

Image 1



This photo was taken in the early years of the 20th century and was published as a postcard and sold to visitors to Blackpool. It shows members of the Boswell family with their vardo and bender camped close to a Scenic Railway on the Pleasure Beach at South Shore, Blackpool. The people in the photo are:

1. Trafalgar Boswell (born 1856, Plaistow, Essex; died 1950 in Spalding, Lincolnshire), the son of Sylvester Boswell and Florence Chilcott. Trafalgar is also the first cousin of the Tobias Boswell who appears in Image 2. Their fathers - Sylvester Boswell and Edward Boswell - were brothers.
2. Trafalgar's wife Athaliah Whatnell (born 1861 in Ramsey, Essex; died 1923 in Skegness), the daughter of James Whatnell and Adelaide Smith. Through her mother's Smith line, Athaliah is a member of my own Romany family. Adelaide Smith and my 2xgreat-grandmother Lementeni Smith were first cousins.
3. A brother of Trafalgar? He had five and of these Mackenzie ("Kenza") and Nathan were known to have lived in Blackpool.
4. Some of the children of Trafalgar and Athaliah. The two girls are likely to be Ida and Linda. The young boy at the back could well be Sylvester Gordon Boswell (born 1895 in Blackpool; died 1977 in Spalding). He went on to be the father of the late Gordon Boswell, founder of the Gordon Boswell Romany Museum in Spalding, Lincolnshire.

Image 2



This photo was taken between 1902 and 1908 and was published as a postcard and sold to visitors to Blackpool. It shows two members of the Boswell family with what appear to be two fortune-telling booths/benders and a vardo camped on the Pleasure Beach at South Shore, Blackpool. The people in the photo are:

1. Tobias Boswell (born c1856; died 1908 in Blackpool, Lancashire), the son of Edward/Ned Boswell and Siari Draper, known as "Gipsy Sarah". Tobias is also the first cousin of the Trafalgar Boswell who appears in Image 1. Their fathers - Edward Boswell and Sylvester Boswell - were brothers.
2. Tobias' second wife Jennie Dutton (1877-1947) who - as the photo shows - was a fortune-teller. According to the sign boards on her tent, Jennie is capitalising on the fact that she is the daughter-in-law of "Gipsy Sarah", one of Blackpool's most famous and highly respected fortune-tellers. I have a number of photos of "Gipsy Sarah", her husband Ned and other members of their family, all of whom lived at South Shore.

Tobias's first wife was Ada Lee (born c1856; died 1901 in Blackpool), daughter of Thomas Lee and Caroline Chilcott. Thomas Lee and Caroline were members of the South Shore Gypsy community too. Ada and Tobias had at least eight children: four daughters and four sons. All four girls became fortune-tellers.

Tobias and his second wife Jennie had three known children: two boys and a girl. I have a second photo, obviously taken on the same day as the one above, that shows two small dark-haired girls to the left of the booth, one of them cradling a baby. The girls are undoubtedly the daughters of Tobias and Ada and the baby one of the children of Tobias and Jennie.