Understanding New Travellers’ history and culture

A project of The Children’s Society, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund
Contents

Introduction 3

Exhibition 1: Why I Became a New Traveller 4

Exhibition 2: A Short History of New Travellers 8

Exhibition 3: Festival! 12

Feedback 17

Young people’s work 18

Further information 22

How to book an exhibition 26

New Traveller, Old Story oral history collection 27

The Children’s Society 28

Credits 29
Introduction

The Children’s Society project *New Travellers, Old Story* began in June 2009. A year-long piece of work, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, its aims were to increase young New Travellers’ understanding of their own history and culture, positively raise awareness of the history and culture of New Travellers among the general public and create something permanent that people could use to learn about the history and culture of New Travellers.

To meet these aims, we interviewed current and former New Travellers across the South West. We used what people told us, and the many photos they kindly shared, as the basis for three public exhibitions. Titled ‘Why I Became a New Traveller’, ‘A Short History of New Travellers’ and ‘Festival’, the words and pictures from these exhibitions form the basis of this heritage pack. Also included are interpretive works by young New Travellers exploring their thoughts and feelings about their heritage, a section on where to find further information and instructions on how to book the exhibitions.

Young New Travellers played an active part in the project through being interviewed and helping to interview other members of their community and by taking part in focus groups to shape the content of the exhibitions. We are very grateful for their input and enthusiasm, as we are to all the New Travellers who gave up their time to share their life stories and personal photographs. The final part of the project will see the digital interview recordings sent to The Children’s Society’s Records and Archive Centre in south London, where they will form a unique oral history collection of New Traveller lifestyle and culture.

We hope you enjoy this heritage pack as much as we have enjoyed collecting the information in it.

May 2010
Why I became a New Traveller

Introduction
The Children’s Society has worked with New Travellers in the South West for nearly 20 years. You may know them as New Age Travellers, or hippies, crusties or simply Travellers – in the media they are sometimes even referred to as ‘scum’, but in fact they are just people, no better or worse than any others. Unfortunately for them, their decision not to live in conventional housing also means that New Travellers are among some of the most discriminated-against people in Britain.

The ideals and disillusionments that have driven this diverse and ever-changing group of people onto the road from the 1970s onwards, make for a fascinating slice of British social history. The Children’s Society has interviewed many New Travellers, past and present, about what made them take the decision to swap their settled existence for a nomadic life: in caravans, coaches, double decker buses, ex-army vehicles, horse-drawn wagons, bender tents made of saplings and tarpaulin, tee-pees, and other dwellings. Their answers reveal a great deal about both the positive benefits that life as a New Traveller can offer and the reasons that lead people to take such a radical step as to try to create an alternative society.
What is a New Traveller?
Just like those of us who live in houses, New Travellers are a diverse group and it is difficult to provide a catch-all definition. Unlike other travelling people: the Roma, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers, who are defined as ethnic minority communities under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, New Travellers are not an ethnic minority and mainly come from the white British population.

Although they come from diverse backgrounds and have gone on the road at different stages in the last 30 years for a variety of reasons, most New Travellers do share some common values and characteristics. The three most important of these are:

• COMMUNITY – being able to live in close proximity, share childcare, resources and support each other.
• Wanting to ‘TREAD LIGHTLY ON THE LAND’ – to live close to nature and use sparingly its finite resources.
• They are ANIMAL LOVERS, particularly dogs.

‘It’s a family.’
Chris, Somerset

‘It’s a way of life really, it’s more than just social. You kind of carry it with you whether you live in a moving home or a settled home. It’s the way you think and feel basically.’
Kirsty, Somerset

‘And anyway, it’s not New Age Travellers, it’s Middle Aged Travellers now.’
Liz, Somerset
Why I became a New Traveller

New Travellers and discrimination

‘New Age Travellers? Not in this age, not in any age!’
Prime Minister John Major, 1992

‘Racism ... towards Gypsies and Travellers is still common, frequently overt and seen as justified.’
Commission for Equalities and Human Rights, 2009

In 1994, The Children’s Society published a report, Out of Site, Out of Mind, which warned that ‘Amidst the images and rhetoric, the needs of New Age Travellers, and in particular the needs of Traveller children and young people, have tended to be forgotten’. Fifteen years later, this is unfortunately still the case.

For New Travellers, prejudice against their lifestyle affects virtually all areas of their existence. In common with other Travellers, they suffer from a chronic shortage of legal stopping places as most councils have not provided enough legal sites for their travelling populations. Their children are often bullied at school; many newspapers encourage prejudice against them through inflammatory and unbalanced reporting; their planning applications are far less likely to be approved than those from house-dwellers; local people tend to presume their guilt when crimes are committed; shops and pubs sometimes refuse their business; and vigilante violence is an ever-present threat.

On top of this they suffer from all the inequalities that afflict the rural poor, and all the difficulties of accessing services faced by those with no home address. Unlike other sections of the travelling community, who have been recognised as ethnic minorities, they are not protected by race relations legislation. It is a hard life.

‘You want to be proud but it’s hard when people are constantly putting you down.’
K, 14, Somerset, born a New Traveller
Why I became a New Traveller

‘I was 17, it was Thatcher’s great unemployment of the early ’80s, my father was quite a strong influence and he was saying if I didn’t get a job I was in the army, which I was dead against, and into growing my hair, so off I went! Bought a caravan for £40, up a drove [lane] that was full of people, it was easy. … It was Salisbury, a place called Green Lane. There was a lot of families, like, old hippies from the ’60s. I was the youngest adult at 17. … It was so inspiring. I was hooked! From one visit I moved up there.’

Nick, Somerset

‘I first discovered the scene in ’81 when I was an arts student. One of the students I was at college with used to wear wellies into college, muddy wellies, and we all used to think, is this some fashion we’re unaware of? And I said to him one day, “Why do you always wear wellies?” And he said, “Oh, ’cos I live in a caravan”.

So, anyway, I found out where he was living and crikey, there was about 80 caravans on this long lane. And I went up to visit him thinking it’s going to be freezing, ’cos it was like October, November, but then you go in the caravan, there’s a wood-burning stove crackling away, candlelight – it was beautiful! Everything about it made such an impact on me.’

David, Wiltshire

‘I went to Treworgey Tree Festival in 1989 and thought, wow, I’m going to live like this too! And that’s what I did. I was on the road for over 12 years and all my kids were born on site, in whatever vehicles, all over the country. … Right at the beginning when I first started travelling, there was just two of us, me and my boyfriend and … we had this thing where we used to storm castles. Everywhere we would find a castle we’d park up and then just have a go at trying to get into it!’

Karen, Somerset

‘That blew my mind – benders [home-made tents of saplings and tarpaulin]

–’cos I’d had an architectural education and here was primitive architecture in its essence. First arch in architecture were bent saplings really. So there was me, back to the roots of architecture, and people making their own home, that they could afford, that was real, that was affordable and very creative and close to nature, warm and comfortable, fine. It was a revelation to me and I felt, well, there’s got to be some kind of role for me in this.’

Tony, Somerset

‘A huge amount of people I know went on the road in those two years [1984-1985]. … It seemed like every time we went to a festival lots of people would come out of the local towns … and go, “Oh great, can I come with you?” I think it was great because there were lots of people who, if they hadn’t been living that life, would have been homeless. And quite a few people came out of a squat to come on the road because you could get set up: you could get a trailer for £50 and somebody would tow it for you. Or, if you hadn’t even got that, you could get a tarpaulin and build a bender and that would cost you nothing.’

Netty, Gloucestershire
**The early years**

British people have taken to the road for centuries. New Travellers have been doing so since the early 1970s, when idealistic hippies decided they wanted to create an alternative society, organising and travelling between a series of free festivals in the summer months and parking up in remote rural locations in the winter. They supported themselves by trading at festivals and living communally and very cheaply and had strong links with the squatter movement. After parking up with CND protestors at military installations, this travelling caravan of colourful buses became known as ‘The Peace Convoy’.

The mid-1980s onwards saw a concerted effort by various police forces to demoralise and deter the movement, through a series of raids on New Traveller encampments, at places such as Nostell Priory in Yorkshire in 1984, Stonehenge in Wiltshire in 1985 and Stoney Cross in the New Forest in 1986. These resulted in mass arrests and the destruction of many New Travellers’ vehicles and pet dogs. Some of the police’s actions at Stonehenge in 1985 were later ruled in court to have been illegal. In 1986 the Government also passed a Public Order Act that made trespass a criminal offence for the first time. In response to
all these factors, a large number of the original wave of New Travellers either left Britain, moving abroad to Ireland, Spain, Portugal and even India, or reluctantly gave up life on the road to avoid confrontation with the state.

After the Beanfield: the late 1980s

Even so, the mid-to-late 1980s saw perhaps the greatest numbers of people taking to the road. New Travellers from this period included anarchists, punks, squatters, people showing solidarity with striking miners, CND campaigners, homeless people, green activists and others. In reaction to the polarisation of British society in the 1980s, and the recent experiences of the New Travellers at the hands of the police, many of these New Travellers took a more cynical and disillusioned view of mainstream society.

Groups of New Travellers, such as those who called themselves ‘the Brew Crew’, were aggressive and confrontational, both to other

New Travellers and the wider society. In addition, the scourge of heroin addiction began to afflict many sites, and with it a rise in criminal activity, ill health and deaths as well as a reduction in community spirit, pride and self-sufficiency. This further divided the movement between those who took a zero tolerance policy towards heroin use and those who believed that part of the New Traveller ethos was to accept all people, no matter what their behaviour. Many of those who took heroin in this period have since died as a result of their addiction.

Rave and recrimination: the 1990s

In the late 1980s to early 1990s another wave of young people began leaving the towns for the countryside, albeit only for the weekends, as they attended huge raves across Britain. The most famous of these was at Castlemorton Common in Worcestershire in May 1992, when New Travellers looking for somewhere to hold an alternative...
to the banned Avon Free Festival joined forces with ravers for a week-long free party attended by more than 20,000 people. Ravers were by no means universally welcomed by New Travellers though. Many felt that these weekend hedonists did not share their values of caring for the planet or their commitment to an alternative community, and feared that the high profile of raves would bring too much negative attention from the state.

Their prediction was correct. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, explicitly designed to outlaw raves, also criminalised a great deal of the New Traveller lifestyle and repealed local councils’ duty to provide sites for Travelling people to park up on. (This was only reintroduced, in a weaker form, in 2006.) This lack of provision of legal places to stop, coupled with the criminalisation of trespassing on private land, made it very difficult to be a New Traveller without breaking the law.

New Travellers today
The pattern of travelling has changed, from convoys and large sites to small groups of maybe one or two families squatting, renting or buying private land. Furthermore, once their children began to approach secondary school age, many New Traveller parents decided to settle in one place and travel only during the school holidays. The lack of legal sites where families can settle without being evicted and the difficulty for Travellers of getting planning permission to live in their vehicles on private land has made this hard to achieve.

And yet there are still New Travellers who continue to live nomadic lives, some because they lack the resources to choose differently, others because they passionately believe it provides the best lifestyle for them and their children. Those people who took to the road so that they could live a low-impact lifestyle and bring their children up close to nature have not given up the dream. There are New Travellers dotted all over Britain’s countryside, and many more in houses, who still regard themselves as part of an important social movement whose time will come again.

The Children’s Society and New Travellers
Today, The Children’s Society works with New Traveller children and their families. Through our innovative projects we seek to ensure that Traveller children have access to education, health and other services and are treated as children first and foremost.
A short history of New Travellers

‘I first saw a site at Mushroom Hill [near Wokingham] and it was lovely. It was really relaxing. Cos the 80s was really oppressive and you always felt you wanted to get away from the authoritarian-type atmosphere, and you didn’t know you could, but when you came across a site it was like: yes, you could! There was people trying to create a society where it wasn’t like that. And there was something you could do, instead of just putting up with it and being told what to do all the time. It just felt like heaven, that first site I saw.’

Beth, Somerset

‘I came out of a situation where I had a mortgage, a powerful job, did everything I thought was the normal thing to do. I slogged for many years and got nothing out of it: I ended up losing my house. … I went to the council to say “help!” and they didn’t help me, they said I had made myself intentionally homeless. I had a young baby … I’d paid all that tax money, lived by their rules, never had any benefits and I was so annoyed. So I fled to the West Country, basically, and met up with a few people that were just about to go on the road. They found me a trailer, gave me so much love and they helped when nobody else would help. So then I had found this whole group of friends who were amazing and no matter who or what life you’d come from, they would help you.’

Val, Somerset

‘Although it was often quite hard work and a struggle it was the best time of my life and I often wish I was still living on a site in the middle of some woods somewhere.’

Beth, Somerset
Festival!

Introduction
Are you the sort of person for whom a weekend at one of Britain’s festivals is an essential part of your summer schedule? If so, did you know that the history of Britain’s summer festival scene is inextricably linked with the history and culture of New Travellers? The Children’s Society has been working with New Traveller children and families in the South West for nearly 20 years. Using their words, we would like to tell you about festivals and their central place in New Traveller culture and heritage.

‘If you’re a Traveller you’re brought up on festivals.’
F, Somerset
Free Festivals – A Brief History

Festivals, free parties, solstice celebrations, pilgrimages and fayres have always been a celebratory and subversive part of the popular folk tradition of Britain. They have traditionally been a means of dissent as well as an affirmation of the power of community. It is from this centuries-old tradition that the modern history of free festivals springs. ‘Popular festivals have always discomforted authority,’ explains Traveller Tony. ‘They are a rare opportunity for the world to be turned upside down and for the normal rules which bind us to be cast aside.’

The New Traveller movement was born in the early 1970s when people organising and attending free festivals decided to turn their summer activities into a year-round lifestyle. Many had previously been living in communes or squats and their decision to live on the road in a convoy of vehicles was an idealistic attempt to build an alternative society.

Anarchy in action

Festivals such as the Glastonbury Fayre in 1971, the People’s Free Festival in Windsor Great Park in 1972 and the Stonehenge Free Festivals from 1974 to 1984 served as a shop window for this alternative culture. At the Stonehenge Free Festival: ‘It was free to get in, there were no rules whatsoever and people could do whatever they liked there, as long as they didn’t harm anyone else’, remembers New Traveller James. ‘There was music, stages, loads and loads of weirdness. It just seemed to be complete freedom, almost anarchy in action – and it was actually working.’

Weekend visitors were sometimes so impressed they just didn’t go home. ‘I went to Stonehenge Festival and it completely blew me away’, says James,
‘It really felt like all my life I’d been looking for something, didn’t know what it was, but as soon as I got there, I knew that was it.’ He wasn’t the only one. ‘Summer of ’82 up at Stonehenge festival was like the ultimate gathering of amazing people,’ remembers New Traveller Dave. ‘And they’re saying, I do this all year round … I was hooked.’

By 1984, the Stonehenge Free Festival lasted for the entire month of June and attracted approximately 100,000 visitors. It was completely unregulated and reliant on the co-operation of the festival-goers to allow the homemade infrastructure to function. Its sheer size meant that once it had begun the police were powerless to shut it down or enforce the law on site. All but the hardest drugs were ‘freely available and advertised for sale’ at the festival and those selling food and goods were not declaring their income or paying licensing fees and tax.

The Battle of the Beanfield
However, there was no Stonehenge Free Festival in 1985. On June 1, a huge police operation by constabularies from five counties resulted in paramilitary techniques being used against New Travellers attempting to reach the site. Known as the ‘Battle of the Beanfield’, it was described in The Observer by journalist Nick Davies: ‘There was glass breaking, people screaming, black smoke towering out of burning caravans and everywhere there seemed to be people being bashed and flattened and pulled by the hair. Men, women and children were led away, shivering, swearing, crying, bleeding, leaving their homes in pieces.’

Although the Battle of the Beanfield was not a unique event (several other violent police actions against New Travellers holding free festivals took place during the mid-1980s) it was uniquely shocking. If the Beanfield had been intended to demoralise the movement out of existence however – it failed. Although many Travellers were so disillusioned by their experiences at the Beanfield that they moved abroad, it also inspired a new wave of people to take to the road in protest. ‘A huge amount of people I know went on the road in those two years,’ remembers Netty. ‘It seemed like every time we went to a festival lots of people would come out of the local villages and
towns and go, “Oh great, can I come with you?”

Free festivals continued to be held after the Beanfield, for example the Torpedo Town festivals in Hampshire from 1985 to 1992 and 1989’s Treworgey Tree Fair in Cornwall (which became free against its organisers’ wishes). They were smaller, however, often much more edgy and chaotic, and had a soundtrack of punk and later techno, as well as traditional Traveller bands like Hawkwind. Some paying festivals, such as Glastonbury, which had by then started charging, also continued to provide free fields for Travellers.

Castlemorton and the Criminal Justice Act
It was the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJA) of 1994 that finally brought the free festivals to an end. It was passed in response to the rave scene of the early 1990s and particularly a five-day, 40,000-strong free party at Castlemorton Common in Worcestershire in May 1992. The biggest free party since the 1984 Stonehenge Free Festival, Castlemorton’s size was due to several rave sound systems joining forces with New Travellers looking for an alternative place to hold the banned Avon Free Festival.

---

**Festivals are my culture: What festivals mean to young New Travellers**

‘Festivals are very important. Some people that are travelling about – you don’t get to see them any other time in the year cos everybody’s all off and about different places.’
K, Somerset

‘It’s what inspires your way of life.’
H, Somerset

‘It’s all about the community really and the people you get to see and meet and make connections with.’
O, Somerset

It’s so nice to go to festivals. It’s much more free, you can do what you want, wear what you want, look how you want and nobody judges you.

Which is how it is on Traveller sites.’
E, Dorset

‘There’s nothing better than festivals. The bus we live in is actually one of the displays that’s put up. People come and say, “Wow it’s an old bus that has been converted!” Sustainable living, sustainable homes.’
T, Dorset

‘There are a lot of people at festivals that are trying to live our lifestyle. But just for a week – and then they move back into their houses with their hot showers.’
N, Dorset

‘I don’t really want to go next year ’cos of the amount of police: you can’t do what you want ’cos there’s so many of them telling you what to do. I mean it used to be a free festival.’
R, Dorset

‘When I was a kid there used to be a Traveller field at Glastonbury and it’d be a site for a couple of months before and after the festival. And it was a lot easier to get in – now you need photo ID. People don’t want the old hippies in.’
A, Dorset

‘We used to go over the walls all the time but I’ve decided to start paying cos I can’t be running away from the security the whole time. It’s not worth the effort and I got beaten up by security last year.’
O, Somerset
Castlemorton holds a controversial place in New Traveller history. Although many enjoyed it, others blame it for providing the impetus for the CJA. A draconian piece of legislation, it gave the police comprehensive powers to prevent further such events. The days of large-scale free parties and festivals were over.

New Travellers still play a crucial role in Britain’s paying festival scene. Some have started their own paying festivals, such as the Big Green Gathering and the Croissant Neuf Summer Party. Others hold senior management positions at festivals like Glastonbury and Beautiful Days, with responsibility for whole fields and the hundreds of people who work in them. The kids’ fields and the arts, craft and performance workshops in them are often run by current and former New Travellers.

New Travellers on the site crew build the stages, lay the infrastructure of the site and help decorate it. Elsewhere they might provide solar-powered showers, cafés and market stalls or work as stewards, security guards and litter-pickers. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of today’s paying festivals would struggle to operate without New Travellers’ expertise, experience, creativity and hard work.

For many young New Travellers, working at a festival is a necessity. With ticket prices so high, it is essential to find a job to get in at all:

‘I’ve done bin-painting and we’ll normally do something like have a trailer and carry people’s luggage across site and they’ll give you £20. We just go back and forward to the gate and do it at the end as well.’
F, Somerset

‘I’ve worked in cafes and things in the tipi field - in the kitchen or washing up. I’ve helped set up stalls. I kind of spent more time last year working than partying!’
H, Somerset

‘You get paid to clear things up: litter picking. You find so much tat - loads of tents and stuff. One year we made about £70 each in 20 minutes by selling cans of beer we found. And you get quite good pay, £7 or £8 an hour.’
A, Dorset

‘If you’re litter-picking, Glastonbury’s great because loads of really rich people go and they’d rather just leave stuff there – ‘cos it doesn’t mean anything to them - than pack it all up.’
O, Somerset

New Travellers and festivals today
Although free festivals no longer exist, New Travellers still play a crucial role in Britain’s paying festival scene. Some have started their own paying festivals, such as the Big Green Gathering and the Croissant Neuf Summer Party. Others hold senior management positions at festivals like Glastonbury and Beautiful Days, with responsibility for whole fields and the hundreds of people who work in them. The kids’ fields and the arts, craft and performance workshops in them are often run by current and former New Travellers.

New Travellers on the site crew build the stages, lay the infrastructure of the site and help decorate it. Elsewhere they might provide solar-powered showers, cafés and market stalls or work as stewards, security guards and litter-pickers. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of today’s paying festivals would struggle to operate without New Travellers’ expertise, experience, creativity and hard work.

For many young New Travellers, working at a festival is a necessity. With ticket prices so high, it is essential to find a job to get in at all:

‘I’ve done bin-painting and we’ll normally do something like have a trailer and carry people’s luggage across site and they’ll give you £20. We just go back and forward to the gate and do it at the end as well.’
F, Somerset

‘I’ve worked in cafes and things in the tipi field - in the kitchen or washing up. I’ve helped set up stalls. I kind of spent more time last year working than partying!’
H, Somerset

‘You get paid to clear things up: litter picking. You find so much tat - loads of tents and stuff. One year we made about £70 each in 20 minutes by selling cans of beer we found. And you get quite good pay, £7 or £8 an hour.’
A, Dorset

‘If you’re litter-picking, Glastonbury’s great because loads of really rich people go and they’d rather just leave stuff there – ‘cos it doesn’t mean anything to them - than pack it all up.’
O, Somerset
Feedback

A selection of comments left by the general public in response to the exhibitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Extremely interesting and informative. I feel a bit envious of their freedom and way of life. Tolerance of people not conforming is not in any great supply and until people have tolerance, indifference, fear of anything outside the accepted norm will be always there. Thank you for the exhibition.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This exhibition is very interesting. It opens my eyes up to the fact that these travellers are good community spirited people, that also these people are getting a lot of negative press. I believe the councils should work with them and not against them.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘What an interesting exhibition! I first became a ‘traveller’ in the 70’s in as much as we took to the road – working markets and fairs. Thirty years on now alone and a pensioner I am again homeless (i.e. without bricks and mortar) but very happy in my caravan. It is not an easy way to live even when using legit sites but I hope I can remain so until I die. I am now seventy four.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Excellent exhibition. It is informative and enlightening. People need to know more about this widely discriminated against group and need to challenge the widespread view that it’s not acceptable to discriminate against groups of people unless they happen to have chosen this lifestyle.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘More than time there was an exhibition celebrating all the things that are positive about the Traveller Community, while not ignoring the downside and difficulties of trying to “live the dream”. The Children’s Society does a good job helping to support Traveller children, and people need to be reminded that travelling is a lifestyle choice as worthy of respect as any other. (Thank you for the chance to see this and comment!)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Lovely images and words. I wish them all lots and lots of luck and acceptance and inclusion in their chosen way that has its own great beauty.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Young people’s work

Memories
When you live in a house you are not so connected.
Bender living is an exciting lifestyle, no repetition
Each day is something new
Site was one ‘big community’ where people help each other.

In my memory box
I would put
Swimming in the weir being chased by cows.
Sailing in the ditch in a large bath tub.
Mud fights with everyone.
Tree house in the old willow tree.

Snuggled up in my sister’s bender celebrating Halloween
Cauldron full of tomato soup and cat bringing in dead toad!
Watching TV powered with solar panels.
Helping Mum make the bender.
Night lights in jam jars, coming home to fairyland.

Indi Hiscock

‘I have nothing against living in a house in the country but I enjoy how I am in a caravan and I’d love my future kids to enjoy that same freedom that I do. And I don’t want them to be stuck in the middle of a city ever, unless that’s what they choose later in their own life.’

H, 16, Somerset, born a New Traveller
They say we’re all different
But that’s not the truth
We’re all in sections
Me, them and you

The police take us away
Because they don’t respect our place
Yeah e yeah

Chorus
Just because we’re travellers
Doesn’t mean we’re road scum
Just because we live our life
We see our life
Love our lives to the fullest

Bus, truck or caravan
You say the road is a total ban
We live for he moment
We are living the dream

Waking up to the festival morning
Listening to musical glory

Can you remember when you were only three?
The froggy boots and the herbal tea

Everyone’s dancing around
Being happy

Chorus
Just because we’re travellers
Doesn’t mean we’re road scum
Just because we live our life
We see our life
Love our lives to the fullest

Once you’ve found a friend here
You’ve found a friend for life
We don’t say hello with a handshake

We say hi with a hug
Yeah yeah yeah

Chorus
Just because we’re travellers
Doesn’t mean we’re road scum
Just because we live our life
We see our life
Love our lives to the fullest

Wagons everywhere
And people plaiting horses’ hair
I can feel the magic in the air
So jump jump jump
Jump jump jump
To the sky
See the sparks fly from the bonfire
Fly

So why do you
Judge us for who we are?
So why do you
Judge us for who we are?

Chorus
Just because we’re travellers
Doesn’t mean we’re road scum
Just because we live our life
Just because we see our life
Just because we love our lives
|to the fullest

So I repeat
So I repeat

Chorus

Why?

RA and AG
In my memory box
I will put
Waking up in my ‘Nest’
Snuggled in blankets, pillows and coats.
Where ever you go, new best friends, sharing
families, lots of loving mums.
Tiny bunks, shared with ‘dappy’ dog.
Festival families, gathering in the summer.

Collecting beer cans for the fire
Making Pot Noodles.
Hunting for treasures in the mud.
Days and weeks of site parties.
Battered Mars bars for breakfast
Mountains of Mid Wales, car bonnets and slippery
slopes.

Meeting new friends at different schools.
With tales of Travelling
Being on the road, an awareness of life and how it
really is.
Gyppo, Woodsmoke, Pikey, abuse from kids
Anarchy!
Pink, blue and orange hair, shaved heads and hand-
me downs.
‘Ye cann’e put your son in a dress lassie’!

Phoebe Jenkins

‘When I was a bit younger and I was getting bullied a school I’d often get quite fed up with my Dad because he wasn’t born a Traveller, he started travelling when he was about 17, so he got more of a choice, and I felt sometimes he didn’t really understand how hard it was for me growing up. But I respect the choice he made, he thought it was the best way to bring me up.’

K, 14, Somerset, born a New Traveller

‘If I had been born and lived in a house all my life I don’t think I would be where I am now and I’m happy where I am at the moment. ... Ever since I’ve been 3 I’ve explored the woods, made rope swings that didn’t work, jumped off very high places and landed on my face, get covered in mud, been able to go out in the rain, there be no one there, and be really happy. And I find it hard to believe that people grow up not being able to have that sort of freedom.’

F, 13, Somerset, born a New Traveller
I Blame the Bricks and Mortar

I wish I lived in a caravan, where windows and corners were draped in strips and scraps of Emily-Material, dripping rash comfort and a thousand smiles glinting in their sultry sequins. Promising Christmas-Dresses and tied up in a bundle of This-Is-What-I-Do-What-The-F***-Are-You-Going-To-Do-About-It.

I wish I lived in a truck, where my biggest challenge was lighting a fire and kids could wield axes without the Health Visitor even blinking. Because there was no Health Visitor.

I wish I lived in a Wood, where logs and water were all anyone ever cared about, and feeding squirrels was my greatest sin.

I wish I lived at stupid little Hippie festivals, where everyone survived perfectly well on lentils and humous and Coolness was squashed into Who’s-Wearing-More-Rainbows-Than-Who.

I wish I lived on a boat, where milk and Mother’s arms were all I had to think about and I could kick vegetables and the swans loved me.

Tegan Sonvico

‘I was a “New Traveller” from the day I was born until I was ten years old…. Being a Traveller was the best time of my life and I hope to go back to it one day.’

Jelly, Devon
Below are some useful places to go for more information about the history and culture of New Travellers, or to access information if you are a New Traveller. For reasons of space, we have not included details of services provided by local authorities, such as Traveller Education Specialist Services (TESS) or Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers. You will be able to find these on your local city or county council’s website.

The Children’s Society cannot take responsibility for the content of the websites listed below.

**Information, advice and outreach services**

*Children’s Participation Project Wessex (The Children’s Society)*
Unit 5 Westway Garage
Marksbury
Bath
BA2 9HN
Tel 01761 479368
Fax 01761 479820
alison.hiscocks@childrenssociety.org.uk

*Dorset Community Action*
Community House
The Barracks
Bridport Road
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 1YG
Tel 01305 250921
Fax 01305 216420
denise.paice@dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk

*Friends, Family and Travellers*
Community Base
113 Queens Road
Brighton

*BN3 3XG*
Tel 01273 234777
fft@gypsy-traveller.org
www.gypsy-traveller.org

*The Gypsy, Traveller and Migrant Children’s Project (The Children’s Society)*
41-44 King Street
Wimborne
Dorset
BH21 1EB
Tel 01202 883034
Debbie.Harvey@childrenssociety.org.uk

*Independent (New) Travellers Advisory and Support (Devon)*
Tel 07842 536266 or 07792 225913
Itas2010@googlemail.com

*Kushti Bok*
contactus@kushtibok.co.uk
www.kushtibok.co.uk

*The Robert Barton Trust*
3 Silver Street
Glastonbury
Somerset
BA6 8BS
Tel 01458 833797
Fax 01458 833050
www.robertbartontrust.org.uk
Facebook page: The Robert Barton Trust

*South West Alliance of Nomads*
www.gypsytravellerhelp.org

*Toby’s Young People’s Project*
1 Bimport
Shaftesbury
Dorset
SP7 8AT
Tel 01747 850860
Further information

tobysypp@googlemail.com
www.tobysproject.co.uk
Facebook page: Toby’s Young People’s Project

TravellerSpace
Penwith Centre
Parade Street
Penzance
Cornwall
TR18 4BU
Tel 01736 366940
tspace@travellerspace-cornwall.org
http://travellerspace-cornwall.org/
Facebook page: TravellerSpace

Travellers Aid Trust
PO Box 16
Llangyndeyrn
Kidwelly
Carmarthenshire
Wales
SA17 5BN
Tel/fax 01554 891876
info@travellersaidtrust.org
www.travellersaidtrust.org

Legal

South West Law
1 Hide Market
West Street
Bristol
BS2 0BH
Tel 0117 314 6400
planning@southwestlaw.org.uk
www.southwestlaw.org.uk

Travellers Advice Team
The Community Law Partnership
4th Floor
Ruskin Chambers

191 Corporation Street
Birmingham
B4 6RP
Tel 0845 120 2980
Tel 07768 316755 (emergencies)
office@communitylawpartnership.co.uk

Traveller Law Reform Project
(does not give legal advice)
c/o London Gypsy and Traveller Unit
6 Westgate Street
London E8 3RN
info@travellerslaw.org.uk
www.travellerslaw.org.uk

Education

Majical Youth Theatre Project and Pengraig Farm
Eco Centre
Pengraig Farm
Felindre
Llandysul
Carmarthenshire
SA44 5HX
Tel 0845 345 3352
majicalyouth@googlemail.com
www.majicalyouth.co.uk
Facebook page: Majical Youth Theatre Project

National Association of Teachers of Travellers and Other Professionals
www.natt.org.uk

The Travellers’ School Charity
www.travellersschool.org.uk
Further information

Media and publishing

Enabler Publications
45 Haymon’s Cove
Eyemouth
Berwickshire
Scotland
TD14 5EG
Tel 01890 751222
adearling@aol.com
www.enablerpublications.co.uk

SchNews
c/o on-the-fiddle
PO Box 2600
Brighton
BN2 2D
Tel/fax 01273 685913
schnews@brighton.co.uk
www.schnews.co.uk

Travellers Times
The Rural Media Company
Sullivan House
72-80 Widemarsh Street
Hereford
HR4 9HG
Tel 01432 344039
travellerstimes@ruralmedia.co.uk
www.travellerstimes.org.uk

History

Albion Wayfarer – interactive map of lost Traveller stopping places
www.albionwayfarer.com

UK Rock Festivals – a comprehensive history of Britain’s free festivals
www.ukrockfestivals.com

Miscellaneous

Tribal Living – online forum
www.tribal-living.co.uk

Books

Colin Clark, Moving Targets: Britain’s New Age Travellers (University of Hertfordshire Press, 1998)
Colin Clark and Margaret Greenfields, Here To Stay: the Gypsies and Travellers of Britain (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2006)
Venetia Dearden, Somerset Stories: Fivepenny Dreams (Kehrer Verlag, 2009)
Fiona Earle, A Time To Travel: an introduction to Britain’s New Travellers (Enabler Publications, 1994)
Peter Gardner, Mediaeval Brigands: Pictures in a Year of the Hippie Convoy (Sansom and Co, 1987)
Kevin Hetherington, New Age Travellers: vanloads of uproarious humanity (Continuum, 2000)
Donald Kenrick and Colin Clark, Moving On: the Gypsies and Travellers of Britain (University of Hertfordshire Press, 1999)
Richard Lowe and William Shaw, Travellers: Voices of the New Age Nomads (Fourth Estate, 1993)
George McKay, Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties (Verso, 1996)
George McKay, Glastonbury: A Very English Fair (Victor Gollancz, 2000)
Further information

Jeremy Sandford and Ron Reid, *Tomorrow’s People* (Jerome Publishing Co, 1974)
C. J. Stone, *Fierce Dancing: Adventures in the Underground* (Faber & Faber, 1996)
Andy Worthington (ed), *Stonehenge: Celebration and Subversion* (Heart of Albion, 2004)

**Reports**

Lyn Webster and Jane Millar, *The nature of employment for new travellers* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2001)

**Films**

*Angleterre Underground* (1994)
*Britain, the Lie of the Land: Spirit of Albion, London Film-makers Co-op* (1987)
*Just Like You, The Children’s Society*

*Living on the Edge* (1995)
*Living With The Enemy: Travellers, BBC* (1998)
*Operation Solstice, Channel 4* (1996)
*Seven Days At Stoney Cross, BBC* (1986)
*Site Crew, PVA MediaLab*
*Sites and Rights: Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, The Rural Media Company*

**Photos and artwork**

Alan ‘Tash’ Lodge www.alanlodge.co.uk
David Stooke - www.davidstooke.co.uk
Ingrid Crawford www.restoretheearth.co.uk
Taff The Photo www.taffthephoto.co.uk
Traveller Homes www.travellerhomes.co.uk
The Facebook group ‘New Age Travellers’ contains more than 6,000 photos.

**Facebook groups**

If you are a member of the Facebook social networking site (www.facebook.com) you can search for New Traveller groups listed below. Simply enter their names, individually, in the search box to be directed to their pages. The groups below contain reminiscences and lots of photos. You will need to apply to join some of them before you can see their content.

*The Battle of The Beanfield* 
crusty travellers
*I was at castlemorton free party may 1992*
*Medieval Brigands*
*New Age Travellers*
*New age travellers*
*Punk New Age Travellers*
*The Tibetan Ukranian Mountain Troupe*
*The Wally Hope Appreciation Society*
How to book an exhibition

All three of The Children’s Society’s exhibitions about New Traveller history and culture are available to use free of charge. They do, however, need to be booked in advance and you will have to arrange to collect and return the exhibition, at your own expense, to The Children’s Society’s office in Marksbury, near Bath.

If you would like to arrange to use one of the exhibitions, please contact Gill Skuse or Sarah Keel on 01761 479368 or gill.skuse@childrenssociety.org.uk, sarah.keel@childrenssociety.org.uk

**Why I Became a New Traveller**
- Lightweight pop up display 3.5m wide x 2.5 m high.
- A combination of photos, narrative history and interview extracts, this exhibition explores the reasons formerly housed people with no travelling background have taken to the road in the South West over the last 30 years. It is based on interviews with both current and former New Travellers in Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Wales, BANES, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire.

**A Short History of New Travellers**
- 2 x roller banners, 1m wide x 2.5m high
- A narrative history of the New Traveller movement from the 1970s to the end of the 20th century, illustrated with photographs.

**Festival!**
- Lightweight pop up display 3.5m wide x 2.5 m high.
- The history of free festivals and the New Traveller movement are closely intertwined. This exhibition is a combination of quotes from young and older New Travellers about what festivals mean to them, photographs and a narrative history of the free festival movement from the early 1970s to the present day.
The process of organising and cataloguing the New Traveller interviews gathered during the project will take some time. To find out about the availability of the collection and more information on how to access it please contact The Children’s Society’s Records and Archive Centre directly. You can do this by email: archive@childrenssociety.org.uk or letter: The Children’s Society Records and Archive Centre, Block A, Floor 2, Tower Bridge Business Complex, 100 Clements Road, London, SE16 4DG.
The Children’s Society wants to create a society where children can be children, childhood is respected and every child is valued for who they are. We are resolute in our commitment to the most disadvantaged and those at risk; challenging of negative public attitudes towards children and positive about what young people can achieve. Our approach is driven by our Christian values and by the voices of children and young people, who are at the heart of all we do.

Charity registration number: 221124

The Children’s Society
Edward Rudolf House
Margery Street
London
WC1X 0JL
0845 300 1128
supporteraction@childrenssociety.org.uk

The Children’s Society and New Travellers in the South West
The Children’s Society has been working with New Travellers in the South West since the early 1990s. Staff from two projects, the Children’s Participation Project – Wessex, near Bath, and The Children’s Society Gypsy, Traveller and Migrant Children’s Project in Wimborne provide outreach services for Travellers.

Children’s Participation Project – Wessex
Unit 5 Westway Garage
Marksbury
Bath
BA2 9HN
01761 479368
alison.hiscocks@childrenssociety.org.uk

The Gypsy, Traveller and Migrant Children’s Project
41-44 King Street
Wimborne
Dorset
BH21 1EB
01202 883034
Debbie.Harvey@childrenssociety.org.uk

The Children’s Society
Edward Rudolf House
Margery Street
London
WC1X 0JL
0845 300 1128
supporteraction@childrenssociety.org.uk
The Children’s Society would like to thank all the New Travellers in the South West and Wales who contributed interviews, photographs, artwork, ideas and advice to the project. Most of all, our thanks go out to the twenty or so young New Travellers who shared their thoughts and feelings and made the project such an uplifting and enjoyable experience.

The exhibitions would have looked much less interesting without the professional photography of Taff The Photo (www.taffthephotoc.co.uk) and Ingrid Crawford (www.restoretheearth.co.uk) and the unique artwork of David Stooke (www.davidstooke.co.uk). You can see more of their work on their websites.

We have also received advice, assistance and encouragement from many organisations over the last year. In particular we would like to thank Friends, Families and Travellers (www.gypsy-traveller.org), the Travellers Aid Trust (www.travellersaidtrust.org), Sally Rawles of Dorset Traveller Education Support Service and Alan Dearling of Enabler Publications (www.enablerpublications.co.uk).