

# Horses & horse fairs

## passing places

**In the early days of horse drawn transport the purchase, upkeep and use of horses was a necessary part of a mobile lifestyle. Today, horses are used for trotting, cart racing or merely as a symbol of wealth or prestige. The typical horse is a Skewbold or Piebold Cob, sometimes known as Gypsy Cobs or Tinker horses. These are robust horses that have been used for hundred of years for pulling wagons. They are renowned for their good temperament, strength and versatility and are recognised by their distinctive black and white, or brown and white colouring and feathered feet.**



The Horse Fair at Barnet, 1921  
Image: University of Liverpool



Racing at Appleby Horse Fair, Cumbria



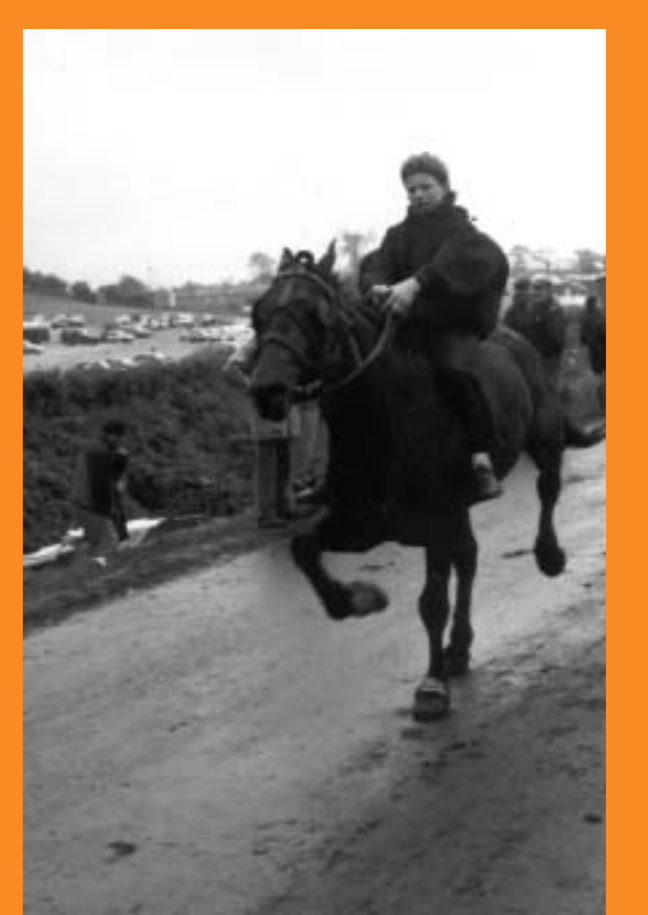
Front row left - right: Moses Lee, Nelson Lee & Geo. Lee, Gypsy and gaugio horse dealers at Barnet horse fair 1920  
Image: University of Liverpool

For many Travellers the most important dates in the calendar are the annual horse fairs. Many of these have their roots in medieval times when licenses for such events were granted by the crown. Stow Fair dates back to 1476 when Edward IV granted a royal charter for fairs to mark the feast days of Saints Philip and James.

Today, traditional and modern ways are sometimes in conflict. The charter fair at Horsemonden in Kent dates back to the middle ages and yet recently caused such local opposition that in 2001 the village was made an exclusion zone in order to close the fair down.

Near Hertfordshire, the Barnet Horse Fair is held every September and local Travellers renew acquaintances and buy or sell horses, horse tack and typical Traveller wares such as Crown Derby crockery.

Dating back to 1685, Appleby Horse Fair in Cumbria has been the biggest horse fair in Europe. In June each year thousands of Travellers meet to trade, to learn or to just watch the horses on show or meet old friends. The social importance of the fair is obvious as Travellers from all around the country meet up to celebrate being part of a unique and deep-rooted cultural group.



"Pitch & Luke"  
Image: Soo