

WHAT DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT



GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS ?

Linda would like to tell people who don't know Travellers:



"I'm writing this not only for myself but for other Traveller boys and girls. We love to meet new people and tell them our stories and what we are really about. I know you will like us and hopefully you'll realise that there's more to Travellers than mess left beside the road."

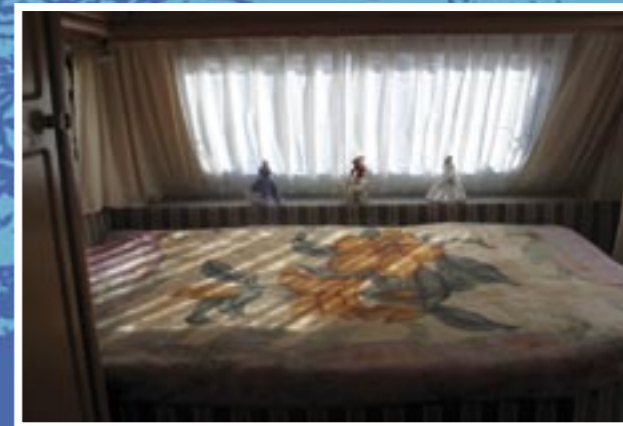
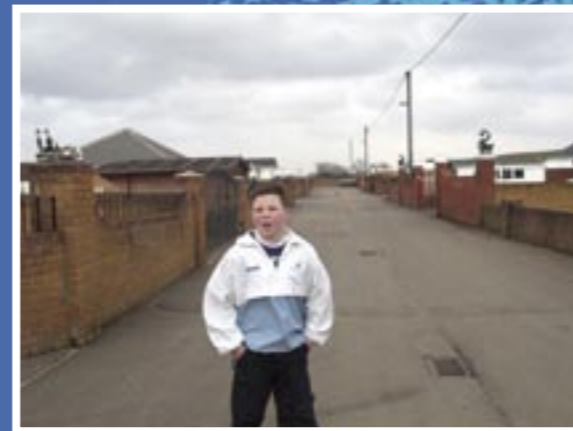
"We have made this magazine to show other young people that Gypsies and Travellers are human and civilised. We are just like you, the only difference is that we live in caravans."

"We would like people to read our magazine and understand more about our lives. We have made this magazine for ourselves and other Gypsy children so that in the future people won't be so prejudiced against Gypsies and Travellers."

The writers of this magazine are:
Leo Lee, Josephine and Chantal Price,
Linda, Kathleen and Jimmy McCann,
Scarlett, Chantel and Pretty Boy Price.

With contributions from:
Francie, Creddy, Jasmine, Cherie, Leo,
Michael, Frog, Jason, Saley, Huggy, Creddy,
Crimea, Smartie, Birdie, Jack-James and
all the Gypsies and Travellers who have been
attending the sessions at the Satellite Youth
Centre, Market Harborough.

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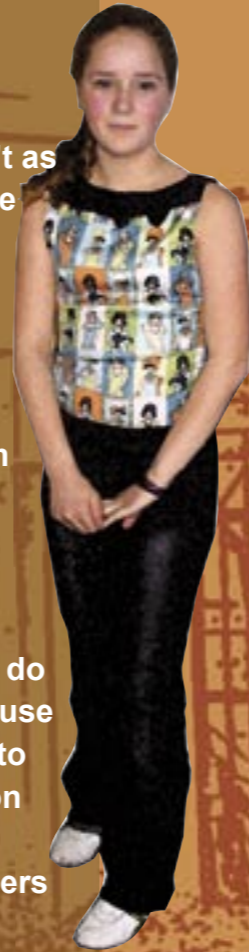
Jimmy's trophies



“My name is Jimmy McCann. I have been boxing for over 5 years. I'm a member of Kettering Boxing Club. This club is for everyone, not just Gypsies. Everyone trains together no matter their race or culture. I did some training with Amir Khan.”



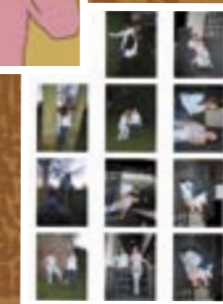
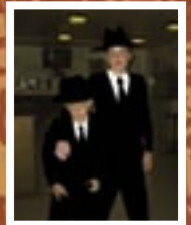
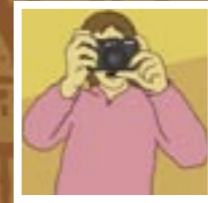
“I am Kathleen McCann. I am 12 years old. I live in a trailer with my sister and two brothers. I used to go to school but now I don't as us Gypsies were getting all the blame for any trouble caused. My first school in Stevenage was different because people were nicer to Gypsies and the local kids wanted to be our friends. I would like to go to college when I'm older and do hairdressing. I get bored at home because our parents are strict about us going places on our own. It's good to go to the youth club and do music, dancing and learning how to use the computer. We would like people to come and visit us and do activities on our site. I entered a competition in the Travellers Times magazine. I painted a Gypsy caravan and won a prize for it.”



Some of the activities at Satellite Youth Centre



In March 2003, the Satellite Youth Centre started a regular night for travellers. Gypsies from the local area came along to try out different arts activities and have a go at making music. It was from these sessions that the idea for making this magazine came.



A Gypsy boy's story

"I don't go to school and never have done. Besides, I'm 14 now and too old for school. During the day, I go out with my dad or uncles to work collecting scrap, which we weigh in at Nottingham or Sheffield. In my spare time I play with friends round our site. I want to join a boxing club soon. My family has 12 horses, 6 chickens and 8 dogs. We breed horses and sell them at the fairs. We also use the horses for the carts and wagons when we go travelling in the summer.

I live on a travellers site with my mum and dad. My gran also lives on the site on her own plot of land. Me and my dad will inherit her plot when she dies. My family moved there about 10 years ago.

Before that, my family travelled all the time. We now only travel during the summer. We see the fairs as a kind of holiday and we often travel from one fair to the next.

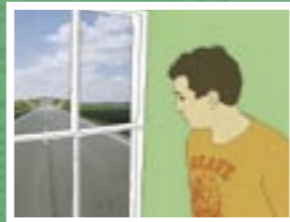
All of my family are Christians and we go to a church in Oakham.

If I get married it might be to someone from my own site. It's not a problem for me to marry a girl who isn't a Gypsy, but she would have to come and live the Gypsy life. When I am grown, I will do the same work as my dad, collecting scrap, building work and PVC windows.

I have a lot of dreams that will never come true."

Travelling

"Gypsies travel mostly in the summer through 'til November or Christmas. We travel to see relatives and go to horse fairs."



"When we travel we don't go to school. When we travel we can't find places to pull in with our trailers and the police move us on. We don't think this is fair."

"Now our family has bought land in Market Harborough, we have somewhere to go in the winter.

Like many Gypsies, we don't travel as much as we used to."

"Our favourite thing about travelling is going to horse fairs.

When we are on our site we don't get to see many people and aren't allowed out much, but when you go to a fair, you get to meet new people and make new friends, maybe even get a girlfriend or boyfriend."

"We also get to stay up late."

"We go to horse fairs in Stow, Appleby and Newcastle."



Changing times

"My granny sells lucky charms and makes table cloths with wagon wheels on them. She tells fortunes by reading palms. She travels all round the country, especially round Cornwall and Scotland. She travels more than we do. She stays on holiday camps and returns to live with us in the winter."

"None of us girls want to do this. I don't think I could do it; knocking peoples' doors and all that. Years ago, the women had to do this and the children would go with them. We've helped our granny selling, that's one reason to still go travelling."

"Making traditional Gypsy things and hawking them is dying out now, because none of the younger women want to do it. Gypsy women now either stay at home or try to get jobs, but it's hard, because you need to go to college. I'd love to go to college, but I just don't know how to do it."



It's different for girls

"We'll be 16 or 17 when we get married. I hope I meet someone who isn't living where I live at the moment. When we go travelling we go to conventions, like churches in big tents. They have adult and youth meetings and childrens' activities."

"Gypsies from all over come to these conventions and we get the chance to meet other people, including boys we might marry.

We wouldn't be allowed to go out with a boy who wasn't a Gypsy."

"Our parents want us to keep our Gypsy lifestyle and culture. If we found a boy our parents didn't like, then we would have to run away to marry them. We either have a big wedding or we run away.

It all depends if our parents like who we want to marry. If I married a boy who wasn't a Gypsy, I would be shamed by my family. If I had kids by them, I think they would get grief from other Gypsy children."

"Non-Gypsy women who have married Gypsy men can also get grief from Gypsy women who might think they are just playing at being Gypsies."

Gypsies and animals



“I’d love to become a vet because I love animals, but I don’t think anyone would want to teach Gypsies because they think we’re cruel to animals. We love animals, they’re really important to us. I’ve looked after animals all my life.”

“We’ve got lots of horses; my dad breeds black and white trotters. They pull our carts and wagons and we show them at fairs. Other Gypsies buy our horses. Gypsy men love horses and their wives go mad at them for spending too much on the horses.”

“Horses are part of Gypsy history. We needed horses to move around and find work. That’s why they came into Gypsies’ lives; they help us out.”

Land

Often, Gypsies buy land to build on for their families, and to park up their vehicles.

Many sites are built on poor land, next to motorways or industrial estates. Sites are often hidden from the world by earth banks and trees.

Planning permission is hard to get because of objections by local people. Sometimes the land, however poor, is classed as greenbelt.

Even sympathetic local authorities are reluctant to grant planning permission. They don’t want to be unpopular with the voters.

Gypsies who get impatient and build without planning permission often get evicted from their sites, even if they own the land.

This doesn’t solve the problem, just moves it on to somewhere else.



While there is a shortage of permanent sites for Gypsies, illegal sites will continue. Allowing Gypsies legal places to stop throughout the country would be a way to reduce problems with local people. Legal sites could have proper rubbish collection services and facilities for power and water. Many people object to the idea of having a Gypsy site near to them, but if no legal sites are built, then illegal sites, with all their problems, will continue.

Going to school.

“We do believe in going to school but we don’t go every day. We do miss a lot of time when we are travelling. The teachers pull us up for our writing because of this.”

“Many of us can read but not enough to do SATS exams.”

“We do get picked on at school, but often the teachers give us detentions and bad reports because they think we start all the trouble. They tell us the other children don’t like us because some Gypsies leave rubbish in the streets.”

“We all get put off going to school because lots of kids and even some teachers are racist towards us. We don’t start all the trouble but we do answer back when people call us names.”

“We sometimes speak in our own language at school, so people think we are Irish, but we have our own Romany language and different accents. Romany Gypsies and Irish travellers are different. We are Romany and we have many places in our blood, England, Spain and more.”

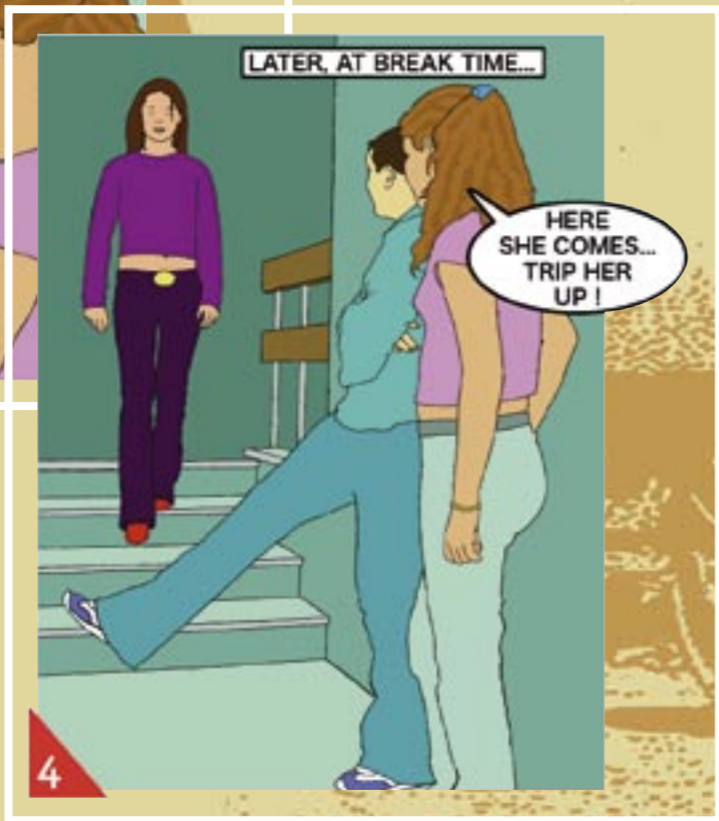
“If people understood more about us they might treat us better, but ever since I started school, I’ve had grief, so us Gypsies tend to stick together. We do have some friends at school, but most kids won’t play with us. If we ask to join in with their games they say things like: ‘No, this is a two-player game.’”

“The kids make fun of us when we get behind in class and the teachers expect us to be able to write as well the other kids.”

“They don’t understand it’s hard for us.”

“We have written and made a short photo story about being bullied in school. All of us have had at least one thing like this happen to us.”







...What should Linda do?

Lots of people get bullied for all sorts of different reasons. Some bullies find it easier to bully if they can find something they don't like about someone else. They could be a different colour or have a different culture.

Gypsies are easily picked on because there are lots of bad stories about them that a lot of people simply accept as true.

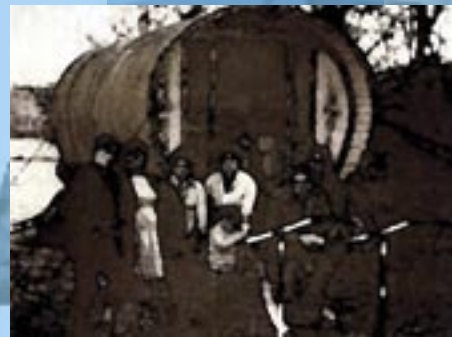
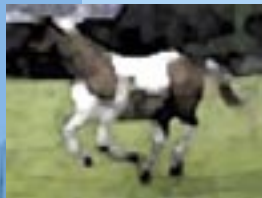
Just as no one should be bullied for their religion or appearance, Gypsies should not be bullied for the way they live.

The young Gypsies who have made this magazine have used it to say that you should get to know people before you judge them.

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