



GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Winter 2022



It's a great pleasure to open our 2022 Winter Newsletter with a tribute to our frontline team. This photo shows Hannah Carbery and Karris Hamilton receiving an award from charity Medical Justice in December. Medical Justice dedicated the award 'For the vital human connection you make with our clients, for supporting them and for assisting Medical Justice.' Congratulations to all the GDWG frontline team for your work and this recognition.

At this time of year, we keep those who are detained in our thoughts and when we look back over recent months we reflect on much in the news that has made us long for change. In this

December edition of our newsletter, I hope you will be encouraged by the experiences of our self-advocacy group who took their Walking Inquiry to Parliament and heard cross-party support for an end to indefinite detention. We have articles from the project co-ordinator, from a person with lived experience who met MPs in Parliament and from Crawley volunteers who shared their visitor experiences in Parliament.

Thank you to all our volunteers whether trustees, visitors, walkers, interpreters, office volunteers or sorters of our clothing store. When one greatly valued visitor recently stepped back from volunteering she wrote 'This is not a message to tell you how much I did for the GDWG. This is to tell how joining the GDWG changed my life into a fulfilled human being.'

When you read this newsletter, I hope you will gain a strong sense of the GDWG community that brings out the best in us all.

Thank you!

Sending Season's Greetings from all the GDWG team.

Anna Pincus
Director GDWG



A day in the life of an advocacy coordinator

By Hannah Carbery

Every day in the advocacy team is completely different! From a broad range of training sessions, following up from initial assessment meetings at Brook House or Tinsley House, to catching up with people following the weekend. We support people during and after detention, connect them with volunteer visitors and work alongside office volunteers (advocacy support volunteers). Safeguarding issues are often a primary concern.

On one particular day I was focusing on calling people in Brook House to see whether there was any additional support needed or updates for me from them. It may be that some people want to talk about their visits with family or GDWG visitors, conversations they've had with their lawyers, or about a film they have seen.

Many people who are waiting for accommodation will not hear many updates from the Home Office until they are allocated an address. It can be hugely

frustrating waiting without any timeline or information. On this day I planned to speak with someone who had been in Brook House for 11 months and who had been refused accommodation. His lawyer had recently spoken to him about the options going forward and had been honest that there would likely be further delays with no guarantee of any progress soon from the Home Office.

Prior to calling him, I received a call from his visitor. She had just come back from a visit and was concerned about his mental health. We spoke about the changes in his behaviour, presentation, and how he had described feeling like life had lost its purpose. She agreed to write up a Safeguarding Report, and I agreed to prioritise calling him to see what level of support was needed and whether there was an imminent risk to his safety.

When speaking with the detained person, he disclosed having thoughts of self-harm because of the lack of progress in his situation. He understood that I would speak with Serco staff about these feelings. We spoke about coping mechanisms and how he should speak

with staff in the Centre immediately if he had thoughts of self-harm.

Safeguarding Reports are not unusual for people in detention. Volunteers, staff or trustees can send these to Anna, our safeguarding lead. Fortunately, in the case on this day, the Home Office did later accept the application for accommodation for this man and he was eventually released back with his family. Thanks to everyone who keeps us updated on safeguarding risks to people they visit and to Pious Keku our trustee who leads on our safeguarding strategy and annual audit.

A Tour of Brook House

By Ajay Sood and Josie Wade

Thank you to Serco who gave GDWG staff and volunteers a tour of Brook House. This was so helpful for our team who are often asked by detained people where they should go to access activities or services in the Centre. Josie from the staff team reflected 'We lost count of the number of doors which had to be unlocked and re-locked as we walked through Brook House, and it made the tour feel disorientating and claustrophobic. One of the first things we noticed was the air. There is no direct ventilation outside from within the cells/rooms, and the temperature is controlled throughout the detention centre... It felt stuffy and we were all grateful for the fresh air when we left after only a couple of hours.' Josie wrote: 'On one of the corridors was a list of jobs which people held in detention could apply for. All of these had a pay of £4 per day, bar one, which the pay was £3 per day. It is disturbing that such a minimal pay is considered acceptable in a detention

centre, when there is a minimum wage within the community. If a detained person was not doing the job, someone living in the community would be employed to do the same job for at least minimum wage. The irony that people could be detained for working without the correct papers, and then are allowed to work in detention, is not lost on members of GDWG's Self-Advocacy group.'

Josie noted: 'B-wing had a different feel to the other wings we visited. The mood of the place felt much lower. A faulty washing machine was running, and it was making a constant noise, much harsher than the noise of a normal machine. It was unbearable after only a few minutes, and I couldn't imagine what it would feel like to be unable to escape that noise. B-wing is currently being used as a Short-Term Holding Facility, and those held in STHF wings are not allowed to leave their wing. Meals are on the wing, and we were told that welfare would visit the wing, rather than people being able to walk to the welfare office themselves. People on B-wing could access one small yard, but none of the other activities usually available. Being held in such a confined place would be difficult enough were it for 24 hours, the intended time for someone to be held under STHF rules. Some of the men currently in B-wing had been there for 2 weeks.' Josie observed the Complaints Boxes that had been described in the Brook House Public Inquiry. These were at the entrance of the wings, and one was bright yellow. It would be impossible to put a complaint letter into a box without a member of staff seeing you do it. Josie felt this was an obvious issue, as it would deter anyone

from feeling that they could make an anonymous complaint in confidence.

Ajay, a volunteer with GDWG described his impressions: 'The institutional aspects of the centre are effectively prison-like: the décor, the bars, the click of the locks on doors, the 'airlessness' of the interior, the cells, the netting to stop people jumping from upper levels, and the presence of guards everywhere all lead to a claustrophobic, enclosed feeling.' Ajay wrote 'Given the environment, there are more services than I thought there would be: the residence 'Wings' are linked with service areas between them, and these include a library, shop, cultural kitchen, art & craft room, internet room, faith rooms, health centre, and so on' but concluded 'I can understand that it would be a desolating experience for an extended period, despite all the services etc, especially with the ubiquitous presence of guards in all areas. It does undoubtedly feel like a sequestration facility.'

The GDWG Clothing Store

By Sue Wareham

I didn't even know we have a clothes store at the Crawley Office until October, when Anna asked a few of us to do some charity shop shopping for items to fill the depleted shelves. A supporter had kindly made a financial donation for clothes to be sourced sustainably from local charity shops. We went shopping for the supporter who wasn't able to get to Crawley charity shops themselves.

The store is very well used, supplying those we support with comfortable, warm clothing. At the time of asking in October, the store was very low on stock. Joggers,

Jeans, jumpers, jackets, and men's trainers were desperately needed so, we went shopping, delivering our goods as soon as possible - that was when I first saw the clothes store, it was clear that stocks were low, trainers non-existent.

I came to realise that when clothes are requested, the wonderful office staff are taken away from their vital tasks to fill bags according to the requested items. Finding the clothes that are needed can be tricky when resources are low but also, as is the case at the moment, when there has been a huge number of donations, they need to be sorted and stored so that items are easily accessible. At the time of writing, we have tried to sort the store but there is still a pile of bags to be investigated! Please let the office know if you can volunteer to help sort clothes. GDWG staff will appreciate your help and regular clothes sorting is hugely welcomed.



Please keep donating, your gifts of clothing are invaluable, but in particular, please donate: men's joggers, jeans, t-shirts, sweatshirts, jumpers, hoodies, fleeces, warm outdoor jackets, waterproofs, useable trainers.

Sizes: Shoe sizes 8, 9 and 10 are most called for and S, M, L size clothes, trousers/ jeans waist 30", 32", 34", although a few extra-large are also required. GDWG cannot use women's or children's clothes, and please do not donate used socks, boxers or briefs as new ones are provided.

We each have a right to wear comfortable clothes, let's do what we can to ensure this right is fulfilled, upholding everyone's dignity.

Sharing news of our work at BHASVIC

By Chris Nichols

At the end of September I fronted a stall for GDWG and Refugee Tales at the BHASVIC Fresher's fair, where we were seeking to build on our already very positive relationship with the school and to reach out and try and interest their new year's intake in our work. BHASVIC is Brighton, Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College.

One moment particularly stays in my memory. I was talking with the very first couple of young people who had come over to ask about us, so I gave them a brief overview of our work. One asked what had particularly motivated me to get involved and I described my dad having been part of an economic migrant family from Wales at the time of the depression in the 30's and the troubles he had

encountered growing up and how that had always made me sympathetic to the problems people face when they move for a better life. She said that she too came from a family of migrants. Her family had come here to safety from Chile after the coup where they had suffered violence while being held in the infamous football stadium.

The students were all filing past what seemed like hundreds of stalls offering all manner of wares which they were being asked to absorb and engage with. Most didn't seem fazed though, and we had a gratifyingly large number of them wanting to find out more. All I spoke with seemed well informed of the plight of people seeking asylum and aware and indignant at the lack of compassion and hostility in the hostile environment.

Memoir Writing

By Anne Jakins

Everyone has a story to tell.

There was nothing positive about the Covid lockdowns, a distressing time of anxiety and separation. My son and young granddaughters lived in Hong Kong and I was missing so much of the girls' early years and celebrations. GDWG, forever mindful of the welfare of their volunteers, asked if they could provide any support during those long days. A memoir writing group was duly started led by staff member, Daniel.

Why write a memoir? My memoir will be a gift to my family who don't yet realise that there are many questions they will want answers to in the future. It covers my childhood, pen portraits of my

grandparents, travel, work, music and clothes. I delve into family dynamics, thoughts and feelings, while always being aware of the responsibility I have towards those I cover in my writing. I have written cameos about people whose stories would otherwise be forgotten and remain untold and included a scandalous murder I uncovered in my family at the beginning of the last century. I believe this activity is also good for the memory and has greatly improved my recall of past events.

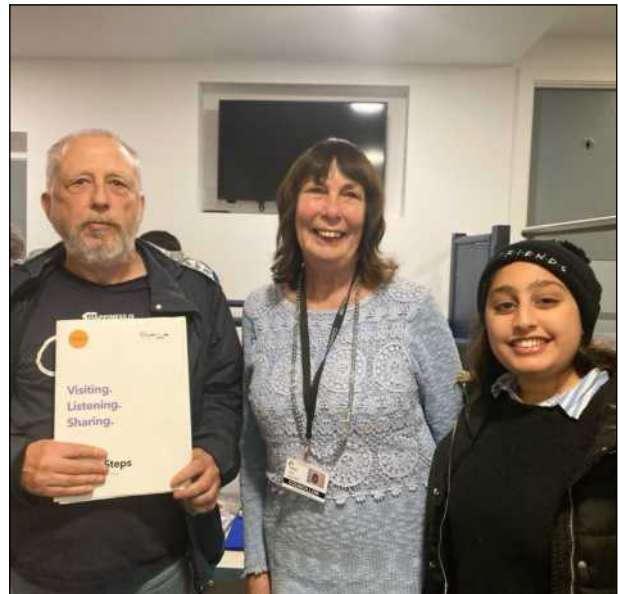
Daniel gently led us through the process, listening intently as we shared paragraphs of our work. He encouraged and inspired us, set us homework and suggesting the different directions we could take our writing. As trust grew within the group, we tackled the more challenging aspects of our lives. It was therapeutic, engrossing and a productive way to spend those enforced days at home. In addition to having a memoir to show for that time I also made a close and special friend in one of the memoir group members.

Many thanks to all involved.

An AGM celebration of the work of GDWG

By Marygold Lewis

On a dark and rainy night in November, over 50 people gathered at the United Reformed Church Crawley to celebrate and reflect on the achievements of GDWG over the past year. This was our first in-person AGM since 2019 and the atmosphere was, as always, convivial and heart-warming and the Chair of the Board, Marie Dewson gave a warm welcome to the community. Marie Dewson, Michael Heathcote and Harry



Crossley were re-elected as Trustees, and we welcomed two new Trustees, Laura Moffatt and Tom Hackett, whilst also saying thank you for long-standing service to Avril Loveless and Jamie Macpherson, who both stood down. We then heard an account of the financial status for the year and re-appointed the independent examiner to authorise the Board to fix their remuneration.

The last, but decidedly not least, item on the agenda was a thrilling presentation of the Walking Inquiry given by the wonderful Antonia Bunnin. Sadly, Ridy Wasolua was unable to join us, but we watched video material he produced for the Walking Inquiry, in which people reflected on what the Inquiry means to them. Our Trustee, Pious Keku, stood in for Ridy and gave an impassioned speech on his own feelings about detention, the Walking Inquiry and the work of GDWG and Refugee Tales. Thank you, Antonia and Pious, and we missed you, Ridy. We learned about the questions posed by the Walking Inquiry and our collective responses to these questions; how people were given postcards to fill out; about letter exchanges between pairs of



Taking the Walking Inquiry to Parliament

By Antonia Bunnin

participants; the sharing of our individual walks during Saturday night Zoom sessions; the online art workshops; and the very successful Parliamentary launch of the Walking Inquiry results that took place in October. The presentation was followed by a lively Q&A.

In addition to all of this, GDWG was selling Christmas cards and asking people to become a Friend of GDWG. We also had an amazing raffle, at which a grand total of 290 tickets were sold! The prizes were of a very high standard, and included a bottle of vintage Dom Perignon champagne, a bottle of sherry, a box of books, a box of games, two works of art and a box of chocolates. Many congratulations to the winners! Our thanks to Jubylee Bakes for absolutely delicious cakes, consumed in great quantity, a testament to their baking skills. Tables in our AGM 'cafe' were colourfully decorated with festive autumn leaves and pine cones.

Trustee Laura Moffatt summed up what GDWG stands for with her comments that we have a "unity of purpose" and that we are happily "punching above our weight" being a "small charity with a national and international reach". For further information, I urge everyone to read our Annual Review.

The day had finally arrived! 26 October: two years since starting the Walking Inquiry into immigration detention, and we were at Westminster for the Parliamentary launch of our Findings. Alison Thewliss MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Immigration Detention was hosting a reception for us in the House of Commons. Members of the Self-Advocacy Group and a few others met for a warm-up session beforehand. We thought about the different ways we'd taken part in the Walking Inquiry, and what we might say to politicians in conversation. This helped us all feel prepared, confident in knowing we had powerful insights and stories to share.

There were huge grins and warm hugs as members of our Refugee Tales community arrived to help celebrate what we've achieved so far with this project. It was especially wonderful to see Steve Collis, who has played a central role in all aspects of the Walking Inquiry including the written report, and who'd come from Canada for the launch. Marygold spotted Rishi Sunak on only his second day as Prime Minister - the buzz was building! As soon as the reception got underway, the room was full. Our guests included MPs from all the main parties, members of the House of Lords, as well as faith leaders. It was exciting to feel the energy and optimism in the room and to hear the hum of conversations about people's lives now and when in detention, about the nature and impacts of immigration detention, and why social and policy change is so vital.



We were delighted that MPs from various parties had agreed to speak. In addition to Alison Thewliss (SNP), we heard from Stephen Kinnock MP (Labour's shadow immigration minister), Alistair Carmichael MP (LibDem immigration spokesperson), and Henry Smith MP (Conservative MP for Crawley, with Gatwick and GDWG in his constituency). Hearing their perspectives and knowing they care about these issues and about what happens to people in detention was powerful. But most powerful of all was witnessing the room full of MPs, Peers, faith leaders and our own community, listen with respect and emotion as first Pious, then Seth and Ridy spoke of their own experiences, the lasting impacts of detention, and why the system must be changed. Seeing this reinforced so strongly why the voices of people with lived experience must be

heard at the centre of our democratic institutions, and throughout our society.

The Parliamentary launch was an important moment for the Walking Inquiry, and a wonderful day. But launching our findings is not the culmination, it is a stage on the way. Now we need to share our report (and four-page summary) far and wide! With the Public Inquiry into Brook House due to report in the new year, now is the time for us to be writing to our MPs: sharing the Walking Inquiry findings and recommendations with them, making clear our own views and asking for their response. We can also ask them to raise our concerns with the Home Secretary, Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP, and Immigration Minister, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Walking Inquiry so

far, and to everyone now helping to spread the findings and make the case for change.

The Day in Parliament

By Temi Olowookere

Brook House has a lifetime impact on people. You might lose your house or maybe family relationships fall apart. Because we're human we bounce back but when something like that happens it really gets to you. It's inhuman. Even those who do get deported are not left in a mentally stable way when you deport them, you've destroyed them. It doesn't make sense. Even animals in the zoo are kept better.



I was grateful that I made it to the event in parliament last week, it was so lovely. Thank you to everyone who made it happen so the MPs that attended weren't just in the room, but they wanted to know

more. Sometimes you dream of something in your life like maybe one day I can enter Parliament, so it was a dream come true for me! GDWG is such a good organisation to be involved with. The Walking Inquiry is so important it means we get to speak to local communities, and it creates awareness. I was just thinking wow, this is well organised. And I met my MP finally. I'd emailed him before and had a video call with his team, but now it was a good opportunity for me to meet him in person. It helps to walk and share our pains, and we have people who are ready to listen.

Crawley Volunteers in Parliament

By Chloe, Penny and Stephen



GDWG volunteers meet in local groups for support and to share their experiences of visiting every six weeks. Several members of the Crawley Group attended the Walking Inquiry event in Parliament. Here they reflect on the day:

Penny:

Firstly, I would like to congratulate everyone involved in the Walking Enquiry Parliamentary presentation - what a day!

The courage and resilience of those with lived experience of detention is humbling. It was a privilege to meet and chat with such optimistic people, and their stories need to be shouted from the rooftops.

Stephen:

One of the things that I took away from the session was a better understanding of the injustices of the “hostile environment” and their human impacts. I had always thought of it in terms of the big policies and headline grabbing disasters: Rwanda, Napier Barracks etc. But what I learned about, are the smaller scale injustices that litter the route to permanent residence like unexploded mines, ready to demoralise and destabilise people in unexpected ways.

Chloe:

It was a powerful afternoon to be together with those with experience of detention, those involved in the Walking Inquiry, and to finally meet many fellow members of the Crawley/Horsham visitors group in real life, after a couple of years of Zoom meetings. Whilst we were there to draw attention to the injustices of detention, the atmosphere was hopeful, with an air that change was possible. Particularly as the Walking Inquiry was shaped by those with lived experience of detention, it was incredible to take it to a place where decisions are made, to highlight their work and the outputs. Change felt especially possible following speeches from MPs across lots of parties - whilst their messaging was all slightly different, all seemed generally aligned in a desire to end indefinite detention. I feel very lucky to have been there to meet those who informed the inquiry, hear the moving experiences of Ridy, Seth and

Pious, and to reflect on the recommendations of the Walking Inquiry together.

The Olio App

By Hannah Carbery

Olio is an app designed to reduce (initially food) waste in communities for free. It allows you to connect with people who want to give away items near you. You can view items such as furniture, clothing, food that would otherwise go to waste, message the person who would like to give it away and arrange to pick it up when suits both parties.

Would you consider using Olio to collect any men's clothing that people in your community may have outgrown or can't be bothered to take to the charity shop? You can also use the app to request these items, meaning people nearby can see you are looking for such items of clothing and contact you if they have them to spare. More info can be found on their website, but you must have a phone or mobile device to download it: <https://help.olioex.com/article/10-what-is-olio>

Anniversary of Channel Tragedy 24th November 2022

By Josie Wade

On the 24th November 2021, 32 people lost their lives whilst crossing the Channel to seek safety in the UK. Each of those people had dreams of a safer future. A year on from this tragedy, we took time to remember each person, and reflect on what led to this catastrophe.

This was a preventable tragedy and one which cannot be allowed to happen again. Both the British and French

authorities failed to take accountability or action to save peoples' lives. People on the boat made over 20 distress calls to both the British and French, with neither taking responsibility, and both denying that the boat was in their water. It was this inaction that led to the disaster, and little has changed to improve the situation in the past year.

In April, only five months after the tragedy, the Nationality and Borders Bill became an Act of Parliament, further endangering the lives of those seeking a safer life in the UK. In the same month, the Government signed a deal to remove people to Rwanda, despite the UNHCR saying the plan would violate international law. The instability within the Home Office (four Home Secretaries within the past year) has overshadowed the plight of humans seeking safety with political turmoil. Recent video footage showing an interaction between Tim Loughton MP and Suella Braverman MP, revealed the scandal of the current UK asylum policy. For many people seeking safety, there are no safe and legal routes for them to reach the UK. Clare Moseley, of Care4Calais, said that the current policy is 'state-sanctioned violence against asylum seekers.'

We join appeals for humanity to be at the heart of any asylum policy. It should not matter which countries' water a boat is in when a call for help is made. What matters is that a human life is at risk if no one responds. The Hostile Environment and the othering of those who migrate has led to a failure to recognise people seeking safety as human beings, and to 32 preventable deaths. We hope that those with the power to make change,

reflect on this tragedy and recognise the urgent need to create safe routes to seek safety in the UK.

Our thoughts are with the families of those whose lives were lost, all those who have been forced into situations where they had to make dangerous journeys in their attempts to seek safety, and those who currently have the prospect of a hugely dangerous journey ahead of them.

Book Review by Frances Bell

Nomad Century: How to Survive the Climate Upheaval by Gaia Vince

'Migration will save us, because it is migration that made us who we are.'

In *Nomad Century*, Gaia Vince outlines the dystopian future predicted by scientists who have studied the likely outcomes of global warming. The Earth is projected to be 4 degrees C hotter than before industrialisation by the time we reach the end of the 21st Century, and Vince's book examines how humanity might cope once the climate crisis leaves large areas of the planet uninhabitable, leading to mass migration.

Vince details how forest fires, rising sea levels, flooding, drought, and extreme temperatures will impact various communities, and where they might go. She writes that most people will try to move north, looking to settle in countries such as Russia and Canada (and she outlines the positive steps Canada has already taken for tripling its population over the next few decades.) And whilst such high levels of migration are inevitable, Vince believes that this "could be done in a manageable, safe, equitable

way" (Interview with NPR) – in a way that would enable humanity to flourish.

Vince offers a history of how migration has been central to our evolution, noting that the creation of political borders to prevent movement is relatively new. "There have never been more barriers to migration, as countries seal borders and build walls," Vince writes. "We should not be handicapping ourselves by limiting our most important survival tool." If we are to benefit from this survival tool, though, we need to "develop new plans based on geology, geography and ecology—not politics." For this to happen, Vince argues that there needs to be a sea change in attitudes around national identity. She shares evidence of the enriching consequences migration has on those who move and the places they move to. And as the climate crisis intensifies, these positive impacts can continue, but only if we act now. Amongst many other suggestions, Vince writes that new cities should be planned to accommodate climate migrants, and that legal protections for climate migrants need to be enshrined.

Recognising that movement has been fundamental to our survival, Nomad Century suggests that migration is not



just a consequence of the climate crisis, but rather – if managed humanely and constructively – the solution. If you are interested in climate migration and would like to know more, we have a copy of this book in the office and will be pleased to lend it to you.

Training for the self-advocacy group

By Ridy Wasolua

The GDWG self-advocacy group of people with lived experience of detention who call for change recently benefited from training generously delivered by Caroline Connor of Lift Consultancy.

Ridy who attended the training reflected: I found the Zoom meeting regarding CVs very important. It was mind-blowing to learn how interviews are run, how to take part in interviews and how to create a CV. The most important thing was how you express yourself, or how you express your background, your interests in the job and the company you are trying to apply for. I've had several interviews, where I wasn't successful even though I had the experience I needed. Every time I do go through the interviews, I'm either nervous, talking less or speaking more, I'm never successful at the end of it. By doing the group discussion on Zoom regarding CVs, that helped a lot to understand more. Don't try to speak less or more, you balance what you are saying and be confident in what you are saying. To understand the importance of having a CV, if anything's missing, putting things correctly where they are meant to be. It was great, I really enjoyed it.

Thanks a lot to Caroline for giving her time and day, going through that and helping us. Everyone was enjoying it, even going into group discussions, we discussed a lot of things. We all had questions, ways to do things, ways to respond to things. You know, everyone had different opinions, we got to ask Caroline questions, it was great, I enjoyed it so much. We talked about reading about the company you are applying for, understanding what they believe in. Do your research before the interview so you know when they ask you questions you've got the right things to say, because you've done your research. So those are the little things, that now I understand how important it is to know what the company stand for. It was mind blowing, just the little details I was missing out on, it kind of opens up doors, to see that there is more to learn. Learning is always key. Thank you GDWG for putting that up for us. It was well-taken and well listened to. I'm just waiting to speak to Caroline on a 1-2-1 basis, to learn a bit more, I want to understand a bit more how to express myself within interviews and how to be confident, not to feel any nerves that kind of puts them off that you're not confident to do the job. I'm gonna keep trying and going hard.

Flipside with Refugee Tales

Our trustee Pious, along with David Herd, spoke at the Flipside Festival in Suffolk in September. The theme of the festival was 'Journeys, Exile, Migration, Flight' and Pious and David were in conversation alongside Chris Maloney, editor of 'Seeking Asylum and Mental Health.' Pious spoke with great force about the damage of detention but also about the changes he was calling on politicians to

make. The audience was deeply impressed and affected by his contribution. As Flipside organiser Gareth Evans said, it was 'the essential session'.



The Kent Pilgrims' Festival

By Teresa Pilgrim

On Friday 23 September, Patience Agbabi - Refugee Tales and Reimagining Chaucer took place at The Beany House of Art & Knowledge in Canterbury, as part of The Kent Pilgrims' Festival which ran from 21-25 September all across Kent. This event was generously sponsored by Canterbury County Council and Carlo Lorenzo introduced the event on behalf of the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome.

To begin, Patience read: The Gospel Truth: Rap, The Son aka 'The Parson' which carries the heading of Canterbury

as its location on the Pilgrim's Way and is the last section of Telling Tales (Agbabi, 2014, pp. 109-111). It is The Parson's Tale remixed and begins, most fittingly: ... Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls Jeremiah 6: 16. Patience read two more short poems before turning to Anna Pincus who, as director of Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group spoke next.

Anna spoke about the crucial work of Refugee Tales on behalf of Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group and described, poignantly, how 'visiting is a radical act'. Anna then introduced David Herd who read the Prologue from his new volume of poetry, Walk Song (Herd, 2022, pp. 7-19). This beautifully evocative piece from which I offer two brief extracts of the first and last stanzas, perfectly encapsulates both Modern and Middle English vernacular in homage to Chaucer and it also provides the preface to the first volume of Refugee Tales (Ed. Herd & Pincus, 2106, pp. v-x).

Prologue

This prologue is not a poem
It is an act of welcome
It announces
That people present reject the terms
Of a debate that criminalises
Human movement
It is a declaration this night
In Shepherdswell
Of solidarity ...

And so we stop this night
And the host steps up
And he says
Listen to this story
Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote

And the room goes quiet
And a voice starts up
And then the language
Alters
Sweet
Tender
Perced to the roote.



To conclude this well attended event, Patience Agbabi spoke again, and she discussed Chaucer's model of walking and sharing tales and then began to read: The Refugee's Tale as told to Patience Agbabi (Ed. Herd & Pincus, 2016, pp. 125-132). This powerful tale was told to Patience by Farida (not her real name but used to protect her real identity) an Egyptian woman. While reading Farida's Tale, at one point Patience stopped, and with the words 'But good people come ...' she glanced smiling warmly towards Anna, it was a powerful moment. This short passage in its entirety continues:

But good people come, who open me to feel
again for others; and as I translate the words
of a refugee life to a form, I begin to heal.
Their voice is my own voice striking a chord.
May our truth conquer fear:
Maybe the real story begins here ... (Ed.
Herd & Pincus, 2016, pp. 125-132, p. 132)

Afterwards, once Patience, Anna, and David had all spoken and/or given their readings, there was a Question & Answer session between all three speakers and the audience. What quickly became very clear to me and was the lasting impression each of the speakers' contributions, combined left me with is how kindness itself, is a radical act, particularly in the face of such extreme adversity at the hands of the UK detention and immigration system.

Attending We Move - a Race Equality and Migrants' Rights Summit

By Antonia Bunnin

In September, I joined over 500 people at the We Move summit, convened by the race equality think tank, Runnymede Trust. I was there on behalf of GDWG and Refugee Tales to make connections and tell people about our Walking Inquiry into immigration detention. We met over a weekend at Leeds University.

The first thing I noticed was the sense of excitement and energy at coming together, especially after such a long time when large scale events had been impossible. This was the first summit of its kind by Runnymede Trust, and everyone

seemed delighted to be there and hungry to meet and exchange ideas.

The programme was packed, with up to nine sessions at the same time. Participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds: local and national charities; migrants' rights and refugee support organisations; campaigns for racial equality and justice; community action groups; educationalists; academics; local government staff and councillors. Here are some of the most memorable aspects for me:

Race, Detention, Deportation

People with lived experience spoke of the devastating effects that detention and deportation have had on their families. Families for Justice have published a report called 'Separated' about separated families and the impacts of deportation. The increase in joint enterprise sentencing is affecting Black men in particular, with some at risk of detention and deportation as a consequence.

Migrants and refugees organising for justice, dignity and rights

Speakers from Right to Remain and Migrants Organise outlined the factors that underpin successful community organising, including "constantly caring and repairing, because survival is hard" and "making it fun and joyful, because life is tough". They talked about the 'Solidarity Knows No Borders' coalition, and of the success of the 'Right to Remain toolkit', now used by 250,000 people per year, and being updated.

Post-Racist Britain: co-creating our future
A large room provided a space where people came throughout the day, and spent time imagining together what a

Britain without racism could look like. This was the first time I'd consciously tried to visualise a post-racial Britain, and initially it felt almost impossible, but once the thoughts and images started coming to the surface, they were profoundly heartening. With whiteboards on all walls, we were encouraged to connect with our senses, feelings and sensations, wander around, look at what others had drawn or written, and add our own responses. Artist Thahmina Begum was resident and the following day created a visual artwork as her own response.

Nursing Narratives film: 'Exposed'

Nurses of colour speak of their experiences of racism whilst working during the pandemic, and as part of the NHS. I found this a powerful and affecting film. <https://nursingnarratives.com/exposed/>

Just an ordinary lawyer

Having thought I was going to a presentation, I was happily surprised when this turned out to be a play with songs! Playwright and actor Tayo Aluko tells the story of Tunji Sowande, a lawyer from Nigeria, who became the first Black Head of Chambers and first Black judge in Britain. <https://www.tayoalukoandfriends.com/jaol/>

Final reflections

We Move was a vibrant, thought-provoking summit. I met many interesting people, and was pleased to tell them about GDWG, Refugee Tales and the Walking Inquiry. I came away with optimism, knowing that in all sorts of places and ways, people are working vigorously for social change, racial justice and the rights of refugees and people who seek asylum.

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/partnership-projects/we-move-race-equality-migrants-rights-summit>



Walk with Us: Walking and talking in Cambridge

By Kasonga

Joining 'Walk with Us' in Cambridge started when you checked your itinerary to connect with the group at Cambridge train station, made your travel plans and then woke up in the morning getting ready to leave your daily routine behind and be with people you barely know but with whom you share the same spirit. Amazingly, the walk is like a family where everyone cares for each other, and people (migrants, volunteers, staff, and community) are equal and aim to meet challenges knowing that together there is strength.

The Cambridge Walk was a mix of urban and natural environments - such as Trumpington Village, Paradise Nature Reserve, famous Cambridge Colleges, or Castle Mound - which had different impacts on our well-being. As someone with lived-experience, self-esteem was significantly higher while walking in the natural environment compared to the urban environment where the daily routine started to take place in my mind again. We understood how close we were to nature and how common was our struggle.

Awareness of the impact of the government's hostile environment toward migrants is our driving force. To defend and help displaced people and community members walk in the shoes of migrants by forming "one" entity and letting nature take care of self-repair. Physically, you may encounter difficulties. But mentally, you are striving to actively seek out a healing and calming experience to force yourself to feel better and be ready for this significant event. Knowing that 'Walk with Us' exposes the impacts of government immigration policy -including immigration detention - on individuals and communities. Overall, calm, joy, forgiveness, hope, compassion, love, trust, awe, unity, and gratitude are there to typify our maturity acquired during the Walk in order to be true Ambassadors of the cause and be one with both nature and the migrant experience.

To gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the Cambridge Walk, including previous walks, participants were randomly surveyed. Here are some of the responses...

Nelica reflected: 'your mind relaxes, and you can feel free. Life can for a little while feel simple. Conversations can be supportive. People interact with one another and share stories. This can help understand each other also understand better what GDWG is fighting for. It is also special to be with the community, and to see old and new faces. Each time we see new landscapes. I had never seen this part of Cambridge before. Feeling how this is such a trusted community. We must keep going with these walks. They are powerful for the individual and for the message for which we are fighting.'



Paul expressed his involvement in walks: 'I had got to an age when my GP was urging me to take regular exercise, when I came across an article about Refugee Tales in the Bar Council magazine. Its author gave an account of the previous summer's long walk and explained the movement's background and objectives. I was already aware of the enormous

problems faced by asylum seekers, so felt it was a perfect opportunity to obey doctor's orders and at the same time to further my concerns. Thus, at the beginning of July 2017 I joined other walkers at Runnymede for a memorable hike, following the Thames towpath into London. It would be untrue to suggest that since then I have never looked back. While I joined the long walks of the succeeding two years and day walks whenever I could, these were followed by long months of inaction which took their toll.

Post covid recovery has been good. Chepstow and the Wye Valley was demanding but beautiful; since that Jubilee weekend walk, I was only able to dip in and out of July's long trek across the North Downs. However, the Epping Forest and then Cambridge day walks struck gold, with weather, scenery, and most of all the companionship encountered. These excursions have given me opportunity both to talk and to listen. The landscape through which we hike supplies occasion to speak about its history and associations. I drew attention to the prevalence of holly growing among the trees of Epping Forest, explaining its traditional function for the woodsmen and how this is celebrated by Shakespeare in his play 'As You Like It.' Passing by a statue of Rupert Brooke in Cambridge's Grantchester Meadows I remarked on his significance and that of other World War One poets, Sassoon and Owen, and of how my own family history reflects great loss in that massive conflict.

And I listen. I hear tell of current vicissitudes and gain a little understanding how they impinge on a

substratum of past traumatic experience. But above all, they speak of the joy of finding friends and support in what is otherwise a bleak hostile environment. In return I experience solicitude for an elderly man with a walking stick, stumbling and mumbling in their midst. To summarise, walking with Refugee Tales is a great tonic for my physical and mental health. If my participation gives the smallest benefit to anyone else, well, that's pure bonus!

Rosie, a GDWG volunteer, said:

'The contribution of walking is huge. Walking outside is the opposite to being confined. It is a community, which welcomes anyone without judgement. The wider community is able to learn and so are the group walking. We all have something to learn from one another. Lovely walk leaders who made delicious vegan flapjacks! It was a shame more people with lived experience of detention could not join us that day. I loved seeing Cambridge colleges across the river - very beautiful. I learned what "punting" is! (If you would have asked me prior to the walk, I'd have probably thought it was some sort of hunting!)

Michael from GDWG wrote:

'Great to have the time and space to walk together, to chat, to share, to reflect in relaxed, beautiful surroundings. A lovely day out, walking in beautiful countryside with great weather; chatted with some wonderful people; good to share experiences and exchange views.'

The end of the walk, also known as the divorce part, has mixed feelings such as anxiety, sadness, loss, dejection, achievement, or success. Knowing that "every goodbye teaches us how to

handle future change," our maturity enables us to see the progress we have made and the experience we have earned. Walk With Us offers the sense of belonging; makes the group to feel better; enables us to flee from difficulties; and allows us to better speak out about the impact of the government's hostile environment upon migrants.

Walking in Georgia and feeling close to Refugee Tales

By Gordon Parker

Almost immediately after the 2022 Refugee Tales Walk Lonica and I went to Georgia to walk in the high Caucasus. When our guide told us that Chechnya and Dagestan were over the next ridge we knew we were on the far borders of Europe. It proved to be a challenging adventure and river crossings were particularly difficult. It was only the knowledge and strong hands, back and legs of our guide, Paata, that got me through. We had been reminded that one of the themes for our walks in 2020 - when we walked alone or in very small

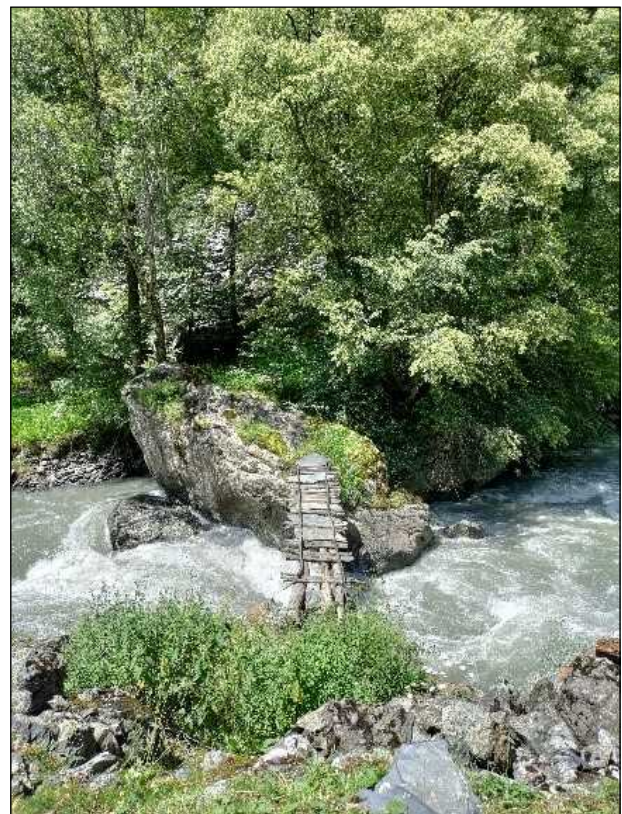


groups - had been Bridges. The further we went, with the Walk of 2022 fresh in my mind, the more our Georgian experience seemed to be an apt metaphor for the work of GDWG.

Above 2000 metres it was still late spring. The rivers were flowing fast and the water was ice-cold. Sometimes there were bridges, but they weren't very good.



Or the bridge didn't lead anywhere we wanted to go.



Sometimes there wasn't a bridge - but somehow we still managed to get across.



Some of the bridges were single planks and we just needed to cross carefully and confidently, with support from Paata. And sometimes help arrived and once we had worked out how to use it, we didn't even get our feet wet.



Asylum seekers in Britain face major difficulties; detention is a cruel added burden. But we know that with patience

many people do finally reach a just outcome and are granted permission to remain here. GDWG is relentless and creative in providing help and support to meet these challenges. Please keep doing what you do so well.

Walking with GDWG and Refugee Tales for the first time

By Dizdari Illyrian

This September is the month of the 20th anniversary of my father's death. Father is not just a big Word but the most important Power to have a healthy family. But this is life and we are nothing more than transients in this world. In this 20th Anniversary of my father's month death I decided to stop smoking. Bad habits that can send a person down a bad path, but with help of my GP I got some patches and finally I stopped. Fortunately, in the first days of September I received a call from Josie who invited me to be part of Refugee Tales walking. As always Ms Karris and Ms Josie they had not forgotten me, and I will never forget these two honourable people, who have helped me since I stayed for one month in immigration detention. After I understood why it was being talked about, I gladly agreed to be a part of Refugee Walking Tale. In the following days, Ms Josie sent me the ticket together with the orientation of where we would meet with the group. After the gloomy days, I thought that this will be a beautiful day. I left the hotel where I live with the prior feeling that I would have a good time and meet good people. I took the road to Chingford where I met the walking group. After arriving there, we started to introduce ourselves to the



Making Films for the Walking Inquiry

By Ridy Wasolua

When I was asked about making the videos for the project, for the Walking Inquiry questions, I was pleased. I enjoyed doing them. Everything just fell in place, even the recording. I spoke to people about what they thought detention changes should be, what the Walking Inquiry stood for, what the whole project meant to them, what they will tell their friends about it, and what they would do if they could do more. It's easy to record but editing sometimes can take longer than you thought, because there's details that you might miss. So, I do the recording then I leave it and come back to it to make sure I've covered all the corners and to make the video work. Yeah, it was challenging, you know. Each time I get these challenges it helps me to learn and progress, become better in what I do and I'm gonna keep learning to

participants and after a few minutes, after the group was completed, we started walking to the Epping Forest park. It was the first time I participated in such a walk. From the first moments I found myself as if I was in my "home." I found the hospitality of the group. I felt very good and as if I was freed from the accumulated stress. The time passed without feeling it and without fatigue and it was time for lunch. The lunch break was also impressive, after we all sat down together to eat, I took a sandwich and ate a lot of sweets and I almost felt like I was in a sweet shop. (joke) After a lunch break, through the beautiful forests of that area, I took the road to the end of the walk at Loughton station. I want to emphasise that I felt very well, and I found the hospitality of everyone without exception. With the greatest pleasure I will continue to be part of Refugee Tales, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for remembering me and inviting me to be part of your walking group.



get better. Thank you to Refugee Tales for giving me the opportunity to showcase my skills. Skills that I've just grown from learning you know, passion for the Walking Inquiry, the whole refugee team and the work that we do. It means a lot to change people's lives, for voices to be heard, not just for Refugee Tales but around the whole country, what people are going through day in day out. You know, life is not easy but by doing these videos it gives people a different opinion on refugees. Refugees are hard-working people that just want to settle down and get on with their lives, but there's barriers that need to be crossed. We're going to keep working, breaking these barriers, and keep doing more videos to try to make a change. It's not easy but we're gonna keep working hard and getting different opinions. That's what was exciting about this video, getting to know people's opinions, how they felt, how they felt it was going, what they felt the achievement is, what they want from the future. I love it, I just love doing the work. When you do something you're more passionate about, you take your time trying to make it perfect, because that's what I'm about. I want it to be perfect, I'm not trying to rush it, if I'm rushing I won't be happy with it and I won't feel that I've done a good job. I was glad that it all came together, and everyone got to see video one. Thanks for everyone who took part, who gave their time, it was great everyone working together. Life is not easy right now for a lot of people, those crossing the channel, those in detention centres, we have to keep fighting for them to keep pushing till these changes come. The videos will play a part now, they will be heard. It gives us a chance to do more and more to let these voices be heard.





The Longley Trust



The Henry Smith Charity

The Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust

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The Bernadette Trust