

Romany Theatre Company

Atching Tan Project

Reminiscence In'terview – Transcription of Edited In'terview

Date of In'terview		In'terviewer	In'terviewee	Age Range of In'terviewee	Duration of Edited Recording
2009		Dean	David	67	37:44
Key timing	Initial of person speaking	Transcription of In'terview			
00:00	Dean	<i>Right, begin.</i>			
	David	What do you want me to say?			
	Dean	<i>Start with your name.</i>			
	David	My name's David Loveridge, and Dean is my son. And... I'd like to do this interview for him... to let the people know out there whatever this is about I don't know because they don't tell me... to help him along a bit, and to let the people out there know what the Travelling way of life is like.			
	Dean	<i>What age group are you in?</i>			
	David	Well I'm over 55, we'll say that.			
	Dean	<i>And is your family traditional Travellers?</i>			
	David	Old Travellers. Myself, I'm a proper Gypsy – I was born in the er... horse drawn wagon.			
	Dean	<i>Well the fact, I know all these... (muffled)... I'm going to ask you two questions from each of the categories what have come out, and then afterwards I'd like you to tell me a little story – doesn't matter what it is – just something from the past... good, bad. Something about work or how you made things – anything like that. But first we will start with the questions. What would you say are Travelling values – values for Travellers – what are they?</i>			
01:34	David	Travelling values to me is being free to go to different towns and have different stopping places, and we just wish the council would provide places for people to go for a short time instead of making these here sites permanent. If they could have a few... just for people what wanted to stay for a week or two weeks, maybe three weeks in different towns to have a permanent place to go to instead of trespassing on parks, and private roadsides, and school playing fields; what's going on already. If the council provided places for a few weeks, then none of this would happen.			
	Dean	<i>So you would still like to travel around – go from place to place – even though, like, work has finished – you'd still like to do that sort of thing?</i>			
	David	I'd like to travel around a little bit, although I've been settled here for a few years. But, er... I'd still like the opportunity to go to different towns and stay for a short time without being hassled by the police and the council and trespassing on private land. So this is why I'd say I would set out little private places for Travelling people to go for a few weeks at a time.			
	Dean	<i>Good... right.... What in your opinion can Travellers contribute to non-Travellers? Like what Travelling values do you think would be good for a non-travelling people to take up from Travellers?</i>			

06:03	David	Well if the younger generation could take up what the older generation of the Travelling people used to do when we used to stop on the side of the roads and the private fields and things where we used to take the recorded presently if we just used to there was nowhere permanent to go so we just used to just pull in old lanes council land playing fields and still there's no opportunities for us to get rid of the rubbish so we just used to bag it up in the old days and we used to take it down to the tips ourselves but now the council wont allow people to do down the tips and dump the rubbish. you have to go and get tickets to go and dump it and a lot of people just wont bother. the younger generation wont bother to do it and they just leave it on the side of the road when they move and it's a pity and shame that they have to do this.
	Dean	<i>Hmm... In your opinion are all Travellers like that or is it only a minority, a few?</i>
	David	It's the ones what travel about 40 – 50% pretty even that its around 40 – 50% what clears the rubbish up and another 40 – 50% that don't. I'd like to say it was around 90% what don't but Id be lying and I reckon its at least 45 to 50% either way depending on which county your in.
	Dean	<i>You think that's due to laziness or your gonna be blamed anyway?</i>
	David	Well, partly through laziness and partly because your gonna get blamed anyway. Because most people just tar all Gypsy people, Travelling people with the same brush. They see one what leave a bit of rubbish and ten more can go on the same ground and they blame them all the same and they say that all Gypsies are the same. But err.. we're not because if we blame people what lives in houses. We call them gorgias, but its not a bad word but it means that you live in a house and we live in a trailer and we all get blamed for the same thing. We don't blame all the people what lives in houses for being murderers and rapists, I in't gonna say there in't murderers and rapists amongst Travellers but its the small minority if there is, which there are. I wont say if, there is Gypsy people what commit murder and rape but if its very fair to go in between (?).
	Dean	<i>When you was a child and umm back in the very older generation days, did you speak more Romany back then than what you do now?</i>
	David	The older generation, they spoke Romany when the housing people used to come round or the police used to come round. We have us own language so they's cant understand us when we speak. I wouldn't say none of this on tape or disk because it would be giving the Gypsy culture away.
	Dean	<i>So you like to keep that part of the culture as a mysterious secret?</i>
	David	To ourselves yes. Some people they err... they tell the police and the television cameras and people sometimes, but it seems wrong. They tell them some words, but 95% of the time they're just having them on and the words they tell 'em ain't true anyway.
	Dean	<i>Do you think the Travelling language is dying out or will die out in the future if care in't put into it?</i>
	David	No, I don't think it will die out completely. They'll always be the die hards. The younger, a lot of the younger generation is losing it because they're not taught it from their parents and their grand parents. They just want to go their own way and do their own thing. They will lose it, but not completely I don't think.
	Dean	<i>There is always some of the language here and there?</i>
David	Yeah. They'll always be some of the Gypsy language, true Gypsy language. Bin out there	

		<p>a long time and it goes on. But umm... I don't think it will completely die out, like I just said. But err... it wont be so much spoke as what there is perhaps a few years ago and today.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>Could you tell us something about your childhood what it was like out with led was it good or bad?</i></p>
	David	<p>We always thought the Travelling life was good, but when you come to look back on it I went to school. The first school I went to was out at Kettering in a little village called Burton Latimer. We stopped there for a few weeks, so mum put me in school when I was about 6 or 7 years old. Then we got turned off and I done about 4 – 6 weeks in that school and it was a pity we couldn't stop and get a better education, because I can read a little bit now. I can write a little bit now. My true age is 67. I've got a mental reading age and writing age I should say of a child of 7. This was not my fault or my parent's fault. This was the laws fault at the time.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>What was the best lessons you learned as a child being amongst ... in the Travelling groups? And were they different to according to different traveller groups?</i></p>
	David	<p>The best lesson I learned was that a Travelling, or Gypsy child as you say, we learned to look after ourselves when we 9 – 10 years old. We helped out parents in all types of work. My dad used to make pegs flowers. We used to strip the elder for him, scrape it and Dad used to do the rest. Cut it into small lengths, make pegs of it, get the elder wood and make flowers. Mum used to dye 'em different colours. Also she used to make wax flowers and sometimes the younger children like myself used to go out and we'd push the pram with all the flowers and pegs on and mum would go round the 'ouses and sell 'em. Maybe for a thrupence or fourpence a dozen at the time. That's like a penny or tuppence these days, so you can tell what the Travelling life was like. A few pence a day.</p> <p>(Muffled)</p>
10:27	Dean	<p><i>Do you face discrimination at work? You know your day to day living? Does it affect you? Can you reveal who you are you know and if you did reveal who you are would it make a massive difference?</i></p>
	David	<p>With 90% of the people today it wouldn't make a difference for the way that people make a living. You've got to hide as much as you can from most people. As soon as you mention Travellers or Gypsies they just won't want to know. They'll close the door in your face and just say they're not interested and then you'll get another one which is really nice and when they see what sort of work you do or whatever you're doing and you do the job as it should be done, they look at it, say thank you very much, no-one could have done any better. But err... most 90% of the people out there soon as they see you're a Gypsy and you let them know you're a Gypsy, they just don't want to know. It is discrimination.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>So what types of work did you used to do when you was a young man?</i></p>
11:49	David	<p>As I say in my early days I used to help with the pegs. Getting the wood for the pegs and the flowers and then we started, when we was a bit older and they say Gypsy people don't work. We started at 6 o'clock in the morning picking fruit 'til four or 5 o'clock in the afternoon and then gone in the strawberries and gooseberries until maybe 7, 8 o'clock and when that's been finished we move on and we bin in the peas; picking peas and then from that plums, apples, pears and from that into 'tata picking. Which is from sugar beet hoeing early in May 'til November 'tata picking. And you get 7 or 8 hours a day working for that for maybe in today's money, what I'm talking about a good few years ago, about a pound or one pound fifty a day for 10 hours work. When other</p>

		<p>people was getting three pound for the same sort of work and not doing so much, people what lived in 'ouses, and agin we had a hard life, it was very, very hard.</p>
	Dean	<i>Has it made you appreciate it?</i>
	David	Its made me appreciate the life what I've got now. I've worked hard for what I've got me and my little family. And we've not got a lot now as err... Travelling and Gypsy people go. But we're pleased with what we've got and we thank god for what we've got.
	Dean	<i>And if you could describe the differences in work now and work then are they big differences?</i>
	David	The big difference in the way of work now there's no agricultural work for Travelling people now. There's no strawberry picking. All labours imported for that. Lettuces and potato picking, they got machines for and there's no land work for the Travelling people at all. There's fruit in no area grown now through the common market rules. The farmers has just closed down, ripped the orchards up because the rules are too strong for them and its too strong for us as well. Plus there's no money in working on farms now.
	Dean	<i>How old were you when you first started work or doing stuff what you'd call contributing to the family?</i>
	David	Contributing to the family like I say was helping me dad and we used to strip the willow, strip the bark off the willow so dad could make pegs. Maybe I was 7 / 8 years old and to start really 'ard work I was 10 year in the 'tata field, picking 'tatas up, doing the man's job.
15:04	Dean	<i>So what did you used to live in, in them days was it a wagon, tents?</i>
	David	We had one small, as we call them, a trailer. That was about 12 feet long. There was me, my 2 brothers and 5 sisters and also we had a big tent outside which the 3 boys used to sleep in and me sisters used to sleep on the floor and on the side bunks and underneath beds . There was one on top and one at the bottom on some of the old vans years ago and the girls. Me mum and dad used to sleep in one and three boys used to sleep in the other.
	Dean	<i>Did you ever make and do with bender tents or things like that?</i>
	David	That's what mainly we used to sleep in an old bender tent, as they call them. That's getting some wood and making like a wigwam more like the Indians have when you see a cowboy picture. Only we never had the bows going out the top it was just a round, like an igloo with a little door in the front.
	Dean	<i>Going from thinking back from your childhood and coming through life how is it the Travelling life's changed from being 'til now say like how come a bit from 50s 60s 70s 80s 90s to say today how has it changed?</i>
16:44	David	Its changed in different ways, I mean umm... Travelling people in different areas has changed different ways for 'em. Erm... some part of my life I spent in West Peterborough area and most of the time in East Cambridgeshire area where I am now. I was born at Kings Lyn and I don't think we never went back to the place I was born no more than 2 or 3 times. And over the years life has just got better for the Travelling people except that when you want to move around. If you want to move around to different places, people still hate to see a Gypsy trailer and motor. As soon as they see it, its 'oh the Gypsies are back. Lock your doors. Watch the lead on the roof.' I'll tell you something if anybodies gonna listen to this, lead is worthless. Travelling people no longer pinch lead.

20:24		<p>It is absolutely worthless. It has always been worthless and why they're going 'Travelling people are pinching lead' I do not know. But life has got a lot better through the 60's 70's. The best thing that happened to me in the early 60's, I got married. Me an' my wife bin together now for just over 47 years. And things have just got better for us all the time. I've got a lovely family. I've got 3 daughters, 2 sons, 20 grandchildren, 6 great grandchildren. We've done well in the family way and I'm proud of all of them.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>So looking back then what is the thing you miss the biggest from the old ways?</i></p>
	David	<p>The thing I miss from the old ways is err... umm.... really like.... settled down and I have been settled down now for the past 30 years. I suppose and the thing I still miss most of all is hooking my trailer up behind me old truck and just going and stopping anywhere I like where we used to years ago. Most of the places where we used to stay and we can go back to the same places now and there's nothing else but 'ouses, 'ouses, 'ouses. There used to be Gypsy stopping places years ago and now the gorgia people and the councils have just confiscated the land. Even common land in Peterborough which they had no right to build on, they confiscated that and put a housing estate on it. This is common land what I'm on about, for anybody. It's all wrong.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>This is what...</i></p>
	David	<p>Councils...</p>
	Dean	<p><i>This is what...</i></p>
	David	<p>Councils do this and the Travelling people feel robbed that the old stopping places what they had for maybe a hundred years is just been took up 'ouses built on and if you go back close to it, to people in the 'ouses say 'We don't want you ere'. I suppose a lot of them don't know that was our home what they robbed us of, what they're staying in these 'ouses living in 'ouses on our places where we used to be. The Travelling people.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>Now to me it's a bit of leading question but erm... I know the answer to. Do you and your family... did you... did they on the whole face racism?</i></p>
	David	<p>We always face racism, always. And it'll never change through a lot of people. I will say a little bit on here. I've never bin in trouble with the law. I wont say I in't never had a summons, because I've had a motoring offence summons. But a policeman stopped me the other day and he was a bit cheeky and brazen and he asked me the last time I was arrested and I told him I've never been arrested and he said 'But you're a Gypsy'. I said 'Don't make no difference what I am. I have never been arrested' and I told him my name and address where I come from and he checked up and he said your telling me the truth, you can go. And if that's not racist from the law I don't know what.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>Did you feel put out by that even though he said afterwards did you still feel put out?</i></p>
	David	<p>Yes because, just because I was a Gypsy, he was expecting me to be arrested.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>Thinking back between now and old times umm do you face more, the same or less racism now than then?</i></p>
	David	<p>It depends on which area you go to. In lots of areas err... Where we are now most people, where we are now. I in't going to say the name of the village, but the people in the village where we are now I should say at lease 70% of them are nice people and there's 25% that's not that's good for Travelling people.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>So its come out on the good side for you?</i></p>

22:43	David	Its come out on the good side yes.
	Dean	<i>Umm we may have mentioned this but we'll ask the question. Did you have any formal education at all?</i>
	David	No. Just a few, about 6 – 8 weeks full schooling in me life. Which I would say again is not our fault, it's the fault of the law and the councils at the time.
	Dean	<i>I'll ask the question in a.... I'm going over it. In your opinion, do you think that you was not educated or do you think you were educated?</i>
	David	I was educated the Gypsy way. I think if I had been educated when I should have been was in the late 40's, early 50's when I should have been educated properly and done me reading and writing as I should have done, I would have missed out on the Travelling way of life because mum and dad wouldn't have been able to taught me what they did. And at least now if things got so bad I suppose, I don't know how to make flowers, but I could make, certainly I could make pegs and whether they'd sell these day or not I don't know. So they taught me how to look after meself and I've looked after meself ever since I was 13 year old. I didn't have to and I just went on me own and I paid my board when I was 13 year old.
	Dean	<i>So really education is a good thing having said what you've just said?</i>
	David	Education today is necessary for not just the Gypsy people, but for all people. I got a little grand son he's in my arm here now. He's 9 year old, oh well 8 year old I'd say, I'm gone out there. He's 8 years old and he can read and write better than what I can and I'm 67. Education is a good thing today.
22:57	Dean	<i>So in the future and looking forward to how things have changed over the years, but looking forward umm... How do you thing Travelling life will evolve, change in the future?</i>
	David	Well I think Travelling people in the future, I should say at least 95% would like their own place where they can settle down and in the summer time maybe travel around for 2 or 3 months. In one way the Travelling life is dying out because 90% of the Travelling people would like their own places, where they could just go and come where they like and have maybe 2 or 3 months of the year away. And this is why people would see more on the road at different times. They would see none in the winter I don't think, but in the summer they would see a few Travelling people about. I would say at least 90% of them, I would say at least 80 % of the Travelling people now have settled down and I would say out of the 80% there's at least 30% got their own yards, got their own trailer sites and they live a normal life and lots of them mix with the gorgia people.
	Dean	<i>What would you like to see happen to Travelling people in Britain in the future.</i>
	David	I'd like to see Travelling people in this country tret as good as all immigrants what come into this country and looked after and respected as much as what they are. Foreign people coming into this country, they get everything that they want. Childrens gets put straight into school. They get good educations. Lots of people have found decent jobs. Some people just go and sign on and they're abusive to the system. The ones what's abusive to the system, Id like this government to kick out of the country because its pulled the country down.
	Dean	<i>Right Umm... In your opinion what is a Travellers attitude to the non-gypsies attitude to the non Gypsy society, the general society around us? What does the Gypsy think?</i>
	David	I think most Gypsy people, they respect the people in the 'ouses and when they start getting abusive to some of the people in the 'ouses and the Travelling people, some

		<p>Travelling people just react back and err... they react back in the same way and the people in the 'ouses don't like it. But otherwise you've always got good people and bad people in both communities and some will agree and some wont all the time. I see so many people in the Travelling way of life they wont, they don't want to mix and people in the 'ouses don't want to mix, but lots of Travelling people would like to mix and have friends in the people in the 'ouses. I don't know about the gorgia way of living but I do know about the Travelling way of life.</p>
28:56	Dean	<p><i>Has that attitude changed over the years?</i></p>
	David	<p>Not a lot. Its constant. Whatever generation you go to it's still the same. I feel we all mix I'd say 10% of the people in the 'ouses maybe 20%, I'd say 80% of the travellers would like to mix but err... there's a big gap on each side. I'm not going to blame one side coz there's 2 sides to blame.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>I'm going to ask you maybe a controversial question to ask but err... What is your opinion of what Gypsy traveller women... what's there role in the society of Gypsies and Travellers</i></p>
	David	<p>Travelling women they err... today... years ago Travelling women, Gypsies women, they used to do as much as the travelling men. The men used to go out. I was saying my dad used to make the pegs bring the wood back to make the pegs, my mum would go out to sell it around the 'ouses or shops wherever she could sell it. Today the younger generation, the younger people, they're trying to find hard jobs working cleaning or even some of them in shops, behind the tills, some of them in supermarkets shelf stacking. They've just changed and that's the way of life. A lot of things have got to change for everybody.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>It is a good thing?</i></p>
30:24	David	<p>It's a good thing they're mixing more and I think it's a lot more for people doing this.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>Ahh, this is going to be a tough question anyway. What do you think in your opinion, what is a traveller, what does it mean what does, what does being a Gypsy traveller, what does is mean? You have to stand on the outside looking at it what do you think it would be? What would you see?</i></p>
	David	<p>Well I think it's like the old kind of thing, when they used to have the old wagons many years ago, I can barely remember it. Travelling round and round. Just Travelling round the roads and having a week in one place, for a few days and or maybe a month when you was working. And I'd like to go back to these times if I could. Somewhere where we could just go on the side of the road, wait for the farmer to want workers, pull in one of his fields, maybe do the work and then move on and if this is the thing. I think a lot the of the Travelling people miss, the older generation at least. I don't think a lot of the younger generation would do it no more that a lot the younger in the 'ouses. They all want computers these days.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>So umm... to sum up then would you say that in a nutshell is hard work and freedom.</i></p>
	David	<p>Hard work and freedom yeah. Hard work never killed no-one as I know of. I've done enough of it. I'm still ere.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>In your opinion and this is the last question. Do you think... I probably know the answer to it... but do you think if a traveller stops Travelling and settles down in a house? Does he or she stop being a traveller?</i></p>
	David	<p>You never stop being a traveller or a Gypsy and if the people find out next door to you</p>

		<p>wherever you live, I'm sure they'll never let you down either. They'll remind you enough of what you are. I know of one certain case some friends of a friend, her husband left her. She moved into a 'ouse. She lived there for 3 years without her brothers and sisters knowing where she was because her husband was a bit abusive and after 2 or 3 years, she let 'em know where she was and her sister went and saw her. And 2 of these women what'd known her all the time she'd bin there. They used to go out at least once or twice a week and when they see her sister go in a transit van and they recognised her a Gypsy. They said to her 'Who was that Gypsy what come and see you?' She said 'Oh that was me sister.' They never spoke to her again. That's to let you know what your neighbours can be like as a Gypsy.</p>
34:36	Dean	<p><i>I will ask one more question, just one. I said I wouldn't but I will ask this one. Are you proud to be what you are?</i></p>
	David	<p>I'm proud to be a Gypsy, yes. I wouldn't change it. Id say I've been settled down as you know for almost 30 years, but it would never make me a gorgia. I'm not running gorgias down because its just a name we've always had for people living in 'ouses, but err... the thing I do resent is err... when they call me a dirty Gypsy. Anyone's welcome any time; to come to my home day or night, no warning and if my place in't as clean as theirs or cleaner than a lot I'd take a gallon of petrol in and burn it down because I wouldn't be called a dirty Gypsy. I am a Gypsy and I'm proud of it but I'm not dirty.</p>
	Dean	<p><i>Could you tell me a little story or tail or something from I don't know anytime as recent as you like or as old as you like It can be about what (muffled)</i></p>
	David	<p>Well, here's a little story. And it's about me mum's people and its sort of like a little bit of a scary story, but its true. And her brothers were sort of like a little bit wicked. They used to... near November and that they'd get fireworks and they'd tie them to cats and dogs tails and they set them alight, bangs and they went down town one night and they was on their way back, you know, with a pocket full of fireworks and Jim, he said 'There's a cat there, lets get it' and they were going to tie a firework to its tail. And this is true coz me mum was telling me it was true and me mum wouldn't tell lies about things like this. And as they run for the cat it went down a halley way. So they says well we'll leave that and they was walking on a bit further and they said there was one runned out in front. About as big as erm... a Labrador dog and they thought 'Well we'll have a bit of fun with this' and they tied the fire works to its tail but that escaped them as well and they got down the road a bit further and they said there was something come out agin which was about as big a donkey. They thought that was a bit big and err.... they wouldn't chase it, but that went in an alley and err.... when they got by it instead of chasing it, they was chased and they said every time they looked back, this thing got bigger and bigger and my Uncle Billy, he was six foot one and he got up to it and they all runned and he jumped over a gate and he done his leg in and he had to have a bit took out of it and its three inches shorter than the other one and everyone used to call him afterwards that was Lamé Billy but the other three brothers they got that fed'p of being in this country, two of them emigrated to Australia and one to Canada I never did see these I don't suppose. But me Uncle Billy I always did see him because when he stood on one leg he was short and when he stood on the other one he was tall and he was called Lamé Billy and he spent most of his life in err Wisbech up by Outwell and this was a true story.</p>
37:28	Dean	<p>So words to the wise then (laughs). Well this is the end of this in'terview. I'd like to thank me dad for giving me this interview. Travelling people are sometimes a bit dubious of giving interview so I'd like to thank him very much and wish him well.</p>
37:55		

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