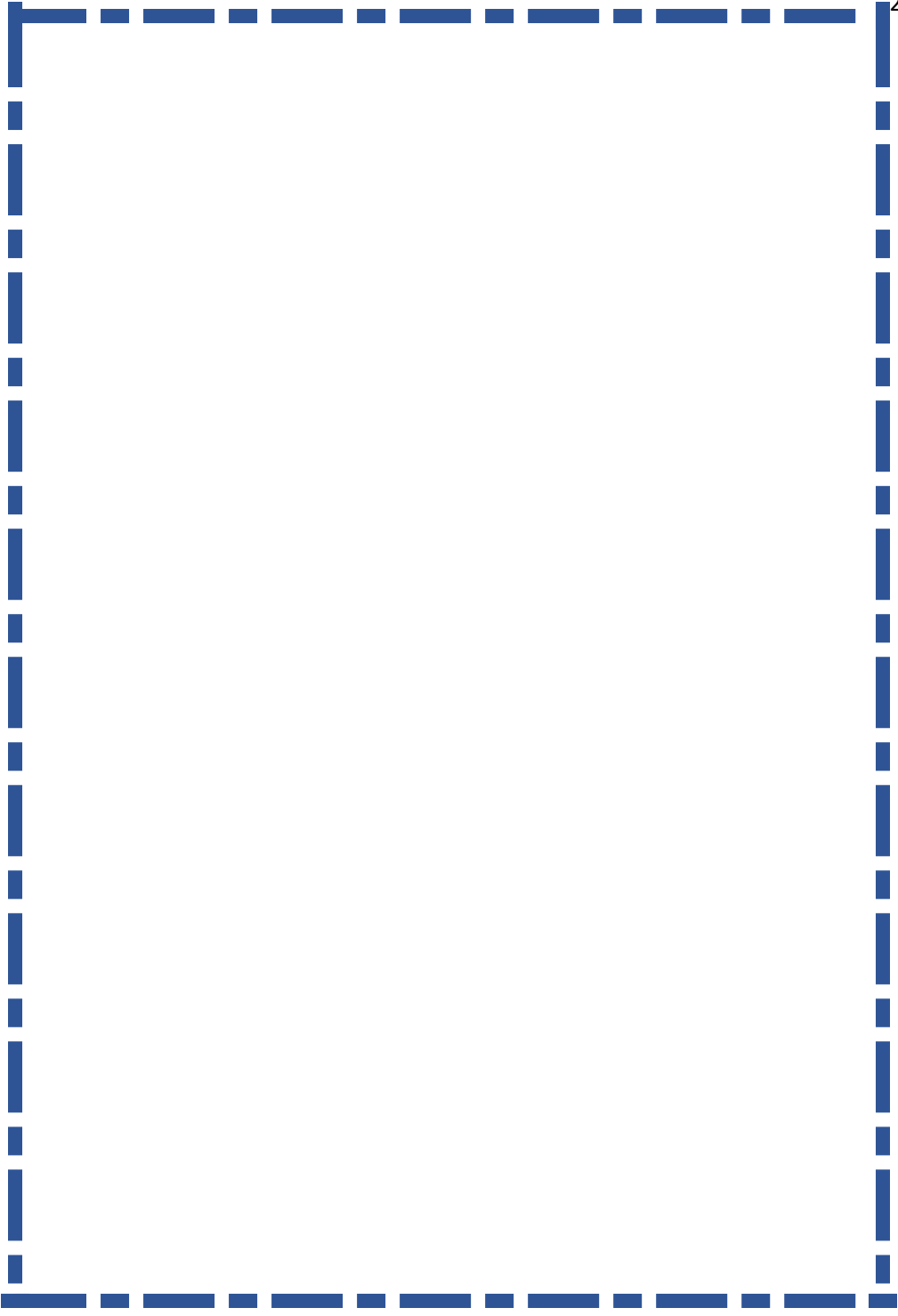


Memories:
A Collection of Stories
written by
Traveller Women in Donegal





You can listen to the audio of this book by opening your camera on your smart phone and holding it in front of this QR code. It will give you the option to open the link, which will take you to the recording of the story.



Acknowledgements

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This project would not have been possible without the collective hard work, creativity and dedication of the Traveller women who wrote these stories.

My Family by Ellie Ward

My name is Ellie Ward and I am a Traveller.

I got married at 18 to Pat. We have 6 children, whose names are Leanne, Martin, Charlie, Abbey Rosezara, Pat and Bernie. They were mostly reared in a house.

We sit down and tell them stories from years ago.

They still love the travelling life in the summer in the trailer.

They love to speak in Cant, which is a traditional Traveller language. They love to go to school and education is very important to us.

It's a lot easier nowadays to live than years ago when times were very hard. Children have it easy nowadays.

I still think years ago were homelier times.



My Memories by Bridget McDonagh

A happy day for me was helping my daddy with his horses, feeding them and giving them water.

My mother's cooking was the best no matter what. She

always had everything so nice and tasty. Her baked bread was so nice that it didn't matter if I ate anything else.

The day my little girl was born I cried with happiness. She was only a very tiny little girl. I never gave up on her and I don't think I ever will.

The day I got my little house for my children was another happy day for me.

I had all my boys before I had my daughter. I love them and all my little grandchildren to bits.

I was on the side of the road in a trailer with my kids. The winters were very hard for us.



Me and My Son

by Kathleen McDonagh

I like to cuddle my baby
before bedtime.

I like to spend some time playing
with Michael.

It makes me happy
knowing Michael is fed.

We like to dance
and have fun.

We are a very close
mother and son.

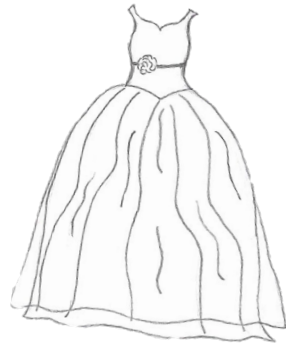
Our bond
will never be broken.



The Wedding Dress by Teresa McDonagh

Seven years ago, I got married to my husband. It was the happiest day of my life and I was so excited for the wedding day to come after he proposed to me.

We flew to England for a beautiful wedding dress to be designed exactly how I wanted it. It was my husband's first time flying and he was so nervous.



It took a few times flying back and forth to get my beautiful dress just right and to bring it home to Ireland. I was so worried my husband would see the dress on the way back because it is bad luck for the groom to see the bride's dress before the wedding.

It was just my luck as he carried it onto the plane, hidden in the wedding bag, it decided to rip! Thankfully it only ripped a bit at the bottom and he didn't see it. We got it back safely and with the dress hidden. I left it in my mother's before our beautiful wedding day.

Mary From Dungloe by Kathleen Ward

I came from a big family of nineteen children with nine boys and ten girls.

We practised the Traveller ways, travelling all around Ireland and England in a horse and cart.

My oldest sister Mary was the first born and was she born in Dungloe, so we called her Mary from Dungloe.



My father was a tin smith and we lived in tents on the side of the road. We were all very happy and I remember my mammy's cooking.

We didn't have any toys and enjoyed making our own toys. We would plait the rushes at the side of the road, play jack stones and hide and seek.

I got married young at 16 and had a family of 12.

I didn't get any schooling, but my family and my children did.

Walking Home by Bridget Ward (Snr)

I am a 55-year-old Traveller woman.

To survive, life skills were handed down to me from my mother on how to cook, clean, hand wash clothes and know how to beg.

Going to school was very important and we were sent to school every day, dropped off by my father.



We would then walk home from school in the evening in groups with our cousins.

I left school at 13 years old with very little reading and writing.

I married at 18 years old, which was 37 years ago.

We were very nomadic, travelling around Ireland and the United Kingdom. I am now living in Bundoran in County Donegal. I have lived here and in Cliffony for over 20 years. I have nine children and nineteen grandchildren. I became a grandmother at the young age of 36 years old.

Family by Bridget Ward (Jnr)

I remember back when I was five. It was my first day at school and my father took me on his bike. I was really



excited, but also nervous and I didn't want my father to leave.

I also remember the day I got married. I was 19 years old. All of our families came together and we celebrated a traditional Traveller wedding with five beautiful wedding cakes made by Traveller women, including my mother.

Today I am 43 years old, I have 8 children, five boys and three girls.

I became a grandmother at 42 and I have a beautiful granddaughter. We are a very close family and I am a very hands-on nanny.

My Children by Geraldine Ward

My name is Geraldine Ward. I was Geraldine McDonagh before I was married. I was only 15 years old when my husband Jimmy came to ask my dad and mum for me to get married to him. We decided to get married. He stole me away and we lived with each other for 12 months and decided to get married when I became 17. He is the love of my life forever and the only man that has ever had my heart, 'till death do us part. I waited six and a half years for my first son, John. The day I found out I was pregnant with him, I had the shock of my life and I reared him in blue and white clothes for three years after I had him, after our blessed lady. I promised her this; to give me a baby to rear in blue and white clothes for three years, and I did. I was so thankful to her. The day he came into this world, it was the happiest day of my life.



I have a wee girl Rosie, coming on 14. She is a daddy's girl. I remember one day she was very sick with a vomiting bug

and made me very scared that I would lose her. I remember hugging her so tight by her bedside, but thank God, she got better and I was so proud of her and relieved.

My husband is very into horses and my kids really love them.

My son Charlie is mad for them. He is only 12 years old and can do everything with a horse like a man. I am so proud of him.

I like my children going to school and I am so happy they are getting fully educated because I didn't.

I am 49 years young coming at Christmas. I was 35 years young when I had my first grandchild. I was a young granny and it made me so proud. I have 10 grandchildren now and 11 children of my own so I am happy for what I have. I am 32 years married. I like birthday parties for my children and surprise them. My oldest girl Kate was a really good help around this and I miss her so much about. I love them all so much.



My Christmas Boy by Nikki Devanney

My son Christopher was born on Christmas day.

He is always a happy boy, always singing and dancing.

Other happy days of my life include when my wee son JJ was born and also when my baby girl Harper was born.

Other happy days are when we all go places together as a family and when the kids are happy.



Illustrations by Pamela Cullotty and Kyle Quill.

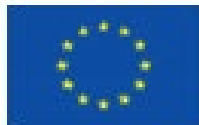
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**Adult
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