

Gypsies in Wales in 1911: approaches to searching

By Chy Hersey

This article was originally published in the March 2021 edition of *Romany Routes*, the journal of the Romany and Traveller Family History Society (Volume 15 No. 2, pages 80-82).

In the printed edition there was only room to give brief extracts from the research finds made by the author in a wide-ranging review of Romanies and Travellers who were camping in Wales on Census Day 1911.

This reprint of the article ends with a complete list of the findings. We have renumbered the pages for this online version for ease of reference.

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Most RTFHS members will be interested in specific families and names but it is also interesting to look at the distribution, location and networking of Romanies and Travellers in historic records, the censuses being obvious sources. However, these relied on the interpretation of individual enumerators, especially as many Travelling people were illiterate. So often the records, and especially the transcriptions, are inaccurate or inconsistent, making it difficult to pinpoint who and where the Travellers were, if indeed they were found!

I thought I would try one sample approach with a smaller range than England, using Ancestry records for the 1911 Census of Wales. I searched with the keyword 'Gipsy' (which was the common spelling of the time) and found 133 entries. Although some were purely place names, the majority were families whom the enumerator suggested were 'Gipsies' or living or working in 'Gipsy'-related concerns. I also then turned to 'Gypsy' and 'Gyps*' as keywords, both with only 17 results and one more family, the **Burtons**.

I consulted both pages of the full household returns, the separate census summary books, and the latter's introductory notes, not just the transcriptions. Combined, these can highlight hidden information: for example, a reference to those living in tents which does not always get copied across. Also bear in mind while searching that results come from transcriptions and mis-transcriptions, not the originals: thus, many entries found in this search had inaccurate, and idiosyncratic, surnames and forenames.

I knew I would not find everyone even if I had perfect knowledge of every likely surname. I decided to do some additional cross-checking to reveal likely flaws, even if there was a 'Gipsy' reference. As a test, I searched for **Bettews** (wrongly transcribed as **Bettens** from the household return) in the relevant summary book and looked at the lists of names. Bettews and **Stopes** was recorded, as expected. However, when I did another search for Bettews for all Wales summary books I found two entries: at Caerphilly Road, Llanishen parish and Whitchurch Common, Whitchurch parish. I then found different information at Whitchurch Common where 'Gipsy Caravans' were listed against four surnames but only two reference numbers: one for Bettews, two for **Stokes** (not Stopes) and one for **Binnell**. This separate encampment had not appeared in the original search, despite the reference to 'Gipsy Caravans' in the summary book. Going back to the full census I searched for Bettews again with no results but a lot of Bettens and variants, including William and Ellen. Searching then for Stokes and Binnell household returns I was able to transcribe their references and see that two sets of addresses were used. Without the cross-check I would not have found the name variants, the additional two surnames or the family connections.

During the searches I noticed that locations were often indicated as 'Vons', not 'Vans'). I then searched for 'Von' as a keyword in both the full census and the summary books for all Wales but no new information was found. Using 'Van' was interesting as there is a civil parish of that name but it also meant there were too many results - 1000 plus - to be

helpful! Using 'Caravan' as a keyword gave 175 results of which some were relevant but not all were necessarily Romanies or Travellers. Nonetheless I have included these in my list for others to verify. I also searched 'Tent' as a keyword; this revealed many 'Tent' references as part of occupation or place, but also a few persons of relevance.

In conclusion, we can find records by using terms such as 'Gipsy', 'Caravan',

and specific occupations like 'Hawker', and their variants, without first having any names or locations. In some cases, this will uncover people who might not otherwise be found because their details have been mangled: see **Loveridge** on page 5. Also, by comparing the records we can find family groupings and perhaps clues as to other relationships, communities and travelling patterns.

Key

The following are my list of finds using the keyword search terms described above. They give the surname of head of household, followed by name of partner if just a couple, any other surnames in the household, and then location (Registration District/Reg District No/Sub Reg District/Enumeration District/Household Schedule No/Piece) and any particular points of interest. Not all the entries are clear so apologies for any mis-interpretations, especially Welsh placenames. Your corrections are welcomed. Results from the 'Caravan' keyword search are marked ●; those from the 'Tent' keyword search are marked ▲.

Bailey, George & Alice ●

No 3 Caravan, Mill Field, Pontypridd,
Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Llanwonno/14/18/32260]

Begley, Matthias & Family & Cahill Relatives ●

No 4 Caravan, Mill Field, Pontypridd,
Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Llanwonno/14/18/32260]
Note that caravan number is duplicated.

Bettews/Bettens, William and Wife Ellen
Gypsy Van, Caerphilly Road, Whitchurch,
Llanishen, Glamorgan
[Cardiff/588/Llandaff/08/115/32052]

Binnell, Deveril & Family
Living in Vans, Mendalgief Road, Newport,
Monmouthshire or Whitchurch Common,
Whitchurch, Glamorgan
[Cardiff/588/Llandaff/18/369/32062]

Boswell, Joseph & Family ●
Caravan, Picton? Farm, Buckley, Flintshire
[Hawarden/620/Hawarden/29/173/33992]

Bridges, Thomas & Family ●

Caravan, Near Rhyswg Fawr Road, Abercarn,
Monmouthshire
[Newport/587/Mynyddislwyn/16/1/32043]

Bridges, William & Family ●

Caravan Near YMCA Buildings, Llanelly,
Camarthenshire
[Llanelly/596/Llanelly Urban/11/242/32856]

Burton, Henry & Family ●

Gypsy Caravan in a Field, Near the Ho?,
Penallt, Monmouthshire
[Monmouth/583/Trelleck/13/16/31766]

Burton, Biston & Family & Brother
Gypsy Caravan, Newchurch, Carmarthenshire
[Carmarthen/599/Conwil/20/81/33071]

Calow, Lewis & Family ●

Caravan, Gorse Road, ?Isen, Swansea,
Glamorgan
[Swansea/594/Swansea/31/449/32788]

Capper, John & Family ●

In A Caravan, Holt, Wrexham, Denbighshire
but of Mile End Road, London
[Wrexham/621/Holt/01/218/33997]

Cooke, Maud & Son •

Caravan, End of Garth Terrace, Bedling,
Glamorgan
[Merthyr Tydfil/590/Gelligaer/11/58/32412]

Craddock, Harry •

Caravan, Edinburgh Hotel Yard, Pembroke
Dock, Pembroke St Mary, Pembrokeshire
[Pembroke/601/Pembroke/04/272/33148]

Davies, John & Family •

The Caravan, Gorse Road,
[Swansea/594/Swansea/31/450/32788]

Davies, Joseph & Family •

No 7 Caravan, Mill Field, Pontypridd,
Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Llanwonno/14/18/32260]

Dean, William •

Caravan, Penucharlilan Llanfor, Bala,
Merionethshire
[Bala/626/Bala/14/18/34260]

Evans, John & Family

Gipsy Caravan, Broadmoor Common,
Wolfscastle, St Dogwell, Pembrokeshire
[Haverfordwest/602/Fishguard/20/15/33257]
Enumerator described family as 'Parish
orphans'

Flury, Martin & Family

Gipsy Tent on Lliw Common, Llandeilo
Talybont, Glamorgan
[Swansea/594/Llandeilo Talybont/
03/212/32722]

Flury, Thomas & Family/Birmingham ▲

Gipsy Camp found on Lliw Common,
Llandeilo Talybont, Glamorgan
[Swansea/594/Llandeilo Talybont/
03/213/32722]

Ford, Leonard & Family •

No 8 Caravan, Mill Field, Pontypridd,
Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Llanwonno/14/18/32260]

Francis, Charles & Family •

No 2 Caravan, Mill Field, Pontypridd,
Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Llanwonno/14/18/32260]

Fullwood, Kate & Sons •

2 Caravan In Market Place, Maesteg, Cwmdru,
Glamorgan
[Bridgend/591/Maesteg/08/381/32533]

Griffiths, Theophilus & Family ▲

Gipsy Tent, Ffald Lane, Pencarreg,
Cardiganshire
[Lampeter/605/Pencarreg/01/134/33366]

Harne, John & Family ▲

No 3 Tent on Carnhywel Road, Felinfoel,
Llanelly, Carmarthenshire
[Llanelly/596/Llanelly Rural/08/81/32840]

Hearn, Sippert

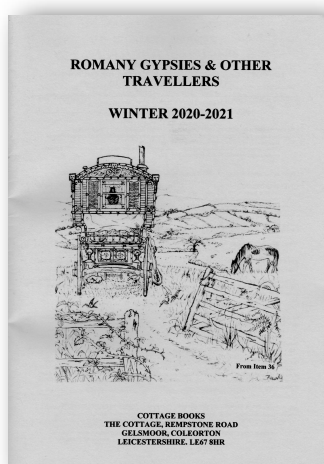
Patient (Travelling Gipsy) in Glamorgan
County Lunatic Asylum, Angelton, Bridgend,
Newcastle and Coity Higher, Glamorgan
[Bridgend/591/Bridgend/01/32592]

Hern, Mary & Children

In a Van at Twyn, Fleur de Lis, via Cardiff,
Mynyddislwyn, Monmouthshire
[Newport/587/Mynyddislwyn/04/69/32031]

Herring, Cumen & Family

In a Van at Twyn, Fleur de Lis, via Cardiff,
Mynyddislwyn, Monmouthshire
[Newport/587/Mynyddislwyn/04/70/32031]



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Hodges, James •

No 1 Caravan, Mill Field, Pontypridd,
Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Llanwonno/14/18/32260]

Hopson, Thomas & Family •

Caravan, Wangyd Crywyyth, Whitechurch,
Cardiganshire
[Cardigan/603/Newport/11/70/33273]

Hughes, Evan & Brothers

Gipsy Caravan in a Field near Cefn Y Bedd,
Hope, Flintshire
[Hawarden/620/Hawarden/19/119/33982]

Jones, John & Family/Boswell

Gipsy Caravan, Conwil Elvet,
Carmarthenshire
[Carmarthen/599/Conwil/06/69/33057]

Jones, Vernon & Family

Gipsy's Caravan, Pandy Capel, Corwen -
Gwyddelwern, Merionethshire
[Corwen/625/Corwen/13/97/34215]

Johns, William & Family

Gipsy Van, Muthern and St Pierre, Chepstow,
Monmouthshire
[Chepstow/582/Chepstow/20/69/31698]

Lea, Bertie & Family/Lee

Gipsy Encampment, Llanfynydd, Wrexham,
Flintshire
[Hawarden/620/Hawarden/22/92/33985]

Lee, John & Family ▲

In Tent In Field on ?Ruthin Road, Caerleon,
Monmouthshire
[Newport/587/Caerleon/02/358/31947]

Lee, Seth & Family •

Caravan, Mynydd bach Common,
Waunarlwyd, Cockett, Glamorgan
[Swansea/594/Llandeilo Talybont/
12/269/32721]

Lee, Thomas ▲

Caravan or Tent In Field Near Panty-ffyn,
Mountain Hall, Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorgan
[Merthyr Tydfil/590/Lower Merthyr Tydfil/
03/330/32427]

Lorell/Lovell, Walter & Family •

Gipsys Caravan, Clyne Common, Brynau,
Glamorgan
[Gower/595/Gower Eastern/05/108/32811]

Lovell, Edward

Gipsy Caravan Behind Lyn Merchant Farm,
Bedwas Road, Caerphilly, Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Eglwysilan/27/5/32237]

Loveridge, John & Family •

No 5 Caravan, Mill Field, Pontypridd,
Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Llanwonno/14/18/32260]
Note: the transcription gives the surname as
Lwendgl and occupation as Banker, not
Hawker!

Loverige, John & Family ▲

Tent, Nr Pentwyn Brickworks, Abersychan,
Monmouthshire
[Pontypool/586/Pontypool/12/260/31907]

Machen/Mochen, Michael & Family

No 1 Tent on Carnhywel Road, Felinfoel,
Llanelly, Carmarthenshire
[Llanelly/596/Llanelly Rural/08/81/32840]

Machen/Mochen, Tom & Family

No 2 Tent on Carnhywel Road, Felinfoel,
Llanelly, Carmarthenshire
[Llanelly/596/Llanelly Rural/08/81/32840]

Osborne, Henry & Family •

Caravan in Market Place, Maesteg,
Glamorgan
[Bridgend/591/Maesteg/08/380/32533]
Occupation given as Travelling Showman

Pedlar, William and Sarah •

Caravan, Fair Field, Treherbert, Rhondda,
Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Rhondda/07/199/32335]

Powell, William •

Caravan in a Field near Panty-ffyn,
Mounlaniharl, Merthyr
[Merthyr Tydfil/590/Lower Merthyr Tydfil/
03/329/32427]
Also possibly of 8 Pontmorlais, Merthyr

Price, Craddoc & Family
Gipsy Caravan, Radyr Quarry Road, Radyr,
Glamorgan
[Cardiff/588/Llandaff/12/258/32056]

Price, Craddoc (Junior) & Family
Gipsy Van, Radyr Quarry Road, Radyr,
Glamorgan
[Cardiff/588/Llandaff/12/259/32056]

Price, Fred with wife and brother ▲
In A Tent On Common back Llandefalle,
Knighton, Radnorshire
[Brecknock/610/Llangorse/08/47/33581]

Price, Fred & Family
Gipsy Van, Radyr Quarry Road, Radyr,
Glamorgan
[Cardiff/588/Llandaff/12/260/32056]

Price, James & Family
Gipsy Caravan, Penygroes Nr Trelech
Village, Llanfyrnach, Tre Lech ar Bettws,
Carmarthenshire
[Carmarthen/599/Conwil/23/19/33074]

Price, Mary Ann & Grandson ▲
Gipsy Tent/Camp, Garnfoch Common,
Gorseinon, Penderry, Glamorgan
[Swansea/594/Llandeilo Talybont/
08/168/32727]

Price, W & Family ●
Caravan, Near Heolcnafpa, Llanfihangel
Cwmdu, Breconshire
[Crickhowell/611/Cwmdv/03/58/33586]

Price, William & Family ●
Caravan, Llanerch Lane, Talgarth,
Breconshire
[Hay/612/Talgarth/08/80/33625]
Described as of no fixed abode

Riley, Mary & Family ●
Caravan/Gipsy Tent, Near Council School,
Pembrey
[Llanelly/596/Pembrey/04/250/32872]

Riley, John & Family ●
Caravan/Gipsy Tent, Near Council School,
Pembrey
[Llanelly/596/Pembrey/04/249/32872]

Roberts, Gideon & Family ●
Caravan Nr Y M C A Buildings, Llanelly,
[Llanelly/596/Llanelly Urban/11/241/32856]

Smith, Cornelius & Family/Boswell ▲
2 Tent, Pentwyn Near Brick Works,
Abersychan, Monmouthshire
[Pontypool/586/Pontypool/12/261/31907]

Smith, James & Family ▲
Tent, Pentwyn Brickworks, Abersychan,
Monmouthshire
[Pontypool/586/Pontypool/12/262/31907]

Smith, Mark and Johanna ●
No 4 Caravan, Mill Field, Pontypridd,
Glamorgan
[Pontypridd/589/Llanwonno/14/18/32260]
Note that caravan number is duplicated.

Stebbing, Edwin F & Family ▲
Tent, Taylor's American Circus, Llangadock
(Pro Tem), Carmarthenshire
[Llandovery/597/Llangadock/01/156/32894]
Occupations described as Acrobats

Stopes/?Stokes, William & Family
Gipsy Caravan, Caerphilly Road, Llanishen,
Glamorgan
[Cardiff/588/Llandaff/08/116/32052]

Stokes, Joseph & Family
Living in Vans, Mendalgief Road, Newport,
Monmouthshire or Whitchurch Common,
Whitchurch, Glamorgan
[Cardiff/588/Llandaff/18/370/32062]

Thomas, Alfred & family
Gipsy Van, Radyr, Glamorgan
[Cardiff/588/Llandaff/12/261/32056]

Thomas, G ▲
Steam Roller Caravan, Rock Bedwellty,
Monmouthshire
[Bedwellty/585/Rock Bedwellty/
04/204/31887]

Thomas, William & Family
Gipsy Caravan, ?Glansvah Road, Llangian,
Caernarvonshire
[Pwllheli/629/Pwllheli/11/54/34383]
Described as of Holyhead

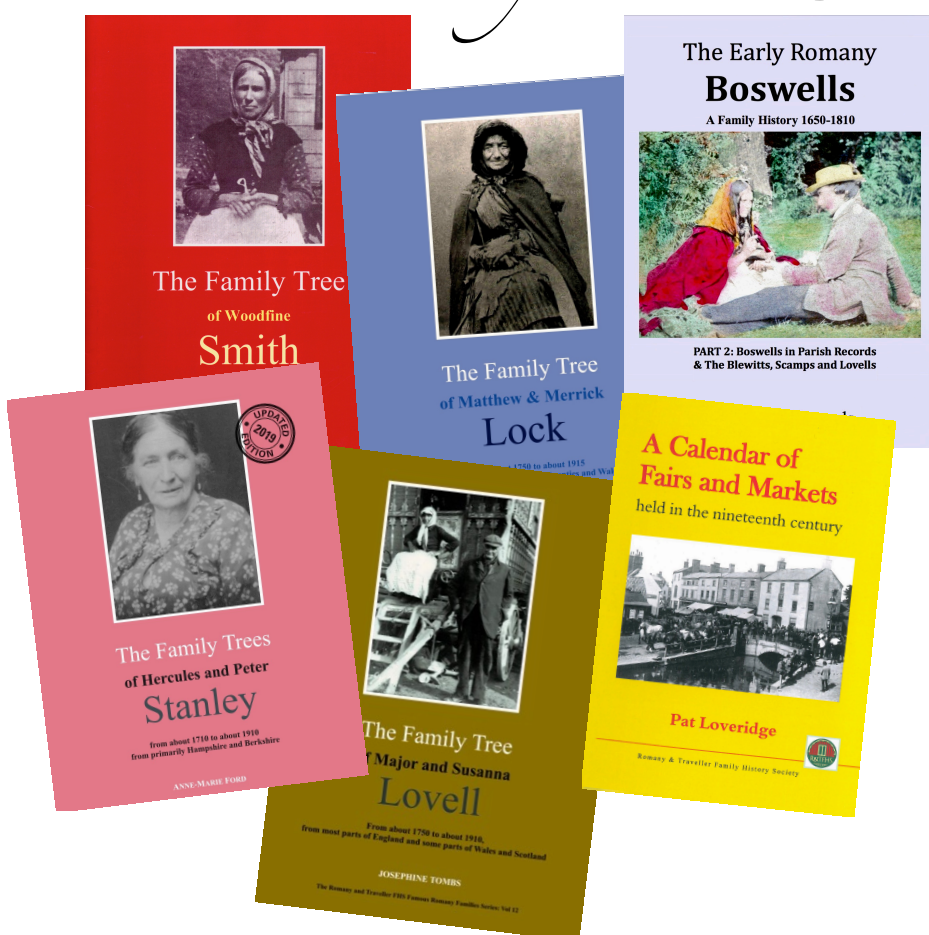
Tierney, Henry and Wife Martha Ellen
Gipsy Van, Beach Road, Hiracl, Bangor,
Caernarvonshire
[Bangor/631/Bangor/05/368/34494]
Occupation given as Showman

Tierney, Leonard and Family
Gipsy Van, Yard, Beach Road, Hiracl, Bangor,
Caernarvonshire
[Bangor/631/Bangor/05/369/34494]
Occupation given as Showman

Toogood, Alfred & Family ●
Caravan, William Street, Cwm,
Monmouthshire
[Bedwellty/585/Aberystroth/08/14/31821]
Occupation given as Travelling Showman

Walker, Charles & Family ▲
In a Tent, Pentwyn, Abersychan,
Monmouthshire
[Pontypool/586/Pontypool/12/259/31907]

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