

Travellers in prison news

Newsletter of the Irish
Chaplaincy in Britain's
Traveller Project

Issue 5
December 2012



Series of Traveller Reading Books Coming Soon



*An illustration by Dublin artist Niamh
Merc from the book 'A Traveller's
Home'*

Beannachtaí na Nollag agus Athbhliain faoi Mhaise Daoibh!

Bachtalo krecunu Thaj Bachtalo Nevo Bers!

Christmas Blessings and a Peaceful New Year to You!

Welcome to the fifth edition of Travellers in Prison News! It's been a busy few months for the Traveller Project. We've been developing a range of reading books for Travellers and have created a new poster of Irish Traveller Musicians. We've also been working with Thames Valley Probation, doing more research into the needs of Traveller offenders.

We hope that you all enjoy the newsletter and would really like to include more contributions for the next issue. For this reason we are launching a **competition with a prize of £10 and an inspirational book** for the best letter/ article/ picture we receive before 1st March 2013.

Merry Christmas to you all!

As the number of Travellers in prison doing reading courses such as Toe by Toe increases, so too does the demand for interesting reading books. So The Irish Chaplaincy has put together a short series of reading books for Travelling people who are just starting to read books.

The first book 'A Traveller's Home' is the story of a young Irish Traveller man called John, living in Dublin who dreams of being a cowboy like John Wayne. He journeys out of the city and crosses Ireland until he comes to the mountain known as 'The Reek.' Having learned much on the journey, John returns to his friends

The work of the Irish Chaplaincy in Britain is funded in part by grants from the Government of Ireland, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, and by the support of many generous Friends.

and family in Dublin knowing that ‘A Traveller is always home.’

Conn Mac Gabhann who wrote the book said ‘It’s important to remember that Traveller men and women want to read interesting stories. No adult really wants to read a children’s book when they are starting to read books for the first time. These books are interesting and they are relevant to Travellers’ lives.’ Conn went on to say ‘We are delighted that The Shannon Trust, who facilitate Toe by Toe across prisons is supportive of the series as a next step for adult learners.’



‘A Traveller’s Home’ will be available from the Irish Chaplaincy in the New Year.

Traveller Numbers

For just over a year, the prison service has recognised Gypsy and Traveller prisoners as an ethnic minority group with the category ‘W3’. Any Gypsy or Traveller prisoner can register themselves as ‘W3’ on the P-Nomis system. The more prisoners that register, the more the prison system will have to listen to the needs of Gypsy and Traveller prisoners.

The Irish Chaplaincy’s Traveller Project recently contacted the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to find out how many prisoners were recorded as ‘W3 - Gypsy or Traveller’. We found that currently only 219 Gypsy or Traveller prisoners are recorded, in 65 prisons.

In the remaining 72 prisons no Gypsies or Travellers were recorded at all.

These figures are much lower than those reported by HM Prison Inspectorate, who report that –for example- 5% of prisoners in male local Cat B prisons are Gypsy or Traveller. This would mean that the total number of Gypsies and Travellers in prison in England and Wales in fact stands at several thousand; a sizeable population who’s needs must be recognised.

The fact that the prison service recognises Gypsies and Travellers as an ethnic group is a step in the right direction. But more needs to be done. We have found that many Traveller prisoners still do not know that a ‘W3’ code exists and have never been offered the opportunity to change their ethnic categorisation. More worryingly we have found that some staff are also unaware of the code and have given Traveller prisoners the wrong information when approached.

Prisoners should be offered the opportunity to register as ‘W3 - Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ on reception. Diversity staff should also inform serving Traveller prisoners that they have the option of being recorded as ‘W3’ on P-Nomis.

It’s also up to Traveller prisoners to spread the word and tell others to get themselves registered as ‘W3’.

Being counted means that you count. If Gypsy and Traveller prisoners are being recorded then more attention will have to be given to their needs.

Dr. Patrick McDonagh: Irish Traveller and Medical Doctor

This recent graduation picture of Dr. Patrick McDonagh from The Ulster Herald Newspaper (County Tyrone) is another reminder if one were needed of what Irish Travellers can achieve through education.



‘Dr Patrick McDonagh, son of Thomas and Ellen McDonagh, Comber Road, Omagh, who recently graduated from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland with LRCP & SI, MB BCh NUI (Hons) in June of this year. Patrick, who is a member of the Irish Traveller community, received his earlier education at St Mary’s Primary School, Killyclogher, and Omagh CBS. He is currently working as an intern in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin.’

The Traveller Advice Team

The Traveller Advice Team have a new national helpline for Gypsies and Travellers, which can be reached on 01216858677 on Mondays to Fridays 9.00am - 5.00pm. For emergencies

concerning Gypsies and Travellers, they also have an out-of-hours emergency number which is 07768 316755.

The Travellers Advice Team (TAT) is made up of a dedicated group of solicitors and legal workers who provide specialist legal advice and representation to the Traveller community throughout England and Wales. Their work focuses mainly on evictions and planning. TAT provides emergency 24hr national advice and representation and works closely with other non-government agencies working with Travellers.

Lawyers from TAT have defended Gypsies and Travellers in some of the most high profile planning disputes of recent times – including Dale Farm – and have taken cases all the way to the House of Lords.

The TAT team is part of the Community Law Partnership (CLP); a progressive firm specializing in housing law. CLP aims to provide quality legal services to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of society who, without their assistance, would be denied access to the legal system and to their rights.

They can be found online at: www.communitylawpartnership.co.uk

Traveller Greats Series

In future issues of Travellers in Prison News (TIPN), we want to highlight a Traveller or Gypsy who has done something remarkable. You can write a short paragraph telling us about that person. The person doesn't have to be famous they just have to have made a difference; that difference can be in sport, in music, in public life or even in your life. So let us know who your Traveller Greats are!



John Doherty (1900 -1980) King of The Donegal Fiddlers

John Doherty was born in County Donegal and came from a famous family of Irish Travellers who worked as tinsmiths and horse traders.

From the late 1940s to the 1970s he was sought out by national and international music collectors. He was first recorded in 1945 by The Irish Folklore Commission and then by the BBC in 1953. His music has appeared on over 12 albums. He played with boundless ornamentation, including bowed and slurred triplets, rolls, cuts and double-stopping. Heavily influenced by the uileann piping tradition, he often replicated the sound of the pipes' drones, by either retuning the fiddle to an open tuning, or by maintaining the fourth finger on the

string below the pitch of the melody. According to many, John Doherty was a significant influence on the fiddle playing of The Chieftains and Altan.

John Doherty was the last of the Great Travelling Fiddlers.

Taking a Stand

There has been a marked improvement in provision for Gypsy and Traveller prisoners in recent years; more groups, more Traveller reps and more Gypsy Traveller History Month events.

However, there is still much more work to be done and we were distressed to hear this month of the racist abuse endured by one Traveller prisoner, Miles Cash. On one occasion in HMP Onley Miles was openly called a "Pikey" by an officer. On a second occasion in HMP Dovegate he was told he couldn't share a cell with his brother as the officer in question "knew how you Gypsies operate".

The positive aspect of this is that on both occasions Miles was brave enough to make official complaints, and both these complaints were upheld. The officers involved were challenged and sent for extra training. The Director of HMP Dovegate, Ray Duckworth, has said that "any future complaints of a similar nature should be rigorously pursued".

The Travellers Project at the ICB have seen the official paperwork relating to Miles' case, and have brought it to the attention of the Ministry of Justice; expressing our view that more needs to be done in terms of equality training, to bring home to staff the fact that racism against Travellers is just as

unacceptable as any other form of racism.

“This is a common problem encountered by Travellers in prisons up and down the country”, Miles wrote to us; “all we want is to be treated like everybody else and allowed to do our time in peace and get home to see our families”.

Miles’ case goes to show that it is worth standing up for your rights and not tolerating racism or discrimination in prison. Don’t suffer in silence; make a complaint.

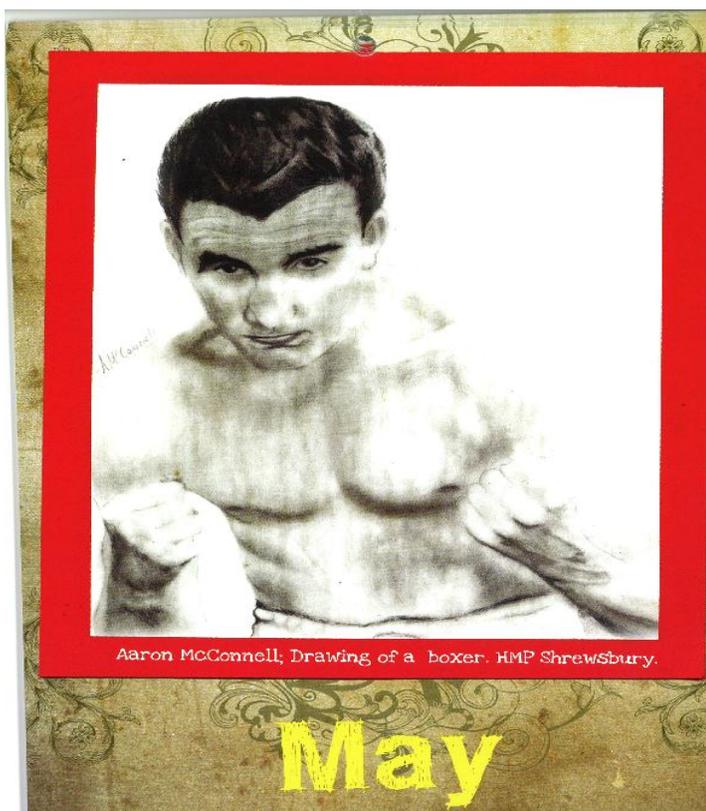
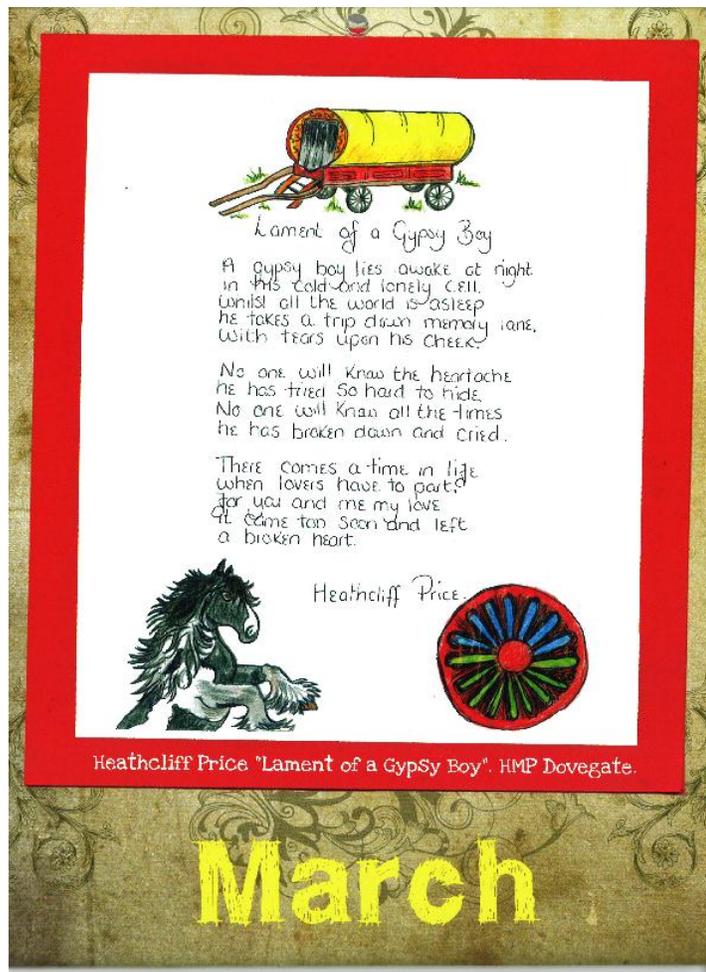
Travellers in Prison Calendar Launched

In the Summer of 2012, Pertemps People Development Group in conjunction with the National Offender Management Service, held an art competition for inmates in West Midlands prisons from the Gypsy, Traveller and Show People community.

A series of workshops were held where inmates created a story, poem, picture or model that they wanted to show the world.

The winning entries are featured in a specially created 2013 calendar which has just been launched. More information can be obtained from: Tina Pritchard, PPDG, Unit 40 Newtown Shopping Centre, Newtown, Birmingham, B19 2SS.

Two of the winning entries from the PPDG calendar, entitled ‘Our Story’:



Traveller and Romany Music Shortlisted for Mercury Music Prize

Coming in the months following the launch of our Irish Traveller Musicians postcard series, celebrating the genius of Traveller musicians, the prestigious Mercury Music Prize 2012 has shortlisted Sam Lee's album of Traveller music 'Ground of Its Own.'

Songs, melodies, rhythms and styles of playing which have been preserved for generations by Irish Travellers, as well as Gypsies have made an impact on the world of folk music. Recently, they have also captured the interest of Sam Lee, a singer from North London who has become deeply involved with the traditions and songs of the Irish Traveller, Gypsy and Romany culture and whose works has won national fame.

Sam Lee brings contemporary folk music back to where much of it came: Romanies, Gypsies and Scottish and Irish Travellers, who have passed these songs from generation to generation, over centuries. He scours Britain for those whom many avoid or despise - Travellers in camps or housed - to learn their lore and songs. And this first collection makes up his debut album: *Ground of Its Own*, nominated for the Mercury award last month.

Freda Black one of the Traveller women from whom Lee got his songs explained their diverse origins. "We're Romany," explains Freda. "The Irish Travellers married into our families, but they're a different race," adds Freda's daughter. Most of Freda's songs come, she says, from

her father-in-law: "Best singer I ever heard in my life - said he was born coming over on a ship from Ireland. My husband would make a fire, we'd gather round and his father would sing."

It is this mixture in Travellers' songs between traditional Irish, Scottish and English folk that is making Sam Lee's music so popular. While Sam Lee's album has brought much interest to this genre, it is the resilience, the wisdom, the beauty and the soulfulness of this music, which makes it entirely unique to the Traveller, Romany and Gypsy people.

Finding Inspiration - The Wretched of the Earth by Frantz Fanon



Frantz Fanon (1925 -1961) was a Martinique-born psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary and writer whose work is influential in the fields of post-colonial studies, group consciousness and liberationism. Ultimately, Frantz Fanon's work explores the psychological effect of marginalisation on oppressed communities and how these communities can overcome

oppression, by empowering themselves.

Fanon's masterwork *The Wretched of the Earth* is a classic, a brilliant analysis of the psychology of marginalised people and their path to liberation. The book offers a powerful and singular insight into the rage and frustration of oppressed peoples, and the role of self-discipline and self-empowerment in effecting historical change.

The book incisively attacks the twin perils of the disenfranchisement of the masses by the elites on the one hand, and inter-tribal and inter-faith animosities on the other. Fanon's analysis is a veritable handbook of social reorganization for community and national leaders of marginalised groups. *The Wretched of the Earth* has had a major impact on civil rights, anti-colonialism, and group consciousness movements around the world.

Winter Blues

Christmas can be a hard time to be in prison, away from family. If you're feeling low it is important not to suffer in silence; talk to someone.

Thomas McCann is a Traveller and a Psychotherapist and runs the Traveller Counselling Service in Ireland.

"It's a wise saying that a problem shared is a problem halved." Thomas says. "Often, when someone finds a safe opportunity to talk about how low they feel, or about their thoughts of suicide, they find this a great relief, and it sometimes allows them space and time to work out what to do next or how to improve their situation.

If you feel you need to talk to someone while you're in prison you can ask to speak to a Listener or call the Samaritans. Listeners won't judge you or pressure you; they don't even need to understand exactly what you're going through because they just do what it says on the tin: listen. Just talking to someone and being heard can be a huge relief in difficult times. Samaritans can be called free from prison on 08457 90 90 90

Channel Four to be investigated for 'Big Fat Gypsy Weddings'

The television watchdog 'Ofcom' has launched an investigation into the 'Big Fat Gypsy Weddings' programmes and spinoff show 'Thelma's Gypsy Girls' over claims that they racially stereotype Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Ofcom will formally investigate the complaint lodged by Howe & Co solicitors, which said that people from the Traveller and Gypsy communities were "unfairly portrayed in an untrue and damaging racially stereotypical manner".

Howe & Co gave examples of "unfair negative images" such as showing all children as "wildly behaved, uncontrollable, foul-mouthed, illiterate, uneducated, violent and dangerous".

Last month the Channel 4 chief executive, David Abraham, was forced to offer a public apology for its "Bigger. Fatter. Gypsier" advert campaign, after it was condemned as offensive and irresponsible by MPs in parliament.

The Advertising Standards Authority also criticised the "Bigger. Fatter. Gypsier" adverts saying they were irresponsible, offensive and reaffirmed negative stereotypes and prejudice against the Traveller and Gypsy communities.

David Enright, a partner with solicitors Howe & Co said that "the ASA's powerful findings represent a fundamental turning point in how Travellers and Gypsies can be portrayed in the media in the future."

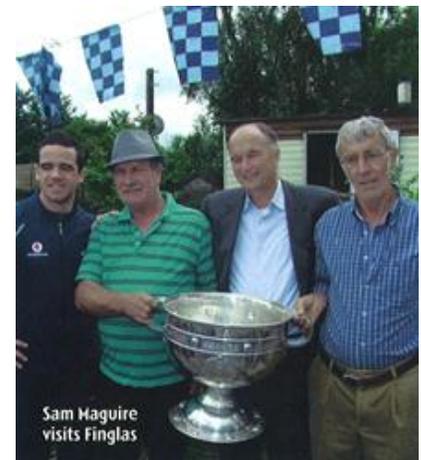


Howe and Co say that the matters that Ofcom are now investigating, regarding the TV shows themselves "are of the most serious nature." "If Ofcom concurs with its fellow regulator, the ASA", the firm says, "the consequences could not be more serious."

Sam Maguire Comes Visiting

The greatest sports prize in Ireland is undoubtedly, Gaelic Football's All Ireland Championship trophy, the Sam Maguire Cup. In Autumn 2011, the winners of the All Ireland Championship were Dublin. So this summer the Traveller Community of Finglas were delighted to welcome 'Sam'; Dublin footballer, Ger Brennan; and Dublin team selector David Hickey.

It was a superb occasion seeing Jim O'Brien hoist the Sam Maguire Cup over his head and there could be no doubt for the crowds attending that this was a celebration of being a Traveller and being Irish. The women would not be outdone though. Amidst the banter at the event the county rivalries (as always) emerged but this was Dublin's year.



Later in the Summer, The Parish of The Travelling People invited Ger Brennan and 'Sam' to visit more Traveller sites. Ger Brennan made a mini-tour of the Traveller sites in Finglas bringing along 'Sam.'

No one was disappointed with unusually sunny skies and Dublin bunting and banners on the sites. Ger was delighted at the reception. There were a great many people out to welcome Ger and Sam making for a wonderful occasion.

Speaking over a hot cup of tea on a Traveller site in Dunsink, Ger said, 'It's my first time on a Traveller site and I've really enjoyed it.' Travellers gathered, young and old, decked out in their Dublin kits as many are keen supporters of the Dublin team. And even though there were a few (quiet) supporters of other counties they also appreciated the visit from Sam

Maguire!

Adapted from an article in The Traveller: Parish Newsletter, by Geraldine McDonnell.

Sports News



Manchester Traveller Tyson Fury cruised to victory against American Kevin Johnson on Saturday 1st December, winning virtually every round. The win is Fury's third of 2012, meaning he is only one fight away from becoming mandatory challenger for the WBC heavyweight title, currently held by Vitali Klitschko.

However the fans in Belfast's Odyssey Arena did not seem to enjoy Fury's patient, careful approach against Johnson, with some who had hoped for a more exciting fight booing him as the final bell went. Fury claimed that he had had no intention of knocking Johnson down and had stuck to his uncle and trainer Peter Fury's instructions to keep out of danger and just let the points clock up.

"I didn't let my heart get to me", Fury explained, "I knew that would be a war and I outboxed him."

Writing in the Daily Mirror, David Anderson commented that Fury showed "just the sort of discipline he needs to show if he is going to become world champion... He can't go in there swinging like he has done in his career, hoping he will land one of his haymakers before his opponent does. He needs to be controlled, fight behind his jab, and take no risks."

There was less good news for John Joe Nevin at the end of November. Nevin, boxing for the British Lionhearts, lost to Branimir Stankovic in the World Series of Boxing face-off in Wales.

Nevin, a silver medal winner at the 2012 Olympics, was ahead on points against Stankovic going in to the fifth and final round of their lightweight clash. But the Serb, who was beaten by Nevin on a split decision in the WSB earlier this year, turned it around in the final frame to claim a split decision (48-47, 48-47, 47-48) over the Mullingar man.

Following the Olympics Nevin had announced his intention to turn pro and was lined up to sign up with Amir Khan's newly formed Super Fight Promotions.

In the end though, the 23 year old changed his mind and extended his amateur career by joining the Lionhearts squad.



STAY IN TOUCH!

We hope you enjoyed our newsletter and will sign up via email for future editions.

If you:

- Have a question about Travellers in prison.
- Are thinking of starting a Travellers group and would like advice.
- Would like help arranging speakers from the Travelling community.
- Are looking for resources for Traveller Prisoners.

Then please get in touch!

**Travellers Project,
Irish Chaplaincy in Britain,
50- 52 Camden Square,
London,
NW19XB**

travellers@irishchaplaincy.org.uk

Tel: 020 7482 5528

Fax: 020 7482 4815

Our Staff:

**Conn MacGabhann
(Manager)**

**Joe Cottrell-Boyce
(Policy Officer)**

**Are you an
Irish Traveller OR a Gypsy?**



It will help YOU if you register as:

‘W3 Irish Traveller OR Gypsy’

The Traveller Representative is:.....

The Diversity Officer is: