

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

In common with other people from different religions and cultures, Gypsy/Traveller people celebrate big events in life. These occasions are a time for extended families to come together, sometimes travelling great distances.

Whilst many Irish Travellers are Roman Catholic, more and more Gypsy/Travellers are becoming born again Christians belonging to the Gypsy Pentecostal church. Gypsy/Travellers maintain their tradition of a lengthy mourning period, with the family wearing black for up to a year after the death of a close relative.

The trailer and clothes of the dead person used to be burned as a sign of respect. Sometimes this still happens but this is not always practical.



Most Gypsy/Travellers are very careful about cleanliness and have certain rules they follow for washing clothes and food preparation. They have a special name for something which is not considered clean: **Mochadi** (pronounced mock-a-dee).



HORSE FAIRS

Appleby Horse Fair in Cumbria and Stow Fair in Gloucestershire are two examples of where large groups of Gypsy/Travellers come together from all over Britain and Ireland. At both of these fairs old horse-drawn **vardos** can be seen alongside new modern trailers. Many Gypsy/Traveller traders come to these fairs selling pottery such as Crown Derby and Staffordshire. Fancy satin cushions are another popular Traveller possession.

CIRCUS FACT FILE



1. The first circuses were travelling shows with musicians, jugglers and acrobats performing in open spaces collecting money for acts.

2. Later, circuses were held in enclosed spaces and people paid to watch.

3. The first modern circus was held in London in 1768, but tents were probably not used until the 1820s.



SHOWMEN AND FAIRGROUND PEOPLE FACT FILE



1. The word "fair" comes from the Latin word "feria", meaning holiday.

2. There were probably fairs in Britain before the Roman invasion.

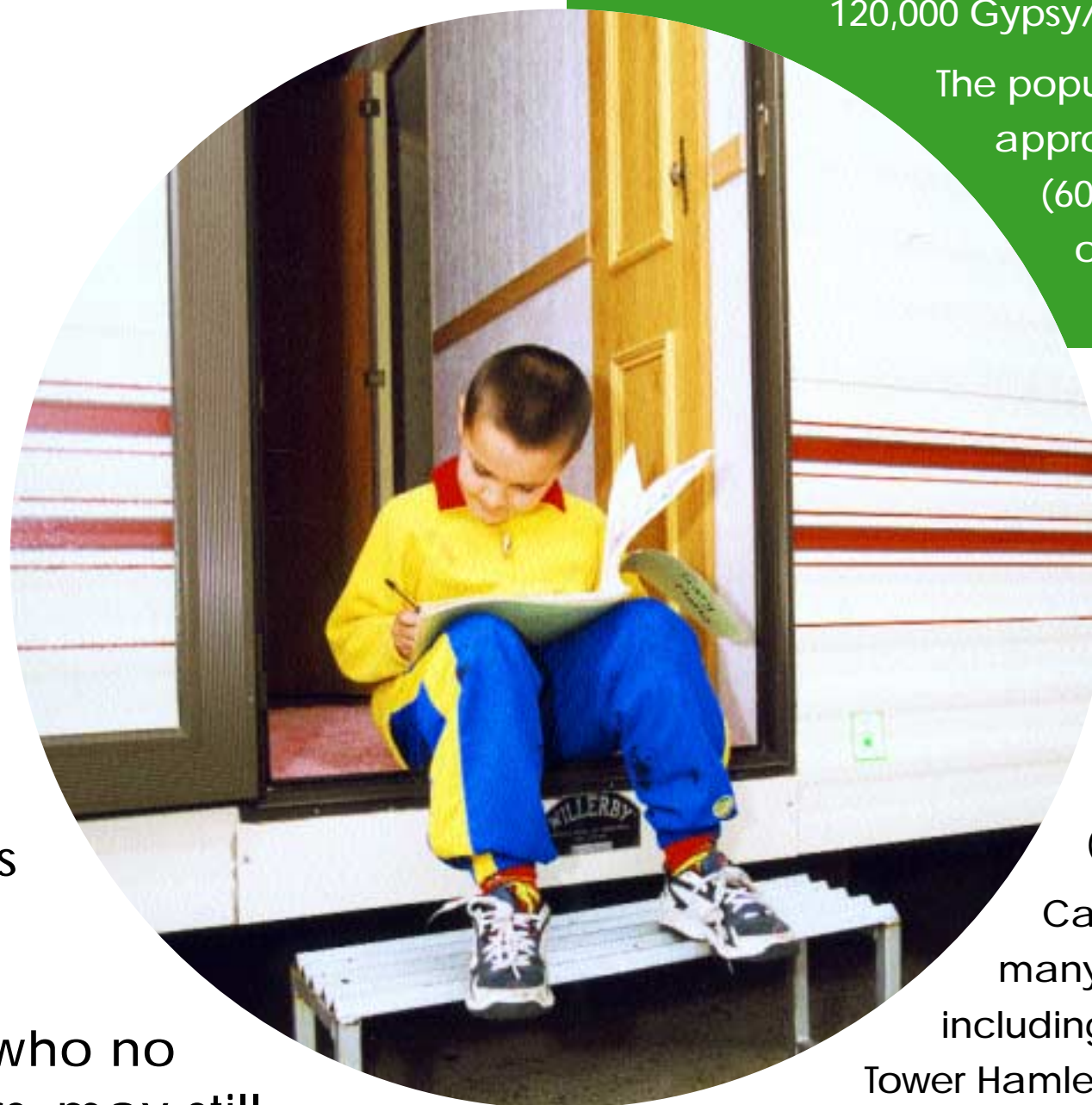
3. In the Middle Ages, traders from Europe brought goods to trade from all over the world. Travelling entertainers such as jugglers, musicians and tumblers performed wherever people gathered to buy their goods.

4. Rides first appeared in the 1800s.

WHERE TRAVELLERS LIVE

Many Travelling people in Great Britain and Ireland live in trailers that are parked on private, official or unofficial sites.

Many Travellers have had to move into houses or flats because there are no places where they can legally park their trailers. Travellers, who no longer live in trailers, may still choose to call themselves Travellers.



NUMBERS

It is difficult to count Gypsy/Travellers because they move so often. In the U.K. there are at least 120,000 Gypsy/Travellers.

The population of the U.K. is approximately 60,000,000 (60 million) and the population of London is approximately 10,000,000 (10 million).

OFFICIAL SITES

In 1968 a law was passed saying that each London council had a duty to provide at least 15 plots on which Travellers stopping in their areas could park their trailers (caravans).

Caravan sites were built in many London boroughs, including Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets. They were situated far away from shops, houses and bus-routes, in areas where nobody else wanted to live.

This law also said that if a site had been built in the area, anyone parking a trailer anywhere else in the borough could be moved on.

London is made up of the City of London and 32 boroughs. Boroughs are areas that are run by their own elected councils.

In 1994 the Criminal Justice Act was passed which abolished the 1968 law. Due to this **legislation** many Travellers are now forced into housing. Some become very unhappy and choose to move back into trailers, risking **prosecution** and **eviction** by living on land where trailers are not allowed to park (unofficial sites).

INTERIOR OF MODERN TRAILER



OCCUPATIONS

Travelling people have historically travelled to earn a living. In the past this has meant fruit picking and totting (collecting scrap). Travellers have always been



very good at changing with the times. Today some still tot, but they

also **hawk**, sell carpets, lay tarmac, do landscape gardening and repair and sell cars, amongst other things.

