

THE MAGAZINE FOR GYPSIES, ROMA & TRAVELLERS

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TRAVELLERS TIMES



NO ONE EVER ASKED

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TRAVELLERS TIMES

EDITORIAL



Josie O'Driscoll with compere Martin Beanz Warde © Lauren Matthews

Dear readers. Welcome to a bumper Spring/Summer 2022 Travellers' Times Magazine.

To celebrate our 70th issue, we have four extra pages and a poster insert which is the result of our collaboration with Radical Traveller Arts, whose art competition we advertised in the last issue of the magazine and on our website at www.travellerstimes.org.uk

RADICAL TRAVELLER ARTS

The judges at Radical Traveller Arts had an enormous number of entries to their three categories, which were 'junior', 'aspiring' and 'professional' artist. So, thank you to everyone who took part. The art competition and poster printing and insert were fully funded by Radical Traveller Arts and we hope to collaborate with them again soon. So, watch this space.

By now all the winners and runners up will have been informed, but we can confirm that the three winners are:

Professional: **Dolly**

Aspiring: **Albi Knight**

Junior: **Hero Korycinska.**

The three winning entries have been printed out as posters by *Radical Traveller Arts* and you will have one of those winners as an insert in your copy of the Travellers' Times. You can find out more at Radical Traveller Arts at: www.rtarts.org.uk

FRIENDS, FAMILIES AND TRAVELLERS AWARDS 2022

The winners of the Friends, Families and Travellers Awards 2022 were announced on Wednesday, 16th February at the Embassy of Ireland.

"All of us at FFT are filled with pride for every single person that took part in the Friends, Families and Travellers Awards 2022, from the winners, to the nominees, to the attendees," say Friends, Families and Travellers.

AND THE WINNERS ARE:

Inspirational Young Person Award:

Josie Welsh

Education Award:

Future4Fairgrounds

Sporting Excellence Award:

John Edwards

Inspirational Project Award:

Showmen's Mental Health Awareness Charity

Arts, Culture and Heritage Award:

David G Pullar

Alexander Award for Lifetime Achievement:

Josie O'Driscoll

To find out more visit the Friends, Families and Travellers website at: www.gypsy-traveller.org

PRIDE OF ROMANI

A new grassroots Cheshire-based organisation is holding a launch event and open day in Nantwich Civic Hall on the 24th June. To find out more contact prideofromani@gmail.com

Mike Doherty, Editor, Travellers' Times

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NEWS



A Traveller vehicle and trailer on a negotiated temporary site in Manchester © Mike Doherty



GTL visit the Traveller Movement to get support for their sports and mental health project. Left to right: Jamal (GTL), Greg (TM), John (GTL), Jenni, Sabrina, Maureen (all TM), Tony (GTL), and Anna (TM). © Traveller Movement



Stock image by Matthew Ansley on Unsplash.



A closed transit site in Wiltshire. © Mike Doherty

PRISONS: EQUAL ACCESS TO REHABILITATION

The Traveller Movement will be visiting prisons in England to investigate and then tackle any barriers that may stop Gypsy and Traveller prisoners from accessing potentially life-changing rehabilitation programmes, such as education, well-being and employment classes.

"We need to ensure that Gypsy and Traveller prisoners have equal access to purposeful activities in prisons and that they suit the needs of prisoners from those communities," said Traveller Movement researcher Rebecca Thompson.

Rehabilitation programmes and prisoner group sessions ground to a halt during the Covid pandemic as prisons shut down activities that could spread the virus.

The Traveller Movement wants to make sure that Gypsy and Traveller prisoners will not be forgotten or overlooked by the authorities as prisons open up and rehabilitation programmes kick in again.

COUNCILS TO GET £10 MILLION FOR MORE TRAVELLER SITES

The government is set to provide funding for councils to build more Traveller sites in a bid to "level up" outcomes for Gypsy and Traveller people.

The £10 million fund, announced on the 20th March, is dedicated to making new permanent sites, improving existing ones, building new transit sites and providing temporary stopping places.

The move was welcomed by Moving for Change, a charity which supports the rights and cultures of nomadic Gypsy and Travelling people.

Adrian Jones, Policy Lead at Moving for Change, who worked tirelessly with the government to establish the fund, said that Gypsy and Traveller families need the support of local authorities to secure their future.

To find out more visit the Moving for Change website at www.movingforchange.org.uk

NEWS

UKRAINE ROMA FUNDRAISER

The European Roma Rights Centre has opened a fundraiser specifically to support the Ukraine's estimated half a million Roma population.

"Funds raised will help those trapped inside the country and those who are trying to rebuild their lives elsewhere," say the ERRC. "The money will be used to pay for gasoline, transport, and other things necessary to get human rights monitors in place to monitor the situation of Romani refugees."

The fundraiser can be found online at

www.chuffed.org/project/human-rights-fund-for-roma



Darlington Light and Life missions ready to set off to Ukraine with donated aid © Light and Life Darlington

DARLINGTON GYPSY CHURCH HEAD TO UKRAINE WITH AID

The Darlington Light and Life Gypsy Church opened its doors and announced it would take in aid for Ukrainian refugees.

The response to the appeal for donations to help refugees was "overwhelming", says Darlington Light and Life Missions.

"Both Light and Life Missions members and the local community surrounding the church got together and their response was overwhelming," they added. "And thanks be to God for that."



GATE Herts workers Joseph Baker, Josie O'Driscoll, Zahra Kazmi, Orla Dellow, Claire Rice © Mike Doherty

A NEW COMMUNITY HUB FOR GATE HERTS

A Herts-based Gypsy and Traveller charity is looking forward to continuing its work in their new community hub in the year ahead. "It has been my professional and personal pleasure to lead GATE Herts though another year which has been a somewhat challenging but successful one for us as we continue to further our mission," says GATE Herts Chief Officer Josie O'Driscoll as she reflected on 2021.

The community hub is a place where Gypsies and Travellers can come along to and access the help that they need. It was opened near the end of 2021 and was made possible through a grant by the National Lottery Community Fund.



Pray for the Ukrainian Roma: Nadiya, 45, and family from Uzhhorod. Picture taken in 2018 before the Russian invasion © Alex Sturrock

ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES FUNDS EXCITING ART PROJECT

The Romani Cultural and Arts Company are pleased to announce their new funding from the Arts Council of Wales to continue the trailblazing Gypsy Maker project in Wales.

Gypsy Maker 5 will commission Gypsy, Roma and Traveller artists to produce new work to add to the growing bank of Gypsy, Roma & Traveller art, knowledge and culture in Wales and beyond.

Isaac Blake, Director of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company, said, "This project will strengthen the role of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers on the arts scene in Wales, the UK and beyond."

Gypsy Maker 5 will provide a platform for three artists, Imogen Bright Moon, Corrina Eastwood and Rosamaria Kostic Cisneros, to develop their art practice.

To find out more visit the Romani Cultural & Arts Company website at www.romaniarts.co.uk



Artworks left to right © Imogen Bright Moon, Rosamaria Kostic Cisneros and Corrina Eastwood © RCAC

NEWS SCOTLAND



MAIN: St Boswell's Fair 2021 © Rob Gray / Alamy Stock Photo
LEFT: Eilidh McLeod © Eilidh McLeod
RIGHT: A roadside Traveller camp in Scotland © Mike Pennington Wikimedia Commons

ROADSIDE EDUCATION FOR YOUNG SCOTTISH TRAVELLERS

Young Gypsy/Travellers' Lives: Education at the Roadside is a new project by the charity Article 12 in Scotland that reaches young people who are shifting and living roadside in North-East Scotland and the Scottish Highlands.

Article 12 says that the project will bring opportunities to the young people and families living in remote or rural areas that are less often reached by formal services.

Eilidh McLeod, who has been with Article 12 in Scotland since 2018, is running the project. She says, "This is an exciting and challenging project.

I'm privileged and excited to be working on the project as I know it will bring positive change to young Travellers' lives, by breaking down some of the prejudices and barriers they face in their day-to-day lives."

Funded by Moving for Change, the three-year pilot project will work with young Gypsy/Travellers to address gaps in their education and work experience, enabling them to gain new skills and

knowledge which will help them to get a new job or start a business.

McLeod's work on the project has included creating contacts and partnerships with local authorities, teachers, and others who work with roadside families. She is now working directly supporting young people who have been living roadside.

"The impact of the project has helped young Gypsy/Travellers learn new functional skills such as learning to use laptops, numeracy, and literacy," says Eilidh McLeod. "Human rights workshops have helped them understand and recognise their rights," she added. "Providing informal education and access to information will empower them to make changes to the things they want to change and help them reach their full potential."

Article 12 in Scotland is a Scotland-wide charity that supports young people's rights and particularly works with young people from the Gypsy/Traveller community. Its Young Gypsy/Travellers' Lives Project, now in its

seventh year, has supported young people from the Gypsy/Traveller community with opportunities for capacity building, formal and non-formal education, community advocacy, and peer education.

"It is important that the Travelling community are respected, valued, and listened to," said Eilidh McLeod. "It is critical to help young people with opportunities to become independent, build confidence, self-esteem, and form their own identity," she added. "Education at the Roadside plays a key role in developing their skills and attitudes, creating opportunities for young travellers to shape their own future. It promotes their personal and social development which enables them to have a voice, influence, and a place within their communities and society."

To find out more about Education at the Roadside or to make a referral to the programme, you can contact Eilidh McLeod at **07896 885 771** or eilidh@article12.org.

NEWS



Kizzy Lovell © Jake Bowers

FIRST AMONG EQUALS

The East Sussex town of Hastings is thought to be the first place in Britain to erect a statue of a Romany hero. On April 1st it installed a statue of Kizzy Lovell in Gensing Gardens, St Leonards. Kizzy was the main character of the 1972 book, *The Diddakoi* which was set in the nearby town of Rye and turned into a BBC TV series in the 1970s. The book, which is 50 years old this year, is the first to explore the issue of anti-Gypsy bullying in schools.

In the sculpture Romany artist blacksmith Jake Bowers has used a white-hot forge, the original Gypsy craft, to depict the defiant woman Kizzy Lovell may have become in steel. Working with Year 10 students at the Hastings Academy and Gypsy and Traveller volunteers across Sussex, together they have forged a Romani heroine that will last for many years.



© Jo Ellis Holland

SPRING INTO ACTION

Drive 2 Survive, the Gypsy and Traveller-led campaign against the Police Bill, has had a busy winter campaigning at every opportunity against the racist new laws that seek to entirely ban nomadic life from England and Wales. In September it marked the 10-year anniversary of the Dale Farm eviction with a protest in Essex; on Holocaust Memorial Day in January, at Oxford University. It highlighted the parallels between current attempts to ban travelling with Nazi attempts to do the same thing in the 1930s; and on March 8th it marked International Women's Day alongside prominent Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women. On March 19th Drive 2 Survive led a march of over ten thousand people against all forms of racism through London with horses.

But with the law making its way through parliament undefeated, the campaign is now preparing to begin working to directly support Gypsies and Travellers who are very likely to have it used against them. When the law is passed, which may be as soon as April 2022, it will create a new offence of criminal trespass that specifically targets Gypsies and Travellers who have nowhere else to go.

"Part Four is a direct assault on the traditional way of life of Gypsy and Traveller communities," says Drive 2 Survive co-chair Sherrie Smith. "When it is passed a new offence of criminal trespass with 'intent to reside' will be created with fines of up to £2500, along with the seizure of homes and imprisonment as punishment. It likely to traumatise and brutalise families that simply have nowhere else to go."

Drive 2 Survive have received funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust to provide mobile human rights advocates who can directly advise people of their rights when having the new law enforced against them. The mobile advocates will also be gathering evidence of human rights abuses for Gypsy and Traveller lawyers who are poised to bring strategic legal challenges. The advocates will work with Gypsies and Travellers from every background because Drive 2 Survive believes the law is a direct attack on the human rights of all.

So if you feel that your human rights as Gypsies and Travellers are being abused by this or any other law we want to hear directly from you. If you want us to advocate on your behalf you simply need to call us on our dedicated mobile hotline on **07840 979 302**

www.drive2survive.org.uk

NEWS



Tyler Hatwell being tested for HIV © Traveller Pride

TRAVELLER PRIDE MEET-UPS

Traveller Pride has launched regular monthly meet-ups in London, with the next one scheduled for 23rd April. Held in the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre, the popular events are there to give LGBTQ+ Travellers a space to meet and find out more about Traveller Pride in a relaxed, sober and accessible space.

Traveller Pride was launched in 2019 at Pride in London where they were the first-ever group of LGBTQ+ Travellers to march at a Pride parade in the UK. They have since become a registered organisation, appeared on the BBC in "Cherry Valentine: Gypsy Queen and Proud" and are in the process of launching a series of services for the community.

"It's a really exciting time for the group," says founder and executive director Tyler Hatwell. "We've got a lot of publicity since the documentary and we're getting more and more LGBTQ+ Travellers turning up and getting involved."

At the most recent event on 12th March the centre was hosting free HIV testing.

"It's quick, painless and it's so important to know your status. The guys delivering it were from METRO, who funded us to go to Pride in 2019! If you can't get to a drop-in there's plenty of online services who can post a test to you," continued Tyler.

The meet-ups are from 1pm-4pm in the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre, directly by Blackfriars Station. Attracting a wide range of the community from across the country, they are meant to be low-stress, sober spaces to connect and to feel that you will be neither judged for being a Traveller or for not being straight.

"It is really something to spend a whole day around people that are more or less like myself, knowing that I'm not either going to have to be hiding or over-explaining Traveller stuff to LGBT people or hiding or having to teach 101 on gay stuff to other GRT people. So



Traveller Pride © Traveller Pride

with all that already spoken for, we can just have a lovely day," said Percy, one attendee.

"It honestly makes me feel so incredible and emotional to have a space I know I won't be judged in. There's no need to come out, any questions are just normal chat rather than scrutiny," added Nicole who had travelled from Brighton.

Traveller Pride plans to launch a northern meet-up soon, and hosts online spaces for those who cannot make it in person. They still run their Trans solidarity fund, phone line and binder service and are looking at which Pride events to attend this year.



NO ONE EVER ASKED

It is the beginning of November, I am calling my grandmother to let her know that I will be visiting Poland soon, and I would like to interview her about the past. She is reluctant. I am trying to explain to an older Roma woman Holocaust Memorial Day and its importance. She doesn't understand. "Why would someone be interested in Romas and what has happened to us?" she says. I knew I needed to change my approach. I couldn't use the word "interview" anymore. "I would just like to talk to you a little bit about travelling in caravans, life back then, how you met grandad". I couldn't see her but I knew she was smiling then. She still misses him.

You pay – she says laughing?

I am broke.

I'll see you soon son.

A few weeks later I am sitting in front of my grandmother. The tea is as always; way too strong and very sweet.

I am starting with a very simple question: what is your name? Sabina Rybicka. How about your Roma name? – Inciuro. Yes, Roma have two names. Official for admin purpose. That's a name for the non-Roma world and Roma name. The one they are attached to more.

How old are you? She laughs a bit. Not because you shouldn't ask a woman about her age but because she simply doesn't know. "I am old but I do not know how old I am"

Tell me something about the past, something you remember – I ask her.

I had a big family. Our camp was made of over fifty caravans. Our caravan was stunning. It had floral paintings all over it and wooden dragon statues; you know; to protect us from bad luck. I remember us kids playing in the forest. Women would take care of their families. They would cook and do laundry in the river. Evenings were the most beautiful. A lot of singing and dancing around the bonfire. Older people told stories about ghosts and old fairytales. Then everything changed. She is silent for few minutes.

We were captured in the forest. My whole family. That one day changed everything. I was a little girl and I did not understand what was happening but I knew that there was something bad going on.

It is dark. The air is heavy. It has to be like that when a lot of people are stuck for days in a closed train

carriage. The stench of sweat, faeces and fear. There is no air. People are dying. I am scared. Someone told us that we are being sent to Russia, Sibir. I didn't know what it means but soon I was to find out that.

The first thing that comes to my mind when I think about that time is hunger. That and cold. I cannot remember how long we were there. Days turned into weeks and months. Maybe years? Every day looked almost the same. Apart from one thing; your relatives dying or being killed. One never can get used to that.

We had to work very hard for no money. Maybe the remuneration was staying alive? My mother did not have shoes. Her feet froze and eventually had to be amputated. Sometimes I would sneak out of the camp, which was not heavily guarded and go to a village and beg for some bread. We all learnt new words: tuberculosis, scarlatina, dysenteric, typhus.

I can see she is getting tired. There are things she doesn't want to talk about.

She stands up and goes to a wardrobe. After a few minutes, she comes back with a little bag wrapped in a white kitchen towel.

We managed to come back to Poland. Those of us who still were alive. It was still the war. We were hiding in forests. Our caravans were not anymore colourful or big. We did not want to be visible. Instead of fifty caravans now there were just a few. It felt lonely.

Your grandfather Ludwik's tribe was still travelling around this time. From what I know – it was a pretty big camp. Around sixty people They just arrived at a new place. His father at this time was in Auschwitz. Ludwik was sent by his mother to a neighbouring village just to see what was there. When he was about to come back to the caravan camp, some Poles stopped him and said not to go there because the Nazi ambushed the caravan camp. He tried to run away but they forced him not to go. When eventually he got there, the whole caravan camp had been murdered. His mother, his siblings – everyone. All killed by the Nazi. The Poles were burying them. He said once that the air had a scent of death.

Many years later he tried to go back there. To pay his respect. Sometimes we would get close, but then he would stop and say: I cannot do it. He never went there.



MAIN: © Szymon Glowacki
LEFT: Sabina Rybicka's ghetto papers.
© Szymon Glowacki
RIGHT: Roma boys in Poland with German soldiers during World War Two.
Picture courtesy of the Robert Dawson Collection www.robertdawson.co.uk



My grandmother then started to unwrap the little package, in the white kitchen towel, that she had retrieved from the wardrobe earlier. Inside the bag is some old documentation. My family was still hiding but we were captured again.

This is my ghetto ID. I have no words to describe how it was there. Again hunger, biting up. People dying all around. One loses hope. A lot of people tried to escape. Some succeeded but those who were caught were killed straight away. Two of my sisters died in the ghetto. A lot of my family members died there as well, and in concentration camps. Some of us survived.

Have you ever spoken about that gran?

No, no one ever asked.

By Szymon Glowacki



TROT ON FOR ADELAIDE!

On a chilly and rainy Sunday in December 2021, over 100 'lots' (horses and carts) met in Wapping, East London, to take part in the London Christmas Drive.

The drive ended up in Borough Market, south of the River Thames. The route took in all the major sights of London, including Buckingham Palace, a busy West End and Piccadilly Circus and Soho.

The drive was organised on social media to raise money for a sweet little girl called Adelaide, who will need life-long care from her friends and family.

"I see the horse drives as the 'new/old...,'" says Romany Gypsy Sally Barter. "They are one of the elements from our culture which has had a big revival in the past few years.

It's a community-led national movement and these drives are often held for charitable reasons to raise funds for an unwell child or in memory of a respected figure from the Traveller community.

They are well-organised, self-policed to ensure safety, and publicised on social media and I feel they highlight the best of one of the most important aspects of Gypsy and Traveller culture, which is our horses."

Photos by © Donna Holpin and Mike Doherty



JIMMY CARR – NOT GETTING AWAY WITH IT

Comedian's Roma Holocaust 'joke' sparks almost universal condemnation.

In his Christmas special His Dark Material broadcast on Netflix, Jimmy Carr 'joked' about the suffering and murder of "thousands" of "Gypsies" in the Holocaust, calling it "a positive". A clip of the 'joke' came to light when it was uploaded to social media earlier this year and went viral, drawing almost universal condemnation.

So, when the Jimmy Carr show rolled into the Dunstable Grove Theatre for a sell-out performance, the Luton Roma Trust and supporters, including the Travellers' Times Editor and the Revd Rachel Phillips rector of a local church, gathered outside with placards and a Romani flag.

We were there to make our views known, to support the local Roma community, and to remember the Roma and Sinti victims of the Holocaust.

Billy Welch, Shera Rom and Appleby Fair Romany Gypsy lead, also condemned Carr's 'joke' and invited the comedian along to the Auschwitz death camp memorial to join the annual August 2nd commemoration of the slaughter of the Roma and Sinti by the Nazis.

Speaking to Cumbria Live, Billy Welch said: "His so-called joke was so offensive because there are many still living who witnessed the brutality of what happened, and many more who lost their families in barbarous and sadistic murders. Making a joke of it is too painful."

Jimmy Carr has not responded to any Gypsy, Roma or Traveller appeals for an apology and to meet up and find out more about the Roma Holocaust.

Luton Roma Trust protest local Jimmy Carr show
© Mike Doherty

BOTTOM RIGHT: Billy Welch – 'There are many still alive who witnessed the brutality of what happened'
© Mike Doherty



WHO ARE YOU FIGHTING FOR, MR. CARR?

Who are you fighting for, Mr. Carr?
You know, my Great grandfather was
Murdered
In the blitzing
Of Bristol Temple Meads.
1940, a Railway Man and
A Gypsy Man,
Born to Norwood Workhouse,
Worked his way to
Safety,
Took his family with him.
The year my mother was born,
Babe in arms only two weeks,
And he was taken.
She cannot take the train to Bristol
Again, and I,
No matter how much I wait
For His ghost
On the platform,
I cannot tell him Thank You
Grandfather,
Nor refrain your comedy,
For the dead are always listening.

(In Memoriam, John Reuben Draper,
1891-1940)

Poem by Imogen Bright Moon

THE LAST STOPPING PLACE

Writer Ray Wills, affectionately known as the Gypsy Poet, is a writer of fiction and non-fiction, poetry and prose. He has now turned his pen to this stunning new novel entitled "The Last Stopping Place".

This is Rays eighth book based on the Gypsy Traveller community and only his second novel. It is a splendid collection of enthralling tales built around the theme of "stopping places", a topic of much concern to the present Gypsy Traveller community.

Each tale has a rich historical background in which Travellers tell of their lives working as brick makers, at the fairgrounds and on designated Traveller sites or on the road in search of new adventures or vital stopping places.

There are tales of remote sleepy villages, the creation of a woodland community in the heart of England where two sisters enrich the lives of both Travellers and non-Gypsies alike, tales of military life and life in



the northern towns of the U.S.A. All are told within an imaginative unique extensive collection of the authors poetry and prose, so sit back on your wagon and enjoy the ride.

Ray's books are available to buy on Amazon.



TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Kushti Bok founder Betty Billington © Mike Doherty. Samuel White, Bill Rogers (left) with friend – also a Romany Gypsy. Caleb Smith – Betty Billington's daddy.

BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Terence Hope, Solomon Keet, Isaac White.

THEY DID THEIR BIT

On Saturday 13th of November, the Travellers' Times visited a very special event put on by Kushti Bok, the Dorset-based Romany GRT rights charity. The event was to honour the Romany Gypsies and Travellers who served in the forces during both the World Wars and some of the armed conflicts that followed.

Betty Smith Packman-Billington, the Chair of Kushti Bok explains: "Every Remembrance Day the photos come out and go on Facebook. We love putting them on Facebook and telling people about all our ancestors. They were in the war and they played their part. I want them recognised. I spoke to one lady a couple of days ago. She was a lovely lady, but when I told her what I was doing, she said 'ooh Betty, I never knew that Gypsies played their part in the armed forces.' This is what people believe."



MAIN: Chanel Lee
All images © Donna Holpin



PHOTO-STORY

LET'S GO SHOPPING!

The Ash Spring Shopping Fair, which took place in Surrey in early April, was a great success, says organiser Chanel Lee.

Chanel has been organising the shopping fairs to support Gypsy and Traveller stall holders when the traditional horse fairs are not running. Travellers' Times photographer, Donna Holpin, went along to record the event.

"All the stall holders did very well, lots of people came, and we were lucky with the spring weather with the rain holding off until the end," says Chanel Lee.

"We are planning another Ash Shopping Fair at the end of July, start of August sometime, and we will be repeating last year's very successful Christmas Shopping Fair."

Anyone interested in coming along or bringing a stall can contact Chanel Lee through her website at londonfifthavenuejewellery.com. Also check the Travellers' Times social media for Ash Shopping Fair promotions.



Joe Smith in his Cushty TV studio © Mike Doherty

CUSHTY!

First published to critical acclaim as Gypsy Joe, with The Observer selecting it as Sports Book Of The Year, Cushty is a revised and expanded edition that brings Joe Smith's story up to date.

Joe spent his early years travelling, his father metal-dealing and mother selling lucky heather, and as an infant he was encouraged by grandfather Rymer to take up golf. When Rymer died suddenly, Joe promised to become a professional golfer. Trophies followed, but not everyone was happy about his success. False accusations were made and he was asked to leave his beloved golf club. The effect on Joe's self-esteem and game was devastating. Anger burned as he fell into bare-knuckle fighting and

crime. His role models were thugs and crooks, no longer sportsmen. Only when prison loomed did he reflect on his life. Remembering his promise to Rymer, he spurned the underworld and returned to golf.

Cushty is not only a story of redemption, but also an uplifting account of Joe Smith's determination to realise his dream.

Cushty is available to buy on Amazon.

The Travellers' Times went to visit Joe Smith and we found out that he also runs a YouTube TV Channel called Cushty TV, and it's well worth a look. We will also soon be publishing an interview with Joe Smith on our website at www.travellerstimes.org.uk, so watch that space!

SURREY SKILLS

Are you a Gypsy and Traveller age 18+? Want to learn to read and write? Are you home educating and want to learn more skills to teach the children? Want to learn something new completely? We can teach anything!

Surrey Community Action, a local charity in Surrey, has launched a tutoring project to deliver a wide range of learning support. This could include learning how to read and write, fill in forms, create a CV, use the internet or manage a budget.

Vicky Nash, Skills Impact Co-ordinator and Tutor said: "We want to give people extra skills to help them in everyday life. Sessions can take place at home or in a local venue like a coffee shop. We can teach students to read and write from scratch, learn a new subject or improve existing skills. You may want to learn how to write better emails or practise the driving theory test – we can teach anything! We put together a plan with the student that works best around their lives – so if you are working or looking after family, that's not a problem."

Contact Vicky on **07395 117392** or email vickyn@surreyca.org.uk



Vicki Nash © Surrey Community Action

I RECALL A GYPSY WOMAN – CHARLOTTE PECKHAM'S STORY

Millie Cooper speaks to Charlotte Peckham about her singing career, her passion for country music and breaking down stereotypes on disabilities.

Charlotte Peckham is a 26-year-old Romany singer and performer from Kent, whose passion is getting up on the karaoke and belting out a country tune for all her family and friends to enjoy. Charlotte has been singing since she was five years old and regularly sings on Facebook on a page called 'The Live Bar', with viewers spanning across the globe from South Africa to America! Charlotte has had over 10K views on her live singing events. As well as her success online Charlotte frequently goes to 'The Bounty' in Strood for a knees-up to country classics.

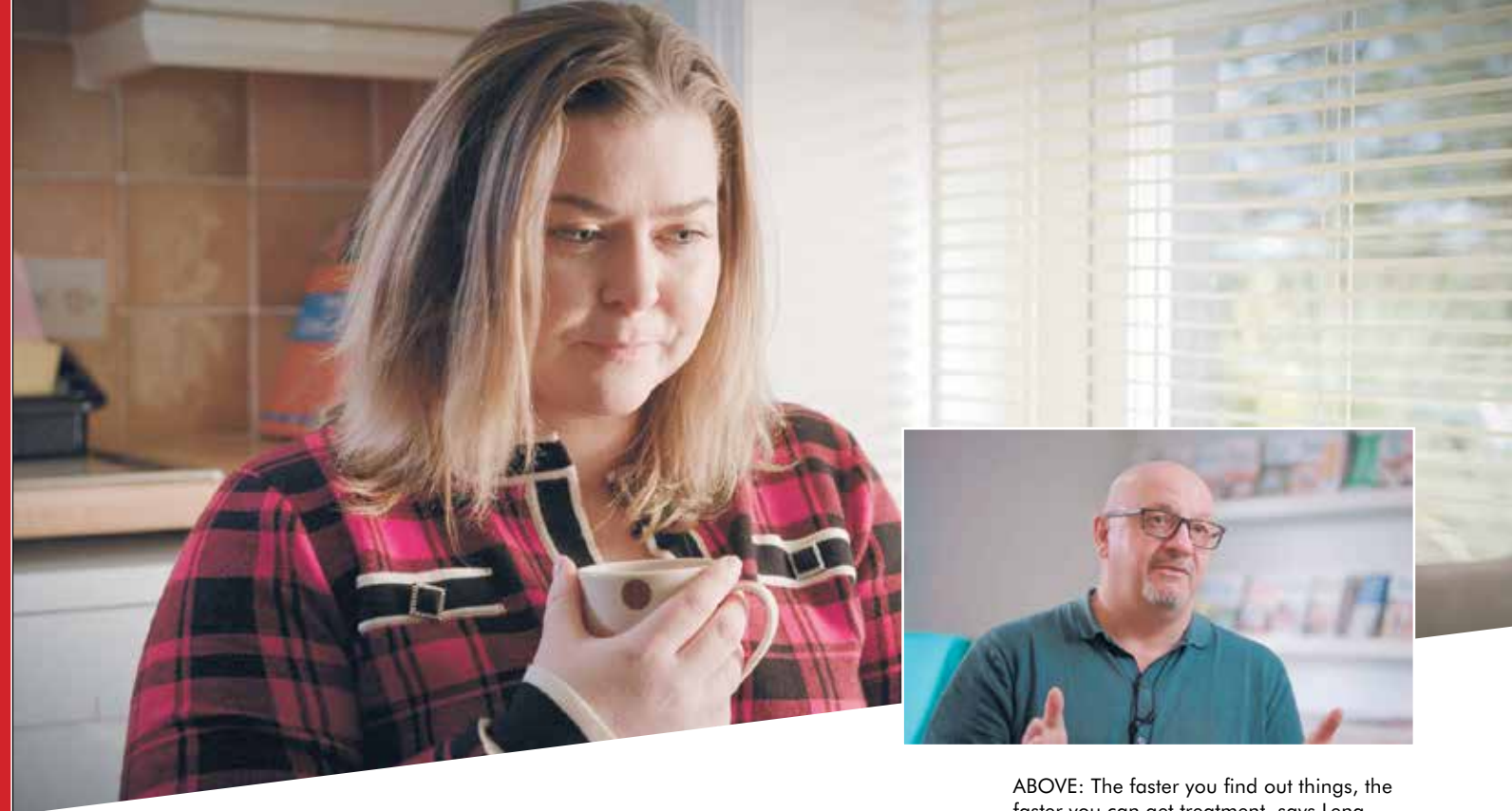
Because Charlotte has learning difficulties, sometimes life can be challenging. However, Charlotte has found singing to be an amazing creative outlet and has found so much confidence in herself through her performing. Charlotte tells me how she can listen to a song a few times and know the melody and the words almost instantly. She now has her own kit and 1950's microphone to complete the show stopping look. 'I recall a Gypsy woman' by Don Williams is a song Charlotte loves to sing, which is always a sure crowd pleaser.

Charlotte comes from a long line of singers. When talking to Charlotte's mother Esther and her Granny Lily, they all describe how important music is to Gypsy Culture and how it brings families together. Lily goes on to discuss how her mother and aunts would sing at weddings, christenings and at Christmas and at the end of the evening it would bring everyone together. Storytelling, poetry and rhyme is a huge part of Romany culture and singing is another form of storytelling for many families.

Charlotte is extremely proud of her singing and how far she has come with it. She would like to thank 'Karaoke King' Charlie Driver, who is a good friend of Charlotte's, and who sings with her at The ounty in Strood.

To become a famous singer and tour around the world is Charlotte's dream for the future. Charlotte is a huge inspiration for all young Romany women out there. She has overcome many struggles and is breaking boundaries and stereotypes about learning difficulties by showing her singing talents and beaming with confidence when she does it.

By Millie Cooper



ABOVE: The faster you find out things, the faster you can get treatment, says Lena McAllister. Macmillan are good at helping to pick you up from those low days, says Chris Smith

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

The Travellers' Times, Macmillan Cancer Support charity, and Gypsy and Traveller people from across England have teamed up to make a video showing you how you can get advice and support if you, or a friend, or a family member have cancer, or think you may need to get checked up for it.

We know that 'Cancer' is a scary word. Some of us do talk about it, some call it 'the bad disease' or the 'c' word and some of us won't talk about it at all, and we understand why – but there is no doubt that with the right help and advice you and your family members can be better supported through it. Macmillan are there to provide that support to you.

"What Macmillan are good at, is helping to pick you up from those low days and helping you to move on," says Romany Gypsy Chris Smith, 62.

When we first started this film with Macmillan, we were told by many Gypsies and Travellers that, "If Macmillan want to know how to engage with us, just ask us". So that's what the Travellers' Times and Macmillan did and our video is co-created with the help and support of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

You can find and watch the video on our website at travellerstimes.org.uk

Macmillan are a charity dedicated to helping people suffering from cancer. Their services are free and they are independent of the National Health Service and your local hospital and doctors.

Macmillan often have a bus and a stall at Appleby Horse Fair. They can provide health advice, advice on how to deal with the NHS and your doctor, financial advice and how to access benefits, and also emotional support. You can speak to them on the phone, online using their 'webchat' or by dropping in to an information desk.

"The faster you find out things, the faster you can get treatment, try not to bury your head in the sand and keep on," says Romany Gypsy Lena McAllister.

Macmillan's national support line is also open every day between 8am to 8pm. Anyone affected by cancer can call free on 0808 808 00 00. The website, www.macmillan.org.uk, has lots of information and an option for you to chat to an expert online.



The Macmillan bus at Appleby Fair © Natasha Quarmby



HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE!

Break the stigma © SMHC

OUR ACTIVITIES

FREE THERAPY AND COUNSELLING:

- The charity has its own mental health nurse who takes self-referrals online, and can assess your current concerns, whilst getting you set up with a private therapy plan.
- We can also help with funding for private psychiatric assessments including (but not limited to) OCD and ADHD.

EDUCATION:

- We provide educational projects. These include mental health within the fairground industry workshops and large one day events across the UK.

AWARENESS:

Check out our social media and website for upcoming events and news:

Twitter:

@ShowmensCharity

Instagram:

@showmensmentalhealth

Facebook:

The Showmen's Mental Health Awareness Charity

Website:

www.showmensmentalhealth.com

OUR TRUSTEES

Xenna Murphy, Shelby Holmes, Bradley Wright, Devon Hill, Ryan Barwick, and Sheldon Chadwick

If you are interested in volunteering for the charity please send us an email.

By Sheldon Chadwick

THE BRIGHTEST AND BIGGEST STAR IN THE SKY

Our much-loved son Jimmy Smith was 24 years old when he took his own life on the 20th January 2020. Jimmy was a loving father to his beautiful daughter Dolcie, who was three when he died. Jim is one of four boys.

Jimmy worked as a plasterer, he was a natural and he really enjoyed it and would often talk about gaining more qualifications and then running his own business. Jimmy had plans for the future.

We all miss Jim more than words could ever say. The pain we feel is relentless. There is the knowing he will never drive through the gate again or ring us or walk through the door or a million other little things.

Dolcie asks us questions and we answer as honestly as we can. Some days Dolcie will just say she wants to go to "daddy's flowers" and so we go. Dolcie says her daddy is the "brightest and biggest star in the sky," and when we let balloons off for Jim's birthday she will shout "catch them daddy!" This little girl is trying to make sense of what us adults cannot.

After Jim's death I came to realise that he had to have been in darkness but now he was in the light – a small comfort but a comfort nonetheless. How I wish he would have reached out and asked for help, but he never did, he kept it all in.

Why didn't he confide in any of us? Did he think we would judge him and label him as "not right in the head", or 'a dinlo', or 'he's got bad nerves'? As Travellers we have all heard these terms and more growing up, but things have to change. What we are teaching our children? We are teaching them not to say anything because Travellers, especially men, are strong and fearless and mental health issues do not affect them. We are teaching them that to reach out and ask for help is weakness.

We have to let our children know that we will listen, we will help, if they don't want to speak to family there are other people who will listen and help, all they have to do is reach out and that this is strength, not weakness.

There are many organisations that are only a phone call away and One Call Away is a telephone service for the GRT community, run by good travelling people that speak as we do.

If awareness is not raised and we as a community do not start taking this seriously, we will continue to bury our loved ones. Our story could be yours and we would never want any family to feel as we do.

By Donna Smith

If you are affected by the issues raised in this article and need someone to talk to call **One Call Away** on **07748 997 617** or the **Samaritans** on **116 123**



Jimmy Smith © Mike Doherty



Jimmy Smith with Dolcie courtesy of Donna Smith



Dolcie visiting 'daddy's flowers' courtesy of Donna Smith



I remember reading this on a Facebook post before putting my phone down and ignoring calls from my friends. Talking about my mental health whilst growing up as a travelling Showman was never something that crossed my mind. Even after the passing of my friend

to suicide, my father, brother, and I sat in an hospital waiting room, reluctant to turn to each other and talk about the inner workings of our minds.

I thought anxiety was a myth before having my first panic attack at 24. I can still feel the dread that rushed over me. I thought I was going to die. Soon, the anxiety moved into depression, which I often refer to as 'getting your trailer stuck in the mud, and not being able to get it out'. It was here everything changed, and I began to write down exactly what was going on and to seek support.

I had what I refer to as 'the fear'. The fear of being judged in everything I do, the fear of failing and not being good enough, and the fear of letting my family down. Have you ever felt like that? After writing down my thoughts, I did some research and planned. I created a mental health plan, and most importantly – started to talk.

The Showmen's Mental Health Awareness Charity started from a conversation, and the collective hurt of frequently losing friends to suicide. Together, we began to talk and listen to many friends going through the same things, with different generations and genders talking about mental health and attempting to 'Break the Stigma'.

We are a charity founded and run by people from the Showmen and fairground community. Our aim is to break the stigma around mental health in our community. This includes providing support, information and mental health services to all Showmen in the UK and Ireland (all ages).

HELPLINES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUPS

GATE HERTS

Community Lead Organisation For
Gypsy, Roma and Travellers

01707 247 088

gateherts.org.uk

hub@gateherts.org.uk

FRIENDS FAMILIES & TRAVELLERS

Working on behalf of all Gypsies,
Roma and Travellers regardless of
ethnicity, culture or background

01273 234777

LEEDS GYPSY AND TRAVELLER EXCHANGE

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

0113 240 2444

LGBT TRAVELLER PRIDE

Advice and support for LGBTQ+
Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

07395 355066

travellerlgbtpride@gmail.com

www.lgbttravellerpride.com

ONE CALL AWAY

Gypsy & Traveller Mental Health
and Support

07748 997617

PRIDE OF ROMANI

Community-lead organisation based
in Cheshire

prideofromani@gmail.com

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

ROMA SUPPORT GROUP

Supporting and empowering the
Roma community.

07949 089778

info@romasupportgroup.org.uk

REPORT RACISM GRT

Report Hate Crime against
Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

reportracismgrt.com

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

TRAVELLERS ADVICE TEAM

Legal advice and support
for Gypsies and Travellers
facing eviction

0121 685 8677

GENERAL

SAMARITANS

116 123

www.samaritans.org

CHILD LINE:

0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Helpline:

0808 2000 247

WOMEN'S AID (DOMESTIC ABUSE)

www.womensaid.org

MIND: FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

0300 123 3393

www.mind.org.uk

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:

0800 9177 650

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

Providing physical, financial
and emotional support to
people living with cancer
and their families.

0808 808 00 00

www.macmillan.org.uk

7 days a week, 8am–8pm

Travellers' Times has loads of other useful
advice and support numbers on our website
visit www.travellerstimes.org.uk/advice

