

Travellers' TIMES

The only magazine for
Gypsies & Travellers

SUMMER 2011 | ISSUE 46 | £3.50
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Under Way

**Meet the families
beneath London's
busy Westway**

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No place like home

Government plans will make it
harder to find a site **PAGE 2**

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The heat is on **PAGE 6**

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No place like home

The government plans to axe many of the policies that have led to an increase in Gypsy and Traveller sites over the last five years, reports *Jake Bowers*



Dale Farm in Essex PHOTO: Mary Turner

GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS looking to establish their own sites in England will shortly find it much harder, if government plans announced in April become a reality. Announcing sweeping changes to the way councils plan for and deliver Gypsy and Traveller sites, Communities Secretary Eric Pickles said: "The current planning policy for Traveller sites does not work. There is a widespread perception that the system is unfair and that it is easier for one group of people to gain planning permission particularly on sensitive green belt land. This creates resentment and damages community cohesion." The government has decided to scrap most of the policies that were beginning to allow Gypsies and Travellers to finally find a place to live in the English countryside.

Key amongst his plans is an intention to scrap planning circulars 01/2006 and 04/2007 which have been responsible for a growing number of Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites and more sites for Travelling Showpeople. But the government also plans to make getting retrospective planning permission almost impossible and abolish regional targets for more Gypsy and Traveller sites.

The plan to end getting retrospective planning permission will close one of the few openings that allow Gypsies and Travellers to begin development without placing a prior notice of permission sought on their property. Such notices, which typically include the words 'Gypsy' and 'Traveller' on them, often cause ethnic tension in local communities, where the desire to keep an area ethnically free from Gypsies and Travellers is still openly debated at council level.

The plans have caused great worry amongst Gypsy and Traveller campaigners who say the government should be challenging the idea that the planning system unfairly helps Gypsies and Travellers rather than pandering to it. "The fact is that planning circular 01/2006 has seen the number Gypsy and Traveller planning applications increase from 10% to 30%, but that still leaves the 70% that fail," says Greg Yates of

the Clearwater Gypsies. "I'm afraid this means that we'll look at the years between 2006 and 2011 as golden years for Gypsy and Traveller planning policy, but those years are now over."

The government argues it is balancing its tough new approach with greater incentives to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers. A key development is the inclusion of Gypsy and Traveller pitches under the New Homes Bonus scheme from April 2011. The government is also giving local councils an incentive to provide new sites by providing £60 million of funding for sites.

Lawyer Chris Johnson, of the Travellers Advice Team is another campaigner who fears the government plans and is organising an event on June 14th to help community members respond to them. He says: "These plans are a serious backward step. We are forever coming across local authorities who state: 'Unfortunately we do not have any land for sites'. Remarkably, when the two Travellers' sites had to move because of the London Olympics, four separate pieces of land in London were identified and the two sites were built within a period of about two years."



Greg Yates

The community has until July 6th 2011 to comment on the government plans. For more information, contact Paul Williams on 0303 44 41223 or email: paul.williams@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Inside your Summer TT



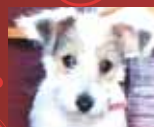
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A lifetime's memories
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Happy pix and memories
**IN TOUCH
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Traveller education not working, claims government

The government has defended its decision to drastically cut Traveller Education Services across Britain, finds *Mike Doherty*

A MINISTER for the Department for Education has responded to growing concerns about the cuts to the education services for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

In a reply to a parliamentary question from Baroness Whittaker about the cuts, Education Minister Lord Hill said that the government had given £201m in Ethnic Minority Achievement grants to individual schools. He said that they could use this to support the schooling of Gypsy and Traveller children instead of relying on council-run Traveller Education Services. Lord Hill then claimed that there was little evidence that Traveller Education Services had any effect, and that the "achievement gap" between Traveller children and other children was "widening".

Brian Foster, a former Traveller teacher says: "Lord Hill is simply wrong about Traveller Education Services not having much effect." Foster says the latest research showed the opposite of what Lord Hill claimed. "Traveller Education Services work with Gypsy and Traveller children by visiting them at home and helping to raise attendance and enrolment rates, as well as working with the schools on achievement rates for the pupils who are already there," he said.

A recent report by the National Association for Traveller Teachers (NATT) has revealed the damage government cuts are doing. A NATT survey returned by just 75 of the 165 local councils in England and Wales found that eight local councils have cut the Traveller education teachers completely, 20 had sacked some of them, and at least six others were planning 'significant' redundancies. Only nine said that no cuts were threatened.

To find out what the rest have got to hide Travellers' Times is investigating exactly how bad the cuts are. We are contacting ALL the local councils in England and Wales and using the Freedom of Information Act to force them to reveal just how many Gypsy and Traveller teachers have been lost. We will be revealing the results in our next issue.

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said: "This is not about removing support. We have given heads more flexibility and control over their own budgets because they know best how to support their own pupils. This is alongside the pupil premium, which will rise to £2.5bn a year by 2015, targeted at the most disadvantaged pupils with money being given directly to heads to use as they deem appropriate."

Lianna May Chapman, 24, Romany Gypsy

Lianna May Chapman got her GCSEs and has trained to be a nursery nurse. School bullies forced her mum to take her home because she didn't know what else she could do. "They picked on me because of my Gypsy background and beat me up one day," says Lianna. "As far as I know, the school did nothing," she said.



Eventually Lianna was approached by a Watford youth group who persuaded her to return to school. "They talked to me and encouraged me," she said. "The school seemed fascinated by my Gypsy background and I felt that was what they thought the problem was, rather than the bullies," she said.

Lianna feels she could have been helped earlier if there had been enough Gypsy and Traveller teachers in her area when she was at school.

Jason McCarthy, 22, Irish Traveller

"It's just not true that Travellers don't want to educate their kids," says Jason McCarthy, from Southall in London. "Everyone wants the best for their children."

Yet even with his family's support, Jason still had difficulties when he first started school. "Every time there was trouble we were blamed for starting it," he says. So Jason's family approached the local Traveller Education Service for help.

"Andy and Jake from Ealing (Traveller Achievement Service) came and visited me and the school," says Jason. "They talked to the teachers and set up a weekly reading and writing class for us. They understand us and the community we come from. They worked with us so that we could adapt to school – and with the teachers so that the school could adapt to us," he says.

Hit the road

An Essex Council has voted to spend one-third of its budget evicting Britain's biggest Travellers' site



Protesters at Dale Farm in Essex PHOTO: Mary Turner

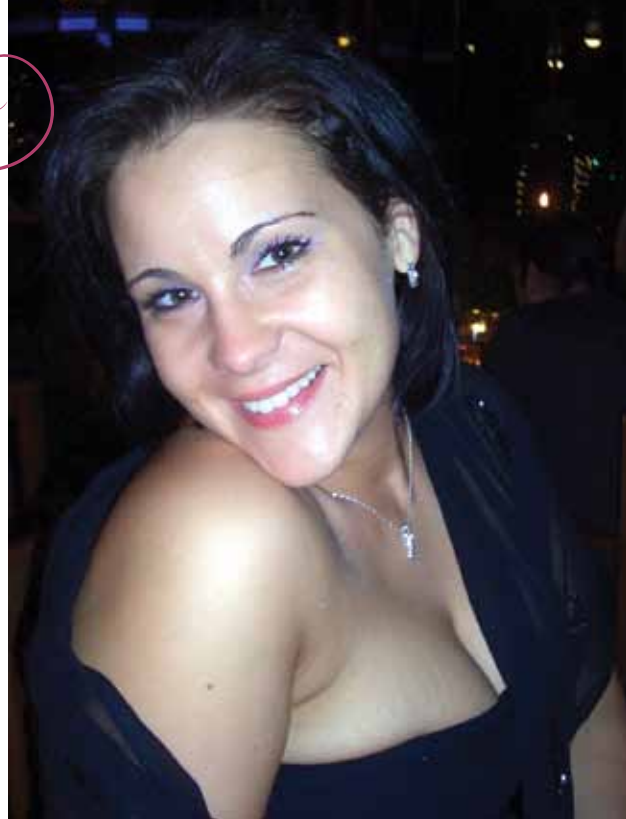
A COMMUNITY of Irish Travellers fighting to stay on the biggest encampment in Europe should be evicted, Basildon Council ruled in March. The 1,000 people living at Dale Farm in Essex will be cleared from their homes at a cost of £18 million if legal moves to block the eviction fail.

The vote by Basildon District Council was passed by 26 votes to 10 with Conservative councillors voting for, and Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors voting against. The government has since given another £1.2 million to help pay for the eviction.

Dale Farm residents and President of the Gypsy Council Richard Sheridan predicted the eviction would cost many more millions. He said: "Evicting this many people to a life on the road where they will be continually evicted will cost a further £200 million over the next 10 years." With no eviction order yet served as Travellers' Times went to press, campaigners are hoping that alternative sites within Basildon can still be found.

Sisters act

Josephine Smith, of the Romany Woman's Union (RWU), describes why she started Britain's newest Gypsy organisation and the search for Miss Gypsy UK



MY FAMILY and ancestors are from the Smiths/Lovells/Lees/Whites of Scotland.

My mam and dad were born in wagons, and all my ancestors before them all lived in wagons, my ancestors are mentioned in practically every history book written on the Romany race. Now many of my family are settled and live in Cheshire, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Scotland. My family own privately owned camps up and down the UK and are well known throughout our race.

I started the union during the programme *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*, because I was appalled and sickened that a programme could be so misleading towards 'GYPSY' people and as a very proud woman I for one was not going to allow the makers of this programme make us into some kind of circus freak show. So during the second series I basically put it all together in the matter of a week and here we are today, during that time we have achieved a lot really. Miss Gypsy UK is a competition to find a spokeswoman and ambassador for the RWU. People can get involved by coming and supporting the girls at the semi-finals and then the actual finals. The semi-finals are to be held in Cheshire on the 30th July and the 6th August, with the final to be held in London on the 20th

August, venue to be confirmed. Tickets for the semi-finals are on sale now on the union's website, all monies go back into the union to go towards other projects and the advancement of our women.

Miss Gypsy UK is our search for an Ambassador for Romany women. Our main aim is to work with the young woman chosen and help her to achieve all she wants in life. If this is to learn to read and write, then we will help her to achieve that, if she wants to set up her own business, we will help and nurture her throughout the whole process.

As an ambassador, Miss Gypsy will be responsible (she will be fully trained by the right people in the right areas) for talking on our human and civil rights in British society, going to schools and colleges and speaking with children and young adults to educate them about the differences of Romany Gypsies to that of Travellers. She will give them a brief history of the Holocaust and how many of our people were gassed. But she will not forget the deportation that many Romany women and young children also suffered at the hands of this country, through the witch hunts, rapes and murders.

She will also travel to Eastern Europe and pay a humanity visit to some Gypsy villages, where

she will make her own private video diary for her to show when she returns to the UK and how she feels it affects us as British Romany. She will also help to front many of our future campaigns and projects.

There are so many people in society that class us as animals, savages and wild. Let's start to show these people that that simply is not the case. There are hundreds among us that want this change, be it for ourselves, our children or our grandchildren.

Romany women should get involved because this is making a stand for their children's future and how British society will treat them. They can get involved by being a spokeswoman for their area, handing out leaflets, running fundraising nights so we can put on more projects and campaigns to raise awareness in society. In the words of the wonderful Charlie Smith "Change comes from us and is passed onto our children", think about it!

I am very proud as President of the RWU having a very strong committee and powerful women and all the young women who have come forward and made a stand that this is the time for change, not tomorrow or the next day, but NOW.

www.romanywomensunion.com

"Miss Gypsy UK is our search for an Ambassador for Romany women. Our main aim is to work with the young woman chosen and help her to achieve all she wants in life."

Diary Dates

June 2 – 8	Appleby Fair
June 4	Epsom Derby
June 12	Hartlebury Museum, Worcester, GRT Event
June 13	Display of GRTHM, Crewkerne Tourist Information Centre, TA18 7LE
June 14	One-Day Workshop on New Planning Policy on Traveller Sites, Birmingham
June 15	St Day Gypsy & Traveller Women's Group Open Day
June 20 – 24	Film showings – New 2 Somerset, Sally Tucker-Woodbury, Yeovil College, BA21 4DR
June 21	Festival of Education: GRT Interactive Display, and talks, Yeovil College, 10-4
June 22	Cambridge Fair
June 30	Celebrate! GRT Culture, Riverside Theatre & Arts Centre, Newport
July 2-3	Henley-in-Arden Horse Fair and Market, Wootton Wawen, B95 6BG
July 15	Seamer Fair, Scarborough
July 24	Kenilworth
August 6	Can you hear me yet? Silent stand for Romany victims of the Holocaust outside the Houses of Parliament, London
August 21	Beehive Fair
August 24	Lee Gap Fair
August 24	Priddy Fair, Weston-Super-Mare
August 27 – 29	Eddie's Fair and Drive, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
August 29	St Mary's Hill, Wales

EVENTS what's going on



This great picture was taken at the Epsom Derby of 1888.

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CHANGING FACE

people and places



www.travellerstimes.org.uk

PHOTOS: Christopher Preece



You can register to take part in any of the following finals or simply come along to watch:

South East Regional Final:

June 4th 2011, 3pm onwards
Location: Epsom Derby, Epsom Downs Racecourse, Epsom Downs, Surrey, KT18 5LQ

Midlands and East of England Regional Final:

June 18th, 11.30am onwards
Location: Genesis Social Enterprise Centre, King Street, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 7DQ

London Regional Final:

June 19th, 2pm – 5pm
Location: Foyer of Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX

North of England Regional Final:

June 26th, 12 noon onwards
Location: The Winsford Centre, The Edge, Cheviot Square, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 1QS

South West Regional Final:

July 2nd, 11.30am onwards
Location: East Christchurch Social Club, Grange Road, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 4JD

Travellers Got Talent Final

August 20th, 2pm – 5pm
Location: Clore Ballroom at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX

1st place £1,000

2nd place £600

3rd place £400

plus prizes from Crown Derby



Last year's nationwide talent contest **Travellers Got Talent** is to be repeated across Britain this summer as part of an 8-hour television series being made to undo some of the damage created by the Channel 4 mockumentary series *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*

BUILDING on the success of last year's contest, Travellers Got Talent 2011 will take place at five regional finals across England leading to a spectacular national final where contestants from traditional Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities will compete to win Travellers Got Talent 2011.

The events are being held as part of this year's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month celebrations in June, but are being privately financed by a TV production company in order to produce an 8-hour series called *A Gypsy's Life for Me* for Sky's Bio channel.

From singing to MCing, from flamenco dance to hip hop, anything that can be performed live is allowed. Everybody from stand-up comics to gymnasts, spoon players and magicians are welcome. The only restriction is that participants must be from traditional Romany Gypsy, Roma, Showman, Irish or Scottish Traveller families. The competition is also being supported by Travellers' Times magazine.

Travellers Got Talent promoter and new Travellers' Times magazine editor

Jake Bowers said: "The Gypsy and Traveller community is considered to be guilty of many things but capable of nothing, so this series will bypass the crude stereotypes recently used by other broadcasters and reveal a community that has survived by entertaining others for well over a thousand years.

"By throwing open the doors on the Gypsy and Travellers' own annual talent contest – Travellers Got Talent – we will be revealing the tales and talents of those determined to follow in the footsteps of other famous Gypsy performers such as Charlie Chaplin, Cher Lloyd, Bob Hoskins and the Gypsy Kings."

Co-promoter Tracey Nedic of the Leicestershire Gypsy Liaison Group is organising the regional finals in the Midlands, the East of England and the South West. She said: "I'm confident that our event in Derbyshire will lead to great success for some of the many people already coming forward to take part in Travellers Got Talent 2011. But no matter where you are from get in touch as soon as you can to make sure you're included."

To enter **Travellers Got Talent 2011** contact **Jake Bowers**
Tel: 07966 786242 email: jake@grthm.co.uk or **Tracy Nedic**
Tel: 07771 416854 email: traceylgclgroup@aol.com

Grave injustice

Few parents can imagine losing their young son to cancer. Imagine then being forced to remove his gravestone or lose the right to be buried with him

LOSING A CHILD is a parent's worst nightmare, but for James and Tina Hedges, it isn't over yet. Over six years since they laid their seven-year-old son Jimmy to rest, they are still fighting to make sure their boy can rest in peace.

"Our son was a wonderful loving child," says James Hedges. "He showed a love and compassion that would make any parent proud." But in March 2004, young Jimmy Hedges developed a lump in his leg. A scan revealed a tumour and an 18-month fight with cancer began. In October 2005, little Jimmy Hedges was buried at St Michael's Church in Sandhurst, Berkshire. At a time when they should have been grieving, Tina and James Hedges found that a new battle was about to begin.

Gypsy gravestones are as big and colourful as the love that is felt for the people that they remember. So Jimmy's headstone reflected that, but as they prepared to have it erected the church informed them that the rules on what was allowed on gravestones had just changed. In 2009, after years of trying to arrange a meeting with the church to find a solution, the Hedges put the headstone up. The family have since been fighting to keep it through church courts and crown courts. In

March this year they were given an agonising ultimatum: Either take the headstone down in six weeks or lose the right to be buried with your son.

Mum Tina is as determined as ever that her son's grave should not be disturbed. "The grave is a triple grave so we can be buried with Jimmy when we die, it's not interfering with anyone else's." She's counted over 900 other gravestones in the cemetery that don't comply with the gravestone rules the church say she must follow but isn't sure why her family is being singled out. "It's probably because we're Gypsies," she says. With the deadline for removing the stone now passed, Tina is planning on taking her fight to the European Court of Human Rights. The family has had vigils at the grave which have been supported by local people and has launched an online petition to help their fight which has attracted over 1,300 signatures.

Norman Russell, Archdeacon of Berkshire, says: "The church has to consider the needs of all of those who mourn the loss of loved ones in considering applications for individual memorials in churchyards.

"The Chancellor of the Diocese is responsible for churchyard regulations which take account of the many



sensitivities involved, and the need to retain an atmosphere of peacefulness in our churchyards.

"The material used, the design and the disproportionate scale all fall well outside the Chancellor's regulations.

"At an earlier hearing, the Chancellor indicated that he would be inclined to compromise and gave an indication of the sort of application he would be likely to find acceptable. He invited the family to submit alternative designs, which they have not done.

"The Chancellor has now ordered the removal of the memorial."

For more information visit
www.thepetitionsite.com/1/jimmys-headstone/

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A site for sore eyes

As residents of local authority sites finally get the security of tenure they've spent decades fighting for, the management of sites in Somerset has undergone major changes, finds *Damian Le Bas*

IT'S HALF A CENTURY since councils first started to provide land for Gypsies and Travellers to stop on when they weren't on the road.

The birth of the 'council site' could never make up for the theft of common land under the Enclosure Acts, or the criminalising of the Romany way of life by the 1822 Turnpike Act, but it did give some Gypsies and Travellers a legal place to pull on with their trailer.

Yet while Travellers had a right to pull on to sites, nothing was put in place to stop them being thrown straight back off at the whim of the landowner.

The 1983 Mobile Homes Act, which aimed to provide the security of tenure that Gypsies and Travellers so badly needed, was never brought into force on local authority sites.

Until now, that is. As of 30th April this year, the Mobile Homes Act will also apply on local authority sites. This means Gypsies and Travellers living on sites should have the same security of tenure for their pitches that people in ordinary council housing take for granted.

If you live on a council site, the manager(s) of a site will only be able to terminate your lease if a court of law:

- (a) is satisfied that the occupier has breached a term of the agreement and, after service of a notice to remedy the breach, has not complied with the notice within a reasonable time; and
- (b) considers it reasonable for the agreement to be terminated.

There are also other conditions that must be met before an eviction can take place, which all help to safeguard a tenant's rights.

Missing, however, is the right of a tenant to sign their tenancy over to a spouse or relative, which people who live in regular council housing are able to do.

Meanwhile, Somerset County Council has transferred the freehold of its four local authority sites, as well as the leasehold of its only transit site, to an external company.

Eight initial bids were received, with Somerset Travellers Ltd the eventual winner.

"Districts usually have a duty to supply but councils don't, but in Somerset it's the county council that controls the sites," says Sally Tucker-Woodbury of the South West Romany Gypsy Advisory Group, adding that lack of council budget may be inspiring the decision to farm out the management of sites.

"It wasn't just a case of selling them off to the highest bidder," said Barry James of Somerset County Council. "We wanted to put controls in place to make sure the residents weren't disadvantaged."

"We initially had eight expressions of interest from housing associations, a Community Interest Company that manages sites, a private individual, and the eventual winners, who set up their company specifically for this purpose."

"We did everything we realistically could to limit the risk to the residents," said James. He added, however, that "There aren't enough pitches in Somerset."

"Our Accommodation Needs Assessment showed we need 295 extra pitches, so we've got our work cut out."

James agreed that cuts to council budgets will continue to be a factor in the process.

"I know for a fact that with council funding going down so much, there will be other councils looking to do this. I know of four that are looking into it at the moment," said James.

"Our Accommodation Needs Assessment showed we need 295 extra pitches, so we've got our work cut out"



The Hatchintan (meaning stopping place) council site near Guildford, Surrey is just one of over 350 council Gypsy sites across Britain where residents will now have tenancy rights, but like the council sites across Somerset, this site may also soon pass into private management.

The Travellers Advice Team at CLP runs a Community Legal Advice-funded telephone helpline for Gypsies and Travellers on 0845 120 2980 which is available Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm. For an informal chat with a member of the Team phone on 0121 685 8595.

Our Lean, Mean Gypsy Media Course

Travelling Voices is the new journalism course from Travellers' Times, and it's helping Gypsies, Roma and Travellers across Britain to hit back against the media's one-sided portrayals. So if you want to join the fight, sign up and get the skills!



WRITE ON: The latest recruits learning media skills with Travellers' Times at Matlock in Derbyshire.

A PEOPLE that are seen through the dirty lens of racism will always have a harder time making it in education and the workplace, and getting access to proper healthcare and services. It's a burden we carry with us every single day of the year. But we can't shake off the burden without shaking up the media. We've all got a story to tell and a point we'd like to make, but unless we take a stand and get involved, it'll all be made about us and without us.

This is why Travellers' Times has launched its 'Travelling Voices' project, a special course in media skills especially for people from Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds. Travelling Voices is a crash course in the basics of journalism, from dealing with journalists asking awkward

questions, to basic interviewing for news stories, all the way to making radio programmes and films.

What makes Travelling Voices different to other courses is that it's tailor-made by and for Gypsy and Traveller people. Best of all, it doesn't cost a penny to join, and you'll get help with travel and food expenses while learning valuable new skills.

Our latest course is running in Matlock in association with the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group. Their forthcoming work, including a new documentary about what the word 'Gypsy' means to us in these controversial times, can be seen online at www.travellerstimes.org.uk

This February, *Strictly Come Dancing* host Craig Revel-Horwood was taken up on

his casual racism by a fellow broadcaster when he called Gypsy people "pikeys" live on air. Host Matthew Wright informed him that "That's like using the 'n' word towards black people and you will have to apologise for that", which Revel-Horwood later did. The tide is turning against anti-Gypsy and Traveller racism. The more of us that make our voices heard, the faster it will turn.

To find out when there's a Travelling Voices course happening in your area, contact Julie North at Travellers' Times. Email julien@ruralmedia.co.uk or call The Rural Media Company on 01432 344039 and ask for Jules.

Mary May & Bridey's Fashions

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YOUNG TIMES

A BIG WELL DONE to Joe Webb, aged 10, who has created his own storybook about Appleby Horse Fair, with lots of colourful pictures to look at. Joe writes about the things you can expect to happen at Appleby.

Joe has gained a Level in Literacy at his school and is hoping to get a Level 4 in his SATS this year. Good luck!



Michael Caffrey, aged 10, from St Mary's Catholic Primary School, sent us this lovely poem. He says, "I am proud to be a Traveller and I like writing poems."

*Dear Kangaroo
I feel happy I have got you
I will feel even happier
If you go boxing
So you can defend yourself
In case thunder tries to strike you
Again!
Last time he tried to strike you
He thought he scared you
But now you can fight back
So he will not do it
Anymore.
But still he can strike you
But it won't hurt you
Will it?*



Learning to win

Congratulations to John Brazil and Bernadette Gilheaney from Norwich who recently won Learner of the Year Awards. They have been students on a site management course, which they passed with flying colours.

Shannon (13) and Sarah-Louise Cash (16, pictured right) attend the George Eliot School in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, where they recently featured in the school's newsletter aimed at inspiring other Traveller children to stick with school.

"School's not all about a book and a pen," says mum Sarah Smith. "It's about goals and achievements."

Sarah-Louise is doing her GCSEs this year and hopes to go on to college. Well done girls!



Boxing boys

Young Times congratulates Colin and Mark Stewart for competing at the Scottish Junior Boxing Championships. Mark won a silver medal and Colin won a gold medal.

Colin, pictured here, second left, with his dad Sammy and brothers Donald and Mark, has since come second at the British Championships, winning himself a bronze medal! Keep up the good work boys!



Nan by Paddy Donoghue.
In memory of my mother, Nan.
God rest her soul.

Oh I am a Sham and a son of
Nan and this is how it goes
When we were young and
the things we done while
we were on the road.
We'd pull beside an old road
side and camp there for a
while
til things got bad and we
were sad, we'd pull away
and smile

Oh Nan, Oh Nan the caravan
tis moving on today.
When will we ever find a
place where we can really
stay?

You know times were hard
and things were tough
when we were on the road
But mummy would pull us
by the fire and tell tales of
long ago
"Oh son," she said "while
you're in bed your dreams
are very sweet,

Until next day instead of
play you'll have to beg to
eat"

Oh Nan, Oh Nan the caravan
tis moving on today.
When will we ever find a
place where we can really
stay?

Sure came next day, we
didn't play – but we did we
begged to eat
Just Brendan and I we're
just two boys both begging
in our bare feet
"Oh Brendan," says I "we're
just two boys, but soon we
will be men,
If I can help it in this life we
won't do this again."

Oh Nan, Oh Nan the caravan
tis moving on today.
When will we ever find a
place where we can really
stay?

Mark of equality

THE LATEST SCHOOLS to gain the Lancashire County Council's
Race Equality Mark gathered for a ceremony at County Hall.

The Mark recognises work undertaken by schools to tackle
discrimination by using multicultural and anti-racist education
and ensuring these principles are reflected in the schools' policies.
Fifteen schools in total were issued with the award.



TELL US ABOUT IT

YT editor Shanterlena Knowles says: "Keep
those stories coming in!"

Call Shanterlena on 01432 344039 or email
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Under the Westway

Photographer *Elisabeth Blanchet* has met a community of Irish Travellers not living on the road, but under it. Their site sits under London's Westway flyover. She says: "It had been more than seven years since I had been to the Travellers' site under the Westway. I brought back some old black and white pictures from that time to see if I could identify some of the kids who are now teenagers. But although nothing seemed to have changed, the families in the pictures had moved to Ireland. I recognised only one family, the Ward family, who have been living on the last pitch of the site for more than 30 years. It's almost incredible to believe that people can live in such conditions, constantly surrounded by the incessant noise of the Westway and the nearby railtrack. It's so different to the rich fashionable area of North Kensington, just a few hundred yards from there."



Family Album

Snapshots of your life

Bill Kerswell, 71, from South Shropshire married into the Lock family and worked with Gypsy Travelling people across Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Dudley.

Here are some of the many pictures from his collection of photos ...



Bill Kerswell's granny, Dorothy Pierce about 1920.



Joey and Mary Smith and family at Craven Arms around 1975.

Families parked up on the A49 at Marshbrook in January 1974. Each was fined £130 for parking up illegally.





The late Rose Smith (Auntie Rosie to most Travellers) in Darkie Lane, 1978.



John Lock, also known as Jack Tar because he once wore a sailor suit, with his horse at Sutton Lane, Shrewsbury in the 1950s. Also in the photo is Jim 'Nelson' Lock, his nephew.

Have you anything to share from your Family Album? Check out
www.travellerstimes/family_album

**Racist incidents
 against Gypsies
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Mind the gap

Alarmed at the shocking rate of suicides amongst young Gypsies and Travellers, Romany filmmaker *Dee Cooper* has gone looking for answers

THERE'S NOT a Gypsy or Traveller family in Britain that can deny it is happening. Gypsies and Travellers are suffering with their nerves more than ever before. Whether it's depression or anxiety caused by hard times, or longer term mental illnesses like being bipolar, it has never been more important for us to talk and then get help for how we feel.

Romany filmmaker Dee Cooper knows just how bad the problem is. Her first film *Romany Me* dramatised her experience of helping her daughter cope with depression and self-harming after she was mercilessly bullied for being a Romany Gypsy. Ambition, the young people's dance troupe Dee organises in London, has also been affected. "In the last year members of Ambition have lost three of their young friends to suicide. It has affected not only them, but their friends, families and the wider community," she says.

Not content to do nothing about it, Dee has gone looking for answers with members of her dance troupe. A film she's made about the mental health crisis in all ethnic minority groups is called *TNT*, and it is intended to have an explosive impact. "The world has gone crazy and the government is responsible," says Dee. She reveals how bad policies on everything from Gypsy site provision to the sacking of

Traveller education staff and community development workers for the Gypsy and Traveller community is causing more worry and depression than ever before.

In the film young people interview doctors, community workers and a priest to reveal where young Gypsies and Travellers can get help for depression and anxiety. They also challenge Conservative MP Iain Duncan Smith to do more for the community. But the film's full title, *Teens Need Teachers*, suggests that the community itself has at least some of the answers. "One of the greatest things about our culture is our family and we need to start using those family values more," urges Dee. "We need to make sure that we start being greater role models for our young people and start listening to them more. Because if as adults we're finding it difficult to cope with our emotions sometimes, how can we expect young people to do so?"

Experience from the other end of Britain suggests it's a nationwide problem. Melanie Price of the Travellers Unity Group says: "Our people are dying fast and furiously. Many hundreds of Travelling men and Romany people are committing suicide. Nobody cares, nobody is listening, and no one is counting. There is a feeling of hopelessness and despair."

"I am desperate to let the world know that our people are dying."



Dee Cooper's film *Teens Need Teachers* will premiere at London's Wimbledon Cinema on June 9th as part of the capital's Happy Soul Film Festival. www.happysoulfestival.co.uk



Beating the blues

If you are suffering from depression or anxiety do the following:

- **Do NOT sit in silence. Talk to a friend or family member about how you feel.**
- **Go to your doctor. They can get you medication and therapy.**
- **Be physically active. It makes everyone feel better.**
- **Contact a mental health organisation for help. Call the Mind Infoline on 0300 123 3393. www.mind.org.uk or Samaritans on 08457 90 90 90 www.samaritans.org**

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YOUNG Travellers' Times reader Kimberley Walker, aged 13, sent in this great picture of dad, Johnny Walker, taken when at Loch Fyne, Inverary, for the oyster fishing.



And here is Jesse-James Smith, aged 3, in his wagon with his puppy, Dora and his black pot.



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Proud day



Dear TT,
As the subject has been Big Fat Gypsy Weddings this year, I thought I would send you a photo of our Big Fat Gypsy Wedding 46 years ago.

"Rose's dress was a bit more reserved than ones seen lately but it was still very beautiful.

"We went travelling in Devon and Cornwall for our honeymoon. When I checked with the bank on our return, what with the wedding and honeymoon I had £3 left to start married life with. Here we are, 46 years on, still happy with one another. We still get about a bit.

"I'd say to young couples, give and take a bit, and never forget that proud day.

Frankie and Rose Chambers-Lee



Anthony and Christine McDonagh at their reception after their marriage at St Thomas the Apostle church in Nunhead, London SE15 in February. Wishing them a long and happy life together.



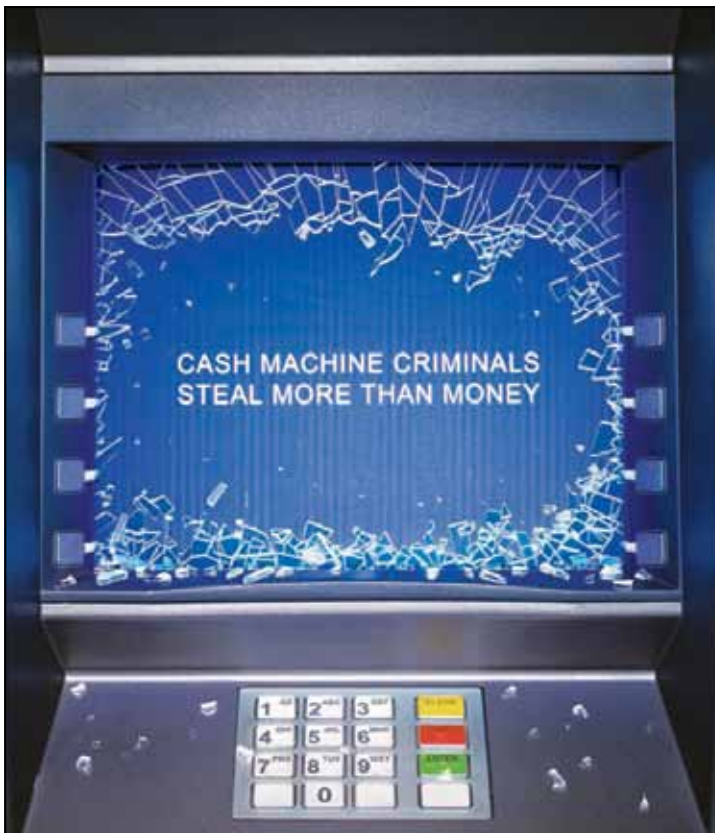
Also from Frank ...

"I have had some lovely times at Appleby and met some great friends. This photo was taken outside the Aboard pub – my favourite – in 1984.

Left to right, Henry Gaskin (Doncaster), John Smith (Smudger, Warwick), Ron Chambers (Essex), Jim Berry (Doncaster) and myself, Frank Chambers-Lee.

"In them days all the pubs were open. Val and Jim Moore were landlords of the Aboard, we had some lovely times. There were musicians from Bridlington and we had singing and dancing outside.

"May Appleby carry on for many years – the 55 I have been have been a nice part of my life."



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RESOURCES

celebrate our culture

With June being Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month, here are two very different books to read to remember our history

A Traveller's Life

No one that has ever met Scottish Traveller Sheila Stewart will ever forget her tales, her passion for her people or her incredible voice. In *A Traveller's Life* she has combined all three into the long-awaited story of her own life.

Sheila Stewart is the last in the line of the Stewarts of Blair, a family of Scottish Travellers who have played a key role in preserving the ancient musical and storytelling traditions of Scotland. Her mother was the legendary "Queen among the Heather," the singer and storyteller Belle Stewart. Her father Willie Stewart was a noted piper. As a child Sheila travelled with them all over Scotland and experienced the good and

bad times of a traditional Traveller lifestyle.

From 1954 onwards Sheila sang with her sister Cathie and they both became famous folk singers. As an acclaimed storyteller and ballad singer Sheila went on to entertain a US president, Pope John Paul and the Queen. Her book unflinchingly shows the harrowing circumstances of her life, but is also a tribute to the rich and dramatic traditions of Scottish Travellers she so proudly represents.

A Traveller's Life by Sheila Stewart costs £9.99 from: www.birlinn.co.uk



Settela Steinbach, a young Dutch Sinti girl was just one of at least 500,000 Romanies to have been killed in the Holocaust

PHOTO: German Roma and Sinti Documentation Centre

Grim, but important reminders

The Holocaust in History and Memory, Vol 3 (2010)

The Porrajmos: The Gypsy Holocaust and the Continuing Discrimination of Roma and Sinti after 1945

THEY SAY that those who fail to learn the lessons from history are doomed to repeat them. In this book from the University of Essex, Rainer Schulze has drawn together seven articles and two poems that show just how often those lessons are being ignored and repeated.

Unlike other books about the Holocaust this book concentrates on the Romany Holocaust or Porrajmos (which means devouring in Romani) and the continuing violence towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities some 66 years after the Holocaust was stopped. Although it's an academic book it can easily be read by anyone interested in the subject. From Gloria Buckley MBE's essay 'Our People Were Mullering for Hoben' (Our people were dying for food), which looks at the effect of the enclosure acts on the Gypsy people, to Paul Polansky's essay about the UN camps in Kosovo, this book is a grim but important reminder of how Gypsies, Roma and Travellers have been treated for over 500 years.

The Holocaust in History and Memory, Vol 3 (2010)

The Porrajmos: The Gypsy Holocaust and the Continuing Discrimination of Roma and Sinti after 1945

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ALFRED COLEMAN



Lunik IX

Two British-based filmmakers have produced a heart-rending story of life in a nursery school at the heart of Europe's largest Romany ghetto, writes *Jake Bowers*

LUNIK IX is Europe's largest Romany ghetto and home to 7,000 Roma. It's a mass of filthy concrete blocks (pictured right) in a moonscape created by the Slovakian Government in the city of Košice to house those they considered "unable to adapt socially". In the 1980s they crammed it full with Roma, by force.

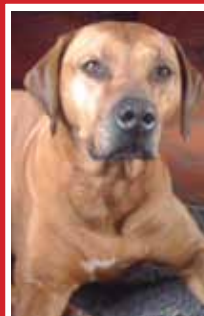
Like many a British Gypsy site it's badly built in a place no one would choose to live and people are desperate to leave, but it's hundreds of times bigger. But unlike any Gypsy site I've ever seen, at its heart is a nursery which is filled with colour and hope.

"Imagine being forcibly relocated to a deprived and cramped estate where you share your room with 15 others," says *Lunik IX*'s director Michelle Coomber. "Your local school is caged, jail-like behind steel bars. Donated sheet metal forms its walls; windowless passageways connect its classrooms."

But it's the nursery school and its children that provide Lunik IX's great hope.

"Some of the city's most artistically gifted children come from this nursery and the fruits of their crafts line the walls of the interior," says producer Dana Wilson. "Self-portraits are painted along the stairwells, and snowmen and Easter bunnies stare down from the tunnels." Through the children's eyes the film *Lunik IX* is a journey into their vivid, shimmering refuge.

I found it touching, heart-rending and bittersweet. It's horrible to see what Romany people have been reduced to by those who thought they could simply round us up. If you want to understand why thousands of Roma from Eastern Europe come to Britain each year, you must watch *Lunik IX*.



MISSING

since last August 7th from farm nr Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15, could be anywhere now - Male Rhodesian Ridgeback, 10 yrs old, neutered, micro-chipped, white flash on chest, scratches on face, missing tooth, scar front right paw. Substantial reward for safe return or any information. **Call freefone 0800 4 320 340 in complete confidence (ref 25423)**

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