

# Travellers in prison news

Newsletter of the  
Traveller Equality  
Project

Issue 10  
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BEANNACHTAÍ NA FÉILE PÁDRAIG!

HAPPY SAINT PATRICK'S DAY!

Welcome to the 10th Edition of Travellers in Prison News (TIPN).

In January, we visited Brixton Prison to speak on National Prison Radio's Open Road programme. Open Road is a brilliant mix of music, information and discussion focused on Gypsy and Traveller issues. Open Road has been a huge success since it was launched late last year and has a large following of Traveller and non-Traveller listeners. Check the back of Inside Time for programme times.

In February we had a very good visit to Coldingley Prison. We met the Traveller

*The work of the Irish Chaplaincy in Britain is funded in part by grants from the Government of Ireland and by the support of many generous Friends.*

Group who were keen to get their Group established within the prison. We also spoke with senior staff at the monthly Diversity Meeting stressing the importance of regular Traveller Groups, the importance of Traveller Reps being able to access prisoners at reception and as always the importance of ethnic monitoring.

As more and more prisoners identify themselves as 'W3 Gypsy / Irish Traveller', they are seeing the benefits of having their ethnic background recognised in prison. So remember if you're not registered as 'W3 Gypsy / Irish Traveller' register today with your Personal Officer because:

**If you are not counted. You won't count!**

*Travellers in Prison News is produced thanks to the kind support of the Barrow Cadbury Trust*

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In this edition of TIPN, we have an article by Noel, a Traveller Rep and Sarah Dabinett, Head of Residence in HMP Guy's Marsh. Terry Smith continues with his life story. We have news of a book of Gypsy and Traveller stories compiled by Sister Carmel Murphy, and edited by Manchester based journalist Ciara Leeming. And much, more.

Remember that TIPN is your newsletter. TIPN is for Travellers and Gypsies and those who work alongside the community – SO GET WRITING.

Let us know what things are happening in your prison for Gypsies and Travellers and how others can learn from it. Send us your poems, artwork, articles and letters to make sure that TIPN makes your voice heard.

Most importantly, in the month of March we here at the Traveller Equality Project wish you (wherever you are from!), your family and friends a Very Happy St Patrick's Day!

## WORKING TOGETHER IN HMP GUY'S MARSH



*We were thrilled this month to get an article written jointly by Noel, a Traveller rep in HMP Guy's Marsh, and Sarah Dabinett; Head of Residence in the prison.*

### Noel:

My name is Noel, I come from an Irish Travelling background and I am 8 years into a mandatory life sentence. Over the years I have used my time productively but along the way I have

fallen victim to and witnessed my fair share of discrimination, I have not allowed it to faze me from achieving my goals

When the ad came out for a Gypsy/Traveller Rep, I was torn about whether to apply. I didn't want to get involved in the politics or be perceived in the wrong way but I was ultimately swayed by knowing that I could contribute to positive changes within the community.

As part of my role the Head of Residence and Safety asked me to give a presentation to staff at a meeting about my role and to give staff an awareness of the concerns and difficulties that Gypsy/Travellers face whilst in custody.

### Sarah:

**My name is Sarah Dabinett and I took over the role of Head of Residence and Safety here at Guy's Marsh in 2013. The role needed developing and key to this is having prisoners to support you that understand the needs of other prisoners. I knew Noel from a previous establishment and so was extremely pleased when he applied for the role of Gypsy/Traveller representative.**

**I had witnessed some staff perceptions of Gypsy/Travellers and it was clear that we need to develop the relationship between the Gypsy/Traveller community and staff working with them.**

### Noel:

I carried out some research into this and also interviewed both staff and Gypsy/Travellers about their perceptions of each other. I was

shocked to learn how similar each others' views were about each other and also how in a modern society there was still a sample of stereotyping about certain ethnic groups.

I presented this information on my presentation and also highlighted the difficulties that Gypsy/Travellers faced when coming to prison; particularly focusing on the low literacy levels and self harm.

I stressed how difficult it was coming from the open road, living as a free spirit amongst your own community to coming to prison where you're confined to a small space, feel isolated from your community and have difficulty understanding prison rules due to your literacy levels.

Coming to prison is tough, particularly if you are vulnerable and experience mental health issues; these all lend to the violence and self harm in prisons

Since the presentation I have received a great deal of positive feedback from staff and I believe that this is a step forward in changing some perceptions. I feel that I now have staff support to put strategies in place that will help with the needs and requirements of the Gypsy/Traveller community here at Guy's Marsh.

### Sarah:

**I asked Noel to do a presentation at a Full Staff Meeting to initiate some awareness amongst staff and the feedback has been extremely positive, staff are now aware of Noel and the role he represents but I do believe that the presentation has generated some thoughts amongst the staff group.**

We have a long way to go in developing the role and the relationships between staff and Gypsies/Travellers but I think that the prison is certainly more aware of the difficulties that are faced on a day-to-day basis.

Noel is part of our Safer Custody and Equalities meetings and as committees we are striving to do what we can to overcome the frustrations of the Gypsy/Traveller communities.

### TRAVELLER EXHIBITION AT HMP ALT COURSE

In January, HMP Altcourse hosted a special exhibition of Traveller history and culture in the prison library. The exhibition was part of the 'Moving Voices' project by Liverpool based charity Twin Vision.

The exhibition, which included recorded interviews with community members, photographs and historical archive, reflects Irish Traveller culture through the community's own eyes.

The exhibition was enjoyed by Traveller and non-Traveller prisoners alike and received positive feedback, some examples of which were:

*"Exhibitions like this help to curb ignorance"*

*"Really enjoyed looking at the photos and reading their history"*

*"Really enjoyed looking at the exhibition and reading about the families. Made me want to know more"*



The Moving Voices project can offer a platform for greater understanding of a proud community's cultural heritage, which can only be a good thing for the Traveller prison population and wider community.

For more information on the project and to watch videos and interviews go to [www.twinvision.org](http://www.twinvision.org)



To enquire about booking the exhibition for your prison, email [paul@twinvision.org](mailto:paul@twinvision.org)

### SOUTHWARK TRAVELLERS TAKE TO THE ROAD

Southwark Travellers Action Group (STAG) based in Peckham, South London, has been running a project to help Travellers become licenced lorry drivers.

"We kept hearing from our project users that finding work out there was getting harder and harder- so we were inspired to hear that one of the men had recently passed his LGV licence and was starting work for a lorry company"

explains Archie Utley, the projects' manager.

"We applied to the Travellers Aid Trust for funding and we're now supporting five men through the process and funding their training and tests."

"Lorry drivers can earn around £500 per week so we weren't surprised by the amount of interest in the opportunity."

"Becoming a Large Goods Vehicle driver involves taking a medical, upgrading your licence to Category C, passing theory tests and the Certificate of Professional Competence, one week's intensive training followed by a practical test. Though it's not easy and the success rate of passing the test first time is only 43%, the men are working hard inspired by the thought of leaving heavy-labouring and scrapping behind. Hopefully we'll be seeing a lot more Travellers driving lorries in the future."



## MY LIFE... PART 2

By Terry Smith

*Following on from his article in December's newsletter, Terry Smith shares his memories of life on the road.*

Hello everyone, even though it's getting on here's wishing you a very happy New Year. Well you might have read a little about me in the last issue.

A Gypsy life on the road is not easy and every Traveller will tell you that. When my family were on the road there were times when we could not stop, in some places the police would follow us through the town or village to make sure we never stopped. Sometimes we travelled at night only to be woken up at dawn and moved on.

In the winter time we struggled for food but in the summer we could hunt for rabbits, go fishing, find wild garlic and a few potatoes. But in the winter it was tough. I can still remember Daddy sharpening 3 of the butchers knives and in return getting six sausages, six slices of bacon and a small piece of belly pork. That same day my mother made six flowers made from elderbush and the lady she sold them to gave her a bag of potatoes, an onion and some bread.

In those days there were no fridges, but there were no sell by dates either! My mother would cover meat in salt and put it in a plastic bag. Then she'd put the bag under cold water in a small milk churn.

We loved hunting, we would walk for miles with the dogs; up and down fields, in and out of woods and down the riverbanks and we always got home safe with a bit of food. Of course you had to be on your guard; sometimes the farmers would run us off the land or we would get a kick off an electric fence.

Many a time we sat at the fire just outside the trailer and Daddy would tell us stories about himself and his family. Mammy would put potatoes in the fire for supper. They were lovely with a bit of butter.

My mother loved to listen to the radio; she would listen out for her old favourites The Dubliners, the Ink Spots, Jim Reeves and Malcom Vaughn, not forgetting Joseph Lock.

My Daddy never went off drinking, that was later on in life when we settled. But when times were fair he would get a bottle of the old Irish Whisky and would sit outside at the fire after the kids was put to bed and then enjoy themselves.

We wouldn't try to drink the Whisky; Mammy would say "don't drink that its got the mullor (devil) in it." Like fools we believed her because when she and daddy would drink we'd hear them shouting and we would say "what's up Mammy?" and she'd say "go back to bed daddy's got the mullor in him!"

In the morning we'd get up and Mammy would be making hot porridge or boiled egg. Daddy would be outside checking on the lorry or sitting at the fire.

The older side of the family called daddy by his first name 'Dooly' where as we called him plain Daddy. We never knew why in them days but later in life we found out the older side of the family had a different daddy by the name of Traynor who passed away before our Mammy re-married our Daddy.

That's all till next time. God Bless and take care!

## TIME TO ASK

*Jim, a Traveller in prison, sent us in a prayer he'd like to share.*

God to grant me the serenity to accept the things as a man I cannot change while in prison,

The courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference,

So help me Lord, as I pray to you today and every day, with all of my heart Lord and with my soul.

So God grant this old man, Jim, his prayers today and every day oh Lord,

Tis all this old Traveller man asks of you Lord God.

My Saviour, I ask of you oh Lord to help this old Traveller man,

The Good Lord I ask of you.

## ST PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE

*We remember St Patrick, patron saint of Ireland on the 17<sup>th</sup> March. For this occasion, Frank, a Traveller in prison, wanted to share the prayer of St Patrick with our readers:*

Christ with me, Christ before me,

Christ behind me, Christ in me,

Christ beneath me, Christ above me,

Christ on my right, Christ on my left,

Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height,

Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,

Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,

Christ in every eye that sees me,

Christ in every ear that hears me.

## A NEW BOOK OF TRAVELLERS TALES



**An illustrated collection of Irish Traveller and Romany Gypsy life stories – in their own words**

A new book, 'Travellers Tales' was released this month, featuring a collection of pictures, stories and history from the Travelling community.

The book was written by Sister Carmel Murphy, a nun who has spent 20 years working in the community, and edited by Manchester based journalist Ciara Leeming.

Sister Carmel spent years collecting the life stories of the Irish Travellers and English Gypsies with whom she worked.

Sister Carmel says she wrote the book "to show the true face of most Travellers and Gypsies – that they are upright, hardworking people who play a valuable role in society".

"I began by collecting stories from the older generation, so that knowledge of their traditional way of life would not be lost." Sister Carmel explained.

Ciara Leeming added that the aim of the book was to "quietly challenge stereotypes about these groups and to highlight the diversity within them - as well as their similarities with other communities. All the stories are told using individuals' own words."

The books are available for £2.50 plus postage by emailing Ciara at [info@ciaraleeming.co.uk](mailto:info@ciaraleeming.co.uk)

There is also a free eBook available at <http://bit.ly/MdbWvS>

The Traveller Equality Project also have a small number of books available free of charge.

## A MESSAGE TO TRAVELLERS IN PRISON



*Patrick, a Traveller prisoner in the London area sent us a heart felt message he wanted to share with fellow Traveller prisoners:*

Prison is not a place for nobody and I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy. My advice to Travellers and Gypsies is to make an honest living and be crime free because you don't appreciate your freedom until you're locked in a prison cell 23 hours a day.

So if you have any sense and look how many young Travellers and Gypsies are in prison then keep crime free.

It took me to come to prison to realize that from the day I'm released from here my life will be crime free so I can be a role model for my younger brothers, nephews and all my young relations.

## GYPSY COUPLE BEAT 'POISON PEN' CAMPAIGN



AN ELDERLY Gypsy couple have suffered a "poison pen" campaign – just for wanting to carry out some home improvements on their legal pitch.

Jim and Doris Manley, who are aged 80 and 79 respectively, have been running a caravan and camping site in Wembury, Devon for 15 years.

However, when they applied for planning permission to replace their personal caravan with a new mobile home at the site in November last year, they were stunned at the overwhelming negative response from local residents.

"We've been here for 15 years and we've lived in Wembury since 1969" said Doris.

"We don't want to change the site. It will always stay a members-only caravan and camping site, just a holiday thing, something just right for this village."

The Manleys plan for a small mobile home, room for a touring caravan and an amenity block resulted in what Doris called a "poison pen" letter being sent to residents opposing their application.

They were accused of lying about their past, or conning the council to approve planning permission. Police were unable to find out who penned the poisonous letter as it was anonymous.

However, they were supported by letters from the likes of the Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council (REC) and Jenny Rayner, the assistant Gypsy and Traveller liaison officer from Devon County Council.

Doris said the poison pen letter plan backfired as supporters came out to counter the objectors.



"People who know us know we're Gypsies," she said. "If you're born a Gypsy, then that's your heritage."

"We run the mission church in the town – everybody knows us. We've been here longer than most people."

The couple said they hoped to start work on the amenity block once the weather improves.

## ANOTHER TRAVELLER STAR



The Voice contestant Talia Smith was knocked out of the show this week, but we're sure we haven't heard the last of this Traveller talent.

Talia, who lives in a trailer near Heathrow, London, had been due to perform as part of duo 'Travellin' Rose', but was forced to go solo after her partner Kelly Lee pulled out.

Talia went through to the next round after wowing the Welsh superstar

Tom Jones, who is a judge on the show.

Talia only started singing after having her third baby but says she has been boosted by the encouragement of her friends and family. She writes about her experiences of being a young mum, living in a trailer and the stresses of being a woman in the music industry, and she is currently recording her debut solo album.



Although they're still relatively unheard of in the UK, Talia and Kelly as 'Travellin Rose' had already enjoyed success on the US country music scene with singles such as "Made Up My Mind." The pair even travelled to Nashville to record an album their debut album 'Cinderella Dreaming' and play a series of live gigs. They have also won a British Country Music Award.

As their profile grows, the pair are keen to use the opportunity to promote the Travelling community and combat stereotypes.

Talia, who lives with her husband Billy and three children says she has "a lot to thank the Gypsy community for."

Talia insists there's nothing to stop Travelling women being independent and successful, despite what is shown on TV shows.

"To be honest I've never watched these Gypsy TV shows on principle. They are for entertainment, it's not our real life."

Kelly adds "I've been singing since I was a little girl. We sing around the campfire. It's in our blood."

## I WANT TO GET AN EDUCATION – TYSON FURY



"I'm not an educated person with any proper schooling," Fury said last year outside the cottage that had been his home in Essen for eight long weeks of training. As sunlight streamed through the trees it seemed a poignant time for Fury to consider his life as a fighter and Traveller who had left school at the age of 10.

The wooden house belonged to his trainer and uncle, Peter, who had begun to educate himself during his second long spell in prison. Fury, however, regretted his failure to have learnt how to write properly.

Fury was on the brink of earning over a million pounds against David Haye but he smiled ruefully. "I'd like to take a course in writing. I'm not the best writer in the world. I'd like to write more neatly, even though people don't send many handwritten letters these days. It bothers me but it's hard when you're one of them people who don't know where to stop sentences or put commas or exclamation marks. You feel like an illiterate dummy, don't you?"

Fury's face creased with emotion as he said: "I can fight but that's the only thing I can do. When it comes

to anything other than fighting, or talking, I'm not very good."

Tyson Fury is smart. His vast intelligence is obvious during a long conversation in which he spoke on subjects as diverse as depression and discipline, addiction and hope, religion and money – and his complicated feelings towards those he fights in the ring.

"Probably when I'm retired from boxing I'll take some time out and do some advanced writing lessons. It could be good but at the moment I'm busy with my career."

*(From an article by Donald McRae in The Guardian, 10/2/14)*

## WHAT THE CENSUS TELLS US: GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS IN THE UK TODAY

In 2011, the census for England and Wales included a category for Gypsies and Travellers for the first time. While many Travellers may have chosen not to identify themselves on the census, thousands did. This means that for the first time we have solid data on the experiences of Travellers in England and Wales. A lot of it makes depressing reading, but it is also food for thought. It shows there is a lot of work to be done – by government and wider society but also within the community – to ensure the next generation of Gypsies and Travellers have the same life chances as anyone else.

Key findings from the census:

- 58,000 people identified themselves as Gypsy or Irish Traveller in the 2011 Census (0.1 per cent of the usual resident population of England and Wales).



- People identifying as Gypsy or Irish Traveller had a higher proportion of residents under the age of 20 at 39 per cent. This compares to 24 per cent of the overall England and Wales population who were under 20.
- Gypsy or Irish Travellers born in non-UK EU countries was double the proportion for England and Wales as a whole – 8 per cent compared to 4 per cent.
- The majority of people who identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller identified with an English only national identity (66 per cent) and were Christian (64 per cent).
- Gypsy or Irish Travellers had the highest proportion with no qualifications for any ethnic group (60 per cent) – almost three times higher than for England and Wales as a whole (23 per cent).
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller was the ethnic group with the lowest proportion of respondents who were economically active at 47 per cent, compared to 63 per cent for England and Wales as a whole.
- Over half of those who were economically active were employed (51 per cent compared to 75 per cent for the total of England and Wales) and 20 per cent were unemployed (compared to 7 per cent for the whole of England and Wales). Gypsy or Irish Traveller had the highest proportion of self-employed out of the ethnic groups at 26 per cent compared to 14 per cent for England and Wales.

- Elementary occupations (such as sales, service or construction) were the most common type of employment at 22 per cent for Gypsy or Irish Traveller (11 per cent for England and Wales as a whole).
- Just under half of Gypsy or Irish Traveller households had dependent children (45 per cent) – above the average for the whole of England and Wales (29 per cent).
- Whole house or bungalow was the most common type of accommodation for respondents who identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller, at 61 per cent (84 per cent for England and Wales as a whole), followed by caravan or other mobile or temporary structure at 24 per cent (0.3 per cent for England and Wales as a whole).
- Gypsy or Irish Travellers were more than twice as likely to live in social housing than the overall population of England and Wales (41 per cent compared to 16 per cent) and less likely to own their accommodation outright (21 per cent compared to 26 per cent).
- Gypsy or Irish Travellers had the lowest proportion of any ethnic group rating their general health as 'good' or 'very good' at 70 per cent compared to 81 per cent overall of the overall population of England and Wales.
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller ethnic group was among the highest providers of unpaid care in England and Wales at 11 per cent (10 per cent for England and Wales as a whole) and provided the highest proportion of people providing 50 hours or more of unpaid care at 4 per cent (compared to 2 per cent for England and Wales as a whole).



## JOHN JOE GOES PRO

Olympic silver medallist John Joe Nevin will begin his professional career with a bout against Albert Candalaria in Boston on March 17.

The Traveller and Mullingar native will face the Puerto Rican brawler in the House of Blues in Boston in a six-round bout.

The show is being co-promoted by Murphys Boxing (Dropkick Murphys) and Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy and will be televised in the US by Fox Sports and in Ireland on BoxNation.

Nevin, who is signed with Green Blood of Philadelphia and Berkeley Sports and Media of the UK, has been in Philadelphia for the last two months training.

The March 17 offering will also feature Dubliner Jamie Kavanagh against an opponent yet to be named.

## TYSON FURY AND DERECK CHISORA BOTH WIN TO SET UP SUMMER REMATCH

Heavyweights Dereck Chisora and Tyson Fury moved closer to a rematch after both secured wins in east London on Saturday 15th February 2014. Chisora, 30, won a unanimous points

decision in a gritty 12-round contest against veteran American Kevin Johnson.

In contrast, 25-year-old Fury provided a demonstration of his power, flooring southpaw Joey Abell four times before the fight was stopped in the fourth.

Tyson and Chisora first fought in 2011 with Fury prevailing, and with both victorious on Saturday a rematch seems likely.

Tyson Fury and Dereck Chisora will bring a saleable commodity to the ring if and when they meet again: unpredictability. These heavyweight rebels, who spread confusion with mouth and fist, were both in good form when they auditioned for each other against a pair of willing Americans in London on Saturday night. Their summer clash is sure to have sparks flying.



## STAY IN TOUCH!

We hope you enjoyed this newsletter and will sign up for future editions.

- Do you have a question about Travellers in prison?
- Are you thinking of starting a Travellers Group and would like advice?
- Would you like help arranging speakers from the Travelling Community?
- Are you looking for resources for Traveller prisoners?

Then please get in touch!

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**Remember to register in  
your prison as:**

**W3 Irish  
Traveller /  
Gypsy**