

Travellers in Ealing

Traveller groups have frequented Ealing for many years. Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) 'caravan counts' consistently record Ealing as having one of the largest Traveller populations in the Greater London area. These figures do not include the large and unrecognised 'hidden' Traveller communities who, due to a deficit in caravan site provision and rapid evictions from roadside encampments, live in other forms of accommodation.

The total Traveller population in Ealing is effected by mobility, but estimates put the total in excess of 2,000 individuals at certain times of the year. Currently, the variety of Traveller groups resorting to, or residing in, the borough are largely from the following traditional communities:

The Travellers have accommodation situations that include:

- Official council caravan site provision
- Roadside and other unofficial transient camp sites
- Negotiated seasonal circus and fairground sites
- Council housing (temporary and permanent)
- Privately rented addresses in areas of housing need
- Hostel and bed and breakfast accommodation.

Travellers of Irish heritage

Traveller Irish communities are the largest group in the Ealing area. Parish registers show that they have had associations with the area for at least two centuries.

Gypsy Corner

The A40 trunk road that links west London to Fishguard in south Wales and the southern Irish port of Rosslare, runs through the borough and has long been used by Gypsy Traveller groups travelling from southern Ireland to London. The junction of the A40 and Horn Lane in North Acton is known as 'Gypsy Corner' in recognition of its former use as a stopping place for Traveller Irish groups passing in and out of London.

The Official Ealing Caravan Site, with pitches for 24 families, is situated behind North Acton station about 1 mile from the area known as 'Gypsy Corner', and the houses along the A40 near Horn Lane still accommodate Traveller Irish families.

Acton

Acton, with its industrial background, afforded opportunities to pursue traditional metal recycling trades as well as the development of entrepreneurial involvement in the extensive rebuilding of London after the second World War. Many demobbed soldiers rejoined their communities here.

Northolt

Northolt is also an area traditionally used by Irish Traveller groups. The modern housing estates are built over a former racecourse and common ground that were well used by Travellers, particularly for pursuing other traditional occupations such as dealing and racing horses.

Southall

Travellers were well-represented in general Irish immigration to the Southall area after 1945, and the Livestock market still attracts a strong Gypsy Traveller involvement.

Roma of other European heritage

Since the break-up of political systems in Eastern Europe, Roma families have travelled to Ealing. They now constitute the second largest Gypsy Traveller group in the borough.

Roma families have a very strong allegiance to their traditions, which can be traced back to northern India and ancient Persia (modern Iran and Iraq). Their first language is Roma, and their second language is generally that of their point of departure eg Polish, Czech, Slovak, Albanian, Romanian or any of the languages of the former Yugoslavia.

Oral traditions are strong and many adult Roma speak at least four languages. Children generally learn to speak English very quickly, and add an oral ability in English to their families' multilingual repertoire.

Occupational Travellers (OCT)

OCT (English, European and international circus and fairground people) arrive at pre-booked sites at specific times of the year, generally around holiday times, and provide entertainment for the duration of their stay. Ealing Common, Walpole Park, Acton Park and Southall Park are the most frequently used locations in Ealing.

Circus families, although sharing a common culture, can be from a range of backgrounds. Ealing Traveller achievement service has had experience of working with circus families from Australia, France, Germany, Spain, New Zealand, USA, England and Italy, as well as English families engaged in circus work for the first time.

Fairground families are generally of European background and groups who come to Ealing have frequently been from the West Midlands and the North-East of England.

Although TAS always recommends short-term school placements, some OCT are supported through 'distance learning' arrangements linked to schools in the area where they 'over-winter'.

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- No

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