

THE JOURNAL OF THE GYPSY LORE SOCIETY  
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Dear Mrs MacDonald

I am sorry you were obliged to write twice to me but, as far as I can establish, there is no record of your previous letter having arrived with, me. That unfortunately is not too rare an experience as our post is regularly sorted through villages with similar sounding names in Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Lancashire.

In reply to your enquiry I am afraid I cannot be of much help at this point in time. I have been aware of the particular Bedfordshire references for some five or six years. When they first came to my attention I considered them puzzling and, at that time endeavoured to make some sense of them but to no avail. All I can do is lay out what little information or ideas I possess on this particular subject.

Throughout the entire Indexes of the Gypsy Lore Society's Journal there is no mention of the name Maclean, or any of its derivative forms, as a Gypsy name. I have certainly never found it amongst Gypsy groups in any part of the United Kingdom or Eire.

The christian name Silence is found in two groups of Gypsy families: the Midland Smiths and the Bucklands. Both these groups travelled and some parts still do travel in Bedfordshire. In the case of the Smith family, it is a post-baptism name for a deaf mute child, a girl. Where the child is a boy the diminutive by-name Mousey has been used. There is an incidence of congenital deaf-mute formation present in the Smiths and this may be the Gypsy side of the marriage.

The sudden reference to these individuals as rechabites is extremely puzzling, particularly as the entry reads: "...rechabites or gypsies.."

I fail to recognise any similarity in the two terms, one being a temperance order the other a race of people.

The Smith element may be reinforced by the introduction of the christian name Riley, which was and still is a common christian name amongst the Smiths. But this child is of Sophia, whose maiden name was Hane. There is a small group of

Gypsies travelling under the name Haines in the north Midlands, but I have no evidence they ever travelled further south than Northamptonshire's northern areas.

And that, I am sorry to say, remains the sum total of my knowledge about this particular group. Whoever they were they failed to make any permanent impact on the Gypsy community of Bedfordshire and there are certainly no MacLean's to be found in that county amongst the Gypsy families.

I hope at some time in the future we may be able to resolve this particular problem but at the moment I have to admit that the MacLeans remain something of a mystery. However as I do still undertake periodic forays into Bedfordshire I am always hopeful that a small piece of new information will provide the key to this particular puzzle.

Repeated apologies for the delay in replying to your letter of January, I had postponed and postponed in the hope of finding something more informative than has proved possible.

Yours sincerely

[sgd]

David Smith