



Irish Traveller Movement in Britain Newsletter 2008 Issue 6

June was **Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month**. To mark this momentous occasion the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (ITMB) hosted a special two day symposium; '**Pavee Céilidh**' to celebrate the richness and diversity of Irish Traveller history and culture at the Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre, London.

200 plus people were there for day one. Travellers came from as far as Liverpool and Birmingham. The DVD 'Meet Your Neighbours: Irish Traveller Role Models Speak Out' was launched. **David Cooney the Irish Ambassador** officially launched the DVD and said he was pleased to launch the DVD. The Ambassador said the DVD funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and produced by the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain shows that Travellers are performing a range of valuable community roles as community and youth workers, school governors, classroom assistants and councillors. **Julie Morgan MP**, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Traveller Law Reform, also attended the launch. Julie said she was greatly impressed by the growing activism of Travellers and that at some point in the near future Travellers would be elected as MPs.

Other activities included singing and dancing and workshops on traditional Traveller crafts, Traveller history and site design.

The event was felt to be a great success and the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain hope to stage an even bigger and better event next year.

Download the **Pavee Céilidh** report with photographs of the event at:

http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/find-out-about-irish-travellers/history_culture

Early Day Motion

The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain is promoting with its partners in the Traveller Law Reform Project the following early day motion by Julie Morgan MP

EDM 1858 GYPSY ROMA TRAVELLER HISTORY MONTH 23.06.2008

That this House notes that June is Gypsy Roma Traveller history month and that it is the first such celebration to be fully supported and endorsed by the Government and provides a tremendous opportunity for children in our schools to hear of the traditions of Gypsies, Roma

and Travellers; and congratulates the large number of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, libraries, schools, teachers and others who have worked hard to organise events around the country.

Please write to your MP at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA - and ask them to sign this motion, So far 57 MPs have signed including Labour, Conservative and Liberal Members of Parliament.

Community Relations

On the 18th June James Gray MP for Wiltshire North led an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on Gypsy and Traveller site provision. The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain has a number of deep concerns about points raised in this debate and misconceptions held by some MPs about Travellers. The ITMB has written to Gray to point out that Irish Travellers are a recognised ethnic minority with a long history of nomadism. The debate can be accessed at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080618/halltext/80618h0005.htm#08061892000002>

Within Gray's constituency a march was held in protest at the government's policies on site provision and 750 people attended a public meeting. Elsewhere in the country similar demonstrations and acts of opposition are being held to site provision. In view of rising community tensions the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain is pressing the Equalities and Human Rights Commission to increase its level of engagement with Travellers.

John Gray MP has also made public the fact that in discussions with Eric Pickles MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, he was assured by Pickles that an incoming Conservative Government will seek to remove the necessity to provide sites.

The ITMB is greatly saddened by Gray's comments. We have pointed out to Gray that if the 4000 pitches, which is the national target, are not found then there will be an increase in community tensions and enforcement costs and Gypsy and Traveller families will continue to suffer poor access to services. Thus more sites are in the interests of the settled and Traveller community.

Conference Report

A conference report on the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain conference held at the end of 2007 can be accessed at:

<http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/policy/briefings>

The next ITMB conference will be at the Resource Centre, Holloway Rd, London on the 19th November. More details to follow.

Traveller Lives

'Traveller Lives' profiles a number of Irish Travellers who are active campaigners for Travellers' rights and provides important insights into the hardships and challenges that face many Irish Travellers. It is hoped that 'Traveller Lives' will help schools and youth groups explore issues around the experiences of Irish Travellers. Learn about the experiences of Tommy Collins, Bridget McCarthy and Patrick McCarthy.

http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/find-out-about-irish-travellers/history_culture

Meet Your Neighbours Free DVD Available

Few will forget how in 2005 Travellers were attacked in the tabloid press with lurid headlines like "Stamp on the Camps" and "Traveller Invaders". During this time there was an increase in reports of harassment against Travellers. 'Meet Your Neighbours: Irish Traveller Role Models Speak Out' is a DVD produced by the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain which profiles a number of Irish Travellers who have taken on roles such as councillors, school governors and community advocates. The DVD exposes the myths and falsehoods created by the media and shows Irish Travellers to be warm and caring people who are playing positive roles in their communities.

The DVD is a great resource for teachers and youth workers or Travellers or members of the wider community who wish to learn more about Irish Travellers. Send us a self addressed stamped envelope for your free copy.

Download the recipe book '100% Irish' by Breda Doran Irish Traveller (Teaching Assistant Cambridgeshire Race Equality and Diversity Service and Irish Traveller Movement in Britain Committee member).

http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/find-out-about-irish-travellers/history_culture

Future Work - The ITMB is pleased to announce it has been successful in securing funds from London Councils to continue and expand our work programmes in London. We are also delighted to announce a successful application to Capacity Builders. This will be a new project of development and support and will be launched in the New Year.

Contact us - info@irishtraveller.org.uk **Tel 0207 607 2002**

Visit the ITM website <http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/>

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