

Travellers' TIMES

The only magazine for Gypsies and Travellers

AUTUMN 2012 | Issue 51 | £3.50

Marvellous Maggie

Queen's Honour
for Maggie
Smith-Bendell
after 20 years
of helping
Travellers

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Special planning guide

Four pages of useful
advice to help you in this
often tricky process

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Win a Crown Derby fruit basket

Beautiful collector's
piece worth £1,650
up for grabs!

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The TT Big Survey 2012

Tell us what you think and
you could

win £250

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Travellers' Times is the national magazine for Gypsies and Travellers, and people and organisations who work with them. We are guided by our editorial group and strive for accuracy and fairness.

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PHOTO: Chris Lucas

No ifs, no buts: no cuts, says Welsh Finance Minister

- "It is vital that cultural needs are considered," says Welsh Government's Leader of the House
- Increased support for Gypsy and Traveller learners
- "100% funding for sites" available for councils

THE WELSH GOVERNMENT has put its money where its mouth is and pledged increased help to tackle problems faced by Gypsies and Travellers, just as services across the border in England have been hit hard by the coalition's cuts.

Jane Hutt, who is Finance Minister and leader of the House in the Welsh Assembly, told those gathered at a Cardiff event celebrating Welsh Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month that "equalities have to be at the forefront of our priorities".

After being introduced by Welsh Romani Gypsy Isaac Blake, Ms Hutt said that working towards equality was "a matter for the whole Welsh government, particularly the Ministers for Education, Health and Housing.

"Education can be a very challenging experience for Gypsy and Traveller young people. The question we have to ask is why, and what we can do to address that.

"We're determined that Gypsy and Traveller children who want to stay at school and progress to further education or training are able to do so.

"We've increased the level of support for Gypsy and Traveller learners over the next two years: £1 million for this financial year, which will increase by 10% for the next year," she said.

Ms Hutt also said that councils in Wales were showing more will to build and improve sites for Travellers as the Welsh government

was offering 100% of the cost needed to provide them.

Romani scholar Dr Ian Hancock was also speaking at the event. He told the audience that Romani people had been misunderstood throughout history.

"The problem with the storybook Gypsy is that there has not been, for a long time, a proper understanding of who the Romani people are," said Dr Hancock, who is Professor of Romani Studies at the University of Texas.

He said that *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* had made people angry in America as well as the UK. "The fact is that if our image is trivialised, then the problems we face in the real world are also trivialised."

The National Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Symposium was organised by Isaac Blake, director of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company in June 2012.



Jane Hutt, Minister for Finance and Leader of the House in the Welsh Assembly Government



Isaac Blake (7th from left) with friends and relations on Shirenewton site, Cardiff, in the 1980s. PHOTO: © Isaac Blake 2012

Superintendent Marion's super work for Travellers

SUSSEX POLICE superintendent Marion Sandwell has been presented with the Michael Gavin Award for her hard work promoting better understanding between Gypsies and Travellers and the police. Marion's work with Sussex Police's Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Group has meant that Sussex now has more Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers than any other county.



Police officer Marion Sandwell (left) receives the Michael Gavin Award from Michelle Gavin, wife of the late Michael Gavin, who was a passionate defender of Gypsy and Traveller rights. PHOTO: Geoff Foster, Sussex Police

++ BREAKING NEWS ++

The government may be looking to repeal a law which can prevent travelling parents being prosecuted if their children miss school. Section 444 (6) of the Education Act says children must attend 200 sessions of school per year.



The RSPCA has found support from a community where the horse is man's best friend. PHOTO: RSPCA

Horse power: Travellers care about animal welfare

THE RSPCA has found support from Travellers for its new Equine Link project, which aims to promote horse welfare. Events have been held in Bilston and Tipton in the West Midlands.

RSPCA Inspector Jackie Hickman said, "The response from local travellers has been brilliant." More events are planned across England and Wales.

Walsall Price from Hillside View Caravan

Site in Bilston took seven horses to the first Equine Link event.

"It's a good thing that people are doing things for us," he said. "We are having our horses tagged and wormed and checked by a vet to show they are in good condition."

Choca Timmins, who lives on the neighbouring site at Batman's Hill, added: "The RSPCA has helped, especially getting the horse passports sorted."

Travellers: "get your vote out" and make a change

AUTHOR OF best-selling book *Gypsy and Traveller Tales* Alexander J. Thompson says Travellers must vote to secure a better future.

"Travellers' natural way of life is being squeezed out of them," says Alexander. "I am putting my support behind Billy Welch to try to get as many Gypsies and Travellers as possible with us."

"A conservative estimate says there are 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers in this country. I think a fairer estimate is nearer one million."

"This is something foreign to us. But maybe

through the power of the vote a Traveller will be in a position of some importance with the authorities to help make life a bit easier, if not for us then for our children and grandchildren.

"With things like planning appeals, the general motto from councils is, 'If I help the Travellers I will get the boot'."

"The power of the Traveller vote could see off an unfair council."

"Make a change. Get the young ones to do it on their laptops. Email mygypsyvote@hotmail.co.uk if you agree."

DIARY DATES

4th – 6th Sept Barnett Horse Fair
9th Sept Dartford Fair
17th Sept Latter Lee Fair
22nd Sept Kirby's Fair
26th Sept Bridgwater Fair
30th Sept Kenilworth Horse Fair

3rd – 5th Oct

5th Oct

6th – 7th Oct
18th Oct TBC
21st Oct

Ballinasloe Fair, Ireland
Whisbesy Horse Fair, Bradford
Wisbech Horse Fair
Stow Fair
Langley Horse Fair



For more info visit the Travellers' Times website and click on the "Events" tab.

PHOTO: Alison Chapman

New sites consultations under way, but what will change?

- Fresh research into the need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Essex and Sussex
- Consultation ends in Leicestershire: Council's next steps awaited



A view from Salvington Hill in Findon, West Sussex, which now lies in the South Downs National Park.
PHOTO: Damian Le Bas

COUNCILS IN THE "coastal strip" area of West Sussex, which includes Worthing Borough and Adur and Arun Districts, have been consulting on the need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches in the area.

Swansea-based research firm Opinion Research Services were drafted in to look at the issue. Swansea is over 200 miles away from the Sussex coast.

Much of the area now lies in the newly created South Downs National Park, which is a new planning authority. It is not yet clear exactly how this will affect any new applications for Traveller sites in the area.

In Essex, Travellers' Times understands that Brentwood Borough Council are to hold talks with Gypsies and Travellers living with temporary permissions in the area.

Bernadette Reilly, chair of the Brentwood Gypsy Support Group, lives at the Roman Triangle site in the area.

"We want to call Brentwood our home," she told the *Brentwood Gazette*. She and her family have had a series of temporary permissions and now have around 18 months left to run.

"It is very stressful to be honest. My father is very, very sick and stressed out."

Meanwhile, further north, Leicester City Council closed its own consultation on Gypsy sites in mid-July.

Peter Soulsby, the Mayor of Leicester, bemoaned the issue on the City Council's website. "For years Leicester has experienced problems with unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller encampments. Trends show that

the north west of the city, in and around the Abbey and Beaumont Leys Wards particularly, is worst affected."

He did not say whether or not a lack of Council site provision was to blame, but said "I am committed to addressing the matter."

As Travellers' Times went to press, the *Shoreham Herald* reported that West Sussex County Council is planning to sell the Withy Patch site in Adur District. Other sites in the area that may be being considered for sale are Adversane, near Billingshurst; Bedelands, in Burgess Hill, and Cousins Copse, near Horsham.

Adur District Council leader Neil Parkin told the *Herald*: "I was given no notification on these plans. I'm not especially happy about being kept in the dark."



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Journalist Toma comes tops over cops in fight against racism



PHOTO: Jess Hurd/www.reportdigital.co.uk

Man on a mission: Toma brought the fight to racist papers in Bulgaria.

FOR YEARS Bulgarian Romani man Toma Nikolaev has been a man on a mission.

One of the few Romani journalists in Bulgaria, where deep set racism and historical prejudice continues to keep huge numbers of Romani people out of work, he took on the might of the country's media with his own magazine, *De Facto*, which gave a voice to the country's biggest minority.

And that's not all. He also ran as a Bulgarian parliamentary candidate in a country where simply being seen to stick up for Romani people can lead to horrendous persecution from the country's far right groups.

He now lives in London: after his courageous work fighting against hate-

speech in his homeland, Toma took the road out of Bulgaria as he was subjected to abuse for his defence of Roma rights, including an assault near his home. He was also arrested in circumstances which saw a police officer lose his job for misconduct.

After a bomb was placed outside his home, Toma sought asylum in the UK and has spoken of his experiences at Amnesty International during Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month.

Grattan Puxon has written of how a London court was told, "It was 'painfully clear' the application for the extradition of Roma journalist Toma Nikolaev Maldenov should be dismissed".

Travellers' Times would like to wish Toma Nikolaev kushti bokt as his fight for justice continues.

Around 1 in 13 Bulgarians is Romani. Unemployment among the Roma in Bulgaria was estimated at over 60% by mid-2009 (source: Alpha Research Surveys, Bulgaria, January-June 2009).

Bomb explodes outside Romani political party's offices

EUROROMA, a political party founded to defend Romani rights, was apparently the target of a terrorist attack earlier this summer when a homemade explosive device went off outside its offices in the Bulgarian town of Sandanski.

The Czech Romani news agency Romea reported that 59-year-old Romani man Malin Iliev was removing an object from the premises on the 9th June this year

when it exploded in his hands.

Mr Iliev lost an arm in the blast and later died in hospital.

"The UN Human Rights Committee [has] expressed concerns over the ongoing widespread discrimination suffered by Roma in accessing justice, employment, and services such as housing and education" in Bulgaria, according to Amnesty International's website.

Dear Lena...

Could I ask the readers of your magazine whether they know the whereabouts of the Gypsy Folklore Museum that was once situated in Pembroke town?

This was in the town of Pembroke about 25-30 years ago, when I was working in Pembrokeshire.

One of the main exhibits was a vardo painted in camouflage colours, found in a field in Kent owned by Roger Daltry from The Who.

I have spoken to people who say it is no longer in that place and I have often wondered what happened to it. It made such an impression on my memory, as anything that I have read since then says that Gypsy vehicles were not painted camouflage in the war years.

Many thanks,
Mick Powell

If you know the whereabouts of this Gypsy Folklore Museum or where the vardo now is can you send the details to: **Shanterlena Knowles, c/o Travellers' Times, Sullivan House, 72-80 Widemarsh Street, Hereford HR4 9HG**

If anybody is interested in visiting a Gypsy museum and learning more about our beautiful culture and heritage then there are plenty to be found on the web.

Here's some fantastic ones that we found: The Gordon Boswell Romany Museum **www.boswell-romany-museum.com**
South East Romany Museum **www.southeastromanymuseum.co.uk**



PHOTO: Alison Chapman

Obituary: In memory of Bubbles Brazil

Bubbles Brazil was one of the first generation of English Romani women activists, playing a major part in the Thistlebrook Caravan Site in the London Borough of Greenwich. She was at various times active in the Romany Guild, the National Romany Rights Association, and the Advisory Council for the Education of Romanies and other Travellers, and worked for a time as an educational outreach worker in Greenwich. She was an unfailing inspiration to those who knew her and a familiar figure at Stow and Horsmonden.

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Fens through a lens: Cambridgeshire Travellers' photography success

Young Travellers from Cambridgeshire have won an Arts Award for taking photographs that show their life as it really is. Photos by Elisabeth Blanchet

THE PHOTOS, which were shown at Michaelhouse, Cambridge, this summer, were taken by Gypsies and Travellers aged from 12 to 21.

The project was run by Ormiston Children's Trust. 17-year-old Billy, who gained the Award (which has the same worth as a GCSE), told the BBC, "This has helped me better myself."

Many of the young people said they would now think about college after taking part in the project, which saw them attend Cambridge Regional College for five months to learn photography skills before putting

together their exhibition. Vikki Carr, who has been helping young Travellers reach their potential for years, said: "This course has enabled these young people to experience a college education."

"Many Gypsies and Travellers from the older generation did not have the chance of much Education." But they still want to learn, says Vikki. "The Traveller men and women I'm teaching are achieving well – one is now in employment and another is studying for an NVQ qualification. "When people achieve their goals it proves that sometimes you can make your dreams come true."

If you're interested in reading and writing lessons you can email Vikki at vikki-carr@hotmail.co.uk

Life through a lens: my Gypsy culture is touring and will be at Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 2BX from 3rd - 14th September 2012. Venues interested in hosting this exhibition should contact Abbie Smith via email: abbie.smith@ormiston.org. For more information online visit www.ormistonlifethroughalens.org



Third time lucky as sun shines at last on Romany day at Burgess Hill

Event cancelled once due to high winds comes back as Gypsy step-dancer Riley Smith thrills the audience

A DAY CELEBRATING Romany Gypsy history and music bounced back in the summer sun as Burgess Hill's St John's Park became an atchen tan for the day.

The cricket pavilion played host to a display honouring the Gypsy men and women who have fought for Britain and helped the war effort which was brought by Romany woman and family historian Janet Keet-Black.



Greg Yates' bow top wagon at Burgess Hill. PHOTO: Greg Yates

The event was hit by monsoon weather last year and had to be put back once in 2012 due to high winds but it basked in the sunshine in the end.

Greg Yates's bow top wagon made a fine backdrop to Romany step-dancer Riley Smith from Edenbridge who wowed the crowd as he "showed time" with his machine gun footwork to music from a string and

squeezebox band.

The mouth organ was played and Romany poet Chris Penfold-Brown won applause when she sang one of her poems about a lord who marries a Gypsy girl.

"Last year we had nothing but rain for four hours so it's nice for us today," said Lisa Williams from Sussex Traveller Action Group, who helped organise the event.

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- Only one entry per person – entry implies acceptance of these conditions.
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Passport report: Romani photographer Nino Pušija looks at deportations from Germany

WHEN A NEW repatriation agreement was signed in Germany in 2009, it sealed the fate of many refugees who had fled there looking for asylum. Among them were thousands of Romani people.

Around 10,000 Romanies from countries in the area formerly occupied by Yugoslavia, half of them children and many born in Germany, were made eligible for deportation under the new law.

Duldung Deluxe Passport (*Duldung* means 'toleration' in German) contains photographs by Nihad Nino Pušija, and essays by Lith Bahlmann and Emran Ermazi, that show how brutal anti-refugee policies can be on people seeking a better life outside some of the poorest countries in Europe.



Nino taking photos of Crystal Ball Genocide on Holocaust Memorial Day. PHOTO: Moritz Pankok

Goals and glory for London's Roma FC

IT'S EXCITING TIMES for Roma FC, London's 11-a-side Romani football team.

Not only has the team gained official status from the Football Association: young Rom Daniel Siwak was voted Player of the Tournament as Roma FC won the City of London 6-a-side tournament in July.

They're a high-scoring team who put six goals past Korona FC of East London earlier in the summer and also scored five goals in a defeat to Gravesend's Punjab United.

"This has been an amazing journey," says coach Gurdeep Singh. "The Roma and Traveller community should be so proud."

"The lads believe in their ability to go further. They've grown in confidence. We are always looking for new players and would like more players from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community to join us."

If you're interested in getting involved with Roma FC, email gurdeepsingh@romasupportgroup.org.uk or call the Roma Support Group on 020 7511 8245



Roma FC team members (clockwise from top left) Daniel Siwak, Sylvester Huczko, Gurdeep Singh, Vania Herman, Adrian Herman and Adam Herman.

Travelling Voices media skills: learn the tricks of the trade with Travellers' Times

TRAVELLING VOICES is our crash course in the basics of journalism, and over the last two years Travellers from all over the country have been trying their hand at making radio programmes and writing articles for Travellers' Times.

Over the next year we'll be helping some of our hardest workers hone their skills, and at the end of the year there'll be a special ceremony with prizes to be won and a celebration of everyone's hard work.

There are still some places left for those who want to learn media skills with us so get in touch if you think you've got what it takes.

If you're interested in getting involved contact Shanterlena in the TT office on **01432 344039**.



Georgi, Emma-Louise and Liz get to grips with making a radio show on a Travelling Voices course in Brighton

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000518

Maggie's Medal: Queen's Honour for Maggie after 20 years' hard work

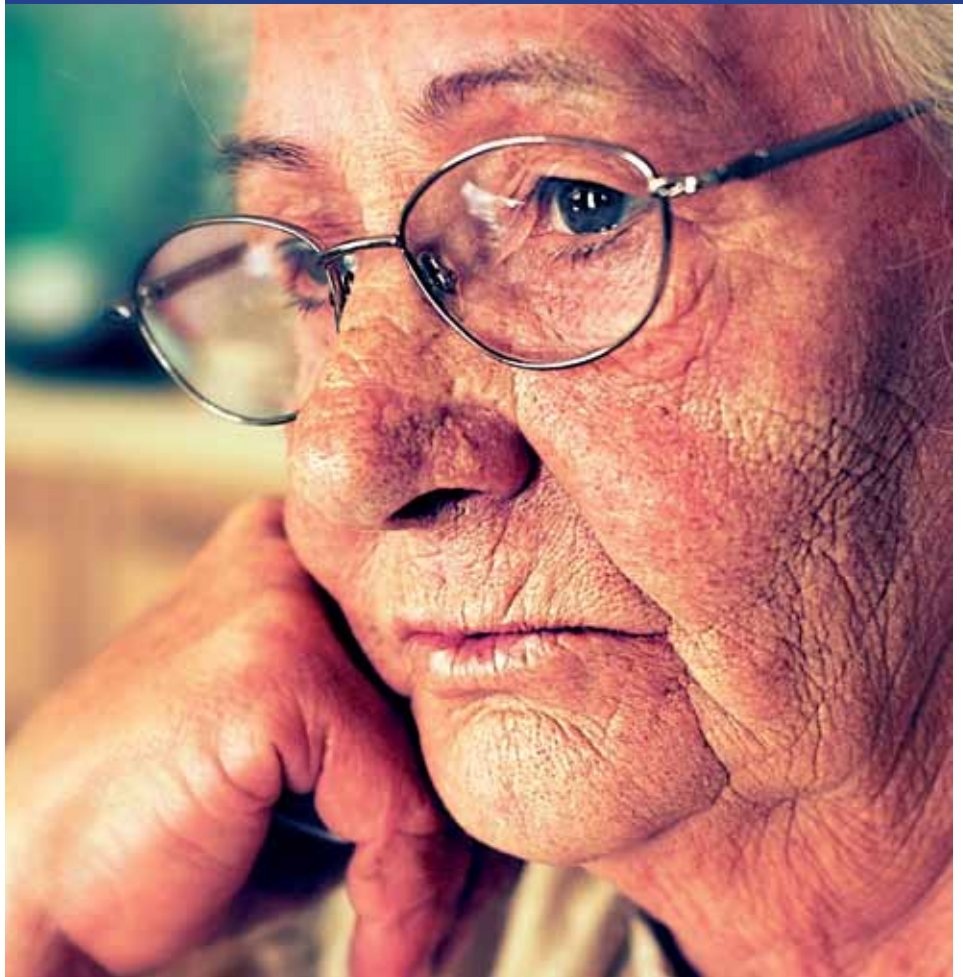
Congratulations to Maggie Smith-Bendell, the "grandmother of the land grab", who has been awarded the British Empire Medal for services to her community.

"AUNT MAGGIE" has been helping Travellers through the planning system for the past 20 years. She's been involved in over 400 cases with a great deal of success, and Maggie credits her "passion for my Romany race" with the victories she's had in planning over the years.

"I'm very pleased and proud to have been included in Her Majesty's birthday honours list," says Maggie. "I'm not just accepting this award for me, I'm accepting it on behalf of every Romany in the country. They're all my chicks at the end of the day," she says.

"I'm a Romany Gypsy liaison officer, but first and foremost I am a Romany Gypsy.

"I've been helping other Romany people get permission for private sites so that our culture, custom and language can continue into the future, long after I'm gone."



Maggie the campaigner. PHOTO: Chris Lucas

Double top in Kidsgrove as "The Power" visits the Travellers

By Paul McDonagh

On Wednesday 1st August, three days after winning his record 13th World Matchplay title, the world's greatest ever darts player Phil "The Power" Taylor paid a visit to the Travellers' site in Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent.

"The Power" has a big following in the travelling community and was invited to the Staffordshire site for a tour around and to say hello to his fans.

During his two-hour visit the darts master answered questions and gave away signed photos for the mass of children wanting to meet and shake hands with their local hero.

Phil also posed for photographs with James Quinn McDonagh of *Knuckle* fame.



Phil Taylor with Theresa and James Quinn McDonagh

Sally & Stacey Roberts are both Welsh Gypsy girls who attend Pembroke Comprehensive School..

My name is Sally Roberts, I'm 14 years old and I enjoy going to school.

My favourite lessons are art, music and drama like the house plays and musicals.

I have been on music trips to Paris and London with the music and drama department. I have taken part in a lot of school concerts singing as a group and also by myself.

Taking part in the activities has helped me become a lot more confident in myself and everything I do.

In school I also come to see the Gypsy support officers once or twice a week and we talk and learn about our culture. We have also been learning how to speak Romany words and they help us catch up on work that we have missed in class if we were away or didn't get it.

We also go on trips to learn more about the Gypsy culture, we have been to Scolton Manor to visit the Gypsy wagon. I enjoy coming to see the Gypsy support officers because I like to learn about my culture and how Gypsies used to live.

When I first started Pembroke School I would always feel left out and that I'm not a part of the school because people would leave me out just because I'm a Gypsy.

But now I feel more included in school and people let me join in with their groups in classes.

I am proud to be a Gypsy!



Stacey and Sally

My name is Stacey Roberts and I am 11 years old.

I enjoy singing, drama and dancing. I have taken part in house plays and sung to elderly people at Christmas time - this has made me confident.

I enjoy coming to the Gypsy support and learning more about our culture and how to speak Romany words.

We have also been working on our family tree and have visited Scolton to see the Gypsy wagon there.

I am proud to be a Gypsy.

Crowning moment

YOUNG TIMES sends huge congratulations to Martina Davis aged 10 from Essendon CE Primary School who was selected to give a posy to the Queen.

Martina, who was nominated by her two head teachers, felt a mixture of nerves and excitement as she waited to greet Her Majesty who thanked her for her gift and asked which school she attended. When TT asked why Martina was chosen, head teacher Rob Woodhouse said:

"Martina is a bright and hardworking individual. She has been at Essendon since she started her schooling and we felt she was the right pupil to represent the school to the Queen."

Feeling like she was a part of history young Martina will always remember the day she met the Queen and how proud her mum was of her as well as everyone from her school and TT!



Martina Davis



Martina meets the Queen

Award for Ed

STOURPORT HIGH SCHOOL in Worcestershire has created a special award in recognition of one of their students Ed Taylor aged 14 who witnessed a tragic ordeal when he saw his friend pass away.

The school decided to present Ed with the Most Resilient Student Award to acknowledge the improvements in both his attitude and school work.

Keep up the good work Ed!



Ed with his award



Lala's hopes...

MY NAME IS Lala Marshall and I'm a Traveller from Merthyr Tydfil. I am 15 and attend college studying hair and beauty. I would like to study law and become a Traveller lawyer as there aren't many lawyers that will take on Travellers.

I've had the opportunity to sing in the youth mayor's inauguration - it was a great experience as I love to sing.

I am a member of a youth forum and cabinet which is all about young people 'having a say'. As the only Traveller to be involved I can help make a change and work towards a better future for Travellers across Merthyr.

Before I get married and settle down I want to get a job and make something of my life.

In November I will be running for deputy youth mayor and I hope to get it so I can prove that Travellers aren't all the same - there's good and bad in everyone.

Some want to get married young and some wants to live their life a bit more and have a job.

It's very rare that Traveller girls work but I would like to be different; all I can do is try to do the best I can.

Exam joy!

WHAT A FANTASTIC day it was for Natalia Jones when she completed her GCSEs at St John Fisher High School in Peterborough.

Here she is pictured with her Slovakian Romany Gypsy boyfriend Michael Bulka at her Year 11 leavers' prom as she celebrates her achievement.

"Being the only girl to go through high school I was supported a lot by my family, although some friends occasionally laughed and bullied me because they thought the idea of me going to school was stupid," said Natalia.

But this didn't stop Natalia from going to school where her experience was somewhat different to that faced by many young Gypsies across the country.

"It took me a while to settle in school but once I did I made friends quickly and I never got bullied by other students for being a Gypsy," she said.

With big dreams for the future, Natalia is intending to go to Peterborough Regional College to study childcare in September and ultimately work as a primary school teacher - good luck!



Great work!

A BIG WELL DONE to five year ten students William Barter, Albie Newman, Sam Foster, Larna Newman and Shannon Taylor from Harefield Academy in Middlesex who completed their two-week work placement as part of their GCSE year.

William and Albie who are studying a City & Guilds qualification in horticulture found jobs in groundsmanship whilst Sam who is also studying horticulture worked at a local agricultural vehicle suppliers.

Larna expressed her artistic flare when

she worked in a local florists while Shannon spent time working with a childcare team in Harefield's Children's Centre.

This was a brilliant opportunity for them as they spent two weeks working with things that they are interested in and where they felt it was still a part of their culture.

"All the students created a very good impression and the academy is very proud of these fantastic role models!" said Sally Barter, an outreach worker.



Shannon, William and Larna



Victoria wins her title

Dazzling victory for Victoria

Congratulations to Victoria Hadderton from Surrey who earlier this year won the regional title of Miss Surrey Dazzling Beauty. *By Shanterlena Knowles*

VICTORIA IS a nineteen-year-old Romany Gypsy who works part-time as a sales rep for a property maintenance company. Her whole family encouraged and supported her as she competed for the title and with a special thanks to her mother she says:

"My mum has helped me all the way through this. She has been really supportive and even made my little black dress for me".

With a variation of rounds such as fitness, evening wear and talent Victoria had to work hard to impress the judges. Modelling her specially made dress down the catwalk, the newly crowned beauty stood out from the rest as she let her talent do the talking by performing her own improvised dance routine.

"I wasn't nervous at all just excited!" she exclaims and it was this adrenaline that has seen Victoria skate her way through to the finals.

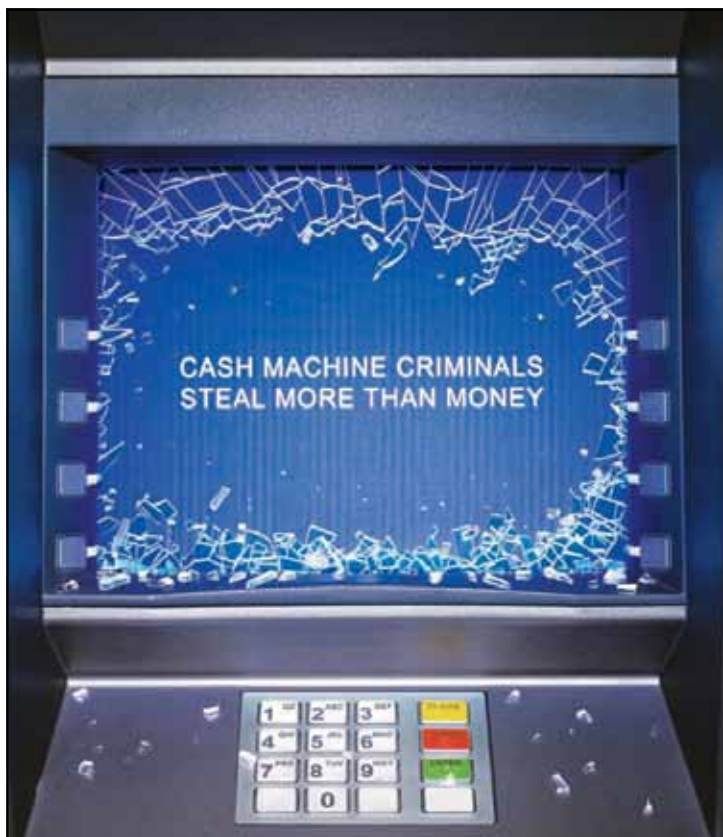
Although as excited as she was Victoria decided not to tell anyone in the competition she was a Gypsy for the same reasons many others face. "I kept it a secret in-case it jeopardised my place, but I think they knew I was different because I had all the bling," she said.

With the upcoming final of the beauty competition on the 22nd September in London, Victoria is pulling out all the stops as she starts her pageant training and designing her personalised outfits.

"I feel really confident, although I'm not going in it to win it because if I don't then I'll be really unhappy and won't do it again. But I feel like I have a good chance of winning," said Victoria.

Hoping this confidence will crown her Miss UK Dazzling Beauty everyone from T'T wishes her good luck!

To follow Victoria's progress visit - www.uksdazzlingbeautypageant.co.uk



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Call anonymously with information about crime





MYTH: Gypsies and Travellers always get their own way in the planning system.

FACT: Gypsies and Travellers are up to 20 times more likely to be refused planning permission than non-Travellers.

We've heard it all before. "Gypsies and Travellers just pull on to a piece of land and then get planning permission!"

We know it's not true.

We know every time people talk about a site for a couple of trailers all hell's let loose.

We know the reality: someone from the settled community puts in for planning and gets it through 80% of the time. But when you try for a site it's down to about 4%.

This TT Special looks at how to go about getting planning.

And what to do if you're turned down.

By Bill Laws

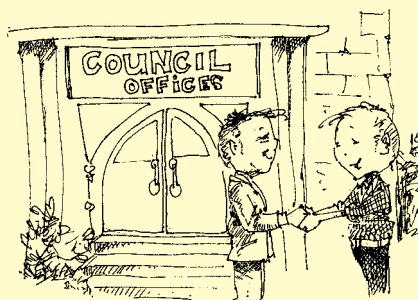
LAND

You've got your eye on some land or you own some. You want to set up a site here. And you need **planning permission**.



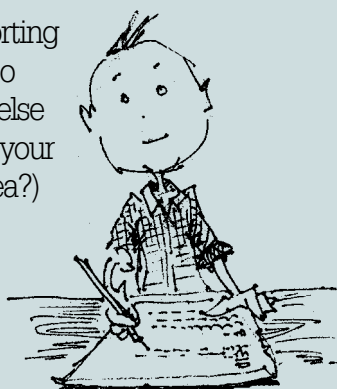
PRE-APPLICATION

Talk to the planning officer at the local council. Maybe ask a **planning consultant** or **Planning Aid** for help.



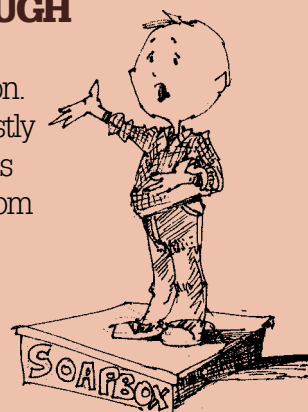
EXPLAIN

Write a letter supporting your application. (Do you have nowhere else to go? Are you and your people from this area?)



TALK IT THROUGH

Go to any meetings about your application. Be prepared to honestly answer any questions and allay any fears from neighbours.



England

The new government promised to stop 'pull-ons' where you move on to land, then apply for **retrospective planning permission**. But they haven't done that yet.

The new guidelines for councils, Planning Circular 01/2006, says they want more new sites, but not in open countryside or the **Green Belt**. Councils set targets for the number of pitches in their area and record this in their local **Development Plans**.

Many councils want to increase the number of Traveller sites "in appropriate locations", to "reduce tensions" and "enable . . . travellers [to] access education, health, welfare and employment facilities."

Local planning authorities must set a target for pitches in their area (and if they don't, that will be taken into consideration if you take out an appeal).

Central Government wants councils to find enough "deliverable sites" to provide for the next five years.



Wales

In Wales the council has to find out if new sites are needed in the area. They call this process the Accommodation Needs Assessment. If the Accommodation Needs Assessment says new sites are needed, the council must find the necessary sites.

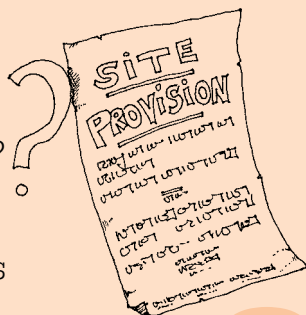
Find out from your local council what the Accommodation Needs Assessment says.

If you can tick any or all of the following boxes you have good grounds for applying for planning permission:

- ☐ Are you forced to live on the roadside or some other unauthorized site?
- ☐ Are you on an over-crowded site?
- ☐ What happens when your children want a pitch of their own? Is there room on your site?
- ☐ Are you living in bricks and mortar but want to move back onto a site?
- ☐ Do you want to buy land for your own site? Yes? Then you need to tell the council. Since the Welsh government is still committed to finding new sites it's important for Travellers and Gypsies in Wales to have their say and make their needs known.

FIND OUT

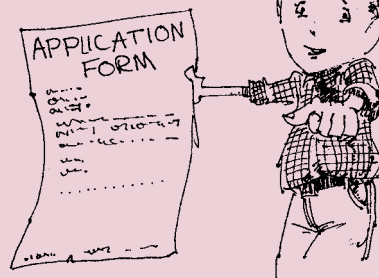
Has the local **council** set a target for new sites? Are there other sites planned for nearby? Are there any sympathetic **councillors**, or neighbours who would support you? Does the council have an overall plan for the area? Does the council have a map showing what land can't be used?



3

APPLY

Fill in the **planning application** forms. (**Planning Aid** can help here.)



4

REFUSAL

Planning permission turned down? Think about making an **appeal**.



7

GET HELP

You will probably need professional help with an appeal. **Planning Aid** may be able to help here.



8



Scotland

Before you apply check the current development plan. The council could be asking for feedback on a development plan right now. You could comment and, maybe, suggest a good place for a site. (Check out development plans locally at

www.planningaidscotland.org.uk/map.asp

Some councils have specific Gypsy/Traveller Site policies; others leave it in more general policies.

Check the planning status of the land in the council's development plan and look at any proposals map and relevant policies. This should help you work out the chances of getting permission. (You want to do this before buying the land; if you already own it, check this out before you start any work.)

Talk to the council's planning department for pre-application discussions.

When you make your planning application you can fill out planning forms or do it online.

If your application is refused, you have a right to appeal. You have three months to appeal from the date of the refusal letter. Your refusal letter should tell you how your appeal will be decided.

What's it mean?

Appeal: you (or the council) 'appeals against' the planning decision. A government planning inspector is appointed to do the appeal which can take up to a year. Their decision must be approved by government.

Council: the local authority for your area. Councils used to have to provide sites. Then they were told to give more planning permissions. These days more old council sites are being sold off, but it's different in each county.

Councillors: ordinary people voted into office by the public. Their job is to monitor the work of the council and represent the ordinary people (that includes you) in their district.

Development plans: the council's overall plan for the area.

Green Belt: countryside that lies outside towns and is earmarked for special protection.

Planning Aid: a charity that provides professional help and advice. (Contact details on the back page).

Planning application: your information which the council uses to decide whether or not to give you planning permission.

Planning consultant: experts in planning who you pay by the hour or day to help you. Always ask around for recommendations!

Planning officer: Planning expert who works for the council.

Retrospective planning: where you move on to land and apply for planning for what you've already done.



Useful contacts

ENGLAND

Planning Aid England on **0330 123 9244**. Or visit online at **www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid**

LONDON

Planning Aid for London on **020 7401 8046** for help/advice. Telephone lines open Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.00pm. Or visit online at **www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk**
Planning Aid for London covers the whole of the Greater London area.

Solicitor Jeremy Browne of Bramwell Browne Odedra, 85 High Street, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1DE
01494 782244
admin@bbosolicitors.co.uk
www.bbosolicitors.co.uk

They do not do planning applications and enquiries, but do undertake defence in s187b injunctions and s288/9 applications to the High Court, as well as Judicial Review. They have a housing contract with the LSC so can undertake legal aid work.

Brian Cox, Sarah Green of South West Law (Legal Services in the Community) Ltd, 1 Hide Market, West Street, St Philips, Bristol BS2 0BH
0117 314 6400
sarah.green@southwestlaw.org.uk
www.southwestlaw.org.uk

Alison Heine, 10 Whitehall Drive, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1SJ
01606 777757
heineplanning@btinternet.com

SCOTLAND

Planning Aid Scotland (0845 230 1314). They are there to help you.

Applying for planning permission online? Go to **<https://eplanning.scotland.gov.uk/WAM/>**. For further information about Planning Aid for Scotland go to

www.planningaidscotland.org.uk or call **0131 220 9730**. For free planning advice call **0845 230 1314**.

There is also a range of planning information sheets available at

www.planningaidscotland.org.uk/page/80/Planning-information.html

Useful for reference

www.planningaidscotland.org.uk/map.asp

WALES

There's a useful booklet (free, but £1 for postage) called Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Sites. It's produced by Planning Aid Wales and is also available online at **www.planningaidwales.org.uk** (look under General Public, How We Can Help and then Publications).

When you get planning, remember you now need to:

- Pay council tax;
- Have a caravan site licence;
- Make sure your amenities (toilets, etc) are all there
- Get a proper address and postcode from the Post Office.

The view from the ground

George has lived on his own land for 30 years

"Unless you've got the money, you're not getting anywhere.

"Years ago you stopped the wagons on the verge, then just as you lit the fire and settled down a couple of burly farm labourers would be there with the police to pull you off.

"So Travellers thought: "If I had my own land I'd be all right.

"But it's not worked out. One feller was saying the only difference between the old Caravans Sites Act and the new Planning Circular are the dates: nothing's really changed.

"To get planning you got to do your homework, get legal advice, talk to the planners. I know several places that have been passed, usually on appeal and usually with an expensive consultant. Some people have spent up to £30,000 to get passed. And the trouble is we're all lumped in together, New Age, Irish Travellers, Show people, Gypsies."

When things go well: man with a memory turns planning meeting around

"I was at a planning hearing recently with a family in Truro down in Cornwall," recalls Romany planning advisor Maggie Smith-Bendell.

"It was up for approval. There was a lot of opposition and objections.

"Luckily, one man on the committee remembered me from years previously. He said, "Maggie told us nine years ago that if we didn't get our act together then this would happen. She foretold these problems and we haven't sorted it out."

"It turned the committee around," says Maggie. "The plan was passed by 10 votes to one.

"It shows what can be achieved when people remember the work that's been done. Councils can have meetings with Gypsy representatives and liaison officers to get to the core of the problem. It's those people who know the real problems, not people who just go around counting caravans.

"I would like to mention Phil Eaton at Cornwall County Council who does a fantastic job. People like him work so hard to give Gypsy people a fair deal and we really appreciate their work."

"Councillors have said to me "Maggie, you're like Oliver Twist, you keep coming back and asking for more." And I say, "If every council sorted themselves out I wouldn't have to keep asking!"

Who's who?

Planners describe Gypsies or Travellers as "Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependents' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such."

Showpeople: "Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependents' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above."

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Family Album

SNAPSHOTS OF YOUR LIFE

Memories of Dhinea and Harry

THESE PHOTOS are of the fantastic Dhinea and Harry "One Dog" Isaacs from Somerset who met in the pea fields and married when she was 21. They then lived and travelled in a wagon with horses from Somerset up to the outskirts of Birmingham.

They went on to have thirteen children who were a great help when the family did field work such as hops and peas.

Unfortunately the family lost Harry in October 1993 and the heartache was to carry on as they lost three of their thirteen children over the years.

Harry's character was like no other. He loved his family deeply but his second love was horses and he owned and bred many over the years. Horse fairs in the West Country still echo with his laughter and loud bids on grys he took a fancy to.

Because Harry was such a big man he would often find himself fighting two men and shouting "One man one dog!" meaning he would fight them both individually. That's how Harry earned his new name.

This family wasn't interested in new fashions, posh trailers or cars: they just loved their traditional lifestyle with their little brood.

Dhinea is now an elderly Romani lady but still demonstrates her skills of Gypsy old time step dancing and suet pudding making at the remarkable age of 82.

She is a grand old bird and I love her to bits.

Maggie Smith-Bendell, BEM



Step dancing with Romani musician Tommy Orchard from Holsworthy, Devon



*Priddy Fair August 1992
PHOTO: Mick Garland*



Harry & Dhinea on Elton site in the 1960s



Dhinea with Danny & Ellen Sherred at GRHM 2010 in Frome, Somerset - notice her front pinnie

Harry with some of his children at Bridgwater Fair in the 1970s

Have you anything to share from your Family Album? Get in touch with us on **01432 344039**



Silver medallist John Joe Nevin is the pride of Mullingar

At 23 years old, Irish Traveller John Joe Nevin is an Olympic silver medallist and one of the finest prospects in Irish boxing. After touching down at home after London 2012, he told Travellers' Times what boxing means to him, what it's like to wear an Olympic medal, and about his hopes for the future.

"I WAS 7 years old when I started boxing," says John Joe Nevin, who fights out of Mullingar, County Westmeath. "Back then, I kept on plaguing my father to let me start! I've never looked back from there."

"Boxing means everything to me, it's my life. I've sacrificed everything for boxing, being away from my family, my son. It means the world to me to do well at my sport."

Beating Danish fighter Dennis Ceylan by 21 points to 6 in the opening bout in London was a buzz for Nevin. "I'd beaten him before but he'd improved a hell of a lot. The atmosphere at the fight was really bringing me on. In the

run up to London I was back boxing the way I knew I could."

There was ample evidence of that when Nevin beat the reigning bantamweight world champion, Cuban fighter Alvarez Estrada, in the semi-final to guarantee silver.

"It's an amazing feeling to have an Olympic silver medal around your neck," he says. "It didn't really sink in until I got home. It proves I'm in the top two in the world, it only comes round every four years. I never thought this would actually happen."

With gold and silver EU Amateur Championship medals and two World Amateur

bronzes already in the bag, John Joe has been proving his class in the ring for some time.

But what about turning pro? "I'm just going to relax for the next few weeks and enjoy it. We're not going to discuss that just yet!"

"A few years back I was just an ordinary Travelling boy, now people stop me to talk to me in the street. It goes to prove we can develop top superstars as well. We've got the talent."

"No matter what age you are, believe in yourself," says John Joe. "If you put in the hard work it pays off in the long run. You get out what you put in."



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000540

STAR LETTER

Dear Editor,

My family had pulled onto a grass verge for the night and went to sleep. At about half past three in the morning was woken up by someone banging on the windows. I was frightened.

My Dad shone a torch through the window and we saw a man.

"What do you want?" shouted Dad.

"I've overturned my car. Can you help me?"

My Mum was worried as she thought there were people outside waiting to get us.

We rang my uncle and he came up from nearby and the men went out to see what had happened.

They managed to turn it back and later the man managed to start the car and drive it back home.

At about eleven thirty the next morning someone knocked on the trailer door. It was the same man who brought flowers, chocolates and wine to say thank you to us and to apologise for frightening me.

It was nice of my family to help him and it was good of the gorgers to bring presents to say thank you.

I think we [Travellers and Gorgers], all need to understand each other better.

Yours sincerely

Miss Charlotte Chapman
Miss Charlotte Chapman



PHOTO: Joel Munson

Looking for clues

Hi,

I have been trying to trace back my Mother's side of the family for a long time and I can never get very far on her side.

My Great Grandmother was raised with a foster family and her foster mother would never let her be around her real family much. The last time she let her see her Aunt my Great Grandmother told my Grandmother that she had said: "You have nothing to be ashamed of, you should be proud to come from our family".

I believe that my Mother's side of the family were Roma who had moved to the United States, and I was wondering if there was somewhere that kept any kind of records.

I would really like to know because it would explain my dark hair and eyes and my urge to move a lot!

Name and address supplied

Searching for roots

My name is Lorraine and I live approximately 12 miles outside of Glasgow.

Through my Mother's side of the family I actually come from the Gypsy/ Traveller community! I have family who lives in houses yet still spend a lot of time in their caravans.

I have been brought up in a house, however since childhood I have been brought up with Traveller strict morals and values etc.

Due to a lack of education in childhood like many I struggled with reading/writing and dyslexia. I worked really hard and I am now at university studying for an honours degree in psychology.

It's certainly in my blood as I'm in my 13th home at the moment!

I have been told that many, many years ago my mother's side of the family originated from Liverpool and Manchester. My Mother has now passed and for her I'd love to find the family she never got to find.

I have been desperate to find any relatives I may have and would be very grateful if the Travellers' Times could help guide me in any way.

My Mother had quite a long name, it was Martha McMahon Rowley Hands McCully.

Many thanks if you have taken the time to read what now looks like the yellow pages!

Lorraine Ward

If you're interested in tracing Romany or Traveller ancestors then get in touch with the experts at the Romany & Traveller Family History Society. Their website is at www.rtfhs.org.uk and you can find out how to become a member and trace your Gypsy roots.

PHOTO: Alison Chapman



Big Survey 2012

Tell us what you think of TT and you could win £250!

TAKE 10 minutes to fill in our Big Survey and you could win £250!

Complete the survey included with this magazine and send back to us in the stamped addressed envelope, or go online to www.travellerstimes.org.uk and click on the survey button.

We'd love to hear from you – tell us what you want from Travellers' Times.

We'll give the results in the next issue.

Give us a call if your copy of the survey is missing from this magazine, **01432 344039**.

Storytelling competition update: iPad still to be won!

We've still got a fantastic brand new Apple iPad to give away, so if you've got a story you think we should hear, whether it's fact or fiction, then write to Travellers' Times and you could be in with a shot! Not up for writing? Then tell it with pictures! Send us a series of photos or drawings that tell a story and you could win this flash top prize.

Send your entries to: Travellers' Times, Sullivan House, 72-80 Widemarsh Street, Hereford HR4 9HG

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Preserving a proud heritage

The Brazil family are traditional south country Romany Gypsies who have retained an interest in the culture and long-established customs of their ancestors. This includes the skills and crafts needed to build or repair the wagons once lived in by many Travellers.

The use of wagons as living accommodation declined after the Second World War to the extent that they are now almost extinct and can usually only be found in collections or museums.

Over the years the Brazils have worked on wagons and built a considerable reputation for their craftsmanship. They have built a Burton type wagon from scratch and are working on restoring several others.

It was their wish to help the general public gain a better understanding of Romany culture by enabling their wagons to be viewed, which inspired the forming of the South East Romany Museum.

Photos by Elisabeth Blanchet





Jake Bowers at his forge



Romani smith at work in Romania, 1992. PHOTO: Bruno Barbey/Magnum

Hammer time

After more than a decade writing about, filming and recording the Gypsy and Traveller community, former Travellers' Times editor Jake Bowers explains why he's now just as likely to be found behind an anvil as a desk...

GYPSIES HAVE BEEN working metal since the very beginning. One story goes that the reason we keep travelling is because Gypsy smiths forged the nails used in Christ's crucifixion. The legend has it that fourth unused nail we forged still glows red hot and follows us across the earth. The Romani word for "cheers" (sastimos or sastipe) doesn't just mean good health; it literally means wishing another the strength of iron. But while many of us may still collect metal for a living, the sad fact is that most of us have never learnt how to work it.

So last year, some 12 years after I began writing about, filming and recording the Gypsy and Traveller community in order to educate gorgias about who we really are, I decided to add a new string to my bow and

learn a new trade. To be honest, I was sick and tired of getting people to listen to our story and I wanted a change. Albert Einstein once said that it was easier to destroy an atom than a prejudice, and I thought that bending steel might be more satisfying than trying to open closed minds.

I'd tried silversmithing and farriery earlier in my life and knew that if I didn't start a new trade before I became forty I probably never would. So I went along to Plumpton Agricultural College in East Sussex and signed up for two year course in Artist Blacksmithing. Some people thought I was mad, others thought I was brave. I knew that the healthiest and happiest people are the ones who have the courage to follow their dreams.

Nine months later I can do things with a coke forge, hammer and anvil that I never even knew were possible. I can fire weld, turn a decent scroll, and make everything from a poker or trivet to railings or a gate. I even came third in a student blacksmithing competition. I've built my own forge and as each month passes I go deeper into a tradition that is woven into the heart of Gypsy history, health and happiness. I'm now a blacksmith as well as a journalist, so when words aren't enough I'll be able to say it in steel.

For more information on anything from chitty irons to horseshoe trivets or wrought iron gates, email Jake Bowers at jake.bowers@btinternet.com

If you like poetry, plays and the magic of Romany life then head to Stowmarket on Saturday 13th October for a ROMANY LITERARY DAY featuring award-winning Romany writers Dan Allum, David Morley and more.

The event will be hosted by the Museum of East Anglian Life, Crowe Street, Stowmarket (A14 between Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds), Suffolk IP14 1DL.

For times and information contact Damian on 07846 970127



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Traveller Homes DAVE FAWCETT

Published by Amberley Publishing
ISBN 978-1-4456-0423-7
Paperback, 96pp, £14.99

Review by Rob Robinson

HERE IS A huge collection of photos of beautiful old buses converted into homes. As you turn the pages you can almost smell the unmistakable smoke coming from those well worn but much loved diesel engines.

It is packed with great pictures of all different makes and models of buses, most of which date from the glory days of the fifties and sixties when British engineering and coach building was at its peak. There are lots of really pretty buses in this book with lovely curved roofs, lots of chrome trim and colourful paintwork. It makes you wonder why modern day buses have to be so bland in comparison.

Each picture comes with an explanation of the make and model, original commercial owner and, perhaps more interestingly, where it was photographed (normally free festival sites and park ups) and who was living in it at the time.

It's such a shame that so many of those lovely old buses appear to have been later scrapped.



Sofia Z-4515 GUNILLA LUNDGREN, SOFIA TAIKON AND AMANDA ERIKSSON

AN ENGAGING autobiographical graphic novel about a young Roma girl's struggle through the concentration camps of World War II. Told from the perspective of a Grandmother explaining the horror of Nazi occupied Poland to her small Grandson, the comic book style works well to portray the atrocities at hand. The artwork is of a very similar vein to that of Persepolis and if you have read Maus this would be of interest. There is also a written section and timeline detailing of the events of the Holocaust as they unfolded.



PHOTO: Alison Chapman

TAT's more like it: legal newsletter's got the latest on the law



FOR THE LATEST updates on how the law affects Gypsies and Travellers, check out TAT NEWS, the newsletter from the Travellers' Advice Team.

If you're online you can read the newsletter for free visit <http://tinyurl.com/bvjd22r>

Travellers Advice Team have a new national telephone helpline for Gypsies & Travellers 0121 685 8677 (Mondays to Fridays 9am-5pm). There's no operator service, so you get straight through to an expert.

To find out more about changes to the planning system and how they might affect you, turn to page 15 of this issue of Travellers' Times and have a look at our planning guide.

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BritishRedCross

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Tel: **0121 772 7340**

Email **vwilliams@redcross.org.uk**



The Travellers Advice Team at Community Law Partnership

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Now available in stereotype

In this day and age, stereotyping someone because of their culture is looked upon as taboo. That is, as long as you are not a Gypsy or Traveller. In a world that is supposed to be built upon the basis that all cultures are equal we still get that stereotype of the thieving, troublesome 'gyppo'.

By Jobie Newland.

TAKE RECENT EVENTS at a certain popular Nottinghamshire car show. Gypsies and Travellers have been going to this event for the past few years: as with all good annual shows word spreads and every year more families attend.

This year in particular, there were reports of tents and caravans being burgled, generators stolen, thefts from market stalls and anti-social behaviour. The blame goes to... that's right, the Gypsies and Travellers.

The said event has a Facebook page and quite a few people find their bravado when sat behind a computer. Racial slurs fill the event's page. Certain people commenting on the site supposedly witnessed or came face to face with what they call the "feral gyppo youth".

So why wait till you come home to type it on Facebook? Why not confront the supposed

"feral" Gypsies on their behaviour there and then? The answer to this question is simple: the reason nobody said or did anything there and then is because it was not true. The alleged offences supposedly happened on the Thursday and Friday. Gypsies and Travellers don't go to said event until the Saturday.

This is just a lone example of the stigma that has haunted Gypsies and Travellers throughout history. The stigma we have had to bear is that if something goes missing or someone is causing trouble and there are Gypsies or Travellers in the vicinity the blame will fall on them. It's a stereotyped view that people outside our community have and will admit to having. Gypsies and Travellers dress, talk and act different from others and that makes them stand out. People often say to me, "Why don't you just

dress and act like everyone else, then you will be left alone?" to which I answer, "That would just be hiding what I am, and I am not ashamed of what I am".

Many a time they are refused entry from clubs and bars; they are refused jobs, even when they are more than qualified; taxis refuse to pick them up; store detectives follow them in stores; the list goes on. I have had to suffer this same prejudice all my life and still do to this day.

Not long ago, I was in a cinema in Cambridge. Now, anyone who knows Cambridge knows that there is quite a large Gypsy community there and most of the younger ones go to the cinema on a Sunday. I was in the cinema one Sunday watching a film with my wife when an argument erupted in the theatre between a Gypsy girl and a non-Gypsy girl. Words were exchanged and then, with no provocation, the non-Gypsy punched the Gypsy girl in the face.

Security came in: they evicted the Gypsy girl without hesitation and let the non-Gypsy girl stay to watch the film, even though she had started the argument and committed an assault. The Gypsy girl was found guilty by race. Now if you were to stereotype any other race or culture the same way that we get stereotyped, you would be branded a racist.

There are good and bad in all parts of society, I'm not saying all Gypsies and Travellers are angels but you cannot judge us on a very small minority. It's been twelve months since the London riots. Gypsies and Travellers took no part in them whatsoever. Parents kept their families at home while the rioters and looters were raging through the streets. Now if we were to brand all non-Gypsies based on these people's actions we would not want to walk down the street for fear, but we don't.

I know I can write this article now, I could petition to the highest point in Parliament, I could set up rallies across the country and I know that the mind-set of the majority of the population would not change overnight. The stigma is there and it is not going to go away any time soon. All we can do is just be the best we can be as individuals and try to show the world that we are better than they think we are.



Travellers love a motor show, but the shows don't always love us back. PHOTO: Chris Preece

A view from the Hill

Since August 2001 a wooded car park on Haldon Hill, Devon, has been a home to New Travellers. The site is not authorised but it is tolerated. *By Tim Wilson*

TO THEIR CREDIT Teignbridge District Council (TDC) knows endless evictions don't help anyone. And they're the only Council to actively engage Gypsies and Travellers at regular forums. However, for Haldon's residents, change is coming. And it's hard, from our viewpoint, to see it as positive.

Teign Housing has been granted more than £1.1 million to build a 15 pitch site. With over 40 people currently living on our site, that's a gaping disparity between need and availability. We are a self-supporting, self-reliant community. We've hardcored and gravelled the ground, created our own allotment, constructed compost toilets and planted a roadside screen. Whatever advantages an authorised, purpose-built site may bring, it is not being constructed for our benefit.

After assurances our cultural needs would be taken into consideration, we were informed that it would be almost impossible to continue

living in our old wagons. The unaffordable costs needed to conform to various British Standards would force most of us to move into uniformly designed modern static caravans. Live-in vehicles are a unique part of New Traveller heritage. TDC's slogan for the project is "Celebrating Diverse Communities". You don't celebrate diversity by destroying it.

Asked of our own requirements, the answer has been broadly the same: mains water and electric, both easily metered. How much of that grant would it take to connect us to the simplest of utilities? Instead, our new site comes with a manager's office, from where we can be 'kept an eye on'. What other social housing scheme has an overseer stationed at its entrance? Again, this proposed high banked and gated, warden controlled compound hardly seems to have our interests at heart.

The area of natural woodland earmarked for the new development directly adjoins our

existing site; already perfect for purpose. An area of outstanding beauty will be felled just to move the new tenants a few hundred metres. And what of the unentitled, those left behind? How uncertain will their futures be?

It has become almost impossible to live a truly viable nomadic life. Many of us took the decision to settle here for educational, health or employment reasons. The proposed site takes no account of any future transitory population. It seems designed to do nothing more than remove the last of our self-determination in order to regulate our lives.

Change here is inevitable. However, there is already enough space for everybody. So why should anyone be forced to move elsewhere? Though TDC's and Teign Housing's consultations are appreciated, any future proposal must surely be something that provides for all the Hill's residents, and better embraces our cultural needs and identity.



The site at Haldon Hill, near Exeter, Devon

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