

**THE MAGAZINE FOR GYPSIES, ROMA & TRAVELLERS**  
SPRING/SUMMER 2023 | ISSUE 72 | FREE | [WWW.TRAVELLERSTIMES.ORG.UK](http://WWW.TRAVELLERSTIMES.ORG.UK)

# TRAVELLERS TIMES



## WE ARE LISTENING

**INSIDE:** NEWS • RACIST ANTI-TRAVELLER SITE CAMPAIGNS • JOHN CONNORS  
• LONDON HORSE DRIVE • LAWRENCE WARD • CAS HOMES • KERRI WILLIAMS  
• OPINION • AGNES MCDONALD • CHASEYBOY SMITH • ALICE THE BOXER

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2023 edition of Travellers' Times Magazine. Much of this issue has been created by our new Travellers' Times Vision (TTV) trainees. Our trainees started working for us in September last year and have been busy learning journalism in all its many forms, partly from the TTV course leaders Dan Haworth-Salter and Liza Mortimer, and partly from each other, and partly from external media industry speakers. As well as working to produce content for the TT, our trainees are also helping to steer the TT's transformation into an independent Gypsy, Roma and Traveller-led media organisation by June 2025, a project which is supported by Rural Media, who have been our project managers for the past 25 years.

We would also like to take the opportunity to thank Sharon Baxter, who has recently retired after running the Travellers' Advice Team helpline for many years. Thank you, Sharon.

And finally, we would like to honour David Loveridge and Edie Smith, who sadly passed away earlier this year. David was involved in an ultimately successful battle against his local cemetery authorities to persuade them to allow him to build the double-plot grave that his wife, who died before him, would have wanted. The TT was first to shine a light on this injustice, but then the local newspaper Cambridge Live and the national newspaper The Sun also covered David's story. Edie featured in our issue 68 with her annual tradition of baking Christmas puddings for local people in her village. A true Traveller woman, as her daughter Elizabeth says.

By Mike Doherty



Betty Billington from Dorset's Kushti Bok and DIACT © Bela Varadi



David Loveridge with friends and family – the authorities would not at first allow him to build a proper double headstone for his wife © Mike Doherty



Edie Smith with one of her famous Christmas puddings © Mike Doherty

## MEDIA NEWS

### DORSET

Dorset campaigners have been having success improving reporting in their local press. Members of DIACT and Kushti Bok, two local support and pressure groups, met with their local newspaper editor for a cup of tea and a chat about how reporting could be improved. "Liaising with your local media does work, you do have to keep going back and meeting new staff and reminding them, but it can pay dividends," say the campaigners.

### IPSO

The Travellers' Times recently teamed up with London Gypsies and Travellers and Leeds GATE to submit to a consultation on the Editors' Code of Practice. We argued that the Code's current clause on discrimination needed to be strengthened to protect Gypsy and Traveller communities from pejorative and prejudicial reporting.

## NEWS

### ENERGY GRANTS FOR TRAVELLERS – BUT SOME LEFT OUT IN THE COLD

Two new discount grants are now available, which could help Gypsies and Travellers with energy costs, say Friends, Families and Travellers.

#### The Alternative Fuels

**Payment** is a £200 grant if you are not on the main gas grid and use alternative fuels, like bottled gas, to heat your home.

Go to GOV.UK and search for **'Apply for alternative fuel bill support if you do not get it automatically'**.

#### The Energy Bill Support

**Scheme-Alternative Funding** grant is £400 for people without a direct relationship with electricity suppliers.

This may apply if you live on a local authority or private site, or if



you are a permanently moored Boater, AND your landlord holds a commercial contract with the energy supplier.

Go to GOV.UK and search for **'Apply for energy bill support if you do not get it automatically'**.

NOTE: Gypsies and Travellers living on roadside camps and liveaboard Boaters without a permanent mooring **DO NOT** qualify for these grants. To take part in the campaign to change this, see more on the Friends, Families and Travellers website.

Prof Benjamin Zephaniah, GATE Herts CEO Josie O'Driscoll, Dr Rachel Stuart, student India Miles, photo courtesy of Josie O'Driscoll



### UNITY AT BRUNEL UNIVERSITY

Brunel University, Bucks, recently hosted a 'conversation' to unite Black and Gypsy/Traveller communities after a couple of high-profile incidents of violence involving young people from those communities spread on social media.

"As someone who comes from a Gypsy/Traveller background and the mother of mixed raced children the friction between the Black and Traveller communities over the past few weeks has been incredibly distressing," said Dr Rachel Stuart, who is a trustee for local charity GATE Herts. "Professor Benjamin Zephaniah and I both lecture at Brunel and we talked about what we could do to bring unity back to the two most marginalised communities in the country. We decided the best plan was a simple one – a conversation between the communities would be the best way to start the healing process. Hopefully this will be the first of many."

TT News

### TRAVELLER PRIDE

Traveller Pride's monthly meetups are hitting the road in a bid to engage more LGBTQ+ Travellers from more parts of the country.

"We have been meeting monthly at the LGBTQ+ Community Centre in London for a coffee drop-in style meetup," said Tyler Hatwell, group founder. "It's a great welcoming space but we need to make sure we have more on offer so have decided to switch it up! We meet every other month there and in between we go elsewhere."

For March, the group's meetup took them to the Queer Britain Museum and to visit Grimaldi Park and see the grave of Grimaldi, the first clown.

"We're up for any events so would love to hear your suggestions! Traveller Pride is about bringing people together, it's your group as much as it is mine," continued Tyler.

Meetups are the 2nd Saturday of the month at the LGBTQ+ Centre: April, June, August, Oct, Dec. See Traveller Pride social media for other venues.

By Traveller Pride for TT News



Tyler Hatwell (front) and other Traveller Pride members © Bela Varadi



COVER PHOTO: JOHN CONNORS © SHANE O'CONNOR

The Travellers' Times is published by Rural Media. EDITOR: Mike Doherty, CONSULTANT: Damian Le Bas, PROJECT MANAGER: Julie Colman, PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Liza Mortimer, COURSE LEADER: Dan Haworth-Salter, TECHNICAL ASSISTANT: Callum Neville. The Travellers' Times is the national magazine for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, and people and organisations who work with them. We are guided by our editorial group and strive for accuracy and fairness. CONTACT US AT: The Travellers' Times, Packers House, 25 West Street, Hereford, HR4 0BX | 01432 344039 | travellerstimes@ruralmedia.co.uk | www.travellerstimes.org.uk

Travellers' Times is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation. We abide by the Editors' Code of Practice. If you want to make a complaint, please contact travellerstimes@ruralmedia.co.uk. If you would like more information about IPSO or the Editors' Code, contact IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or visit www.ipso.co.uk





© Bela Varadi

## AND THEN THE CAMPAIGN TURNED RACIST

At a parish meeting in the Norfolk village of Lingwood, on a chilly spring evening in early March, they started to arrive in their hundreds.

The story began last year, when a consortium of local councils proposed that land should be set aside for several new Traveller sites in the Greater Norwich Development Plan. The plan is a blueprint for the years ahead and marks out land to develop new shops, industrial estates, roads, houses etc – and a tiny number of Traveller sites. One of the proposed Traveller sites is a mile or so outside Lingwood. This was what the Lingwood meeting was all about.

The inevitable campaign against the Lingwood proposal had a slow start; an earlier parish meeting about the proposed site had only four members of the public turn up, and a follow-up meeting had ten. At first, objections seemed to centre around the welfare of the future residents of the Traveller site – largely based on its proximity to the A47 trunk road – but then the campaign turned racist. A few days before the March meeting two things happened; racist posters (pictured) suddenly appeared in the surrounding area; and a campaign website was created hosting a dossier of objections, links to

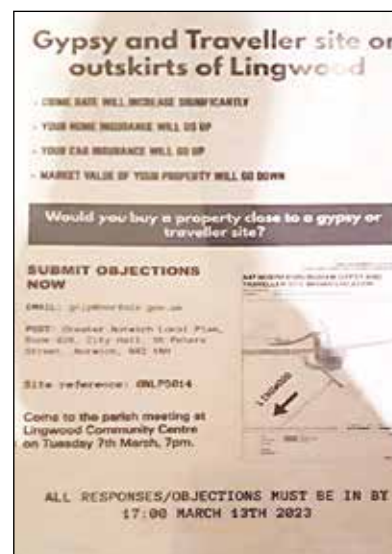
sensationalist media reports about Travellers, and a copy of the poster.

The local community Facebook groups began to buzz with conflict. On one group, its members largely opposing the proposed site, one brave local said that they did not go to the meeting because “the idea of being shouted down by ill-informed bigots would have been intimidating.” In reply to another negative post on the group, which repeated so-called “concerns” about the welfare of any potential Traveller site residents, one Traveller girl wrote: “Like to question your concerns (...) Do you know that most sites are opposed by the wider society – who hide behind a caring face but it is in actual fact racism.”

It’s not unknown for councils to propose Traveller sites on unsuitable land, but for me, that hundreds of people turned up to the March meeting after the racist poster appeared, when hardly anyone turned up to the meetings before, exposes the real motivations of many of those who went. A local county councillor who was at the meeting suggested that building a Traveller site in an area where there weren’t any was unsuitable. Yet in another area the local parishioners



© Evelyn Simka



are objecting to a similar proposal because they say they already have enough Traveller sites there. The councillor also said she was surprised by the turnout, but she shouldn’t have been; because nothing can pack out a parish meeting like a nearby planning proposal for a Traveller site.

By Charmaine McGuigan/TT

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

“People want to feel they’re not alone,” says John Connors, the award-winning actor and film director. “The power of depression or mental illness is that it has this ability to make you feel alone, because you’re holding it as a secret.”

Eleven years ago, before the acting and directing career, John Connors was sitting “in a little box bedroom in the darkness contemplating suicide,” he told a stunned audience during his acceptance speech on winning the Best Actor category at the 2018 Irish Film and Television Awards. He then dedicated his award to his father, who died by suicide when John was barely an adult. “This one is for you daddy,” he said. A clip of the acceptance speech went viral, shining a much-needed public spotlight on the mental health crisis among Travellers, and prompting many messages of support and encouragement – including from Tyson Fury.

The few statistics that exist are grim. A 2006 all-Ireland study estimated that Travellers – mainly young adults – were six times more likely to die by suicide than the wider population. A more recent study in 2023 has backed that up, and researchers from both studies cite racism and ‘cultural dislocation’ – or forced assimilation and resettlement to call a spade a spade – as major factors in this shocking loss of life.

“When you mess with someone’s identity, it’s catastrophic,” says Connors, adding that most Travellers in Ireland have been uprooted from their traditional way of life and resettled on council estates. “Young Travellers are growing up without having a great grasp of their own language and their culture and then going to school and being discriminated for it.”

John is being interviewed for this article by Lisa Smith at the Travellers’ Times office in Hereford. He is in the UK to take part in a short film produced by Rural Media for the Samaritans; the mental health and suicide charity and helpline, who recognised they needed to do more to inform Gypsy & Traveller people about their work after meeting with Claire Rice and Josie O’Driscoll from GATE Herts.

Connors helped to script the film and poignantly speaks the part of a Traveller Man who calls the Samaritans when he is struggling with his mental health after the loss of his father.

“Suicide is the number one killer of Travellers,” says John Connors. “So, to say that I know people who have killed themselves is an understatement; friends, family and my own father, but acting – creativity – is what saved me.”

**When life is difficult, Samaritans are here – day or night, 365 days a year. You can call them free on 116 123**

By Lisa Smith/TT



Photo © Shane O’Connor



# PHOTO FEATURE

Cast your mind back to last Christmas when hundreds of Gypsies, Travellers and friends converged on east London to take part in the London Christmas Horse Drive.

About 60–100 lots braved the cold, chilly, but thankfully dry weather to complete the drive which trotted along from Wapping, through Camden, on to Soho and then Buckingham Palace and finally finishing at Borough Market, south London.

Traveller's Times photographer Bela Varadi went along to photograph what happened.

## LONDON HORSE DRIVE 2022

All photographs © Bela Varadi/TT



"I had my share of setbacks growing up," says Lawrence Ward, 26, who lives in Cheshire. "I realised a while ago that the main thing that sets me apart from a lot of the boys I work with is just the luck of the draw. I was lucky enough to zig where they zagged. I had the right influences at the right times to make the right choices when it mattered."

After missing most of school because he was out on the road travelling with his family, then working as an air conditioning engineer, a stint in sales for a major retail company, and picking up a degree in Business Management and Marketing from the Open University along the way, Lawrence decided to start making a difference in people's lives. Acting on this, Lawrence's next two jobs were working as a firefighter with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service whilst simultaneously helping to rehabilitate young offenders – some Travellers and some not – in his other job as a Youth Justice Worker. In his spare time Lawrence also trains for Mixed Martial Arts and commentates on boxing matches. "I have a brother doing well in the Marines and my youngest sister is studying towards becoming a Police Officer and we've always been a driven and hardworking bunch," laughs Lawrence.

Lawrence spent over a year balancing the two very demanding jobs, working at the Youth Justice Worker role on day shift and on-call firefighting for night shifts and weekends. During the summer heat waves last year, fire services across the UK were at – and sometimes beyond – full stretch and it was literally all hands to the pump. "It's a very well-respected role in the community, and it is nice to know you are valued by the public and that comes with a sense of pride," says Lawrence. "But every firefighter I know will tell you that they do it because they just want the opportunity to help people."

Since our initial interview which was published on the Travellers' Times website, Lawrence has recently decided to hang up his fire tunic to focus on his career helping young people during their time in custody.

"Since I have been at the youth custody establishment, I've also taken on responsibility for the equalities and diversity role, and as we have had a few Traveller lads, I am also the prison's Traveller Liaison Officer," says Lawrence.

"As the world makes an itinerant lifestyle more unachievable, many Gypsy and Traveller boys are pushing back against sedentary life in unhealthy ways," adds Lawrence. "I want to set the example that Traveller lads can find the adventures and experiences they crave in healthier and more productive ways."

By Mike Doherty/TT

## LAWRENCE WARD

"WE'VE ALWAYS  
BEEN A DRIVEN AND  
HARDWORKING BUNCH"



PROFILE



# ARTS AND CRAFTS



ABOVE: Cas Holmes © Robert Greshoff  
LEFT: Cas Holmes for RCAC

## STITCHES AND STORIES

The Gypsy Roma and Traveller history of textile crafts starts in northwest India where the Banjara people moved across India to Europe. Banjara translates to 'nomadic'.

The traditional Banjara textiles designs and details changed through time and these days we would typically recognise Gypsy, Roma and Traveller textiles such as the Spanish flamenco dresses, Dikhlo scarves, and embroidery flowers on tablecloths.

I talked to the textile artist Cas Holmes about her relationship with cloth and why it speaks to her on such a personal level. Her craft has taken her all over the world from Japan to Europe and, like the Banjara people, she collects fabrics and threads from where her journeys take her.

"I have always travelled, and I have travelled all over the world, I have always collected fabrics, and these fabrics are used throughout my work," said Cas. "I received a research and study award from Arts Council England to travel to India to explore the connection between Romani Art and textiles to the arts in North West India and the connection to the Banjara/trading community."

Cas recently worked on Gypsy Maker 4, an art project by the Romani Cultural and Arts Company, and we spoke about the pieces she made for this. "I have used photographic images in the pieces for Gypsy Maker 4 of my Romani family," said Cas. "Photography was something I first studied in art college, I then turned to paint but found myself settled and inspired with textiles and cloth as my main inspiration."

In the Gypsy Maker 4 project, Cas has honoured motifs, such as teapots and roses, which can be seen in lots of traditional Romani textile art.

I asked Cas why textiles are her main medium. "I was never taught any needlework and was never exposed to it as a child apart from in school," said Cas. "I feel connected to cloth and its fluidity and I enjoy that the pieces I make are not structured and formal, that they tell a story that's not always finished. My work is up for interpretation from the viewer."

Cas's work is almost otherworldly, delicate and powerful. The mix of found textiles, embroidery, paint, and photography makes her work stand out, just as the colours and textures of the Banjara people's textiles and the Romani people's cloth are timeless.

By Faye Freeman/TT



All photographs © Bela Varadi/TT

## KERRI WILLIAMS

**Midlands-based canal artist Kerri Williams speaks to Imogen Bright Moon about her crafts practice and why she loves traditional waterway arts**

"I was taught the craft by canal artist Julie Tonkin," says Kerri Williams, "and it was a strange start to learning canal art for me; I originally booked the course for my dad as a gift, as he has boaters and coal-women on his side of the family. Sadly, he passed two weeks before the course started. I had to decide if I should do it in his place, so I decided to go, because it's what he would have wanted. At the end of the course, Julie tapped me on the shoulder and she said 'come back tomorrow'. I went back every day for about two years, as an informal apprentice. She was wonderful, she taught me everything; and not just about 'this is how you paint a rose', but historically why you paint the rose, the style of rose, this is how you paint it on a working boat... all the things I'd experienced in my childhood hopping on and off boats but not really taking notice, now I was this little bit older, and with my dad on my shoulder, it was time to learn more. It was exactly the right time, the right moment."

I like painting the boats themselves, especially if they are working boats, and I like painting items that belong to boats as well, items like water cans. I think my favourite though is painting nose-bowls which are traditionally for the horses, so as the horses were pulling the barges along the canal, they'd have a metal bucket attached to their harness, and they'd have a little chomp as they walked along, and I really love painting those as I've got horses myself, so it's a link to that, and it just makes me think of all those horses making those journeys day in day out. I've got some of the tools my dad used to use; if I'm painting something special I'll use his brushes, then put them away; it's a link to him, and he's the reason I do canal art, and I've picked up the tradition of canal art through my dad's love and appreciation of the tradition. To keep our crafts going, we're going to have to think about how we deliver history to people, how we capture their imagination; getting them interested young, appreciating living history, and thinking about how we bring that living history forward, and that's not easy, but it's vital."

Interview by Imogen Bright Moon/TT



## I ENJOYED LEARNING BUT HATED SCHOOL

My experience, being the only member of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community in my secondary school, made me realise I didn't want my children to attend school. I was bullied, made fun of, physically assaulted, stolen from and generally made to feel miserable. I was quite bright and enjoyed learning but hated school.

Deciding how to educate your child is a very personal decision and many parents decide to enrol their child in school, but other parents might not want to send their child. I did a lot of research into the alternatives to school and was relieved to find out that school wasn't compulsory.

My children have never been to school – I have taught them what they needed to know from birth and continued to educate them at home once they became 'compulsory school age'. Every family is different but for us this was the best decision we have ever made and we absolutely love our lifestyle and the freedom it gives

us, and as a result my children are happy, positive and educated.

When your child reaches 'compulsory school age' you can choose to register your child at a school or educate them at home. (In England and Wales, home education is the default method of education for children, which means that school is actually what's called an 'opt-in' service.)

Whether you send your child to school or not, there is a legal requirement to educate your child whilst they are classed as 'compulsory school age' and your child must receive an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, but this doesn't necessarily have to be in a school-type setting; there is no requirement to replicate school at home. Education can be provided in many different ways and can take place anywhere and everywhere, and there are no set hours for when or how home education must be carried out.

Our typical week varies according

to time of year, the weather, our location and what's available, but there is always plenty to do and we usually have difficulty deciding! We have a really good home ed community in our local area and we do the following activities (when available) either weekly or monthly: gymnastics, forest school, horse riding, swimming, dancing and various sports classes. We also attend home ed group meets at zoos, safari parks and museums, as well as at local parks and libraries. At home we do online classes, watch documentaries and play online games, time permitting!

You don't need to be a teacher to home educate but you do need to be willing and present to help and encourage your child with their learning. Some parents struggle themselves with reading and writing due to many reasons, but it is still possible to home educate with the different tools and resources available now which make learning fun and easy!

By Freedom Hoskins/TT

## GEMMA LEES

### RECYCLING IS IN OUR BLOOD AND HISTORY

*Recycling is in our blood and in our history, particularly in the rag and bone and scrap metal trades. We can continue this tradition with contemporary items that would otherwise be thrown 'away'.*

Growing up in the 80s, I was acutely aware of 'Keep Britain Tidy' and the ubiquitous little man called 'Tidyman' who could be seen on bins and the back of crisp packets. At that time, we were taught that throwing rubbish away rather than littering was enough.

Don't get me wrong, the impact of 'Keep Britain Tidy' on the growing post-war littering problem was tremendous, but the truth is that there just is no 'away'. Every crisp packet that I've ever dutifully put in the bin still exists on Earth and will do so for at least another four decades. Made from flexible or soft plastics, crisp packets and other similar items, such as chocolate wrappers, film lids, pasta bags or bread bags, make up 290,000 tonnes of waste sent to landfill each year in the UK alone.

Living a completely waste-free life is almost impossible, we all need medicines, furniture, appliances and clothes. Eventually we will end up with either useable goods that are no longer useful to us, such as toys and shoes our kids have grown out of, or waste items such as broken electrical appliances or ripped linens. With a little bit of effort, we can sell, donate or recycle these items.

We can all also be responsible for ending 'conspicuous consumption'. This is when we buy items just to look good or show off our wealth to other people. The planet is filling up with out of style handbags and last gen mobile phones.

#### I NOW FOLLOW A DIFFERENT MANTRA, THE THREE 'RS':

**REDUCE:** I reduce the amount of waste I send to landfill by buying less and buying less wasteful essentials.

**REUSE:** I upcycle, mend or pass on everything I'm finished with that somebody else could use.

**RECYCLE:** I recycle absolutely everything I can.

By Gemma Lees/TT

#### ITEMS THAT GO TO LANDFILL EVERY YEAR IN THE UK:

- 360,000 tonnes of wearable clothing.
- 149 million pairs of shoes.
- 114,000 tonnes of towels and blankets.
- £144million worth of duvets and pillows.
- 600 million batteries.
- The vast majority of blister packs from the £10.23 billion worth of medicines packaged in them that are sold and prescribed.
- 22 million pieces of furniture.
- 3 million useable household items such as kitchenware and décor.
- 109 billion pieces of beauty industry packaging, such as make-up and toiletries.
- 8.5 million useable toys.
- 1.6 million tonnes of e-waste, that's anything with plugs, cords, and electrical components.



Gemma Lees © Bela Varadi/TT



# OPINIONS

## CHRIS MCDONAGH



Main pic: Chris McDonagh © Evie Colman | Small pic: Gareth Davies MS © SeneddInsider - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=111415118>

### 'WE DON'T WANT THEM'

Racism. Prejudice. Discrimination. Hateful stereotypes. These are all things that the Traveller community are used to, even in 2023. We have come to expect these things and some of us to even accept this treatment, as it is all we have ever known; from ordinary members of the public to those who are in positions of power and trust. As we all know, politicians and certain political groups have used us as ammunition to further their own agenda, careers and political goals.

Gareth Davies, the Member of Senedd for Clwyd, is no different. On the 1st of March 2023, Gareth Davies stood up in the Senedd and attacked Traveller and Romany Gypsy people, through the issue of Traveller site provision, by stating: "The simple message is that we don't want them. When is Welsh Government going to wise up, get real, and act in the best interests of people who pay their council taxes and charges?"

This is a man who has Travellers and Gypsy people in his constituency, and who would probably have looked to him for help. Gareth Davies is a man who is in a position to help break down the stereotypes, help educate others, has the power to influence and challenge the treatment that we, as a people, have faced for perhaps our entire existence.

Gareth Davies went on to say, "Travellers aren't Travellers in the sense of the word if taxpayers' money is being spent on fixed sites in places where they don't contribute to society or pay their way." Saying that we don't pay our way is a racist stereotype. We pay our taxes and bills as much as, and sometimes more than, anyone else. Especially when living on local council sites with the cost of rent, gas and water being more than the national average.

For someone like this to stand up and belittle our historical treatment and reinforce the stereotypes we have been fighting to destroy, is something that disturbs me. How can someone like this be fit to be in a position to make or influence decisions that are meant to be for the benefit of people like us? Gareth Davies clearly sees us as lesser people and the dislike and hatred of us can be seen in his comments.

Gareth Davies has since apologised for his comments, but not to the Traveller and Gypsy people; the people he claimed who don't contribute to society; instead, he apologised to the Senedd.

To be fair, if he did apologise to us, I would be the first in line to tell Gareth Davies that his apology means nothing. A fake apology is no apology, especially if it comes from a person with beliefs such as his.

By Chris McDonagh/TT

## HERITAGE

### AGNES MCDONALD

The moment I was asked – 'who is the most notable person in Scottish Traveller history?', thoughts of folk heroes, warriors and rogues came into my mind. But there was one massive, glaring issue – they were all men.

I'm the brother to three gorgeously strong and resourceful women and many of the incredible changemakers I look up to are women – so where are these women in our history books? In this the year of Scotland's stories, I wanted to ensure the story of a historical Traveller woman was told.

Agnes' story represents the unrecognised contributions of Gypsy/Traveller women throughout Scottish history. Whilst the specific details of Agnes' life were never recorded, we know that as a Gypsy/Traveller woman she would have played many important roles in our society.

One of these was selling or 'hawking' crucial supplies across the country. Scottish communities, particularly rural ones, relied on Gypsy/Travellers such as Agnes to bring them everyday items like cleaning brushes, cutlery and tinware, often hand-crafted by the women themselves. Agnes may have also been a 'herb-wifie', offering her services to those who couldn't afford a doctor: using herbal remedies to ease the pain of labour, treat injuries and relieve sickness. Maybe she was a fortune-teller, a trusted stranger who could act as an early counsellor for emotional heartache, bereavement, and anxiety.

Tragically we will never know Agnes' full story as the first 'anti-Gypsy' legislation was enacted in Scotland around 1541 and Agnes sadly fell victim to these laws. On the 24th of November 1714, Agnes was executed alongside her friend Jean Baillie at the Grassmarket in Edinburgh. Their fate sealed for no other reason than that they had been born a Gypsy/Traveller.

Sadly, her death did not mark the end of the persecution of her people. Throughout the next century, Gypsy/Travellers were shipped to the Caribbean as slaves, children were forcibly removed from their families and many were made to give up their nomadic way of life.

Let's all celebrate and platform the strong, resourceful and incredible Gypsy/Traveller women playing a multitude of important roles in our society. Never again will their voices be written out.

BY DAVIE DONALDSON

Illustration of Agnes McDonald by Leanne McDonagh

Davie Donaldson with Agnes Macdonald's story at the Historic Environment Scotland exhibition at Blackness Castle; © Davie Donaldson





# YOUTH TRAVELLERS' TIMES

## CHASEYBOY SMITH: AMBASSADOR OF DIGNITY!

The Travellers' Times is shining a light on 7-year-old Chaseyboy Smith for receiving an extra special recognition certificate for being an amazing Ambassador of Dignity.

Mrs King, Chaseyboy's teacher, awarded the special recognition to Chaseyboy for demonstrating kindness to all, all the time, and for always believing in himself, and for achieving excellent maths results.

The Travellers' Times asked Chaseyboy how he felt about receiving this award, and with a face full of pride and a cuteness overload, he proudly said, "I'm really happy because I got a certificate from my school. I wish my granny and Uncle Absy were here to see it."

Chaseyboy was referring to the late Ryalla Duffy and Absy Duffy, Ryalla's son. Ryalla sadly passed away in 2021 and the family were devastated further when they lost Absy shortly after.

Ryalla was well known in the community for her writing, poems and film making. She was founder of the Lincolnshire liaison group and got her whole family involved in supporting Gypsy and Traveller

communities. So, it will probably come as no surprise that young Chaseyboy is following in his grannie's footsteps in showing kindness to all and receiving this award for Ambassador of Dignity; something both his family and friends are very proud of.

"I am so proud of the progress Chaseyboy has been making at school," said Eliza, Chaseyboy's mam. "The last few years have not been the easiest for Chaseyboy and his cousins," added Eliza. "They had a very close relationship with their Granny Ryalla and their Uncle Absy. They have all had their struggles at school with bullying and racism, which unfortunately seems to be part and parcel of life for Gypsy and Traveller children. Considering everything that Chaseyboy has had to face at the young age of seven years old, I couldn't be prouder of his achievements. I am also very pleased to hear that he tries to do everything with kindness too, I think that is just as important as his academic achievements."

The Travellers' Times wants to wish Chaseyboy massive congratulations and looks forward to seeing if his



Chaseyboy Smith © Dee Cooper

future achievements will lead him on the same path as his granny. Keep up the Kushti work!

If you know a young person in the community who should have a light shone on them for their outstanding achievement, please contact the Travellers' Times and tell us more!

By Dee Cooper

# #YTT COMMUNITY



## ALICE: "YOU CAN DO ANYTHING, JUST FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS"

When she was six months old, Alice, 10, underwent heart surgery and has ongoing challenges with her health. However, this does not provide any barriers to her boxing. Alice's passion and dedication for boxing shines through. It is clear for Alice boxing is life.

"I just started boxing when I was four," says Alice, who lives in London. "Nothing really made me start boxing. One day I wanted to do something and I just thought boxing. Boxing makes me happy."

To fulfill her dedication to boxing Alice trains hard. "I go four times a week to the gym and

Jamie, my coach, trains me," says Alice. "I go jogging every day, four and a half miles." Alice then mentions to us about her training diet for boxing. "Be careful what you eat," says Alice. "Spaghetti bolognese is my favourite," adding with a big smile on her face that her mum makes the best!

When Alice isn't busy training or boxing another big interest of hers is horses. She likes to help at a family horse farm where her dad trains them. We asked Alice how she likes to help with the horses. "Sometimes I jog them, I walk them around, I brush them, I clean them out, feed them, loads of stuff really," says Alice.

Alice has a really clear vision of where she wants to go with boxing. "I want to go a long way; I want to go professional in the Olympics."

Alice is already preparing for this goal and she talks about boxing matches she has competed in. "The girls are older than me," says Alice. "When I was nine I had to fight a 13-year-old, and she was heavier than me."

We asked Alice what would she say to inspire other Traveller girls who may dream of taking up boxing. "You can do anything, just follow your dreams," says Alice.

Words by Stacey Hodgkins/TT  
Photographs by Eszter Halasi/TT



# HELPLINES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

## GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUPS

### **GATE HERTS**

Community-led Organisation for  
Gypsy, Roma and Travellers

**01707 247 088**

**[www.gateherts.org.uk](http://www.gateherts.org.uk)**

**[hub@gateherts.org.uk](mailto:hub@gateherts.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](mailto:fft@gypsy-traveller.org)**

**[www.gypsy-traveller.org](http://www.gypsy-traveller.org)**

### **LEEDS GYPSY AND TRAVELLER EXCHANGE**

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

**0113 240 2444**

### **LGBTQ+ TRAVELLER PRIDE**

Advice and support for LGBTQ+  
Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

**07395 355066**

**[travellerlgbtpride@gmail.com](mailto:travellerlgbtpride@gmail.com)**

**[www.lgbttravellerpride.com](http://www.lgbttravellerpride.com)**

### **ONE CALL AWAY**

Gypsy & Traveller Mental Health  
and Support

**[Onecallawaytoday@gmail.com](mailto:Onecallawaytoday@gmail.com)**

### **PRIDE OF ROMANI**

Community-led organisation based  
in Cheshire

**[prideofromani@gmail.com](mailto:prideofromani@gmail.com)**

### **REPORT RACISM GRT**

Report Hate Crime against Gypsies,  
Roma and Travellers

**[reportracismgrt.com](http://reportracismgrt.com)**

### **ROMA SUPPORT GROUP**

Supporting and empowering the  
Roma community

**07949 089778**

**[info@romasupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:info@romasupportgroup.org.uk)**

### **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](http://www.drive2survive.org.uk)**

### **TRAVELLER MOVEMENT**

Providing support and advice  
nationally to Gypsies and Travellers  
visit our website

**[www.travellermovement.org.uk](http://www.travellermovement.org.uk)**

**0207 607 2002**

**[info@travellermovement.org.uk](mailto:info@travellermovement.org.uk)**

### **TRAVELLING AHEAD**

Support & advice for Gypsy, Roma and  
Traveller communities across Wales

**0808 802 0025**

**[travellingahead@tgpcymru.org.uk](mailto:travellingahead@tgpcymru.org.uk)**

### **COMMUNITY LAW PARTNERSHIPS TRAVELLERS ADVICE TEAM**

Legal advice and support for Gypsies  
and Travellers facing eviction

**0121 685 8677**

## GENERAL

### **SAMARITANS**

**116 123**

**[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)**

### **CHILD LINE**

**0800 1111**

**[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**

### **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**Helpline: 0808 2000 247**

### **WOMEN'S AID (DOMESTIC ABUSE)**

**[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)**

### **MIND: FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH**

**0300 123 3393**

**[www.mind.org.uk](http://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](http://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](http://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/advice)**

