

The Irish Traveller Community

Travellers have been part of Irish society for centuries. We have our own history, culture, language and traditions that make us a recognisable and distinct group. There are an estimated 30,000 Travellers in Ireland. You have to be born into the Traveller community, you cannot chose to join.

It is commonly thought that Irish Travellers were originally people who lost their land and homes during the Famine, however this is not the case. As early as the 12th Century, "Tinkers" are mentioned in Irish records and refer to travelling crafts people who were very important in the daily of life of the time.

Travellers have our own language, which is called "Cant". This is a language mostly used by Travellers to speak with each other. These days, it is stronger in some families than others. NTW Ltd believe that Cant is a valuable and unique part of our heritage and have worked hard in recent years to preserve, record and teach it to younger Travellers.

Traveller occupations in the past included tin-smithing, farm labour, door to door sales and recycling. Today many of these occupations have become obsolete with many Travellers now turning to market trading, scrap collecting and antiques dealing.

A small number of Travellers have their own businesses, others are employed by community enterprises established by Traveller groups (such as Navan Travellers Workshops Ltd.). However in Meath especially, more Travellers are succeeding in becoming Teachers, Health workers and Community Workers.



To find out more about Traveller history, log on to our website for stories, interviews, facts and figures and the only online historical Traveller photo gallery in the world.

www.travellerheritage.ie

BRING HISTORY TO YOUR DOOR!

The Living History Project is available to come to your school, group or organisation.

This is an exciting and original way of bringing Traveller culture to life and allows your participants to step back in time, hear a few stories and songs and learn a lot about the Traveller past.

For more information and to book the exhibit, please contact Navan Travellers Workshops Ltd on the number below



046 9027801



Navan Travellers Workshops Ltd

LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

CYWS Hall, Fairgreen,
Navan, Co Meath
Tel: 046 90 27801
Fax: 046 90 73298
Email: infontw@eircom.net



<http://community.meath.ie/travellers>
www.travellerheritage.ie

With thanks to the following:



Bringing the Traveller past, into the present





The Living History Project

Navan Travellers Workshops Ltd have re-created a real life picture of Traveller life in the 1950's. The scene includes a fully restored Barrel Top Wagon, a traditional tent, a flat cart, working tin-smith, story telling Traveller woman and of course, a camp-fire.

NTW Ltd recognises the importance of Traveller culture, history and identity. We also believe in sharing this unique part of Irish life with the wider community. By literally setting this scene, visitors can visit the camp and spend time learning about what Traveller life was like fifty years ago.

The 1950's was a period of change for everyone in Ireland and it's a time that is still within living memory for many people. Just before the introduction of mass produced plastics and mechanical farming, it was the last time traditional Traveller life was fully intact. Soon after, a move to towns and cities begun and their time honoured skills of tin smithing and crafts became less wanted.

In recent times, there has been a huge resurgence of interest in Irish history and in particular, Irish Traveller history. We hope that this Living History Project will give groups an appreciation of Traveller culture and bring a vital part of our history back to life.

The "Crossroads Project" being led by Co. Meath VEC as part of the Meath Interagency Strategy for Travellers is concerned with addressing the heritage and community development needs of the Travellers in Co. Meath. Its vision is to provide initiatives to retain their heritage and to empower them to engage with the wider community in communications 'what it means to be a Traveller today'. The Living History Project forms one part of this.

The Barrell Top Wagon



If ever there was one symbol that represents traditional Traveller culture, it is the wagon.

Colourful, practical, comfortable and warm it was home for thousands of Traveller families over the years. It is the enduring image of a time when Travellers were treasured as skilled crafts people, news carriers, welcome musicians and a vital part of Irish life.

Restoring a traditional Barrell Top Wagon has been one of the most successful projects the Workshops have ever run. In early 2006, three men from Navan Travellers Workshops Ltd began work, using an original wheel base.

The wagon was officially launched as part of Minceir Hooley - Navan Traveller Festival Week, June 2008. Since then it has become a favourite fixture at local fairs and family days around the country and has even visited Stormont in Belfast and appeared on RTE television.

The wagon plays a leading part in our "Living History" programme and has had many extremely popular visits to local schools to help illustrate Traveller culture.

About Navan Travellers Workshops Ltd.

We are a voluntary community development organisation. Since 1965, we have been working as a partnership of Travellers and Settled improving the situation of the Travelling community in Co. Meath. From our busy premises on the Fairgreen in Navan, we run a wide variety of programmes and services. Some of these include:



Little Angels Childcare Services

25 children aged between 3 and 5 years attend either a morning or afternoon session of "Our Lady of the Little Angels" pre-school. As well as learning songs and games, the children have two days of PE per week and many educational outings during the year.

Adult Education and Training

20 people are employed by NTW Ltd. on a Community Employment Scheme. CE staff help run all areas of NTW Ltd.'s activities and attend courses that will improve their job prospects when they leave. Meath Travellers Employment Initiative is also based in NTW Ltd. The MTEI offers one-to-one supports to all Travellers who want to achieve access to jobs, work-experience, courses and business start-up opportunities.

Youth Services

Primary School children attend our after-school homework club from 2pm each day. The children are given a snack during their time at the club. Teenagers are invited to join our boys or girls youth clubs.

Get on the Bus!

This mobile Citizen's Information Office is the first of its kind in Ireland. It is a professional facility for members of the Traveller and wider community to visit in confidence for information on such things as housing, health and social welfare.