

Romany Theatre Company

Atching Tan Project

**Reminiscence Interview – Transcription of Edited Interview**

Date of Interview		Interviewer	Interviewee	Age Range of Interviewee	Duration of Edited Recording
17-11-09		Jane G	Rory C		12:50
Key timing	Initial of person speaking	Transcription of Interview			
00:00	Rory	<p>Yeah I'll go back to racism. So as a child I never experienced any, but in later life in fact in the last 5 years I have. Where as I never ever experienced any in my life, because you blend in with the crowd. You don't let others know who you are. But since I've been, sort of, wagon painting, advertising as a wagon painter on the internet and also advertising...We do holiday lets as well so people can stay in a wagon and an old trailer to get the experience of as it used to be living in the old days and as your fere would say before the.. , the potatoes so they find a little holiday for the weekend and that's out there in the world and I would say that at least once a month I'd get phone calls; abusive phone calls, phone the room someone would shout down the phone gypsy bastards, effing this, effing that. Umm and emails and I would get err... and its quite amazing people must think they're invisible really, but you press a few buttons and it tells you exactly where they are. (laughs) So it's still out there.</p> <p>Erm... And quite an interesting thing as well is when people come stay in umm in the wagon for a holiday, a little break. The first thing they say is 'Ooh your not like you're a real gypsy, your not like all the other gypsies who've got their transits and trailers and all that'. And I say 'There's no difference your just seeing the modern world'. There's no difference between anybody its just, you just happen to notice a very large pick up truck, a big twin axle umm Val de Loire trailer. Whereas if it had been a horse and a wagon it looks cute, it looks quaint people take photographs of it. And I have stuck my wagons on village greens. I'll hook up and put a little wagon on a village green no problem and people actually take photographs of them. But erm but if I turned up with a big twin axle trailer, a Cap Star or something like that, I'd only get a visit by the police. So its funny peoples perception of travellers is different. They class people with a horse and wagon as real and anybody hasn't is not. It's amazing so yeah racism still exists, but actually it has got worse. There's 2 types of theories I have I've always said that rural, the rural population and the rural travellers have always had (and this is big word I learnt not very long ago off an 11 year old) a symbiotic relationship (How's that? That's someone who couldn't write his name when he was 16) That's a symbiotic relationship. Its very.. and you can hear that in stories told in this very village by the older folk. And there used to be a little stopping place up the road and when the travellers arrived they'd go to the pub and they'd all mix together, the travellers and the local community. They'd always mix they'd be mixing in the fields harvesting potatoes. They supplied the everyday little bits to the housewives; the pegs, the little bits of doileys, the little bits of lace and the little bits of things like that and the men would erm... and the children would be working doing the potato harvesting and things like that. So there was a mix. The people would be mixing together more in the r... especially in the rural community. More so than indeed in say a town, a larger town or city where travellers were always for a long time 50, 60 or even a hundred years, especially London gypsies, have always been on the edge in their own little community and the rest of society's in their own community. So you start getting a them and us situation and I think since sites were set up and the loss of stopping grounds and the general population in the rural areas haven't had the contact with gypsies and travellers that their grandparents had. There's more so in more like a silly situation really. The travellers are over there by the rubbish tip and the others are over here and the two don't mix together and the only mixing you may get is possibly at school.</p>			

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The media doesn't help I find the media's a funny animal. I had an article written about me in the Sunday mirror about the wagons and it was basically they were doing an article on wagon holidays. Only 6 months before the same papers running umm... articles on umm... gypsies landing on sites and 'get gypos out' and all this stuff you know? It's a funny thing. But it sells papers I suppose. Newspapers are only there to make money and they like to do shock horror stories which will make people buy them or think they're pushing their product

At any rate Changes for travellers for how things are going to be in the future. Erm... there is obviously site provision more than there has ever been before. The east of England (umm is it the East of England Assembly?) came up with every district has to have so many sites. But I personally think they're 25 years too late, if not 30 years too late. You've got district councils running around looking for gypsies by the side of the road saying where do we need the sites, where do we need the sites? And actually you don't see people on the side of the road anymore umm I cant remember the last time I saw any travellers in this district (I'm in Babergh District Council) by the side of the road actually, I really can't. There are travellers around which are hidden behind hedges. Are on their own land and have been there probably 10, 15, 20 years but for people on the side of the road... Its great that the councils are moving towards having more sites, but I think there a bit slow off the starting block for that really. I mean they should have been doing when Barbara Cartland was doing it really. Umm and as for future of travellers and gypsies I mean well there's plenty to talk about really, I mean, if you go to the whole range of type of traveller people and if you look at say the gypsy, the lone gypsy whose headed from Asia across to the UK probably most will start settling down more and more buying their own land maybe building on it. Small plots and things like that. The culture will always continue. The future of the horse fairs particularly the big ones Appleby and Stow particularly Appleby are in the balance and will probably disappear in the next four or five years. They'll be gone. Umm but I think the culture in the community will turn up elsewhere. It won't die out. It won't disappear. Maybe the travelling life as such is more curtailed than it ever has been, especially within the last 20 years of John Majors little law he bought out stop the err more the spread of new age travellers preventing roads being built. So basically the gathering of so many people in one spot and that was used against travellers. So it more or less criminalised the actual entire life style of actually stopping on the side of the road yeah umm with me and then your stuff confiscated. So it really put the kybosh on everything really. But the future for what I would call Romany Gypsy/ Irish Traveller communities will continue especially horse fairs. I think more and more local horse fairs will spring up umm and I see with the wagon, there's less and less horse drawn wagons going to the big fairs now. Umm there has been trouble at those fairs. I think the canvas was slashed on the wagons and people spend a lot of money on some of these wagons and some like the Jowett wagons which are still manufactured today are actually £20,000 for a wagon, undecorated. To have your canvas slashed by some kid walking passed with a Stanley knife in a fair which is supposedly full of travellers, its obviously other travellers have done it. Umm people are starting to move away from the trouble, which is going on at the fairs. I mean Appleby fair had armed police there this year and it was ridiculous and I think that to be honest it's over the top. That's police I think watching too many films and coming up with machine guns to manage a horse fair. Yes, there is some problems sometimes. There is stabbing and there probably always has been, but to be up there with machine guns is bazaar. Steam fairs are getting very popular. An awful lot of travellers now especially local ones are at steam fairs now. Err Melford Steam Fair will have a range of what I suppose would be called classic trailers, wagons and you can walk around there and you see an awful lot of travellers. Then there's your new travellers which actually are to be honest the only people if you want to say are true travelling people, are the new travellers. Its always hard to say exactly what a new traveller is mainly someone from a lifestyle choice has decided to drop out of society and maybe take up the travelling way of life. Some do it really well and others do it very badly umm but I've seen some very, very good err new travellers managing to travel in an incredible way. I met this one girl called Rena and she's got a website called into the hermitage and she travels via I call

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her cyber travelling. She does art work, she's got a converted TK lorry and because she's got such a following on the internet people are offering her land to stop on and having to go and stop at farms where she's invited to go and stay. So its err there are ways you can travel in this country and you can actually live the old fashioned way of life if you're prepared to step back in time. Umm there are places where people can go now, I mean there are a lot of organic farms still need an army of people to work on them and there's an organisation in this country its called Woofing and there are some travellers down in Kent I know which are actually hitched up with a horse and wagon again which are travelling farm to farm and they're invited to stay do the work there for maybe a month, 2 months and then through the internet, they've organised the next farm and so on. And then they come back to Kent and stay the winter on their own plot of land.

Well my great grandfather, my grandfather, my great uncles and my mother all lived in one house ermm and they lived on the edge of kings cross ermm and they were the Hearne family and they had a umm a little business which started up when they came off the road from travelling with umm flat carts and coster monger barrows and all those little barrows you used to see them in London. I think they only exist in East Enders now which doesn't really exist does it. But they're those little carts and little narrow London trolleys, which were used by traders and rag and bone men. Very much Steptoe and son stuff really. The Hearne family moved on and they still exist today that part of the family and they lease and rent. They got into motors early on. My great grandfather married, there was something going on I don't know exactly what it was he married someone he shouldn't have done or something and he got erm there was a big row and the family got split. He was thrown out of the rest of the family and whatever that argument was it rumbled on for many, many years and this argument probably occurred in the 1920's. Erm and when my mum was a young women, would have been I suppose 18 or 19. She was stopped by someone she never knew in her life spat at and shouted at and this women said 'You're one of them Hearnese' and err she went back to her mum and dad obviously her grandfather was still alive and they obviously live in the same building. Umm now basically he said 'Ah that would be one of your relatives whose' (Laughs) the argument was still fresh. I suppose the story I'm going on to is about my great grandfather. He was long retired umm and he was very ill, laying in his bed dying and umm he was catholic. He was christened a catholic. I believe he was born in Ireland whilst they were in Ireland, so he was christened a catholic and funnily enough when he was living there was no, there was umm not much scope for the catholic church really, and he was dying on his bed and somehow my uncles and grandfather managed to get hold of the bishop of London who was around somewhere in that area to come in and see him. Read him his last rights. Err so my great grandfathers laying in his bed there and he opens his eyes and he sees the bishop stood there and the vicar (I think the local vicar had brought the bishop along) opened his eyes saw by his bed he said 'Get that bloody protestant out of my bedroom' and he lived another 10 years.

This is a horse and wagon story, I won't tell you who it involved umm but he umm. This is back in the 1960's. He lived in a umm and he was pulling it along with a horse down a lane and was trying to impress a lady ermm evidently it was a gorgia women he was trying to impress her and she was riding up on the foot plate. They were going down a small country lane, Sussex way, so it is around that area sort of Southern Counties and it was a very small lane and this Mini came belting along this lane towards the horse and braked hard and swerved and it startled the horse. The horse reared up. He fell forward slap bang into the backside of the horse, falls off the footplate. Gets kicked by the horse as he falls down between the shafts and the horse. The horse then bolts and runs off and his own wagon runs him over. And he gets up and he's in great pain, he says. He obviously has broken ribs, clearly broken ribs. He's been kicked by his horse been run over by his own wagon and he didn't want to lose face with this girl, so he sort of hobbles up. Gets himself up, walks back, climbs up onto the footboard and holding ribs says 'Yep, I'm fine' and carries on riding along and he says when he got back and dropped her off, he just went back and rolled around in pain. He just couldn't show her that he'd been smashed to pieces on his horse. So that's the romance of going around

17:58	on a horse and wagon you know people think it would be very nice to travel with a horse and wagon but they're unpredictable things at times.
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