

Who Was John Sampson Really Protecting?

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Frances Roberts Reilly was born on the Welsh border and grew up in England. She's of mixed-heritage Welsh Gypsy-English, a descendant of Abram Wood, the notable family of musicians and storytellers. Frances has an international profile as a Romani writer. She has published *Parramisha: A Romani Poetry Collection* (Cinnamon Press). Her poems have been published internationally in well-regarded anthologies in Canada, Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Wales. She began writing while working at BBC television in London, England. After making award-winning documentaries on human rights, she earned an Honours degree in English Literature at the University of Toronto.



Abstract

Begun in 1888, the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) set out to describe and preserve Welsh Kale Romani customs, culture and language. Leaders in this effort were John Sampson, Francis Hindes Groome and Dora Yates, among others who took on the role of ethnographers, anthropologists and linguists. This paper raises the question, “Who Was John Sampson Really Protecting?” It is answered through an extensive examination of documented sources: birth records, census records, newspaper articles, Gypsy Lore Society Journals, academics on racism, and modern-day ethnography and anthropological practices. As well as family history; the archived memory of a Wood family member. It is premised on these facts – that John Sampson’s ethics, methods and emotional investment ignores the context and inhumane impact of his study, namely the everyday lives and voices of his subject matter. His goal was heavily influenced by the works of Charles Darwin and intellectual baggage of the history of the world seen through British eyes; simply as a straight line from cultures to possess the deep roots of civilization itself. The purer and more hidden the better. The method used by John Sampson was to capture as much of the Welsh Kale culture and language by embedding himself in one family – the Wood family who he proclaimed spoke the “pure” Romanus language of the Abram Wood tribe of North Wales. His published work on this is *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales: Being the Older Form of British Romani Preserved in the Speech of the Clan of Abram Wood* (1926). Against this intellectual stronghold fortified inside a racially superior monolith, the story of Edward Wood, John Roberts and their extended family is told. Ethically however, his project also raises serious questions about the dichotomy of singling out the Wood family from others who also spoke Welsh Kale Romanus but were excluded from John Sampson’s studies. He and the GLS recast the Wood family in romantic Victorian terms to use as props with which to stage their inventions in widely published articles to a gullible audience. In this paper, the moral position taken is one of non-compliance with the Romanized recasting and politicizing of the “Pure” Gypsy that local authorities used as policy to rationalize the separation of families and force them into housing right up to the 1970s. What is called today, “Scientific Racism”. Concluding with the ways we are dealing with the intergenerational trauma and the collateral damage done to these Welsh Kale families. Asserting, our own voices and legacy have earned us a rightful place in the wider collective as we commit to standing together in our ethnicity, diversity, and authenticity with all Roma.

“I want to go home to Wales.” My husband had asked me where in the world I wanted to go to celebrate my seventieth birthday. Our itinerary? To drive from north to south Wales, visiting cousins. The route followed my direct blood line back to Abram Wood, buried near Aberystwyth through to John Roberts who lived in Newtown and onto South Wales to visit a cousin. We’d be on the *drom*, just like them. It is through music I know my Welsh Kale family which is apart from extended family.

Our drive also followed the well-documented path the Victorian Ryes and ethnographers had travelled through Wales two hundred years prior. But from my reading of the books and journals written by the Gypsy Lore Society’s (GLS) Ryes – Charles Leland, Francis Hindes Groome, John Sampson, and Dora Yates among others – I had a completely different perspective. Mine is very much at odds with what they wrote about my great-great grandfather, Edward Wood, his wife Mary Ann, their daughter Winnie Wood, and my great-great-great-grandfather, John Roberts. The GLS account has become widely acknowledged as the authority on our Romanus language and Welsh Gypsy customs and culture, not only in Wales but with cyber-culture, worldwide.

As I’ve said, it is through music I know my Welsh Kale family. Like my ancestors, I learned to tune and play the harp. From an early age, I would read a music score and hear the music play in my head; still do to this day. To my musical ear there is a dissonance and disconnect between what I know and what the Ryes wrote about us. These Ryes invented a lost rural England by using my family and taking many liberties with the facts as they successfully marketed the fantasy of a romantic rural pastoral. A convenient antidote

to the rapid industrialization that transformed the country, sold to a suggestable audience of readers, researchers, and academics.^[1]

On our *drom* we arrive in Corwen, driving past the house that Edward Wood, Mary Ann Roberts, and their child Winnie Wood, my great grandmother once lived in. Having been on the *drom*, they’d left the travelers life behind, eventually settling into houses. They made their living as musicians, playing their harp and fiddle music. Abram Wood brought the fiddle music with him, it was transposed for the harp using the Gypsy ornamentations and motifs – a repertoire of Gypsy hornpipes, jigs, and reels.

They played their harps and fiddles at paid gigs – weddings, dances, concerts, and as buskers at the popular seaside resorts on the North Wales coast. Their repertoire was not their Gypsy hornpipes, jigs, and reels, but of Welsh traditional airs, such as “The Bells of Aberdovey”, “The Ash Grove”, and “Daffyd y Careg Wen” – “David of the White Rock”. A program designed for the punters who strolled the promenades, the gentry who danced Quadrille’s (a courtly version of a country dance) at their military balls, and for the skaters who spun around the frozen River Severn in Newtown. They even busked outside the Bear Inn in Newtown and the Red Lion Inn (Plas Goch) in Bala for tips.

As reviewed in numerous newspaper reports of the day, the entire Roberts family had earned a solid reputation as The Cambrian Minstrels.



Edward Wood (1838–1908), Harpist.
Photograph is property of the author.

1 Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination (1807–1930)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

The popular musical group they formed consisted of John Roberts and his seven sons, as well as his son-in-law, Edward Wood with his daughter, Winnie Wood. They performed the traditional repertoire of Welsh Airs on triple harp and fiddle, while Winnie sang the popular Victorian patriotic and parlour songs of the day, accompanied by her father, Edward Wood on harp. They received favourable reviews: “The whole audience lustily cheered” chimed the *North Wales Express* in one review in 1881.

We next stop in Dolgello. Here the buildings are constructed of sturdy Welsh granite with grey slate roofs. It was here in Dolgello, according to Francis Hindes Groome^[2] that he met up with John Roberts who was on his way to play his harp at a local wedding. As the account goes, after much joshing in Romanus with John Roberts, with John correcting Groome, they retired to an inn for refreshments.

Playing the triple harp is a feat of dexterity while possessing an ear trained to music’s harmonics, a sound that is impossible to produce on any other instrument. It has to be learned. The first time I sat down to play, I took a deep breath, placed my hands on each side of the triple strings and my fingers a third apart. Then at intervals of another third, played a descending chord. My heart leapt as the harp offered up her unmistakable and unique sound of bells.

When I read Goome’s reputed story that was ascribed to John Roberts, a couple of references gave me pause. One is the description of John carrying the harp on his back like a “wing”. This is an image taken directly from a photograph taken in 1875,^[3] widely available at the time, depicting him as a Gypsy bard walking the Welsh mountains. In reality, he preferred to load the harp on a cart or use the train. The tunes played that Groome listed were also widely available in newspaper reviews of the day.^[4] Yet neither of these primary sources are cited in *Gipsy Tales*. Did Groome plagiarize or invent this conversation? Family have weighed in that Groome helped by his wife, Esmeralda Locke, took other liberties with the truth, changing family names to suit their recasting of our story.^[5]

Now Corwen is a town dwarfed by Snowdon’s mountains and in shadow most of the year. The shadow cast by the Welsh mountains had a protagonist in John Sampson: linguist, literary scholar and librarian, and the author of “The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales: Being the Older Form of British Romani Preserved in the Speech of the Clan of Abram Wood.”

Having had a miserable childhood in Ireland and sent to Liverpool as a printer’s apprentice, unable to pursue an education at age 14, Sampson had tracked down and embedded himself in the life of Edward Wood^[6] in what we call these days, a family romance. A psychological compensation for denying his

2 Francis Hindes Groome, *In Gipsy Tents* (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo & Co, 1880).

3 Photograph (circa 1875) by John Thomas Photographer (1838–1905) in John Thomas Collection, National Library of Wales.

4 Welsh Newspaper Archive, National Library of Wales.

5 On Groome – “In 1999, my father was ill and I would take turns with my sisters to help our mother nurse Dadus. I took Groome’s book *In Gipsy tents* and read to him as he really did not read well enough to take in a book. As I started reading from Groome’s book – as soon as I read Lovell first names like Plato, Loverin, etc., my father shouted, ‘That’s not right they aren’t Lovell’s, they are Locks and Boswells.’ He became agitated to know there were books that told *hoknos* – lies. He refused to hear anymore. As for the bits of *chib* in the books he said it didn’t sound right when I tried to pronounce the words as written.” Bob Lovell, personal communication with author.

6 Anthony Sampson, “John Sampson and Romani Studies in Liverpool”, in *Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter Images of ‘Gypsies’/Romanies in European Cultures*, ed. Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt, 15–20 (Liverpool University Press, 2004). <https://doi.org/10.5949/UPO9781846313950>

own dysfunctional and deprived early life by supplanting it with a romance of belonging to another family ideal. He was emotionally invested in proving one family had a “deep” and “pure” language. It became his work that “was largely concerned with a search for ‘real Romanies’ who spoke Romanus, and with identifying the ‘mixed breed’, or ‘didicoi’ as they were contemptuously known in English. The more isolated the Gypsy population the more ‘pure’ they were imagined to be.”^[7] Hence, we Woods and Roberts were to become his shadow family. Meanwhile for the sake of Victorian morality Sampson maintained a respectable career at Liverpool University and a traditional marriage.

In its psychological meaning, Sampson was split and lived a double life with many faces. His grandson, the author and journalist Anthony Sampson^[8] revealed the existence of his grandfather’s illegitimate daughter, fathered with one of our own^[9] and kept as a family secret from his wife. Searching his probate,^[10] I discovered no mention of this child among his beneficiaries. Allowing for inflation, he had left over £300,000 (\$510,000 CAD) to close family along with a cache of letters from John Roberts to Dora Yates^[11] for publishing and selling in the thriving Gypsy business, a publishing model he was to successfully set up.

Still in the Welsh mountains, leaving behind Corwen and Dolgello, our *drom* takes us to Bala. We step inside the Plas Goch Inn to check out the lounge and bar. The Plas Goch has an imposing presence with its mock Tudor façade, standing taller than the stone storefronts on Bala High Street. It’s here that my other Wood cousins, Howell and Manfri, Matthew Wood’s sons, were for hire as “Gypsy fisherman” taking the Gentry for a day’s fishing, using their “special powers” for catching the plentiful trout found in Lake Bala.

In 1894, the year John Roberts passed way, John Sampson while on a camping vacation in North Wales discovered Edward Wood in Bala in that same lounge in the Plas Goch Inn. A momentous event as Anthony Sampson recorded triumphantly because, “The Wood family transformed John Sampson’s career.”^[12] Sampson arrived with more than just camping gear, he came with cultural baggage too; the history of the world seen through British eyes. It was a simple one – a straight line from cultures. Know this history and you begin to see his work as the struggle for domination, to possess the deep roots of civilization itself.^{[13][14]} The Ryes project of capturing my family’s Welsh Kale dialect was how they envisioned their position in Romani scholarship and their place in history. The only literate amongst us was John Roberts, the rest could neither read nor write. The point was having all of it. The Ryes told our story for us. They were culture thieves.

7 Michael Stewart, “Roma and Gypsy ‘Ethnicity’ As a Subject of Anthropological Inquiry”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 42 (2013), 415–432. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-092010-153348>

8 Hermione Lee, “The Scholar Gypsy: The Quest for a Family Secret”, in *The Independent*, 21 June 1997.

9 Though the official account is with one of his researchers, Gladys Imlach.

10 British Newspaper Archive – John Sampson’s Probate and Will.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Anthony Sampson, “John Sampson and Romani Studies in Liverpool”, 2004. According to Anthony Sampson’s essay written in 2004, family remain supportive. Recently, I have been fact checking with these family members without success, due to Matthew Wood’s granddaughters, having passed away in 1999 and 2000. Therefore, at the time of writing I cannot confirm this meeting nor their testimonial.

13 Angela Superior Saini, *The Return of Race Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019).

14 *Ibid.*

The Ryes, also called Lorists, used a racist classification to position Welsh Kale as a “pure” race. Descriptors they used such as “dark skinned”, “black hair and eyes”, and “black blood” point to the use of racist nomenclature. The power hierarchy had white people of European descent sitting at the top. They believed themselves to be “the natural winners, the inevitable heirs of great ancient civilizations”^[15]

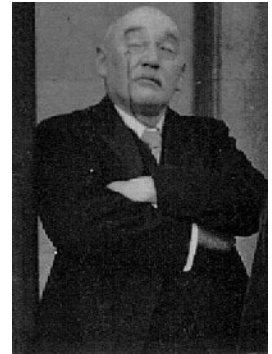
John Sampson considered himself a new scientist and true inheritor of Darwinism.^[16] “The subtext of their narrative is that history is over.” In Darwinist fashion, “the fittest have survived, and the victors have been decided.”^[17] The primary function of GLS and JGLS was to trap our story, draining it of our everyday authentic voices as if pinned like a “specimen inside a museum’s glass cabinet”. These ethnographers were entitled to recast us,^[18] “giving themselves the right to document history their way, to define “scientific” facts about humankind”^[19] – about Welsh Kale, about my family.

Against this intellectual stronghold fortified inside a racially superior monolith, I tell my story.

In 1870 Edward Wood had lost his beloved wife, Mary Ann Roberts to a fluid disease that flooded her heart and liver. On her death certificate, it’s noted that he was at her bedside when she passed away at the age of 30. Mary Ann had left Edward with a young child Winnie, age six. Mary Ann had been a brilliant harpist and singer, winning awards at the age of 12 at the Welsh National Eisteddfod. As husband and wife, they gave concerts in North Wales. With a young child, Mary Ann as a working mother was ahead of her time in Victorian Wales.

By the age of 15, Winnie and her father, Edward, performed together, he on the harp accompanying Winnie as she sang patriotic and Victorian parlour songs. A newspaper review of 1879 finds Edward Wood (41) and Winnie Wood (15) performing together at the Corwen Dramatic Society. “Edward played a Choice Selection of very masterful Welsh Melodies on his triple harp, Winnie Wood sang her most successful performance with the popular ballad, “Excelsior” a sentimental Victoria ballad of enduring marital love, which earned her “three encores and a standing ovation”^[20]

By 1882, Edward had married Mary Ann’s sister, Sarah after she turned 18 years of age. It was not as Sampson smuttily insinuated a “co-marriage” of Edward with two sisters.^[21] The concerts had continued with the close



John Sampson (1862–1931),
Liverpool University
Librarian and President of the
Gypsy Lore Society,
Wikimedia Commons.

15 *Ibid.*

16 Anthony Sampson, “John Sampson and Romani Studies in Liverpool”, 2004.

17 Angela Superior Saini, *The Return of Race Science*, 2019.

18 Arturo Escobar, “Limits of Reflexivity: Politics in Anthropology’s Post-‘Writing Culture’ Era”, *Journal of Anthropological Research* 49, No. 4 (Winter, 1993), 377–391.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Welsh Newspaper Archive, National Library of Wales.

21 John Sampson, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Vol. xii, 205.

family of musicians.^[22] Edward's crowning achievement came in 1889 as harpist for a Royal performance at Palé Hall with Queen Victoria in attendance on her Royal Tour of North Wales. He was aged 51.

Reading of Edward's brilliant career as a Welsh triple harpist, in comparison, Sampson merely footnotes this concert along with one other that Edward gave to the H.R.H. Prince of Wales in 1899 in Ruthin at the home of Lady Cornwallis^[23] with whom it was rumoured HRH was having an affair. This royal performance earned Edward the title of Telynor Meirion and John Roberts the title of Telynor Cymru – Royal Harpist of Wales. Sampson used the harp as a prop to leverage whatever influence and favours he could get to assuage his ambitions. A useful expedience. "Gypsy-lore was a 'discipline' that had never got beyond the use of peoples of the modern world as props with which to stage the nation's past."^[24]

By 1886, Winnie had married David Charles Davies, her policeman (not a Welsh Draper as noted in JGLS).^[25] She continued singing and performing and was like her mother Mary Ann, a working mother. Clearly, ours is a supportive family that nurtures gifts and talents. We respect Edward as a loving, good father and grandfather. Though happy in Wales, Winnie had married out. However, her first son, Edward, my great uncle, married a first cousin, Lucy, daughter of Madoc Roberts, brother of Mary Ann.

But what of Sampson's opus? By 1890, census records note that Oliver Lee, the first collaborator of Sampson's had by now left Wales for more lucrative work available in Liverpool.^[26] He would have to find another collaborator. Meanwhile the Gypsy Lore Society was formed in 1888 with Charles Leland as president. The stage was set for the fulfillment of Sampson's ambitions.

What the JGLS fails to mention is the dramatic change in Edward's circumstances. By this time, Edward was down on his luck and had taken to alcohol as the family story goes.^[27] Recalled in 1933 by J. Glynn Davies their meeting in 1892 at the Red Lion Inn.^[28] In what makes painful reading, Davies describes Edward as having "a large jug of ale ... which he emptied on his forehead." He falls asleep "half snoozing, with his head on the sounding board", nevertheless "his fingers very much awake." In his state, did Davies even bother to get Edward's consent before publishing?

On the 1891 and 1901 Census records Edward's occupation is listed as "Tinsmith". Edward worked like many Romani, mending pots and pans for Gadji (non-Rom) folk. Edward would likely have been seen in local villages with a grinding barrow. More often than not, villagers welcomed the Romani tinsmith.

22 There's the 1881 concert at the Assembly Rooms in Ruthin by the Cambrian Minstrels consisting of Wood/Roberts family members. In 1885, the Roberts' Family Concert was reported as "Mr. John Roberts and his celebrated family of Welsh harpists, assisted by Miss Winnie Wood, of Llangollen."

23 Gd Glynn Davies, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, n.d.

24 Michael Herzfeld. *Ours Once More; Folklore, Ideology and the Making of Modern Greece* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), cited in Michael Stewart, "Roma and Gypsy 'Ethnicity' As a Subject of Anthropological Inquiry", 2013.

25 *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* Series 3, Vols. 13 and 14 (1934–35).

26 The birth of Lily Lee, daughter of Oliver Lee and Julie Lee (Boswell) in Liverpool.

27 Martin Thomas (Lord Gresford) Speech "Teulu Abram Wood" at the International Harp Festival, Caernarfon, Wales 2015. Archive, National Library of Wales.

28 G. Glynn Davies, "Edward Wood", *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* Series 3, Vols. 13 and 14 (1934–35).

It was during Edward's most depressed life phase in 1894 that at age 56 he met John Sampson in Bala. That depression gene has been passed down the family. My grandmother, Gwen, Edward's granddaughter suffered from depression her entire life. On meeting a first cousin in 2015, I experienced the same familiar depression. Aware of this inherited mental illness, he confided in me that he has passed the depression onto his son. Other Wood family members, including my father, report mental health issues with borderline personality disorder. Some say it's due to endogamy – the intermarriage of cousins. Indeed, Edward Wood married his cousin Mary Ann Wood.

“One of the old saws of the folklorists had been to stress the superstitious beliefs of the ‘pure’ Romanus speakers in notions of pollution and ritual cleanliness,” writes Michael Stewart. Yet a glaring contradiction is the omission by Sampson of the cultural context of the cleanliness code and taboo. Searching the dictionary, I can only locate the word, *mokadi*, defined as “stained, unclean” referencing utensils and women's menses. However, the word *marimee* (pronounced marry-me) – the entire cultural context for *mokadi* in the practice of *marimee* is missing. Bob Dawson, the Romani author and educator has identified the word as very old and only spoken by a few.^[29] Which leads me to believe that both Edward and Matthew chose carefully what information they conveyed to Sampson, the outsider, the Gadji. At times, his dictionary reads like a tourist phrase book. Other words appear to be inventions, such as the word for the harp as *Baro Basimengro*, which translates as “big stringed instrument”. John Roberts in adapting to Wales, preferred the Welsh words, *Telyn* for harp *Telynor* for harpist. It is clear that Edward and Matthew knew that certain things were to be kept secret and never shared. Judith Okely, an anthropologist, is correct in identifying our secrets as our “personal and political autonomy”.^[30]

Therefore, claims by Sampson as the gatekeeper and guardian of the “pure” Romanus of Abram Wood and his descendants are exaggerated and founded on stereotypes.^[31] And we didn't remain a “pure” tribe. There are at least 20 marriages recorded to Gadji in the family tree.

How do I know this when so few Welsh Romani words were handed down? My grandmother, Gwen, sprinkled Romanus and Welsh into her everyday speech. No doubt learned from her mother Winnie Wood. As a documentary filmmaker, I am interested in finding hidden stories to tell. I had discovered a speaker of Welsh Romanus in New Zealand on social media. Bob Lovell Kamulo's father, Adolphus, was born on an *atchitan* – stopping place called the Upper Race near Pontypool, Wales in 1924. He was raised in the traditional Welsh Gypsy culture, living in and travelling by *vardo* between Wales, south to the West country, east to the Midlands, and north to Lancashire and Cumbria. His father had taught him our *chib* – our language in New Zealand where it has survived.

Noticing that the Lovells are a mere footnote in Sampson writings, I asked Bob what his family thought of John Sampson. Why were the Lovell's excluded? Not one to hold back in his email his says, “Sampson's

29 “Marimee is not found amongst English Romanichal,” according to Bob Dawson. “The first time he heard or read me using Marimee he said that word is very Old Romanus, he had only ever heard it a long-time ago being spoken by few Rom.” Bob Lovell, personal communication with author.

30 Judith Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), cited in cited in Michael Stewart, “Roma and Gypsy ‘Ethnicity’ As a Subject of Anthropological Inquiry”, 2013.

31 Colin Colin, “Severity Has Often Enraged but Never Subdued a Gypsy’: The History and Making of European Romani Stereotypes”, in *Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter Images of ‘Gypsies’/Romanies in European Cultures*, ed. Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt, 226–46 (Liverpool University Press, 2004).

writings say things like, the Lovell's are the 'blackest and the most cunning', using the common garden variety of racism and not in its "pure" Gypsy differentiating meaning. Bob goes on, "Then in another bit I saw that he was complaining that he couldn't find speakers of the Welsh *chib* language, commenting that he'd have to talk to a Lovell woman he knew on the English boarder who had some *chib*. But in the end, it was a disappointment as it wasn't full on." Meaning that the Lovell *chib* wasn't "pure" enough.

Another good reason for avoiding the Lovells is that Sampson, was "seen off", Bob writes. "He also was extremely afraid of my great great Aunt Marjory Lovell. It was said she could give a person the 'eye' and they would sicken and die. She did not like any of the Ryes [so] they kept clear of her. My great granddad Surrenda Lovell also disliked the Ryes."

Arriving in Swansea, we end our *drom*. I meet my cousin Allison through Bob Lovell. He and I are third cousins, she is his second cousin and so Allison and I are cousins, too. Bob had been asked by his father, Adolphus, to find his eldest lost sister, Aunt Rhoda Lovell/Lee. They were taken from their bender tent in Brookers Field by "the social". In the 1990s Bob had travelled from New Zealand to Wales and tracked Allison down. When he told Allison about what had happened to her grandmother, it was the first time she'd heard the story.

We'd enjoyed a meal of marshland lamb. When the men retired Allison and I told our stories about our Romani *puri dye* – our grandmothers. Allison, a lawyer and social worker went first. "She was taken, snatched," said Allison. "Right out of the atchitan where they were stopping." "What year was this?" I asked. "1940," replied Allison. "She was a baby and she never saw her parents again." I looked over the table directly into her eyes and saw the grief behind them. "Not only that," she added. "My two languages – Welsh and Romani are persecuted. If Bob hadn't found me and told me the story, I would never have known. What about your grandmother?"

"Mine," I tell Allison. "Gwen had a #Metoo experience, targeted by a bigamist." I have no doubt it was due to the orientalism and exotic image of the seductive Roma promoted by GLS associates like the poet Arthur Symons who possibly emboldened the man when he wrote:

*You dance, and I know the desire of all flesh, and the pain
Of all longing of body for body; you beckon, repel,
Entreat, and entice, and bewilder, and build up the spell.*^[32]

Why did Edward collaborate with John Sampson? We'll never know. However, in my role as an elder of our Wood/Roberts family – Teulu Abram Wood – my position is clear. I do not condone nor am I complicit in preserving the GLS legacy, or as Bob says, the *baro hokni* – big lie of a "Pure" Romani. It has harmed our relationships and left a legacy of division and hostility among our extended families – Welsh Kale and Romanichal – the Lovells, Boswells, Stanleys, Lees and others with whom we intermarried. They too spoke Welsh Kale *chib* language, and all spoke three languages: Welsh, Romanus, and English. But were ignored by the Ryes. To add insult to injury, those "elderly [JGLS] editors gave up the ghost without having found a younger generation to replace them."^[33]

Furthermore, the politicizing of the "didicoi" as "bastards" or "hybrids", categorizing them as distinct from the "Pure" Gypsy was used by local authorities as policy to rationalize the separation of

32 Arthur Symons (1865–1945), "To a Gitana Dancing".

33 Michael Stewart, "Roma and Gypsy 'Ethnicity' As a Subject of Anthropological Inquiry", 2013.

families and force them into housing right up to the 1970s.^[34] This injustice or scientific racism has been well articulated by Dr Thomas Acton, to whom I am truly grateful. Allison has a personal story of this injustice. She now works in Wales with the Welsh government to mitigate these injustices and is seeking financial reparation for her family's pain and suffering. While, as a film maker and writer I am the heir to my grandmother's feisty strengths in my writing and creating documentaries on human and women's rights. Together we are dealing with intergenerational trauma and the collateral damage the GLS has done to our families.

What of the future? How do we preserve what's left of our Welsh Gypsy heritage, its culture and language? In 2019, I established a heritage fund in the name of my fourth father, John Roberts – The John Roberts Heritage Fund to keep alive what is left of our language and music. Bob Lovell and I formed a partnership to record him speaking our *chib*, offering it via website to those interested in learning everyday Romanus as it is spoken, not written. We have 22 episodes – a living legacy of what was once proclaimed a “dead” language by the Ryes.^[35] It is offered free of charge to this and future generations.

As for the legacy of the triple harp. Schools in Wales are now teaching children how to play the Gypsy harp music of my family. Robin Huw Bowen is our advocate, having learned our music as it was handed down seven generations to Eldra Jarman, another cousin. Robin performs worldwide, telling the story of the Wood/Roberts family of Gypsy harpists. Plans are set for an annual scholarship awarded to a young triple harp player through the heritage fund.

If the existence of “Pure” Gypsy, speaking “Deep” Romanus is in dispute, one question remains: who is John Sampson really protecting? While we have never leveraged any of his Gypsy business models for profit, gain, or fame, we know who did. The answer is clear, John Sampson was protecting himself, his legacy and his self-serving narcissism. Surely, our own voices and legacy have earned us a rightful place in the wider collective as we commit to standing together in our ethnicity, diversity, and authenticity with all Roma.

At this time when prejudice against young Roma/Gypsies is on the rise, new voices in art, music, dance, activism, and literature are rising. Fortunately, in this twenty-first century the way forward lies in keeping alive the story of lost heritage and what is left of our ancient Romani/Gypsy ethnicity, identity, belonging, safety, language, and culture. It's where contemporary cultural movements take us if we successfully rewrite the outmoded and inaccurate narratives which have done us little justice. Although there are many questions that require thinking about on the intersection between disciplines, languages, and marginalizing, to name a few, I do think it possible to work together, avoiding silos or the politics of organized vocal divisiveness. Over time, that Romani literature canon will expand and deepen the general public's outmoded perception of we Romani people.

34 Thomas Acton, “Scientific Racism, Popular Racism and the Discourse of the Gypsy Lore Society”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, No. 7 (2016), 1187–1204.

35 Manfri Wood has recorded Romanus on *Harps & Hornpipes: Traditions of The Welsh Romany Gipsy* in 1975. Folktracks label. British Library collection. See also: E. Ernest Roberts, *Harp Fiddle and Folktale* (Aberystwyth: The Welsh Book Centre, 1981); Jarman and Jarman, *Welsh Gypsies: Children of Abram Wood*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991).