

PRESS RELEASE

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Travellers Remember

In an innovative Rural Media Company project, children and young people from 25 different Traveller families in the West Midlands have recorded the personal reminiscences of their parents and grandparents. These powerful and often poignant digital stories were premiered at Borderlines Film Festival, Hereford, in late March.

Travellers' history is misunderstood and often ignored. Hostility, prejudice and ignorance blind the general population to the richness of Traveller culture. With resentment towards Travellers on the rise and their lifestyle increasingly threatened, this collection of digital histories aims to redress the balance.

Each lasting from two to three minutes, and using images drawn from their personal collections, the stories depict how Travellers were perceived in the past and how this perception has changed. They also bring to life traditional Traveller trades and artefacts, the part Travellers played in agriculture, and their relationship to nature and the landscape.

Young Gypsies and Travellers were trained and supported by The Rural Media Company to use digital stills cameras, scanners, microphones and iBook Apple laptops to tell stories based on their parents' and grandparents' memories of travelling in the 1960s and 1970s.

The filmmaker and narrator of one of the digital stories - *My Family* - is Selena Warner, ten years old. She says '*Travellers Remember* opens up a new world. What people say about Gypsies and Travellers isn't true.

'I wasn't proud of who I was until I did *Travellers Remember*. I get bullied in my school by one boy. He calls me Gypo and says: "If you die everyone will be pleased". If he could see this film, I think he would stop doing it.

'In school they didn't teach me how to use the computer mouse, but I learned to on *Travellers Remember*!'

Selena adds: 'I used to think my family made their pegs in a factory. When I talked to my uncles I found out how it was done and how they used to sell from door to door.'

Other participants concur that the experience taught them useful media skills and gave them an increased sense of confidence and pride in their identity: Ellie Jones says 'On *Travellers Remember* I picked up a lot of skills, like using sound equipment and a scanning machine, that I didn't have before', while Maya adds 'Using the Apple Mac and digital camera were good skills to learn. You get bullied at school because you are a Traveller: it would be good to show *Travellers Remember* to the other children in school.'

Melissa Smith, 17, says 'I came to the project through my teacher at school. We did our story about my Granddad and tap dancing. Three months after he told his story, he passed away. We had to narrow down from 300 pictures. The project overall was good because it's not The Sun and you get your facts straight before and you don't talk rubbish'.

Organisations using the *Travellers Remember* DVD include museums and heritage centres, schools and colleges (as part of the PHSE and citizenship syllabus), social historians and organisations with an interest in Traveller history.

To view *Travellers Remember* free of charge visit www.travellerstimes.org.uk. Alternatively DVD copies of the stories are available to buy (£10 each or £15 for two) from The Rural Media Company, Sullivan House, 72-80 Widemarsh Street, Hereford HR4 9HG Tel: 01432 344039 Email: info@ruralmedia.co.uk Web: www.ruralmedia.co.uk. Contact The Rural Media Company if your organisation is interested in producing high quality media work and education material.

The Rural Media Company also publishes *Travellers Times*, the UK magazine for Gypsies and Travellers and those who work with Gypsies and Travellers, sharing information, contacts, and views.

The Rural Media Company works throughout the UK. We combine community and informal education, training and advocacy with the professional skills of the media industry. *Travellers Remember* is one of The Rural Media Company's latest productions of its many dealing with rural issues, working with young people and disadvantaged groups, for both voluntary groups and statutory agencies, in the 14 years since the company was formed. We welcome enquiries from groups who wish to produce effective, high-impact, high quality media projects and educational materials at the cutting edge of current policy and debate.

Release ends

Note to Editors

- The Rural Media Company is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It receives support from the UK Film Council, Screen West Midlands, Herefordshire Council and many other funders, trusts, foundations and charities. *Travellers Remember* was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Rural Impetus Newsletter Article for Summer 06 issue

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