

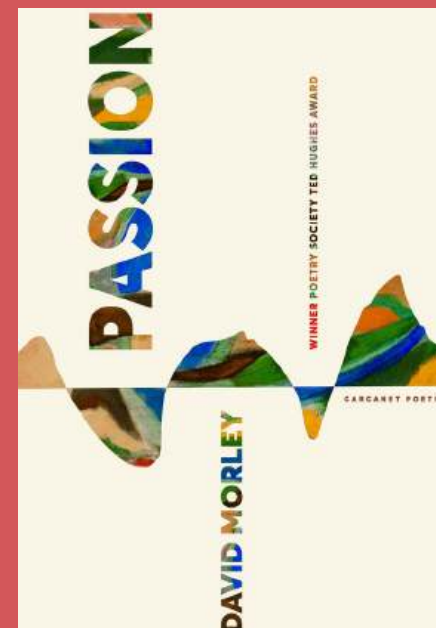
TRAVELLERS TIMES



LILLIE ELSIE JORDAN – DOING HER BIT

INSIDE: NEWS * INTERNATIONAL IRISH TRAVELLER DAY * MANCHESTER RALLY * LONDON HORSE DRIVE
* KENT FAIR * ASH SHEEHAN * ERIKA VARGA * OPINION * THE TINKER EXPERIMENTS * BOOKS

BOOKS



PASSION BY DAVID MORLEY

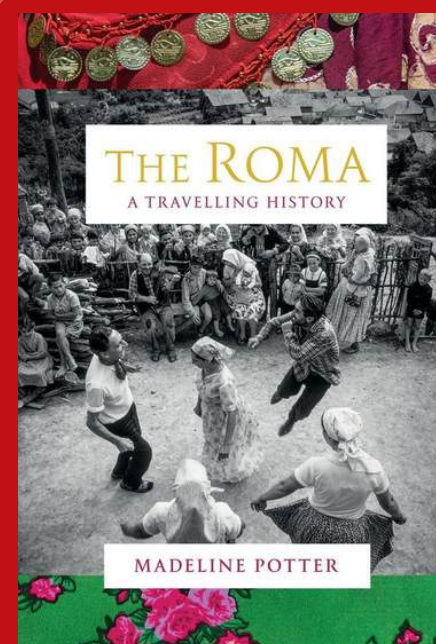
Ecologist and poet David Morley's new, supercharged collection, *Passion*, focuses on love, nature, and Romany Traveller life and language through storytelling and speech.

Drawing on Romany language, storytelling and the speech of birds, these poems look at climate change and environmental devastation from the perspectives of the margins.

Morley unpacks experiences of growing up in two worlds, Romany and English, touching on themes including domestic violence and childhood trauma.

Women are central to, and celebrated throughout, the collection, from their stories in Romany camps to world-shaping discoveries by female scientists.

Published by Carcanet Press on the 29th May, 2025. Order a copy through your local bookshop or direct from the publisher via Carcanet Press



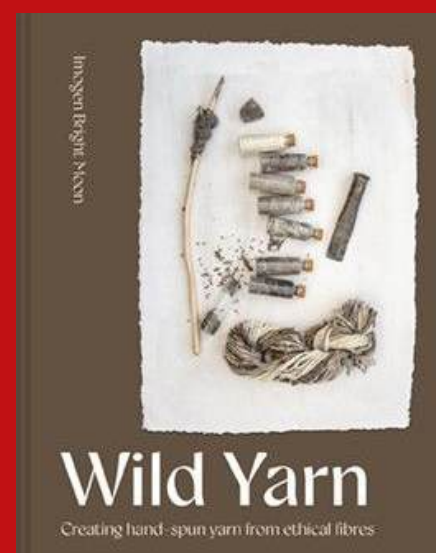
THE ROMA - A TRAVELLING HISTORY BY MADELINE POTTER

The Roma is a profoundly personal portrait of a people and their on-going journey, shedding new light on their history in countries through which they've travelled and in which they've settled, and what it means to be Romani in Europe today.

It is a history that is not widely understood, and that invisibility has created a space where fear and hostility continue to thrive. The Roma, as well as being full of fascinating stories and extraordinary individuals, is a powerful corrective to the stereotyping and prejudices that Romani communities still face today.

Throughout, Madeline Potter weaves in her travels through contemporary Romani Europe as well as strands of her own journey as a Romani woman in Romania and now the UK. In so doing she deftly blends explorative history with intimate accounts of racism to create a work of history that is also urgent, timely and forward-looking.

Published by Bodley Head/Vintage 22nd May 2025. Order a copy through your local bookshop or through Amazon HERE



WILD YARN BY IMOGEN BRIGHT MOON

Imogen Bright Moon, a British Romani textile artist, has published *Wild Yarn*, a practical and inspirational guide to choosing, blending and spinning richly textured artisan yarn for weaving, knitting and other textile art applications.

Imogen Bright Moon creates richly textured, highly tactile woven textile works from yarn that she spins and blends herself. In this elegantly designed book Imogen reveals the secrets of her practice. In evocative, engagingly written text accompanied by sumptuous images of her work in her studio throughout the year, she explains her craft.

With an emphasis on engagement with nature, the rhythms of the seasonal craft cycle, ethical making, sustainability and mindfulness, this book is ideal for weavers, textile artists and anyone seduced by the joys of yarn.

Out now. Published by Batsford Press. Buy a copy through your local bookshop or direct from the publisher via Wild Yarn - Batsford Books

HELPLINES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

COMMUNITY LAW PARTNERSHIP

Legal advice and support for Gypsies and Travellers who live in caravans or are liveaboard boaters, facing eviction or planning issues
0121 685 8595

DRIVE2SURVIVE

A national GRT-led campaign charity set up to oppose the new anti-Traveller laws. For advice and information call
07840 979302 or 07903 198022
www.drive2survive.org.uk

FRIENDS, FAMILIES & TRAVELLERS

Work to end racism and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and to protect the right to pursue a nomadic way of life.
01273 234777
fft@gypsy-traveller.org
www.gypsy-traveller.org

GATE HERTS

Community-led organisation for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.
gateherts.org.uk
01707 247 088
hub@gateherts.org.uk

LEEDS GYPSY AND TRAVELLER EXCHANGE

Confidential support and advocacy for Gypsies and Travellers living in or passing through West Yorkshire.
0113 2402444

LGBT TRAVELLER PRIDE

Advice and support for LGBTQ+ Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.
07395 355 066

LINCOLNSHIRE TRAVELLER INITIATIVE

Connecting Gypsy and Traveller people with services in the Lincolnshire area.
07503 878 740

GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUPS

ONE CALL AWAY

Gypsy & Traveller Mental Health Support.
07748 997617
onecallawaytoday@gmail.com

PRIDE OF ROMANI

Community-led organisation based in Cheshire.
prideofromani@gmail.com

REPORT RACISM GRT

Report Hate Crime against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.
reportracismgrt.com

ROMA SUPPORT GROUP

Supporting and empowering the Roma community.
0794 908 9778
info@romasupportgroup.org.uk

TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

Providing support and advice nationally to Gypsies and Travellers. Visit our website.
www.travellermovement.org.uk
0207 607 2002
info@travellermovement.org.uk

TRAVELLING AHEAD

Support & advice for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities across Wales.
0808 802 0025
travellingahead@tgpcymru.org.uk

YORK TRAVELLERS TRUST

Supporting Gypsy and Traveller people in York and surrounding area.
01904 630526
www.ytt.org.uk

GENERAL

**ALCOHOLICS
ANONYMOUS**
0808 200 0247

CHILDLINE
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

Providing physical, financial and emotional support to people living with cancer and their families.
0808 808 00 00
7 days a week, 8am-8pm
www.macmillan.org.uk

MIND
For better mental health.
0300 123 3393
www.mind.org.uk

**NATIONAL DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE HELPLINE**
0808 2000 247

SAMARITANS
116 123
www.samaritans.org

**WOMENS AID
(DOMESTIC ABUSE)**
www.womensaid.org

EDITORIAL



Important announcement regarding the Travellers Times

Hi readers, we have some great news!

The Travellers Times has very recently been accepted as an official independent charity! Our entry can now be found on the Charity Commission's website [Travellers Times Charity](http://TravellersTimesCharity.org.uk).

This is a really positive change, as this means that the Travellers Times Charity are now governed by our own dedicated Board of Trustees, allowing us to continue to serve the communities we represent. We currently have three trustees as a core team and will be recruiting more as we work on our first funding bid so that we can carry on our operations.

Up until now the Travellers Times has been a project run by the Rural Media Charity, who have been an excellent guardian of the Travellers Times for its 25-year-long history, and we are grateful for all the hard work they have put in to keep the Travellers Times running, and who will continue to support us until our official Travellers Times Charity independence day on July 1st, later this summer, when Rural Media will step away and our own Trustees will take over.

As we prepare for independence, there may be a slight reduction in the stories and content we publish, and as part of that reduction this issue of the Travellers Times Magazine (Spring/Summer issue 76) will be online only.

TRAVELLERS TIMES

Although we won't be able to send out printed copies in the mail this time, we have packed it with all the engaging content that you've come to expect, and you can download and print it from our website.

We hope to return to normal service as the new fledgling Travellers Times Charity grows, finds its feet and looks forward to the future and the next 25 years of its existence!

We are incredibly grateful for your continued support. Your belief in Travellers Times has made this journey possible, and we look forward to moving towards complete independence with you. We thank you all in advance for being part of our next exciting chapter!

Travellers Times Charity Team and Board of Trustees

I am delighted and hugely proud that after founding Travellers Times magazine 25 years ago Rural Media is handing on this national and internationally recognised publication and digital platform to a new and brilliant Gypsy, Roma and Traveller-led organisation. Rural Media looks forward to continuing its support in every way that it can to the new Travellers Times Charity, its new Board of Trustees, and the communities that it so powerfully represents.

**Nic Millington, Founder
and Rural Media CEO**



RURAL MEDIA CHARITY

COVER PHOTO: LILLIE JORDAN AT HOME WITH
HER NEW BOOK, 'ROAMING THROUGH THE
WORDS' © ESZTER HALASI

MAIN: APPLEBY BY BELA VARADI

APPLEBY FAIR WILL NOT BECOME A COMMERCIAL FESTIVAL – SAYS NEW REPORT

Appleby Fair should not become a ticketed and licensed event and should instead remain “a large informal and often spontaneous gathering” – says a wide-ranging independent report published in March.

The report was commissioned in 2022 to provide advice to the group of authorities, local councils, voluntary agencies and Gypsy and Traveller representatives who support the annual event.

One of the main topics the report covered is whether Appleby Fair should become a licensed and ticketed event in an arena, and whether that would solve any problems that tend to crop up when the fair takes place.

At the time the report was commissioned Billy Welch, who sits on the Appleby Fair support group and is the annual leaseholder for Fair Hill, told the Travellers Times that turning the fair into a licensed and ticketed event “is not as simple as some people like to think”.

“But you can’t charge people for a ticket for being on a public highway in Cumbria, or for walking through Appleby Town to the River Eden, any more than you can charge people to visit Blackpool and go to the beach on a bank holiday weekend.”

Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code to see a longer version of this article on our website.

TT News



MANCHESTER - 'NEVER SEEN RACISM LIKE THIS BEFORE'

Romany Gypsies and Travellers reacted in horror when Greater Manchester Police were accused of “brutal” and “racialised” policing against young people and children visiting the city centre in November, last year.

Videos of police indiscriminately barring Traveller young people from shopping centres and “herding” them back onto trains at mainline Manchester stations spread rapidly on social media.

In another video, a young Traveller man remonstrated with police outside the Manchester Arndale Centre, demanding to know why they were not letting him go in. The young man was then brutally thrown to the ground by the police before being bundled into a police van.

The shocking scenes prompted the Gypsy Traveller League charity to call for a protest – which passed peacefully on 6th December (photo story on page 8).

Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code to see a longer version of this article on our website.

TT News

NEW PLANNING POLICY AIMS TO ADDRESS TRAVELLER SITE INEQUALITIES

In a move to tackle the long-standing challenges faced by Gypsy and Traveller communities in the UK, the government has introduced an updated Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, effective December 2024.

These changes are designed to provide fairer and more inclusive processes for planning applications, increase the provision of authorised sites, and hold local authorities accountable for meeting the needs of our communities.

The updated policy is being hailed as a step in the right direction. However, while these revisions offer a framework for positive change, advocates warn that the success of the policy depends on robust enforcement and sustained commitment by local councils.

A key aspect of the revised policy is the expansion of the term ‘Traveller’. The updated definition now includes individuals who have a cultural tradition of nomadism or living in caravans, even if they have ceased travelling permanently or temporarily. This adjustment is significant, as it recognises the realities faced by many in the community who may no longer lead a nomadic lifestyle.

Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code to see a longer version of this article on our website.

Claire Rice

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE FUNDRAISER ORGANISERS



TRAVELLER MEN RAISE OVER £14K FOR CHILDREN IN HOSPITAL

Even RJ Draper, Levi W and pals were surprised when the fundraiser they had organised for Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital and St George’s Hospital in London reached “fourteen and a half grand”.

The Gypsy and Traveller men had got together to raise money for charity before but normally raised five or six grand, says Tom Ball, whose daughter Valentina was the inspiration and motive behind this fundraising bash.

Tommy adds that Valentina had a serious illness and is now recovering – thanks to the grace of God and the work of the doctors and nurses at St George’s Hospital, but at first it was touch and go.

The fundraising started with a football match between two teams of Gypsy and Traveller men – eleven a side, with a referee, linesman, cheering supporters, and on a full-size pitch: so proper Match of the Day stuff!

Once the fundraiser was closed, the organisers decided to use the money to directly help the children in the hospitals, so the organisers went out and bought toys.

“We bought PlayStation 5s, 15 Nintendo switches, 20 iPads and more, and we went and donated them to the children’s wards,” says Tom, adding that there are many children in the hospitals whose parents can’t afford the toys they need to keep them occupied while they undergo treatment.

“Some people are not as fortunate as other people,” explains Tommy Ball.

TT News

CASANOVA. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CASANOVA’S FAMILY



CASANOVA – A LIVING LEGEND TO HIS FAMILY

Casanova has had many obstacles to overcome from birth and his mam and dad were told he wouldn’t make it when he was born, but at five years old he’s still defying all the odds.

Despite being told he wouldn’t do anything, he walks, talks and likes to be cheeky to his Aunty Vee.

Casanova, who is a grandson of the much-missed Ryalla Duffy, likes doing exactly what all the other kids are doing even though due to his low muscle tone it is so much harder for him to balance and keep up, but he doesn’t let that stop him.

Casanova spent the majority of 2024 in hospital, almost losing his life due to complications, but in true Casanova style he fought and fought and this week he started back at school where he earned a certificate of recognition.

People could learn a lot from Casanova, never letting any disabilities stop him from doing what he wants to do and getting up each day and fighting to be stronger and to achieve everything he wants to achieve.

His family absolutely adore him and dote on him. It really is beautiful to watch his older brother and his cousins make sure he isn’t left out and the way Casanova watches over his little sister and protects her is enough to make the strongest men cry.

He really is a living legend.

By Stacey-Michelle Kemp (Casanova’s godmother)



MAIN: IRISH TRAVELLERS AND SUPPORTERS AT THE LONDON SAINT PATRICK'S DAY PARADE. PHOTO COURTESY OF INTERNATIONAL IRISH TRAVELLER DAY

INTERNATIONAL IRISH TRAVELLER DAY SET FOR 25TH JULY – SAY ORGANISERS

Every year on the Sunday before or on St Patrick's Day on the 17th March, the London St Patrick's Day Parade and Festival takes place, with the parade starting at midday and festivities winding down around 6pm in Trafalgar Square.

And for every London St Patrick's Day Parade, a contingent of Irish Travellers from the London boroughs and surrounding counties typically go along to join in the fun.

This year, as well as having fun and taking pride in their Irish roots, one group of Travellers were there to spread a message about a very important day that will be taking place later in the summer on the 25th July – the first-ever annual International Irish Traveller Day.

The Travellers Times spoke to Mena Mongan – one of the organisers of this ground-breaking event.

"Our aim is to create an International Irish Traveller Day," said Mena, an Irish Traveller activist who lives in Hackney and works for the charity London Gypsies and Travellers.

"We want to celebrate our rich heritage and culture and history of Irish Travellers in Britain."

The idea first came about in a conversation between Mena and Josie O'Driscoll, who is the Irish Traveller Chief Executive Officer of GATE Herts, a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller charity based in Hertfordshire.



GATE HERTS STAFF HOLDING UP THE NEW IRISH TRAVELLER FLAG. JOSIE O'DRISCOLL IS ON THE RIGHT. PHOTO COURTESY OF GATE HERTS

Mena and Josie then set up a steering group of Irish Traveller activists, based in both the UK and the Republic of Ireland, who have been meeting for nearly two years to make the idea become a reality.

After consultations at Gypsy and Traveller cultural events like Appleby Fair, meetings with Irish Traveller charities based in the Republic of Ireland, followed by an online voting poll, the date was finally decided on earlier this year.

Not content with creating an International Irish Traveller Day, the organising group also came up with an Irish Traveller flag to go with the event!

"We haven't come up with what we are going to do on the day yet," said Mena, adding that they were having meetings to get the ball rolling.

"We want to hold an event in every city that has an Irish Traveller organisation or community – like London, Manchester and Bristol."

Good luck with the first-ever International Irish Traveller Day – from all at the Travellers Times – and be sure to mark the 25th July in your diary folks!

TT News



MAIN: BY ESZTER HALASI | BOOK COVER PHOTO BY LILLIE ELSIE JORDAN

'I'M JUST TRYING TO CREATE SOMETHING EDUCATIONAL THAT OUR CHILDREN CAN RELATE TO'

It was a discrimination incident at her daughter's school that prompted Lillie Elsie Jordan to finally create her children's activity book *Are We There Yet?* to do her bit to help combat the stigma that Romany Gypsies and Travellers all so often face.

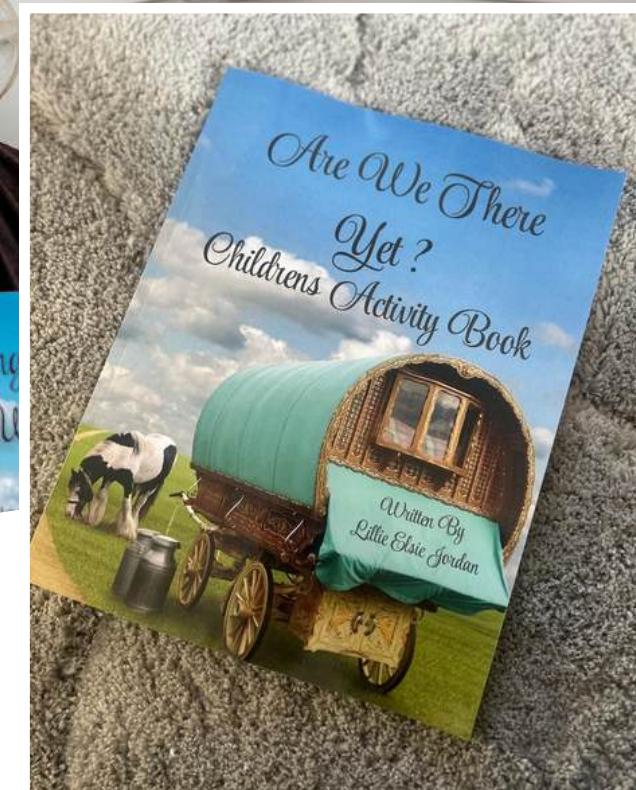
"When I had the initial idea, it was back in the summer," says Lillie.

"There was an incident with discrimination – I don't want to go into the details to protect the victim's privacy – and I would definitely say that this gave me the push to finally go ahead and publish *Are We There Yet?* because I was like, no, this needs to stop."

Are We There Yet? was named after the constant refrain that many mums and dads hear when on a journey with their children – and in Lillie's case it was often heard when the family set off during the Travelling season and were on their way to visit fairs and other events.

Lillie explains that *Are We There Yet?* is full of educational activities that Gypsy and Traveller children can relate to and that they recognise from their own culture – and it is already attracting some good feedback.

"One of the teachers from my daughter's school sat down with one of the students that live on my site, and she never, ever could get a conversation out of this little girl about anything," says Lillie.



Scan to see on Amazon!

"And the little girl started to get really into the activities, and it created sort of a bond between that teacher and the student."

Lillie also sent the book to a few Gypsy and Traveller social media influencers – including Heidi Clee, a TikTok influencer who is a Traveller and married to a Gypsy man.

"Heidi messaged me, and she said, 'Both my children proper loved them, they are so good, my husband brought them down to show his dad as well, he couldn't get over them, literally, everyone from the oldest to the youngest has loved them.'"

"It's done quite well, really, so far," says Lillie, adding that the feedback so far is that this book must be in available in schools – because there is so little out there for Gypsy and Traveller children.

In fact, *Are We There Yet?* has done so well that Lillie has just published a literacy work book called *Roaming through the Words*.

"I'm just trying to create something educational that our children can relate to – especially the boys – to keep them keen and to keep them interested, because bless them, I've got male relatives and they can't read nor write, and that needs to change" says Lillie.

Are We There Yet? and *Roaming through the Words* are available to buy through Amazon. Click [HERE](#) to find out more.

By Mike Doherty

PHOTO STORIES

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ESZTER HALASI

MANCHESTER - LET OUR VOICES BE HEARD

After the shocking police brutality against Gypsy and Traveller children and young people attending the Manchester Christmas markets (see page 4), John Reilly, CEO of the Gypsy Traveller League charity, called for a “peaceful rally” for Traveller rights in Manchester on Friday 6th December, last year.

“This is the day we stand as one against discrimination,” he said. “Don’t just talk about change. Be part of it.” Manchester Traveller Tommy Joyce echoed John Reilly’s call: “Let our voices be heard.”

Hundreds of Travellers and supporters turned up to protest and the rally, which took place in the city centre, passed peacefully.

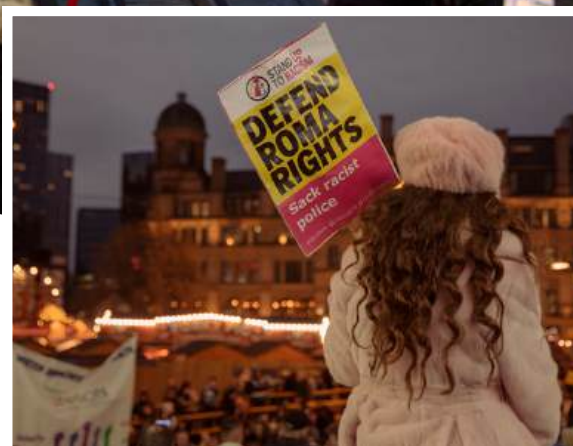
Lizzie and Kaylie and family – all Travellers from Manchester – had turned up to make change. They explained that all three generations of their family had suffered from racism all their lives and they didn’t want it to keep on going through future generations.

“If we don’t do something now, they’re not going to have a life, are they?”

Lizzie told the Travellers Times that they had family that had been directly affected by the actions of the police. “Obviously they are a bit shaken up, but they’re used to it – it’s normal for us,” said Lizzie.

See a longer version of this article on our website [HERE](#)

TT News



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ESZTER HALASI

GET UP FOR THE LONDON CHRISTMAS DRIVE 2024!

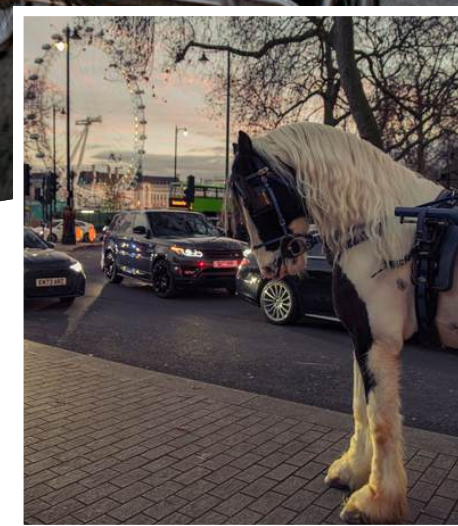
Last year in mid-December, the Christmas Drive is held in London. This year, 257 horses and their families gathered for the drive, gliding through central London in their beautifully decorated, festive carriages.

The drive is not only a heart-warming event in the community’s life before Christmas but also serves as one of the last year-end drives for the Traveller and Gypsy community – although there were a few Boxing Day drives dotted about the country, but not nearly as big and not in London.

The participants are there to show off their horses and carts and have fun. No racing is allowed by the organisers.

The London drive encourages participants to take part in fundraising and donation efforts. Last year’s fundraiser aimed to purchase toys for The Salvation Army, helping them provide children’s gifts for Christmas.

Words and photographs by Eszter Halasi





FEATURE

KENT HORSE FAIR 2025 - SUCCESS IN THE SUN

A glorious day of sunshine blessed the Kent Horse Fair held on April 6th, 2025, this year, which brought out an even bigger crowd than usual.

With a beautiful array of stalls, for all your household wants and needs; from cushions to Crown Derby, to Spanish cleaner & washables, as well as beautifully made children's wear.

Kushti homemade cakes and crumbles from Amy Hilden's truly scrumptious baby pink and mint green trailer, which is a sweet box in itself – and who wouldn't be tempted by school cake and custard – the queue was continuous and there were definitely a few going back for seconds.

This year's Kent Fair took me back to the old days of the Epsom Derby, when it had a real sense of community and meeting up to share a day that was meant for us.

Having attended the Kent Fair before there's no doubt that it's going from strength to strength. It's well organised and run and it has a truly community atmosphere and is a great day out for all the family. There is something for everyone, and where else can you buy a goat, a horse, or a goldfinch?



In a field in West Malling, there's a proper sense of tradition and respect and proper old-school dealing and long may it continue.

If you haven't been yet, then don't forget the next fair is on the 6th of July 2025. Parking is only £5 to stay all day, there are toilets on site and plenty of stalls for food and drink.

You can follow the Kent Fair on Facebook – and for updates on all the fairs follow the excellent Romany Heritage Facebook group [HERE](#).

By Dee Cooper



ASH SHEEHAN

MAIN: ASH SHEEHAN PLAYS AT TINKS TROVE EMPORIUM



UNCLE JONNY GOLDFINGER WITH A YOUNG ASH SHEEHAN (PHOTO COURTESY OF ASH SHEEHAN)

Irish Traveller filmmaker Johnny P Collins was in for a few surprises when he recently took the train to Birmingham to meet musician and session drummer Ash Sheehan – who hails from a Traveller/Circus background himself ...

It's lunchtime and I made it to Birmingham. As I walked down the staircase at New Street and turned the corner to meet the legend Ash Sheehan, I was to find out this interview would be special.

Ash – who is a professional session drummer and in a rock band called Twang – looked dapper in a fine suit and hat, and with his gold watch and rings to match and I felt I was in the presence of a rockstar. Ash was driving me to a special location for our interview, but first we had to make a side quest.

As we drove, Ash spoke about his music and the tours and how it took him around the world, but the true heart of the man behind the music shone through as he spoke about his family. His uncle, Jonny Goldfinger, who became like a father figure to him at a young age, taught him the music which led him to the path he's now on.

We took a turn into a local auto shop and jumped out. Walking in Ash gave me a first-hand look at his new reg which spelled out G13PSY! We moved on to his friend's mechanic shop and it was quickly fitted on to Ash's van.

We finally arrived at the location in Feckenham, Worcestershire and my eyes widened as I saw for the first time in my life a vintage shop full of Gypsy and Traveller memorabilia called the Tinks Trove Emporium.

As Ash sat ready with his guitar warming up for his live performances, we gathered round, and I set my camera to record. As Ash performed you could feel his passion for the music that drove this man through life. As Ash sang and played guitar something strange happened – the lights around him began to warm – and a surprise was revealed when we played back the video footage. On film we could see that a glowing orb had appeared beside Ash, dancing along with joy. As I watched the footage my thoughts went back to the conversation earlier and the joy when Ash spoke of his dear uncle. Our final thoughts were that it was Uncle Jonny Goldfinger coming back to cheer his beloved nephew on and to remind him that he's always about!

As a creative in the film industry who comes from the Irish Traveller community, meeting Ash was a welcome refresh for me, as it's rare that I meet another Traveller creative in my work – and one who's level minded while also protective, respectful and proud of their background!

I'm glad I got to meet Ash Sheehan – a true inspiration in music and life.

Photographs and words by Johnny P. Collins for the Travellers Times



ERIKA VARGA

MAIN: ERIKA VARGA BY ESZTER HALASI



'OUR ART IS A RESPONSE TO OUR WORLD, TO WHAT WE OBSERVE'

In a cozy nook in Erika Varga's Budapest home, lies the heart of Romani Design. As I sat down to talk with Erika, the leader and creative force behind the Hungarian brand, our conversation wove an intricate fabric of complex traditions, challenges faced by youth today, activism, and the responsibilities shouldered by Roma artists and intellectuals.

Reflecting on the factors that contributed to their success, Erika emphasised the importance of innovative communication.

"Fashion and design provide a universally understandable language," she explained. "Yet, to sustain success over time, strong awareness and perseverance are necessary. These elements' essence and strength determine whether something will be successful or remain a failure."

Discussing the preservation and abandonment of traditions and cultural elements, Erika highlighted the importance of preserving the language. "We have preserved our language as descendants of a tradition-keeping Olah Roma lineage," she said.

"However, unfortunately, linguistic assimilation is quite high among the generations following us." Erika traced this trend back to historical injustices, mentioning the Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa's reign in the 18th century, and the policies enforced that promoted assimilation and worsened the loss of cultural identity.

"The abandonment of our own communities due to work and education, the mobilisation, inherently creates the situation where recreating the original cultural identity, as experienced in childhood or within the community, becomes a challenge," Erika explained. "Among the elements voluntarily sacrificed are dressing customs, hairstyles, family celebrations, and language – which fades last."

Speaking of the consequences of this loss, I asked: "Can it be said that the mistake of previous generations is the loss of cultural knowledge?"

"Perhaps 'mistake' is a strong expression, but there is truth in it," replied Erika.

"We need to consider whether accepting promises communicated by the majority, sacrificing our own cultural treasures and ourselves, is truly the best answer for Roma people?"

When we discussed Romani Design's responsibility as artists, Erika emphasised their role in shaping opinions. "Every generation has a responsibility within the given social framework," she noted. "It's not just the responsibility of the majority society; the efforts of Roma intellectuals and artists are important too! Our art is a response to our world, to what we observe," adding that she expressed her desire for people to understand the value of Roma culture through Romani Design's work.

Erika highlighted the importance of Roma identity, stressing the need to reclaim it for future generations. We discussed the reception of Romani Design's art among today's youth. "Internationally, we see a change where traditional attire is gaining increasing importance as a form of communication," Erika explained. "The catalysing effect of Romani Design has been crucial in this change over our 14 years of committed work."

Erika stressed the importance of smart decisions in preserving identity, whether through traditional motifs or a unique style that reflects one's origin. When we talked about a Roma young person who leaves the community for education and then feels rejected upon return to the community, Erika was decisive. "That doesn't happen," she said. "If a skilled individual wants to return to the community, they are welcomed."

Words and photographs by Eszter Halasi

OPINION

WHY PIP IS A LITERAL LIFELINE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

A new government Green Paper 'Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working', proposes a number of changes to PIP (Personal Independent Payments) and Universal Credit. These changes include making it harder to score enough points to receive the daily living component of PIP, a freeze on the amount received under the health element of Universal Credit until 2030, eligibility of the health element only beginning at age 22 and the scrapping of the 'Work Capability Assessment', meaning that only people entitled to PIP will receive the health element of Universal Credit. So, losing one will also mean losing the other.

A University of Worcester report states that Romany and Traveller people in the UK have life expectancies between 10 and 25 years shorter than the general population and are significantly more likely to have a disability or health problem that limits ability to work or complete daily tasks. The report, 'Including the Missing Voices of Disabled People in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities', adds that disabled Gypsy, Roma and Traveller folks are likely to experience intersectional forms of discrimination and economic inactivity caused by disability or long-term sickness was the highest rate amongst all ethnic groups in the UK. According to the last census, our communities are also almost twice as likely than the wider public to provide 50 or more unpaid hours of caring work for a relative or friend.

It's expensive being disabled. According to disability charity Scope, it costs an extra £1,010 per month on average. I can't work full-time due to extreme fatigue and pain, seizures, autism and mental health issues. PIP pays for those shortfalls and for equipment that the NHS just doesn't provide, e.g. my NHS-issue crutch caused me extreme pain to use, an ergonomic one costs over £100, and my rollator cost £400. A large proportion of my PIP goes to my Motability car which, again, enables me to work part-time as a self-employed artist and attend appointments as public transport isn't accessible for everyone. My receiving PIP means that my husband can claim Carer's Allowance and his daily support again allows me to work and live a life worth living.

Taking away my disability support wouldn't make me magically able to work full-time and preventing me from doing the work I can would lead to further costs for the government, e.g., if I were to be hospitalised again due to poor mental health caused by losing the work that I am able to do, it could cost the NHS approximately £440 per day and it could even cost me my life.

MPs on the 'Work and Pensions Committee' heard in 2023 that 69 suicides were linked to problems with benefit claims over the preceding 6 years with the number probably much higher as the DWP hadn't actively sought information from families or coroners or investigated all of the cases reported to it.

This fact is especially troubling when you consider that the suicide rates for Gypsies and Travellers are more than twice those of White British people for women and 1.6 times higher for men according to a Friends, Families and Travellers report which also outlines that self-employment and unpaid caring duties are contributing factors to these numbers.

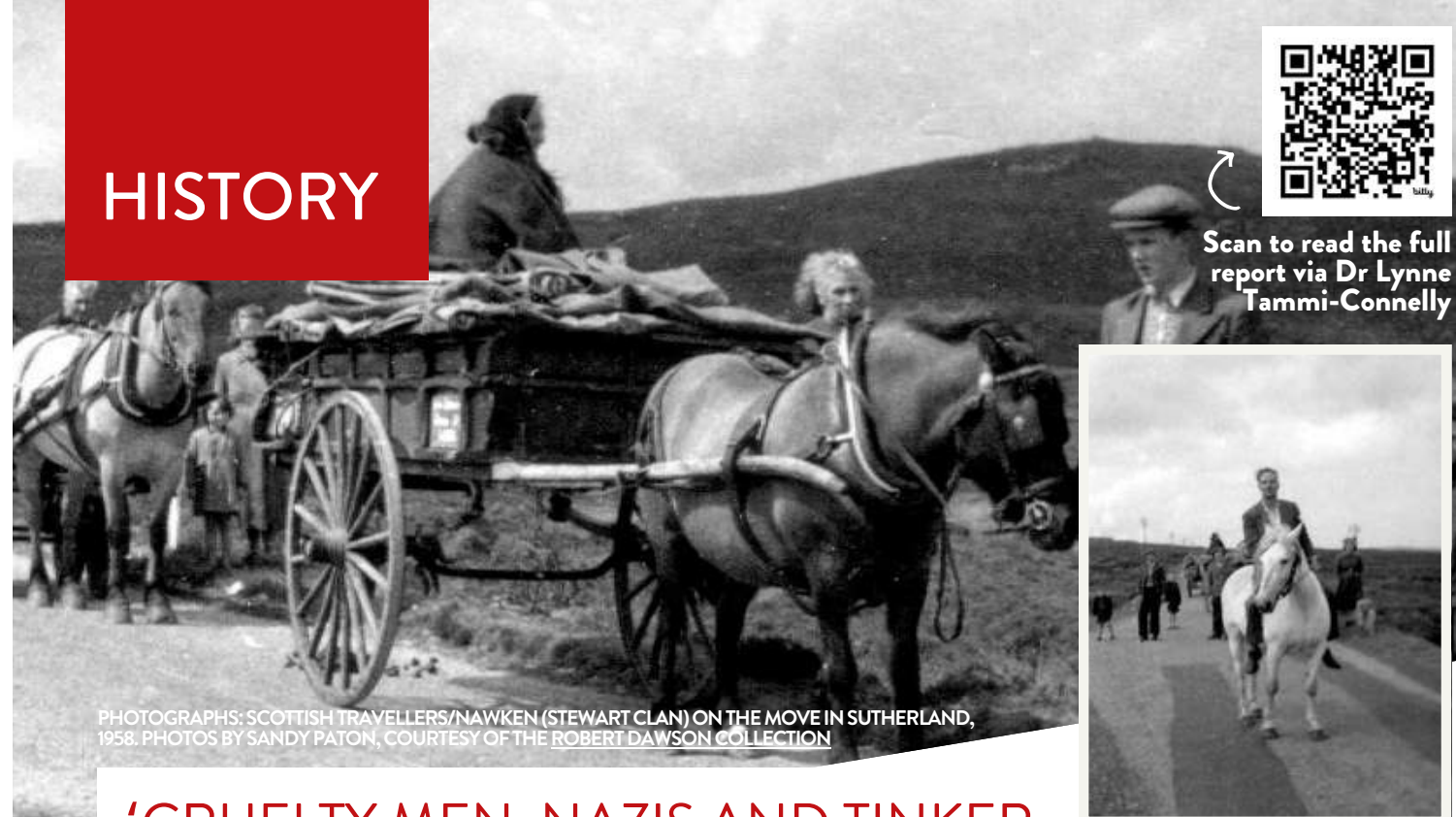
Taking away PIP could take away Gypsy, Roma and Traveller livelihoods and lives, costing the public purse and individuals far, far more in the future.

Gemma Lees

PHOTOGRAPH BY CATH MULDOWNEY

GEMMA LEES

HISTORY



PHOTOGRAPHS: SCOTTISH TRAVELLERS/NAWKEN (STEWART CLAN) ON THE MOVE IN SUTHERLAND, 1958. PHOTOS BY SANDY PATON, COURTESY OF THE ROBERT DAWSON COLLECTION

'CRUELTY MEN, NAZIS AND TINKER EXPERIMENTS' – THE HISTORIC CULTURAL GENOCIDE OF SCOTLAND'S GYPSY TRAVELLERS

A leaked research report into the historic abuse of Scottish Travellers/Nawken has laid bare the role of both the Scottish authorities and religious institutions in the "cultural genocide" of Scotland's only "indigenous ethnic minority".

The 80-page report also reveals that the Scottish authorities colluded with the Nazis and allowed their scientists to study Scottish Gypsy Travellers in 1938 just before the Second World War started.

The report – funded by the Scottish Government – was leaked by Scottish Traveller campaigner and academic Dr Lynne Tammi-Connelly who became concerned that the Scottish Government were delaying the publication of the report and were attempting to 'sanitize' it and remove the most shocking content.

"I take no pleasure in leaking this report but given the fact that the government has been sitting on it for months and their many attempts to have a lot of content removed, I felt I had no choice," Dr Lynne Tammi-Connelly wrote in a Facebook post alongside a link to the report.

The report, which was researched and written by Scotland's top academics, details how the Scottish authorities and religious institutions – such as the Quarriers and Barnardo's – used 'cruelty men' to seize children from families and put them into workhouses in an effort to "erase" Scottish Gypsy Traveller culture.

Some of the children were also then sent abroad to the colonies to work, and almost all were never seen by their families again.

The researchers state that they are clear that what happened was an act of "cultural genocide", where the Scottish authorities and the religious institutions sought to "'detinkerise' children", "abolish tinkerness", and "end the gypsy race".

Another tool that the Scottish authorities used to eradicate Scottish Gypsy Travellers/Nawken was the setting up of what were effectively small-scale concentration camps which families were forced to live in as a step towards forced assimilation into the wider population, which were collectively known by the authorities as the "Tinker Experiments".

These abuses continued until the 1970s, say the researchers, and has since been followed by a policy of assimilation that continues to this day.

The report also reveals that in the 1938, just before the Second World War, the Scottish authorities allowed Wolfgang Abel, a top German eugenicist (a discredited science of inferior and superior human 'races') to visit Scottish Gypsy Travellers and to study them for his Nazi masters back in Berlin. Nazi Germany went on to murder over a million Romanies (and also non-Romani Travellers) during the Holocaust.

The report calls for an apology from the Scottish Government, and reparations and actions to ameliorate the generational trauma that Scottish Gypsy Travellers/Nawken suffered during over a century of Scotland's "cultural genocide".

TT News

BOOKS

COURTESY OF RAY WILLS



Set in Dorset, this book provides a factual and historical account of Gypsy and Traveller life, taking you on a journey through times gone by into the present day. The book captivated my interest from the beginning. Ray Wills sets the scene with introductory poems taking you back to the past especially with his poem *The Way of Life*. This leads nicely into a brief history of the author's family, ancestors, description of accommodation and trades within his own personal family experiences.

I really like how after the introductory pages the journey continues, and you become immersed in each chapter. Each chapter brings Gypsy and Traveller history to life through the poem at start to set the scene. This is followed by a balance of photographs, history of encampments, families who settled or travelled through, Romany trades and traditions as well as a complete history of Gypsy and Traveller presence within Dorset.

I had no previous knowledge of Dorset and the history before I read this wonderful book. Ray Wills has written this in a way that your attention is captured from the beginning, and I came to feel part of the content and people's stories.

As I was reading, I could imagine the families living on encampments, making the bricks and being part of Dorset and the surrounding areas. I became immersed in the stories being told through poetry with my favourite ones being *The Way of Life*, *Vardo Days* and *Bender Days* amongst others.

It has been a great pleasure to be able to review this unique and soul-soothing book. I highly recommend it to anyone whether you have lived in this area, surrounding areas or not anywhere nearby. You will feel as though you have been on the journey with the author and others in this book.

All Ray Wills' books can be purchased through Amazon. Click [HERE](#) to learn more.

By Stacey Hodgkins

ROMANY HERITAGE

Romany Heritage Facebook Page was started in 2012 to try and combat, through the medium of photos, the negative press and media reports seen in newspapers, TV and on social media by presenting the positive normal family life of most Travellers.

The beauty of Romany Heritage – which has grown to just short of 200,000 followers at the time of this magazine going to print – is that its contributors post photos of events, like fairs and drives, as soon as the event happens and often even before they are finished.

The founder, John, who himself went to over 30 fairs, drives, charity events and auctions last year alone, said this to the Travellers Times:

"I have the help and support from Richard William Short, who posts regularly as 'The Vest', and also the other admins Kim & Sue, who keep an eye on the page, occasionally stepping in to deal with problem posts when I am away. We also have regular contributions from photographers Alan Mawdsley, Helen Blackburn and Elwyn L Evans."

Romany Heritage will also post contributions from followers who send their own photos to the page by Facebook Messenger.

Check out [Romany Heritage](#) – if you haven't already – and in the meantime here is a wonderful selection of the kind of photographs that you will find.

Romany Heritage



BARTON FEST 14TH SEPTEMBER 2024 ~ CHARITY EVENT.



ON THE ROAD TO APPLEBY WITH PETER EVANS, HORSES BILLY & FLOWER, A JACK EVANS MEMORIAL JOURNEY TO APPLEBY 27TH MAY 2022



HORSMONDEN HORSE FAIR 8TH SEPTEMBER 2024



VIC LAURENCE & BETTY BILLINGTON SMITH AT KUSHTI-BOK'S, ROMA HISTORY DAY EVENT AT DORCHESTER, 15TH JUNE 2024



MALT PROFFITT, ROADSIDE, NEAR UTTOXETER, 7 SEPTEMBER 2022



MARC ATKINSON ~ SEND OFF, 7TH MARCH 2025



RAY'S COBS DRIVE, SWANSEA, 5TH MAY, 2024.



JOHN PERKS WITH DORA AT THE LONDON CHRISTMAS DRIVE 14TH DECEMBER 2024

A THUMBS UP FROM OUR REVIEWER STACEY HODGKINS FOR RAY WILL'S LATEST COLLECTION OF POETRY AND PROSE ABOUT DORSET ROMANY HISTORY

With the title *Heather For Your Luck My Dear*, Romany author and poet Ray Wills draws you into the book from the start. This immediately brought back one of my childhood memories of seeing women from the community selling it in my hometown.