

Travelling  
Tales

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# Fairground people, Show-people, Circus-folk, Romani and Travellers in Wales

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The heritage and culture of the  
Romani and Traveller communities  
as players and performers is  
one that remains obscure and  
largely ‘forgotten’, but is bound  
up with feasts, festivals and  
entertainments...

# Introduction

The current increase in antagonism and antipathy towards Romani and Traveller people, across Europe, reflects a worrying trend, seen in earlier times and frequently resulting in xenophobia and intolerance that leads, ultimately, to the 'Gypsy camp' (*Zigeunerlager*) at Auschwitz-Birkenau and elsewhere (1939-1945). Over the course of the history of Romani and Traveller peoples, there have been both sporadic episodes of (majority) ethnic violence combined with the attempted destruction of 'Gypsies' (late 16th century and early 17th century CE; mid-20th century), and periods of tolerance (late 18th and early 19th centuries CE. Though rarely a real acceptance of Romani people), or engagement even, and sometimes combined with an enchantment with 'Gypsies', that is the bright side of the coin (early 15th and 16th centuries CE), these brief periods are the opposite of the dark, the widespread stereotypes of 'the Gypsy' as 'child-stealer', 'cheat', 'conning' (see below) and 'thieving', all-too-often used to justify the extremes of hatred and destruction inflicted upon Romani and Travellers by the majority population.

That bright side of the coin, the engagement with Romani and Travelling people, by the wider society has often been through the prism of entertainment and traditionally, the business of entertainment has been the staple of Romani and Traveller economies for many in the communities (though not all, by any means). Fairgrounds and circuses, musicians, dancers and singers, jugglers and acrobats, clowns (*joey*s) and barkers for fairground rides (*slanging buffers*), even players in travelling theatres, these have been the faces of Romani and Traveller, Fairground people, Circus-folk and Show peoples, that non-Romani families from local towns and villages in England and Wales have seen, when seeking 'all the fun of the fair'.

Entertainment is often how we first see Romani people in history, at the court of the Byzantine Emperors for example, in the most wondrous (as described in the accounts of travellers) of cities, Constantinople. In the middle of the eleventh century CE (Common Era), the ancestors of modern Romani people arrived in the capital of Byzantium and 'enchanted' the *basileus Romioi* (Emperor of the Romans) Constantine IX (1042-1055 CE), the Empresses Zoë (1028-105 CE) and Theodora (1042-1055 CE) Porphyrogenita (there were two at the

time), and the glittering nobles of the palace, with their powers of divination and fortune-telling, magic and prophecy. Impressed, the Emperor asked them to rid his hunting grounds of bears and wolves that were killing all his deer and boars, as he believed the 'Egyptians' had to power to 'charm' the wild beasts away. They were successful in doing so, though they were condemned by St George of Iviron, from the Holy Mount of Athos, for their 'devilish practices' and left the Emperor's court unpaid for their work (Lang, 1956). The 'Egyptians', however, continued to perform feats of wonder in the city, offering charms made from bones and bear's fur, 'scrying' (looking to the future) in brass bowls of clear water, using the shapes of the clouds above, to tell the fortunes of anxious Byzantines. Further evidence is found in interdictions by priests, clerics and even the Patriarchs of the eastern Orthodox Church, condemning the population for seeking their divinatory advice about the future at this uncertain time, seeking to undermine God's plan and purpose for 'his people'. The Empire faced the threat of invasion by the *Saracens* (Seldjûk Turks) that would eventually mean the loss of Anatolia (c.1071) and the *Islamification* of the whole region through the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries CE, with Ottoman's conquering the capital on 29th May 1453. The fearfulness of the population during these times of turmoil caused many to ignore the warnings of priests and clerics, seeking comfort in a clearer vision of the future for themselves and their families, from the 'Egyptian' fortune-tellers.

One of those clerics was Theodore Balsamon, writing towards the end of the twelfth-century (1170 CE) in Byzantium, about these '*Atsinganoi*' (Gypsy) entertainers and fortune-tellers. "Others... who would have snakes wound around them... would tell one person he was born under an evil star and the other under a lucky star; and they would also prophecy about forthcoming good and ill fortunes" (Soulis, 1961, 146). Clearly the entertainments offered included snake-charming and bear-leading, as well as fortune-telling. Balsamon also notes that these people practised ventriloquism and wizardry (conjuring, prestidigitation). At the end of the thirteenth century, the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, Athanasios I (1230-1310 CE), wrote to all his clergy, telling them to punish any of their flock who sought entertainment from the 'Gypsies' and,

Child-Stealer  
Cheat  
Conning  
Thieving

especially, those that had their fortunes told (Fraser, 47). Joseph Bryennios, a monk at the Monastery of St John Studion, in Constantinople (c.1410 CE), wrote about the misfortunes that had befallen the Byzantine Empire, including the fact that the ordinary people of the Empire sought out entertainments from magicians, fortune-tellers, sooth-sayers, charmers and ‘Gypsies’ (Soulis, 1961, 148). Bryennios was a rigid and uncompromising theologian, who saw the world in terms of the Biblical cycle of time and especially the ‘last days’ of the Revelation of St John, as Byzantium was attacked and defeated again and again, by the *Pechenegs*, *Bulgars* and Ottoman Turks. He died just four years before the Ottomans conquered Constantinople. We also hear, from Nikephoros Gregoras (c.1292 CE – c.1360 CE), about Romani acrobats in the capital in the early-fourteenth century, tumblers and jugglers who were travelling from the eastern lands, through Anatolia, Macedonia and Thrace to Iberia (Spain and Portugal). These entertainers were despondent though, as a bad accident had left some of their troupe injured and even dead, and they despaired of reaching their goal. Gregoras was himself a renowned historian, theologian and astronomer and clearly identified the entertainers as ‘Egyptians’, reflecting the use of this term in Byzantium for over two hundred years since they first appeared in 1054 CE. Romani people called themselves, ‘the sons of the Romans’, or *Romanichal* (Sinclair, 1909–1910).

The origins of the ‘wandering minstrel’ are to be found in the early 1300’s CE, when musicians, poets and singers (often combining all three) would travel from village to village, entertaining the ‘villeins’ (peasants) on village greens, “...in public drinking houses and other assemblies where they sing many songs that move men to mischievous behaviour...”, as the Bishop of Worcester noted (Thomas de Cobham, c.1325 CE), “...but there are others who sing about the lives of princes...”, by which he was referring to the stories around the legendary kings of Britain, such as Uther Pendragon and Arthur, drawing upon the works of Gildas, *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, (Williams, 1899), originally from c.550CE, Nennius’ *Historia Brittonum*, (Giles, 1891a) and Geoffrey of Monmouth *Historium Regum Brittanæ* (Giles, 1891b). These minstrels were part of everyday life in a mediaeval village, bringing news, stories of

the past and narratives of journeys that brought the world into the narrow confines of villeins’ lives, as peasants were tied to the land and their lord’s demesne, making them effectively ‘property’. These ‘wandering minstrels’, along with itinerant pedlars, tinkers, mountebanks and players, existed across Europe long before the Gypsies arrived, but their positions and trades were taken up by such at the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth-centuries CE, when they did.

In the case of Gypsies or more properly, Romani people, whether Welsh *Kalé*, English *Romanichals* or European *Roma*, the ancestry of these peoples is ultimately to be found in India, many centuries before. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, a Turkic–Persian empire, ruled by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (now in modern Afghanistan), raided north-western and north-central India from 997CE to 1030CE, capturing many thousands of Indian soldiers and their families, bringing them to his capital as captive soldier-slaves and forcing them to fight for him in his armies. These became the *Ghaznavid* household troops, with their families, servitors and auxiliaries loyal to the sultan and his dynasty (his son, Masood, 1030 to 1041). When the Ghaznavids were themselves defeated (1040CE) by another Turkic group on their way to establishing their own great empire across Persia, Anatolia and Syria – the *Saldjuks* – these soldier-slaves fled their enemies and migrated westwards to the Byzantine Empire of the Greeks, as the remainder of a once powerful military force of household *ghulam*, or slave-soldiers (similar to the later Ottoman *janissaries*). Living as small groups in an effort to survive after their defeats, these people with their mixture of Indian, Persian, Armenian and Greek languages and heritage, and their skills of fortune-telling, metallurgy, acrobatics, story-telling and musical entertainment, had established themselves in the Empire and the settled throughout the south-east European provinces, by the fourteenth century.

‘Gyptian entertainers appear across mediaeval Europe, at fairs and celebrations, from the early 1400’s onwards, with juggling, tumbling, acrobatics and puppets made from leather (with stories from the Ottomans, of ‘Karagöz’ or ‘Black Eye’, that later becomes Punch and Judy). Romani entertainers also brought stories from further away,

many more familiar to us now as fairy tales such as Snow White and Cinderella, but originally Indian and Persian tales of wonder, learned (the original terms ‘to con’ and ‘conned’, meant to commit to memory), during their sojourn in east. Alongside the more familiar fables were ancient, dark and frightening tales, that would haunt the imagination of Europeans to this day, such as ‘Vikram and the vampire’. The association of ‘Gypsies’ and vampires in Bram Stoker’s Gothic romance, is an echo of this past; Romani people brought the first stories about these dreadful ‘undead’ to Europe from India (Groome, 1899).

In the fifteenth century these groups of ‘Egyptians’ as the Byzantine Greeks had called them (because of their magic and fortune-telling, for all magic was supposed to come from the Pharaohs of Egypt, as told in the Bible), had begun to travel to central and western Europe and were in the German lands, France and Spain early in the century. The Byzantine Empire fell (29th May 1453) to an emerging world power, the House of *Osman* or the Ottomans, and the ‘Egyptians’ became incorporated into this multi-ethnic, multi-religious Turkish empire as ‘*Çingene*’, where they created guilds of dancers, story-tellers, fortune-tellers, musicians – some as royal entertainers. Ottoman Gypsy guilds became so wealthy that they could give gifts to the sultans; the basket-maker’s guild built a small palace for the sultan, on the shores of the Golden Horn in Istanbul in the seventeenth century, that survives to this day, the *Sepetci kasrı* or *Small Palace of the Basket-makers*. Individual ‘Çingene’ could rise to become engineers, administrators and even military commanders. In Cyprus, Palestine, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Arabia, the *Domari* Gypsy populations travelled and worked as a part of the nomadic peoples, with great herds of goats, sheep, camels and horses, providing the owners of these herds, the *Turkmen* and *Yoruks*, *Bedu* and *Wahhabi*, with important blacksmithing skills, and as dancers and singers of the epic poetry and ballads that were at the cultural heart of these communities.

The arrival of ‘Gyptians’ (as they were known initially) into England and Wales, c.1460CE, during the reigns of Edward IV (1461–1470, 1471–1483CE), may have been as military ‘companies’; a chronicler of the time, Dominic Mancini (Armstrong,

C. A. J. [trans.] 1969, *De occupatione regni Anglie per Ricardum tertium libellus* – ‘A little book about the taking of the realm of England by Richard III’, Oxford Univeristy Press), mentions ‘dusky [i.e. dark skinned]... Walloons’ being brought into London as mercenaries. This term was often a euphemism for Gypsies and companies of them, led by ‘Dukes’ had been touring European states since at least c.1420CE (Fraser, A. M. The Gypsies, Blackwell) and some, in the Venetian territories for example, continuing to fight for pay, but the identification is unsure. A group of ‘Saracens’ (Turks) and ‘Moors’ (north African and Iberian Berbers) were supposed to have ‘infested’ Galloway, in the middle years of the fifteenth century CE (Simson, W. 1865, *A History of the Gipsies, With Specimens of the Gipsy Language*, Sampson, Low, Son, and Marston), but again, it is difficult to firmly identify these with Gypsies, though the likelihood of Muslim Turks, having just conquered Constantinople (29th May 1453), being found in Scotland, is slim indeed.

Definitive identification and connections of Gypsies in Britain, with entertainment and fortune-telling come in early sixteenth-century CE Scotland, with James IV of Scotland instructing the Lord High Treasurer at Stirling to pay 10 French crowns (about £7 at the time), to “the Egiptianis” on 24th April 1505 (Paul, 1901–03). As entertainers at the Scottish court, these Gypsies were paid well, as the king was generous to dancers, musicians, acrobats, story-tellers and ‘guisers’ (actors). James also ‘recommended’ to his uncle, the King of Denmark, a certain Anthonius Gagino, Count of Little Egypt (*ex para Egipto Comes*), in 1505, who wished to travel to Denmark and meet King Johannes. The Gypsies in England were also fortune-tellers, as Sir Thomas More mentioned in his treatise, *A Dialogue of Sir Thomas More, Knight...* (1529), who described an ‘Egyptian’ woman who could tell marvellous things from looking into peoples’ palms and lived in Lambeth, but had recently travelled abroad,



“‘Nay, forsooth, my lord,’ quoth he, ‘it is a woman. I would she were here with Your Lordships now!’

“‘Well,’ quoth my lord, ‘woman or man, all is one. She shall be had, wheresoever she be.’

“‘By my faith, my lords,’ quoth he, ‘and she were with you, she would tell you wonders. For, by God, I have wist her tell many marvellous things ere now.’

“‘Why,’ quoth the lords, ‘what have you heard her told?’ “‘Forsooth, my lords,’ quoth he, ‘if a thing had been stolen, she would have told who had it! And therefore I think she could as well tell who killed Hunne as who stole a horse.’

“‘Surely,’ said the lords, ‘so think all we too, I trow. But how could she tell it? By the devil?’

“‘Nay, by my troth, I trow,’ quoth he, ‘for I could never see her use any worse way than looking in one’s hand.’ “‘Therewith the lords laughed, and asked, ‘What is she?’

“‘Forsooth, my lords,’ quoth he, ‘an Egyptian; and she was lodged here at Lambeth, but she is gone overseas now. Howbeit, I trow she be not in her own country yet; for they say it is a great way hence, and she went over little more than a month ago.’” (Book Three, Chap.15, lines 9-28; see also Ogle, 1949)

In 1510, two court ladies dressed in the fashion of the Egyptians for a court play, with their heads wrapped in turbans and colourful clothes (Hall, 1548), suggesting that Gypsies were so recognisable and widespread in the country, that they were instantly recognisable and that dressing as such would not be taken for impersonating anyone else (such as Muslim Turks or Arabs). For that to be the case, the image of the ‘Gyptian’ must have been widely understood, and visible throughout England and Wales. By the beginning of the sixteenth century CE, the ‘Egyptians’ or ‘Gypsies’ had come to the British Isles, going on from there to Denmark and Sweden, pushing into Scandinavia. They had spread across the

Iberian peninsula, throughout the Italian lands and the territories of Muscovy (Russia) as blacksmiths, actors, fortune-tellers, dancers, musicians, ‘cunning’ people (healers) and horse-traders. Indeed, the image and representation of Gypsies as entertainers and fortune-tellers was so familiar to audiences, that Shakespeare could invoke them (1607) to suggest foreign-ness, exoticism, untrustworthiness and the idea of women’s (usurped) power over men,

“...Betray’d I am:  
O this false soul of Egypt! This grave charm,  
Whose eye beck’d forth my wars, and call’d them home;  
Whose bosom was my crownnet, my chief end,  
Like a right Gipsy, hath, at fast and loose,  
Beguiled me to the very heart of loss...” The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra, (Act 4, Sc.12, lines 26–31)

Shakespeare’s depiction of Cleopatra as a Gypsy, using the ambiguity of her identity as an Egyptian queen (La Perle, 2017), presages the deepening suspicions of Romani people in Tudor England , the shift from potential beauty of a beloved (1599, A Midsummer Night’s Dream), where Theseus says, “The lover, all as frantic, sees Helen’s beauty in a brow of Egypt...” (as in, a lover seeing the beauty of Helen in the face of an ‘Egyptian’; Act 5, Sc.1), through the magical ‘charming’ that Jacques, in As You Like It (1599), speaks when he sings,

“JACQUES  
...If it do come to pass  
That any man turn ass,  
Leaving his wealth and ease,  
A stubborn will to please,  
Ducdame, ducdame, ducdame:  
Here shall he see  
Gross fools as he,  
An if he will come to me.  
AMIENS  
What’s that ‘ducdame’?

JACQUES  
‘Tis a Greek invocation, to call fools into a circle. I’ll go sleep, if I can; if I cannot, I’ll rail against all the first-born of Egypt.” (As You Like It, Act 2, Sc.5, lines 43–56; my emphasis)

In this scene, Jacques calls upon a Romani phrase, “*dukka me*”, meaning “I tell fortunes”, which Shakespeare heard (or misheard) from an ‘Egyptian’ entertainer, charmer or fortune-teller. In *Othello* (1603), again the ‘Egyptian as ‘charmer’ appears,

“OTHELLO  
...That handkerchief  
Did an Egyptian to my mother give;  
She was a charmer, and could almost read  
The thoughts of people: she told her, while she kept it,  
‘Twould make her amiable and subdue my father Entirely to her love, but if she lost it  
Or made gift of it, my father’s eye  
Should hold her loathed and his spirits should hunt  
After new fancies: she, dying, gave it me;  
And bid me, when my fate would have me wive,  
To give it her. I did so: and take heed on’t;  
Make it a darling like your precious eye;  
To lose’t or give’t away were such perdition  
As nothing else could match.”  
(Othello, Act 3, Sc.4, lines 70–84; my emphasis)

In this instance, the portrayal of the ‘Egyptian’ is again one where the power of women to quieten and control men, is highlighted, as the handkerchief is a magical token that makes Othello’s father compliant and subdued. However, Desdemona has ‘lost’ this token, given by Othello to his wife and, by implication, this act now removes such control from Othello, who perceives his wife, Desdemona, false and begins to loath her and “...hunt after new fancies...”, ultimately ending with Desdemona’s murder by Othello, as part of the plot by Iago to destroy him. Othello, a Moor (north African, Muslim Berber from the Maghreb), is, like Mark Antony, undone by the ‘charm’ of an ‘Egyptian’ and like the Gypsies, his passionate temper results in uncontrolled violence and the death of his beloved, innocent wife, at his own hands. In this, Shakespeare draws a parallel to the passionate temper of ‘Egyptians’ and the idea of unfettered (and innate) violence, as part of the ‘nature’ of both dark-skinned Gypsies and Moors.

The final appearance of Gypsies in Shakespeare reflects even more the changing attitudes towards this group in early modern England. *The Tempest* (1611), portrays a magical island, where the magician, Prospero is surrounded by spirits of the air and seas. He is the rightful Duke of Milan, exiled with his daughter, Miranda to this lonely island for twelve years, with one monstrous inhabitant, the son of the witch Sycorax, whose enchantments had kept the spirits of the island captive and enslaved. The witch is dead and her son, Caliban, has taught Prospero all the magic he now knows, and has been enslaved by Prospero in turn. Caliban is both monstrous to look upon and smells strange, his behaviour (when found by other characters, Trinculo and Stephano), becomes drunken and raucous, thieving and murderous, planning (with Trinculo and Stephano) to kill Prospero and steal his fine clothes. In the final act, Caliban appears in his stolen fine clothing, is made to return it and clean his cell where he lives, like a monstrous monk.

The image of Caliban is one, therefore, that portrays a series of stereotypes about Gypsies; thieving, drunken, murderous, black and unprepossessing in looks, smelly, sorcerous, dealing in dark magic and illusions, servile and cringing. The character’s name, Caliban, is a corruption of the Romani language, *kali* meaning ‘black’ (as the opposite of *parno*, being ‘white’) and the suffix *-ban*, meaning ‘with’ or ‘like’. Thus, ‘*Kali-ban*’ is a play on words, ‘like blackness’ or more clearly, ‘darkly’, as in something that is evil, malevolent, ill-meaning. The ‘turn’ in perceptions of early modern Gypsies in England, is clearly marked through the works of Shakespeare, from enchanting and exotic to malevolent and evil.

The wider perceptions of Gypsies in early modern Europe can be seen in art, such as Georges de La Tour’s *The Fortune Teller* (1630), where four women, three of whom are clearly recognisable as Romani, are reading a young man’s palm, stealing his purse and cutting a valuable necklace from his neck, all without him apparently noticing, as he is held literally ‘spell-bound’ by the fortune-teller. The fourth woman, who is quietly cutting away a valuable pendant (a Byzantine gold ‘bezant’ or Venetian ‘ducat’) from the elaborate necklace the wealthy young man is wearing, is both very pale and dressed in much less exotic clothing, confirming the

stereotype of Gypsies ‘stealing’ non-Gypsy children to bring them up as pick-pockets and thieves. The oldest woman in the composition, clearly the Romani fortune-teller, is dressed in parti-coloured (striped) ‘tippets’ or strips of different cloth and brocade, sewn together to create an exotic, fantastical dress. She also wears a turban, whilst the youngest woman, again dark-skinned and beautiful, has her hair down, again fulfilling the stereotypical role of Gypsy ‘temptress’, echoed in Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*. The other young woman, who is carrying out the theft from the young man’s pocket, is wearing an unusual head-dress, a kind of Venetian hat of highly-patterned brocade, with a shirt of embroidered and printed material and a parti-coloured dress. The painting captures a series of notions of Gypsy entertainers, beguiling, untrustworthy, beautiful, pitiless in their exploitation of innocence and gullibility. The message overall is clear; these are villainess people, preying upon well-ordered society.

The perception and treatment of Gypsies in England and Wales during this period relies upon such racialised imagery and portrayals, as La Tour’s and Shakespeare’s. Others, such as the poet and playwright Ben Jonson, in *The Gypsies’ Metamorphosis, or The Masque of Gypsies* (1621), portray Gypsies as unbounded, vagrant and wilfully ignorant of boundaries, denying control and legal restraint of borders, especially those geographical regions between England and Wales (the Marches) or England and Scotland (the Borders). They inhabit an island called ‘Devil’s Arse’, created when Satan passed wind and their behaviour during the *masque* (a kind of court pageant), reinforces stereotypes, as when the ‘clown’ Cock Lorel or Cockerel, holds a banquet for the Devil, or when the Gypsies rob Cockerel, Puppy, Clod and Townsend (again, an allusion to the liminal nature of Gypsies at the ‘town’s end’) during a country dance. The masque was intended as a morality play, performed three times in the presence of the royal court and using courtiers as players in the masque (such as the King’s favourite, the Duke of Buckingham, as the ‘Captain of the Gypsies’). As entertainers, these Gypsies are portrayed as dancers, jugglers, acrobats and fortune-tellers, during the performance (even ‘reading’ palms of members of the audience in the course of the

masque). At the masque’s end, the Gypsies throw off their parti-coloured rags and costumes to reveal themselves as the ‘true’ courtiers, metamorphosed into honest, honourable and genteel men and women of the rightful kingdom and respectful of the laws and of their king. Jonson’s Gypsies then are the opposite, living in a topsy-turvy world of false values and demonic licence to behave without limits.

As the sixteenth century wore on, the territories of Europe became harsher and more violent in their treatment of the ‘Egyptians’ and in many central European kingdoms and principalities, the punishments were both severe and appalling merely for being a ‘Gypsy’. The former practice of travelling in large groups was discontinued, as these made the Gypsies vulnerable and obvious to arrest and punishment. Many individuals and extended family groups maintained their military life-style, travelling in ‘companies’ as seen in engravings from the early-seventeenth century France by Jacques Callot, (1592 – 1635). The “Marching Gypsies”, hired themselves out to monarchs and princes who needed soldiers in the European religious wars of the time (c.1440 – c.1750) and in the conflicts with the Ottoman Turks.

The period under the Tudors (1453 to 1603CE), themselves of Welsh heritage, saw the last remnants of Welsh law and independent governance finally removed and the incorporation of Wales, legally and administratively, into the English kingdom of Henry VII (1453–1491) and his son, Henry VIII (1491–1547). This coincides with this period of the first arrivals in England, Wales and Scotland of Romani people, (‘Egyptians’, ‘Gypcians’) or Gypsies, though it is likely that the ancestors of the Irish Travellers (*Pavees* or *Minkiers*) arrived earlier with Irish immigration to Wales from c.350CE (early history for Irish Travellers remains highly contested). These Romani *arrivants* came into conflict with the legal administration not long after, as the earliest reference to them as ‘Gypsies’ in Wales concerns the Sheriff of Radnor having difficulty feeding forty of them charged with vagrancy, in the local gaol (1579). The increasingly draconian laws against vagrants, beggars, sturdy-men and ‘counterfeit’ Egyptians, came into being during the reigns of Edward VI (1537–1553) and his successors.

The frequency with which the origins of these ‘Egyptians’ was speculated upon in print at the time, shows that the concerns and interest in them remained high throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, though the changing attitudes from what might be described as ‘enchantment’ and benign curiosity, to outright persecution and attempted eradication (see above), fuelled the question of who the Gypsies were, in different ways. The Gypsies in Wales though, remained relatively undocumented during these turbulent times, and it is not until the eighteenth century, with the arrival of Abram Wood and his family in 1730, that we can see more evidence of their historical presence. The arrivals of the Lees, Lovells and Locks (or Lockes) in Wales, began to establish what was a definably Welsh Romani community, as opposed to the itinerant *Romanichals* (English Gypsies) who had travelled to Wales prior to this period. The *Kalé* (related to the Spanish *Caló*, Finnish *Kaalé* and other Romani communities and who Shakespeare had identified with his character *Caliban*), maintained a dialect of *Romanës* (*Rromani-chib* or Romani language) that lasted until the 1950’s, and a musical tradition that saw them praised, and awarded trophies in local and national competitions. Many *Kalé* in Wales today are descended from these migrants in the eighteenth century. The presence of Irish Travellers was also strengthened during this period, as conditions in Ireland worsened and many removed to Wales for better opportunities, fleeing hunger and starvation in mid-nineteenth century Ireland.

The most recent migrations to Wales have seen numbers of Roma from central, southeastern and eastern Europe arrive in southern Wales, bringing together Romani communities that have previously been separated by many centuries and great distances. The increasing inclusion of Roma into Welsh society is another example of the continuing pattern of diversity and development of the complex ethnic and cultural mosaic of the country, and one that adds another Romani element to the population. The ongoing documentation of the Welsh Romani and Traveller communities, will see the addition of stories of their migration and movements that are hundreds of years old, and very recent indeed, as Roma become a living part of this multi-cultural and multi-ethnic, Welsh heritage. Their traditions

of music, fortune-telling, story-telling and dancing continue to add to the overall cultural mosaic of modern Wales, particularly as east European Roma bring their entertainment to compliment those of the travelling Show-people and Circus people of Wales, while the heritage of Abram Wood and the harping and story-telling tradition continues with the work of collectors and story-tellers such as Daniel Morden, who though not Romani, honours the inheritance and contributions of Romani people with his *Dark Tales from the Woods* (2008).





For George  
from  
Dad  
This is the Chiltons Go  
card see how nice it is  
the Cart and wheels will  
line out for the  
Competition  
the Paper has to look this









Chavvies

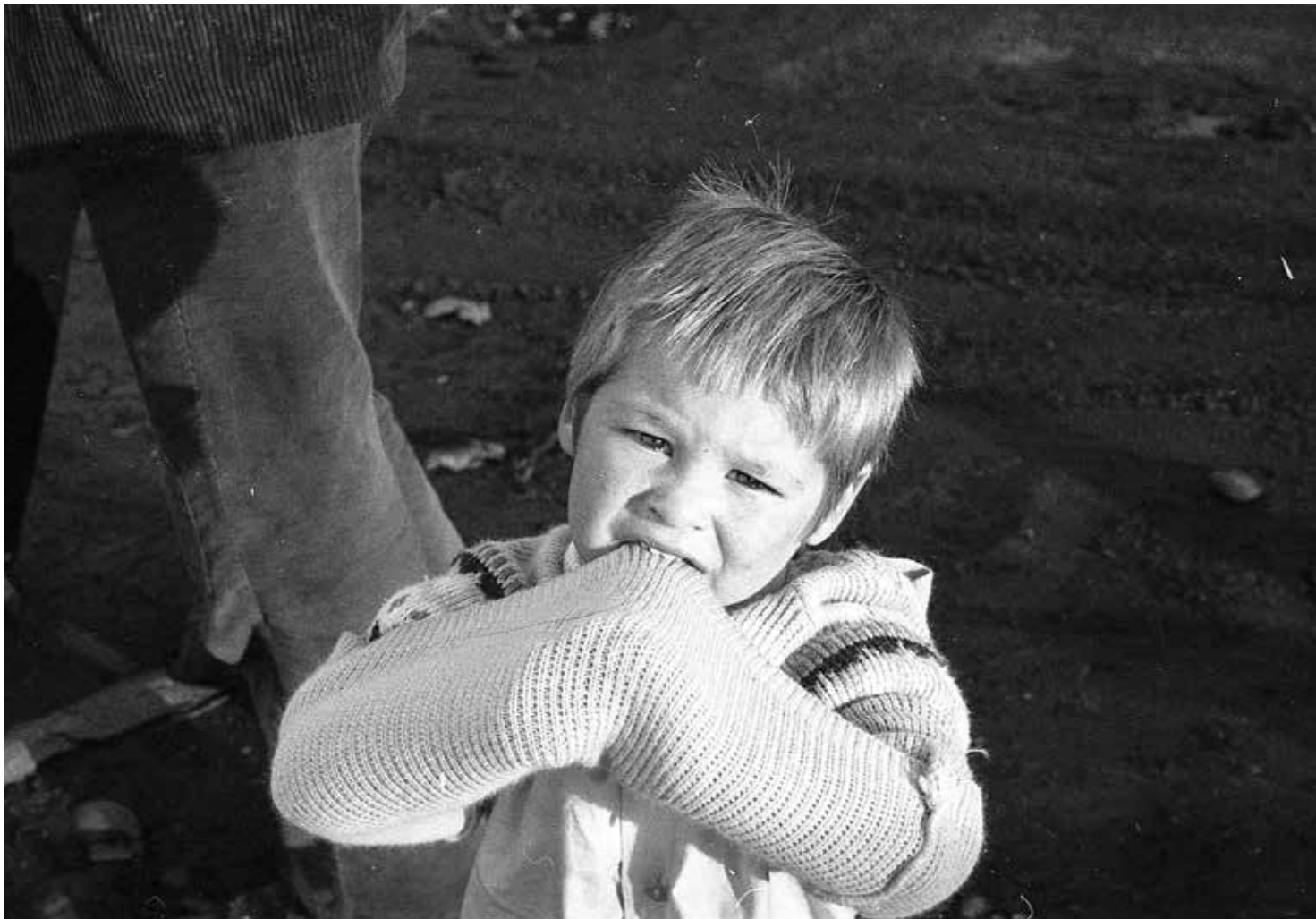


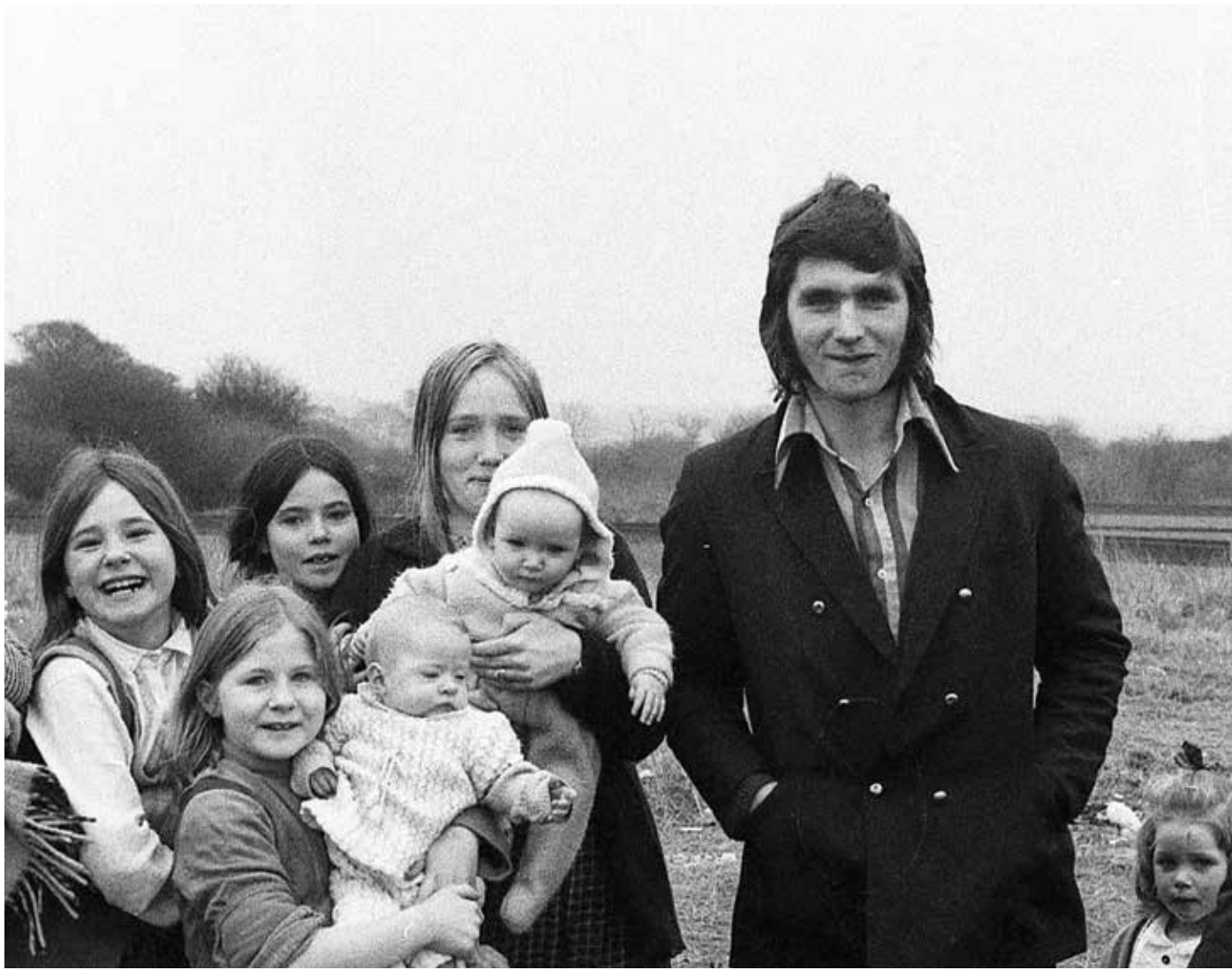












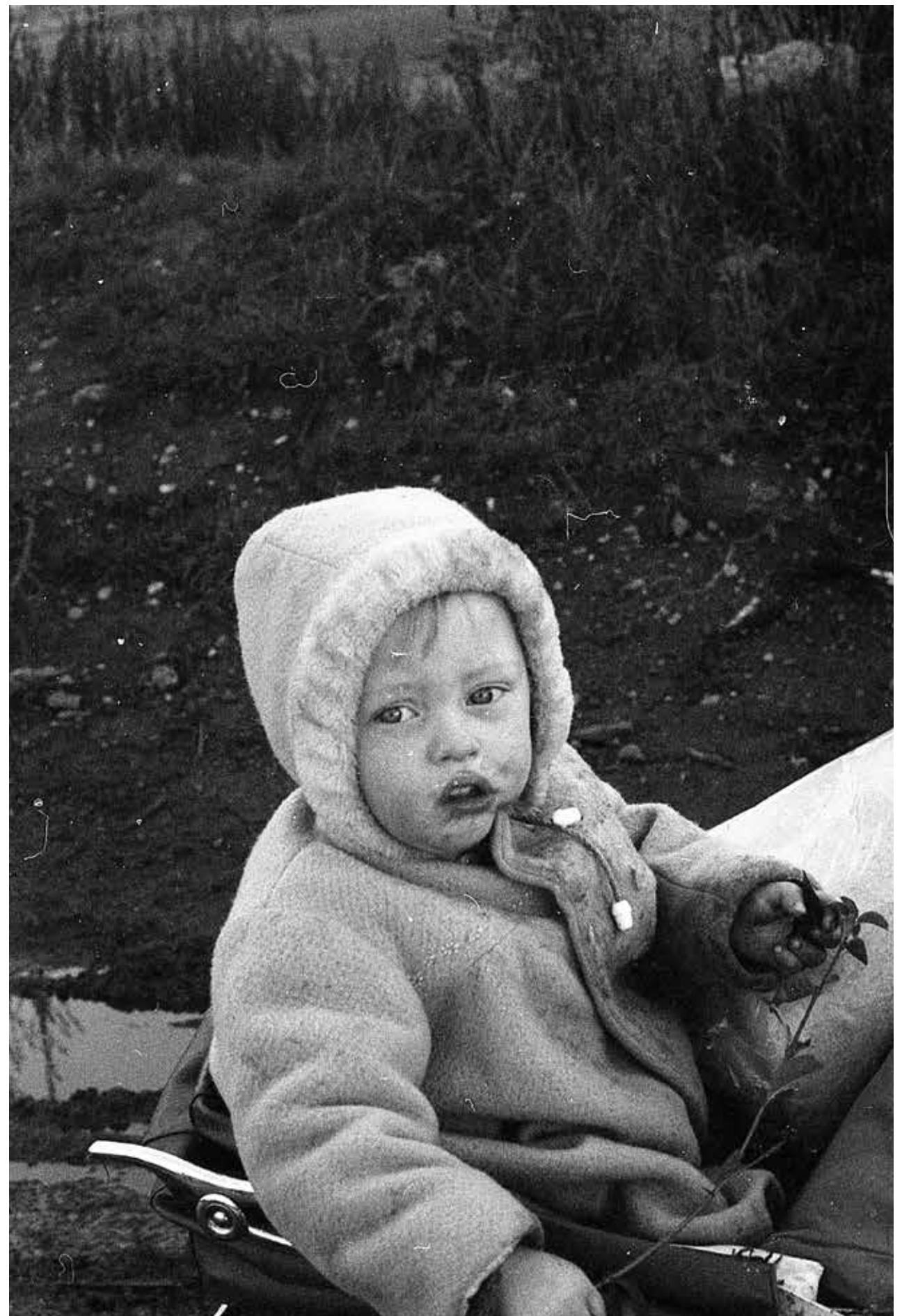


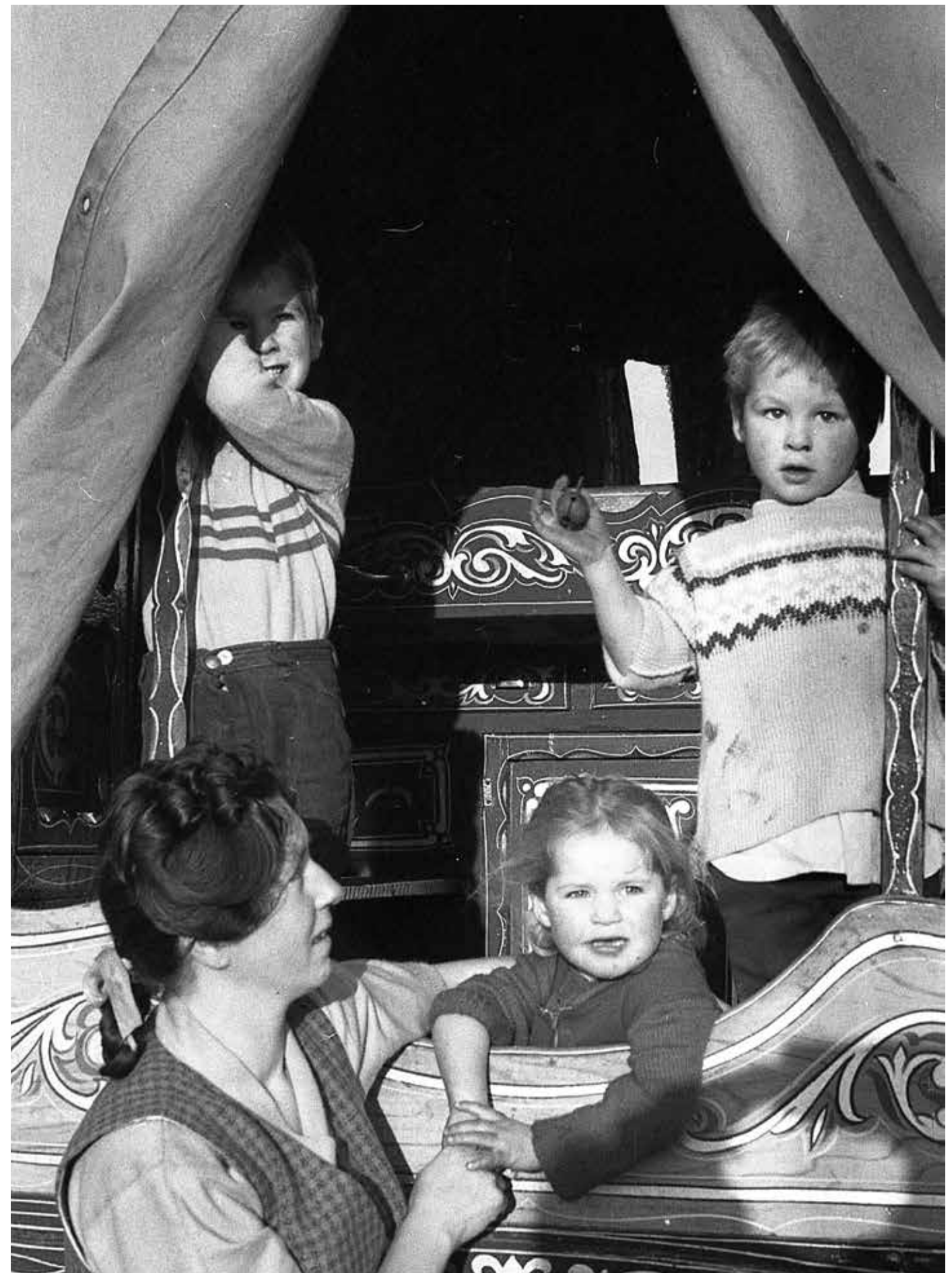












Aitchin than



















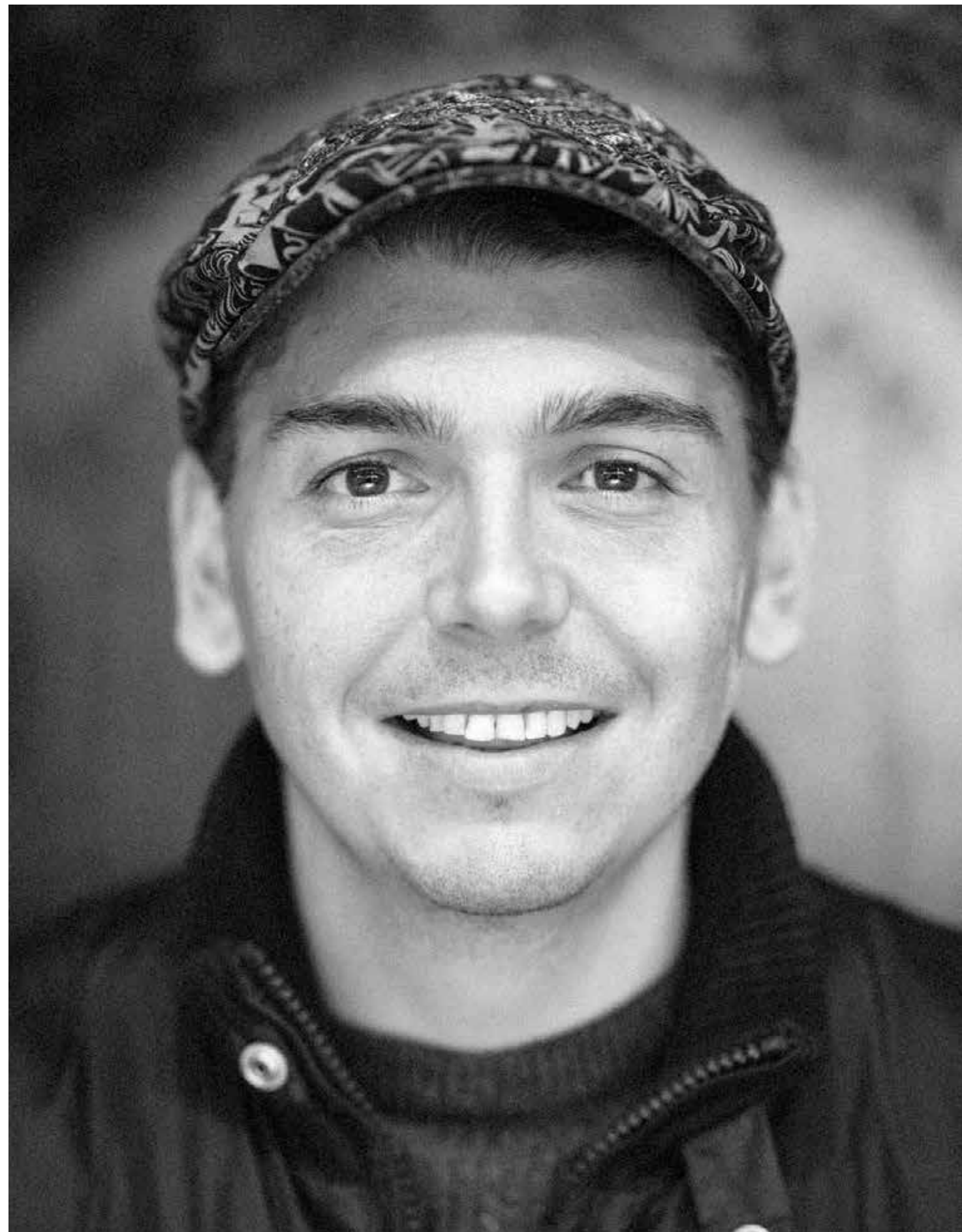








Dukkerin







# Roma

English and  
Welsh (south)  
Romanichal  
Romani people

















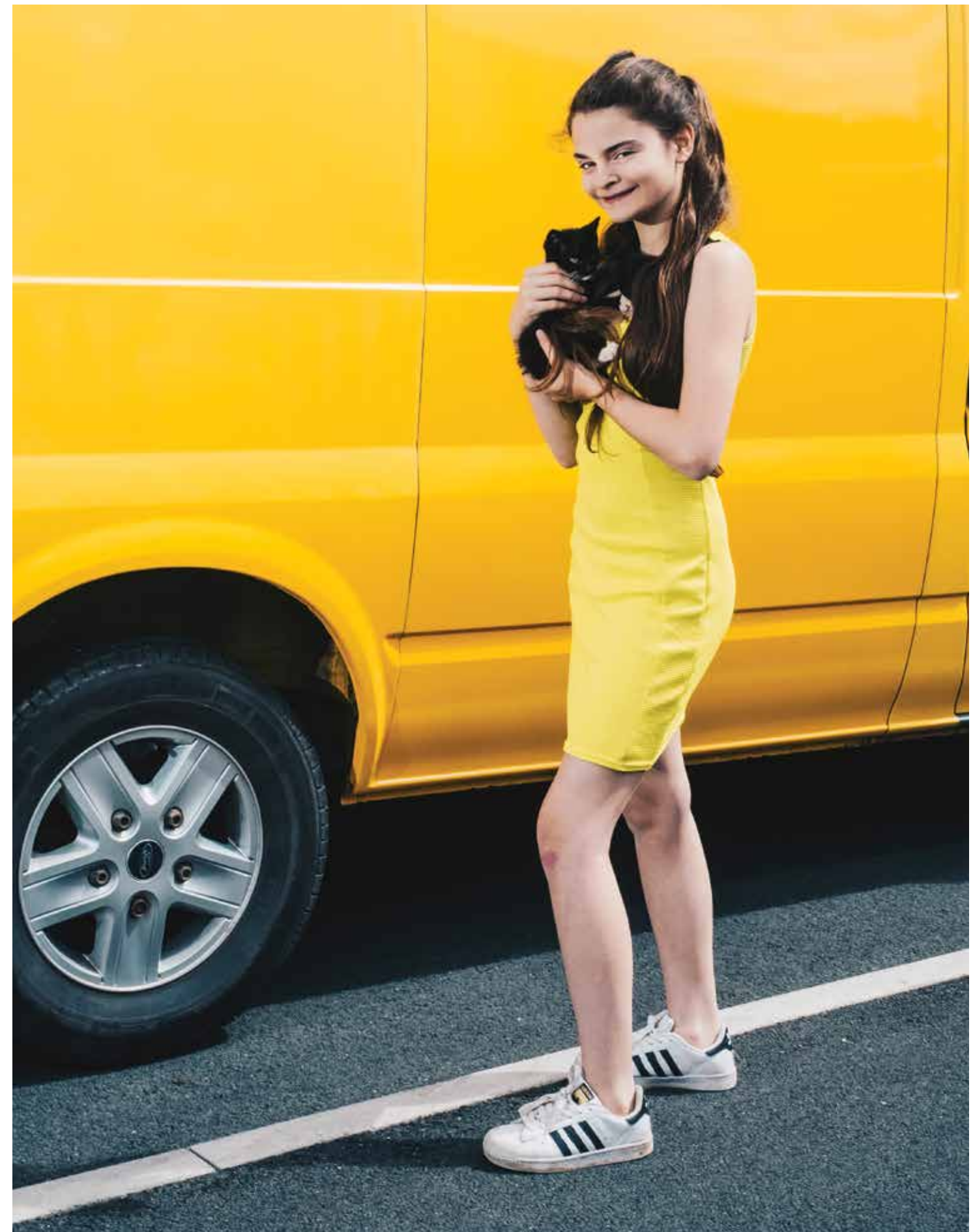












*Drom*



















# Vardo







































Kushti







English/S.Welsh Romanes  
English

- **Tottin Man**  
-----  
Rag and bone man  
(recycler)
- **Aitchin than**  
-----  
Home site  
(or winter  
stopping place)
- **Poggadi-chib**  
-----  
English Romani  
language
- **Rokkerin  
Romanies**  
-----  
Speaking Romani  
language

- **Daddo**  
-----  
Father
- **Dai or mamus**  
-----  
Mother
- **Chavvies**  
-----  
Children
- **Mullered**  
-----  
Beaten (literally  
`murdered')
- **Drom**  
-----  
Road or way

- **Tattin folki**  
-----  
Romani groups who  
collect and recycle
- **Joeys**  
-----  
Clowns
- **Slanging buffers**  
-----  
Circus or fairground  
barkers and callers
- **Kushti**  
-----  
Good or well
- **Vardo**  
-----  
Romani waggon

English/S.Welsh Romanes  
English

- **Pani**  
-----  
Water
- **Manro**  
-----  
Bread
- **Rom**  
-----  
Married man
- **Manouche**  
-----  
French Rom  
(literally `human  
being')
- **Romni**  
-----  
Married woman

- **Gorgio**  
-----  
non-Romani man
- **Gorgi**  
-----  
non-Romani  
woman
- **Romanichal**  
-----  
English and Welsh  
(south) Romani  
people
- **Kalé**  
-----  
Welsh (north),  
Spanish and Finnish  
Romani people

- **Dukkerin**  
-----  
Telling fortunes
- **Dom**  
-----  
Gypsy communities  
in eastern Turkey,  
Iran, Iraq, Syria,  
Jordan, Israel,  
Egypt, Libya,  
Morocco, Algiers
- **Lom**  
-----  
Gypsy communities  
in north-eastern  
Anatolia, Caucasus  
and central Asia



# Romani and Traveller History Timeline



**c.450 CE**  
Fairs are being held in Continuing colonisation by Irish peoples such as the *Uí Liatháin*, *Laigin*, the *Déisi Muman*, and *An lucht siúil* ('the walking people') who used ogham inscriptions on marker stones, in the Kingdom of Dyfed

**c.711 CE**  
Umayyad invasion of Sindh, Hindus captured and taken as 'qiqaniyya' troops for the Umayyad armies, ancestors of the Domari (Middle Eastern Gypsies)

**997 CE**  
Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (modern Ghazni, Afghanistan) invades Sindh, Rajasthan and Ganges basin, capturing hundreds of thousands of Hindus and taking them to his capital Ghazna, where they were

incorporated into his personal guard, military auxiliaries, masons, builders and architects (ancestors of modern Romani), speaking a mixed, Indian dialect as a *koîné*

**1030 CE**  
Mahmud of Ghazna dies after carrying out seventeen huge raids into India, over twenty years. His son, Mas'ud, 'Amîr-i Shahîd' (the martyr king) usurps the throne from his older twin and continues the raids against Rajput India

**1040 CE**  
Mas'ud of Ghazna defeated and killed at the Battle of Dandanqan, by the Saldjûk Turks, along with 6,000 Hindu ghulams (slave soldiers); remnants of the Hindu army flee west, to Anatolia, pursued by the Saldjûks

**1054 CE**  
'Atsinganoi' and 'Aiguptioi' (Egyptian, in Greek) in Byzantium, at the court of Constantine IX Monomachos

**1100 CE**  
Byzantine clerics warn of consulting the 'Egyptian' fortune-tellers in Constantinople

**1170 CE**  
Theodore Balsamon (1105-1195) writes about the 'Egyptians' as fortune-tellers, bear-leaders, magicians and snake-charmers, in the Byzantine Empire

**c.1290 CE**  
Patriarch of Constantinople, Athanasios I (1230-1310 CE) writes to the Byzantine clergy, warning them to punish the 'Egyptians' and those Christians who go to and have their fortunes told or to see their entertainments

**1322 CE**  
John 'the Gypsy' commissioned by the Venetians, with his 'company' (troop of mercenaries) to fight against the Ottomans in Crete

**c.1345 CE**  
Nikephoros Gregoras (c.1292 CE – c.1360 CE) records the performance of 'Egyptian' acrobats in Constantinople, by the harbour of Theodosios (harbour of Eleutherios)



**1348 CE**  
'Cingarije' in Kosovo, Serbia, attached to the monastery of Prizren, with the permission of Tsar Stefan Dushan

**1362 CE**  
'Gypsies' in Ragusa (Dubrovnik), Croatia

**1373 CE**  
'Gypsies' reported living in Corfu, in black tents of goat hair, working as metal-smiths and shoe-makers

**1378 CE**  
'Gypsies' recorded living in villages around Rila Monastery, Bulgaria, in a document issued that year by Ivan Šišman (1371-1395 CE), detailing the possessions of the monastery, including a reference to 'Agupovy klétí' ('the huts of the

Egyptians'), suggesting that already they were indentured or enslaved

**1385 CE**  
'Tsigane' (from the Byzantine 'Atsinganoi'), sold as slaves in Wallachia (now part of Rumania)

**1399 CE**  
'Gypsies' mentioned in Bohemia and Moravia (Czech lands)

**1400 CE**  
Transylvania records 'Gypsies' arriving

**1407 CE**  
Hildesheim (Lower Saxony) Chronicle records 'Tatars' arriving

**1414 CE**  
'Heiden' (heathens) arrive in Basel, Switzerland, Hesse (Moselle, France) and Meissen (Germany)

**1415 CE**  
Manuel Mazaris, protonotarios of Thessaloniki, writes his satirical *Journey Into Hades*, after being exiled to the Peloponnesos, describing the 'babble' of the 'Egyptians' there (i.e. Romani language being spoken)

**1422 CE**  
Sigismund of Luxembourg (1368-1437 CE), King of Hungary and Croatia (1387-1437 CE) Holy Roman Emperor (1433-1437 CE), grants permission to Voivode Ladislav and his company of Gypsies to travel through his lands of Hungary, Croatia, Germany, Bohemia, and Italy

**1425 CE**  
Spain records 'Gitanos' arriving

**1492 CE**  
Scotland, the reign of James IV, an entry in the *Book of the Lord High Treasurer* records a payment to Peter Ker of four shillings, to go to King James at Hunthall, for letters subscribed to the 'King of Rowmais'. A payment of twenty pounds was made at the king's command, to the messenger of the 'King of Rowmais' shortly after

**1502 CE**  
'Earl of Grece' was paid 14 shillings at the Scottish king's command

**1505 CE**  
Egyptians' in Scotland; April 22nd to the "'Egyptianis' be the Kingis command, vij lib." (£7 paid)



# History Timeline



**1506 CE**  
July 5th, Anthonius Gawino, the 'Earl of Little Egypt', received from King James IV of Scotland, letters commending him to the King of Denmark, as Gawino and his 'Egyptianis' were about to sail there from Scotland

**1512 CE**  
'Mustaleinen' in Finland, Romani people arrive in Helsinki

**1514 CE**  
The first mentions of 'Egyptians' in Tudor England

**1525 CE**  
Tattere' in Sweden, Romani people arrive from Finland in Stockholm

**1530 CE**  
The Egyptians Act 1530, passed by the Parliament of England, in 1531 to expel the "outlandish people calling themselves Egyptians", meaning, "Vagabonds, Rogues, and Gypsies"; "...from henceforth no such person be suffered to come within this the King's (Henry VIII) realm and if they do, then they and every of them so doing, shall forfeit to the King our Sovereign Lord all their goods and titles and then to be commanded to avoid the realm within fifteen days under pain of imprisonment"; also carrying of 'Egyptians' by sea captains to English shores forbidden

**1540 CE**  
Scottish Gypsies are given the right to live under the governance of their chieftains, such as George Faw, by King James V of Scotland

**1544 CE**  
'Gypsies' are deported to Norway from England, suggesting that they had travelled from there originally, under the provisions of the 1530 Act

**1547 CE**  
'Vagrancy Act' passed by Tudor parliament with severe penalties for vagrants, 'sturdy beggars' and 'counterfeit Egyptians', including whipping naked at the 'cart's tail' (tied to the back of an oxen-drawn cart and whipped), nailing ears to a tree or the two stocks before cutting them off, and branding with a 'V' or 'E' (vagrant or Egyptian)

**1554 CE**  
Punishments for 'Egyptians' under the 1530 Act are extended and increased by the English Parliament, to include the death penalty for avoiding leaving England and Wales (formerly imprisonment) within fifteen days of being ordered to by local sheriffs and bailiffs

**1579 CE**  
First record of Gypsies' in Wales; Sherrif of Radnor asks for support from the town burghers to feed forty 'Gypsies' in Radnor goal (the Castle), who had been detained as 'vagrants and sturdy beggars', according to the 1530 'Egyptians Act' and the 1547 'Vagrancy Act'

**1611 CE**  
Gypsies in Scotland are hanged, under the 1554 amendments to the 1530 Act, by King James VI (Scotland) and I (England)



**1714 CE**  
Scottish planters and merchants apply to the United Kingdom, Privy Council (the king's appointed ministers, following the Act of Union 1707) to allow the transportation of 'Gypsies' to the 'West Indies' (Caribbean) as convicted criminals and slaves

**1715 CE**  
Ten 'Gypsies' transported, as convicted felons from Scotland, to the English colony at Virginia, to 'work out their lives in slavery'

**c.1730 CE**  
Abram Wood and his family migrate to Wales, near Llanbrynmair (though moving north later), establishing the 'Welsh Gypsies' and a tradition of story-telling, harping and fiddle-playing that lasts to the present

**1822 CE**  
'Turnpike Act' passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, specifying 'Gypsies' in roadside encampments be fined and removed ('moved on') by local sheriffs and bailiffs

**1835 CE**  
Highways Act' strengthens the provisions and prohibitions of the 'Turnpike Act' of 1822, further criminalising 'Gypsies' stopping by the side of the road and travelling upon the major highways

**1877 CE**  
'Canal Boats Act' brought into law, enforcing the education of children on narrow boats, in the place where the boats are registered; many Romani families operate narrow-boats and barges (known as Water Gypsies, Bargees,

or 'ditch-mumpers' in colloquial Romani). The Act was seen as a forerunner of the attempts to control Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople through the 'Movable Dwellings Bill' (repeatedly proposed 1885-1911)

**1888 CE**  
Gypsy Lore Society founded by David McRichie, Francis Hinde Groome, Richard Burton and others, publishing the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* quarterly until 1892, then from 1907 (with some interruptions in five series) until the present, as Romani Studies (from 1999)

**1889 CE**  
Showmen's Guild' established to oppose the proposed 'Movable Dwellings Bill' and its impact upon their livelihoods

**1902 CE**  
'Balfour's Education Act' passed by Parliament making primary education (5-12 years old) compulsory for all children, including 'Gypsy' children, however, only half the number of sessions that non-Gypsy children attended. The Act also made significant provision for secondary school education, though not compulsory attendance, for working class children in England and Wales

**1926 CE**  
Romani language scholar, John Sampson publishes *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales Being the Older Form of British Romani...*, written with research carried out amongst the descendants of Abram Wood, Edward and Matthew, in Bala and Ruthin





# History Timeline



**1927 CE**

Ralph L. Turner debates with John Sampson, in the pages of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, the differing varieties of the Romani language, including what he [Turner] terms, "Asiatic Romani" (Domari) spoken in the Middle East and the origins of Romani migration from India

**1940 CE**

Restrictions upon travelling and movement mean that many Romani and Traveller families are 'temporarily settled' during war-time in large camps, such as St Mary le Cray in Essex and smaller encampments around England and Wales; Romani women work in war-time agriculture and munitions, Traveller children attend school in greater numbers and Romani men are drafted into the Special Operations Service (forerunner of the SAS), due to survival skills

**1944 CE**

Butler's Education Act' passed as an expression of 'One Nation Conservatism' (following Benjamin Disraeli's notions of British politics), removing fees, establishing the Ministry of Education and significant budgets, teacher training, an expanded state system (bringing in religious schools, though with their own control over admissions and curricula) and compulsory secondary education, raising the leaving age (15 years); Gypsy children are still only required to attend for half the school sessions

**1949 CE**

Howel Wood, a son of Matthew Wood, recorded clog dancing in the film, *The Last Days of Dolwyn / women of Dolwyn*, a drama starring, in his first film role, the Welsh actor Richard Burton

**1960 CE**

Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act' amended the 1947 'Town & Country Planning Act', limiting the conditions around travelling and living in caravans, in Paragraph 2 allowing use of land as a caravan site by someone travelling in a caravan as long as three conditions were met: a) the stay is for no more than two nights, b) no more than one caravan being used for human habitation is on the land at the time, c) the land is not used for human habitation in caravans for more than 28 days in any 12 month period; such restrictions severely curtailed the opportunity for Travellers and Gypsies to stop at roadsides and elsewhere, for any length of time

**1966 CE**

The Gypsy Council is established in England

**1967 CE**

The first Gypsy Council summer schools, operated on an abandoned aerodrome near Blackbird Leas in Oxfordshire and run by Thomas Acton, takes place

**1971 CE**

First World Romani Congress, organised by the *Comité Internationale Rom (CIR, later the International Romani Union)* in London, adopts the term 'Roma', the international anthem, "Gelem, gelem" and the Romani flag

**2000 CE**

Prague World Romani Congress adopts the resolution defining Roma as a nation without a territory



**2009 CE**

The Romani Cultural and Arts Company was formed in Cardiff, UK by Romani Gypsy, Isaac Blake

**2010 CE**

Young Gypsies, Roma & Travellers launch the History Month at the National Assembly for Wales

**2011 CE**

Romani Cultural and Arts Company receives a grant from BBC Children-in-Need to lead on a 3 year project to improve the social engagement of Gypsy and Traveller children and young people across South East Wales

**2012 CE**

Romani Cultural and Arts Company visits 10 Downing Street First Welsh International Symposium on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers organised by the Romani Cultural and Arts Company at City Hall, Cardiff

**2013 CE**

Dr Daniel Baker's 'Shine' exhibition is hosted by the National Assembly for Wales

**2014 CE**

Arts Council of Wales fund the first ground-breaking *Gypsy-Maker* project - a unique project within Europe

**2015 CE**

Romani Cultural and Arts Company attends the International Roma LGBT Conference in Prague for the first time

**2016 CE**

Isaac Blake represents UK at Roma Youth Conference in Bratislava

**2017 CE**

Romani Cultural and Arts Company is commissioned by Public Health Wales to lead the ground-breaking 'Stories of Health and Wellness' across the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities of Wales

**2018 CE**

Romani Cultural and Arts Company receive a grant from Big Lottery Fund to lead a ground-breaking community project to improve the wellbeing of elderly Gypsies and Travellers across South East Wales



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