



GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Spring 2023



This hand printed linocut by walker Jacqui Smith was gifted to the GDWG office (for more of Jacqui's work see JasmiPrints on Etsy)

This newsletter is written the week after a man died in detention in London. When we know the identity of the person who died we shall remember his name. In the Public Inquiry into the mistreatment of individuals detained at Brook House in 2017, the harms experienced by detained

people were laid bare. These continue today. The death raises questions about the application of safeguards. Every day the human cost of detention is witnessed by our volunteers and staff team. Read in this newsletter how we keep working in the face of a system that fulfils its

intention to break people down until they give up.

This newsletter is written in the shadow of the Illegal Migration Bill, an attempt to strengthen the hostile environment. The Bill will not end dangerous channel crossings. It will, however, fuel hostility to asylum seekers and make us all less safe. In the face of a Bill that embeds dehumanisation into law, we shall resist dehumanisation in all the ways open to us and at every turn. Read how we have come together for walks and training and how, overseas in Germany and Belgium, our supporters have walked in solidarity. Read how we have connected with other visitor groups, with research, our local community, and how we have taken information about detention into schools and colleges.

Read in this newsletter how our community demonstrates that we see the world differently and walk a path of welcome and respect.

Anna Pincus
Director, GDWG

Casework Supervision *by Karris Hamilton*

Every month our Casework Team have one to one Casework Supervisions with Val Coumont, our team psychotherapist. In these sessions we speak to Val about how we are feeling, any challenges we are facing and how the work is impacting us. It is important for us the Casework Team to have supervisions to help us deal with the difficult emotions that arise when supporting people during and after detention. It is also a great opportunity to get advice from a psychotherapist's

perspective about the best way to support people.

Through supervision, the Casework Team is supported and able to consider how to improve support for individuals. It then leads to better experiences and outcomes for those we are supporting. Val helps us to work through any challenges arising from our work and helps us understand our feelings.



If any of our Volunteers have a difficult conversation with a detained person or are negatively affected by anything when visiting, we can arrange a phone call or face to face meeting with Val. If you would like to arrange a session with Val please let Anna know.

I sit down in the room opposite you. List in my hand, ready to off-load everything in my mind on to you. You smile, ask how I am and make sure I have a cup of tea. I talk a lot, and quickly. I have so much to say. You slow me down and ask me to take it one person at a time. My mind often works like this, multiple people

racing through my mind at once. It is hard to slow it down, think about one thing at a time, it is not what I am accustomed to.

We speak about people I am supporting at the moment. You ask me how it makes me feel when someone pins all their hopes on me. You mention how much of a weight that must be to bear. I smile. It's not something I've really considered, I say.

I pause and reflect. I wouldn't really describe it as a weight, more a sea. A sea of people needing things from me and I'm trying to keep swimming, to stay afloat amongst all of the need. When the waves of crisis come, I tense up. It is not a surprise really, but it's as if every time I have forgotten the way it feels. The crisis is so great, and I am the person who needs to find a solution.

I tell you that most often I just feel tired, tired of working in a system that is not broken but is working in exactly the way it is meant to. It fulfils its intention to break people down until they give up. It wears us, the support workers, down too.

But having this space you hold for me, allows me time to breathe. To think it all through. To examine how I am feeling, and so often I am surprised by what I am holding on to.

I always end these sessions feeling much lighter. I feel more capable of keeping on going. Somehow, I often finish with a reflection of a moment that reminds me how necessary this work is. The memory of the words "you gave me hope" or "you made me feel that someone cared" help keep me afloat.

Make us your Charity of the Year

By Anna Pincus

If the organisation where you work chooses GDWG as your Charity of the Year, you get the opportunity to support our frontline work and also our Refugee Tales outreach work. Choose us as your Charity of the Year, and we will work with you to create a bespoke calendar of events to help meet your corporate social responsibility needs.

We will give presentations to your organisation to raise awareness of the work we do. Our presentations will include the voices of people with lived experience of detention. We think you will find it positive and rewarding for your staff to feel part of our work and that they will be passionate together in support of our call for change.

We will bring you a programme of suggestions about how your teams can get involved in our work. We can create a Refugee Tales walk from your workplace with all the opportunities this brings for your team to build their connections with each other alongside health benefits too! We can offer fundraising activities, offering time and skills through volunteering opportunities, collections of second-hand clothes, walking with us, welcoming a Refugee Tales writer in a reading group, supporting Refugee Tales arts events and more.

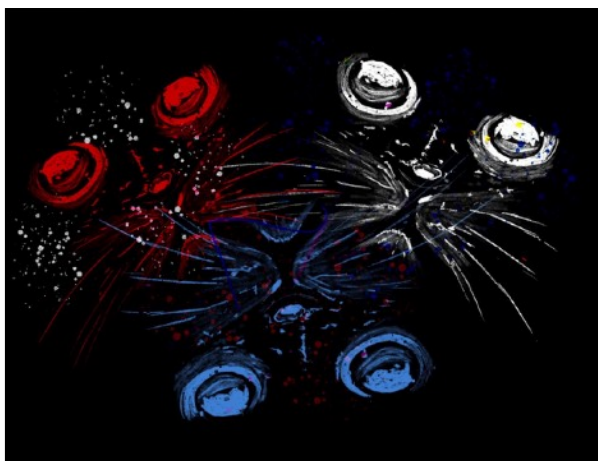
Many companies recognise the benefits of working with a charity partner for multiple years, embedding the partnership within the organisation culture to deliver mutually beneficial results with a lasting legacy.

Look, Feel and Imagine

By Ridy Wasolua



I saw the photo of this image from a Refugee Tales walk and thought this was the best picture to draw. You can see David Herd in the picture, can you tell it's him? There's not just one person, there's a mix of people there. The picture shows peace and harmony and how the world is so precious. People standing on the bridge means a lot, and there is so much green around. We can all cross the bridge together. And David likes to read a lot, so it made sense that he had some paper in his hand! You can stand there and see the beauty around you, simple things you can miss out on life - that's what we get on these beautiful walks. It stays with you in the long-term and it's all the people you meet. That bridge represented a lot, so I wanted to get it right!



Some years ago I went looking for art. To begin my journey I went to an art gallery. At that stage art to me was whatever I found in an art gallery. I found paintings, mostly, and because they were in the gallery I recognised them as art. A particular painting was one colour and large. I observed a further piece that did not have an obvious label. It was also of one colour - white - and gigantically large, occupying one complete wall of the very high and spacious room and standing on small roller wheels. On closer inspection I saw that it was a moveable



wall, not a piece of art. Why could one piece of work be considered 'art' and the other not? The answer to the question could, perhaps, be found in the criteria of Berys Gaut to decide if some artefact is, indeed, art - that art pieces function only as pieces of art, just as their creators intended. Art is a way of grasping the world. Not merely the physical world, which is what science attempts to do; but the whole world, and specifically, the

human world, the world of society and spiritual experience. Look, feel and imagine, with your heart.



Facilitation Training

By the Self-Advocacy Group

In January, GDWG arranged facilitation training for the self-advocacy group of people with lived experience of detention who come together to call for change. Sam Higgins from Be Magnificent CIC was the leader of the session. Here are some reflections on the training from those who took part:

The training was marvellous, it was good really. It was eye-opening, there was more stuff to learn about. The most interesting thing was how to deal with people you are leading, and things like that - asking questions and we should make everyone feel at ease, some people are shy, so how to encourage them. You should be neutral and respect everyone's beliefs.

I enjoyed it very much. The course went well, we had a lot to learn. I enjoyed it. The most interesting was listening

to others' opinions and before starting a group putting the ground rules in the front, so certain things won't be tolerated in the classroom, and be said - people have different cultures. That was the most valuable thing I took, make sure you put those boundaries in the front. Knowing everyone's names, doing ice-breaker warm-ups to get everyone active and keep everyone focused on what you are trying to do. Noticing who's the least confident and bringing them out of their shell. It was great. During the process some people's confidence came up, we were working to bring people out of their shell.

The main thing I learned was if you are leading the group you have to make your own decision, you can't always wait for everyone's opinions. That I found a little bit hard.

It was excellent, man. I really enjoyed it to be honest and the Walking Inquiry, meeting new people as well, definitely I really appreciate it you know. Sam, she gave us more courage and more confidence you know, how to speak, and how to be a leader. She told us with confidence you can be leader. Everybody was listening.



I learned how to be patient when you are with the group, how to make decisions when you are with the group. For things like that I say it was a nice experience, thanks to GDWG.

One of the things I am working towards is having the confidence to stand and speak at the front. Maybe this education will help me. Every training, every programme is a learning opportunity for me. On Friday it was a bit of an eye-opener in understanding how groups work and the different roles that people can play. Sam, she was quite easy to understand and everyone was chipping in. These trainings give me a bit of confidence to even understand myself.



January Weekend

By Kingsley

In January the self-advocacy group attended training on Facilitation. The training was good, I enjoyed it. It was impactful. What they teach - how to relate, for instance, how to address people, how you talk. As a leader you have to lead a good example, for people to follow. I know I learnt a lot that day. The teacher was very accommodating as well, she really contributed to every one of us.

She did her best, it was an eye-opener, I jotted so many things down. To be a good leader you have to be tolerant and patient. Where there is disagreement between group members, the leader should know how to manage the group and misunderstandings. It takes a leader to handle matters.

We stayed in a hotel for the weekend for the training and a walk. The environment it really calms your mind, the mental health and alertness was super that night in the hotel. The hospitality was excellent, I was able to sleep well and think well. That bonding - we were all interacting and getting to know each other more, it was awesome. We were able to relate very well, I enjoyed it. It makes me to feel at home even when I do not have my documents yet. Each time you give us an opportunity, there is always an improvement in, my life, I feel one step ahead.

The walk was fine as well, even for me I have not been training for some time, so the walk is like exercise. Everyone is very friendly as well, asking if you are okay and if you are eating. They want to know you! You can see why I come, I know I will be blessed if I come. As long as I am not having to do Home Office signing, I will always come, the distance will not stop me. I am glad to be part of the group.

The Launch of Refugee Tales 2023

By Marygold Lewis

The launch event for the Refugee Tales walk taking place in July was held on Saturday 21 January. And what a wonderful time the 73 people in attendance had! The walk itself went from Three Bridges train station to the



beginning of the Worth Way walking trail and took about one and a half hours. We were blessed with a cold, but sunny day and the walkers were greeted with a warming cup of tea on arrival at the Crawley URC, where the launch event took place. Nicky and Sal had two fun ice-breaking games for us to play: one involved tossing a ball around and shouting out our names and what we had for breakfast; and for the other, we split up into groups and each group had to put together a jigsaw puzzle that revealed the name of one of the towns the July walk is going through and some multiple-choice questions. Frenetic and funny, thanks so much Nicky and Sal for your very inspired and creative games!



We all went into the church section and were privileged to have Ridy as our accomplished MC for the day. We learned that the walk that day was partnered with one in Chemnitz, Germany, the first of our twinned walks with international partners, who sent us photographs of their walk (viewable on Instagram). Refugee Tales Cymru in Wales also walked with us on the day and sent a message from their walkers.



Refugee Tales is international, and the message of walking in solidarity with people who have experienced immigration detention, is a powerful one. We also heard from Seth on behalf of the self-advocacy group. We all wrote out our reflections about the July 2022 walk on post-its and some of these were read out.

Christina Fitzsimons and Mary Barrett outlined this year's walk route, taking place from 8 - 12 July, which starts in Three Bridges, then goes to Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, Preston Park (on the outskirts of Brighton), Portslade, and ending in Worthing. Anna Pincus and Anna Sayburn then gave us information about Publicity, and Walk Ambassadors.

Hannah Carbery, one of our Advocacy Co-ordinators, followed and spoke about the school talks, youth engagement and the importance of having youth ambassadors. Finally, David Herd introduced the theme for this year's walk: Voices. We adjourned to have tea, coffee, lunch and cake. Such a wonderful opportunity to connect with old friends and make new ones, in our unified endeavour to spread a positive message of solidarity.



Brussels Walk in Solidarity

By Zoheb Mashur

When GDWG arranged a monthly walk in the UK in February, a group walked in solidarity in Brussels. Zoheb Mashur, one of the walkers wrote:

To walk through Brussels with migration on the mind is to see the city anew. Most of those who joined us in our walk in solidarity had never before seen the Fedasil Arrival Center at Le Petit-Château, where asylum seekers first lodge their claim for shelter in Belgium. Passing by the site at the very beginning of our walk, on a rainy Belgian day, the foreboding walls were themselves an ironic contrast to the posters on them, showing games and activities for the asylum seekers

within. A place of hospitality, or was the little fortress a dour sign of hospitality's absence? Despite its grim presence in the middle of the city, just streets away from the glitzy centre, this most visible of sites of migration was invisible to all except those who needed to know about it. Opening our eyes to the presence of Le Petit-Château, we were able to see the migrant stories on the streets of Brussels – we were, after all, every one of us migrants to Belgium ourselves.

If you know the history of the city, especially in its centre, there isn't a corner without a historic café opened by an immigrant, some city institution whose story stretches beyond Belgium's borders. Every convenience store has someone whose papers are not in order. Our walking route brought us in contact with the Stolpersteine – stumbling stones – the discreet Holocaust memorials scattered through the cities formerly occupied by the Nazis. Each stone, a tiny paving stone, carries the names and histories of someone deported during the Holocaust, placed outside their former residence. A somber thing to read the names of multiple family members, the parents often Polish, the children Belgian, most of whom were killed – assassiné, as the stones say in French. Around these stones today: playgrounds, homes, cafes, a wine museum. Sarah Goldberg, resistance fighter, sentenced to the concentration camp, later escaped – her stone a few minutes from Audrey Hepburn's home. Hepburn's story is famous, but I've just looked Sarah up, and her story is just as extraordinary (prohibitively so for this space, you should Google her.)



This is the city, its people, its past and present. The people that come and go - forgotten, never noticed, celebrated on plaques, mourned on stones - and spaces and streets and buildings that are no more fixed in place or meaning than we are.



Attending the AVID Conference

By Hannah Carbery

At the start of March, the Association of Visitors In Detention (AVID) network had its first in person conference since COVID. We had two days of sessions and networking events that covered solidarity and resistance in and after detention, lived experienced power and leadership, supporting relationships with lawyers and what's next for our community.

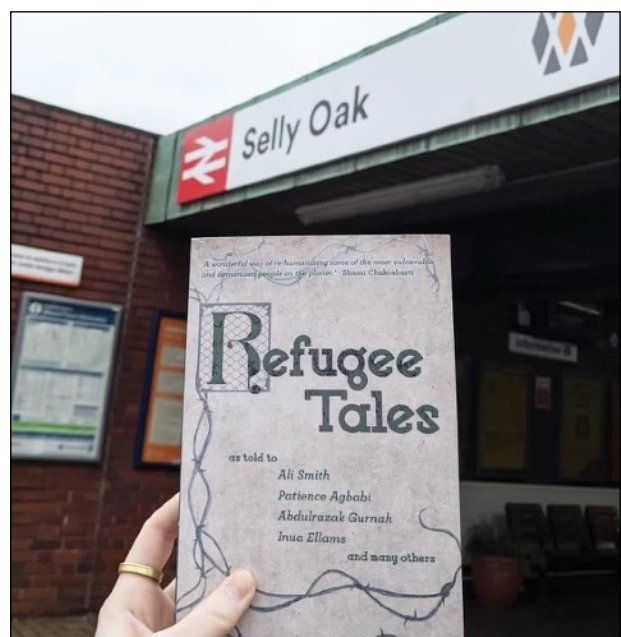
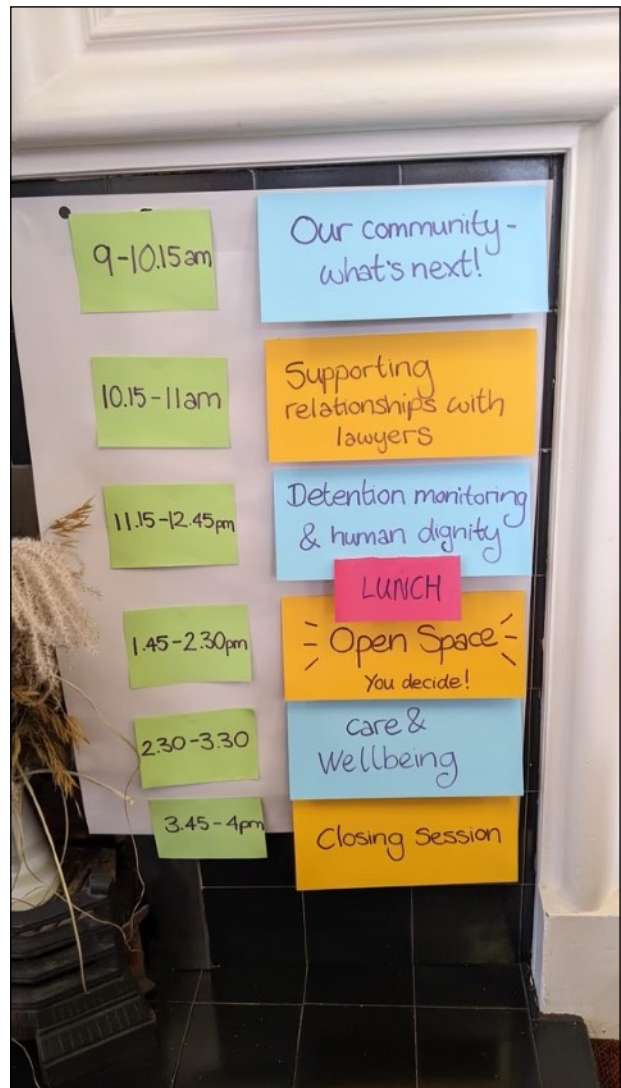
Visitors, volunteers and support workers from across the UK joined together to share struggles and work together to overcome shared barriers and concerns. It was great to finally meet with people we had spoken to only over email or met via Zoom. We were also joined by speakers from Duncan Lewis, International Detention Coalition and lived experience campaigners and caseworkers.

Throughout the two days, the power of visiting and the importance of solidarity between visitors and people in detention was so clear. Now more than ever it is essential that we are standing with people going through the anxiety and hostility of the UK's immigration policy, rather than standing by. We must continue to think and challenge ourselves on how we continue to support people in detention, without validating spaces of detention. As visitors, many of us are witnesses to the daily injustices of the UK's immigration system. While some are experienced and well versed in the processes, delays and inhumanity that the system fosters, it is important that we support all people to resist this 'status quo' that is created to wear people down. Regardless of how often we have heard injustice or witnessed unfair decisions, or

shocking responses from legal representatives - we must remain strong and in solidarity with people who are experiencing it daily. We discussed the importance of visitors to detention not becoming bored with the routines of detention or feeling hopeless about positive change occurring.

The conference sparks ideas. After the AVID conference, I wondered how we describe detention to others and how we reach out to others who don't know about detention. Patricia from Larne House visitors group in Northern Ireland, discussed contextual comparisons. She describes detention to her community as people being held by the government without trial, while their immigration status is resolved. Patricia pointed out that in Northern Ireland, people can make a historic comparison to the policy of internment during The Troubles, when people were personally impacted by the indefinite internment of loved ones. This comparison can motivate people to get involved with visiting and resisting detention today.

If you've read this far - I wondered whether you could let me know how you 'describe' detention. Do you describe the building, the impact, or your experience of visiting someone in detention? Does this change based on who you are speaking to, and how so? As we continue our outreach in schools, I am intrigued to know about your own outreach and to learn from your experiences talking about detention. How do people respond to your conversations? Do get in touch and let me know: hannah@gdwg.org.uk



Book Review of 'Landlines'

Author: Raynor Winn

By Eva Twine

Raynor Winn's writing, an inspirational mix of memoir and nature writing, with thought-provoking observations of the challenges facing the modern-day world, has captivated me since reading her deeply moving 2018 debut, 'The Salt Path.'

For those who have not yet come across 'The Salt Path,' it documented Raynor's and her husband Moth's life-changing experiences along the 630-mile-long trail known as the South West Coast Path. That walk came in the wake of the couple's world being shattered in 2013, when, within the space of a week, Moth was diagnosed with a rare and progressive neurological disorder (a condition known as Corticobasal Degeneration / CBD) and the loss of their livelihood and beloved family home in Wales. Left with little more than the rucksacks on their backs and a tent bought on eBay, they began walking the remote and wild route along the Southwest coastlines, from Somerset to Devon. Inexplicably, after the first 200 arduous miles, Moth's health began to improve in ways that should have been impossible. Other strenuous long-distance hikes followed but CBD is a cruel one-way street, and the enforced confinement and inactivity of the Covid lockdowns brought a sharp decline in Moth's health. Walking, and being one with nature, had saved them in their darkest hour, and Raynor's hope was that it could work its magic again. Thus begins the story of 'Landlines,' their remarkable and often perilous 1,000 mile journey over the summer of 2021 from Scotland's remotest mountains

and lochs, along the West Highland Way, through The Borders, along the Pennine Way all the way down South, back to their new home in Cornwall.

'Landlines' records, in beautiful language, the landscapes, the strangers and friends, wilderness and wildlife they encounter along the way. There is humour and resourcefulness in overcoming the weather and terrain, the midges and horseflies - as well as the ever-present fear, guilt and hope for Moth's health.

But Raynor Winn's writing and observations are as multi-layered as the landscapes they walk through. 'Landlines' encompasses not just their personal journey but an array of important themes that concern all of us: the climate crisis, extinction of wildlife, migration, food security, homelessness, terminal illness and friendship. Homelessness in particular, and the prejudice homeless people all too often face, remains a topic close to Raynor Winn's heart: drawing on her own experiences, her first foray into writing after completing the South West Coast Path were contributions to The Big Issue.

I chose to review 'Landlines' for Refugee Tales not just because of its theme of walking but because for me the overarching themes of the book are resilience, human kindness - and hope. Early on in this tremendous undertaking of a journey and already facing unforeseen obstacles, Raynor and Moth share an encounter with two mountain climbers who leave them with these words:

"Hope. It's powerful; it can change things. But you've got to put yourself in the way

of it, let yourself feel it. Let the power of it lift you up. That's what you're doing: putting yourselves in the way of hope. Do that and anything can happen."

A Submission to the Walking Inquiry

'We Must Leave No-one Behind'

By Lauren Cape-Davenhill

I am responding to the Walking Inquiry's question, 'What is our response?' The Walking Inquiry, and GDWG's tireless advocacy and campaigning, have powerfully underscored the harms of detention to individuals and society, and the fundamental injustice of locking people up without time limit for immigration purposes.

Our response can only be to demand an end to detention - for everyone. And the 'for everyone' is vital, as there is a risk that some people are excluded in the current moves towards detention reform. It is an important step in the right direction that Labour committed to a time limit on detention in its last manifesto, and that the Conservatives have recognised the need to reduce detention - but these political commitments exclude the detention of people with convictions.

I am a former GDWG caseworker and university researcher, and am currently collaborating with GDWG on a research project exploring the processes by which people face detention and deportation as a result of time in prison or contact with the police. The majority of people in detention are in this situation; and people with convictions spend on average much longer in detention than other groups. In my research I have spoken with people

who came to the UK as children, got into trouble with the police as teenagers, and found themselves facing deportation to a country they barely remember. I have spoken to an asylum seeker given a prison sentence for touching the rudder of the boat he was in crossing the English Channel. I have spoken to a survivor of modern slavery convicted for work he was forced to do by his traffickers. All of these people have served their time; and then experienced the 'double punishment' of detention, sometimes spending longer in detention than their original prison sentence. This is wrong, and we must stand up and say it is wrong. Locking people without time limit for immigration purposes can never be justified, for anyone. In the fight to end detention, we must leave no one behind.

A Visit to Scotland

By Josie Wade

In early December, I visited Glasgow on behalf of GDWG to attend the Scottish Detainee Visitor group's event marking their 20th year of visiting people held in immigration detention at Dungavel. I attended the event with someone who had previously been detained at Gatwick, and was now living and working in Scotland with his family. Together we met Alison Thewliss MP and Paul Sweeney MSP, both of whom were clear that indefinite detention must end. Despite the disheartening premise of the event, the evening itself felt positive and encouraging. It was interesting to meet some of the SDV team and find common ground with visitors, trustees and social media volunteers, as well as Kate and Georgie who work at the organisation.



The next day we visited Dungavel IRC. It was around an hour's drive out of Glasgow city centre, which makes it hard for families to visit detained people. SDV ensure all volunteer visitors can drive, but if a family member or friend of someone in detention wish to visit, there is no public transport available.

It was interesting to compare Dungavel to Brook and Tinsley House, because the architecture was so different. Instead of a purpose-built centre like those at Gatwick, Dungavel used to be a hunting lodge, and from the road, looks like it could be a motel. As soon as you turn onto the driveway, the hostile environment is apparent, with huge barbed-wire fences around the building. After a recent protest, the Home Office added metal panels around the lower part of the fence, so that those held in detention are not able to see anyone on the outside. Inside, a listed wooden stairway contrasts with the huge institutional fire doors which have been incorporated into the building.

When we visited the centre, two women were held in detention. Because Dungavel is a mixed centre, management

decided that women must be escorted around the centre 24/7. Men can walk between the accommodation units and different areas independently, but women are always with a member of staff, adding to the oppressive atmosphere. The rules at Dungavel have changed recently and more staff are required for it to hold the maximum number of people in detention. They are not currently able to detain the maximum number of people in the centre because of a lack of staff. We spoke to one man who was detained for months on end and then released only to be re-detained a number of days later. He was missing his family and was understandably frustrated by the lack of progress on his case.

Although there were many differences between Dungavel and the Gatwick centres, the hostile environment underpins the entire estate. For people who have been detained in multiple centres, some may feel that one centre is marginally better than another, but ultimately the same principle applies across detention... People experience loss of liberty in an arbitrary way, and the indefinite nature of detention has a severe impact upon anyone who experiences it.





School Talks for GDWG

By Hannah Carbery

For those of you with children or grandchildren, you will know that we are reaching the halfway point of the school year already. Many students will be doing mock exams, receiving offers from universities, or engaging in extra-curricular activities before the intensity of GCSEs, A-Levels or college coursework deadlines. So far, the GDWG school talks team have spoken to over 2,000 students in four different schools. Would you like to know how you can get involved?

The scope of the GDWG school talks varies as we work with each school and year group to arrange the best length and time of year to talk with students. Some of our talks will be an assembly style presentation in front of a whole year group lasting only 40 minutes, while other talks are with a much smaller group, and last up to two hours. Depending on what the school, sixth form or university has capacity for, informs the full structure of the school talk.

Every talk has the foundation of explaining the meanings of terminology such as migrant; asylum seeker; refugee; and undocumented person. We focus on students having had their own experiences of migration, and having

family members who may have been born in other countries, or experienced living in other countries to show that crossing borders and migration is not as far from their personal lives as they might have thought!

We speak with students about some 'facts' or phrases that they might have heard in the media - challenging them to think whether the UK hosts the most refugees and talk about how channel crossings being one of the only routes people can take to the UK to seek asylum. Throughout the talks, we weave in quotes from the Refugee Tales books. Visitors speak about the difficulties of supporting someone who doesn't know when they are going to be released - the uncertainty that people face while in detention and how confusing complex immigration laws can be. The aim of the school talks is for students to think about the impact of laws, policies and media narratives on individual people, regardless of their backgrounds.

Last year, we asked students to highlight something that surprised or shocked them about the talk that we did. The majority of students referred specifically to indefinite nature of detention, and the statistic that 77% of people detained are released back into the communities; their detention having served no purpose. We will continue to speak with students about immigration in the UK, detention and share tales from the Refugee Tales books and welcome any thoughts or contacts that this wonderful community might have in making the talks accessible, interesting and something that people are motivated by!



A Walk in Thanet

By Felicity Allen

On 18th February we were delighted to host our first Refugee Tales walk in Thanet, that is, the small 'island' (as it was in the Roman period, pre-drainage) made up of Margate to the north, Broadstairs to the east, and Ramsgate to the south. Each town is historically and architecturally quite distinct, although they more or less flow into each other around the coast and across the interior land. Thanet's histories include many arrivals (St Augustine, the Vikings, occasional 'small boats') which we discussed on the walk.

A large group gathered at Broadstairs station, coming from all directions, with a mix of regular walkers and local people who did not know GDWG or Refugee Tales before. We celebrated that one of our walkers had recently been granted leave to remain, as well as our Folkestone neighbour Raga Gibreel's birthday. Lucy Williams, Jiggy Bhore and I planned the route, grateful for back up from Josie in the GDWG office. We were quickly witnessing stunning views, sandy



beaches, sea birds, chalk cliffs and their outcrops in the sea, arriving in time for tea at the Pie Factory & Crab Museum in Margate's Old Town. The weather was mild for February, dissolving our anxieties about windswept cliffs pelted with hard rain from the east. There is very little shelter on this walk and, with cuts, public lavatories are closed out of season. We were dependent on a large pub's loos, and concerned that our guest walkers might encounter the views of local extremists who are vocal in the locality. In this context, support from friends from elsewhere felt vital to us in Thanet as we work to gather strong, vocal and visible support to express welcome.



Songs from Home

By Ave Houston

On a grey Friday afternoon I went to "Songs From Home" a concert put on in Crawley by a group of musicians who had come together for the very first time only once before. They had been carefully selected and recruited from local temporary accommodation by Derren. Following demonstrations by the far-right outside hotel accommodation for refugees, it had not been possible to publicly advertise the concert. The organisers asked groups like GDWG to encourage their community to attend. All the musicians had an extraordinary musical talent but also had a commitment to music making that was central in their culture.

I joined the GDWG volunteers and other local people who filled the hall to hear the twenty or so performers making music. They were from all over the world; from North and South America, Asia and Africa, Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, and of course, from the UK. Their instruments were as varied, from the familiar and modern keyboard, electric guitar and drum kit, the violin and flute to the oud, the mbira and Columbian drums. The musicians on these last three told us a little about the origins and significance of the instruments and how they were tuned and played.

The sound was cohesive, the rhythms, simple and complex, were always arresting and the tunes were sometimes haunting and sometimes joyful. And all this with improvised elements and no music score anywhere to be seen. To add to the mix, the audience were encouraged to join in by singing along

with the refrains and playing the djembe drums that were dotted amongst us. I was full of admiration for Derren, who managed to keep the efforts of the audience in time with the musicians. It was a joyful occasion which easily dispelled the greyness of the day. I was delighted to be there in solidarity and to hear so many songs from so many homes.

Research into how people stay occupied in detention

By Madeline Denny

Madeline Denny is an Occupational Therapy MSc student researcher, and former GDWG volunteer who is carrying out a study into what people spent their time doing during immigration detention. GDWG is working with Madeline and we invited her to share about her research with you in the newsletter. Madeline writes:

There is a strong connection between what we do with our time and our wellbeing. The NHS '[five steps to mental wellbeing](#)', rather than focusing on treating illness, encourages people to achieve wellbeing through being active, learning, being present in ourselves, connecting with others and contributing to our communities.

As a student of occupational therapy, much of my time is taken up with trying to understand how we can support people to overcome any barriers they face to doing the things they want and need to do (for example, through making a kitchen more accessible for a person who uses a wheelchair), and how occupations can support recovery (for example, creative activities can support people with mental health challenges to feel

better (Hansen, Erlandsson and Leufstadius, 2021)).

Time and again, this has led me to reflect on the lives of people in immigration removal centres (IRCs). As one detained person in Brook House articulated in a previous research study by GDWG, "You don't got nothing to do here...in prison you can do education (or) work, you've got the motivation to do something rather than just be locked up in your cell" (Neale, 2012).

Numerous research studies and government reviews have pointed to a link between immigration detention and poor mental health (for example, Shaw, 2016), so it is vital that people receive support in detention to stay occupied, doing things that feel meaningful as much as possible. However, this raises many complex questions. Is it possible to lose oneself in an activity while managing the overwhelming uncertainty that many people experience during immigration detention? Can occupations have meaning for people who are physically removed from those they are closest to? For people that cannot cope with doing anything, is there anything that supportive organisations could do to help them make small changes to become a little more occupied during detention?

Through my research into the experiences and meaning of what people spent their time doing while they were detained in IRCs, I will draw on the experiences of formerly detained people who are generously giving their time to be interviewed. I hope this will shed light on some of these questions and help people who support those in

detention to enable detained people to cope better.

References

Hansen, B. W., Erlandsson, L.-K. and Leufstadius, C. (2021) 'A concept analysis of creative activities as intervention in occupational therapy', *Scandinavian journal of occupational therapy*, 28(1), pp. 63-77.

Neale, D. (2012) 'A prison in the mind': the mental health implications of detention

in Brook House Immigration Removal Centre: Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group,. Available at: <https://www.gdwg.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/04/gdwg-prisoninthemind.pdf>.

Shaw, S. (2016) *Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons* Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/490782/52532_Shaw_Review_Accessible.pdf.

A Marathon Run for Refugee Tales

By Anna Pincus



David Herd has completed many marathons for Refugee Tales over the years... editing ones, walking ones, writing ones and even email ones! On 2nd April he and Lily Herd completed their greatest challenge so far when they

completed the Paris Marathon to support the work of GDWG. We congratulate them on their great achievement and invite you to show your support with a [donation](#). All money raised from their supporters will go to our frontline work. Please donate and share the link with your friends. Thank you! And thank you, Lily and David, for your courageous run.



In Memoriam Jim Howley (1940 - 2023)

We remember a GDWG visitor, always as considerate to GDWG staff as to the people he visited. Jim was a teacher, a guitarist, a Huddersfield Town supporter, a man of faith, a linguist, a husband, father, grandfather, friend to many in detention and to many in GDWG. We shall miss him. Jim's relationship with one man he visited in detention was captured in Refugee Tales Volume I 'The Deportee's Tale' by Avaes Mohammad:

A local man
A caring kind colossal man
With colossal hands and eyes and mouth
and size
Called Jim
Would heave through those fortified
gates with heaps of
clothes and smiles
Someone who dared to sit and look at
him for longer than most looks had been.
Spoke to ask not where he's from, why
he's here, but how he
is, who he is?
Jim was the first.
The first one to show this young boy that
he cared
Assure him that there's someone there
Encourage him, empower him, fight for
this young man - that
was Jim
This young child of 14 years who'd
walked from Afghanistan,
entering into Pakistan, lorry smuggled
him into Iran
Climbed mountains, deserts, cities and
the first man in
months, over half this earth, the first who
asked him how he
was, was this man named Jim.
That's probably why he fights to stay
somewhere, to be
someone colossal enough to show he
cared.





The Longley Trust



The Henry Smith Charity

The Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust

Swan Mountain Trust

The Bernadette Trust