

PROUD  
GYPSY  
TRAVELLER

Summer 2016 Edition

Hidden Histories

# Gypsies At War



Jim Foster smiles as he tells the story behind this Image. One of his many Military images that he is so fiercely proud of. It's 1966 Hong Kong in a humid heat, they are sat in Fan Gardens. He tells of the 5 Hong Kong Dollars they paid their "boot boy" to look at him and his friend "Bri Bolland".

Jim Comes from a long line of Military Men, but a longer line of Gypsies Jim regales us with stories of his Yorkshire upbringing as a Traveller. "When we were young, we didn't use the term Gypsy, it just wasn't who we are. but I guess today our family would be classed as English Gypsies"

"We had the time of our lives. whilst my mum Lizzie went "hawking", the uncles went out "old stuffing" "spiveying", selling plums round many villages in the area, at the time jam was still been made in quantity by country folk and it was a good earner. Now these ways of earning a living are gone, I always remember my granddad hawking wash leathers on Bridlington prom.



Granny Florrie Hall & family around the fire

Back then Travellers really did travel, you didn't come from one town or village, you belonged to a county. Home was a cottage, tent, a "whoppie" and "accommodations." This was life at its finest. Winter time we settled for a while. Mum still went hawking but she also had a shop which sold nearly new second hand clothes. There was a big demand in those days, the 40s and 50s, cash was in short supply. I used go out calling with my uncles, selling horse muck, half a crown a basket or five for a pound.



Jims Aunt Minnie, Uncle Podge and Mam Floss

## Fined for being Poor!

### Penniless gipsies feel full might of Doncaster's law enforcers

What an ass is the law. It does make me so angry. A company of five gipsies, all called Smith, were each fined five shillings at Thorne for lodging out under the broad canopy of heaven at Hatfield. They were bothering nobody, had committed no sort of offence. they preferred the open air with the stars as nightlights, nestling snugly on mother earth, to the shelter of the workhouse with its enforced tubbing\* and its skilly\*. Or to the fleas and stifling air of the common lodging house. But as they possessed no visible means of subsistence they were taken in hand by the gentlemen in blue uniform and forced to make the acquaintance of the magistrates. For this dire offence they were promptly mulcted\* of a crown apiece. It is ludicrous. A man without a coin in the world must plank down five shillings-from where I ask?- so as to avoid having to do "hard" in one of His Majesty's more lowly palaces. Fortunately for the Romanies one of them had friends in the courtroom. "The ladies will pay" one of them remarked, and so the five Mrs Smiths handed out the full five and twenty shillings between them. Had these homeless wanderers possessed but one poor sixpence each the charge would not have been made against them. How small is the line that divides the free citizen from the Gaol bird. Yours Emily of Hyde Park 1902

Dear Emily of Hyde Park.

Thank you for your letter, we must agree that your observations seem quite correct. that to be fined for not having money and sleeping under the night sky does seem ludicrous.

We would like to update you on the Gentlemen in question, we are told that the 5 Mrs Smiths were very angry at the loss of their 25 shillings and the men were not allowed out on an evening for at least a week. we note your spelling of Gypsy and its "i" instead of a "y" this is quite common place in 1902, but will be phased out eventually. we also note the use of interesting words which we have marked with an \* .

Yours P.G.T

# PROUD GYPSY TRAVELLER



Jim as a small boy dressed in dark jumper and friends

Growing up our lives were good compared to those lived around us. They respected us for what we were, we respected them and I think it was much better for Travellers or general dealers to earn a living.

I was not interested in learning anything, which when I look back was a big mistake. I had to be re educated once I joined the army. The reason for joining the army was to emulate those who had been in before me.



Jims Parents Wedding Day WW2



Jims Granddad and Great Uncle WW1

Granddad Joey Hall ,great uncle Jimmy Hall, mum Lizzie foster, dad Jimmy Foster not forgetting my uncles Tommy Hall and Billy Hall, I had heard stories of all those mentioned and I wanted some excitement and to travel the world

I travelled further as a soldier than I ever did. I was just right for the army, some of my best memories from the very sad to the joyous. I joined the army at the age of 17 in 1964 I was fit young and raring to go. we were street wise back then .

In 1971/72 on a emergency tour of Belfast in the Ardoyne, we had five of soldiers shot and 36 with gunshot wounds and bomb blast wounds. It was like the OK corral. I struggle to forget those sad times.



Jim in Belfast 1972



Best Section Anti Tank platoon 1982

When talking about our lives prior to the army I always talked of my family and was proud of that fact. Mum and Dad fought in World War 2 and throughout my army life, I never hid the fact that I was from a Traveller family. In fact I met Uncle Henry Hall's step daughter, she was married to a friend and it was over a drink we found out we were related. It's a small world we live in



Jim Receiving his 50 year Gold Badge

# Origins of the Romani People

The first Europeans thought the Romani were from Turkey, Nubia or Egypt, Naming them, Egyptians or 'Gyptians, which is where the word "Gypsy" comes from. It was not until the second half of the 18th century that scholars in Europe began to realize that the Romani language, in fact, came from India. So they concluded if the language were originally Indian, what about the people

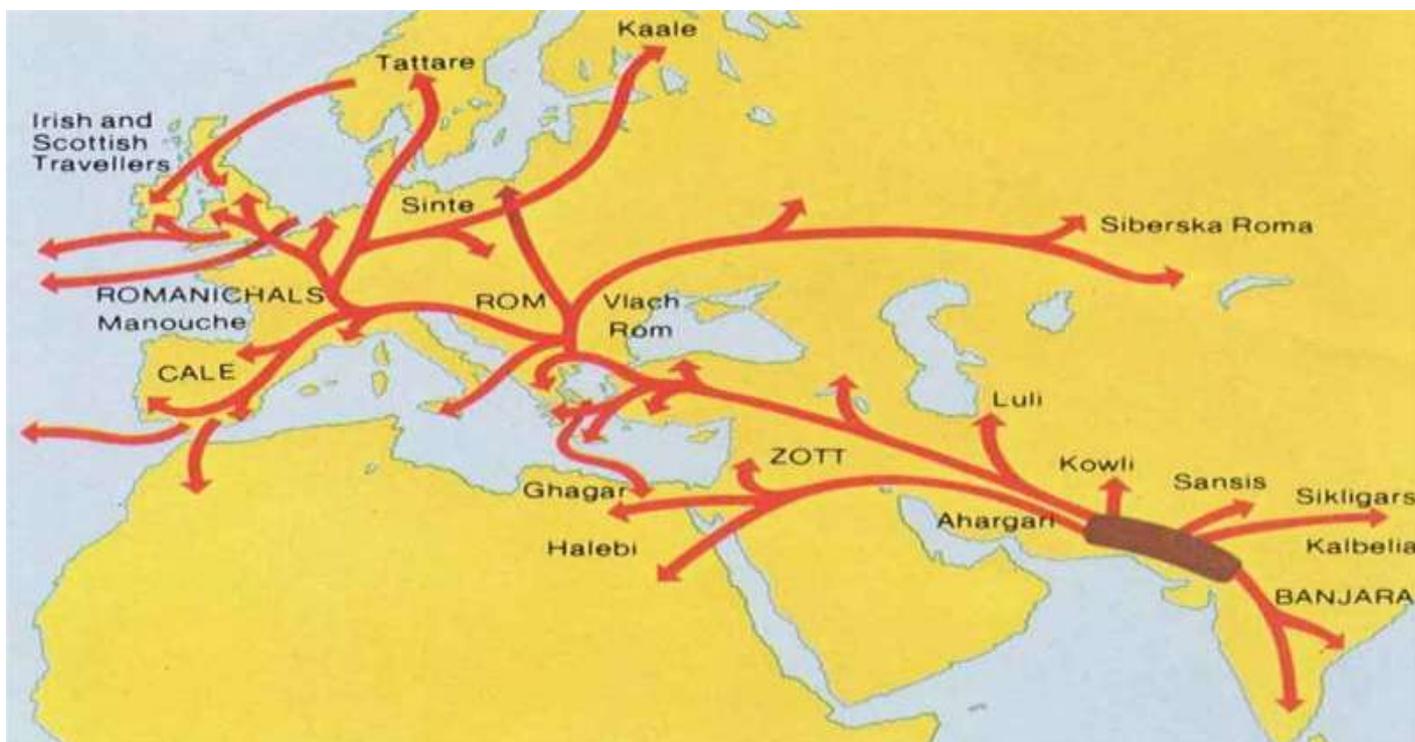
At the very beginning of the 11th century, India came under attack by the Muslim general Mahmud of Ghazni, who was trying to push Islam into India, which was mainly Hindu territory. The Indian rulers had been assembling troops to hold back the Muslim army for centuries. Deliberately drawing their warriors from various populations who were not Aryan. The Aryans regarded their lives as being more precious than non-Aryan.

The troops that were assembled to fight were all taken from many different ethnic groups who spoke languages and dialects. This composite army moved out of India through the mountain passes into Persia, battling with Muslim forces all along the eastern limit of Islam.

While this is to an extent speculative, it is based upon sound linguistic and historical evidence, and provides the best-supported scenario to date. Because Islam was not only making inroads into India to the east, but was also being spread westwards into Europe, the Indian troops—the early Roma— were carried further in that direction, until they eventually crossed over into south eastern Europe about the year 1300.

As the ethnically and linguistically mixed population further away from its land of origin, so it began to acquire its own ethnic identity, it was at this time that the Romani language also began to take shape. As the warriors moved, they took words and grammar from Persian, the same in Armenia and the Byzantine Empire, and continued to happen in Europe.

By about 1500 Roma were living in all parts of Europe. As a result of having interacted with various European populations, and being fragmented into widely-separated groups, Roma have emerged as a collection of distinct ethnic groups within the larger whole.



Map of possible migration routes from India to Asia, Africa & Europe, with recognised Community Names edited excerpt from [www.oocities.org/~patrin/history.htm](http://www.oocities.org/~patrin/history.htm)

# Time Line

**1300.** Romani shoemakers are recorded in Greece

"Aresajipe"; Roma arrive in Europe.

**1400.** Prince Vlad Dracul transports some 12,000 "who looked like *Egyptians*" for slave labour.

Roma declared traitors to Christian countries, spies for the Turks, carriers of plague, practicing witchcraft, kidnapping of children & banditry.

4 *Gypsies* accompany Christopher Columbus on his third voyage to the New World.

**1500.** Rome affirms that Roma cannot be priests & orders their expulsion from the domain of the Roman Catholic Church.

**1505.** Roma are recorded in Scotland.

**1530.** Henry VIII forbids the transportation of Gypsies into England. A Fine of £40 for ship's owner or captain. The Gypsies are punished by hanging.

**1547.** Edward VI of England requires Gypsies be "branded with a 'V' on their breast, & enslaved for 2 years." escapees are caught, branded with an "S" & made slaves for life.

**1554.** King Philip & Queen Mary, decrees that that the death penalty shall be imposed for being a Gypsy, or anyone who accompanies them

**1562.** An Act entitled "further punishment of Vagabonds, calling themselves *Egyptians*." they should suffer death and loss of possessions, unless born in England & Wales, they were not compelled to leave if they quit their idle, ungodly life & company.

**1573.** Gypsies in Scotland are ordered to leave the country or settle.

**1579.** Gypsies are recorded in Wales.

**1596.** 106 men & women are sentenced to death at York, for being Gypsies, 9 are executed. The others prove they were born in England.

**1650.** Last known execution for being Gypsies, in England. Others are banished to America.

**1660-1800.** The identity of English Gypsy *Romanichal* group is formed.

**1714.** British merchants apply to the Privy Council to ship Gypsies, to the Caribbean, to be used as slaves.

**1726.** Gitanos in Spain are forbidden to appeal against the courts judgements.

**1740.** The Guild of Locksmiths in Hungary canvas successfully for an order to stop Roma from doing any metalwork outside their tents.

**1768.** The First Modern Circus held in London

**1811.** Trinity Cooper, a Gypsy girl aged thirteen, demands to be let into a charity school for "ragged children" in Clapham, near London, with her two brothers.

**1822.** In the United Kingdom, the Turnpike Act is introduced. Gypsies found camping are fined.

**1830.** First wooden horse-drawn covered wagons for Gypsies are developed in England.

**1884.** First record of Gypsies in Doncaster, A child baptism in Adwick Le Street

**1880.** Agricultural depression in England, many Gypsies move to towns.

**1884.** Dr. Sonya Kavalevsky, a Romani, is made a professor of mathematics at Stockholm University becoming the first female professor in Scandinavia.

**1889.** The Showmen's Guild formed to oppose the Moveable Dwellings Bills. Showmen begin to become a distinct group from other "Travellers".

**1908.** The Children's Act in England makes education compulsory for Gypsy children, but only for half the year. This is continued in the 1944 Education Act, many Gypsy children still have no schooling.

**1916.** Yorkshire Born John Cunningham is awarded the Victoria Cross. Private Cunningham went with his section to a trench where much opposition was met. The rest of the section were either killed or wounded. He went on alone up the communication trench where he met a party of Germans. He killed all 10 & cleared the trench up to the new line

**1920.** Minister of Public Welfare in Düsseldorf forbids Roma and Sinti from entering any public washing or recreational facilities

**1926.** The Swiss *Pro Juventute* Foundation begins to take children away from Roma to change their names & put them into foster homes. This program continues until 1973, it is not brought to light until the 1980s. Switzerland has apologized to the Roma, but adamantly refuses to allow them access to the records which will help them locate their children

**1933.** Sinto boxer, Johann Trollman, is stripped of his title as light-heavyweight champion of Germany for "racial reasons."

**1934.** Django Reinhardt forms "*The Quintet Hot Club de France*" & introduces French "*swing jazz*" to the world, influencing American jazz entertainers.

**1936.** Gypsies & Jews both have their voting rights taken from them.

Interpol in Vienna establishes the *Centre for Combating the Gypsy Menace*, which has grown out of the earlier *Bureau of Gypsy Affairs*.

Martin Block publishes his general study of *Gypsies*, & justifies Nazi racist attitudes by speaking of the "nauseating Gypsy smell," & the "involuntary feeling of mistrust or repulsion one feels in their presence."

In Berlin, Roma & Sinti are cleared off the streets away from public view because of the upcoming Olympic games. Fifty years later, the police in Spain do the same thing for the Olympic Games in Madrid.

**1939-45.** A list of English Gypsies is drawn up for internment. British government creates caravan sites for families of Gypsies in the army or doing farm labour. These sites are closed after the war.

**1933-45.** *O Porraimos*, the Great Devouring. an estimated 1,500,000 Sinti and Roma are killed in. At Buchenwald, 250 Romani children are used as guinea-pigs to test the Zyklon-B gas crystals. *Zigeunernacht*, literally, Gypsy Night. Nazi leader Himmler orders all Gypsy camps closed, resulting in the liquidation of the Romani prisoners 4000 Roma are gassed & cremated in a single action at Auschwitz-Birkenau

**1945-60.** Gypsies begin to use motor-drawn trailers, and buy land for their own stopping-places in England.

**1950-1967.** In the Cologne region of Germany, identity papers given to survivors of the Nazi concentration camps are withdrawn from Sinti and Roma on the grounds that they could provide no written proof of their German nationality.

**1952.** The *Romani Evangelical Church* movement is started in Brittany, France under the leadership of Clément Le Cossec.

**1954.** Police authorities in Bavaria set up a special office, with Interpol, for registering Sinti and Roma.

**1960.** The Caravan Sites Act in England stops new private sites being built until 1972. Eviction and harassment of Gypsies starts to reach a crisis.

**1966.** Growing eviction and harassment leads to the formation of the *British Gypsy Council* to fight for sites.

**1967.** First Gypsy Council summer school, in Essex, England.

**1968.** The Caravan Sites Act insists that from 1970, local authorities should provide caravan sites for Gypsies in England. This Act is never fully enforced, and is later abolished.

**1971.** The First World Romani Congress is held in London with delegates from fourteen countries. An international Romani flag, anthem and motto are formally approved. The term *Rom* is adopted as a self-appellation

**1972.** The British government begins to exempt councils from building sites for caravans. The government starts to give grants only to Gypsy organisations who cooperate with it.

**1976.** The Czechoslovakian newspaper *Vychodoslovenske Noviny* publishes the official text of government policy for compulsory sterilisation of Roma as an act of "socialistic humanity."

**1983.** The first national Gypsy Pentecostal Convention is held in England.

**1989.** Romany Gypsies are First recognised as an ethnic minority

**1991.** In Macedonia, Roma are accorded equal rights in the new republic.

**1994.** The Criminal Justice & Public Order Act abolishes the Caravan Sites Act leaving about 5,000 families with no legal home

**2000.** Irish Travellers are recognised as a separate and distinct Ethnic Minority from Romany Gypsies. with their own unique culture, customs and language

# PROUD GYPSY TRAVELLER



During the last 12 months we have run  
23 Different Workshops covering 5 topics  
in 11 locations across Doncaster  
with over 254 Participants  
and 6 volunteers

# Hidden History Exhibition

13th August - 24 September 2016: Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery



Doncaster Gypsy and Traveller Voice project and community members identified an issue within the communities regarding the negative stereotyping of Gypsies and Travellers; particularly of young people, largely due to current media portrayals, to address these issues staff in collaboration with the local Gypsy and Traveller communities want to redress the balance by engaging in a fully participating programme of activity and learning by rediscovering their past and sharing it both within their own communities and to a wider Doncaster audience through a variety of different mediums

We want to show a deeper insight into all the communities who are classified as “Travellers” to show how they are not one harmonious group, but have very different communities, with different value systems and lifestyles. From the Ethnically Protected groups of Romany Gypsy, Irish Travellers and Scottish Gypsy/Travellers to the lifestyle and economic Travellers such as Travelling Show People



# PROUD GYPSY TRAVELLER



**The project will look at a time span of 1900-2000 and focus on Doncaster Travellers** from the Ethnically Protected groups of Romany Gypsy, Irish Travellers and Scottish Gypsy/Travellers to the lifestyle and economic Travellers such as Traveller Show People.

Working in collaboration with local Art facilities, Doncaster Council and other available media outlets, the project aims to dispel myths and create a lasting legacy for Doncaster. This will involve community members learning new skills in the use of Social Media, photography, filming and interview techniques and developing communication skills, the collection and display of local artefacts.

The first of the exhibitions for the project is currently showing at Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery, the "Hidden History" exhibition closes on 24th September and then moves and expands in Doncaster ARTS @The Point. Where "Suitcase Under The bed" will run from 18th October until 17th December. After this exhibition the project continues on into 2017, with another exhibition and a book of the process created. The workers welcome and want more input to make sure the stories told are diverse and representative.

The artefacts in the cabinets signify different elements of Traveller Heritage.

1) Stainless steel "Water Churn" these are actually milk churns, which farmers would use to store milk. However Gypsies and Travellers use them for water, as the stainless steel helps to keep the water clean, pure and prevents algae growing. Cast Iron Pans and Kettle, used over the outside fire, the pans would be suspended via a "Chitty Iron" and the Kettle would be placed on a "Kettle Prop" to keep the water warm. These are still used by the communities, but not commonly used on a daily basis, it's more about keeping the memories alive., so occasionally meals will be cooked over the fire.

2) Walsall Double Buckled Harness with matching children's belts, made for the owners Grandsons. These Harness are to be used to "Yoke up" and are not riding harness. The harness have a large amount of "Keepers, these are used to keep the belt straps in place. The number of keepers are a status symbol. The Brass and leather handle driving wipe is ornamental.





3) Childhood replica living wagon which is still played with by the owners son. Brass Bells on rope, these were tied around the eldest son of the owner. "He was a bad one" as long as they heard the bells, they knew he was safe. Collection of pen knives from one man's collection, the "Bone and silver ones being most prized" and date back to the 1800. Rusty Horse Breaking bit, belong to the owners father in law, who passed 37 years ago. Brass selection are name plates and wheel hubs from company's around Yorkshire that no longer exist. The small anvil and Horse shoes are over 60 years old, they were given to the owner by his father. his father got them from a trainer of Hackney Horses. these shoes would have come from a foal. Foals are not usually shod. Collection of "unusual" horse bits. Most of the items in this unit came from a man shed and were shown to us after we asked, "What do you think is important to show?"

4) Welsh Blanket over 40 years old. Set of Cigar pattern Royal Crown Derby, passed down to the owner after the death of her grandmother, these were the first set of china owned by the deceased lady. "Fifty Pence Dish" Old Imari Royal Crown Derby, passed down from her mother's collection, as a wedding present. Bone and silver handled carving knife, essential for carving home cured bacon. Images on plates, the owners parents. made after both passed away. Stainless Steel Collection. and water can are both "Barnsley" made by a local company, they are national considered to be one of the finest makers. the can is 42 years old and has the very desirable patterned sides. The original owner was given it as a wedding present, it was then passed down to its new owner when she was married. Macramé Lace Cushions, given to the owner by her mother. They were handmade by the original owners cousin

These items are held very dear and passed on through families. the original items are difficult to find now and recent copies just don't cut it with the communities. the items which have less monetary value are considered more valuable, especially if they have sentiment or cannot be replaced.



Jack VC

I am your Gypsy warrior Of me you can be sure  
I'll wear your ribband coat And I'll fight your foreign war.  
You train me up in Dalton You send me off to France  
I was only there a short while Before you ordered the advance.  
My comrades they'd all fallen The Germans thought they'd won  
But they'd not beat this Gypsy From no man I would run.  
So I gathered up the weapons Moved forward on my own  
And I killed those German soldiers I killed them every one.  
So you're sending me back home now Say the King I have to  
meet  
He wants to pin on me a medal And I'm carried through your  
streets.  
But when the war is over And my soldiering days are done  
I go back to hawking carpets And I throw away your gun.  
But you bang me up in prison You say that I am bad  
But it is not surprising For a war-scarred Gypsy lad.  
And when my days are over You push me in the ground  
With no head stone above me No flag no bugle sound.  
Yet I was once your hero Of me you could be sure  
When England needed heroes This Gypsy heard your call.  
I won your highest honour I won your Victoria Cross  
But now I lie in unmarked ground And you don't grieve my loss.  
So listen all you Gypsies You Traveller boys heed well  
Should you fight and die for England She'll just leave you where  
you fell.  
For we don't have a country That we can call our own  
As we travel down the highways With a trailer for our home.

Joe Wilson



JOHN CUNNINGHAM (also known as Jack) died 70 years ago. Amanda Reed, a Cunningham by birth and descended from a long line of Gypsies and Travellers, first heard about John from her Uncle Jimmy. Eventually, and with the help of John Colam from Lincolnshire Family History Society, she unwrapped the following story. John's parents, licensed hawkers who sold oilcloth and carpets, were stopping in Swains Yard, Scunthorpe when John was born in 1897. After school he too became a hawker before volunteering, aged just seventeen, for the East Yorkshire regiment. He was sent to fight on the Somme. On November 13, 1916 during the Battle of Ancre, he was in a bombing party when all his mates were killed or injured. John picked up their bombs and attacked the German trenches. He returned for a second attack killing ten Germans. John returned to a hero's welcome (although his Gypsy background was rarely if ever mentioned) and after marrying and having two children he settled in Hull.

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