

The Scottish Storytellers

Jess Smith

It was early 1982 and we were with my father at death's door... I made a silent promise: to discover as much information about Scottish Travellers as it was possible to find, and write a book, a simple, easy to read book.

Yet as I walked away from the hospital as the lined sheet was being pulled across his face I knew there was no way I could write as much as a goodbye note, let alone a book in memory of that good man, my father, Charles Riley.

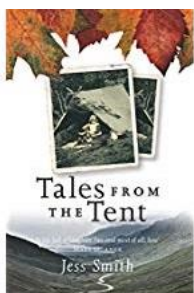
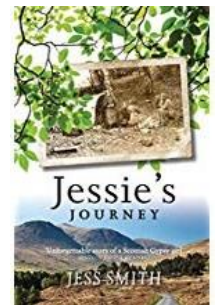


Twenty years later not only have I written his promised book "The Way of the Wanderers" but I have also penned an autobiography trilogy, a story book and a novel. It has taken many years of research; trawling through piles of documents, linking Celtic and Gaelic legends, reaching back into my childhood of nights at campfires listening to the Shanechies re-tell the old tales of the Travelling people so that they should never die, but live on as part of Scotland's oldest culture. Finding the cultural time-line has been an almost impossible task. Orally we existed, but in the wide world we were erroneously written about. So it gives me great joy to know I broke the barrier of academia to discover our history and tell the truth.

Books by Jess Smith

Jessie's Journey

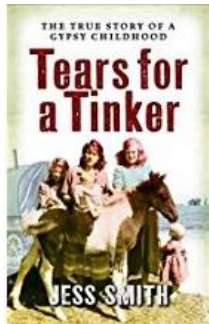
From the ages of 5 to 15, Jess Smith lived with her parents, sisters and a mongrel dog in an old, blue Bedford bus. They travelled the length and breadth of Scotland, and much of England too, stopping here and there until they were moved on by the local authorities or driven by their own instinctive need to travel. By campfires, under the unchanging stars they brewed up tea, telling stories and singing songs late into the night. 'Jessie's Journey' describes what it was like to be one of the last of the traditional travelling folk. It is not an idyllic tale, but despite the threat of bigoted abuse and scattered schooling, humour and laughter run throughout a childhood teeming with unforgettable characters and incidents.



Tales from the Tent'

"Tales from the Tent" continues Jess Smith's story from the first book in the series, "Jessie's Journey". Jess has left school, and after a miserable spell working in a paper-mill, she abandons the settled life and takes to the roads once more. The old bus has gone, to be replaced by a caravan and campsites. Times are changing, and it is becoming harder and harder for travellers to make a living by doing the rounds of seasonal jobs like the berry-picking. Conscious that the old way of life was disappearing before her eyes, Jess stored up as much as she could gather from the rich folklore of the travellers' world. Now she retells some of the many stories and songs she heard by the campfire or at the tent's mouth. Interwoven with these tales is the story of Jess and her life on the road - her first loves, her friendships, her

days at the hawking and berry-picking, the exploits of her lovable but infuriating family, the unforgettable characters she meets.

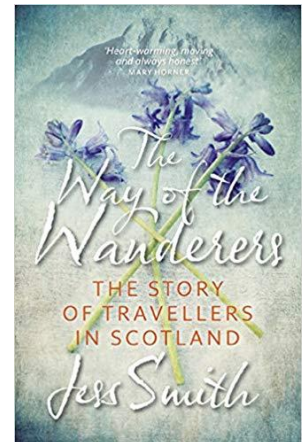


Tears for a Tinker

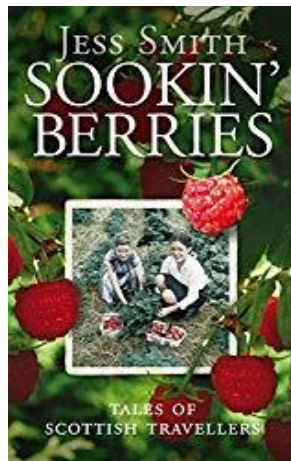
In the third and final book of Jess Smith's autobiographical trilogy, Jess traces her eventful life with Dave and their three children, from their earliest years together. Their adventures and achievements are interspersed with stories of her parents' childhood, her father's 'tall tales' and the eerie echoes of ghosts and hauntings that she has heard from gypsies and travellers over many years. Fans of Jess Smith will not be disappointed with her latest memoir, full of more unforgettable characters and insight into the travellers' way of life, a tradition that stretches back more than 2000 years and survives in the rich oral tradition of its people.

Way of the Wanderers: The Story of Travellers in Scotland

TV programmes like "My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding", books like "Gypsy Boy" and the recent disturbances at Dale Farm have created enormous interest in the history and lifestyle of gypsies. Scottish gypsies, known as travellers, have wandered Scotland's roads and byways for centuries, and their turbulent history is captured in this passionate book by Jess Smith, the bestselling author of *Jessie's Journey*. This is less a conventional history than a personal pilgrimage through the stories, songs and culture of a people for whom freedom is more important than security and a campfire under the stars is preferable to a warm hearth within stone walls. Settled society has always discriminated against travellers and Jess tells shocking stories of bullying, violence, the enforced break-up of families and separate schooling. But drawing on her own and her family's experiences, she also captures the magic and drama of days wandering the roads and working the land, and brings to life the travellers' rich and vibrant traditions.



Sookin' Berries



Introducing "Sookin' Berries", her collection of stories for younger readers, Jess Smith writes: 'I have been a gatherer of tales for most of my life, and I suppose it all began when I was a wee girl. I shared a home with parents, seven sisters and a shaggy dog. It could be said that I lived a different sort of life from most other children, because 'home' was an old blue bus. We were known as tinkers or travellers, descendants of those who have wandered the highways and by ways of Scotland for two thousand years. Acclaimed for her autobiographical trilogy, "*Jessie's Journey*", Jess is on a mission to pass on the stories she heard as a girl to the young readers of today. If you are aged from around 10 going on 100, then you're a fine age to read, enjoy and, hopefully, remember forever these ancient oral tales of Scotland's travelling people. What I'd like you to do in this book is to come with me on the road, back to those days when it was time to pack up and get going, and to take the way of our ancestors. I want you to imagine that, as my friend, you are by the campfire listening to the magical Scottish stories that have been handed down through generations of travellers'.

Bruar's Rest

is an epic tale of love and loyalty set against the backdrop of World War One. The story opens in the Highlands at the beginning of the twentieth century. The gypsy wife of wild drunkard Rory Stewart dies giving birth to their second son. Many years pass, and Rory and his sons are rootless travellers on the roads of Scotland. One night, during a winter storm, they save another traveller family from freezing to death in a blizzard. Bruar Stewart and one of the girls he rescues, the hot-blooded and beautiful Megan, fall in love. But the First World War is declared, tearing their lives apart. Bruar is reported missing in action, and Megan sets off on a long and perilous journey to find him...An epic tale of love and loyalty by the author of the spellbinding autobiographical trilogy, *Jessie's Journey*.

