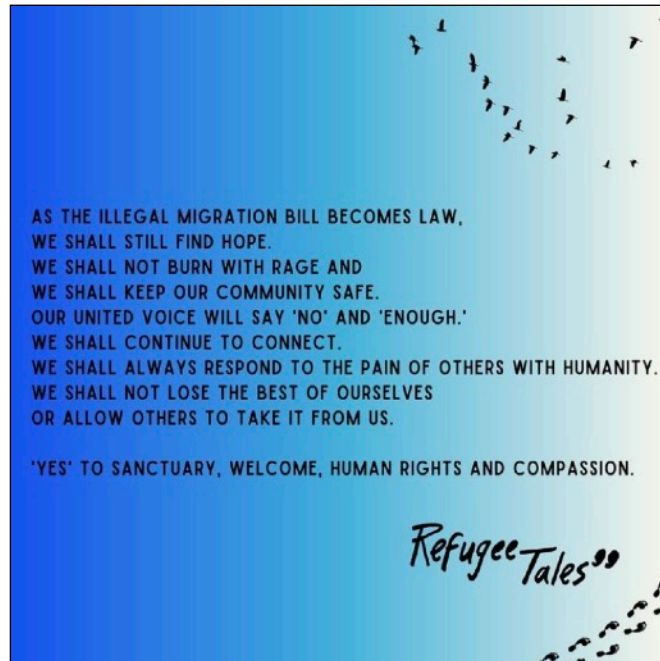




GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Summer 2023



If you are a child migrant arriving in the UK in the months ahead, if you are a victim of modern slavery or someone who has been trafficked to the UK and you reach our shores, your future in the UK will be bleak whatever your reason for seeking safety. There will be no access to asylum as we have known it. The Illegal Migration Act that received Royal Assent on 20 July represents a violation of the UK's obligations under human rights and refugee law and will create a permanent asylum backlog and acute suffering for many people that will be framed by limbo years of destitution. A future without detention is more out of reach today. Our volunteer visiting will be more needed, and our work together is going to be harder. Walking is more necessary. International solidarity is crucial. It is going to be essential for all people who recognise the performative cruelty to work together in every way to build community responses that defy denials of human response to need. This is the lowest point. If the UK does not step back from this tragic choice, others will follow. Let this be a moment when we draw collective breath and keep listening, visiting, supporting, caring, walking, sharing, calling for change. Thank you for your support in the months to come. Thank you for all the connections you are making and this newsletter celebrates those.

Anna Pincus - Director GDWG



University Connections

When we were approached by a university Student Engagement and Communications Officer (SECO) at the University of Kent, we weren't really sure where the conversation would lead! Several months later, we have a suitcase and 8 big bags of clothes for GDWG awaiting collection and the University STAR group (Student Action for Refugees) keen to keep clothes collections going. We were also delighted that clothes collections took place alongside Refugee Week celebrations. The SECO set up a mini Refugee Tales trail on the Canterbury Campus that was walked by students, university staff, people from the community and local press. The half-mile walk took participants from the Gulbenkian Arts Centre in Canterbury to the Kent Community Oasis Garden. Along



the way there were signs sharing the stories and experiences of refugees and people who had experienced immigration detention prompting reflection on how the community could mobilise to be a force for positive change. The trail was so successful, it is still in operation over the Summer. Our thanks to Natalia Crisanti, the University of Kent Student Engagement and Communications Officer. Thanks everyone who donated clothes!

Local Connections

By Lis Clegg

When GDWG offered us training we jumped at it. Like other groups around the country, a local hotel rapidly filling with asylum seekers put us somewhat out of our depth. We quickly realised we lacked the knowledge to help with many of the queries and cries for help that we were hearing, especially with regard to the asylum system. We also needed guidance on the limits of where we could help or offer advice and, if we couldn't or shouldn't, where to turn next.



In just 90 minutes, Karris covered everything we'd queried and more. The presentation was clear and her knowledge and ability to quickly answer questions and find or point us to solutions she hadn't already covered was outstanding. She gave us the context of asylum law and guidance on the limits of what we could offer. We came away with a greater understanding of which

organisations to contact regarding certain aspects of the process. A heartfelt thank you to Karris and your colleagues, from all of us at Horsham Refugee Support Group, and keep up your fantastic work. We wholeheartedly recommend this training.



School Connections

GDWG was invited as part of the Cambridge's Literary Festival to an event with students in the historical Cambridge Union building. The Litmus Creative Writing Project had a theme this year of 'Over the Border' and students were invited to write on this theme. To give context to the theme, our trustee, Pious, and David from Refugee Tales, spoke in the Cambridge Union about the different experiences people face in detention and about our walking too. They were introduced by Refugee Tales patron, Ali Smith. Bernardine Evaristo read the tale she had written for Refugee Tales as an example of writing and storytelling in the context of the theme 'Over the Border'. Students posed fantastic questions, and after a lunch break were invited into smaller groups for GDWG

staff member Hannah to lead workshops on migration and detention in the UK.

In the workshops, students discussed their own experiences crossing borders in different contexts. Hannah asked students whether borders protected countries and people, whether they didn't do anything but separate countries or whether they were divisive and hurt people. At the beginning of the workshops, most students felt unsure about the impact of borders. Throughout the workshops, students discussed the role that borders have in a journey; as a beginning for some and an end point for others. Students learned about the different reasons people sought safety in the UK, listened to 'The Dependent's Tale' as told to Marina Lewycka and learned about detention in the UK. In group discussions students repeatedly referred to the talk Pious had given earlier, showing interest in how people can be detained multiple times, moved around, and face restrictions on their rights and lifestyles even after release. Students provided feedback: "Something that shocked me was how long you can be detained for, as I thought you can only be detained for a short amount of time" and said they had learned about the "the trauma people go through, and how England talks about wanting to be diverse and including but treats migrants seeking help shockingly". At the end of the sessions, Hannah asked students again whether they felt that any of the previous statements about the border resonated with them differently, after listening to 'The Dependents Tale' and hearing about detention in the UK.

Hannah writes: 'I was struck by one student who said at the beginning of the session they weren't really sure about any of the statements, but now felt that "borders don't do anything, they just separate countries" was the most accurate. They explained that in the tales and in many people's journey it wasn't the border that caused harm, but the people and policies that detained them and took away their freedom.'

Reflecting on the day, Hannah wrote: 'It is important to remember (amongst a bleak background of fake news, or media polarisation) that education is an opportunity for greater freedom, and a chance to encourage thinking away from either/or. In outreach, when the experiences and the voices of people who have been detained are centred, it allows others to understand that differences deserve respect, that all voices are worthy and important - ultimately encouraging empathy and a world of both/and - or in the words of Ali Smith: A better imagined.'

Mentoring Connections

By Anne Jakins

One evening in July in Portslade saw a celebration of optimism, bravery, joyful African music and an out-pouring of triumph over adversity. Sitting quietly near the back of the hall was a young man from Sudan whose life story of endurance and positivity had been documented by a writer and shared with the audience. When I first met this young man as a GDWG visitor, he was living in hotel accommodation near London Bridge, supporting others in the hotel by interpreting for them. We first met outside Waterstones in Piccadilly

between COVID lockdowns and we now regularly frequent the basement café. Asking too many questions of someone who has experienced such danger, hardship and trauma sometimes feels intrusive, so in Portslade I listened intently as the researcher filled in my gaps in my friend's story. Since I have known him, the situation in Sudan has deteriorated further and due to the unavailability of Wifi he has had no contact with his mother and siblings for many months. Although I was not aware of every detail of his life, I was very aware of his personal qualities. Despite this intense worry about his family's welfare, my friend remains cheerful, positive, hardworking and highly motivated. His aim is to complete an apprenticeship in Car Mechanics and he is working hard to achieve this. His family would be so proud of him and until he is able to tell them himself about his achievements, I am privileged to be in the position to mentor and encourage him, and to celebrate his successes.

Stockton Connections

The Walking Inquiry exhibition travelled to Stockton during May and we were welcomed by the Stockton Baptist Church and our friends from the area: Seth, Lorraine and Diana. Local charity, Justice First, were key in setting up the connections that made the exhibition possible. Our thanks to Catherine Ramos and all at Justice First. We had a splendid space to display the Exhibition and we were visited by some of the many organisations who work to support refugees in Stockton and Middlesborough as well as by people who knew very little about immigration



detention in the UK and its effects on people detained. We had some interesting conversations stimulated by the exhibits and collected some important feedback. We even gave a Zoom tour of the Exhibition to someone in the community who could not travel to visit - which was a first for us!



Seth and Gordon led a walk along the River Tees before our opening event and this proved to be a great way to make friends and to get to know the very beautiful local area. We learned about local organisations providing legal support, housing advice, befriending, drop-in services, cooking and sewing activities as well as food banks - there's so much going on in Stockton! After a river-bank stroll, walkers were relaxed and ready for refreshments and a lively discussion of the issues raised in the Exhibition. Seth spoke powerfully from his own experience and answered questions from the audience. Thank you, Seth. The Refugee Tales team was Seth, Gordon, Ton, Josie, Lucy and not forgetting Chris who, with Anna, kindly drove all the exhibits there and back from the office.

Canterbury Connections

By Karris Hamilton

The majestic cathedral appears at the end of the narrow cobbled street, it towers above the town in all its beauty. The room we are set up in today is The Chapter House, a chamber with a lot of history within its walls. It was once used by monks as a meeting place for administering the affairs of the cathedral. You can close your eyes and cast your mind back thousands of years to monks huddling together, sitting on the cold stone floor. A breathtaking room, the ceiling is intricate and the sun shining through the stained glass windows feels otherworldly. Around the room we have set up easels with large boards with headers such as "Immigration detention", "Brook House Public Inquiry" and "What is it like to be detained?". Each board has an explainer or an excerpt about the



Refugee Tales Walking Inquiry background or findings. People who are experts by experience are part of the team hosting the Exhibition.

Different people wander into the Chapter House; families, tour groups, couples and lone tourists. Many find themselves there for the historical beauty and gaze up at the ceiling and windows, chattering amongst themselves or listening to audio tours on head-sets. Some slowly make their way around the boards in the room, reading every word. We thank people for taking the time to look at the Exhibition and ask what they already know of immigration detention. For most, it is very little or nothing at all. We engage in conversations about the realities of detention, who will find themselves in such a place and the inhumanity that underpins the system. People commend us for bringing their awareness to such an important issue. Most are shocked and ashamed that this is happening in the

UK and say they had no idea. Others relate back to their own countries use of detention.

Some question our perspective, they feel our exhibition is one sided and that people should be detained for the betterment of the country. This is a conversation I am not used to having. I live in an echo chamber, with most people I surround myself with mirroring my own views on immigration. I try to approach these conversations with empathy but gently challenge this line of thinking. I focus on the human stories and the impact detention has on individuals, highlighting that during the COVID-19 pandemic very few people were detained and we did not see negative consequences as a result. When economic migration is used as a weapon I try to remind people that if they were in the same position, they would fight for their family to have a better life too. These conversations are needed, although



challenging. Over the course of the time spent in Canterbury Cathedral we welcome around 1,000 people through the doors of the Chapter House. We hope that we amplified the voices of people who have experienced detention and raised awareness of the life-long impact detention has on those held within its walls.

Visitor Connections

By GDWG Volunteer Visitors

When we asked our visitors if they would like to share memories of conversations they had in visits over the years, we never anticipated the extraordinary variety of recollections. We're sharing some anonymously for the safety of people they visited. We hope that 'I remember a conversation when' will become a regular item in our newsletters celebrating the sheer humanity of visits. Here are memories of taking action, tragedy, romance, and food!

'A had been friends for some years with a local woman he wished to marry. Her father married her to a much older man. When A went to say goodbye, her father found them together and a fatwa was pronounced on A for attacking the family honour. In order to stay safe, A left his country and took the long, dangerous, complex route to the UK where instead of finding sanctuary, he was 'welcomed' with indefinite immigration detention at Brook House.'

'I was over the moon about 7 years ago to hear from the man I was visiting that he was starting a committee of detained people to take action in the running of Brook House! With the support of staff, they would befriend and induct new

people, hear complaints, run inter-wing sporting contests, oversee the menu, liaise with officials, you name it. And he told me it happened!'

'I had always put rice in the pan and cooked it until it looked just about edible, but in one visit the person I was seeing gave me an incredibly detailed description of how best to cook rice. I time my rice cooking now and have done since that visit even though it was years ago! I had never realised there was an art to cooking rice, but it really does taste better. Thank you to the detained person who gave me good culinary advice.'

'I was sitting waiting in the visit hall. We are often left sitting with our thoughts for 15 or 20 minutes. On this occasion, I was opposite a couple of visitors, a man and a woman, with a young man who had his back to me. Suddenly the detained person got down on one knee and appeared to propose to the young woman. After a short conversation, a cheer went up round the whole visit room and the couple embraced. Staff came over and joined in the applause with everyone else. So how can this story be summed up? '...and they all lived happily ever after.' Or not?'

Please write to us if you have conversations from the visits hall you would like to remember and share in our next newsletter.

Welsh Connections

By Sue Hofsteede

The night before Refugee Tales supporters gathered in Crawley for the Walk of 2023, another group gathered in Caernarfon to hear a Refugee's Tale. We were in Palas Print bookshop, next to the great castle of Edward I, built to assert his power over the Welsh. We met to hear Osman and Steve in conversation about Osman's journey to the UK and to learn about the difference GDWG makes to individuals through frontline work and through Refugee Tales. Our speakers were introduced in Welsh and English, by Catrin Wager. Catrin has walked with Refugee Tales and is a strong supporter of Refugee Tales Cymru. When Steve asked Osman to tell us a little about his early life, I don't think he, or any of us, were prepared for what followed: Osman spoke for the best part of 40 minutes; a natural story-teller with our rapt attention throughout. The tale was heartbreaking and Osman was overcome with emotion at times in the telling. There was little for Steve to do except put a brotherly arm round Osman's shoulders - and wait. Osman's amazing courage, perseverance and steadfastness in the intention of providing a home for his son were breathtaking. I'm not normally lost for words, but I really could not find ones adequate to thank Osman afterwards. Only a hug.

Austrian Connections

By Violet Stathopoulou

On Saturday June 17th, we set out on our walk with refugees, friends, students and members of the English Department of the University of Innsbruck - among us, a

young man from Afghanistan who, almost miraculously, survived a road accident and had to spend two months in intensive care after he had finally made it to Austria. We walked a path through the forest between Sistrans and Igls, two villages on the southern slopes of the Inntal Valley, close to Innsbruck, and shared stories, favourite activities and home-made food. We spoke different languages, had different dreams and hopes, and yet we felt part of a group with a common purpose.



When we parted, I was thinking that we needed more time to get to know each other. More time to keep on talking. Looking back on the day, what remains vivid in memory is fragments of conversations in German, English, French, Arabic or Farsi, attempts to find common ground, the eagerness to share stories and find out more about each other. It seems we all need to experience such gatherings more often. We need to be

present, with open heart and open mind. I am certain that this was the first of many a solidarity walk in Tyrol! With all good wishes to GDWG for all your upcoming walks and the stories that are yet to be told!

Staff Connections

By Marygold Lewis

In May, our staff team got together to celebrate two birthdays and to help Nasima prepare one of the national dishes of Afghanistan. This delicious food is called Bulani, and consists of flatbread stuffed with delicious vegetables and spices. The kitchen at the Crawley United Reformed Church was abuzz with activity, and we were chopping vegetables and spices, rolling dough into balls and then pounding it flat, and stuffing the dough with the vegetables and spices. Anna did the honours of frying the finished products and Karris distributed the bulani onto plates. Preparing food in this way is such a heartwarming, joyful and

bonding activity. Nasima explained that this style of food preparation is normal in Afghanistan as it brings the whole family together. We all enjoyed Nasima's delicious bulanis and then somehow found room for a huge birthday cookie! Thank you, Nasima, for sharing the secrets of the cuisine of Afghanistan.

Here is the recipe for you to try:

Ingredients - Flour, vegetable oil, potatoes, green onions, parsley, sumac, chili flakes, olive oil, salt, black pepper

Method - Wash the potatoes, poke a few holes into them with a fork, then boil. When soft, let cool, then peel and place the cooked potatoes into a bowl. Add chopped onions, garlic, oil, chilli salt, pepper and coriander. Gently mix through the potato. To make the dough, place flour in a large mixing bowl and gradually add water, mixing with your hands until it becomes doughy. Leave the dough to settle for 15-20 minutes.



Separate dough into large handfuls and rolling each one into a ball shape.



Scatter some flour on the bench surface and roll the balls flat with a rolling pin, keeping the circular shape. Place a spoonful of desired mix on one side of the rolled dough. Using the back of the spoon spread the mixture evenly across one half of the dough. Fold the other half over the top of the mixture to form a semi-circle. Pat down and sprinkle with a little extra flour. Heat oil in a pan. Place the bulani one at a time in the pan and fry for 2-3 minutes each side until golden brown.

Walking Connections

By Benjamin Cousen

I was very grateful to join the RT 2023 walk for the last three days, missing the beginning and, due to train schedules, the very end (and, sadly, the prizegiving for Andy and Mary for being

the only two walkers to have spent every day and night possible walking or on the floor somewhere since 2015). I know I am not entirely alone in wondering what it is about the Refugee Tales long walks that makes it so compelling to return and, in fact, one of the most important things I do (for me personally - I contribute little but by walking and talking and I am challenged and moved every time). Centred as they are around the disquiet of undefeated injustice, appalling narratives and as an attempt to somehow bear witness to the worst in us, what is it that makes the walks also a moving site of such joy and inspiration and not a descent into a kind of dark tourism?



I think it is important to ask these questions, and I don't think the answer is simple, but, as we walked across the Downs and towards the sea on another of Christina's brilliant routes, I think something began to settle that is somewhere in the direction of an answer. It is the simplicity of being there, of not forgetting, the relentlessness, if you like, of the walking year by year and presenting the possibility, gently but with an iron persistence of (an)other way(s) of being. (Ali Smith says it best every year with 'the better imagined'). But it is also

uniquely fluid and the relationships that it holds and which extend beyond the walk itself are unique and have evolved and grown deeper over time whilst being always open and welcoming to new relationships and friendships. It dissolves freely, (it's not a cult) and willingly forms again the next year. It's a beautiful experiment, homogenous in purpose (although strong enough for dissent about matters of form and presentation to be voiced) but wonderfully multitudinous in its human makeup. Perhaps this will sound a little trite but I think I tentatively suggest that Refugee Tales are at the end of the day nothing more nor less than an experiment in love.

Art Connections

By Ruby Wright and Self-Advocacy Group Artists

It was such a pleasure to spend some time with the Self Advocacy group this week. We drew portraits of each other using lots of different techniques and materials. I asked participants to draw each other with a cardboard box obscuring their sketches so they couldn't see what they were doing, and there were some wonderfully theatrical and hilarious moments as we revealed



the wonky portraits we'd created. We then created a collaborative artwork: a scene of a group of friends sitting around a table. It was so interesting to see everyone's interpretations of each other and to create an image that captured a moment of coming together. I found the experience very powerful, it's not always easy to make an artwork with a lot of different artists but the cooperation and friendship I felt during this workshop moved me, and also felt very typical of a Refugee Tales event. This is what you do so well: give people the space to share and trust and celebrate and laugh.

Participants reflected:

- It was just a joy, a good distraction to do something else. It was good to see people laughing and talking different languages. It was good to see new faces.'
- 'It was very helpful and interesting. Before I was feeling in a low mood, I even wanted to cancel my appointment but I said let me just try and come experience new people and do some artwork. When I arrived, I felt comfortable and forgot most of my worries. It was a new me, it was like I was with my family. Everybody was laughing together, and doing the

artwork, it was really helpful for me.'

- 'I didn't know people had so much talent! Everyone was an artist. It was good to just pick up the pencils and start drawing. I'm quite happy to see everyone.'
- 'It's soo fantastic for somebody like us, because we are living in fully stress. I am waiting long time for interview. I am really happy because it's so important for us to meet in this moment. It was a lovely time with you and other people, I am so happy!'

Our thanks to Ruby Wright and all the artists.

Expert by Experience Connections

Article by Many Voices

Thanks to all the experts by experience who joined our Refugee Tales walk in July. We were particularly interested to hear reflections from people who had not previously walked with Refugee Tales before, comments such as 'walking is good, because we can't go to the gym, so it is good exercise. And good for your mental health as well' and from someone who joined our support team: 'I was part of the support crew - it is what I know how to do best. As far as I am concerned, it was as if people there had known me for many years. One thing that is lost in the world now is love - if we can bring love back then we will be alright. That is the only thing that can bring us back together. Even John who came to pick me from the station, it was as if he had known me for years, that is how life should be. I felt welcomed, it was nice. I will come back next year!'

Comments from experts by experience included 'We come from societies where we live very close to one another, and you can enjoy with people you haven't met before. European lifestyle is different, it's very private, you don't talk to anyone, so this is a very good opportunity. This is how it is back home, not just on social media like families in London. On the walk you can discuss everything and enjoy the nature, the singing of the birds, the trees. So now we are out of the natural way, everyone is scared of the other one. In the park, if someone sits on the bench and you say hello they are scared, why are you saying hello, why are you greeting me. It is very unnatural. Sometimes when you break the silence, or this barrier they like it, but everybody is scared of one another. Refugee Tales is the opposite of that. Whenever you speak to someone you experience a new thing, you learn a new thing... Most people are very experienced, they have a long journey in their life, so you can learn a lot from talking to people.'

We were delighted when the evening event content resonated with people's own backgrounds. One person said 'on the first night the guy playing music was from my home country, Gambia, he was singing in my mother tongue so in my mind I went to Gambia, it was really special. I was really happy to see him. I like kora music, it is our traditional music. That was the first time I heard the kora since I had been in the UK, it was amazing and interesting to be honest. I loved to join you.'

Thanks to all the experts by experience who walked with us. One person said: 'I don't want to lost this walk... For me, you

can't do things better. Each year is different. Walking is important, so anytime you are talking with the people, you don't think about what has happened to you, you don't think about the difficulty you have, you just think about communicating with people. It's important to do this walk. Anytime you are talking with the people you find out something you didn't know before, and they do too.' Another said: 'Walking is very important for your health, it brings your blood pressure down and less stress on your body. I always want to be walking, even if it's just in the park. It's good to get the motivation from people on the walk. I'm still struggling with mental health from my whole asylum case, I can feel it in my body. It is difficult to be honest with you, but the walking helps. Talking to people helps you forget these things.'

Building Connections

By Stephen Klein

Have you ever had one of those moments? Some apparently sensible human suddenly says something like 'those asylum seekers getting all our houses ...' or whatever. My experience has always been to have the perfect riposte some 15 minutes after it is required. In the meanwhile what I actually said, in retrospect feels entirely wrong. So, I was really pleased when Anna put on a session called Difficult Conversations Training. It was a beautifully rounded course. It was run in two parts.

The first half was offered remotely by Lauren Cape-Davenhill, who took us back to thinking about what we wanted to achieve. Pick your battles she argued. Do you want to waste your emotional energy

on failing to persuade Nigel Farage that he is wrong? Or is your time better spent trying to shift people who are not active opponents and might be reachable. She challenged us to be respectful, curious and listen to their arguments, rather than beating them over the head with aggressive argument or a storm of statistics. Also, we were reminded, most of such conversations will be with people who have never met an asylum seeker. So, stories are important ways to bring the reality of the detention experience to life. We role-played this in pairs, and I confess I failed miserably. Two sentences in, I was haranguing my partner about the error of her ways. Maybe next time I will do better.

Anna led the second half of the session. Having been encouraged not to bore our 'opponents' with statistics, there are, on the other hand some situations where it is entirely right to ground our arguments in facts. She took us through some of the facts and their sources. It is the best list I have ever had.

The main problem with the session is that it was too short. The first part of the presentation offered us a novel and unique perspective which I would have liked to explore more. Two minutes of role play only allowed us to replicate the challenge and not to develop a solution for ourselves. But it is certainly worth repeating for those who could not make it.

Refugee Tales Connections

By Bill Keller

Why do we walk? What makes walking such a powerful expression of who we are and what we believe in? Walking with others is a time to reflect and unwind, to exchange thoughts and ideas and to gain new perspectives. Refugee Tales is all this and a collective act of solidarity and protest: solidarity with those making perilous journeys to safety; protest against the UK's inhumane policy of migrant detention.



Our journey began with a reading, I Continue To Dream (Langston Hughes), the first of five voices we carried. A disused railway line wound us out of Three Bridges, between mature trees. Soon we passed through dense woodland to a welcome lunch stop at Worth Abbey. After nearly twelve miles, we reached Haywards Heath, tired but jubilant. That evening, it was salutary to hear the moving tales of those who have journeyed far further, in arduous conditions, to seek sanctuary in the UK. Our walk from Burgess Hill to Brighton was memorable.

Stopping for tea in the pretty village of Ditchling, author Kenan Malik challenged our thinking about the politics of immigration. If we despair that the EU outsources policing of its borders to north African militias, there is hope knowing that public attitudes in the UK are now far more relaxed than hostile government immigration policy suggests. Afterwards, we climbed an ancient drovers' track, steeply up onto the ridge of the Downs and were rewarded by commanding views: northwards, the open Sussex Weald; southwards, the hazy sea beyond Brighton. It made a magnificent picnic spot. Later, we

celebrated. Seth had been granted leave to remain. "I am free!", he said, and the infectious music of Don Kipper had everyone dancing joyously. The final day traced the coastline to Worthing. The sea sparkled and our blue, Refugee Tales standard streamed ahead, proudly held aloft by Osman. Drivers honked horns, beach-goers applauded, and passers-by excitedly came to talk. Our patron, Ali Smith, offered words of welcome and we were spellbound by the sublime, Gaelic voice of Julie Fowlis, accompanied by guitar and shruti box. Pious spoke movingly about finding his voice, while Mary Barrett and Andy Barnes were deservedly awarded the OBE (Order of the Boot, Extraordinary!) for their unstinting commitment to Refugee Tales.

At journey's end, I felt I understood something more about the power of walking. Stephen Collis had earlier read his wonderful poem, "A Single Starling Is No Such Thing". And, we might say, a single human is no such thing. Our walk is our murmur, a physical expression of our humanity and all our voices: hear our voices.

A Single Starling is No Such Thing

By Stephen Collis

Said this out loud
for no one and nothing
for everyone
and everything
starry regions
avian minds hovering
you and I are nothing
but swarms of particles
constellations
liquidities
governed by laws

fuzzy states between
here and there
magnetic and
clinging to each other

Said this to no one
said this to a bird
swooping pulse
throb and oscillation
*I'll have a starling
be taught to speak*
but what if all it says
is untranslatable
gurgling and sputtering
electric chatter?
A single starling is no such thing
as one grain of sand or one drop of rain
what is vision—what is harmony?
A flock is what we want to be
clustering telepathic collective thought
flash out so many minds moving
border crossing seas and mountains
though the starling has
affinity groups in sevens
just these nearest seven in flight
to pay attention syncing breathing
sevens touching other sevens calling
voices / hear our voices
you do the math
fractal and telepathic
navigating by quick moves
I am looking for love in numbers
if I form a flock I am leaving with you
get my breath by being in sync
hearing voices / hear our voices

What is at the limit of the infinite?
What is moving out this mobile mesh
of black purple indigo and deep green
background radiation scintilla of feathers
from out which cosmic depths
stars shoot as million pinholes streaming
to make one bird plumed for night
rise into collective form

of flocks governed by their flock
members
of the measure of sevens
of the nearness of wing-to-wing
communication
of hearts and breaths in unison coursing
of parables stars and spies of the
midnight heavens
 and voices / hear our voices
 voices / hear our voices

Said this was an accident
said it seemed a single bird
abandoned on a hedge
was nothing but an accident
couldn't identify one without many
There is only one quarrel in the world
Hölderlin wrote:
which is more important,
the whole or the individual part?
And there was no one human way
to choose or maneuver
and sometimes accidentally *en masse*
thousands of starlings just will form
the fleeting and fluid image
of one leviathanic starling-of-starlings
is all we ever needed to know of politics
and the impossible
and what was common or
could be commoned still
 voices / hear our voices
and the air and its breathing
sevens touching other sevens
 voices / hear our voices
the street of streetlights lighting
swells through cosmic voids
brilliant dark out of darkness splintering
all that is a bundle of feathers in flight
all that is bundled
into the bundle of bundles
 voices / hear our voices
 voices / hear our voices

Wildlife Connections

By Nicky Rowbottom

A species new to science was spotted this summer in Sussex. Scientists are baffled - they've not seen anything quite like it. Taken from fieldnotes... It's certainly a vertebrate because its got backbone. It's believed to be a mammal, because it has hair and the group includes several young ones, which are carefully looked after. It has mostly blue colouring on its upper body and great variety of colours on its 240 legs. Most of its feet are waterproof, and towards late afternoon it sometimes limps. It travels at varying speeds across the south-east of England but we believe its distribution is spreading. It has many calls some of which sound almost like words... listen out for . . . "Where should i put my bag?" "Have you seen Frances?" It has an enormous appetite and seems almost to have a sense of purpose...

Thank you, Nicky, we love this new species!

Connecting with Friends

By Felicity Laurence

Walking for five days alongside the people of GDWG - those who do this urgent work of solidarity, together with the people with whom it is done - opens up a profound understanding of this beautiful endeavour of human tenderness, solidarity and empathy.

Walking together we were modelling a way of being and living with each other, as it could be: Ali Smith's 'the better imagined' in practice. This moment took us all into that imaginary, replenishing

and rebooting that vital faith - currently so undermined - in fundamental, and reciprocal, human kindness.

In their collective resisting of the prevailing dehumanisation of those who seek sanctuary here in our place, those who have been detained show such grace, such eloquence, such resilience - as to inspire again and again; as do those who never falter over innumerable days, weeks, months, and years of visiting, listening, helping, and above all, reaffirming, always, the shared humanity of those whom our state so cruelly discards.

I live too far away to be able to join GDWG in their ongoing work on the ground, but in becoming a Friend I can now feel part of their increasingly crucial task as detention once again enlarges its savage hold. Even a small but consistent ongoing donation translates into a real and maybe even life-changing effect upon a fellow human being who is in a place that, but for fortune, we might ourselves be.

Thank you, Felicity, we urge all our supporters to become Friends of GDWG and Refugee Tales!





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