

GDWG

GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Winter 2023



In this newsletter, there are a lot of stories of the ways we come together through exhibitions, meetings, walking, training, planning, visits to detention and the detention centre visits room and even, in this edition, through boxing! Our activities are set in relief against a background of the weight of isolation and despair for those who are detained away from their families, their communities and their hopes of a better life. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of the man who was moved from detention in Brook House to hospital where he died in November. We mourn his life. We shall also come together with all the imagination, strength and determination we possibly can. In this edition of the newsletter, you will read about the Brook House Public Inquiry Report with its wide-ranging recommendations. The Report is a new tool for GDWG and all others in the sector to call for change. The Report, like many before, clearly made the case for a time limit for immigration detention. We shall carry this demand to people of influence who connect with us and you can expect more stories, connections and work for change in the new year. We send seasonal wishes to you and yours and thank you for all your volunteering and support in 2023.

Anna Pincus - Director GDWG

GDWG drop-in sessions in detention

By Karris Hamilton

Each Friday morning we go to Brook House to meet people in the library. It's an open session, where anyone held in detention can come along to meet us. We've been holding the sessions for 3 months now and we have fallen into a routine. Every week we see at least 20 people. Some people come in just to say hello and it's often the same faces who pop in; it seems there can be a comfort to regularity and routine, to knowing that we shall be there every Friday - even if just for a 5 minute chat.

Others express extreme distress at their continued detention. I feel a sense of helplessness and tell them I wish I could do more, but I reassure them I'll do everything I can. In 3 hours we hold a place for many people's stories, troubles and needs to be aired. I hope we are able to hold those moments for everyone we meet and show we care and are there for them, despite the busy room with its interruptions.

It's given us a better insight into the workings of the detention centre. We see how people manage to maintain laughter and care in an environment that inhibits it. Men come together to chat, play cards and banter. People we are supporting bring friends along to meet us, hoping they will benefit from similar support they have received. Others share the names and contact details of people with severe mental health issues who they know need more help. There is also an undercurrent of tension which is more visible on some days than others. There's a feeling that at

any moment something bad could happen. A scream comes from the corridor. A loud bang from the gym that you're relieved to realise is just the weights dropping to the base of machine.

In the library we see laughter and tears, anger and hopelessness. We try to create a space of safety and we return again and again every Friday to hold that space. Week after week, after week.

GDWG at Labour Conference

By Anna Pincus

We arrived at Conference in a hired van packed on a busy day with an array of single items and boxes to find other corporate stands had one plastic wrapped package neatly couriered and awaiting the arrival of less beleaguered teams! We carried our individual items to the Stand. There was no way to attach our backdrop. Our driver, Chris, looked through a skip and found wire and a pulley to use...When it was all set up, no-one would know our arrival was less than glamorous and our construction was genius on the part of Chris.



Conference was packed. Snaking queues for events, long waits for food serveries, lots of young people. There was good interest in our Stand and a number of local people came to say hello from Crawley, Horsham, Lewes, Brighton, Reigate. People signed up to ask for details of becoming volunteer visitors, of walks, to write an article, to interpret for us. Each time a new person came we had no idea where the next conversation would lead. Our funders Paul Hamlyn Foundation came to see us on our Stand where we sold Refugee Tales books to disseminate the tales.

There are many highlights from Conference. Ridy and Pious from the GDWG self-advocacy group met inspirational speaker, footballer John Barnes. We learned much from Hope Not Hate. Our own event with Shami Chakrabarti in the Chair and actor Toby Jones reading a tale by Abdulrazak Gurnah was standing room only. Sue from Refugee Tales Cymru attended the event. Laura, our then Vice-Chair of Trustees was a constant support. It was immensely encouraging to share news with visitors to the Stand and hear about good work being done by communities all around the UK.

Our contacts at Conference mean we now have the potential of meetings with Yvette Cooper, Stephen Kinnock and Diana Johnson. Pious and Ridy from the GDWG self-advocacy group shared their lived experience and used it to highlight issues and question speakers at key events. Our briefing papers on the #CostsOfDetention set out the human and social costs of detention and we made sure the issue did not go away for policy makers. There was a feeling that

change was possible and that this was the time for serious conversations about the way forward. Thanks to all the volunteers and staff who made it possible for us to share the reality of how detention policy is experienced at #Lab23.

Our time at Labour Conference

By Pious and Ridy

Two members of the GDWG self-advocacy group attended Labour Conference where we hosted a GDWG Stand to talk to delegates about the costs of detention.

Pious: The Conference has really opened up my mind and taught me or showed me how Conference is, and what Conference is all about. Given the opportunity again, I would come over and over and over again. I have learned a lot by interacting with people from all walks of life, and all the many discussions. It will be good for us to reflect on our experience at Conference and on our campaign and the ways we are able to draw people in. The panel discussion at our Refugee Tales event was amazing - it



opened up peoples' mind who have never heard about the issue of detention and what it takes for people to be detained. People were so shocked at what is going on in this country. Going to Conference was a dream come true for me. God bless you all.

Ridy: It's a chance for us to learn, advocate and make a positive impact. It was great inspiration, a good memory. It was a great pleasure to help out with GDWG/RT this week, and I'm glad I could be of assistance. I did have a good time, it's always a rewarding experience. Thanks for your understanding and support.

Looking back on my time as Chair

By Marie Dewson

As I prepare to step down as Chair of the Board of Trustees of GDWG many memories flood in. I have been a trustee since 2015. I had been a visitor for many years before that, mostly at Tinsley House then latterly at Brook House, the detention centre built like a category B H-Block prison. I was therefore completely committed to the ethos of GDWG and excited by the then new outreach of Refugee Tales. In the summer of 2017 I became Chair - in fear and trepidation and exhibiting genuine "Imposter Syndrome". Nevertheless I took the view that it was a bit like being a parent - you do your best, sometimes you get it right! Fortunately, though we trustees were few at the time, they were wonderfully supportive and gradually we were joined by equally committed trustees. Anna became our Director. We went from strength to strength.

We moved forward, meeting setbacks due to hostile government policies with the determination to continue our core values; to ensure visiting and supporting those in detention who were isolated in a country in which they had hoped to find safety. Refugee Tales forged ahead. Books were published. The outreach became international. We made our way inside Westminster... ably abetted by formerly detained people, one of whom is a member of staff, Kasonga, and one who is a trustee, Pious. So much has changed in the organisation I joined and yet much remains the same - the people at the heart of it, detained persons, are still detained. Visitors still visit. Volunteers volunteer. Our staff go the extra mile. The Public Inquiry in which we were Core Participants has made 33 recommendations to the Home Office so monitoring whether change is effected will be ongoing. I cannot see a time when GDWG is not needed for its valuable work and that saddens me. However surrounded by people who care gives one hope even in times of trouble and heartache.

Be assured, as I pass on the baton, that I do so to someone who will run the race, Laura Moffatt. In valediction, it has been an enormous privilege to have been Chair of GDWG and I send my very best wishes to all.

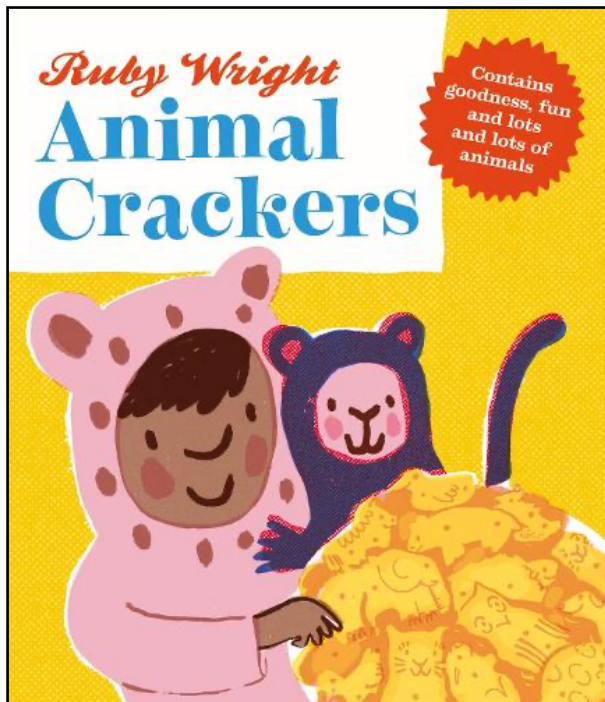
Animal Crackers by Ruby Wright

Review by Alice (8), Clara (6) and Orla (3)

Ruby Wright has walked with Refugee Tales and drawn our community. We were delighted when she published her first children's book in May this year. We asked the grandchildren of a GDWG

volunteer to review the book and this is what they wrote:

'This is a clever book about a little girl called Maisie with a big imagination.



Maisie loves animals and wishes she has a pet. All her friends have pets but mum says their flat is too small and they don't have a garden. Suddenly, a big surprise changes everything for Maisie.

This is a great book with colourful and fun illustrations and lots of laughs along the way.'

We recommend the book to children from 2 to 6 years old. The book is £12.99 from: <https://rocketbirdbooks.co.uk/product/animal-crackers>

Too much in common

When you go to a GDWG local group meeting, you never know what to expect. You may hear about beautiful connections in the visits room, challenging visits, disappointments or celebrations. In a local Crawley meeting, after we had heard about the visits each volunteer was making, we heard about the visit one volunteer, Stephen, had made to Sweden and we read the literature he had brought back from FARR. FARR is a voluntary organisation founded in 1988. It consists of voluntary groups and individual members from all over Sweden. One of FARR's roles is to give information and support to people seeking asylum. We heard that FARR are interested to walk in solidarity with us. We heard from FARR that 'the number who land in limbo without a permit to stay is increasing... Splitting up families and the insecurity involved with various kinds of temporary permits only complicate integration for those who are permitted to stay. We see how mental health problems are increasing and how both refugees and the people who support them are losing faith in the rule of law.' Looking through FARR publications with their illustrations of barbed wire, Swedish phrases and words 'asylutredning' 'snabbprocedur', 'migrationsverket', and matt recycled paper pages, it seems we have too much in common. Poems and fragments from poems resonate 'one single stroke and everything that's built up is shattered'... 'I was stored somewhere while waiting.' The suffering is all too familiar regardless of the language. Systems exclude across the globe. But in these pages there is another picture too. There are some people in an illustration defiantly waving.

I have instant recognition of the emotion. Suffering, yes, but also a profound solidarity in the pages from FARR to those it gives space to, from FARR to us sharing across the miles and from the rich human connections that FARR and GDWG both strive to build.

Pictures at an exhibition: A Great British Welcome

By Anne Jakins and Margaret Lawrence

On a grey October morning, against the backdrop of historic London with Tower Bridge and HMS Belfast and a development of modern skyscrapers, we visited a small exhibition which offered hope, and demonstrated the best in human resilience, kindness and positivity. This was a photography series by the

UNHCR profiling people and organisations across the UK who supported refugees, including Refugee Tales. They were the work of photographer Andrew Testa.

With an unprecedented number of people across the world now forced to flee their homes to seek safety, compassion and hope are needed more than ever. This small outdoor exhibition of poignant photographs and quotes offered an insight into the welcome that some refugees have received in different parts of the country. The photographs depicted the diverse and important roles undertaken by refugees and their valuable contributions to local communities. Following work experience and healthcare placements, a number of refugees have been welcomed into hospitals in Bradford where their life



© UNHCR/Andrew Testa

experiences are a positive influence on patients and staff.

Bright faces shone out from the photographs showing volunteers in charity shops, and in community kitchens where food is at the heart of mental health support. A child from Ukraine finds solidarity and support in education saying 'my mood is so good when I go to school'. The Citizens of the World Choir comprises a unique mix of people who find community and solace through singing together. Pro-active theatre groups bring inclusivity, friendship and confidence to the participants. One section celebrated Refugee Tales, based on Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, offering the well-being and human connection that comes with walking together sharing thoughts, feelings and stories. Many of the participants are refugees and asylum seekers who have been held in detention in immigration centres around the UK.

The autumn sun cast low shadows across the Thames Path. With the news dominated by war, this poignant exhibition of inspiring photos and heartfelt words, illustrated the best of the human spirit, tolerance and hope for the future.

The pictures are available online: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/stories/refugees-take-steps-and-tell-stories-part-walking-community>

The AGM of GDWG

By Marygold Lewis

GDWG held its annual AGM on 8 November 2023 at St. Barnabas Church, Three Bridges, Crawley. Despite the rather inclement weather, there was good

attendance with much camaraderie in evidence. Refreshments were cheerfully served by Margaret and Esther, with help from other willing hands.

The proceedings began with approval of the minutes from last year, followed by the re-appointment of trustees Felicity Dick, Pious Keku and Adrian Radford. The next order of business was the report of the accounts by Adrian, Treasurer, which were also approved, along with the positive news that GDWG received grants from 19 different funders and that donations doubled in 2022. Darren Harding of Richard Place Dobson was then reappointed as the Independent Examiner. It was with great emotion from all that we heard from Marie, who has stepped down as Chair of GDWG, passing the role on to Laura Moffatt who had previously been Vice-Chair. Marie thanked staff, trustees and volunteers for their work, as well as all those involved with the Public Inquiry. Thank you, Marie, for your selfless support and work on behalf of GDWG and detained people. Congratulations, Laura, on your new role.

Marie then introduced our guest speaker, Mary Molyneux from the Independent Monitoring Board. Mary described in detail the role of the IMB and explained that it is made up of volunteers drawn from the local community. The IMB is a public body and part of the national framework. Their remit is to provide regular and independent oversight of the two Gatwick detention centres, with a focus on the welfare of detained people. They have a duty to respect and protect human rights, including asking the questions is it fair, humane, decent and proper. They look at the treatment of detained people, the conditions in and

administration of the IRCs. They go onsite at least once a week and must be informed if there has been any use of force or anyone has been placed in isolation. They have access everywhere within the centres and submit a report at the end of each week. The IMB Annual Report is submitted to the Minister of Immigration. Mary's report ended on a note of positivity, highlighting the fact that trust is building between the IMB and the GDWG.

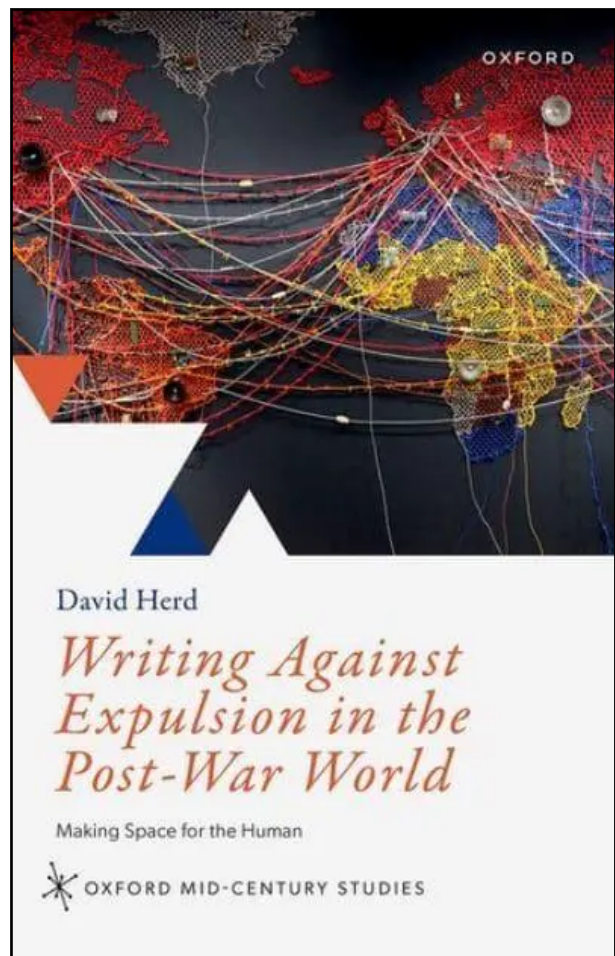
The AGM finished at 8pm, and happily the rain had ceased by then and everyone made their way home safely. Thank you to all who came and to those who were unable to attend, but were there with us in spirit. What a wonderful community we are lucky enough to enjoy.

Writing Against Expulsion

A new book by David Herd

Much has been written about the work of GDWG and Refugee Tales. Most recent has been the publication of David Herd's latest book 'Writing Against Expulsion', published by OUP in October. David is a co-organiser and co-editor of Refugee Tales and the book grew out of his work with Refugee Tales. It shows the harm we cause when we detain and expel and how we can think and act towards a better politics. The book starts and ends with the expulsive politics of the present moment while drawing on post-war writers to make its arguments. Kamila Shamsie wrote the following on the book: 'Writing Against Expulsion is one of those books that arrives in the world and immediately feels necessary. David Herd asks and brilliantly answers two questions about the condition of unwelcome

migrants and the UK government: 'how did we get here' and 'how do we move away from where we are?' Drawing on and building from the works of writers such as Hannah Arendt, Frantz Fanon, the poet Charles Olson as well as his own work with Refugee Tales, Herd re-casts conversations around 'political non-persons' to allow space for imagination, humanity and truth. A profound and inspiring book.' The book is available here: <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/writing-against-expulsion-in-the-post-war-world-9780192872258?cc=gb&lang=en> and we have a copy in the office that our volunteers are most welcome to borrow.



The Brook House Public Inquiry Report

The Brook House Public Inquiry Report, published on 19 September 2023 made 33 important recommendations which the Chair, Kate Eves, said, 'need to be implemented to ensure that other detained people do not suffer in the same way as those at Brook House did.' This was the maiden statutory public inquiry into the reality of life for individuals detained in immigration detention centres in the UK. The Inquiry found 19 incidents during a five-month period at Brook House IRC in 2017, where there was credible evidence that detained people had been subject to mistreatment capable of amounting to inhuman and/or degrading treatment, contrary to Article 3 ECHR. Given the limited period of time the Inquiry focused on, the Chair found the prevalence of abuse and mistreatment of detained people in immigration detention to be gravely concerning.

The Chair identified a string of individual errors resulting in those specific incidents of mistreatment, but also a significant volume of wide-ranging generic failures in the methods, policies, practices and management arrangements of the Home Office and its private contractors. She found there were ongoing 'serious systemic failures, indicating a wholesale breakdown in the system of safeguards designed to protect vulnerable detained people'. She lambasted the failure to act on previous recommendations as a dark thread that runs throughout the report and urged the Home Office and other recipients of her recommendations to publish their responses within six months: 'It is my sincere hope that more than

mere lip service will be paid to this report. The events that occurred at Brook House cannot be repeated. Amongst its many important recommendations, the Inquiry has recommended the UK end its policy of indefinite detention for individuals detained under immigration powers, owing to the inevitable harm that it causes individuals.'

The Inquiry recommended a statutory 28 day time limit be introduced, limiting the duration for which individuals can be held under this form of administrative detention. It called upon the Government and organisations identified in the Inquiry's report recommendations to publish details of the steps they will take in response to each recommendation, including the timetable involved, by 19 March 2024. Implementation of or compliance with the Inquiry's recommendations will then be regularly monitored and reported upon by the Home Affairs Select Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights. GDWG is doing all it can to monitor progress against the recommendations and to ensure that visitor groups around the UK all complete the same monitoring exercise to highlight the way policy is experienced throughout the detention estate today.

I remember a conversation when... *By Eva Twine*

In the week that the Brook House Public Inquiry Report was published, Eva, a GDWG visitor, wrote to us that a visit to the Centre she made 'seemed to encapsulate the Report's Findings - in the words of a young man who has no knowledge of the Report but who lives it, every day.'

Eva's description vividly conveyed the daily almost routine suffering in detention. She wrote about a young man feeling 'overwhelming hopelessness about his situation, having had no news at all for weeks and months on end'. Visiting him regularly, Eva noted they 'often have conversations about all sorts of topics'. Whenever she uses a word or phrase he hasn't heard before, he asks her to write it down and to sound it out - he is a very quick learner. Occasionally, there'll even be genuine laughter... But mostly, she observed, 'he is weary and depressed and sadly - though not surprisingly - increasingly cynical. He now thinks it's a big lie when the UK talks about Human Rights, but this is what people (like him) are told, and believe, when they leave behind their own countries and set off on the most perilous journeys'. She says that as far as Brook House is concerned, 'he is bothered by the many rules and regulations, plenty of which make no sense to him'. If he queries anything, he's told that's just how it is, no one questions and no one bothers to explain. Asked whether working in the servery gave him some opportunity to talk to others, he says 'it's best not to; people are angry or upset all the time, talking about it just makes it worse'.

Eva finished: 'There was no distracting him today and so I just let him talk and listened. I'll visit again next week and try my best to take his mind off his situation for a couple of hours. It is such a waste - no 21-year-old should be so lost and so disillusioned.'

An Essex Walk

By Josie Wade and the GDWG Self-Advocacy Group

In October, Refugee Tales walkers took a new route on our monthly walk - starting in Benfleet and finishing in Southend. Thank you so much Gordon for your meticulous planning of this route and all the history you shared throughout the day. Thank you Nelica and Paul for your crucial back-marking. It was a beautiful walk that took us through the forest, up onto a Salvation Army estate and along to Hadleigh castle. We walked through the town of Leigh-on-Sea and had a coffee break overlooking the river Thames.



Experts by experience on the walk said:

'It was quite interesting, especially around the river, and seeing new places, meeting different people again, and having new conversations. I always tell you I like to



come out from [my town] to experience new things. The walk is like a good exercise as we are walking for a long time. Before that I could not sleep that week, with everything with my case, but after the walk I was so tired. When I got back from the walk I could sleep. Before that I was depressed, stressed, but the time I was there everything was ok, I forget everything of my past and was just enjoying being with everyone. It was amazing.'

'Thank you for this beautiful day. I felt as if I was sitting at home. I was very happy that day. For me, it's very nice. Everything about this, the people, anything from that walk I liked it!'

'It was a very beautiful walk. It was a very beautiful atmosphere, and the weather was not too bad as well. It was a very lovely day. It was well-organised and it was good that new people are interested

in joining the walk. Nothing I can think about that can make it better.'

'It was a good new city and with people active again, it was a long time since we didn't walk. We walk a little outside the city and a little inside the city. It is good to walk inside the city because we see new people - the people they don't know about us, about Refugee Tales.'

'Essex is nice, the landscape is nice, up and down. When you go up, you can see very long distance.'

'I like it. It was a new area, it's nice to walk, so I enjoy it. I like to talk with new people, I like to walk with the people, I like to go to different areas. Everybody is happy to talk with you, to show you things if they know something you don't, or if you ask something. I meet new people, some it's the first time we meet, we talk together. Of course, I enjoyed it.'



Women in detention

GDWG was delighted to be one of the partner organisations (alongside Justice First and Samphire) working with Dr Lucy Williams on a Briefing Paper focusing on the experience of women in immigration detention. The Paper addresses the questions of how women in particular experience immigration detention. Is detention experienced differently by women? The paper was created by women who are experts by experience or who work to support women who have been detained. The Paper, funded by the University of Kent, provides insight into women's unique experience of immigration detention and is intended to be a tool to support all those working to end detention. Our thanks to Dr Lucy Williams for this important work. Here is a link to read the Briefing Paper: <https://justicefirst.org.uk/immigration-detention-of-women/> Please let us know if you would like to discuss the Paper with Dr Lucy Williams or if you'd like to use it in your work or as you call for change.

Volunteering in the GDWG office

By Felix Knight

Volunteering with GDWG was a truly enriching and informative experience. Before coming to the office, I was extensively briefed about the work and duties of GDWG by Karris, who explained complex and sensitive matters in a way that was easy to digest. This included some safeguarding training designed to give me more confidence in some situations I encountered as a volunteer. When I arrived at the office, I was welcomed with open arms, and made to feel a part of the GDWG community immediately. I was shown how to use the

software which tracks the information and status of detainees and could witness firsthand how caseworkers handled delicate issues, of great importance. And I was always offered biscuits and tea!

My role as a casework volunteer was pretty straightforward; complete the urgent tasks Karris had set for me, relating to people detained in Brook and Tinsley house. These tasks often revolved around reviewing a detained person's eligibility for phone credit, and then sending it over. I would also call people newly arrived in the centres. This element, of calling and checking up on, often vulnerable young people, was the hardest, but also most rewarding part of the role. It was not uncommon to speak to someone barely older than myself, who was finding it difficult to adjust to the harsh conditions of the detention centre they had been placed in. There is an element of powerlessness here, on the receiving end of the phone. But what I learned, and what Karris and Hannah stressed to me, was that even being able to offer a caring voice can go a long way in improving someone's wellbeing. And of course, that was not the only thing I could do. I could offer to send them phone credit, and clothing, as well as monitor their mental health via speaking with the detention centre. And in certain circumstances, I could even help arrange the family of a detained person to visit them, to lift their spirits.

Maybe the most exciting day I experienced while volunteering was being in the office when the Brook House Inquiry Report was published, on the 19th of September. GDWG contributed to some of the evidence used in this report,

which suggested multiple quite substantial reforms to the way Brook House was being run. To be a part of this group, even just on the periphery, and to see the real-life impacts our work can have, not just on the immediate lives of those detained, but also in helping shape the wider public conversation, was a rewarding and proud moment. GDWG is doing really important work in trying to shift the terms of the immigration 'debate' to more empathetic, human grounds. And to be a part of this was a great privilege.

So, what are you waiting for? Don't let the bright lights of Crawley dissuade you - if you want to be a part of a caring, motivated, like-minded community, that does crucial frontline work in helping victims of the immigration system, look no further than the GDWG.

Book Review: 'Migrants - The Story of Us All' by Sam Miller

By Mary Barrett

We are all descended from migrants - Humans are, in fundamental ways, a migratory species, more so than any other land mammal. For most of our existence, we were all nomads, and some of us still are. Houses and permanent settlements are a relatively late development - dating back little more than twelve thousand years. Borders and passports are much more recent. From Neanderthals, Alexander the Great, Christopher Columbus and Pocahontas to the African slave trade, Fu Manchu and Barack Obama, Sam Miller's Migrants shows us that it is only by understanding how migration and migrants have been viewed in the past

that we can re-set the terms of the modern-day debate about migration.

'Migrants' tells us a great deal about ourselves from the perspective of Miller who was born and grew up in London but has spent much of his life in India as a journalist and writer. He said he found the book difficult to write because the public debate in the West has become so partisan and chauvinistic he felt no one would listen. He did not want the book to become part of 'migration studies' - a special academic case and thus an anomaly in the modern world. He is convinced that migration is at the centre, not the periphery, of the human story. Miller found a way into starting his story through the tale of a refugee who travelled round the Mediterranean until landing in Italy and by making clever alliances he became an important figure in Rome. This is the Aeneid and tells us much of how migration has always been, since the very beginning, central to the human story - and it remains so.

The story of migration should not be sentimental, now or in the past. Migration happens and it can be disruptive and destructive. Migrants from Europe brought death through disease to the Americas and migrants have reduced the original inhabitants of countries like Sri Lanka, Cuba and New Zealand to tiny minorities.

Miller searches back in time to find a beginning to his story - is it the first creatures emerging onto land about 530 million years ago? He actually chooses to start his story with our common ancestor Neanderthals. Much is now known about the prehistoric human journey to populate the planet. Why did they do it?

Miller suggests that apart from the usual reasons for migration - climate change, territorial disputes and scarce resources there is a deep-rooted, ancient, instinctive, perhaps genetic desire to be on the move. In deep historical terms we have been sedentary with a permanent home for a relatively short time as around four hundred years ago about a third of the world's population was nomadic. So maybe, Miller argues, we should not be discussing that it is innately normal or natural to be staying in or close to the place we were born.

'Migrants' takes the reader on an alternative history of the world criss-crossing geography and time. He suggests that on arrival, migrants are both expected to assimilate and encouraged to remain distinctive; to defend their heritage and adopt a new one. This is the history of us all, part of everybody's backstory. I found 'Migrants' a fascinating read, not a new story but told provocatively. Sadly it is a story given very little prominence today. I recommend it and would be happy to lend my copy to anyone who would like to read it, just leave a message for me in the GDWG office.

GDWG webinars

By Michael Berkeley

Our new series of training webinars for volunteer visitors kicked off in October with a session led by Hannah Carbery from our frontline team. The subject was the various types of accommodation 'offered' to people after release from immigration detention, something that our visitors had said they'd like to understand better. More than a dozen visitors tuned into the 7pm Zoom call.

Despite the somewhat detailed technicalities of the various options and criteria of Home Office accommodation, Hannah did an excellent job in making a relaxed, clear and informative presentation. This started with a summary of the various types offered: Hotel Accommodation (Section 98); Shared Accommodation (S.95, S.4 and Schedule 10); and Private/not shared (for those with dependents, evidenced health needs, or perhaps with probation limits); plus a few other options such as Approved premises (probation hostel), Local Authority accommodation or third party referrals (organisations or charities that provide housing to specific groups). The first shocker, at least for those who didn't know or who had forgotten this, was that to access Home Office accommodation you must prove you are 'destitute', which means you have less than what the Home Office considers enough to live on for two weeks, and that's £47.39 per week. So having £100 means you don't qualify.

After going into a bit more detail of the main options, Hannah described the application process and how GDWG can help, followed by outlining some common issues with the whole process. Frustrating and far from satisfactory for our friends in detention, but great to know that GDWG and Migrant Help are here to advocate and support. A really useful training session, and despite the detail and complexities of the subject matter, really well delivered by Hannah. For those who couldn't attend, Hannah's slides are available and the session was also recorded for catch-up viewing. Just ask Hannah for more information at hannah@gdwg.org.uk. Many thanks Hannah!

Base Boxing Club: where everyone is a champion

By Ridy Wasolua

In the heart of our community stands Base Boxing Club, a beacon of strength, skill, and wellbeing. Recently, we had the pleasure of hosting an incredible day for the GDWG Self Advocacy Group, an experience that highlighted our club's commitment to fostering talent and camaraderie among young people. At Base Boxing Club, we believe in the transformative power of boxing. Our programs are designed not just to hone boxing skills but to build resilience and a sense of purpose in day-to-day life. Our members learn to channel their energy positively, developing both physical

strength and mental fortitude. What truly sets us apart is our inclusive spirit. We're a growing club where everyone is welcome, regardless of background or birthplace. At Base Boxing, you're not just a member; you're part of a family. A family that values hard work, dedication, and mutual respect.

Our gym has become a vibrant community hub, a place where friendships are forged in the fire of shared passion and hard work. It's a bubble of positivity, where everyone shares a common goal - to be the best they can be, both in and out of the ring. We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the GDWG Self Advocacy Group for choosing to spend their day with us. Your enthusiasm and spirit perfectly encapsulate what Base Boxing Club is all





about. Together, we're not just building better boxers; we're building a stronger, more connected community. Here's to many more days of training, growth, and friendship at Base Boxing Club - where every punch is a step towards greatness, and every member is a champion in their own right. Thank you so much Ridy and Zen for hosting us, we really did have an unforgettable day!

'Thank you guys so much for today for this opportunity with Big Narstie and for the exercise in the Gym, for real I have enjoyed. I start enjoying freedom now cause of you guys thanks. Thanks for this kindness and this support and programmes I appreciated it. Best wishes for GDWG to grow up more and more!'

'It was a very good experience and tougher than expected. I enjoyed it a lot.'

'For me, it was very beautiful. The most beautiful thing was that I got to know new



people. The whole atmosphere was very beautiful. Thank you all for making us feel that the world is still fine.' F

Strategic planning

By Stephen Klein and Eva Twine

We held a series of focus groups as we formulated our strategic plan. One volunteer, Stephen, reflected on the process: 'A strategic planning session. Oh Joy! What more exciting ways are there to spend a couple of hours? I know they are necessary to point the organisation in the right direction for the next few years. But it is hardly why we volunteers joined GDWG. Our unit of activity is the individual. I thought I had left 'blue sky thinking' in breakout groups and plenaries behind when I left the Social Services strategic planning team. So, to be stuck in a low, stuffy meeting room round a big table, by a white board made my heart sink. Anna suggested a change of format: 'let's go for a walk.' It

certainly was in keeping with the way GDWG works. We walk and talk at the same time. That is the essence of Refugee Tales. A short opening session posed the questions and then we headed out the door. There was an added constraint. Accuweather said it was going to start raining in 18 minutes. So we knew when we needed to be back. Unlike the plenary round the table, we walked and talked in twos and threes. It did not take a management consultant's intervention for us to change break-out groups. It happened organically as we crossed the road, as we entered the park and as we found ourselves alongside another walking group. Sometimes we drifted off topic, but then that happens in break-out groups anyway. By the time we got back to the office, about one minute before the rain started, we had discussed most of the topics on our agenda, but it felt a lot like going for a walk with friends and having a chat. Really, you can't ask for more than that.' Eva wrote to our Director after the : 'Thank you so much for inviting me to be part of the Visitors' Focus Group and to take into consideration our input towards the development of the next GDWG Strategic Plan. I have learned so much in each of our three group sessions, from the ideas and suggestions put forward by my fellow Visitors and your feedback from other discussion groups. The process has reminded me once again just how wide-reaching, creative and impactful this Charity's work truly is, managed and carried out so diligently and with such commitment and kindness by such a small - and incredibly special - team. As a Visitor, I am proud to be able to contribute in a small way to one aspect of GDWG's work and it has been a real privilege to be part of this focus group.'

'Journeys'

A book by Chris Orange

We have a book recommendation for you. Chris Orange is a photographer who has worked with us on our websites and has taken some of our best photos of Refugee Tales events and walks. Journeys is the brand new photography collection from Chris. To celebrate the last 10 years of his landscape photography adventures to wild and remote locations, Chris has put this collection of 30 unique photographs together in an exceptionally high quality and beautiful hardback book. To find out more, please visit www.beautyinthewild.click



'Agitation'

A poem by Paul Francis

GDWG recently gave a talk in Horsham and after the talk, we were sent a copy of a poem written by Paul Francis. Paul had entered a poem, 'Agitation' for the 2023 Shelley Memorial Competition. The poem was about three young activists arrested for blocking a road near Gatwick Airport to prevent people from Brook House IRC

being forcibly removed to Jamaica. The poem won second prize. Congratulations to Paul for using poetry to highlight forced removal of people from detention. Paul reminds us that speaking out against abuses of power was experienced as a duty by Shelley, too!

Agitation

She scrolls through deportation flights.
The lads, both lawyers, are appalled
at the brutality. They're all agreed:
someone must stir things up, to right this
wrong.

In his Livorno tower, Shelley reads
the English newspapers, and seethes with
rage.

In Manchester, a hungry crowd
armed only with the power of their cause
have been cut down by local yeomanry.

A damp, November afternoon.
The three of them have blocked the
Gatwick road.
They're chained together, lying down,
won't let the traffic through.
Reluctant passengers will not take off.

All government spokesmen, the Prince
Regent too,
commend the valour of the loyal troops.
Someone must stir things up, to right this
wrong
and Shelley grabs his pen. Within two
weeks
there's ninety stanzas which will make his
name.

Authorities intensify the charge.
Aggressive trespass; public nuisance,
now.
Maximum - life imprisonment.

His satire builds a world of caricature,
of gruesome villains stamping on the
poor.

He got away with student blasphemy
but writing for the rabble gets you jail.

The three explain their reasoning.
Some of these migrants came as kids;
others were trafficked, slaves,
but all have families, networks of support
which will be ripped apart
in this remorseless haste.
Jamaica kills the people we send back.
The crime is hostile environment.

He's born to write the Mask of Anarchy
but he won't see it published. That refrain
which freedom lovers get. "No, no. Not
yet."

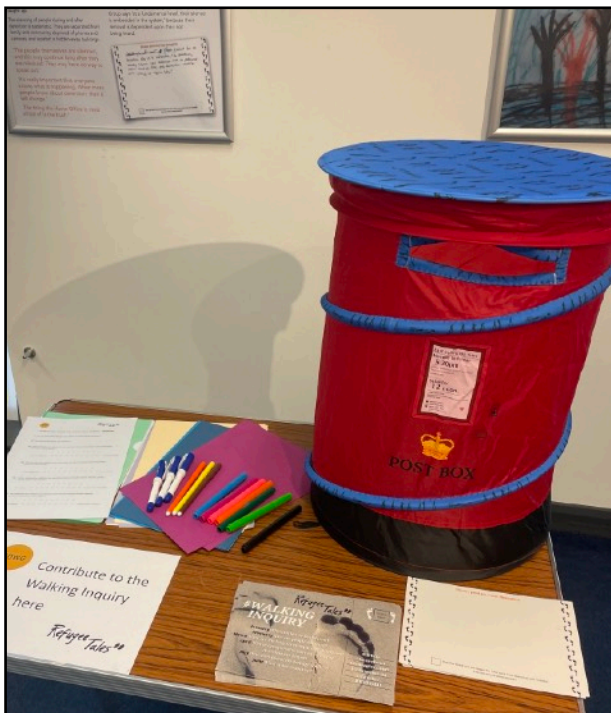
The prosecution don't dispute their case;
it doesn't interest them.
The judge insists these reasons aren't
enough
to justify the action that they took.
The jury don't agree, and set them free.
Justice is smuggled into court.

Walking Inquiry Exhibition in Arundel

By Marygold Lewis

GDWG has been showcasing a Walking Inquiry exhibition in conjunction with the Brook House Inquiry. The Walking Inquiry exhibition has been travelling around the country in 2023, with the final stop being Arundel in September. I was happy to host the exhibition and was thrilled to welcome five members of a writing group from the Arundel area. They were all highly engaged and expressed great interest in the information provided through our multi-media exhibition. The

large wall panels gave a concise summary about how immigration detention is experienced, and how our inquiry gathered people's view of the experience through letters exchanges, Zoom meetings, and of course, talking and walking. Following that, they watched some of the videos, picked up leaflets and offered written thoughts about the exhibition, posted in our large "mailbox".



They signed up to be on our mailing list as well. They were all in agreement that a 28-day time limit for immigration detention is urgently needed. We hope some of the attendees will join us on future walks or donate clothes, which are sorely needed. Luckily we have a clothes donation point in Arundel at the cathedral. We are so grateful to everyone who attended the Walking Inquiry exhibition with open hearts and minds!

Here are reviews from two of the writing group visitors: 'Excellent exhibition by the

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG), highlighting the little known and unthinkable plight of detained people arriving in the UK. I learned so much through the informative posters and extremely moving video clips of detainees and many supporters, including Jeremy Irons and through talking to the GDWG representative, Marygold. Could not believe we are the only country in Europe which does not enforce a 28-day limit on detention. Now reading 'Refugee Tales.' A very worthy cause.'

'Thanks for welcoming me to the exhibition, which introduced me to the plight of those detained whose freedom and human rights are being compromised, in some cases indefinitely. I was shocked and disturbed by the isolation and feelings of hopelessness and desolation experienced by many in detention. I also am encouraged by the work of GDWG. The stories shared on the walks, and befriending that occurs, are inspiring. The exhibit also led me to read the recently published Brook House Inquiry Report, the public inquiry into the mistreatment of individuals who were detained at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre. The violence against detained people set forth in that report deepened my concern and compassion for them. Thank you for the excellent work of GDWG.'

Thanks to everyone who attended our Exhibition in Arundel and to the Arundel Museum that welcomed us in their space. Thanks to all the volunteers who hosted the Exhibition.



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