

KUSHTI BOK ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY 1ST 2021-31ST DECEMBER 2021

Well in spite of Covid and all the restrictions Kushti Bok have had an amazing year.

All monthly meetings have been well attended, via Zoom and once our face to face meetings started up members had the option of in person or Zoom attendance.

Kushti Bok Display (Ray Wills and Sue Miller worked really hard gathering information and photos) Poole Museum ran the display on local Gypsies and Travellers, from June until October, which was well attended, many social media comments, also Guest book gave us some really good feedback and resulted in many visitors attending our events later in the year. Many libraries are interested in hosting the display, others are asking for a similar display from other areas of Dorset. The display will be shown in Shire Hall Dorchester in January 2022, with an event of stories from Ray Wills and Dan Turner (the Gypsy Poet and KB members) arranged with DEED, an education group.

Kushti Bok chair is on the Bournemouth and Poole Holocaust committee, who produce an annual event as near as possible to January 27th. KB always make sure There is always some content re Gypsies and Travellers. One part is a GRT person to light a candle for the Roma and Sinti, then a young GRT person to read out a pledge. The event is always attended by many of the local dignitaries and the GRT community. KB also supports The Dorset Multicultural Network, with a reading at their annual Holocaust event annually in January. This year a KB member will be filmed talking about "ONE DAY".

Our Roma Holocaust Memorial Service again went ahead on 2nd August 2021, for the FIFTH year, the room was filled to capacity. In 2016 our chair attended the Roma Holocaust Memorial Service in Auschwitz-Birkenau, she vowed to make sure that this event would always be remembered. This is always a good way for members of the Gypsy and Traveller community to interact with local Dorset and BCP residents and council officials and dignitaries, who share all they have learnt with other Council officials, and many others. This event goes a long way to ensure Gypsies worldwide are not the forgotten people of the Holocaust. The event gets good social media and press coverage. Apart

from a few Romanies attending an outside meet up in Hyde Park, this event was the first of its kind in England. It has encouraged many other GRT organisations and individuals to mark the event.

For the second year running, Kushti Bok have been instrumental in arranging the flying of the Romany Flag, over Dorchester/Christchurch/Poole and Bournemouth Civic offices and of course Kingston Maurward College (where the service is held) to commemorate The Night of the Gypsies 2nd August 1944.

The first Community meet up, September 21st at Kinson BCP area, where local GRT members can bring in their family trees or details of their heritage and ancestors, local residents are welcomed to come and join us for a drink and cake, to meet local Romanies, many who already know them and get to realize the rich culture and Heritage of their neighbours and also learn of the "On the Road Travellers" who regularly visit the area mostly in Summer months. The second was on November 13th, which was a special event to remember all DORSET Ex servicemen and women who served this country. Travellers Times attended and the article written and posted online has shown much interest from many GRTs in other parts of the Country. KB chair laid a wreath (escorted by Rev. Herbert) at Dorchester Cenotaph for remembrance day 11th November. It seems Kushti Bok has started a trend for future years, as GRT members and Organisations countrywide, have expressed the way forward, many have already secured an invitation, to lay a Poppy wreath, from their local Councils for 2022.

Dorset Council Forum was always well attended by Partners and many Dorset and BCP Councillors and officers, it was kept going by KB organising online meetings and the content of the Agenda, even though Liaison Team stayed away due to some legal action brought by a site resident.. After much negotiation with Dorset Council, and interest from many partners asking to attend, the DC Forum has survived and will once again be owned and hosted by Dorset Council with their Equality and Diversity Councillor chairing, KB chair will now act as Vice chair. The Forum is always a good way for interacting and networking. GRT community are welcome to come along with any issues. Many partners find the Forum a good place to make GRT community aware of issues happening in the Dorset Council area. Presentations include planning

officers making GRT aware of the Local Plan and how they can become involved, information is given to advise GRT and others that Dorset Council are looking to identify land for new Gypsy sites. Emergency service officers and Police , attend where GRT can ask questions, make the services aware of any issues or worries, regarding site safety and the many Hate and racist incidents in the area. Kushti Bok was responsible for recent visits and check ups from the Fire service, where the findings will be acted upon to make the sites safer.

Kushti Bok members regularly attend the Health Ambassadors meetings held every 2-4weeks this is arranged by DREC. These meetings have been invaluable to many of the community, who can via KB make their thoughts and fears known to the NHS and CCG, have first-hand advice made available to them. The information regarding Covid has been passed on to GRT many of whom were finding it difficult to decide about vaccinations and side effects. Some KB members made short videos regarding the annual Flu vaccinations.

Much headway has been achieved by KB members attending BCP and Dorset Council briefings, regarding “Unauthorised encampments” , and raising awareness of how there are many ways to avoid problems from both Travellers and Non Travellers. Hate and racism towards Travellers in the Summer months is unacceptable and both councils were advised of the benefits of Negotiated and Alternative stopping places. After a presentation from KB members BCP council who previously decided it was not for them, will now be re visiting the benefits of Negotiated and Alternative Stopping.

KB is always in close contact with many other GRT Organizations, attending Training sessions given by Traveller Movement, (Politics and Voting) Friends Family and Travellers, (The New Police Bill , CPS) Gate Herts and Report Racism.

Two KB Trustees have been invited to sit on the CPS panel for Wessex, to look at ,then comment and advise on a number of different past cases.

We are very involved with The Churches Network for Gypsies and Travellers, who were instrumental in getting a pledge from the Synod to support the Travelling way of life by identifying Church land for stopping places,. Rev/Canon Jonathan Herbert (KB member) spoke on Radio 4 about how the Churches may allow use of their land for stopping places for GRT.

KB has been organising a Heritage Lottery Funding bid, to enable a replacement of the much damaged Legend Pole which is situated in Kingston Maurward College. Sadly because of staff changes at KMC and no KB visits at one of the RHMS days because of bad weather the original which was in need of restoration, deteriorated beyond repair. This Project if we gain funding will go a long way to enable many GRT community members to gain training in many Romany/Travellers traditional and modern works. The project will last for six months bringing together GRT (who will be and non GRT community. Even if we do not get the funding KB volunteers will still persevere to make sure that the Legend Pole is replaced.

December 18th saw many Kushti Bok members attending Hillfield Friary with Revs Jonathan Herbert and Roger Redding, and planting some of the 100 trees to commemorate its centenary, and our Queens Jubilee .

Kushti Bok supports “Drive to Survive” Kushti Bok members attended their rally in London on July 7th 2021 .

Several Kushti Bok members attended Dorchester “Stand up to Racism “ in April 2021,where Dan Turner spoke well for GRT rights. Many also attended the SUTR on December 13th 2021.

Kushti Bok continues its advocacy work even supporting and advising GRT over the Christmas Period. We are pleased to say that in 2022 we will be partnering Citizens Advice Dorset who will be employing an Experienced Advocacy worker to work with us ,specifically for Dorset GRT community. Kushti Bok member Rosina James site resident continues to give support and help to other Ash Oaks residents regarding rent queries, help with Census forms and Covid related issues etc.

The Kushti Bok social media page is doing very well. People reached in the last seven days was 3.8K.
