

Within living memory

Passing places

During the First and Second World War, many men and women from Traveller communities contributed to the war effort and many were awarded medals for their bravery (including the Victoria Cross).

The mid-20th Century brought about economic changes that made some of the Traveller's specialised trades obsolete. The large-scale construction of new towns, factories and houses also saw the disappearance of the traditional stopping places, with domestic legislation bringing about changes to the way of life of Gypsies and Travellers.



A local authority caravan site

James Howell (from Showman's family) served during the First World War
Image: Jane Hastler

Norman Dodds MP campaigned for adequate camp provisions for local Gypsies in the south east in the 1950s

Ben Smith's sister served during the Second World War
Image: Ben Smith

James Howell and comrades stationed in France during the First World War
Image: Jane Hastler

'Joseph' Howell, Showman serving his country during the Second World War
Image: Jane Hastler

Emma Kefferd
Image: Jane Hastler

Roadside encampment

The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, the Highways Act of 1959 and the Caravan Sites Acts of the 1960s removed many of the stopping places that had previously been available.

The 1960 Caravan Sites (Control of Development) Act resulted in evictions. Consequently new pressure groups for Travellers were formed, such as the Gypsy Council.

In 1968 a revised Caravan Sites Act attempted to make provisions for Travellers ordering local authorities to provide sites for all Gypsies residing in, or stopping in, their areas. It was not fully implemented.

In 1994, the previous acts were repealed by the introduction of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. Councils no longer needed to build sites, and had increased powers to move Travellers on. Conflicts arose particularly between landowners, police and New Travellers.



Henry Bentley
Image: Jane Hastler



George Cooper
Image: Jane Hastler



Joe Bentley
Image: Jane Hastler

Currently, the outdated 1994 Act is the only Traveller-related legislation. Many Traveller Groups have attempted to fill this gap by the promotion of the Traveller Law Reform Bill.

For more information about these issues, please see the information file.