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978-0-521-10316-9 - Gypsy-Travellers in Nineteenth-Century Society

David Mayall

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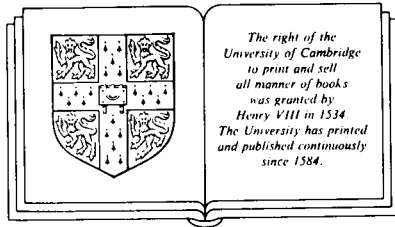
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# *Gypsy-travellers in nineteenth-century society*

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DAVID MAYALL

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## *Preface and acknowledgements*

It has often been a matter of puzzlement and not little amusement to others as to how I became attracted to Gypsies as a subject for research. My first explanation, not altogether seriously offered, is that I was embarking on a voyage to rediscover my origins. This stems from a story I was told in childhood by my mother that I was the son of a Gypsy confined in the same hospital ward, the name tags being somehow confused. Following any naughty behaviour I was threatened with being sent away with the next group of peg-sellers to visit the house. From an early age I was led to believe that the Gypsies were a different people, a group apart to be feared and scorned. Yet the real attraction lay not in a search for a separate and distant race but rather with a group which seemed to stand in firm opposition to major features of nineteenth-century society, notably permanency of settlement and wage-labour employments. This itinerant group functioned within a sedentary-based society and yet apparently resisted attempts by various agencies at their religious, moral and economic reform, whether taking the form of voluntary and philanthropic endeavours or by means of coercive and legislative pressure.

From such beginnings developed a full-time study which led first to a doctoral thesis and then on to this revised form. Along my own often peripatetic path many people have helped considerably with obscure references, advice and criticism. Special mention and gratitude is due to Colin Holmes for his initial supervision and subsequent encouragement and interest. I am also grateful to Mary Mallon for her thorough reading of the manuscript, and to Helen Corr and Hosein Piranfar for their most useful comments on parts of the text. Further thanks to the following who each contributed much of value: Tony Delves, John Field, Elaine Fishwick, Van Gore, Nigel Goose, Richard Russell, David Smith, Tony Sutcliffe, and finally to Beryl Moore, Sheila Ashden and Beverley Eaton for their secretarial assistance. I would also like to acknowledge the help provided by the many librarians and archivists who managed to identify much relevant material. Particular mention is due to the staffs of the Sydney Jones Library (University of Liverpool), the Brotherton Library (University of Leeds), the Inter-Library

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