



aTown
explores
a book

Zine created by Esme Fisher

*With contributions from: Lily Bowers,
Amy Jennery, Tatenda Michael Manyarara
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*Support from: Hannah Collisson,
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ATownExploresABook
festival was established in
2017 and is organised and run
by ExploreTheArch theatre company.

Based in St Leonards on Sea, each year a
heritage book is explored by artists, schools
and local businesses resulting in a
multi-site festival of community creativity.

To see what ATownExploresABook 2022
has in store, or to get involved please
scan the QR code or follow us on
Instagram and Facebook
@ATownExploresABook

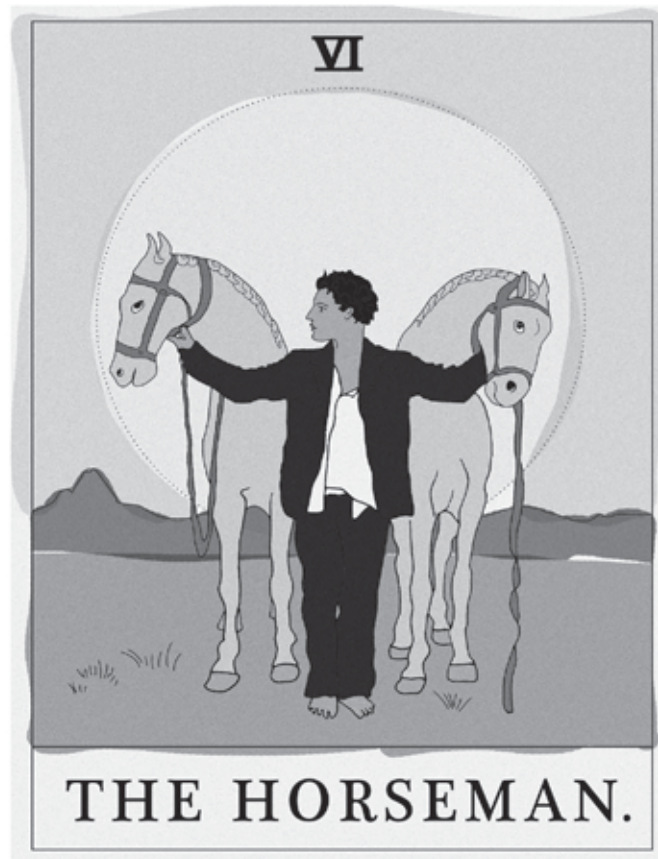


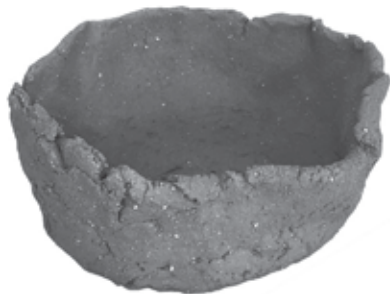
DIDDAKOI ZINE
A TOWN EXPLORES
A BOOK 2022



Tarot cards were first designed nearly 600 years ago. They were used much like other cards, to play games with. This was until the Romany community popularised using Tarot cards to tell fortunes, bringing fortune telling into the mainstream during the Victorian era.

Although travellers and tarot are now broadly connected, traditionally Romany people would practise Cartomancy: a way to tell fortunes with a deck of normal playing cards. Romany matriarchs have passed down these traditional practices for centuries.





The Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) community often experience a close relationship with the natural world. At the beginning of Godden's novel, *The Diddakoi*, Kizzy and her great grandmother are not travelling but live statically in a caravan in an orchard. Their paths and lines are in the grass. Their way of life is close to the elements and reflects the many, varied lifestyle choices seen on the Sussex coast including static caravan living in various forms.

There are just four permanent sites, with waiting lists, for the GRT in East Sussex and we're exploring how this impacts this community.

Wayfaring.

One of the exciting aspects of the ATownExploresABook festival is the mentee programme supporting early career freelance artists in developing their own practice and learning about creating festival projects. Ceramicist Emma Harding is exploring the theme of wayfaring in the festival, considering the paths and lines that we create and the lines and patterns we find in nature. She invited the festival mentees to explore with her.

First we drew and wrote about our ideas and then we made marks in clay. We then pressed natural forms and made shapes that related to our understanding of the natural world. Emma will be exploring with school children and festival viewers in 2022.

Scan the QR code to see the process.



Diddakoi means half Romany, a traveller of mixed descent.

The ATownExploresABook book choice for 2022 is Rumer Godden's *The Diddakoi* on the 50th anniversary of the novel's publication. The novel is a fascinating insight into Sussex village life in the early 1970s, focused around a mixed race orphaned child, Kizzy Lovell.

Kizzy is fostered by a single woman, Olivia, and befriended by retired Admiral Twiss and his two male members of staff who served in the war with him. All these characters are inspirational and engaging in their unconventionality and tensions are explored in the book between various villagers in relation to their different life choices.

In this zine, you'll discover some of the festival explorations under way, ahead of the festival delivery in the spring holiday, 1-18 April 2022, including explorations of central themes in the book: human's relationship with nature and outdoors and Kizzy Lovell's Romany heritage.

Throughout the zine, there are QR codes to scan with the camera on your phone to see more content.



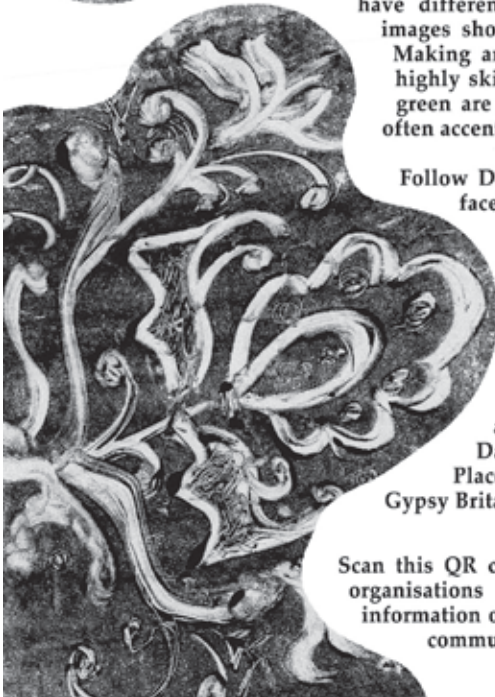
Romany Culture.

The grass roots Drive2Survive movement has been created in 2021 by a coalition of Romany Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Roma activists and community organisations to highlight a threat to the freedoms of all people in the proposed policing bill which they explain will entirely eradicate nomadic life in Britain, a way of life that is many hundreds of years old.

At Appleby Fair, the activists' presence was colourful with a collection of horse drawn caravans, referred to as vardos, with intricately painted designs and carved decoration. The patterns have different meanings and symbolic images show aspects of Romany life. Making and decorating a vardo is a highly skilled craft. Red, yellow and green are the most common colours, often accented with real gold.

Follow Drive2Survive on instagram, facebook and twitter for their perspective on current political policy making. For insights into Romany culture, the festival team are reading Isabel Fonseca's *Bury My Standing: The Gypsies and their Journey* and Damian Le Bas' *The Stopping Places: A Journey Through Gypsy Britain*.

Scan this QR code to see organisations with more information on the GRT community.





EARTHED: exploring mixed race experience in *The Diddakoi*

Rumer Godden's *The Diddakoi* was a ground-breaking as a children's novel published in 1972 for having a mixed race central character.

Performers Hannah Collisson and Yasmin Aishah are responding to the novel by exploring their personal experience of being mixed race. Introspection has pervaded their childhoods, both artists seeking the end of their garden to dwell quietly on the known and unknown of relatives, residences and ritual in their mixed race heritage.

Iraq, Ghana, Belize, New Zealand, the UK,
Distance and boundaries merged,
Poetic worlds emerged.

Hannah and Yasmin are creating an experiential theatre performance inspired by these poetic worlds at the bottom of the garden for the festival. The experiential theatre performance will honour Godden's emphasis of her protagonist Kizzy Lovell's need to dwell in the garden of her foster carer, Olivia. Olivia and Kizzy boil the kettle over the fire after school and eat outside until it's time to go to bed. Kizzy's love of the outdoors extends Olivia's relationship with nature.

Podcast

Brighton University English literature student, Lily Bowers, has initiated a podcast series for reading groups and community groups exploring the novel ahead of the festival.

Working with festival mentors and mentees, Lily's starting point is an exploration of identity and societal expectations in Godden's fifty year old novel, other themes in the novel coming up in later podcasts.

Supported by mentor composer -musician Ruby Colley, Lily explains, "the pre-festival 3-5 minute podcasts are aimed at opening up conversation and debate on the novel, reassuring adult reading groups that exploring this children's novel is enriching for all age groups". When the novel won the Whitbread Book Award for Children's Literature (Now Costa Book Awards) in 1972, judge Martin Amis is reported to have said, "the sort of book children had to fight for to get it from adults."

If you would like to take part in a podcast as a group, please email explorers@explorethearch.com

Foster.

When Kizzy becomes an orphan, it is Joe, her horse, that she chooses to spend her life with. Rumer Godden's *The Diddakoi* explores Kizzy's experience when authority figures intercept this plan. The foster carer cannot be a horse.

Foster is artist Amy Jennery's festival project with today's foster carer community in Sussex. An anonymous project, it gives voice to insights often confined to the margins. What insights do foster carers want to share with the wider community?



