



crossing places

Art and Crafts

Art often plays a large part of the Travellers' way of life. It is used to symbolise and celebrate a culture, to earn money and to show talent and identity.

Barge Art is highly decorative and prevalent across the UK canal network. It is characterised by highly colourful painted 'Rose and Castle' decoration on narrow boats and fixtures. Many other imagery are used, such as churches, dogs and horses.

Other traditional crafts for example, making simple yet effective wooden pegs, or paper and wood flowers are only produced on a small scale. However, the techniques for making them are still passed down through the generations.



Belgian Gypsies, Barnet, 1921 Clearly (left)
Image: University of Liverpool



Belgian Gypsies, Barnet, 1922
Left - right Kiki, Langle and Jaccoman
Image: University of Liverpool



Example of barge painting
Image: Hertfordshire Traveller Education Project



Gypsy Draper - Image: Hitchin Museum and Art Gallery

Language

The most well known of Gypsy language, is Romani, used by Roma Gypsies. It is derived from Sanskrit and has been since influenced by different languages and lifestyles. Most Roma use Romani language between themselves, and is sometimes considered a secret language. It is very common to find Romani words borrowed in the English language such as 'Mush' which means 'man' and also 'Kushti' which translates as 'nice'.

Below are a few more ROMANI terms:

YAG	fire	GORGIO or GAUJO	non-Gypsy person
CHAVI	girl	CHAVO	boy
RAKKLI	woman	MUSH	man
ROKKER	to talk	DUKKER	to tell fortunes

Music

There is a strong musical tradition amongst Travellers, and much European folk music has its roots in musical influences from Gypsies and Travellers as they travelled and entertained through different countries, such as Flamenco which originated in Andalusia.

There are records of Travellers and Gypsies entertaining non-Traveller folk as far back as the 16th Century in England through music and dance. There is no single type of 'Gypsy Music', and it differs from country to country. Some music is played with instruments such as violins and some is merely sung or played with clapping hands. Instruments were sometimes burned when their owner died, along with other belongings.

Irish Traveller musicians have included the uilleann piper Felix Doran and the world-renowned folk musicians The Fureys. Fewer Travellers now rely on singing and making music for their livelihood as in times gone by.