

# Travellers in prison news

Newsletter of the  
Traveller Equality Project

Issue 13  
December 2014



Happy Christmas! / Baxtalo Krecuno Thaj Baxtalo Nevo Berš!  
Beannachtaí na Nollag!

Merry Christmas to all our readers! We have had an extremely busy year here at the Traveller Equality Project. We welcomed our new Project Officer, Ellena Costello in October. We didn't give her much time to settle in as she spoke at the International Criminal Justice Seminar which aims to ensure that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller voices are heard when governments in Europe are developing policies on the treatment of Travellers in the justice system.

Our Star Letter in this edition comes from John in Wandsworth who writes some inspirational words for all Travellers around the country. And once again we have some excellent stories and poems from our readers.

*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 the support of many generous friends.*

We also have some news on government plans to redefine who is a Gypsy or Traveller, which has been met with much opposition from Travellers and Traveller organisations. More positively, the Government in Ireland have finally indicated that they will recognise Travellers as an ethnic group.

We at The Traveller Equality Project would like to wish you, your family and friends a happy and healthy new year.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. TIPN is your newsletter, so please send us your poems, letters, stories and pictures for the next issue. Contributions can be sent to:

**Traveller Equality Project,  
Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, 50-  
52 Camden Square, London,  
NW1 9XB**

Prison and Probation staff can also download resources from our website here:

[bit.ly/XCUhAc](http://bit.ly/XCUhAc)

Or email us:

[travellers@irishchaplaincy.org.uk](mailto:travellers@irishchaplaincy.org.uk)



Ellena, from the Traveller Equality Project speaking at the recent conference on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the criminal justice system. (Dec, 2014)



### Letter of the Month

#### Never Give Up

All ye Travellers and Gypsies in jail, I'm an Irish Traveller at HMP Wandsworth. I came to prison with my two brothers in law. The first day we had exercise out in the yard, me and a few Travellers were chatting about what we were gonna try to do while we're here. Some said they wanted a gardening course, two of the lads said they were gonna do nothing to which we all laughed.

I knew what I wanted to do and that was to become a Travellers Rep, to help those who can't read or write, get them work, help them with any problems they may have. It all sounds so easy but when you're a Traveller it's so hard to get what you want in here. I must have put in 15-20 apps for myself and others to change to W3 [the Irish Traveller /Gypsy ethnic Code] and you would laugh how long it has taken for it to change. But four months later, I've never given up.

Four months later they gave me the job of equality rep saying that Traveller reps doesn't exist here. Of course they don't exist.

'Are you white Irish or white British?' Where's the box you can tick for W3? So are we ashamed to be Travellers or Gypsies? Next time they ask, say I'm W3 and proud!

Here at Wandsworth I'm the Rep and as you can tell it wasn't easy for me to get it. I'm hoping to be the first person to get a Traveller and Gypsy group going out here. Hopefully they will see we are not just a number in here and might give us a chance to progress while here. **So boys don't**

**If you don't have a rep why not you or one of the other lads put in to be a Traveller and Gypsy rep. Make sure you don't give up in trying, it took me four months and hopefully it won't take you as long as me. It is possible for me to get a red band which means I can walk around the prison to see what Travellers and Gypsies need help.**

Boys, I was one of those who thought I could beat the system. I done twenty months at Isis there wasn't a day goes by where me and my friend didn't get into some trouble.

If the alarm went off, it was probably me. Out of the twenty months in there I done over seven months in the block.

I got out of there in April 2012. I didn't write this letter to make me look like I'm Mr. Hard. Just to help you so you don't go through what I went through, the hard way, it ain't worth it in the long run. You miss out on a lot outside.

But at the time I was a single man. Now it's different, I have a beautiful wife to go home to. So if the system or officers goes wrong I just bite my tongue because I want out of here.

Peace out lads, your time will come. Thank ye all for reading this and a big thank you to Breda Power, C. A. and my wife for helping me achieve what I have done.

John, Wandsworth

  
**ShannonTrust**

**TRAVELLERS**

**Become a Reading Plan learner  
or mentor today!**

**Ask prison staff for details.**



### Government Plan to Re-define Who Is a Gypsy or Traveller

Gypsy and Traveller groups are forcefully responding to the Government's proposal to redefine who can be considered a Gypsy or Traveller for the purposes of meeting obligations under planning law.

A new Government consultation paper on Planning and Travellers from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) proposes to redefine what a Traveller or Gypsy is. According to the proposals, Gypsies and Travellers stop being Gypsies or Travellers, and therefore cease to have specific rights if they cannot prove they follow a nomadic (travelling) lifestyle.

If Travellers keep moving, they qualify to rest on a permanent site. If, on the other hand, they have settled (and the reasons for this could range from child care, ill health or to care for an elderly relative), then they are no longer 'Travellers' and the Government and councils have no duties to them.

The London Gypsy and Traveller Unit launched the 'We STILL Count' Campaign, calling on Gypsies and Travellers to make themselves aware of the redefinition. The Government's consultation on planning policy proposals ended on 23rd November 2014.

### Appleby Day At HMP The Mount

Appleby Day was a day of celebration during Gypsy and Traveller month here at The Mount held on 26th June 2014. Held in the chapel there was a good turn out to celebrate our culture and way of life.

I and all those present were pleasantly surprised at all the time and effort put into making this day possible for us all to enjoy by Mr Hardaker and C.M. Elgar and our thanks go to them both.

Becky Taylor, a lecturer at Birkbeck University in London who has researched our past and present and is author of many books which give an accurate account of our people.

Becky explained about the adversity and hardships faced by Gypsy and Irish Travellers throughout their lives, from the very beginning of our ancient ancestors to the present day. She showed a great deal of empathy towards our people. Our constant struggle in the world was highlighted.

Irish, English, Scottish and Welsh Travellers are different races of people yet, we walk the same paths as Gypsy people. We bare the same scars and live a similar way of life as free spirited, free-born people, proud of who we are. Our nomadic way of life, moving freely from place to place to find work is outside the conventions of other people. After the talk, lunch was served.

A fine meal, cooked to perfection by the chef and staff of the prison kitchen. The traditional feast of spuds, cabbage and boiled bacon was very much appreciated and gratefully received by all.



Traveller History Month Celebrations took place in prisons across the UK

There were plenty of magazines and pictures to browse showing the history and culture of Gypsies and Travellers and my fellow inmate made a table box depicting a story in decorated words and pictures. The day was better than we could have imagined and id like on behalf of everyone, to thank all the good people who made this special occasion here at the Mount.

It's a nice feeling knowing that there are those who want to help prisoners, regardless of culture or race. It's good to know that we have a voice to speak and ears to hear us and that there are those who are passionate about their work. Ms Elgar and Mr Hardaker have the thanks and gratitude of Gypsies and Travellers for making the day possible and for making it such a resounding success.

John, The Mount

**Remember to register today in  
your prison as:**

**'W3 – Gypsy / Irish  
Traveller'**

**If you are not counted,  
You won't count!**

### Still Free

I am a Gypsy Traveller  
Used to the freedom of the roads  
So living in this prison  
Carries a heavy load

My cell is like a caravan  
With a round top  
But of course I have no horse  
I miss that old 'clip clop'

I say it's like a caravan  
Well that's the way it feels  
The only trouble is, you see  
It hasn't any wheels

But when I close my eyes and dream  
I'm up there on the road  
The horses there in front of me  
And off and off we go

The travel through the country  
Down where the river flows  
I hear the birds a singing  
I watch the flowers grow

So you can lock my body up  
To that I am resigned  
But you can't take the freedom  
That I have within my mind

**John Paul, Pentonville**



### People Like Us

Where angels fear to tread, I walk alone  
Seeking redemption for my soul  
All my life is filled with misfits  
And promises of 'it will be alright'

Then I see the light  
It seems brighter than the sun above  
Words of wisdom like rays of the rainbow,  
Are written down like a Buddhist monk,  
The four noble truths.

Put the outside world in a cradle  
And rock it to the sound of the universe  
Time is sure to pass away  
Forming tomorrow to become yesterday  
And reason becomes our facts of life

It's about simplicity and the quickest way  
But we have only a short time on it  
As I walk and sit down in the shadows of death  
I find the ultimate truths that each of us  
Are born innocent in life

Become our burden as we alone must live it  
The way it is always going to be  
No matter what way we think, we choose in it  
It will be as it will be  
If we call it fate it's just a world  
that we are born on to be  
Like God we are already from one to all  
People like us.

Patrick, Wakefield

### Not a Day Goes By

There's not a day that goes by  
When your thoughts do not warm my heart  
When your light long hair and your golden looks  
Cannot make me smile.

Your blue golden eyes put the shine in mine  
The thoughts of your laughing  
Make me all warm.

That dark horrible day haunts me as I sleep  
But I know once I wake  
I'll see your warm smile  
And that makes my day so worthwhile.

**Josephine, Holloway**

### *Traveller Movement Annual Conference*



*Padraig Mac Lochlainn speaking at the Traveller Movement Conference in London in November*

Padraig Mac Lochlainn, Member of the Irish Parliament and Sinn Fein Spokesperson on Justice, Equality and Defence, was one of the impressive line-up of speakers at speaking at the Traveller Movement Annual Conference held recently in London.

Mac Lochlainn who grew up in a Traveller family and was raised by his mother and grandmother who he describes as "two strong, loving Traveller women".

MacLochlainn said that all parties in Ireland were starting to acknowledge the distinct culture of Travellers and we all need to "support our people to stand tall as a strong part of society".

### **An Irish Christmas Blessing**

The light of the Christmas star to you  
The warmth of home and hearth to you  
The cheer and good will of friends to you  
The hope of a childlike heart to you  
The joy of a thousand angels to you  
The love of the Son and God's peace to you

## Traveller Ethnicity to be Recognised in Ireland

Traveller ethnicity is finally to be recognised in Ireland according to Aodhán Ó Riordáin the Minister of State for Equality in the Republic of Ireland.

The recommendation for change came after a long campaign by Travellers for such recognition which was supported by human rights organisations, including the United Nations and the Irish Human Rights Commission.

“Irish Travellers have ethnic status in Northern Ireland, they have ethnic status in Britain and I think it’s a requirement. The world community is looking at us now and at what we are doing in our own country. I think it is possibly one of the greatest things we can do to finally celebrate and acknowledge the rich and vibrant culture that the Traveller community have in Ireland and to begin to build bridges between Traveller people and settled people. It will also be a challenge to the Traveller community to bring the positive nature of their community to the fore. I think we can do that together,” said Mr Ó Riordáin.

## Profile: Thomas McCann

Thomas McCann grew up in the first Traveller site at Labre Park, Ballyfermot, Dublin in the 1960s. He attended, like everyone else he knew, an all-Traveller school, which was ‘not bad, but I didn’t learn much’.

Like everyone else, he left at 13 to join his father in trading for scrap and horses. There he might have continued, but what changed things was the Tallaght by-pass. Vigilantes decided to keep Travellers out of the area: ‘big men, heavies, set up road blocks. Trailers were burned. The police did nothing’. Thirteen of us were refused in a pub, so we sat down and we were all arrested. We spent the weekend in Bridewell police station. A funny feature of these events was that whenever Travellers were discriminated against and complained, we were always the people who were arrested. When we once organised a protest, the police turned out in full riot gear’.

Thomas became involved in Traveller education and community projects. As a result of this he enlisted on a community work course at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Following this he became a youth and community worker for Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group.

With an amazing sense of timing, Thomas then took time out to travel to Eastern Europe in 1989, the year of revolutions, on to China by train on a \$29 fare and then to Hong Kong where he worked in a travel agency and in the film industry.

Returning to Ireland, Thomas started a Business, Economic and Social Studies course in Dublin University (Trinity College), a course he loved, with ‘great lectures’ and learning statistics. He moved on to work for the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) for a long spell. During his time there (1993-2005) it grew from just a few groups to more



**Thomas McCann, Traveller activist and founder member of the Irish Traveller Movement. Thomas established and currently manages the Traveller Counselling Service which was launched in 2008.**

than 80 and became the national representative organisation for Travellers.

He then began to pursue an interest in counselling, starting with a foundational course at the Tivoli Institute and finished a Master’s degree in clinical supervision at Dublin University (Trinity College). This led to the founding of the **Traveller Counselling Service**.

Thomas has long had an interest in culturally inclusive counselling and was convinced of the need for a service for Travellers, one which Travellers could trust. The service is now well established and expanding. The Traveller Counselling Service has a team of six psychotherapists managed by Thomas.

Looking at the past years, Thomas points to the achievements of Traveller community development as a means of organising and mobilizing people to create change, but is disappointed with ‘policies and structures not implemented and the law going backward. The state may concede the policies and structures, but lacks the resolve to implement them.’

*Significantly, Thomas says a ‘fully engaged Traveller Community can make that happen.’*

The Miracle of Man

The miracle of man, the nature of his birth  
 Mother nature and the planet earth  
 Riddles of mankind, thoughts and disbeliefs  
 Love and compassion, bewilderment and grief.

It's only a book that is written day by day  
 and we fill in the pages as we pass along the way  
 A short book for some and a long one for others  
 Then we part from this world to join our brothers.

Love is the most important of things  
 as it can make you happy and leave you in a dream  
 Yet the pages keep on turning in the book of life  
 The next page, marriage commitment, man and wife  
 One body, one soul the tie of human life.

Until the page stops at your number  
 You will think of your life and start to wonder  
 Where did it go, it seemed so fast  
 Then it passes your page and you breathe your last

But not to worry life still goes on  
 As you part from this world to a better one  
 Some with happiness and some with rage  
 Because at the end of your life  
 God judges you by your page.

John, The Mount

**Soon**

As the deer pants for water,  
 So my soul longs after you.  
 You alone are the real joy  
 Giver and apple of my eye.  
 You alone are my heart's desire  
 And I long to worship you.  
 You alone are my strength,  
 My shield, to you alone  
 May my spirit yield all  
 My love.

I want you more than gold and silver,  
 Only you can satisfy my heart's desire.  
 You're my friend, my lover  
 And my wife.  
 I love you more than any other,  
 With every beat of my heart,  
 It say's your name.  
 Each night I dream of you,  
 Each tear is a tear of loneliness  
 I feel without you,  
 I wait in darkness, I wait with  
 loneliness,  
 For the day my tears turn to joy.  
 By your side.

Oliver, Wakefield

**Resources Available  
 from the Traveller  
 Equality Project**

Reading Books:



**A Traveller's Home**  
 Story by Conn Mall Gibbons  
 Illustrated by Frank Mark



**The Fight**  
 Story by Conn Mall Gibbons  
 Illustrated by Frank Mark

Posters and Postcards:

Are you an  
 Irish Traveller OR a Gypsy?

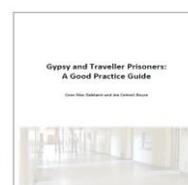


It will help YOU if you register as:  
 'W3 Irish Traveller OR Gypsy'

The Traveller Representative is: .....  
 The Diversity Officer is: .....



**Information:**



**Traveller Probation Report Published**

The Traveller Equality Project has published a new report to improve practice for Gypsies and Irish Travellers engaged with Probation. The aim of the report is to provide probation staff with greater understanding of Travellers in order that both Travellers engaged with probation and probation staff can benefit.

The report's author Joe Cottrell-Boyce said that 'a key to many of the problems that arise are about understanding – Probation staff understanding Travellers and also Traveller understanding what Probation staff have to do.' The report was undertaken in partnership with Thames Valley Probation. Copies of the report, 'Working with Gypsy and Traveller Offenders' is available online and on request from the Traveller Equality Project.

Working with Gypsy and Traveller Offenders:  
 A Thames Valley Probation Case Study

Joe Cottrell-Boyce  
 Traveller Equality Project





## Fury and Saunders on Top of The World

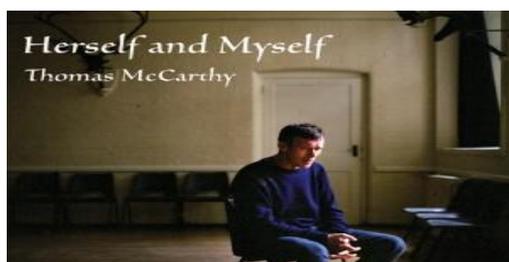
Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> November was a good night for the Travelling Community and not a bad night for boxing, as a loud gathering of nearly 20,000 fans willing to miss their last train home stayed in the hall into the small hours as their champions Billy Joe Saunders and Tyson Fury held off challengers to their unbeaten records and world title ambitions.

## Thomas McCarthy Launches Second Album



London-based Irish Traveller, Thomas McCarthy has launched his second album, 'Herself and Myself'. The reviews of the album have been fantastic. One review stated: 'The majesty and control of his singing here is something to ponder on. It is full of the high decoration that we associate with the best of the Irish tradition and then on held notes he employs an easy vibrato. Technically, it is singing of the very highest quality.'

'The album title comes from the opening track, but Thomas is also referring to his mother and singing teacher who was also his source for a number of items here. The album ends with one delightful example of Mary McCarthy's singing. From this it is possible to hear the stylistic source of Thomas's singing.'



## Tyson Fury defeats Dereck Chisora

Fury, switching from orthodox to southpaw, virtually strolled through 10 one-sided rounds before Dereck Chisora decided he had taken enough punishment - an ending that was greeted with unhappiness as fans left the arena. Fury won way more easily than when they met three years ago, and securing the vacant European title puts him just a few months of hard negotiating away from challenging the best heavyweight in the world, Wladimir Klitschko.

## What Can You Do To Support Your Gypsy and Traveller Community?

**\* REGISTER AS 'W3 – Gypsy / Irish Traveller' \***

- Become a Shannon Trust Reading Plan Mentor or Learner
- Become a Traveller Rep
- Organise a Traveller Group
- Become a Listener

**EDUCATE / ORGANISE / EMPOWER**

## Billy Joe Defeats Eubank

Billy Joe Saunders survived the late charge of Chris Eubank Jr to keep his British, European and Commonwealth titles. Billy Joe now looks forward to fighting fellow Traveller, Andy Lee, who defeated Matt Koborov in Las Vegas on 13<sup>th</sup> December, for a WBO version of the world title. The fight built slowly and ended in fierce exchanges, with the result in the balance until the final seconds, as Saunders, exhausted, dug deep to hold the challenger at bay.



Eubank might well be a world champion one day but he was not quite good enough last night. He will come again, much better for this experience. Had he boxed in the first half of the contest like he did in the second half, he might be admiring the British, European and Commonwealth middleweight titles – but he learned that posing like his father once did can be a costly business. From the moment he vaulted the ropes - like his father, Junior wanted to play mind games. Saunders kept his cool, though, as his opponent went into full Eubank pose.

Saunders did not land a single blow capable of stopping his opponent but he took quite a few himself that threatened his titles in the final few rounds. Eubank's strategy appeared to be watch, wait, watch some more then lunge and dip low to avoid the counter. It was not pretty and it was bringing him joy. By the end of the fourth, he'd given up staring down Saunders on the bell.

The fight was very tight, with neither fighter seizing the lead which did not make for much of a spectacle early on. They continued their grab-and-smash into the eighth, with more missing than landing from either side - although Eubank, swinging more freely, caught Saunders on the ropes with some heavy shots to the ribs. There was nothing in it going into the final two rounds, but Saunders needed to stop the barrage coming his way.

With his mouth open and his nose bleeding, Saunders shipped huge left hooks and uppercuts in the final round, as well as one crunching right cross, but he was still there.

**Proud and unbeaten, Saunders raised his hands at the end, but looked mighty tired.**

## STAY IN TOUCH!

We hope you enjoyed this newsletter and will sign up for future editions.

Do you have a question about Travellers in prison?

Are you thinking of starting a Travellers Group and would like advice?

Are you looking for resources for Traveller prisoners?

Then please get in touch!

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Billy Joe Saunders, the British, European and Commonwealth titleholder will now fight Irish Traveller Andy Lee for the WBO World Title.