

Kate

Kate*, is a 48 year old Traveller who was born in Boscombe. Her mum and dad got divorced when she was young. When she was little she travelled, but she doesn't remember this. She travels now, stopping on Traveller's places in a caravan, but was settled for part of her life.

Kate has difficult memories of her early life. 'At school I felt I didn't fit in, I felt different. Children were mean. It was difficult to fit in either way – I had some problems with Travellers so didn't fit in with them, and had problems at school because the other kids didn't want to know me because I was a Gypsy.' Kate gravitated away from everyone, and became a loner.

Kate's first marriage was to a gorja* and they had a child. She lived in houses in Christchurch and Bournemouth, but wasn't happy with a gorja lifestyle – no-one knew their neighbours, or spoke to each other much. She realised it wasn't the life she wanted; she hated living in a house and felt trapped. 'I didn't know *why* I didn't like it. It took me a long time to realise.' Kate split up with her husband and was on her own for a few years.

Later, she met her second husband, John, who was also a Traveller. They talked, and she realised his mum and dad went to the karaoke her family used to go to. He knew her family, but they had never met before. John had been brought up as a Traveller and had lived in trailers. When he met Kate he was living a settled life with his family after recently splitting from his gorja partner. Like Kate, he was not living the life he wanted. 'We seemed to have so much in common –meeting was fate, our destiny.'

Kate says discrimination towards Travellers is 'quite common.' A friend of theirs bought a piece of land that he was doing some work on. Kate and her husband stayed there for a couple of weeks. People drove past shouting 'dirty pikeys.' She says they tend to accept this type of discrimination because it happens so often, although this term is extremely offensive.

Kate enjoys the Traveller lifestyle. 'Everyone knows everyone, which is good and bad. If you're on a site and go to the toilet or shower you're gone half an hour because you see someone and start talking.' On bank holidays she goes to the big fairs and markets on Southampton Common, and in Bridgewater, Kempton and other places, and meets up with family.

Kate and John are now happy living the lifestyle to which they were born. 'We are so in love and wish we had met many years before.'

*Name has been changed

*Gorja (or gawjie) is the term for a non-travelling person