

THE MAGAZINE FOR GYPSIES, ROMA & TRAVELLERS

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TRAVELLERS TIMES



KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE

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EDITORIAL



PHOTOS: LEFT:
MIKE DOHERTY
INTERVIEWING JOHN
AND HENRY AT JOHN'S
ROADSIDE CAMP.
© ESZTER HALASI

RIGHT: TELERI GRAY
© ROMANI CULTURAL
AND ARTS COMPANY

Welcome to issue 74 of the Travellers' Times Magazine. We often hear people who don't know much about Romany Gypsies and Travellers say that – 'yeah, but that travelling around in horse-drawn wagons is a thing of the past and one for the romantic postcards isn't it?'. Well, OK, part of this issue is going to address those comments, but in short, it is not a thing of the past, and it is not always picture postcard – as I believe our talented photographer Eszter Halasi – who is Romani herself – shows with her wonderful cover-shot of Henry Sherwood and John Doe standing on the front of John Doe's bowtop wagon.

We also have an excellent photo-feature by Cath Muldowney about Jowett Wagons, who – as the name suggests – build wagons and carts. The Jowetts told Cath that business is booming.

I asked John how many Travellers still live horse-drawn and he told me that he knew of a few. Many Traveller families who live in houses or on sites, he explained, also own wagons and horses, which they take to horse fairs like Appleby. Alongside this, there is also a thriving hobby – and business – in crafting and collecting intricate and beautiful models of wagons.

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Henry, who is "now in the houses" in Dorset, often goes to visit John when he is camped nearby. Henry was brought up in horse-drawn wagons until his family had to give up the nomadic life, like many Traveller families, in the 1960s and 1970s. Henry told me that seeing John made him feel happy, and that he missed the old life. So, hats off to John, to Henry, to Jowett Wagons, and to all the Romany Gypsies and Travellers who travel to fairs either in the wagons, or go to the fairs to see and admire them, for keeping the flame alive.

Mike Doherty: Travellers' Times Editor



TELERI GRAY

The Romani Cultural & Arts Company would like to acknowledge the sad passing of Teleri Gray... writes Director Isaac Blake.

Teleri was a staunch advocate and supporter of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities of Wales and beyond. She was a loyal supporter of our work and engaged in many projects and ventures over the years. The Romani Cultural & Arts Company will miss Teleri greatly and wish to pass on sympathies and kind thoughts to family and friends who will be grieving her loss.

COVER PHOTO: (L-R) HENRY SHERWOOD AND JOHN DOE © ESZTER HALASI



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NEWS



LEGAL VICTORY FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

The controversial planning definition 'Gypsy status' – which Travellers need to meet to develop Traveller sites, has finally been changed by the government – over a year after Court of Appeal judges branded parts of it "discriminatory".

Romany Gypsies and Travellers who want to access the government's planning policy for Travellers must prove to councils and planning inspectors that they have 'Gypsy status', which means that they continue to travel for work, to develop and live on their own permanent sites on land that they own.

The changed definition of 'Gypsy status' now includes Travellers who have stopped travelling permanently because of illness or old age, after judges said that the previous definition – brought in by the government – discriminated against elderly and disabled Gypsies and Travellers.

Gypsy and Traveller campaigners welcomed the news.

"We are proud to have successfully worked together with London Gypsies and Travellers, Southwark Traveller Action Group and Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group on a case that shed light on policies and legislation that have attacked and stripped back the cultural traditions of Gypsy and Traveller people," said a spokesperson for Friends, Families and Travellers.

PONTINS

An investigation by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission has found enough hard evidence to say that from 2013 – 2018 Pontins staff operated an official policy designed to bar Irish Travellers from its holiday camps.

Pontins must now, say the Commission, apologise to the Romany and Traveller community, commit to a zero tolerance towards discrimination, engage with Romany and Traveller groups at the highest level, and prepare an action plan for the purpose of avoiding repetition or continuation of the unlawful discriminations.

The first draft of the action plan must be given to the Commission by 5pm on Tuesday 9 April 2024. Failure to do so will mean the Commission could apply for an injunction to prevent further unlawful discrimination by Pontins – and failure to comply with an injunction could lead to criminal charges.

This issue of the Travellers' Times Magazine went to print before the deadline for the action plan - so check out our website news at travellerstimes.co.uk to find out what happened next!

GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS COUNTED

The government have released a report delving into the characteristics of the 71,440 people who identified as "Gypsy or Irish Traveller" in the England and Wales Census, which took place in March, 2021.



Some of the snapshot headlines from the report, released by the Office for National Statistics late last year, are that:

- Only one in five of Gypsies and Irish Travellers live in mobile homes or caravans – the rest live in flats, houses and bungalows.
- Nearly three-quarters of Gypsies and Irish Travellers reported being in good or very good health.
- However, the proportion of how many reported being in bad health was a lot higher than the wider population – nearly twice as many for late middle-aged to elderly Gypsies and Irish Travellers.
- Gypsies or Irish Travellers were almost twice as likely to provide 50 or more hours of unpaid care per week for a relative or friend than the wider population.
- Self-employment was more common among Gypsies and Irish Travellers than in the wider population – and the most popular occupation (among men in England) was skilled trades.
- Nearly two-thirds of those who identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller also identified as Christian. This was higher than the wider population of whom less than half identified as Christian.



MAIN: FATHER CRAIG FITZPATRICK FROM ST NICHOLAS CATHOLIC CHURCH, GIPTON, WELCOMES A DONATION FROM LEEDS GATE MEMBERS © CATH MULDOWNEY. **BELOW LEFT:** BENJAMIN BOOTLE RIP © ROSE BRASH. **BELOW:** BETTY SMITH-BILLINGTON © VICKY STEVENS

CHRISTMAS CHARITY FROM LEEDS GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

Gypsy and Traveller people across Leeds came together last Christmas to donate to multiple charities.

Community charity Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (Leeds GATE), supported a call-out from one of their members, Kathleen 'Suzie' Doherty, for local Travellers to contribute food, toys and essentials to local churches and foodbanks.

For Suzie, giving to charity is an annual tradition.

"I donate to various churches around Leeds every year, such as Christ the King in Wortley and Holy Family Church," said Suzie, who is Catholic.

"In the Bible Jesus helped people with the little he had, so it's important to try and help others even if you can only give something small."

Gypsy and Traveller young people who attend youth groups at Leeds GATE each week, also decided to use their Christmas youth groups to focus on creating gift boxes for young people in need.

One young person said: "I think it was good to do something so kind for children, but also made me appreciate what I have and be grateful for what I get in the future."



NEW TRAVELLERS RALLY ROUND

The New Traveller community are rallying around to support a nomadic horse-drawn family after their horse was killed outright in the early hours of the morning by a speeding uninsured van.

The horse, Benjamin Bootle, which was tethered and left to graze on a grass verge next to two wagons belonging to Rose Brash and her friend, was pushed 100 metres down the road and was killed instantly by the out-of-control van which was on the wrong side of the road.

Rose's friend Netty Miles decided to try to help Rose out and started a crowdfunder to help pay for another horse. The crowdfunder had reached nearly £2.5k at the time of us going to print, thanks to the generosity of the New Traveller community and their friends.

"Rose is a horsedrawn Traveller who has been on the road since the 1980's," said Netty Miles. "She's a great horsewoman, well known in her community for her warmth and kindness to horses and people."



NEW YEAR'S HONOUR

Betty Smith-Billington, chair of the Dorset-based Gypsy and Traveller charity Kushti Bok, will be picking up a British Empire Medal after being named in the King's New Year's Honours list.

Betty was awarded the BEM for services to the Gypsy and Traveller community.

"It's really a great honour and feels so good to get recognised," said Betty Smith-Billington, "but it's also good for the Gypsy and Traveller community to be recognised."

"Several already have MBEs and OBEs, it's not a new thing, but there are not many of us who have been recognised," she continued.

"We are just normal people: my father served in the Royal Marines, and people say we don't do anything for the country, but we do."



MAIN AND BELOW: © BELA VARADI
OTHER PHOTOS: © ESZTER HALASI



THEY CAME FROM ALL OVER

Suddenly, on Camden High Street, a mass clip-clopping sound can be heard in the distance and heading towards us. It's that time of the year again and the London Christmas Drive soon swings into view. And what a spectacle it is, Romanies and Travellers (and friends) in their element with their horses and carts, out and proud and claiming a little bit of London for themselves just for one day.

I talk to main organiser John. "We never have any trouble," he says. "The drive has been going for 15 years, but I took it over in 2019. It's probably the biggest one-day drive in the country. People come from all over; Wales, up north, and a lot from around Kent and places like that," he adds.

"I think it's the location that makes it popular," says John. "Most drives will only pull in people from around that area, but for London they come from all over. I think we had about 140 lots this year."

By Mike Doherty





LGBTQI+ TRAVELLERS TAKE OVER QUEER BRITAIN

Queer Britain, a museum dedicated to collecting and showcasing British LGBTQI+ lives, has collaborated with Traveller Pride (who support UK-based LGBTQI+ GRT folks), researcher and campaigner Shaan Knan, and Mermaids, (a charity supporting gender-diverse children and families), to conduct a creative residency.

The residency comprises six hybrid sessions held at Queer Britain's gallery in London and also online. The aim is to offer participants an opportunity to observe how intersecting LGBTQI+ and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller identities can be expressed through different art forms.

"This project will start our first Community Residency Programme which is meant to fight the erasure of underrepresented histories within our LGBTQI+ community, amplifying their voices and experiences for a more inclusive future," says Nan Dorrego Carreira, Queer Britain's Programming and Community Events Manager.

The initial two workshops were delivered by Traveller's Times own features journalist Gemma Lees (above), and photojournalist Bela Varadi.

Bela's workshop offered participants an interactive experience in photography and storytelling. He talked about the significance of visual narratives in capturing diverse identities and lived experiences. Participants were encouraged to create their own portrait photography and explore how their different identities were represented in the pictures. In a second exercise,

the participants could test their photographic storytelling skills. The ecstatically positive feedback Bela received after the workshop shows how important it would be to create community spaces where LGBTQI+ Travellers could share their experiences of their dual identities and engage in creative endeavours without fear of exclusion or criticism.

Gemma's workshop involved cut-up and collaborative poetry exercises. The first of which involved cutting up poems from great LGBTQI+ and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller poets and combining the two into a collage poem encapsulating the phrase 'I am'. In the second activity, everyone was asked to write as many 'I want' phrases as they wished onto sticky notes and stick them to a blank wall. The notes spanned a gamut of wants ranging from a pet cat to the end of homophobia and transphobia. Participants were then asked to choose five of their own wants and five wants from others that resonated with them and combine them into a ten-line poem. Finally, all the poems were put in an agreed-upon order to create one cohesive collaborative poem. Online participants were able to join in as well, using interactive online technology.

"Working with Queer Britain and phenomenal facilitators like Bela and Gemma to positively increase our communities' representation is truly a moment of realising that you are part of history," said participant, Ruari McClay. (It was) truly an honour and a priceless privilege."

The artworks created will be archived in Queer Britain's Collection and publicly showcased on 6th April.

Words and photos by Gemma Lees

PETERBOROUGH – ROMA STUDENTS TRY OUT A CAREER IN LAW!

Peterborough Magistrates Court recently played host to several Roma young people, who were there to find out more about how the law works – and to maybe even one day become judges, magistrates, lawyers and court staff themselves!

The students, all from Queen Katharine Academy, Peterborough, took part in a mock trial, which was organised by Diversity and Tribunal Judge Rosemary Lloyd. The students each played a part in the trial, including judge, solicitors, barrister, jury and court clerks and ushers.

"I enjoyed wearing the gown and wig," said Martin, who played the role of a solicitor. "I was very excited when I was told we were going to the Magistrates Court," he added. "I did not know what to expect. It was a good opportunity for me. After I went to the court, I felt that I could actually have a chance to become a lawyer!"

Marlene Flor, Accelerated Curriculum Teacher at Queen Katharine Academy – which has over 57 different languages spoken among its student cohort – said that the experience was of great value to the students – as well as being great fun!

Fabricio played the part of the judge in the mock trial – and enjoyed it because he liked being in control! "I was surprised because I thought the court would be bigger," said Fabricio. "Being part of the mock trial helped me because I realised the importance of good behaviour, and my attitude has improved. I (...) came away on the bus thinking of what I want to be in future."

Over one in ten of Queen Katharine Academy's students are estimated to be Roma from the Czech Republic, and over half of the total student cohort do not have English as their first language. To help their Roma students to reach their full potential, the Academy has a special community liaison team to support them – funded by the National Lottery – including speakers of Czech, Slovak, Romanian and Romani, who work to empower Roma families and Roma students, many of whom have seen further and higher education denied to Roma children in segregated and impoverished communities across Europe.

Judge Rosemary Lloyd is keen to see more students visiting courts across the UK.

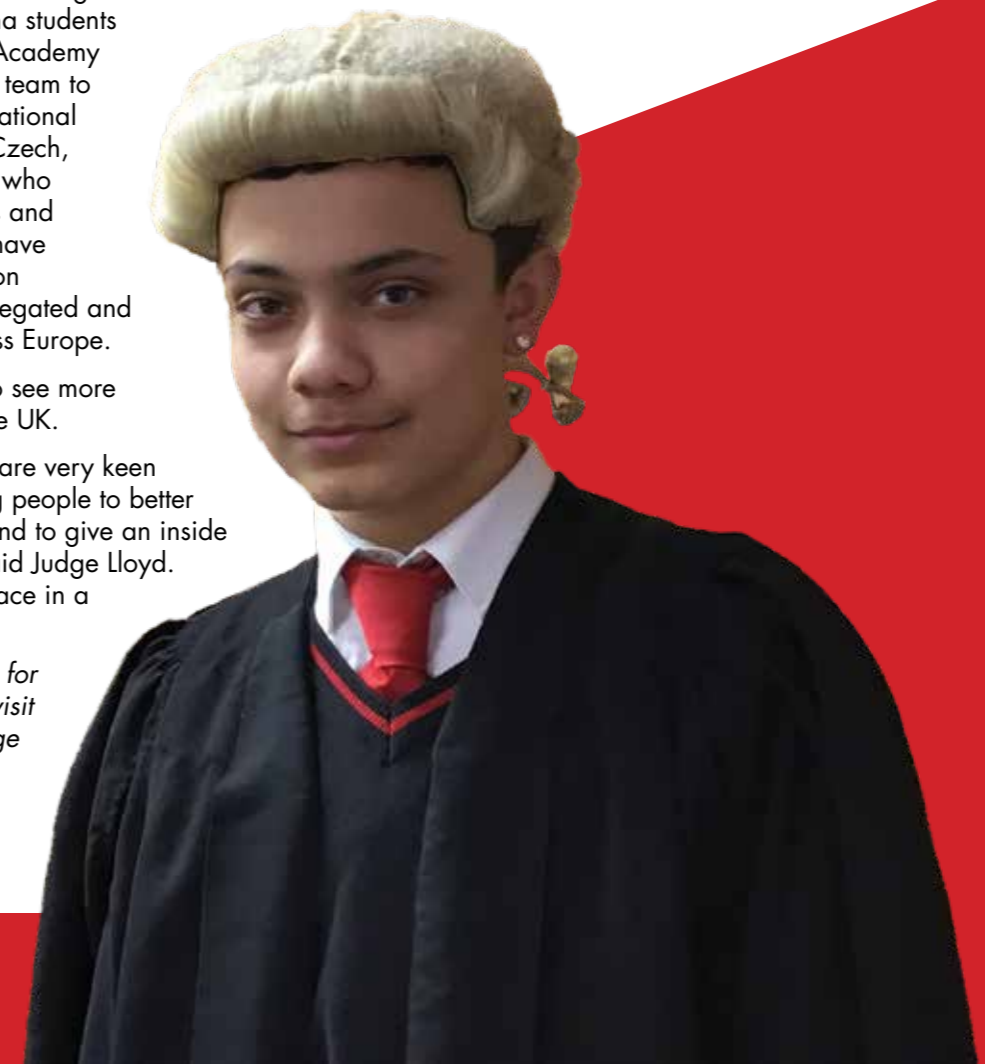
"Diversity judges across the UK are very keen to work with students and young people to better understand our justice system, and to give an inside view of the UK legal system," said Judge Lloyd. "The mock trial can also take place in a school or college."

If you are interested in applying for a court visit – or for a judge to visit your school, please contact Judge Rosemary Lloyd by email on regionaltribunaljudge.lloyd@ejudiciary.net

TT News



PHOTOS: © QUEEN KATHARINE ACADEMY





JOHN DOE



ALL PHOTOS: © ESZTER HALASI

KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE

It's how I've been brought up. It's bred in your bones, it's in your blood. I can trace my family back, as Travellers and Gypsies, into the 16th, 17th century. That's all the Doe family all the way back. We've got the Coopers, Pikes, in the bloodline of Doe.

The horse I've got here now, I call her a horse when she's upset with me. But, no, she's what we call a standard cob; a heavy cob. What you have to appreciate is that my wagon runs into quite a few grand. Every mortal thing I own on this planet is in that wagon. So, my cob has got to be bomb proof.

Last night I was here soaked through. Went out and got a bit of wood. Lit my wood burner. Lied in bed listening to that rain. By that time, I was snug as a bug in a rug. That's my pride. That's why I'm proud of what I have. I get my stuff without answering to anyone else or without relying on anyone else. If I don't go out and get the wood to get nice and warm, like I was last night, I stay cold.

You can see the hawthorn coming out and what a lovely, lovely, fresh green

it is. That puts a smile on my face to see Mother Nature on the way.

I don't have to work nine to five and have to pay rent or bills, but you do have to earn a bit of a living. I still have to go out and work. I like buying and selling a few horses. I'm pretty big into my scrap metal and bits and pieces, and that's enough just to put the food on the table, pay for the outgoings of my truck and the upkeep of my horses and all the rest of it.

Throughout the centuries there's been many, many laws passed to stop Romany people from travelling, from the death penalty, down to imprisonment and on to the new law that's just come through, where it makes you a criminal just to be on the side of the road.

I am proud of my background, and I think it's important for the Romany people to keep their culture, like I'm trying to keep it going. My culture has been in Britain for hundreds of years. They've brought in so many different laws to outlaw us, and we're still here.

Interviewed by Mike Doherty

JIMMY DOHERTY



ALL PHOTOS: © BELA VARADI



PROFILES

"I used to study the way the actors would portray the characters. I'd see actors in different projects, but then the characters would be different. So, I'd try and understand how they could actually do that and do it convincingly."

Jimmy Doherty, 18, has dreams about forging a career as a professional actor – dreams that are starting to become a reality.

Jimmy has been interested in acting throughout his childhood and time in school, studying actors in films and acting in as many school performances as possible.

"Wait, you have to understand, I only really started all this about a year and a half ago," he says.

For Jimmy his acting career started in October 2022, as an extra in a Bollywood film. Jimmy says: "I was literally just in the background, and the amount of anxiety I felt for doing something so small was insane."

A year later Jimmy moved onto a bigger role. In October 2023 he starred in a short drama called "Ice Cream". Jimmy talks about the challenge of that role: "I had to be a character that I wouldn't usually be; a protective older brother, a Romany boy. That stands out to me more than anything I've ever done."

Prior to this Jimmy had only taken part in one acting lesson, led by award-winning film and TV director, producer and actor, John Connors, at the Misleór Festival of Nomadic Cultures in Galway, Ireland. Jimmy talks about his experience:

"Me and John improvised together. I never thought I could become an actor just based off being a Traveller, but watching John made me believe I could, so it was an honour to get to meet him, and to do a scene with him," adds Jimmy.

"As soon as I came back from Galway, John said, 'Jimmy, you got to get some acting lessons to better your performance'. So, that's exactly what I did; I got a six-week acting course at City Academy in Leicester Square."

A couple of months after that, Jimmy then starred as the lead in a short film called "Wipe it over", one of seven shorts from a research project called "Realities Checked".

Jimmy is continuing to take part in acting lessons and continues to study films to perfect his craft and to make his dreams of a career in front of the camera become a reality. Jimmy is also attending a creative media course in college, where he is learning to make short films.

"Your abilities should be transferred into any role that you can play, not only ones that help promote the community, but beyond that," says Jimmy. "You should not be confined to any box just because of your ethnicity.

"If there's something that you can't stop thinking about, and if this is the only kind of life you view, and you can't see any other option, then you have to do it!"

It is evident that Jimmy Doherty means business, and Travellers' Times wishes him all the best of luck!

By Liza Mortimer

I PAINT TODAY

Laura Knight was a hugely successful artist who achieved considerable fame for her paintings in her lifetime. Knight's portraits of Romany Gypsies are considered to be her greatest work, despite it being a brief part of her career.

In the Laura Knight – I Paint Today exhibition at Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery, which runs until the 30th June, 2024, three of Knight's Romany paintings feature. These are Beulah No2, Gypsies at Ascot, and A Gypsy Encampment.

Knight's paintings in this exhibition mostly focus on Beulah (Freedom Smith) and her mother-in-law Lilo Loveridge. Visiting this exhibition to talk to Curator Georgie Stevens – who is Romany herself – I learnt that Knight would sit in Beulah's wagon and paint her. In her autobiography Knight later wrote of Beulah: "To say she was beautiful is not enough, apart from perfection of the mould she bore the mark of tragedy as well."

"Dame Laura Knight very honestly and accurately captures the genuine expressions of her Gypsy subjects which is indicative that she spent enough time with them to get to know them," said Georgie Stevens.

Laura Knight first came to be introduced to Gypsy life when she attended Derby Day, Newlyn, in 1933. The Gypsies at Ascot portrait in particular was painted from the back of her vintage Rolls Royce. It was here that Knight befriended and connected with a Romany community who were living on encampments and working the land in and around Iver, Buckinghamshire. From this point she went on to make daily visits to the settlements to represent their daily lives through painting. She visited every day for several months during the 1930s and painted several portraits and scenes.

"The love of life and the bold colours of the Gypsy Communities are captured and the attention to the detail of expressions, the keen watchful eye on their surroundings with that almost untrusting gaze and evidence of the hardships of a Gypsy way of life captured by the lines of the face, said Georgie Stevens. "There is also a positive anticipation of what a day at the races may hold for them."



Georgie Stevens finishes our interview by telling me why these portraits are still important to Gypsy and Traveller life today: "Everyone in Gypsy and Traveller communities know of Dame Laura Knight's Gypsy work and it's because she has so respectfully and accurately captured key characteristics of our community positively, with no judgement, stereotypes or over-romanticisation."

By Stacey Hodgkins



LEFT MAIN: CURATOR GEORGIE STEVENS AND HER SON TED
LEFT INSET TOP: DETAIL FROM GYPSY ENCAMPMENT
LEFT INSET MIDDLE: DETAIL FROM GYPSIES AT ASCOT
LEFT INSET BOTTOM: DETAIL FROM BEULAH NO2

ALL PHOTOS: © DAN HAWORTH-SALTER

OPINION

“IDYLIC SUMMERS TRAVELLING”
L-R AUNT ISOBEL PRICE (WAS MCPHEE),
AUNT NANCY LEWIS (WAS MCPHEE),
AND THE CHILD ON NANCY’S KNEE IS ME

PHOTO: © CHARMAIN MCGUIGAN



FUTURE MEMORY

When researching Romani history to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2024 earlier this year, I came across an archive I never knew existed. It is called the Shoah Foundation and was started by none other than Steven Spielberg to record survivor stories from the concentration camps. The archive includes many audio recordings, produced in the late 1990s, of in-depth interviews with Roma and Sinti people, and are about how they lived before, during and after the Holocaust.

I listened to two long interviews with Romani Holocaust survivors called Lina Jackson and Julia Lentini. The women shared similar stories of the horrors of that time, but also very different stories of their lives before and after and it is their accounts of their lives before the Holocaust that particularly resonated with me.

Lina spoke of living in an apartment in Germany and having little understanding of her Romani heritage, although she knew her father was Romani. Lina’s main link with her Romani culture before the Holocaust was some of the Romani language that she’d picked up from her family.

This started to change, and was a foreshadow of the horrors to come, when Lina made an innocent remark one day to her school friend, who had commented on Lina’s “beautiful dark hair.” Lina replied to her friend that her hair was down to her being “part Gypsy”. After that Lina said that “all heck broke loose”, and the children

started following her home chanting a derogatory and racist song calling her a thief.

Julia spoke of the idyllic summers before the Holocaust, travelling with her family through Germany, and of being well integrated in the small village where they settled every winter. This was similar to my experience of growing up travelling.

I can also understand their stories, as it seems to me that both Lina and Julia were each initially blissfully unaware of any hatred towards them either personally, or as Romani people. It was only when I settled in houses and worked locally that, like Lina, I became aware of the negativity that exists towards the Traveller community. Not being visible or recognisable as a Traveller meant I was able to witness the negativity that existed. This often took the form of derogatory comments towards the Gypsies who frequented the place where I worked, and also in the form of neighbours making comments about Travellers without knowing that I was also a Traveller.

The racism stopped me in my tracks from saying that I am a Traveller too, and I found myself switching off. The affinity I found with the stories in the archive is that, despite this, they help us remember who we are, especially when trying to fit in, and for me that’s the importance of future memory.

By Charmain McGuigan

ROMANI DANCE

For centuries Romani tribes have passed down their traditions through stories shared over the yag. This makes it quite hard to find written documentation of exactly when Romani people started to use art forms like dance and music to express themselves. Research shows there is little written evidence to pinpoint when Romani dance originated or what it looked like before the 12th – 14th century, as the Romani people arrived in Europe.

The ‘Dance’ section of the RomArchive (a digital archive of Roma art and cultural history) notes that the push and pull of Romani people travelling West from Northern India has resulted in various dance styles that have influenced Turkish, Spanish, and Russian dance forms, and many more.

Many of the Romani dances today have obvious common movements that include spinning and twirling, direct footwork and stomping, shoulder movements, and flamboyant arm work.

The influence on Spanish Roma is especially important as it resulted in the art form Flamenco. The ‘Flamenco’ section of the RomArchive states, Flamenco is a Roma art form and artefacts depicting Romani Flamenco dancers show that the Gitano (meaning Spanish Roma) from the Andalusia regions had a direct influence on how Flamenco came to be. The influence was sourced from the everyday life of Romani people in Southern Spain. Through gestures, poems, music, dance and emotions, Flamenco took its physical form.

The Judith Cohen Collection in the Rom-Archvie shows how Romani people migration to East Europe saw the influence of Čoček: a Balkan Romani Dance. Both Spanish Flamenco and Čoček share similar styles. Both dances often involve proud, upright postures with isolated movements of the upper body. Arms might be held high or used for expressive gestures. Also, Flamenco and Balkan Romani dances are

FEATURE

known for conveying emotions through body language. Sharp arm movements, head tilts, and hand gestures can express passion, defiance, or joy.

A commonality when looking at many Romani dance styles in Europe often involves improvisation and a strong connection between the dancer and the music. Dancers tend to respond to the rhythm and emotions carried by the musicians. The Romani people have a rich cultural history of expressing themselves through dance, music and other art forms, as a fundamental part of their social and cultural life. Romani dance has never been a fixed form but rather a living tradition that continues to develop and evolve.

By Liza Mortimer

CZATKA PILGRIMAGE, HUNGARY,
2023 © ESZTER HALASI



JOWETT WAGONS



DAVID, DAVID JR, TOM, JOBY AND PHILIP JOWETT



THREE GENERATIONS OF MASTER CRAFTSMEN

Philip Jowett was an apprentice joiner in Bradford in the 1960s, built his first cart at age 16, and his first bow top wagon at 18. Fast forward to the present day, and Bentham in North Yorkshire is home to Jowett Wagons, a family business incorporating three generations of master craftsmen. Now joined by son David and grandsons David, Joby and Tom, the family produce the finest quality, exquisitely decorated bow top wagons, drays and associated items.

The workshops are filled with a variety of vehicles at varying stages of their creation, and everything is hand crafted from scratch on site, often using original heritage tools – only the axles and springs are bought in. Even the undersides of the wagons are carved and painted with the same attention to detail as the more visible parts. The raw materials are mainly ash, oak and sapele, sourced from specialist suppliers, and hand-picked by David to ensure its quality. As each craftsman's carving is slightly different, if one man starts the carving on a wagon, then they alone have to finish it – and a wagon can take from three to twelve months plus to complete!

Until Joby joined the business, the wagons and carts were sold unpainted, but now he adds the beautiful final finish with intricate hand painted designs and gold leaf decoration.

Jowett's main customers are from the Gypsy and Traveller communities, and whilst there was a time when shiny trailers massively outnumbered traditional wagons on places like Fair Hill, now the iconic bow top wagon is celebrated and treasured, and its numbers are gradually rising again.

This should ensure that Jowett Wagons, their passion for their craft, the family bond, and the brotherly banter continue for generations to come.

Photographs and words
by Cath Muldowney

HISTORY

THE MORNING AFTER: 1886

This photo of the morning after the Kelso St James Fair in Scotland has been in my family as long as I can remember. We're lucky to have two copies; one, a high-quality print and the other, although poorer quality, includes a long caption, listing who's who in great detail. I've no idea where the prints came from and I'm embarrassed to admit that it never occurred to me to get them scanned into electronic copies until recently. I'd grown up with the image, so perhaps took it for granted and didn't appreciate its importance. That is until I thought more about the date it was taken and the wider history of photography in Scotland.

But let's first look at the image itself. It shows Travellers preparing to leave Kelso market place on the sixth of August 1886. Large trailers are arranged around the square with smaller carts towards the foreground.

It's a lively scene, bustling with pockets of activity, and I notice new details the more I look. Front and centre, a group of lads pose for the camera. To their left, there's a wary sideways glance from a moustachioed gentleman in a bowler hat. But most people go about their business, seemingly unaware they are being photographed. On the left, near the trailer without its covering sheet, my great-great grandparents stand with their infant son. Over on the right, a man leans rakishly on a cart, one hand on his hip, chatting to a woman in an apron.

Although the annual 'morning after' gathering was regarded as a local spectacle, it stemmed from a rule that Travellers had to leave town the day after the fair, so it's worth noting the presence of two policemen in the centre.

It seems likely the photo was taken for the local newspaper but I've never been able to trace this. For me, a deeper mystery – and enduring part of the image's fascination – is: who wrote the caption and what was their connection to the Traveller families?

But back to the photo's historic importance. Photography was brought to Scotland in the 1840s, coming first to Edinburgh and Glasgow then spreading out to other cities and towns. The technology was still being developed and refined by a relatively small group of people (mainly linked to the scientific community) for many years.

Although it's not the first photo of Scottish Travellers, it must surely be among the earliest, and its quality, the number of families it captures, and the accompanying caption make it an important artefact.



MARK BAILLIE WITH ONE OF THE COPIES OF THE PHOTOS THAT HE HAS
© MARK BAILLIE

Watch out for the soon to be published Travellers' Times online version of this article – which will include the caption to the photo – which runs to nearly 500 words!
travellerstimes.org.uk

By Mark Baillie



ROMANY GYPSIES AND FORTUNE-TELLING

Romany Gypsy women - and very occasionally men - have practised the art of fortune-telling for centuries, if not millenia. In past times it was one of the mainstays of a family's domestic income and a tradition that was passed down by mothers to their daughters and, from time to time, their sons too.

For most fortune-tellers reading palms was an adjunct to their "calling" - going from door to door in a village or town to sell pegs, hand-made lace, small baskets, wooden flowers, sewing materials and other household essentials to the women of the house. They had to be covert about their palm reading as it had been made illegal under British legislation in 1747 and again under the Vagrancy Act of 1824.

The women earning a living in the seaside booths on South Shore, Blackpool, at the turn of the 20th century, all had previous careers as fortune-tellers before their arrival - and they had frequently appeared in the press being arrested and tried for the crime of palmistry across Britain and Ireland. They were usually found guilty and fined but seemed to shrug it off. One or two of the repeat offenders were even sentenced to short spells of imprisonment.

Most of the fortune-tellers would ask their customers to show the palms of their hands and would then read the lines. My own 2xgreat-grandmother Lementeni Smith used that technique but also had an interesting alternative method. A photograph taken in 1906 shows her by her tent at South Shore with her pet African Grey parrot in a cage on a table, and I believe she was using the parrot to help her tell her customers' fortunes using a deck of cards.



MAIN PHOTO: LEMENTENI SMITH AND HER AFRICAN GREY PARROT
© LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM/ARCHIVE STONE COLLECTION BOX 244/ PRINT 5
LOWER PHOTO: MAUDE LEE AND HER HUSBAND BENDIGO LEE BY HER FORTUNE-TELLING BOOTH AT SOUTH SHORE, BLACKPOOL. © SHARON HEPELL

In Blackpool, to not appear to be blatantly breaking the law, the women would put a sign up on their booth saying "Baskets for sale, 6d each. Advice free". They were, however, still prosecuted and fined virtually on a weekly basis. But telling the fortunes of Blackpool holidaymakers was extremely lucrative. "Gipsy Sarah", one of the most famous of the Blackpool fortune-tellers, used to say: "You haven't been to Blackpool unless you've had your fortune told at South Shore."

If your ancestors were members of the South Shore Romany Gypsy community, please do get in touch with me via Travellers' Times at travellerstimes@ruralmedia.co.uk.

By Sharon Heppell

POETRY

Redbridge Hollow, Oakley Wood, Standlake and Woodhill Lane are Traveller sites in Oxfordshire. Some lines are adapted from a song 'O write me down the powers above' performed by the Traveller Betsy Smith in Creech St. Michael in Somerset on 9 August 1906.

Professor David Morley is an academic and an award-winning poet of Romani heritage. David's most recent published work of poetry was *Fury*.



CAMPAIGNERS ON THEIR WAY FROM A DRIVE 2 SURVIVE TEMPORARY CAMP IN MANCHESTER TO JOIN A DEMO AGAINST THE POLICE BILL AND ITS ANTI-TRAVELLING LAWS © BELA VARADI

COME WRITE ME DOWN

NAMED AFTER A ROMANY SONG PERFORMED BY BETSY SMITH, 1906

*I have a diamond in my eye
and no care in the world despite you.
I'll give you gold and all my pearls
for the Romany families freezing
from dewfall until evening
on their Oxfordshire Traveller sites
in Redbridge Hollow, and Oakley,
at Standlake and Woodhill Lane.
Come write me down, said the singer,
come write me down.*

*It's not your gold or pearls, my love.
I have no need of either
as I unroll your moneyed mind
and find no heart for your being kind
to the Romany children freezing
from moonrise until morning
on their English Traveller sites
with no water, heat, or light.
Come write me down, said the singer,
Come write me down.*

STORYTELLING

*At an academic conference I gave a paper
on Romany language. I spoke of the leopard-leap
of its dialects from branch to branch
of Sanskrit, Anglo-Saxon, and Romance.
The open purse of gold of Romany loan words
both given and received in kind, or kindness.
The caravan trails of its tongue across continents,
its mouth wide to the tides and shoals of speech.*

*How fleet of foot the words needed to be
in their quicksilver changeling disguises.
Why nouns grew spring-heeled with meaning
and verbs vroomed off, words which Travellers
might ride on, or hide behind from hard law,
gadjos, or the poisoned pens of parliament.*

*I spoke all this poetic stuff as prose.
Then I leaned out of art and said, 'My friends,
when police come for Travellers, we move on.
Language shows who we are, and it is better
to be invisible. But spoken language moves
like meltwater under ice. Speech thaws into life'.*

There was cold applause. A door whined open.
Catering trundled in, clattering trays
to hurry us along to Q&A.
A young lecturer raised his hand, saying:
*What is the point of listening to this trash?
Nobody spoke or spoke up. Tea was served.*

REALITIES CHECKED CHANGING THE CONVERSATION AROUND TRAVELLERS AND CRIME

Academics leading an ambitious project that delves into Gypsies' and Travellers' experiences of crime and the criminal justice system have released a series of films based on real-life stories uncovered by their research.

The seven short films, which can be found on the Realities Checked website (www.realities-checked.org), were scripted by Romani writer and poet Damian Le Bas, produced by Rural Media, and Romani and Traveller actors played the main characters.

Liza Mortimer, Travellers Times' Deputy Project Manager, who featured in one of the films, said that the experience was "empowering".

"I portrayed a Traveller woman who had suffered and overcame domestic abuse by a non-Traveller and who the criminal justice system had failed," said Liza Mortimer.

"Even though I have not experienced domestic abuse myself, being a Traveller I have experienced and seen the prejudice and discrimination we face," she added.

Professor Becky Taylor, who helped to lead the research team, said that the films were just part of the outputs of an ongoing three-year project. "Ultimately, this project aims to change the conversations that are had around Gypsies' and Travellers and crime and to move it away from thinking of them always as perpetrators of crime, to thinking of them also as victims of crime," said Professor Becky Taylor.

"The Realities Checked short films used the anonymised words of Romani and Traveller people interviewed by researchers for the Realities Checked project," said Julie Colman, from the Rural Media production team.

"The films aim to highlight and explore several recurring themes discussed by the interviewees, which were: prejudice encountered in day-to-day interaction with the economy; harsh evictions; poor experiences of healthcare; possible over-sentencing for offences; domestic violence; and violence from members of the public," she added.

"Each of these themes consists of not just the negative dimension of a difficult experience suffered, but also the positive 'counter-theme' of the resilience that is required to negotiate and overcome it."

Professor Coretta Phillips from the London School of Economics led the research team, with Professor Zoë James from the University of Plymouth as the other Co-Principal Investigator alongside Professor Becky Taylor. The Project received funding from the Economic & Social Research Council.

Friends, Families and Travellers, LeedsGATE, Rural Media, and TravellerSpace supported and facilitated the research study.

Mike Doherty/TT News



JOHN CONNORS AND HEAVEN-LEIGH CLEE IN DARK TO DARK



DAMIAN LE BAS IN MY DAILY TASK



LIZA MORTIMER IN SEE THAT SCAR?



FAYE FREEMAN IN BORN ON THE EDGE

ALL PHOTOS: © LUKE COLLINS

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GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUPS

COMMUNITY LAW PARTNERSHIP

Legal advice and support for Gypsies and Travellers facing eviction or planning issues, living in caravans or live-aboard boats.

0121 685 8595

DERBYSHIRE GYPSY LIAISON GROUP

Works in a local and national capacity

07799 443830

info@dglg.org

DRIVE2SURVIVE

A national GRT led campaign charity set up to oppose the new anti-Traveller laws. For advice and information call

07840 979302 or 07903 198022

www.drive2survive.org.uk

GATEHERTS

Community Led Organisation For Gypsy, Roma and Travellers.

https://gateherts.org.uk

01707 247 088

hub@gateherts.org.uk

FRIENDS, FAMILIES & TRAVELLERS

Work to end racism and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and to protect the right to pursue a nomadic way of life.

01273 234777

fft@gypsy-traveller.org

www.gypsy-traveller.org

LEEDS GYPSY AND TRAVELLER EXCHANGE

Confidential support and advocacy for Gypsies and Travellers living in or passing through West Yorkshire.

0113 2402444

LGBT TRAVELLER PRIDE

Advice and support for LGBTQ+ Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

07395 355 066

LINCOLNSHIRE TRAVELLER INITIATIVE

Connecting Gypsy and Traveller people with services in the Lincolnshire area.

07503 878 740

ONE CALL AWAY

Gypsy & Traveller Mental Health Support.

07748 997617

onecallawaytoday@gmail.com

PRIDE OF ROMANI

Community-led organisation based in Cheshire.

prideofromani@gmail.com

REPORT RACISM GRT

Report Hate Crime against Gypsies Roma and Travellers.

https://reportracismgrt.com

ROMA SUPPORT GROUP

Supporting and empowering the Roma community.

0794 908 9778

info@romasupportgroup.org.uk

TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

Providing support and advice nationally to Gypsies and Travellers visit our website.

www.travellermovement.org.uk

0207 607 2002

info@travellermovement.org.uk

TRAVELLING AHEAD

Support & advice for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities across Wales.

0808 802 0025

travellingahead@tgpcymru.org.uk

YORK TRAVELLERS TRUST

Supporting Gypsy and Traveller people in York and surrounding area.

01904 630526

TRAVELLERS TIMES

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ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

0800 9177 650

CHILD LINE

0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

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For better mental health.

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MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

Providing physical, financial and emotional support to people living with cancer and their families.

0808 808 00 00

**7 days a week,
8am-8pm**

www.macmillan.org.uk

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE

0808 2000 247

SAMARITANS

116 123

www.samaritans.org

WOMEN'S AID (DOMESTIC ABUSE)

www.womensaid.org

Travellers' Times has loads of other useful advice and support numbers on our website visit
www.travellerstimes.org.uk/advice

