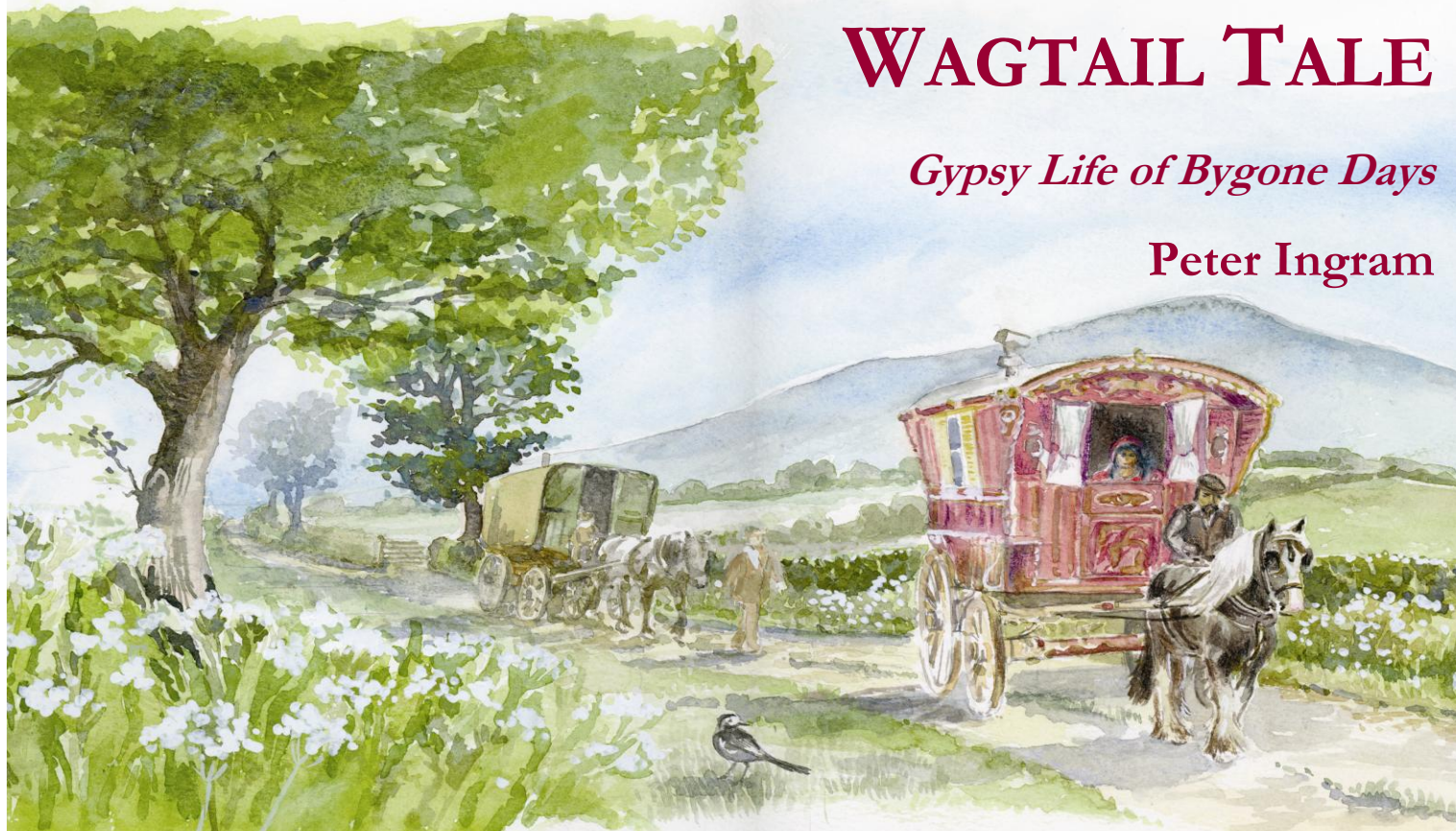


# WAGTAIL TALE

*Gypsy Life of Bygone Days*

Peter Ingram



Old John and Genty, two Romanies, now permanently encamped with their wagon and tent in a quiet spot along a green lane close to the Welsh border, living out their last years in peaceful contentment. Their estranged daughter becomes ill and needs a lengthy stay in hospital, and their two grandchildren, Little Jimmy and Katie, come to stay with them.

Over the following weeks the children begin to discover the lifestyle which is their unknown heritage. Old John teaches Jimmy the skills of his forefathers, from making and using a catapult to making pegs, and Genty shows Katie how to prepare and cook food over the open fire. At night around the fire Old John recalls tales of life in days gone by. Other relations walk through the pages with their own tales, portraying the lives they lead and recording their traditions and taboos. There is a visit to the ancient Obie and Britty, living in a woodland clearing in Wales in their woodsmoke-impregnated tent, giving a last glimpse of an almost forgotten lifestyle.

The author captures the essence of a way of life already fast disappearing by the 1960s. This book is not looking back with rose-tinted glasses, but captures the reality. You can almost smell the woodsmoke and damp earth, feel the discomforts and difficulties of keeping body and soul together, but sense also the contentment of living close to nature, the loving relationships, and the respect and eagerness of the younger generation to learn the old ways. Little Jimmy and Katie are now grandparents themselves, and their real names are concealed to preserve their privacy.

Jenny Boyd-Cropley, Cottage Books

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