

THE ONLY MAGAZINE FOR GYPSIES, ROMA & TRAVELLERS

# THE TRAVELLERS' TIMES

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## IVY-JANE SMITH

BEATS ALL OF ENGLAND AND HAS HER SIGHTS SET ON THE REST OF THE WORLD

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# FROM THE EDITOR

*By Mike Doherty*

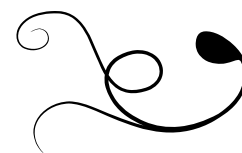


PHOTO: Mike Doherty © Dan Haworth-Salter



## THE THEME FOR THIS ISSUE IS FIGHTING BACK AND STANDING UP FOR OUR RIGHTS

It's easy to get disheartened by the sometimes seemingly monolithic and institutionalised nature of what has often been called 'the last acceptable racism', but – as the old saying goes – you have to be in it to win it.

Finally, I want to use this editorial to pay tribute to Lord Avebury, the Liberal Democrat peer who died on February 14th this year.

Damian Le Bas wrote this in The TT's obituary column – one of many published on The TT Online – alongside an interview filmed shortly before his death:

"HE was a good boxer when he was young, but he liked the odd cigarette as well. In the end he gave up the fags and the drink and stuck to his work and his family. By his mid-30s he'd got sick and tired of seeing Travelling people get evicted from waste ground and lay-bys with nowhere to go, so he made it his business to do something about it. He stuck to his guns and fought for Gypsy and Traveller rights for the next 50 years. He was ill for a long time, but he wouldn't let it stop him going to work 'til the very end. The Travellers will never see another one like him again."

Lord Avebury – Eric as we knew him – was also the Patron of the Traveller Movement campaign charity (TM) – where I worked for five years.

> continued on page 13

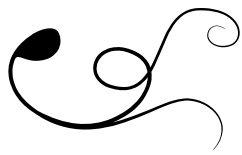
**H**ello and welcome to The Travellers' Times magazine. This is my first magazine as editor and I hope you will agree that it is a knockout. For those of you wondering, Damian Le Bas – the previous editor – has stepped up into the role of 'Editor at Large'. What that basically means is that Damian is still very much part of guiding the future of The Travellers' Times, whilst I concentrate on the nuts and bolts of producing the magazine, sourcing stories for The Travellers' Times Online (which now publishes a new story every working day of the week) and shaping and delivering The Travellers' Times' basic and advanced media skills training.

As we put each magazine together, a general theme for each issue begins to take shape. The theme for this issue is 'fighting back and standing up for our rights'. What with the current new laws that threaten Gypsy and Traveller identity, the continued denigration of all things Traveller in the newspapers and on TV, the discrimination by big household name commercial businesses and the continued mouthing of anti-Gypsy and Traveller sentiments by politicians, 'fighting back' seemed appropriate.



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CONTACT US AT: The Travellers' Times, Packers House, 25 West Street, Hereford, HR4 0BX  
01432 344039 | [travellerstimes@ruralmedia.co.uk](mailto:travellerstimes@ruralmedia.co.uk) | [www.travellerstimes.org.uk](http://www.travellerstimes.org.uk)

COVER PHOTO © ELISABETH BLANCHETT



## NEWS

*Read all about it*



### CHARITY WALK FOR GREAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL "MAKES LITTLE MARY PROUD"

A group of Romany Gypsy men from Cambridgeshire have completed a 75 mile charity walk from Ely to London to raise over £4,500 for Great Ormond Street Hospital to thank them for the "unbelievable" love and care that was given to little baby Mary Angelena Smith, when she was born with spina bifida.

The 15 men – John, Jess, Wally, Nelson, Rocky, Joe, Alfie, Steve, Charlie, Danny, Mark, John Henry, Amoss, Luke and Kevin – finished the walk on the doorstep of Great Ormond Street Hospital, London.

"We would like to thank each and every one of the boys who did the walk from the bottoms of our hearts," says Lisa Marie Smith, Mary Angelena's mother. "They have made Mary proud!"



### 'TRAVELLING UNDER THE STARS' WITH GYPSY GIRL LILLYMARIE WILLIAMS

A 14-year-old Romany Gypsy girl, Lillymarie Williams from Anglesey, Wales, has just won two awards for helping to raise thousands of pounds for 'Travelling under the Stars' – a charity fundraiser initiative for people with cancer – and is planning to do more next year in remembrance of her young friend who passed away from the illness.

### SOUTH WALES GYPSY CHURCH RECEIVES GIFT OF 100 BIBLES FROM BIBLE SOCIETY

Karl O'Dare, the pastor of the South Wales Gypsy Church, asked Bible Society for some Bibles late last year.

"The congregation was growing and growing," he said. "I had given away all of my Bibles to people who had joined the church. I couldn't afford to buy any more. I was absolutely amazed when Bible Society gave us 100 Bibles. I was overwhelmed when they arrived."

The church was founded two years ago and now boasts a congregation of 70 Gypsies. Many live by the roadside in Newport, but others travel from as far as Swansea, Builth Wells and London to attend the weekly meetings.

### CHARITY AIMS TO HELP GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER FAMILIES WITH DISABLED CHILDREN

A charity that gives special grants to families bringing up disabled children has approached The Travellers' Times because they want to do more to help disabled Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

Family Fund is a charity that provides free grants for essential items such as washing machines, sensory toys, computers, family breaks, bedding or clothing, for families who are raising a child or young person with a disability or serious illness in the UK.

To request an application pack for a grant, or to find out more about Family Fund, please visit the website: **[www.familyfund.org.uk](http://www.familyfund.org.uk)** or phone **01904 621115**



### GOVERNMENT 'COOKED THE BOOKS' WITH CONSULTATION RESULTS FOR NEW PLANNING RULES FOR GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES

The Government has been accused of 'cooking the books' after an investigation

by the Traveller Movement. The TM investigated the consultation into the controversial new law redefining Gypsies and Travellers who have stopped travelling because of ill health or old age so they are no longer classed as Gypsies or Travellers. The investigation revealed that the Government ignored an overwhelming response calling for the law to be dropped.

A spokesperson for the Traveller Movement said that the Government had "cooked the books" with the consultation results.

### "WE DON'T HAVE TO TAKE IT," SAYS GYPSY MAN IN NEWSPAPER LIBEL BATTLE

A Gypsy man from Lancashire has won "substantial damages" and legal costs after a national newspaper settled out of court after a year-long libel battle and apologised for running a headline that falsely accused him of lying in court.

Speaking to The Travellers Times, the Gypsy man said: "I hope this win will encourage other Gypsies and Travellers to step forward and challenge damaging reports written about them in the newspapers. Our victory shows it can be done and we don't have just to take it lying down."

### BUTLINS REPORTED TO EQUALITY COMMISSION AMID CLAIMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND 'TRAVELLER BLACKLISTS'

The Traveller Movement has complained to the Equality and Human Rights Commission on behalf of Irish Traveller John O'Leary from Camden, London, who was refused service by two holiday camp operators and who claims he is the victim of 'discrimination'.

Although Mr O'Leary booked and paid for the holiday in September, their Christmas was "ruined" when they received a letter cancelling the holiday six days before they were due to go, telling them that the holiday had been cancelled because they were not on

the electoral register. Mr O'Leary was then refused service by rival holiday camp operator Pontins.

"This is discrimination," says Mr O'Leary. "I am on the electoral register. They ruined our holiday and I will see them in court or whatever it takes."

The Travellers Movement (TM) and Leigh Day law firm are interested in hearing about any similar cases involving Gypsies and Travellers. Please contact the TM on **0207 607 2002** if this has happened to you.



### GYPSY COUNCIL INVESTIGATION INTO CROYDON TRAVELLER EVICTIONS RAISES CONCERNS AT UNITED NATIONS

A Gypsy Council investigation into evictions of unauthorised camps by Croydon Borough Council has raised concerns at the United Nations after the Council was forced to reveal that it had recorded 130 camps in just over a year and that "most" had been evicted.

Joseph G Jones, from the Gypsy Council Thames Valley branch, launched the Freedom of Information investigation in a bid to find evidence to support a Traveller site planning application.

Joseph G Jones added that most of the camps were the same few groups being evicted again and again and that they had no authorised place to put their caravans.

"It seems that the eviction of Romani Gypsies and Travellers is now a matter of course in Croydon, and any consideration of the Human Rights of the persons being evicted – if considered at all – is little more than a tick box exercise."





PHOTO: Friends, Families and Travellers



PHOTO: Traveller Movement



### TIME FOR THAT 'BLITZ SPIRIT' FOR APPLEBY TOWN

Billy Welch, the influential Romany Gypsy businessman and Gypsy member of the Appleby Fair Multi-Agency Oversight Committee, has endorsed the 'Fund for Appleby' set up for fans and fair-goers to help the people of the town following the devastating recent floods.

The floods, which "split the town into two halves", came when the River Eden burst its banks after the North West of England suffered the worst storms in fifty years.

"Every year the people of Appleby Town host Appleby Fair," says Billy. "This event is a sacred event to our people. It's important we all help – just like the Blitz spirit during the war."

### 'CRYSTAL'S VARD0' BACK ON THE ROAD AGAIN IN JUNE

Friends, Families and Travellers' highly acclaimed theatre production 'Crystal's Vardo' will be taking to the road again in June this year – which also happens to be Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month.

'Crystal's Vardo', written by Suzannah King, is a play aimed at children ages 9 – 13 about the impact of being bullied at school on a young Gypsy girl's life. The play explores the rich history and culture of Gypsies and Travellers to raise awareness and improve understanding of the Travelling community.

The cast was led by Kavanagh Rose Rattigan as Crystal, herself of Irish Traveller heritage, supported by Neil Thomas and Cara Fraser in numerous other roles.

### 'NEVER GOING TO BEAT YOU' – NEW TRAVELLER-LED PLAY ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Gypsy and Traveller Women will be putting their acting skills to the test in June 2016 when they will take to the stage to highlight issues around domestic abuse.

'Never Going to Beat You' will be performed by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women, supported by the Traveller Movement and Solace Women's Aid. The play was written by playwright Jenny Buchman from Giants Theatre Company and is based on issues around domestic violence within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Contact the Traveller Movement on **0207 607 2002** for details.



## FAIR DATES 2016



12TH MAY **STOW FAIR**  
20TH MAY **WICKHAM FAIR**  
22ND MAY **KENT KING OF THE ROAD**  
27-29TH MAY **SCOTTISH KING OF THE ROADS FAIR**

2ND-6TH JUNE **APPLEBY HORSE FAIR**  
6TH JUNE **EPSOM DERBY**  
18TH-22ND JUNE **CAMBRIDGE SHOWMAN'S FAIR**

13TH-14TH JULY **JIM WALKER'S SHOW OUT DAY**  
15TH JULY **SEAMER FAIR**  
31ST JULY **KENILWORTH FAIR**

18TH-25TH AUGUST **BLACKPOOL FAIR**  
23RD AUGUST **EDDIE'S FAIR AND DRIVE**  
24TH AUGUST **LEE GAP FAIR**  
29TH AUGUST **SELBY FAIR**

6TH SEPTEMBER **BARNET HORSE FAIR**  
10TH-11TH SEPTEMBER **HORSEMONDEN FAIR**  
25TH SEPTEMBER **KENILWORTH FAIR**

20TH OCTOBER **STOW FAIR**

COURTESY OF JIM'S DVDS 07807 831808



# DOSTA! GRINTA! ENOUGH!



PHOTOS: Mike Doherty



London's Gypsies and Travellers caused a big stir when they joined a big march for more homes held in London on Sunday 13th March this year.

About thirty Gypsies, Travellers and supporters from the London Gypsy and Traveller Unit, plus representatives from the Gypsy Council and the Traveller Movement and a group with a big banner from the London National Bargee Travellers Association, made up the 'Gypsy Traveller bloc' that joined the thousands of other people marching from Holborn to the Houses of Parliament on a beautiful sunny spring day. The Travellers' Times joined the bloc to record this important rally.

Marion Mahony, from The London Gypsy and Traveller Unit and the grassroots 'We Still Count' campaign for more sites, was on the march and spoke to The Travellers' Times:

"We are here because Gypsies and Travellers need more sites. The new laws will mean that it will be even harder to make London councils plan and build Gypsy and Traveller sites. Our culture is being taken away from us. We are here for our children and grandchildren so they have somewhere to live."

On May 21st from 1pm onwards, Gypsies, Travellers and supporters will be holding a rally outside Parliament to protest against the new definition-change law and for Gypsy and Traveller Pride.

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# EQUAL AND EMPOWERED THE SURREY SCHOOL SMASHING STEREOTYPES

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PHOTO: Steven Horne



## ACADEMIC AND THE TRAVELLERS' TIMES ADVOCATE STEVEN HORNE REPORTS ON ASH MANOR SCHOOL

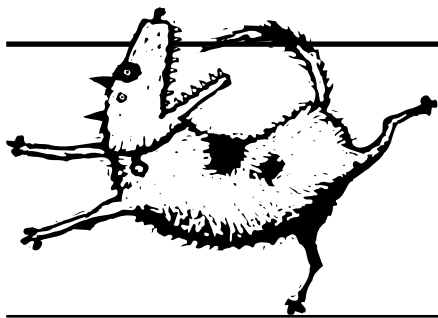
**F**rom the outside, Ash Manor School in Surrey appears to be no different to any other secondary school around the country. However, within its walls it is unique. Reports suggest that in UK classrooms the typical pupil demographic is over 70% White British, whilst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils make up just 0.4% of the pupil numbers yet around one in ten of the pupils at Ash Manor School are Gypsy and Traveller. I went to find out more.

I spoke to two key members of staff who have taken on the challenge of creating an environment that truly caters for all. Deputy Head Jo Luhman has been instrumental in developing an atmosphere of inclusion. This creates a situation where all pupils can embrace their culture and identity. Helping Jo in her mission is Key Worker Billie Jo Sines, herself a Traveller. Billie Jo has been pivotal in developing relationships with parents and the pupils. Within the school there is a dedicated room where pupils can meet with Billie Jo at any time.

The pupils are the success story of Ash Manor School and they are refusing to be left behind. Former pupils such as Jack Loveridge have seen the value of the education at Ash

Manor School and taken it on to college, where Jack is rapidly excelling in his brick-laying studies. Jack will soon be joined by Darrel Ward, a Year 11 pupil following the same route. Pupils such as Jack and Darrel are role models for the younger Travellers entering the school. Paddy Cash and Ethan Jones – both Year 7 pupils – were my 'tour guides' for the day. Their enthusiasm for their school and genuine happiness was testament to the hope they could see in their peers and the confidence which the school has developed. "Everything's equal. Travellers are equal. And there's no racism," says Paddy. Darrel and Jack add that "there's a lot of understanding and there's always someone to talk to."

Lauren Stevens (Year 10) and Ruby Brazil (Year 9) are two pupils who are taking 'traditional' cultural expectations and turning them upside down. Their decision to succeed in education highlights not only a positive step in the right direction, but also makes a powerful statement for young Traveller women everywhere. Ash Manor is an excellent example of showing that when Travellers embrace education the culture is not lost, diluted or polluted, but is in fact strengthened and empowered. And whilst Deputy Head Jo Luhman acknowledges that they still have work to do, she can rest assured that what is being done, is being done well.



# YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS

*By Steven Horne*



YOU CAN  
TEACH AN  
OLD DOG  
NEW TRICKS,  
SAYS GUEST  
EDUCATION  
SUPPLEMENT  
EDITOR  
STEVEN  
HORNE, A  
TRAVELLER  
AND AN  
ACADEMIC

Looking down at my hands, I can see calluses and scars; imperfections that have been there since I was a 13-year-old boy. Nowadays they're mostly due to an over-zealous gym habit, but that's not how they got there. When I was 13, I moved my first wheelbarrow and lifted my first paving slab. My brothers were landscape gardeners, and I had just been introduced to the family business. Twenty years later and my work is significantly different. No longer do I feel the cold rain beating down in winter, or the burning of my neck during summer – but I still remember. I remember everything – particularly what my brothers taught me. I could still lay a patio tomorrow, or transform a garden. Why? Because everyone remembers a good teacher.

Education isn't always apparent, it often takes place outside of the classroom, and teachers can take many forms. Education can and does transform us in ways we could never imagine, regardless of where we learnt. Generally speaking though, education has always been perceived to be a little different amongst Travellers and Gypsies. Statistically and culturally, many of us have shunned or ignored the value of 'school' education once our children have reached secondary school age. The famous American Mark Twain summed up this attitude to a classroom-based education quite nicely when he said "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education".

However, times have changed since Twain wrote that almost 200 years ago. Whereas in the past Travellers could survive entirely on non-qualified trades to make a living, the present age is not so accommodating. To survive today without at least

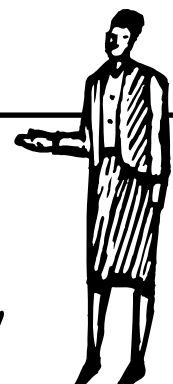
a few qualifications is a lot harder than it used to be. But gaining a good education – at least, in the 'school' sense of the word – is so much more than surviving, it's about thriving! It's about overcoming and being inspired. It's about taking each generation a little farther than the one before it. It's about understanding the past and making sense of the future. And thankfully, it's never too late to get educated and I am living proof of that.

I left school with only two GCSEs, but I made the choice to re-enter the education system as an adult in my late 20s; a daunting thought for many. But in a relatively short amount of time, I have progressed to a point where I will soon have earned the title 'Doctor'. I believe I have achieved this because of the tenacity and hard-work ethic that comes from growing up in our culture, and not in spite of our culture; there is a huge difference.

Age should never be considered a barrier or an excuse in making a decision about re-entering education – neither should our traditions. To believe that formal education is contradictory in some way to our heritage and our culture is a mistake. For centuries, Travellers and Gypsies have adapted to ever-changing circumstances.

Maybe, many moons ago, it wasn't necessary for Travellers and Gypsies to get formally educated and to chase after more prestigious 'gorger' jobs. But that was then and this is now. With the destructive laws that are currently being brewed in Parliament, Travellers and Gypsies face the biggest crisis to their existence since the 16th and 17th centuries. If there was ever a time to engage and participate and fight for our rights with all the tools available – well, that time is now. Now please do excuse me – I've got a class to teach.

[www.StevenHorneTheology.com](http://www.StevenHorneTheology.com)



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# ADULT LEARNERS AND ADULT TEACHERS

*You're never too old or young to learn and teach!*

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EDUCATION IS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS ALL YOUR LIFE AND IT'S NOT JUST SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS AT SCHOOL. HERE ARE THREE EXAMPLES OF GYPSY AND TRAVELLER WOMEN WHO LEARN AND TEACH AS ADULTS.

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## MICHAELA TYERS

Michaela Tyers is a qualified Health Trainer who has been working with the Gypsy/Traveller community across County Durham since January 2015. Since starting she has completed her Level 3 Health Trainer course and Level 1 IT course.

Michaela has faced challenges along the way to getting back into work after maternity leave, and she couldn't even turn a computer on in the beginning so had to learn those skills.

"I am most proud of passing my health trainer course because I thought I would never be able to do anything like that," says Michaela.

Michaela explains that her new role has even benefited her own family: "My Dad has had a health check; he hasn't even been to the doctors in 30 years! So that is a big thing for him."

If you would like any further information about the project or live in County Durham and would like to access the GRT Health Trainers please call **01325 321234**.

## BETTY BLUE PACKMAN-BILLINGTON

The editors of the Bournemouth Echo soon learnt to improve their coverage after Betty Packman-Billington and Jenny Galuschka from a Dorset-based Gypsy/Traveller media group came knocking on their door!

The 'Dorset Inter-Agency Concern for Travellers' (DIACT) group met with the editors of the Bournemouth Echo and the Blackmore Vale Magazine to raise recent reporting that had offended their local Gypsy and Traveller readers.

Betty reminded the editors that there are many local Romany Gypsies and Travellers who live and work locally and who are well-respected within the settled community. She said that inaccurate and negative reporting had an effect on them. Since the meeting, the coverage in the Bournemouth Echo has greatly improved, says Betty.

Betty says that DIACT will continue to monitor their local press and if things take another turn for the worse – the editors will be receiving another visit!

## SHERRIE SMITH

Romany Gypsy Sherrie Smith recently took part in a Holocaust remembrance and resistance teaching workshop organised by ternYpe International Roma Youth Network. Here is an extract from Sherrie's diary published in full on The Travellers' Times Online:

"Today we meet Roma and Sinti Holocaust survivors. My group meets 88-year-old Adolf Heilig (Schwauzer) he has breathing problems and tells us he has been in hospital 12 times this year. He tells us how the Nazis' murdered 28 of his close family, including his mother and sister in Auschwitz.

His life was saved by the respect him and his family had as musicians and as a travelling puppeteer. He shows us his pictures, and tells jokes. At times it's emotional, but I feel so honoured to have met this hero who has dedicated the last 40 years to educating the world on the Roma Holocaust. I ask him if he ever sees a better fairer life for Gypsies. He replies 'yes, definitely if we continue to fight to educate'."



# TRAVELLING AHEAD



Last year Travelling Ahead, a project working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people around Wales, set up a Youth Advisory Group to help the project plan for the future and run events like the National Forum which took place on March 3rd 2016.

Ricky Price (18) said: “The things that I enjoy most about work in the Advisory Group are the way Travelling Ahead gets all the young Gypsy children to meet more young Gypsies from around Wales. It makes the young people from the Gypsy community learn more about the rights and education and that there are many situations that Gypsy/Travellers don’t understand, things that they could change, it might not get changed now but could have an effect on the younger generation.”

Two other members said: “It gets us off the site and it gives us an education – we also went to a conference [run by Show Racism the Red Card] and I felt proud that I was there representing Gypsies and Travellers and training teachers about our culture and our lives.”

Adalaide Purcell (15) said: “I’d like the Advisory Group to do something like an advert to go on YouTube – to tell a little bit about each of us and what we do and how Travellers get treated and how they got treated 30 years ago – well it’s changed.

“I’d like to see Travelling Ahead work with more Gypsies and Travellers, and more from different age groups – also the work we do with the **PEER** Project with the Roma ones – I’d like to see them come into it too...”

Three of the young people on the Advisory Group, Ricky Price, Nicole Miller and Chloe Price have also successfully applied to work as Community Researchers with a European funded project called **PEER** – they will be running groups in their areas for young people.

For more information see our Facebook page or [www.travellingahead.org.uk](http://www.travellingahead.org.uk)



PHOTOS: TRAVELLING AHEAD

Young Community Researchers running a session



Youth Advisory Group meeting



Youth Advisory Group running activities at National Forum

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# DEFINING TRAVELLERS OUT OF EXISTENCE – AN UPDATE

*By Chris Johnson, Dr Simon Ruston and Marc Willers QC*

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## INTRODUCTION

The long-awaited and dreaded changes to *Planning policy for traveller sites* (PPTS) were published by the Government on the August Bank Holiday Monday 2015 and came into force immediately. The most controversial change in policy was to the planning definition of “gypsies and travellers”; now, if a Gypsy or Traveller stops travelling permanently for health reasons or reasons of old age, he or she will no longer fall within the new planning definition! Other changes will make it much more difficult for Gypsies and Travellers to obtain planning permission for sites.

We believe that the Government’s new planning definition discriminates against Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers, breaches their human rights and is ripe for challenge by way of judicial review. Two Gypsies are currently trying to obtain funding to take such a challenge.

The PPTS replaces the previous version issued in 2012.

**The change to the planning definition of “gypsies and travellers”.** In the Annexe to the new PPTS the Government explains that any reference in the policy to “gypsies and travellers” means:

*“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 dependants’ educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such”*

In the 2012 version of the PPTS the planning definition of “gypsies and travellers” had included the words “have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently” which meant that Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople who had stopped travelling on a permanent basis because of ill-health or old age, were able to seek planning permission for a caravan site to meet their accommodation needs and rely upon the positive planning guidance in the PPTS when doing so. This is no longer the case. As the authors of this article have stated in our previous blog on *The Travellers’ Times* this change to the planning definition will have a most damaging effect upon the most vulnerable members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

In our view it is vital that people who could be affected by these changes take steps to challenge the Government’s new planning definition in the courts on grounds that it is discriminatory and breaches their rights to respect for their family life, their homes and their traditional way of life, an integral part of which involves living in caravans, all rights

protected by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Those who are concerned that these changes may affect them should seek advice.

Some local authorities are contracting organisations to compile evidence on the extent to which individuals and families travel for work – in order, it must be presumed, to reassess their needs assessments in the light of the new and more restrictive planning definition. Concern has been expressed about the format of questionnaires distributed during these exercises. If you are asked to complete such a form then we would advise that you seek advice before doing so. It may be that a local or national Gypsy/Traveller organisation can assist.

## CONCLUSION

The fact that planning policy requires that ethnic Gypsies and Travellers must demonstrate that they travel in their caravans for work (or have only ceased doing so temporarily on grounds of ill-health, old age or so that they can educate their children) before they can rely upon the positive planning guidance in the PPTS when seeking planning permission for a caravan site to meet their accommodation needs is itself invidious.

The position of those Gypsies and Travellers who are too old or too ill to continue travelling is even more problematic. They will no longer fall within the planning definition of “gypsies and travellers” and will stand no real chance of obtaining planning permission for a caravan site despite the fact that they may be in greater need of a site than younger and more mobile members of their respective communities.

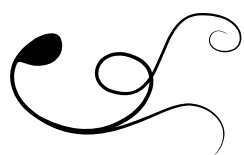
We believe that these policy changes are challengeable on grounds that they are discriminatory and violate the rights of Gypsies and Travellers which are protected by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. We hope that those people most affected will take action to force the Government to reverse these policy changes.

Anyone who is affected by these changes can contact the Travellers Advice Team (TAT) at the Community Law Partnership (CLP) who operate a national Helpline for Travellers on 0121 685 8677, Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

**Chris Johnson** ([chrisjohnson@communitylawpartnership.co.uk](mailto:chrisjohnson@communitylawpartnership.co.uk)) is the team leader of the TAT at CLP. CLP’s website is [www.communitylawpartnership.co.uk](http://www.communitylawpartnership.co.uk)

**Dr Simon Ruston**, Ruston Planning Limited, Independent Planning Consultant specialising in Gypsy and Traveller work. Simon can be contacted at [simon@rustonplanning.co.uk](mailto:simon@rustonplanning.co.uk) or on 07967 308752/0117 325 0350

**Marc Willers QC** ([marcw@gclaw.co.uk](mailto:marcw@gclaw.co.uk), @mwillers1) specialises in representing Gypsies and Travellers and is a member of the Romani Gypsy and Traveller Team at Garden Court Chambers (@gardencourtlaw, [www.gardencourtchambers.co.uk](http://www.gardencourtchambers.co.uk)).



# GYPSIES OF THE NEW FOREST

*By Ryalla Duffy*



The New Forest is really the very old Forest, enclosed as a Royal hunting ground by William the Conqueror. Since ancient Saxon times, this open heathland and forest has run through the counties of Hampshire, Dorset and Wiltshire, until it finally met with the sea. Gypsies call the place 'Nevi Wesh' and have for centuries been drawn to its untamed beauty, fresh water springs, remote green places and abundant wild life.

Courts in Royal Stuart times over 400 years ago, periodically refer to the New Forest Gypsies and talk about the theft of timber and deer poaching. King Charles II's mistress was a Forest Romany and under Royal Warrant was gifted three enclosures of Forest land.

Romany Gypsy Priscilla Wells lived and predominated as matriarch at Shave Green in the New Forest for many years of her life. The Wells were joined in the Forest by Lees, Stanleys, Burtons, Turners, Sherrards, Pidgleys, Willets, Does and other families. They eked a living on their wanderings by gathering and selling flowers, manufacturing beesoms, bee skeps and chair bottom caneing. At this time it was common practice for families to be allowed 48 hours grace unhindered, before being asked to move on. In fact, they were left undisturbed for much longer – an arrangement which suited Gypsies and Foresters alike. However, with the advent of the motor car, visitors from London began to invade the Forest. The nouveaux riche had little tolerance for the raggle-taggle Romanies that 'cluttered up the copses', and murmurs of dissent began.

By 1926 the Forest Commission had put the 'compound' system into place to corral the New Forest Gypsies into official enclosures. Seven such places were identified to which the unsuspecting Gypsies would be herded. Establishing compounds breached the New Forest Act of 1877 – but this was tactically disregarded by the authorities involved. Black Hamsley, Broomfield, Hardley, Latchmoor, Shave Green, Millersford and Thorney Hill were the locations chosen. Families were rounded up and herded onto these sites, along with their animals and impelled to remain there under threat of harsh fines. By the 1930s, Thorney Hill, numbered 400 residents at a time. To sit there now, in the silence and sunlight, its atmosphere seems to resonate with the voices and spirits of the families forced to make it their home.

After the war, in 1946, the New Forest Committee published a report that was to herald disastrous changes for the families. Once put in motion, it would prove impossible to stop. By the late 1950s over 600 Gypsies were living in the compounds, though no permanent structures were allowed, nor floors or windows. Despite the dilapidated appearance of these shacks, inside they were cosy, warm and dry. Outside however they frequently had no water, sanitation or refuse collection. In winter, overcrowding and mud created problems.

The draconian actions of the UK authorities were condemned by many. The Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies recognises that: "It is hard to believe that civilized Britons would herd innocent people into compounds because of their race, just as Nazi Germans would a few decades later."



Some that were forced into housing fared little better. As one old Romany lamented: "When freedom is taken away, the life of the flower shall wither and none but those weeping shall be found on the face of the Earth. A people without a miracle – in a sea of mud."

By the middle of the 1960s most of the families had been removed, although stubborn stragglers hung on until the 1970s. Juanita Casey, speaking on behalf of the authorities, observed: "Like an unruly harvest, the Gypsies have been safely gathered in, to council houses."

Some families evaded the claws of the council, mustering the necessary finance to purchase their own small parcels of land, continuing their trade as horse dealers and flower sellers. Similarly, in certain graveyards, a colourful, well-tended mismatch of colours signified the final resting place of Forest families, huddled away, in a straggled and unruly throng, in death, as in life, only on the fringe.

As the lopsided headstones lean into each other, as if in deep conversation, they are a silent visual reminder of that which the Romany Gypsy race represents: independence, originality and close family values and support. The long-disused compounds, the majestic beeches and holly thickets, once home to hundreds, have been swallowed back by the Forest from which they came. Yet for the old ones, the memory keepers, the discerning, the Forest will again yield her secret signs, her 'patrins', to those that know and seek.

Some children of the Forest stayed, others travelled further afield, to America and beyond. The pull of the Nevi Wesh is not easily shaken off though and pilgrims from near and far revisit the ancient camps and wild green stopping places, to commemorate the passages of life. Evidenced by wild posies, tributes, wilting on the moss, or a lone shaved chrysanthemum in the forest in winter, embedded in the frozen ground.

> Continued from page 2

PHOTO: Traveller Movement



Last year, just before the General Election and whilst Eric was in and out of hospital with a terminal illness, a Member of Parliament decided that it would be a good idea to garner a few votes by publically opposing a local council's plans for more Traveller pitches and make discriminatory statements in his local newspaper. The TM got involved and contacted Eric who wrote a letter to the MP – who just happened to be a Liberal Democrat as well.

"Dear Gordon [the letter starts],

I have spent a lifetime working for the provision of adequate accommodation for Travellers, and I am now Patron of the Traveller Movement. I steered the Caravan Sites Act through Parliament in 1968, requiring local authorities to provide adequate accommodation for caravan-dwelling Gypsies residing in or resorting to their area.

You will therefore understand my dismay when I read of your unconditional opposition to any Traveller sites."

The letter then went on to gently flay the MP alive, whilst laying out the legal duties on councils regarding equalities and Traveller site provision, before ending with:

"I would be grateful if you would place a copy of this letter on [your] Lib Dem website, so that members are aware of the arguments for cooperating with the Council in getting on with the provision of Traveller sites, as they are legally – and morally – obliged to do."

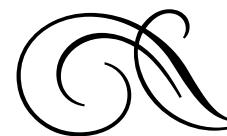
The MP never did publish the letter, but he certainly never uttered another peep about Traveller sites. He also lost his seat in the ensuing general election.

**Thank you Eric. We will all miss you a lot.**

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# CATHOLIC TRAVELLERS PROVIDE AID TO THE HOMELESS

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PHOTOS: Catholic Travellers Bible Study Group



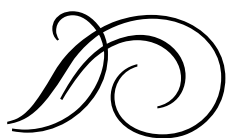
**T**he men's Catholic Travellers Bible Study Group – an online network of over 70 Traveller men of all ages – have raised thousands of pounds to help the homeless in London, Manchester and Birmingham.

The men – who come from all over the country – meet for Mass and then roam the streets looking for rough sleepers to help.

Both the men and a separate women's group raise money from the members of the Bible group network and through Gypsy and Traveller communities using online donations on social media and by face to face collections.

Declan O'Loughlin, one of the organisers, said: "I admit I was a bit apprehensive at first. There were so many homeless, more than we expected. I thought they would be 'give me the sleeping bag but go away with your Jesus', but they weren't. That wasn't what happened, we were welcomed."

Declan was moved by his experience of helping the UK's most vulnerable people. "I felt that we were giving them back a bit of humanity as well. The homeless are often invisible and people don't look at them; they don't recognise them as fellow human beings," he says.



# FOUR YOUNG SPORTING CHAMPIONS



## IVY-JANE SMITH

Romany Gypsy Boxer Ivy-Jane Smith, 17, is creating a stir on the boxing scene and has just won her fourth national title, earning a place representing England in the Three Nations tournament which will take place in Wales in May 2016.

Ivy-Jane, a Bantam weight at 54kg, has also been a semi-finalist at both the recent European and World Championships, and is on track to represent Team GB at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Impressed with her record, England Boxing nominated Ivy-Jane for a Sports Aid grant, which awards young athletes between the ages 12 to 18 to help progress their sporting advancement. Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cambridge is the charity's Patron – a champion of future champions.

Ivy-Jane, who started boxing at three when her dad – a boxer himself – used to play-fight with her whilst teaching her the moves, has her sights set on an extraordinary goal. "I want to represent England at the 2020 Olympics," she says.



## ADALAIDE PURCELL

I'm Adalaide Purcell, I'm 14 and I'm from Wales.

Five years ago I started kick boxing – travelling all over fighting. In December 2012 I received my first Dan Junior Black Belt after a hard 8 hours grading session. After holding six undefeated title belts for 4 years I got bored of fighting the same people and I wanted new challenges, so I gave boxing a go.

I started training with ex-Welsh coach Tony Williams and after two years I got my boxing licence.

The biggest challenge that I had to overcome was being accepted as a girl that can box. In the future I've got the British Championships coming up and I'd like to take part in the Commonwealth Games and eventually turn pro. My advice to any young person that wants to do the same is to never give up and no matter how hard it gets nothing feels better than the feeling of winning. Hard work pays off!



## JAMES PROBERT

My name is James Probert, I'm 15 years old and I'm from Pembrokeshire. I started going to the boxing gym when I was seven years old, my dad used to box in the same gym and now he's my coach.

I have won four Welsh titles so far, I won my first British title last year, two European bronze medals 2014 & 2015, a bronze medal in the world championships in Russia

2015 and a gold medal in the Richards Tamulis tournament.

I train in Pembroke & Pembroke Dock ABC with my dad Nathan Probert and Andy Edmondson as my coaches. The biggest challenge I've overcome was travelling to different European countries and competing against world class boys. My ambitions are to box in the Commonwealth and Olympic Games.

The advice I'd give to anyone who wants to box is to train hard because you get out what you put in and never give up on your dream.



## JOHNBOY SMITH

Romany Gypsy JohnBoy Smith, who was paralysed from the waist down after being shot in the spine, has set his sights on Rio just 10 months into his wheelchair marathon racing career.

With a spectacular win in Dubai's Standard Chartered Marathon in March, JohnBoy made the cut to compete in Team GB for the London Marathon on April 24.

Speaking to The Travellers' Times JohnBoy said: "Rio is every athlete's ultimate dream – whether you're a runner, jumper, thrower, whether you're at the world championships or European championships – even getting there is a once in a lifetime opportunity. It's about determination and dedication – that's what it comes down to. If the best train 24 miles, I push for 25 – I stop when my coach tells me to."

The former boxer added: "I have been told that no one has done what I have done in 10 months."

The team for Rio will be announced in July with teammate and Paralympic legend David Weir training alongside JohnBoy, who is coached by legendary trainer, Jenny Archer.



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