

Stopping Places

This exhibition is a stopping place for work started by the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and then developed further with Renaissance East Midlands funding to widen audiences. The aim was to begin creating a resource for Gypsy and Traveller family history research and recording.

The methods used are the same as with any other family history project:

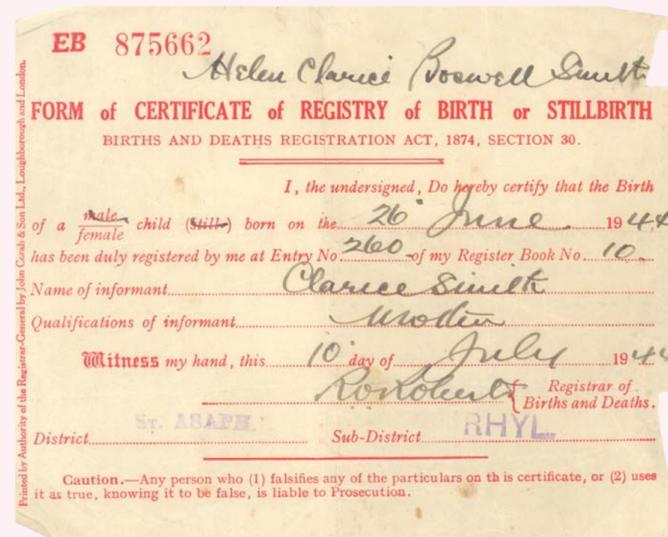
- searching records for birth, marriage and death certificates
- writing down a family tree
- recording family members to keep their stories in memory

The process began with members of the community donating photographs and documents to be copied and writing down family history. These histories were then expanded with oral histories. We want to share some of this process, even though it is at an early stage.

Because the work began with a few families, the exhibition is based around a small number of individuals telling some of their stories.

Given the vast diversity of cultural and ethnic experiences that make up the community as a whole, this is just a drop in the ocean.

But we hope it inspires you to explore your own family history.



“As I said to the BBC in Leicester, it’s our birthright to travel. We didn’t just jump up one day and decide we’ll go in a trailer; we’ll go in a wagon. We was born into it. Some like it; some love it; some hate it. But we was born to being a Gypsy; born to being a Traveller ... and the majority of people love it and I loved it and I used to love travelling.”

Extract from oral history interview, June 3 2008



Gray family with trailer, Ireland. From Boswell archive



Boswells, Isle of Man showing an early rod tent. From Boswell archive

Community History Nellie Valam extract:

‘Nellie Douglas aged 101. Nellie prefers to be called a Traveller. Nellie has seen many changes in her lifetime. Travellers no longer stopping in fields in summer and yards in towns in winter. Many are in houses and on camps now. Nellie and her husband Charlie came to live in Coalville over 30 years ago. She now lives in a mobile trailer home beside her daughter. All Nellie’s family no longer travel. To this family a way of life gone forever.



Nelly Valam with message from the queen

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