

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month

What is Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month?

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month, or GRTHM, is a celebration of the variety of talent and achievements that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities bring to the UK.

GRTHM has been celebrated in some schools since 2001 but was recognised by the Department for Education in 2007, and is now recognised throughout the UK during June.

Many years ago, Gypsies, Roma and Travellers were groups of people who might have moved from place to place, however, now that is not the case. Most Gypsies, Roma and Travellers live in houses or permanent sites, but some choose to live in caravans and travel around. They have their own beliefs, histories, cultures and languages.

History of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers have been part of British society for over 500 years. The first mention of a Gypsy in England was in 1514.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have faced victimisation and mistreatment through people's lack of understanding and judgemental attitudes. Aims of GRTHM is to improve awareness of Travelling communities, develop respect and understanding about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller traditional ways of life, and encourage positive links between all communities.



Interesting Information

Traditionally, many Gypsies and Travellers worked on farms, for example, fruit picking, harvesting and planting. After more machines were used on farms, Gypsies moved from the countryside to cities and towns, to find work.

Many Gypsies and Travellers have adapted their skills to work in landscaping, gardening and motor trading. Gypsies and Travellers work in a variety of professions and careers, including the police force, as politicians, and as teachers.

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are three separate ethnic groups with different histories, cultures and languages. All three groups traditionally lived nomadic lives, moving to different places. Now most Gypsies, Roma and Travellers live in houses. Some people choose to travel around and live in caravans and some people live in caravans that stay in one place for most of the year.

prejudice: negative opinions not actually based on facts.

persecution: ill-treated or victimised due to race or religion.

Fascinating Fact

Gypsy culture is built upon strict codes of about being clean and hygienic. There are strict guidelines, for example, on what objects can be washed in what bowls.

Most Gypsies and Travellers call caravans 'trailers', and mobile homes on sites are known as 'chalets'.

Problems Faced by Gypsies and Travellers

Gypsies and Travellers have faced hundreds of years of prejudice and persecution. This is largely due to a lack of understanding about the way of life. Views about Gypsies and Travellers are often wrong because of a lack of information. Gypsies and Travellers face a lot of racism and prejudice. During the Holocaust in the Second World War, Gypsies and Travellers were killed in the mass genocide carried out by the Nazis.

There aren't enough authorised camp sites. Many old campsites have been shut off so it is hard for anyone to camp there. This means they have to camp wherever they can, sometimes without the land owners' permission.

GRTHM aims to change this, and teach people about lifestyles and the importance of the histories of Gypsy and Traveller culture.



Famous Gypsies and Travellers

Django Reinhardt was born in 1910 in Belgium. He was brought up in a Sinti Gypsy community and became the first and most important European jazz musician of all time, playing the banjo, guitar and violin.

Flamenco dancing in Spain is originally from Gypsy communities, and the Romany Diamonds are a popular Polish music group. There have been many writers, artists and musicians who grew up in a variety of Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Questions

1. Match up these sentences:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| a. GRTHM began in | 500 years. |
| b. It was celebrated nationally from | 1514. |
| c. Gypsies in England were first recorded in | 2001. |
| d. There have been Gypsies in the UK for over | 2007. |

2. Give two reasons why Gypsies and Travellers have been treated badly in the past?

3. Before the use of machines, Gypsies and Travellers often worked on farms. Tick all the jobs they would have done.

milking cows

picking fruit

plant seeds

help with the harvest

4. Explain why Gypsies and Travellers needed to move to the cities.

5. Which of these statements are true? Correct the statements which are wrong.

Gypsies and Travellers are not bothered about hygiene.

Traditionally, Gypsies have rules about what can be washed in which bowls.

Most Gypsies and Travellers work on farms.

6. Identify one major problem that Gypsies and Travellers who still travel face.

7. Tick the correct facts about Django Reinhardt.

he was Belgian

he played the violin

he was born in 1901

he was the first disco musician

8. What do you think GRTHM hopes to achieve?