

# GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP



## Highlights and Anticipations

*Anna Pincus*

As we begin 2019, the government has committed to a reduction of 40% in the use of detention (compared with 2015). The forthcoming immigration bill presents an opportunity for pressure towards reform. We look forward to working with the Detention Forum and our sector as we look ahead.

We have much to celebrate with Daniel Eichner and our volunteer team spreading news of the reality of indefinite detention in local schools. '28 Tales for 28 Days' ([www.28for28.org](http://www.28for28.org)) took the issue wider to an audience of over 3 million

on social media thanks to our collaboration with Comma Press. The Refugee Tales publicity team led by Mary Barrett gave over 60 talks in 2018 including at The Belfast Literature Festival, in Stroud, Edinburgh, and by David Herd at universities in Italy and the USA. People with lived experience of detention took part in our monthly walks and were interviewed on the 'Ramblings' R4 programme by Clare Balding. We ended 2018 with Refugee Tales featuring on the Boxing Day R4 'Today' programme thanks to writer and guest editor, Kamila Shamsie. Katie Close has led our parliamentary engagement team to achieve cross-party

support and has met 20 Conservative members of parliament in 2018. Katie developed support for an end to indefinite detention through an event hosted by Afzal Khan MP at Labour Party conference and this was furthered through our presence at the Conservative Party fringe.

It has been a year with staff changes, yet our constancy of intent is shown in the fact that two visitors just celebrated their 22 year anniversaries of volunteering with us. I take GDWG into the new year as Acting Director at a time when the 'Verita' report (triggered by the Panorama programme on Brook House) summarised that 'GDWG is one of few

independent organisations with direct contact with detainees at Brook House. It therefore offers G4S a potential channel of information about the wider experiences of detainees and insights into the way the centre is run.' <https://bit.ly/2s1VI54> Insights that you pass to the office regarding concerns

expressed by detainees are, of course, appreciated. Our detainee focus group in December gave further insights and showed that for some people in detention, maintaining human connections with our visitors makes even basic survival on release at least possible. Thank you for bearing witness

and for walking alongside people in the most difficult times. And as we look forward with hope that 2019 will be a year of legislative change in our sector, I wish you a happy new year.

## GDWG at Lush

GDWG held a charity pot event at the Lush handmade cosmetics shop in Brighton over the weekend of 27-28 October. This was managed by Marygold Lewis in the GDWG office and she is grateful for the herculean efforts of dedicated volunteers who staffed the stand. The team raised an impressive £400! This was a wonderful opportunity to talk about the detention estate in the UK, as well as the work we do at GDWG and Refugee Tales. People

were interested in our work supporting people in detention, but also in how we raise awareness about indefinite detention. Marygold's favourite moment was talking to two young people who bought charity pots and promised to discuss this important issue with their parents... who weren't themselves naturally sympathetic to the plight of asylum seekers and migrants! We hope that by the time these young shoppers reach adulthood, there will no longer be indefinite immigration detention in the UK.



## **Trustee Profile:**

### **Meet Michael Berkeley**

Michael retired from full-time work in the City four years ago and now works as an investor relations consultant and is a non-executive director of two companies - one a leading City PR firm and the other a stock exchange for growth companies. He worked in investment banking for 15 years followed by a further 18 years in communications consultancy. Before that he taught in Italy and in Japan. Other experience includes 8 years as a Governor of an inner London state school where he chaired the Finance Committee and brief spells as a relief worker in Nepal and in India. He graduated from Cambridge in Classics and has an MBA from SDA Bocconi in Milan.

Michael started as a volunteer visitor with GDWG early in 2018 and continues to visit detainees regularly. "Having been involved with GDWG through visiting detainees I see the tremendous value in the organisation's work both in helping individuals in detention and in the wider cause of detainee welfare in this country. I feel there would be good synergy between visiting as a volunteer and serving as a trustee and I hope I can bring my broad international experience in corporate life and consultancy to benefit GDWG. I look forward to doing more to help the charity's excellent work and to help further its goals at both grassroots and policy levels."



## **AVID Handbook**

*By Harriet Ballance (AVID)*

The AVID handbook for volunteer visitors is returning in its new and updated 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Packed with information on visiting skills, along with technical and practical information about immigration detention, we hope that the updated handbook will be an invaluable resource and support for volunteer visitors. This edition is a significant update on the previous edition and, for the first time, we are making an e-copy available as well as print copies.

The Handbook is designed to support visitors to find the information needed to provide the best care and support to people in detention. Covering topics such as legal support, detention law and policy, how to support vulnerable people, getting out of detention, and removal and deportation, this will be an indispensable tool for those supporting people who are detained.

GDWG has ordered copies of the Handbook for each of the local groups. If you would like an individual copy, please order the Handbook directly from AVID ([enquiries@aviddetention.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@aviddetention.org.uk) / 115 Mare Street, London, E8 4RU).





## Tees and Totes

T-shirts and tote bags are on sale bearing the message 'No human is illegal' and with all proceeds going to the work of Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group. These were designed for the charity by comedian Sameena Zehra who read the Lorry Driver's Tale in '28 Tales for 28 Days' (28for28.org) and who is a good friend to the charity having worked with Refugee Tales over several years. Here's the link: <https://extremedoodles.teemill.com/collection/no-human-is-illegal/> and your purchases will further our work. Thank you for your support.

## I am just like you

*Poems from school students in Stoke Newington written to welcome Refugee Tales walkers. With thanks to Emma Parsons for school workshops.*

I don't want bullets fired  
 I want to see my dad smile  
 I don't want to be lonely  
 I want to be able to play games  
 I am just like you

I want to be sliding down the slippery slide  
 I don't want to be hearing screaming bombs  
 I want to be eating KFC  
 I don't want to be afraid of large waves  
 I want to be playing PSU  
 I am just like you

I don't want to be hearing babies crying  
 I want to be eating my mum's pancakes  
 I don't want to see conflict  
 I want to be snuggling my teddies  
 I am just like you

*by Terell, 10, William Patten School, London  
 Poem inspired by 'I am just like you' by Arji Manuelpillai*



## I am just like you

I was not created to be alone  
I was created to be loved  
I wasn't created to be trapped  
I was created to be free  
I was not created to be anxious all day  
I was created to have fun  
I'm just like you

I was not created to be nothing  
I was created to be something  
I was not created to be a newspaper headline  
I was created to be normal  
I was not created to be neglected  
I was created to be heard  
I am just like you

*by Florence, 10, William Patten School,  
London*

## Come and Walk with us!

### **Christina Fitzsimons**

Has the new year given you an appetite for getting fit? Put your walking boots on and walk with us!

We organise a walk most months. They are open to all. We have a voluntary charge of £5 per walk (or £20 per year). This is used to pay for travel for our guest walkers.

Our 'Walk with Us' walks started after our first Refugee Tales walk back in 2015. We had all gained such a lot out of the nine-day walk and made such firm friends. We felt that we wanted to continue to walk together and to invite new people to join us.

Our walks are beneficial on many different levels:

- You will get to know new areas of the countryside. We walk in Surrey, Sussex, Kent and in London. Some of our walks are in spectacular countryside, others are in green areas of London.
- You will enjoy the health benefits of fresh air and exercise.
- You will have the opportunity to meet new people in a relaxed way
- We have walkers of all ages - walking is so good for mixing up the ages.

Our guest walkers are core to what we do. A guest walker is someone who has been in immigration detention. The charity pays for their travel. Our guests have told us how much they value the walks and the opportunities to be part of a supportive community of friends. I know that these sentiments are echoed by all our walkers, guests or not.

The walks are typically five to seven miles at a relaxed pace. You don't need to be super fit - there is always a friendly 'back marker' who walks with the slower walkers. All you need is a sturdy pair of walking shoes or boots, a picnic and some water. Every walk starts and ends at a rail station.

Avril emails out the details and there is a free online registration site so she knows how many are coming. If you think you would enjoy walking with us or if you know others who would be interested please contact Christina Fitzsimons ([cfitzs3287@aol.com](mailto:cfitzs3287@aol.com)).



## Update on UK immigration policy

Jean Gould

In December the long-awaited Immigration White Paper, *The UK's future skills-based immigration system*, was published.

Following a phased ending of free movement for EU nationals (except Irish citizens), UK Immigration Rules are to apply to all - EU and non-EU citizens alike. However the distinction made between so-called 'low risk' countries whose citizens do not require visas to visit the UK, and the rest who do, is maintained.

The cap on skilled workers (roughly A level equivalent or above) will be removed, but the minimum salary requirement of about £30,000 will remain. Less skilled workers to fill job shortages will only be admitted temporarily and only from 'low risk' countries, they will need a visa and be unable to bring dependents. The aim is to phase out this category of migrant labour entirely.

Chapter 10, *Protecting the Vulnerable*, deals with asylum, and contains some welcome positive proposals to:

- continue the current resettlement schemes (including the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme which has brought Syrian families to the Lewes area)
- 'secure an ambitious and well-funded English language strategy' to promote integration of refugees
- consider allowing asylum seekers to work, recognising the 'importance of work when it comes to physical and mental well-being'
- negotiate an agreement with the EU to bring unaccompanied children into the UK to join 'close family members' already here. A review of the level of grant funding to enable local authorities to look after other unaccompanied asylum seeking children

coming under the so-called Dubs amendment, is also underway.

The emphasis on creating ever greater barriers to refugees reaching the UK from Europe rather than providing safe passage shows no sign of abating. Instead the White Paper proposes to seek agreement with the EU to implement similar arrangements to the current Dublin agreement under which asylum seekers may be returned to their first 'safe' point of entry to Europe. The attempt to widen family reunion to allow unaccompanied children in the UK to be joined by immediate family beyond Europe has also fallen on deaf ears.

There is no reference to a time limit on detention, but a commitment to consider alternatives, 'starting with an intention to pilot a scheme to manage vulnerable women in the community'. Other Shaw recommendations are taken up - improving support to vulnerable detainees; greater transparency through published data and inspection reports, and improving provision, exemplified by a pilot enabling detainees to Skype families overseas.

None of these policy proposals are in the Immigration Bill, which simply repeals the EU freedom of movement provisions and provides the Home Secretary with very wide rule making powers, so that most if not all the proposals will be introduced through that mechanism, which tends to reduce parliamentary scrutiny as well as making progressive amendments to the Bill less likely. However, Tulip Siddiq MP has introduced a private members Bill, *Immigration (Time Limit on Detention)* limiting immigration detention to 28 days. The Bill has support from Conservatives such as Dominic Grieve, Andrew Mitchell, Caroline Spelman and David Davis. It is due to receive its second reading on 25<sup>th</sup> January.

## Beyond Gatwick

*Anna Sayburn Lane*

Refugee Tales carried out over 60 events highlighting indefinite detention for the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group in 2018. Our thanks to Comma Press. Walker Anna Sayburn-Lane attended one of these events at the Edinburgh Festival this year and describes the event for you..

'We started to get an idea of just how popular the Jackie Kay/Kamila Shamsie Refugee Tales event was going to be when we saw the queue being organised into three tranches. The Edinburgh International Book Festival was our biggest event yet, almost selling out the main auditorium. Both writers have big followings. Jackie Kay is the current Scottish Makar, or poet laureate, and Kamila Shamsie's acclaimed novel Home Fire won this year's Women's Prize for Fiction. They are just two of the authors who wrote for us in the second volume of Refugee Tales, and we were thrilled that so many people came along to hear them talk.

They began with an arresting recital of 28 facts and figures around indefinite detention. These are facts that people involved with campaigns against immigration detention know well, but they never fail to surprise a general audience, and audible gasps accompanied some of their words. They finished with two statements that seem unarguable - "Detention is a waste of money," and "Detention is a waste of human life." "By any standard, indefinite detention is a breach of human rights," concluded Jackie Kay, to applause. Peggy Hughes, chairing the event, began by asking them how they each got involved. Both credited our patron, Ali Smith, who wrote so movingly about the project and

told The Detainee's Tale in Refugee Tales volume one. "This was a story that had to be told," said Kamila Shamsie. Both spoke of the "moral duty" of writers to give a voice to those who, for whatever reason, are unable to tell their own stories. The two writers gave short readings from their Tales, demonstrating the different and beautiful ways in which they had approached the commission. Afterwards, audience members asked difficult questions - how do you decide what to include and what to exclude? What can we do, when the situation seems hopeless? The situation, Kamila Shamsie stressed, is not hopeless. It is hoped there will soon be an immigration bill, and many MPs have expressed support for an amendment to include a time limit of 28 days on immigration detention. We need to keep telling our stories, keep piling on the pressure, above all ensure that our politicians know this matters, refugees matter.

If everyone in the audience took out that message into the sunny Edinburgh afternoon, imagine the difference it could make. Given the length of the signing queue - and the numbers of copies of the Refugee Tales we sold - we gained plenty of new supporters in Edinburgh that day. '



## Visiting

*Chloe O'Connor (visitor since 2018)*

I have been a visitor since around June last year. Even though I was told what going into the detention centre would be like, and staff from GDWG came with us for the first visit, I was still shocked by the level of security and how much you are expected to know exactly what to do. I think this must be overwhelming for people visiting people for the first time that don't have someone guiding them as there are so many steps involved and it isn't explained by detention centre staff.

My biggest surprise about visiting was how much I enjoy it. That feels strange to say, but I am really pleased that I visit and I enjoy the conversations that I have with the people I visit. The first person I visited was in the centre for around three months and I visited him for two of them. He was grateful for visits as he had no family in the UK and found it hard to speak with his family in Bangladesh as they became so tearful about his situation. He, along with everyone else I have visited, feel they cannot talk to other people in detention about their situation as everyone has their own problems and no one wants to burden anyone with extra issues.

Whilst we had fun chats, visits could sometimes be trickier as he was very unwell with suspected cancer and was struggling to get seen by a doctor which understandably made him feel down. He struggled to sleep and eat due to the pain. Through him telling me this, I was able to contact staff at GDWG and ask for help, and they suggested he contact a different charity who were able to help with medical situations. He found them very useful and got seen by a doctor much quicker. One week I went to visit him and no



one came. After half an hour, staff told me that he was gone, that he had been released that day. I was unbelievably happy for him at that moment as I hoped he could stay with his friend and be more comfortable. I have no idea what happened to him after that day, or how his health is but I am really glad that I knew him.

My Mum also visits and has gained a similar satisfaction in knowing that, even if only for an hour a week, she has given support to someone who has nobody to talk to. Visiting together means we can help each other and share concerns, but if we didn't both visit, the support groups would be so useful for this, and I am always confident that I will get the support I need from the GDWG office staff.

From a selfish point of view, I enjoy visiting because it can take you out of yourself and give some perspective. For example, going back to work after the Christmas break felt like a very insignificant thing to be grumpy about when someone was sat opposite me asking about my Christmas when they didn't have the choice to go to work, even if they weren't in detention. It has made me more aware of how lucky I am.



## The view of GDWG after detention

*Author wishes to remain anonymous*

I want to tell you my personal opinion about Refugee Tales and GDWG. Being in this big multi-national family has a special value for me. When I arrived here the police opened the lorry's door which was a refrigerator and took me to detention. Because it was night I didn't even see outside for a moment. When I was in detention people used drugs, fought and made self-harm, I said to myself 'This is the end of the world. Here is a horrible country'.

After a while through seeing Avril, a charity visitor, gradually I found myself and my view was getting better. Refugee Tales and GDWG proved to me that humanity is still alive and there are many hearts that love justice and equality. Sleeping together on the floor, chatting and walking together, eating and drinking together, dancing together, laughing and crying together, has a great moral message. Now, with confidence I say being together even in bitter moments and frustrating situations is reassuring. It's a really nice feeling to see dozens of people in a strange country, for the sake of you and people like you, sleep on the floor with you and walk miles and they say to me through their own actions 'You are not alone. We are with you.' Instead of a clenched fist and demonstrating in the city centre, Refugee Tales and GDWG have chosen to tie shoelaces and walk in the countryside. Instead of showing, we want to be seen. History shows that a different way of thinking has been successful. I hope that as soon as we can see an end to indefinite detention, then Refugee Tales enters into a new stage of

its activity. I want to say thanks for all the GDWG effort. Thanks for all the smiles and tears.

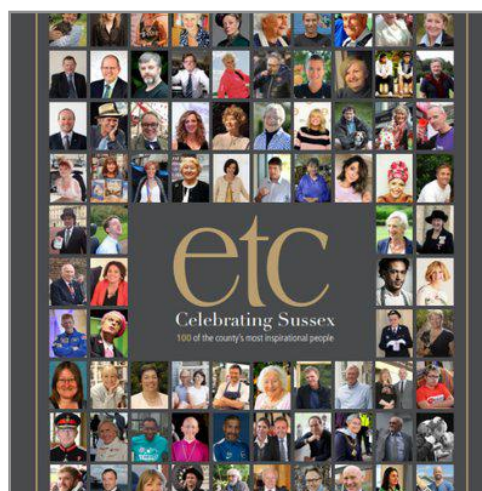
## Celebrating Sussex

*Marie Dewson, Chair GDWG*

Puzzle! What do Gareth Southgate and Anna Pincus have in common? Maybe there are many answers - including how well they kick a football or, better still, how well they manage a team - but the one I want to bring to your attention is that they both appear on a special list. The team at the Etc Magazine have compiled a list for their "Celebrating Sussex" edition of inspirational people in the area, stretching from Chichester to Hastings in the south and Crawley in the north, who have made a real difference to the communities in which they live. Anna is on that list!

They claim that the people on the list are not superstars but we know that Anna is exactly that and we are very proud that her stellar quality has been recognised by those other than her family, friends, fellow staff members, trustees and all the detainees she has helped throughout the years.

Congratulations, Anna!



## **GDWG Support**

*Dorothy Sheridan (visitor since 2015)*

The longer I have been involved in the GDWG, the more I have come to appreciate the local group set up to support visitors to the detention centres at Gatwick. I belong to the Brighton group which is convened and generously hosted by Jamie MacPherson. We meet regularly to share and discuss experiences of visiting and hear an update from the office.

The group has met two key needs for me: firstly, it provides practical and factual information. Hearing other visitors talk has helped me understand just a bit more about the whole UK immigration situation and how indefinite detention works (or doesn't work). We can't expect ourselves to be legal experts but we do need to be able to understand some of the terms and some of the background so that we can be more useful and empathic to the people we are visiting. The groups supplement the more formal training we receive at Crawley.

Secondly, the group has provided me with kindness and emotional support as well as feedback and advice. I really value the friendship of the other Brighton volunteers and have learned from their experience. It's helped me develop my own emotional and practical support to the detainees at Gatwick. I actually now think that attending such a group is a *vital* part of GDWG work. I'd recommend to all prospective visitors that when considering whether you'll have time to visit a detainee at Gatwick once a week, you also consider whether you can spare a couple of hours every six weeks or so for a meeting with other visitors. There are times when we

all need moral support, when we need to believe we are making a difference, when we feel doubts about what we are doing..... the group can help with all of that.

## **School Talks for GDWG**

*Cathy Merry*

An important aspect of GDWG's work and an essential one in terms of grant funding is our education outreach in local schools and colleges. Feedback from students after these presentations overwhelmingly reflects their increased awareness and empathy with those detained, 'The lesson really opened my eyes and I learnt a lot about how asylum seekers go through great hardship' and 'It was really educational and it helped me understand that asylum seekers have no choice about coming to the UK and that they need support', for example.

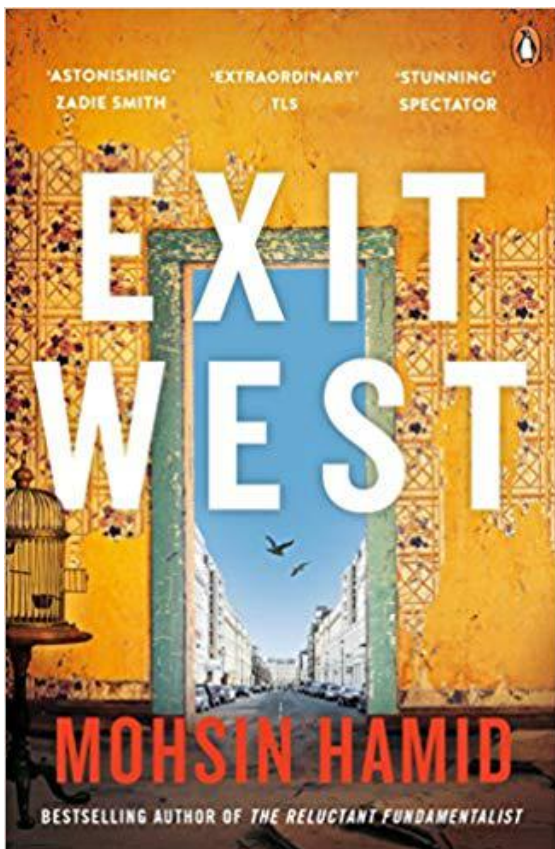
A typical school presentation will include 'Rachel's story', an animated film account of a family seeking refuge and experiencing detention; a myth-busting quiz to debunk commonly held misconceptions around refugees and asylum seekers; a brief exploration of the negative emotive language around 'migrants' often used in the media and the 'Visitor's Story', always the part of the presentation which most holds the attention of the listeners. This may be the first time a young person has become aware of the traumatic reasons that lead a person to leave everything behind in the hope of a better, safer life.

Simulation exercises include asking students to think of a favourite local place, special person, possession and ideal job and then to imagine losing each of these as we narrate the story of a person forced to flee. Similarly,

students roleplay a scenario in which a family has to decide who will go and who will stay when they are facing persecution. What items will they take in their haste and what happens when they arrive at the border?

The GDWG quilt is a powerful visual resource which invites students to reflect on the stories depicted in its squares by people who have experienced detention, from tearful faces to hands of welcome, from precarious journeys in small boats to footsteps across the burning sands.

We also talk about how we support the people we visit in detention. Recent responses include, *'I thought the work of the charity we learnt about was really inspiring'*. If you would like to come along to one of these presentations to find out what makes them so worthwhile or perhaps to tell your own 'Visitor's story', contact Daniel in the office to find out more.



Registered Charity No.4911257

## Book Review of Exit West by Mohsin Hamid

Mary Barrett

'In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace or at least not openly at war, two young people notice one another.' Thus opens *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid's Booker shortlisted novel published in 2017. This is in essence a love story, that moves from a war torn city to the West, never losing hope or compassion and with a magical lightness of touch that makes the book so readable.

Nadia meets Saeed in a classroom in a city on the edge of war. We never know the country or the city but it is probably in the Middle East. Their backgrounds are different, Saeed lives with his middle class parents and Nadia daringly alone. Their relationship develops, however when helicopters fill the sky everything changes and terror stalks their community.

People vanish and no one knows if they are alive or dead. Nadia sees the outside of her parents' home and it is deserted, there are always questions and always fear. The couple's jobs dry up and more deaths and rumours circulate that there are doors that could take you anywhere.

The terror increases, they contact an agent and make the decision to leave with the blessing of Saeed's father who tells them he will not come with them. They follow instructions and move to the rendezvous, hand over the money and wait with others in the nameless, featureless building to approach the door that will take them to freedom. Moving through the door is said in the book to be 'like dying and being born' as they emerge exhausted on the island of

Mykanos. Nadia and Saeed pass through more doors as they adjust to life in London and finally California.

The device of the magic doorway takes the reader by surprise but compellingly emphasises the challenge experienced by the refugee, who is propelled into a new and confusing world. The normality of the city inhabited by Saeed and Nadia is still familiar and home even in the midst of terror. Life on a Greek island or London or San Francisco challenges everything including relationships.

As someone who has the privilege of knowing and counting as friends many refugees, this book moved me a great deal. As Nadia and Saeed prepare to leave their country they face the dilemma of the migrant '... for when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind.'

Mohsin Hamid has managed to construct this fable with an amazing lightness of touch and humanity. He is a very talented and skilled writer and I highly recommend this book.

**Exit West** is available in paperback.

## Music In Detention

Music in Detention (MID) are currently running music workshops in Brook House. Workshops are facilitated by artists who come from all over the world. They co-create sound tracks with detainees, record them, burn them to CD and share them online here: <https://www.musicindetention.org.uk/player/> MID were invited to work in Brook House following a request from detainees there.

MID is currently delivering a Community Exchange programme between Brook House and Langley Green Psychiatric Hospital. Here

artists take tracks from Brook House to Langley Green, participants build on each others' creative work, in the long term making music together and getting to know each other without ever meeting.

There will be a concert at Brook House on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February and one at Langley Green on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January.

## Toolkit

With cuts to legal aid, more and more people have no lawyer at all and are forced to navigate the immigration and asylum system without legal representation. The Right to Remain Toolkit gives an overview of the legal system and procedures with information on rights and options at key stages. It shows actions people who are seeking asylum can take in support of their claims, or actions their supporters can take to help along the way. We have a copy of the toolkit at the GDWG. GDWG staff will be bringing the toolkit to your local peer support meetings. Look out for it in your meetings coming up.

## Upcoming Events

- The launch of Refugee Tales 2019 is in London on Saturday 19 January.
- Day walks will take place on 3 March, 13 April, 18 May, 8 June.

Local support group meetings are on:  
Horsham - 7.45 pm, Monday 11th February,  
Oxted and East Grinstead - 1.30pm, Monday 14th January

**Edited and Designed by Eli Barrott**