



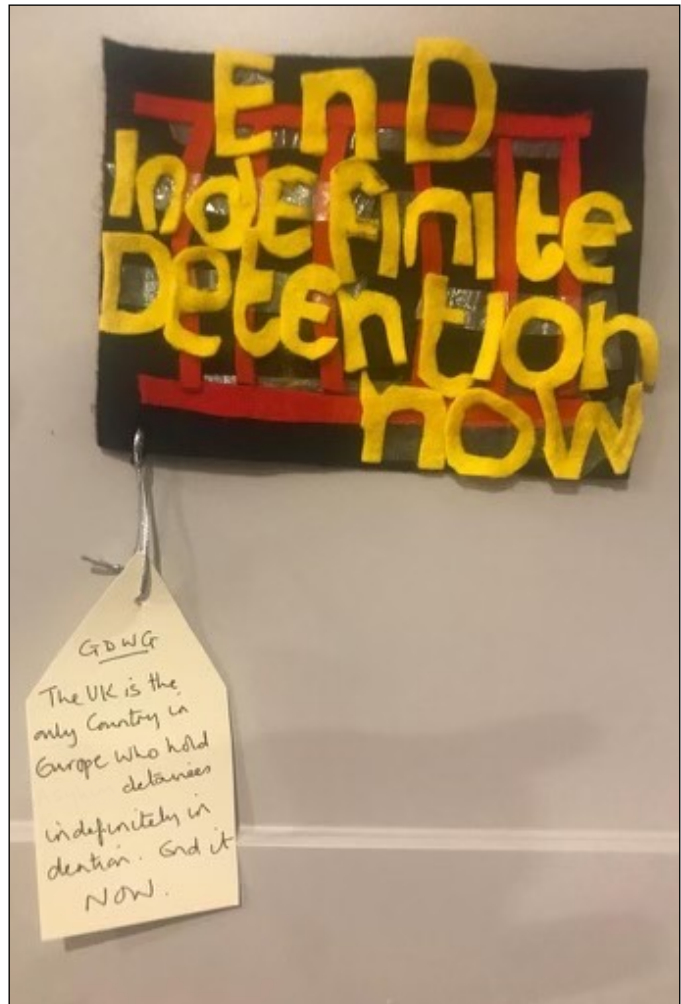
GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Spring 2021

Looking Forward

Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of the GDWG newsletter. In this edition you will find news of a Walking Inquiry, meet newcomers to our team, read articles by our volunteers, a film review from our Chair, news of schools talks, poems and creative writing, and contributions from our community with lived experience of detention including recipes, music recommendations and reflections of what it is like to be part of our self-advocacy group. We hope you are well and that there is something to inspire you in these pages. Thank you for your support. This cover illustration was made by Ann Locke, GDWG volunteer and a founder of Refugee Tales.

Anna Pincus
Director GDWG





Meet Pious, our New Trustee

Pious has lived experience of detention and GDWG supported him when he was detained. His visitor when he was detained was Mary, and Pious says her visits were beneficial to his mental health while he was incarcerated. Talking helped a lot, Pious says. He felt that although he was locked up, she gave encouragement and hope. Pious is a volunteer with the Red Cross and has volunteered with GDWG and Refugee Tales for over 5 years. Pious says that walking with Refugee Tales as on the day in the photo above, is something he is proud to do. He likes to walk in solidarity and raise awareness and says it is inspiring being part of a community that believes in giving opportunities to people. Pious remembers walking from Dover to Crawley in the first year of Refugee Tales. He remembers the hills, fields and beautiful landscapes of that first walk. Reflecting on the walks, Pious says each walk is very different with its own unique encouragement.

Pious wishes to bring his lived experience over two years and nine months in detention to work with GDWG for change. The charity is important to him, and he says it is dear to his heart and has done much for him. He thinks without

GDWG he would not be in the situation where he finds himself now. When we asked Pious to consider being a trustee he says he was shocked and confused because he never thought he could be a trustee of the organisation that helped him. Pious says he agreed to the role after having thought about what becoming a trustee would mean to society as a whole and to people currently detained as well as the impact for the charity in particular. Pious hopes his experience will assist the Board to understand the trauma of what goes on behind the bars for people who are detained.

Pious wishes for a future without detention and believes that a time limit for detention has to be the minimum step forward. Pious's message to GDWG visitors is 'thank you for the amazing job you are doing, giving hope and changing lives.'



Using the German Language in Detention Support

By Eva Twine

"Everybody smiles in the same language" said George Carlin, and what a lovely sentiment that is. Frequently though a

smile, however welcome, will not be enough, especially for those who arrive in the UK with high hopes for a safe place and a new future but with little or no knowledge of the English language. Faced with the already harsh and intimidating reality of the asylum and immigration process, how bewildering - no, how frightening - it must be not to be able to understand or speak the language.

When I first became a volunteer visitor with GDWG, I didn't really expect my own language skills (German, some basic French and a smattering of holiday Italian) to account for much - how much more useful to speak Arabic or Farsi, I thought. However, I was proved wrong. More than once I have had the opportunity to support people in detention who, over the months and years their journeys took to reach the UK, via any number of other African and European countries, picked up and learned to get by in new languages along the way. Not fluent, but sometimes to an incredibly impressive level given the difficult circumstances and lack of formal schooling. German or French, Italian or Spanish, depending on their route and length of stay in each country.

Before the pandemic put an end to regular in-person visits to Brook House and Tinsley House, before face masks hid the smiles and muffled quiet voices even further, sometimes even a Babylonian mix of phrases, combined with plenty of gesturing and the odd badly drawn sketch, would suffice to bring an hour's distraction to someone stuck in the purgatory that is immigration detention. Communicating and providing support over the telephone demands a much

better command of a language, on both sides.

I consider myself lucky to have been able to assist a couple of young men in German over the past months, providing both practical and emotional support. Translating documents and phrases, interpreting for the GDWG office, even explaining the mysteries of Pancake Day on one occasion ... Native Arabic and Farsi speakers respectively and from very different backgrounds, each had spent some months in Germany and learned to speak the language to a frankly astonishing degree. And this is, I feel, an important fact to stress: given half a chance, given the opportunity to stay and to integrate, their ability to speak English will grow and flourish just as quickly - they want to learn, they want to contribute to this new country, this new society they have finally reached.

Back to Visiting

By Colin Belcher

During the summer of 2009 I was a helper on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. Afterwards I was encouraged to volunteer somewhere else. I was accepted by GDWG and attended Brook House for the first time in December 2009. Anna accompanied me on my first visit. I was worried the conversation would not flow as I have a stammer and speaking has never been my forte. Luckily my new friend played his part well and almost as soon as I sat down it seemed to be time to go.

I was a visitor for the next two and a half years. One man remains etched in my memory. S from Sierra Leone, had been living with his family in South London

when he was detained. We got on like a house on fire, which was just as well as he became the longest serving detained person in the Centre where he was held, and I saw him every week for nine months. S's frustration with his detention became my frustration and when he was eventually released I shared in his joy.

Eventually I married, moved away from Crawley, and stopped visiting. Some years later we moved to Redhill and I heard a neighbour was doing a sponsored walk for GDWG. As I passed his house a few days later, Jim was sitting outside and I stopped for a chat. His enthusiasm for GDWG encouraged me to re-apply and I look forward to returning to Brook House once it re-opens. I believe everyone deserves the right to a good life, and if I were in detention I would definitely wish that someone would visit me.

Being a Visitor

By Beverley Hamadeh

I joined Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG) in 2016 and visited people in detention in Brook House regularly. More recently, since the Covid restrictions, I have been giving support by phone to a person who had previously been detained. In the years leading up to GDWG, I volunteered with a charity in the Middle East, supporting migrant workers. This work included visits to a detention centre.

Shock, Sadness & Wonder

I've got over the sense of **shock** now:

the shock of finding out that conditions for those detained in the UK appear to be

no better than they are in the Middle East

the shock of discovering that we are the only country in Europe that detains people with no time limit

the shock of realizing that no judge presides over the decision to detain

the shock of knowing that so many, including our members of parliament, are unaware

the shock of seeing the mental health of those detained deteriorate so rapidly

But I haven't got over the overwhelming sense of **sadness**:

the sadness of stories of war, of torture, of slavery, of abuse from those detained

the sadness of their stories of leaving their loved ones, their homes, their languages and their cultures

the sadness of their stories of losing everything they own to smugglers

the sadness of their stories of being forced to cut short their education

the sadness of their stories of dashed hopes and expectations in the 'free' world

And I still have a sense of **wonder**:

wonder at the resilience, the determination and the courage of so many in the face of hardship

wonder at how much our visits mean to those locked away

wonder at the rewards it brings to us to be able to make any difference at all

wonder that a small charity can have such a significant impact

and

wonder at the joy being granted asylum can bring...

I feel privileged to be part - albeit a small part - of the invaluable GDWG team and I feel humbled to witness, over and over again, the amazing fortitude of many of the people we support. It is rewarding work indeed.



On Joining the Self-Advocacy group

By Gordon

I started joining meetings in November, when I got my phone. The group is amazing, it is very good. I like it because I'm able to hear people sharing their experiences and I'm able to contribute too. There is discipline in the group and there is a respect. There is no 'isms', no racism or anything like that. There is a focus and I think the group have got an ambition as well. The way we have started, we can get our voices heard.

All the things we are talking about relate to me. For people to come out with their experiences, it makes a change to me.

Every time I join the group, I feel good and feel I have got a relief. It's got a positive relationship to me.

In the group we talk a lot about people in detention and we talk a lot about immigration and immigration law and the life of detainees. The things that detained people go through; the mental health, people's wellbeing. It's also about refugees and all immigrants; their troubles and suffering that they go through. How people feel being detained and the negative impact that can show on people when they are detained.

I hope the group will meet our targets. I hope our voices are heard. Especially in parliament and at the Home Office, so they can consider our efforts. As I'm saying, I hope we will meet our aims. If I will have the chance to speak with an MP then of course I will. I want the group to grow big and established, so more people hear our voices. We are just a small group. We are trying to do something to help. I want the government to notice that what we are doing has got to do with humanity.



What the Walking Inquiry means to me

by Ton Bunnin

Last autumn, when the idea of the Walking Inquiry was shared with me and I was asked if I would help, I felt excited, energised ... and daunted! It was a chance to be part of something new, creative and meaningful, but what we were taking on also felt scary and potentially vast. Most of all, though, it felt important that we do it. Important to use the opportunity of the Brook House Public Inquiry to raise a much broader set of questions. Important for the voices of people who have been in detention to be heard and taken seriously. Important for the understanding and insights gained by volunteer visitors to be widely shared. And important that together, we build a case to the wider public that the appalling system of immigration detention we have now - so flawed, so inhumane, so full of injustices - is not the way things have to be.

Being part of the Walking Inquiry has been wonderful. There are so many aspects of it that I love. The idea of building an initiative based around *walking* at a time when we cannot walk together has been challenging! But we've been determined to come up with ways that people can connect despite lockdown. The sense of connection that comes through seeing photos of others walking in solidarity, hearing of people's paired phone calls and letter exchanges, seeing contributions on the Walking Inquiry webpages, and taking part in the monthly Zoom discussions is enormous. I love the way the Walking Inquiry values the richness of thought that comes from

walking and talking together, and the gradual unfolding of conversations. It is an antidote to our culture of 'instant answers' and hurled insults on social media.

Of course, aspects of the Walking Inquiry have been harrowing too. And so they should be. It is a harrowing reality, and nobody should be able to simply block their ears and look away. We are all responsible for these systems our society has created, and we can all act to change them. The films people have made for the Walking Inquiry form such a valuable body of material. It feels important that we all share these films widely with others, to open people's eyes, change minds and do justice to those who have contributed so powerfully.

Seeing the richness and creativity in the ways people are taking part has been inspiring. In these strange lockdown months, I've hugely valued the sense of purpose and connection it's given me. There is such friendship and warmth, a joy in being together (albeit digitally, for now) and a shared determination and optimism that together we can bring about social change.



Why the Walking Inquiry is Important to me as a GDWG Visitor

By *Chloe O'Connor*

The Walking Inquiry is important to me as a visitor because it is an opportunity to show solidarity with the people I've visited. The Walking Inquiry will coincide with the Public Inquiry into mistreatment at Brook House, and will go beyond this to ask important questions about the existence of immigration detention, and its impact. For me, it is an opportunity to make sure that personal awareness of these issues isn't limited to the specific times you spend with someone in detention, and to make sure that other people can begin to build an awareness of the detention system and, more importantly, its impact on human beings.

Whilst I've only been a visitor since 2018, I have met people with a huge range of experiences and stories that led them to being in Brook House, and with that comes a range of experiences of being inside Brook House. I welcome the Walking Inquiry as a way to highlight the complexity of detention, and whilst it does not affect everybody in the same way, it does not seem to affect anybody positively. As a visitor, the people you meet are living the experience of detention every day, so I am especially interested in hearing the thoughts of those with lived experience in the past. Maybe hearing these voices will help navigate away from the narrative that detention is an inevitable fact.

The exciting thing about the Walking Inquiry is that no one is quite sure what direction it will go in. Just like a visitor,

when seeing someone for the first time, you do not know what this person will be like, what you will talk about, what their experiences will be. Approaching this open-mindedly as a community with Refugee Tales walkers, GDWG visitors, and, most importantly, with people with lived experience, presents an opportunity to identify the full spectrum of issues that are important to those with lived experience and to make sure that they are heard. This is an opportunity to be an active participant in changing the story you hear when you go in as a visitor - so that maybe visits will be different, and their necessity reduced. It is an opportunity to consider alternatives, to not be constrained by a predetermined scope, but to be taken in whatever direction the Walking Inquiry takes us.



A Letter to the Walking Inquiry Participants from Ghent

By Rachel Nye

Dear Refugee Tales community,

Or in other words, "Dear friends": friends I have met in person and walked with, friends I have met on Zoom and talked with, friends I have yet to meet but hope to have the chance to do so soon. I am writing to you from Ghent in Belgium, a city located in the Flemish region in the northern part of the country, half-way between the capital, Brussels, and the coast. Het Kanaal. The Channel. Just a few letters and a few kilometres separating Belgium from the UK; that same body of water which we walked and talked our way along under the summer sun of 2019. And yet how high the cost for those forced to risk everything in the crossing. And how unworthy of the name 'welcome' the reception granted to those subsequently detained, who discover that this is not in fact the end of the journey, the fear, the trauma, but rather familiar suffering repeated, compounded, only translated into a new and unfamiliar setting, system, language - and with no subtitles available.

It is the sad reality that, here in Belgium, the questions raised by the Refugee Tales Walking Inquiry are just as relevant, just as pressing, just as much in need of being asked, being discussed, being given the attention they deserve and fail to receive. The two countries may be separated by the Channel, yet at the same time there has hardly been a day over the past few weeks that the UK hasn't featured in the news here, and rarely in a positive light. Making headlines have been both Brexit, and the restrictions it brings with it for

Belgium for trade and travel, and 'the British variant' of Covid. Fear of the new strain being brought into the country from abroad and spreading through the population is so great that all but essential outward travel from Belgium has been banned. The Walking Inquiry model offers hope of something which can be imported from the UK with no taxes or tariffs, no visa required. The spreading among the population of a desire to engage with each other and with questions and concerns relating to immigration detention for which there is no other forum for discussion, brought together by a Walking Inquiry bringing movement, hope, creativity, openness of spirit and mind, can only be good for our collective health and wellbeing, no matter where we are.

Groetjes uit Gent ('Greetings from Ghent'),
Rachel





Thoughts on the Walking Inquiry From a GDWG Visitor

By Mary Barrett

I met an elderly friend while out walking this morning. 'How are your poor people in detention?' she asked, 'I am worrying about them'. I explained that the Corona virus had emptied the centres but they were now filling up again. She asked her question before enquiring about my family and it showed she understood the plight of the detained person was so much more serious than that of my stressed but fortunate family. How come this question is not being repeated across this country?

It is nearly a quarter of a century since I first started visiting people in detention at Gatwick and I wonder why so little has changed, and whose failure is it that I still need to do it? Is it because not enough people care that men and women are held indefinitely in detention without judicial oversight and that more than half are simply released again? Is it because

of a climate of fear and distrust of 'the stranger'? Is it because there has been a noticeable shift to the political right in the last few years? We were nearly there, eighteen months ago, when there was a chance to get a change to the legislation and bring an end to indefinite detention. The vagaries of Brexit have finished that and now it feels as if everything has slipped back twenty years.

This may sound hopeless and I would not be honest if I did not frequently feel low about the prospects for those seeking a safe legal home in this country. However, volunteering with Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group and Refugee Tales always brings hope and positivity. As a visitor, hope is what you give, as there is little else to offer when you sit opposite a distressed stranger in the visits room. Such hope has to be honest and constructive and built one day, one week at a time.

The fact that a public enquiry into the Panorama programme is happening at all is important. It will shine a light into so much that is wrong with the detention estate, but it will not answer the basic question as to what is wrong with detention itself. That is why the Walking Enquiry means so much to me. It is a chance to get the word out, to say to anyone who will listen that you cannot lock people up indefinitely without effect. The long-lasting mental and physical damage to individuals and families, the waste of potential, the abuse of international law, all this has to be debated and shown for what it is - a scandal.

Any way that the powerful testimony of those who have been detained and those

who defend and support them can be shared is a step towards a national outcry for detention to be used only minimally with judicial oversight and in clearly defined circumstances.

A Letter in Solidarity with the Walking Inquiry from Chemnitz

*By Cecile Sandten,
Chemnitz University of Technology,
Germany*

As an overseas supporter of Refugee Tales I feel that the model of the Walking Inquiry might be an important instrument to help raise awareness not only in the UK but also abroad about what exactly is happening in detention centres. As a literary scholar at a German university, I have been most grateful to Refugee Tales for having informed me and others about the situation of refugees and detained persons in the UK in a way that is most compelling and passionate: through literature and walking!

A new and perhaps even stronger format, from my point of view, is the method of "inquiry," which could help to further explore issues around indefinite detention, to share with those of your supporters who are living and working abroad and have a genuine interest in getting more detailed information (e.g. via the website) which we would otherwise not get. To be able to learn about "what it is like to be detained or which form detention takes?" would be most helpful for me, to be able to also inform my students in my seminars on "Asylum Accounts" and "Reading Refugee Tales," in particular those who are enrolled in the teacher training programme and will become

spokespersons as future English teachers in and around Chemnitz. I will definitely read, talk, as well as walk with my students in the future, again. Maybe the future English teachers would also take up the method of "Walking Inquiry" in order to discuss issues such as refugeeism, asylum seeking and detention together with their pupils. My students are always thankful to get current background information, which they would be able to examine and reflect on in my seminars with their peers. First-hand reports always have the ability to move and raise people's compassion and thus awareness. And compassion might be the first step to take action in the sense of political intervention.

This damaging practice of indefinite detention has to stop, and people and politicians in the UK as well as abroad need to be informed about this ruthless and inhuman treatment of those who need our help most: our friends who have



fled war, famine, displacement, or persecution, but also our friends who have been in the UK for years or decades but are now considered illegal. We should not forget that all of us could be 'them!' By informing about these kinds of issues, you would bring those who are most tragically involved but also those who will be able to read and learn about the ones who suffer this inhuman incarceration, closer together. Networking with other activists is extremely important and the "Walking Inquiry" could be a great format to bring to light the truth about these severe human rights breaches.



Picture drawn by Leila for the Walking Inquiry showing Refugee Tales Walkers

Song for all Seasons

By GT

GT has lived experience of detention and takes part in Refugee Tales walks. G was impressed when he learned from one of our GDWG visitors supporting people in the community that whilst other birds migrate during winter, the robin sings all year round. He wrote this poem in response:

Let us sing unconditionally like robin.
 For God glory and mercy.
 It is time to sing aloud.
 It is time to dance around.
 The setback is so challenging.
 But it is setup for a comeback and shine again.



Image from John and Rosamund Macfarlane

The Iranian Vegan: Recipe for Ash-Reshteh

By Mana Shamshiri

I started my instagram page, @theiranianvegan, during lockdown. I share traditional Iranian recipes, food history and anthropology, and show that we can still enjoy Iranian food while leading a vegan lifestyle. One of the cultural traits that immigrant communities pass on from generation to generation is the heritage of our cuisine. For us, as Iranians, and especially as the Iranian diaspora, food is so much more than just food. Engaging with the rituals of creating and eating food are ways in which we connect with and hold on to our culture.

Our identities are often fragmented, confused and we feel estranged from the world outside of our homes and our families. Given our history, and the political upheaval and change that has displaced us, consuming such food offers a stability of identity and ties us to our lineage in spaces of uncertainty. Here is a recipe for Ash-Reshteh or Persian Noodle Soup: a dreamy, feel-good wholesome soup to cure any winter blues, or at least soothe it for a little while.

This Ash is thought to be one of the earliest known - it existed in ancient Zoroastrian Persia (1500 BCE), and was called 'Shuli'. For Iranians, the way the noodles cross over each other symbolise the choices & crossroads in the paths in our lives. We believe that they symbolise a new start and can bring good fortune. This is why this soup is made often when loved ones are embarking on a new journey, or on the new year as we transition from the old into the new. For more recipes visit www.theiranianvegan.com, @theiranianvegan on Instagram, or The Iranian Vegan on Facebook.

Recipe: INGREDIENTS

- 2 large white onions
- 5 minced cloves of garlic
- 100g brown lentils
- 100g pinto beans/kidney beans (soaked overnight if dry)
- 240g can of chickpeas (soaked overnight if dry)
- 100g spinach
- 100g reshteh (persian soup noodles, or linguine noodles)
- 3 cups fresh parsley (packed - equivalent to 1 1/2 bunch)

- 2 cups fresh cilantro (packed - equivalent to 1 bunch)
- 2 cups fresh mint (packed - equivalent to 1 bunch)
- 1 cup of chopped fresh dill
- 1/2 tbsp of turmeric
- 1/2 tbsp of salt (adjust to your taste)
- 1/2 tbsp of pepper (adjust to your taste)
- 1 tbsp flour
- Vegetable oil
- 10 cups of water

Topping:

- 1 large white onion
- 8 minced garlic cloves
- 5 tbsp dried mint
- 1 cup of vegan yoghurt (I prefer the Greek style from the brand Oatly) or 50g walnuts blended with water (see recipe)
- Fresh lime juice
- Vegetable oil





INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add one sliced onion, 5 cloves of minced garlic, chickpeas (if using dry-soaked), pinto beans (if using dry-soaked), turmeric, salt, pepper, chopped fresh herbs, water, let it come to a boil and cover with the lid. Cook on a medium-low flame for 30-40 minutes.
2. Add in beans and chickpeas here if you are using the canned kind. Add the flour, stir and cook for another 10 minutes.
3. When all the beans are cooked, add in the flat noodles and cook for a remaining 10-15 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, fry 2 onions until soft and golden. Mix half of the caramelised onion into the ash and put the rest aside for garnish.
5. Mince and fry 8 cloves of garlic and set it aside for the garnish.

6. Fry 5 tbsp of dried mint in 5 tbsp of oil for only a few seconds until it goes dark green and rises to the top of the surface of the oil. Be careful not to burn it. Mix half in with the ash and put the rest aside for garnish.

7. Mix 1 cup of unsweetened vegan yoghurt with the juice of half a lime and 2 tsp of salt (adjust to your taste, it should be salty and tangy). Mix with water until a runny consistency. Mix some in with the ash to make it creamy and leave some aside to decorate the top.

7. Or, for a homemade alternative to the store-bought vegan yoghurt, blend 50g of walnuts with half a cup of water, the juice of one lime and salt to taste. Add extra water to create a runny consistency. Mix some in with the ash and leave some aside to decorate the top.

8. Decorate the ash with sautéed dry mint, vegan kashk, and caramelised onions and garlic. Enjoy!

My Music Choices for our Walking Spotify Playlist

By Eva Twine

"Eclectic" - what a marvellous word this is, implying definitions such as varied, diverse, wide-ranging ... So much kinder than saying "undefined", uncommitted, vague or "can't decide on any one thing". No question then that I answer with "eclectic" when asked about my taste in music!

Rock, pop, folk, country, blues, soul, indie, classical - I have no particular allegiance to any one genre but claim favourite pieces of music, songs, and artists from a

wide range of them. Lyrics are as important as melody, and whilst I'll frequently draw a blank when put on the spot about a song title or band name or release year - don't ever ask me to be on your pub quiz team, I won't be an asset - much of the music I cherish is associated with specific moods, activities, memories and times in my life. That's why I loved Anna's idea of compiling a Refugee Tales Walking Playlist at the start of the first lockdown last spring as a way of keeping our walking community connected, and when asked for suggestions my contributions were, you've guessed it, eclectic ...

But looking back at the list I submitted nearly a year ago, I stand by my choices. To me Bruce Springsteen songs are all about energy and defiance and "Dancing in the Dark" is an old favourite - as is Nina Simone's "Feeling Good". The Proclaimers' "I'm gonna be (500 miles)" seemed a bit of a tongue-in-cheek choice for a walking playlist but frankly, who wouldn't feel like striding out with a smile

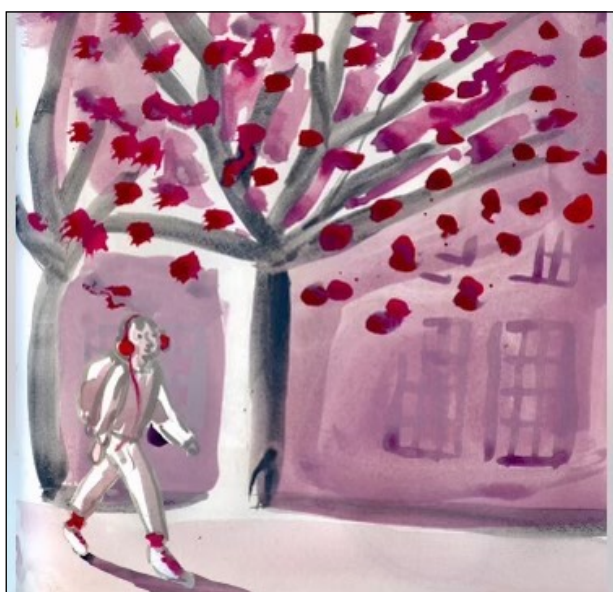


Illustration by Ruby Wright

on their face whilst listening to this feel-good anthem. Cher's "Walking in Memphis" evokes memories of travelling and finding new perspectives, and it invariably makes me want to dance. Or at least, on a walk, discreetly sway my hips ... At the other end of the (music genre) scale, Mozart's Piano Concerto No 21 has a similar effect; growing up in Austria, there's no escaping Mozart's genius and I have always loved this particular concerto - there's something incredibly uplifting about it and I find it hard to sit still when listening to it; it is to me perfect walking music. My second classical choice was "The Swan" from Saint-Saens' *Le Carnaval des Animaux*. Again, a long-time favourite but these days I associate it very much with a nearby lake where I walk and swim, and the beautiful pair of swans who have made it their home.

What made the Refugee Tales Playlist so special, however, was listening to and learning about fellow walkers' choices - there's so much wonderful music out there. I can't wait for the time when we will be able to walk together in person again but, until then, I love having the Refugee Tales Playlist accompany me on walks!

Refugee Tales on Spotify:

<https://open.spotify.com/user/z3ig9zg8lu7p4fx67lncsvw8y?si=D1cRzsJVTUOWxuBcnQ7wkw>

Giving GDWG Post-Detention Phone Support

By Jamie Macpherson

What a strange year this has been. In and out of lockdown has given us all a little insight to being 'detained', having our freedom curtailed.

I started supporting S by telephone just before the first lockdown in March 2020. He had been detained and held in Brook House. As I couldn't visit in person, we had telephone calls; struggling to hear and to understand each other over the noise on the wing and poor phone reception. It was a difficult experience for both of us at first and S was having a very hard time being locked up at the start of the pandemic, when no one knew how it would unfold. Thankfully we both persisted, and our conversations gradually became easier. We spoke once or twice a week until S was released from detention at the end of April.

Once S was living again back in his accommodation, things became a lot easier. We were able to have WhatsApp and Zoom calls, which felt more like a normal visit, though better because S was



no longer in detention. This was the first time that I had befriended someone outside of detention and someone that I'd never met in person.

Our telephone calls became weekly, on a Sunday evening, but lasted on average about an hour. When lockdown ended, S usually visited his mother and family on a Sunday afternoon and our conversations often included his mother, sister and cousins. My partner Sarah was also drawn into the conversations; it felt less like supporting someone and more like a family 'get-together'.

Eventually the first lockdown ended and spring moved into summer with the easing of restrictions. On one of the monthly 'Walk with Us' Saturdays we met up in Greenwich. It was wonderful to finally meet S in person and to spend the day with him.

We have since continued our weekly phone calls and have shared the difficulties of not being able to visit family and friends, particularly at Christmas. And we have also celebrated the good times, such as when S recently got his Covid-19 vaccine. When the current lockdown ends we plan to meet again, possibly with a visit to London Zoo as S has never been there and he would love to see the animals.

Although the last year has been an awful and difficult year in so many ways, getting to know S has been one of the few positives and I feel privileged to have met him and to call him my friend.

Please be Our Friend!

By Frances Bell

This year, we are developing a Friends Scheme to thank everyone who donates to our work on a regular basis. Regardless of the amount, consistent donations make such a difference to GDWG. The GDWG Friends Scheme will explore how we can connect our supporters with resources and events to thank you for your regular donations. The scheme is still in development, so we will update you as it progresses.

For now, if you are able to set up a one-off or regular donation, please visit our website and click 'Donate Now' or follow this link: <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/9688#!/DonationDetails>

GDWG School Talks Online

By Angie Lynn

In recent years I have been privileged to enjoy helping to deliver education sessions about asylum refugees and detention to schools, most recently in the company of Daniel Eichner. When the pandemic struck last year, we were sad to cancel or postpone a number of schools' sessions. But then Daniel came up with the brilliant idea of making a video version of our presentation! Having realised that our early efforts recorded on our home devices were, to say the least, not quite of the professional standard we wanted, we were lucky enough to secure the services of film-maker John Hughes. John generously gave his expertise for free, and in the autumn of 2020 he filmed Daniel, a former detained person and a volunteer to tell the story of immigration detention in the UK, and the role of

GDWG. Others came on board - Mana to steer the project; Miriam to help with her expertise in remote learning in schools during lockdown; staff working in the office with their thoughts on music; Josie to give the activities pack a professional polish. John patiently collaborated with us and edited the work. The finished video will be available to schools and other organisations along with a pack of activities designed to be really flexible, so it can be used in groups, classes and year groups who are able to meet face to face, or who are working on line either at school or from home. Activities suitable for top end Junior school to adult are included, and since the pack is to be offered on-line, it will be easy to update e.g. in response to more refugees coming across the Channel, or changes in regulations and responses by the government. We hope that both teachers and home educators will find the video and pack accessible, and that it will give them plenty to discuss with their students. It should be a useful addition to our offer to schools through the pandemic and beyond.



Advertise Refugee Tales as you walk!

By Josie Wade

In December we printed our latest merch - these lovely blue drawstring bags. We listened to your feedback (and completely agree!) that during the Winter months it is far too cold to be donning just your Refugee Tales t-shirts when you're out for a walk. Now you can layer up and still represent us.

The bags have flown off the shelves and travelled wide around the UK. They have already been spotted in Brighton, Wales, London, Plymouth, Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester. Don't miss out on the chance to get one and support Refugee Tales. Please email josie@gdwg.org.uk if you would like to order one, at £5 per bag. Keep sending in your photos with them, we love to see where they get to, and what conversations they inspire!



Meet Frances, Our New Operations Manager

Frances first encountered GDWG when she joined the Refugee Tales walk from Brighton to Hastings in 2019. When the walk ended, Frances returned to Ireland to continue working as a gardener and live-in companion. In Ireland, and later in York, Frances found herself retracing the Refugee Tales walk in her writing and in conversations with friends, family, and strangers. In 2020, Frances joined the Refugee Tales organising group and the Walking Inquiry focus group as a volunteer. This January, Frances was welcomed into the GDWG staff team as an Operations Manager. Frances says, "I am so grateful for the opportunity to contribute to GDWG's work and to Refugee Tales' roaming celebration of the people we support."

Bike Riding Stories from our Community

By Seth

I went for a bike ride on Tuesday, the sun was shining. For a long time in the winter, I haven't been for a bike ride. I just did about six miles from Middlesbrough to Stockton and back again. Any time the sun comes out I try to go. There was no raining. I don't cycle in town, it's a bit confusing. When I come out of my house immediately, I cross the main road and then get into the woodland and the bush. It's a very good route you get a lot of good cycling around there. I am cycling alone because of covid, before I was cycling in a group. The group go out of Stockton to Billingham, Darlington and Norton, we have a good time. There are three cycling groups, I don't usually join

the fast group because they meet on Sunday during Church. I have a racing bike that has a speedometer, I go at 15mph. Cycling is very good for your mental health, you burn all the unwanted energy away. I've also been picking litter along the Tees river.

By Mohammed

I'm really lucky that I got my bike from the Bike Project. Emma and her son applied for me and I got my bike a week before lockdown. During this lockdown there were so few buses, and the weather was good and from there I started cycling. Now, if it is not too far (under one hour forty) I don't even take the bus. On Christmas Day I cycled to Watford.

All the time I go to different places, but it also depends on weather. If its good weather I cycle from here to Richmond park and sometimes the lake near Uxbridge. It's a really nice place with big trees. I sometimes cycle to central London as long as it's not too heavy rain. When I cycled into central London in the first lockdown I was so surprised, I couldn't see more than 20-30 people! I really love it. If I hadn't had this bike, I don't know what I'd have done. Now it seems like my life! Any time I get bored of home I just



take my bike for 10-15 minutes then I come back refreshed. This bike is everything to me.



Poem by GDWG visitor

By Adam Green

FIRST WORLD PROBLEMS

We were meant to go away
For a week in May
But Covid wrecked our plans,
is all that I can say

Nursery was cancelled,
Swimming lessons paused
We had to stay at home

We had to stay indoors

We ate ourselves obese,
And stayed just in one room,
Spent all day in meetings,
Remotely using zoom.

Covid wrecked our plans,
Yes, covid wrecked our dreams.
But think again because,
It's not as bad as it seems.

Because...

I was meant to have a job.
I was meant to be at work.
But Covid wrecked my plans
It's driving me berserk.

The kids aren't going to school now,
And I was struggling before.
But how do you propose I feed them,
When I'm ridiculously poor.

Some nights it's been so tough
They went to bed with an empty tummy.
The bills, the rent, the food.
Gosh, I miss their mummy.

Cos Covid wrecked our plans,
We were holding it together.
Now we're queuing at the food bank,
No matter what the weather

Cos Covid took my wife,
and Covid took my dreams.
But think again because
It's not as bad as it seems.

Because...

Covid wrecked *my* plans,
My asylum again rejected.
Detained against my will,

With a room-mate who's infected

I've crossed the channel twice now
Deported, back to Spain.
The home office claims "not my
problem"
and just ignore my pain?

The jungle it was scary
Gangsters, gangs and crimes.
Alone without my family,
I couldn't sleep most of the time

Now I'm stuck here in limbo
Scared of going back, alone.
I don't belong anywhere, anymore,
Since bombs destroyed my home

So yes, Covid has been bad
But my life was wrecked before.
These British people are lucky
They don't have to flee from war.

So remember...

Covid wrecked your plans
Covid wrecked your dreams
But think again because
Someone has it worse, it seems

So, as I sit here watching telly,
Full of food and feeling warm
I'm reminded of my Nan's words
"You don't know you've been born"

Music Getting us Through Lockdown (3.0)

Though all of our lockdown experiences
have been different, one thing that's clear
is how important music has been in
raising our spirits in these strange times.
The self-advocacy group have put
together a playlist of what have been



their top tunes for staying joyful during the pandemic. **Gordon** has genre suggestions for you of American Gospel music, Reggae, UK Garage and R & B. Do let us know what songs you like best in those and we'll let Gordon know. We love exchanging music ideas! **Samson** recommends Mama by Kiss Daniel, **Ridy** suggests you listen to Way Down We Go by KALEO. **Temi's** recommendation is One Love by Bob Marley and The Wailers. Have you heard **Raga's** choice Circlesong 6 by Bobby McFerrin, or **Souleyman's** choice Good Enough by the Cast of Empire featuring Jussie Smollett? **JB** suggests you listen to Jerusalem by Master KG featuring Nomcebo Zikode and **Samuel** suggests that any recording of Amazing Grace is joyful to hear. **Madson** recommends All the Jive Is Gone by Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy, **Emmanuel** suggests Angels by Robbie Williams and **Rashid** says take a listen to Let Her Go by Passenger. Happy listening all.

'We Bear Burdens we did not bring on ourselves'

By Emma Wilson

Last Autumn I visited an independent bookshop in Bath called [Mr B's Emporium](#) to purchase [The Good Immigrant](#) -

written by 21 writers and edited by Nikesh Shukla - for the first read of our new work book club. While browsing the shelves of Mr B's, a lovely member of staff, who was clearly a dedicated and knowledgeable reader, introduced me to Refugee Tales. I hadn't heard of the project previously and had spent much of my privileged life feeling as though the struggles of those escaping torture, rape, death and destruction, was a distant event that I wasn't very informed about and couldn't influence.

I've grown up with much of the media and many politicians making statements and using language that dehumanises refugees. They've portrayed them as people who have come here to claim our benefits, to take up space in our cities and towns, and to take our jobs away. And we should shut the borders and not let them in.

Now it was time for me to meet the real people behind the news stories, and some of the interpreters, lawyers and friends that support them. I picked up my copy of Refugee Tales - published in 2016 - to my read over the Christmas holidays, in the comfort of my cottage. A complete juxtaposition in itself. These are just some of the harrowing stories that have stayed with me.

'But when I came to this place, when I came to your country, you say. I thought you would help me, you say.'

A six-year-old orphan who is forced into child labour spends the next 16 years knowing nothing other than hunger and beatings. Before being trafficked to the UK to spend 18 hours, seven days a week, working unpaid in a warehouse. When he

writes to the Home Office for help, they lock him up.

A woman in her 30s called Alice, with a degree in HR Management, came to the UK to help her daughters escape from Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). She had herself been cut and stitched as a baby. Alice enrolled her eldest daughter in pre-school and worked as a volunteer for women in a similar position to herself. Only for the Home Office to deport Alice and her children back to Nigeria.

A 63-year-old who worked in radio and TV in Nigeria, interviewed to join the BBC World Service and after receiving security clearance, came to the UK in 1984. He picked up his work permit and worked for the BBC before becoming a plumber. However, despite paying taxes for 28 years, the UK Border Agency arrived on his door in 2012. Even with a record of National Insurance and tax, and confirmation from the Home Office that he had no criminal record, he is suddenly cast in a detention centre to face deportation.

'Most of the security guards shouted at us like we were just animals.'

Reading Refugee Tales, I felt immense empathy, sorrow, and anger. In today's day and age, how can we treat those much worse off than ourselves this way? I had spent enough years thinking that I'd like to give my support and time - as well as the financial donations I was already making - in some way, shape or form and now was time to start actioning that.

The first thing I did was to get in touch with Anna at Refugee Tales and ask her how I could help. So here it is. I've taken

the first step in that journey by writing this article. It's not much but it's part of the behaviour change we need as a society to stop distancing ourselves from situations that can be hard to comprehend and to start working as a united power.

Refugee Tales humanised those previously not listened to. Perhaps you'd like to hear these voices too?



EasyFundraising: Donate to GDWG for Free

By Frances Bell

Many of us are now shopping online to reduce the risk of catching and spreading the Covid-19 virus. But did you know your online shopping can also raise funds for GDWG? The donations won't cost you anything and it only takes two minutes to set up.

Whenever you shop for groceries, organise the household bills, top up your phone, or order a takeaway, you could be

fundraising for GDWG. Once you sign up to EasyFundraising, every purchase you make through affiliated retailers will generate a donation that supports our work. These 4,500 retailers include Ebay, M&S, Amazon, Tesco, Boots, Argos, Vodafone, Uswitch, and Just Eat. Once you sign up, you can either start your shopping at easyfundraising.org.uk, use the App, or get the browser extension 'Donation Reminder', which reminds you whenever a free donation is available. Donations vary between retailers, but on average you can fundraise 5% of your spend. Some retailers will pay a one-off donation, which can be as much as £50.

Last year, our Birthday Ambassadors fundraised against the odds and we are so grateful to everyone who donated and supported their efforts. But fundraising is especially challenging in lockdown and many people face additional financial pressures this year. If you would like to donate to GDWG for free, please sign up to EasyFundraising today. Your next purchase could be our next donation.

GT Recipes

I am a very good cook, but I don't like doing washing up! Every day I cook something different. My other hobby is taking photos of food. When you look at the photos you start getting an appetite. You can feel the smell of it.

Recipe 1: Fillet of fish: Put black pepper, salt and olive oil, and marinate the fish with the three. When you get the pan hot with butter, when the butter melts, put the fish with tomato paste. Finally do the red tomatoes with onion. And finally do the parsley after it is on a plate.



Recipe 2: Homemade cheese: Get low fat yoghurts, you boil it on a very low amount of heat for 10 minutes. Then put half of a lemon juice in. Wait for some minutes, maybe 20 minutes and you get the cheese. With the chicken in the injera, there is a lot of hot pepper spice. It is hot, so the cheese makes it cool.

Recipe 3: Pasta covered by egg omelette. You make the omelette then put in a round bowl. Then put the pasta with sauce into the bowl. Put a plate on top and turn it upside down, and you find this. It is very hot when you open it, it's amazing, it remains hot for a long time.



Photos for Our Community

We are delighted to share images from John and Rosamund Macfarlane. John and Rosamund have kindly shared photos with people in post-detention accommodation for the walls of their temporary homes. We hope these photos brighten your day as they have gladdened ours!





Story Sharing to Create Change

By *Nelica Lagro*

Through Refugee Tales, GDWG continues to spread its influence and help new audiences understand the lived experience of detention. On 14th January Patrick Gale read 'The Embroiderer's Tale' to an online audience, as part of a fundraising event by North London Supporters Group for Freedom from Torture (FFT).

Over 100 people listened and substantial funds were raised for this important charity. After the reading both Patrick and 'Timothy' one of the characters in the story answered questions. 'Timothy' is Greg Clough, a GDWG Trustee. People were very moved by Patrick's beautiful reading and also curious about the process by which he was asked to write, the way in which he had developed a relationship with Mahdi, from Iran, whom the story was about. Patrick explained how important it was for someone who had been through a journey seeking asylum to be listened to and believed, in contrast to many other exchanges with authorities. People emerging from detention can experience a form of torture with the continuing threat of being re-detained and endless barriers to starting a new life. What remains shocking is that so many people in the audience were still unaware of indefinite immigration detention. Timothy told us how valuable his journey had been with Mahdi, who now shares his home, after finally being released from his 3rd period of detention and commented 'it was one of the best things that happened in my life'. Together they set up www.thesaffronstitch.co.uk.

FFT was established more than 30 years ago to support survivors of torture to rebuild their lives through counselling, therapy, medical support and pain management. Torture tries to silence. FFT provides a voice. Doctors meticulously document evidence of torture which is used in asylum claims and also to hold countries to account <https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/>

The event was sung out by The Sing for Freedom refugee choir, originally founded by FFT in 2016, and made up of current and former clients of the charity, as well as staff and local residents. They welcome new members. <https://togetherproductions.co.uk/sing-for-freedom.html> Three different charities worked together, all for a common aim, and in these difficult times it was wonderful to celebrate the power of stories and song.

Reflections on My First Months Working with GDWG

By *Mana Shamshiri*

"It's so suffocating in here. It's unbearable", I hear in my mother-tongue language of Farsi through the crackled line of the telephone. It's December 2020 and I'm in my second month of working as an Advocacy Coordinator for GDWG. It has been a busy start to my new job, the phones have been ringing constantly - every few minutes, a new individual who has been rendered helpless by the system. But for some reason, this one pulled at something inside my chest. His voice sounded just like my father's. "We'll work through it. We will support you. What did you say your birth date was again, Mr Rostam*?" I say, anticipating the answer.

"13th February 1960", he tells me in a low, splintered voice. My heart sinks a little deeper into my chest. *He's around the same age as him, too.* He proceeds to tell me about the difficulties he endured at the hands of the smugglers which he feels he is too old to have been put through, resulting in health problems which are not addressed at the detention centre. Every word he speaks is as if I'm hearing my father on the other end.

I'm from Iran. That's how I introduce myself whenever someone asks. Iranian is primary, British is secondary, even though I was born in England. My mum made her way to this country at the time of the Iran-Iraq war, my dad as a young man on a limited student visa. Although he was lucky enough to never be confined to the cold walls of a detention centre, the difficulties related to asylum, migration and the journey across for a better life are not alien for my loved ones. Stories of running, risking, smuggling, and struggling are stories I have seen reflected in the eyes of family members and friends.

I have always sought to work with and for migrants in my personal and professional life. I am aware of the structural racism that permeates UK institutions which makes life as a refugee or asylum seeker in this country unspeakably difficult, and the historical backdrop which makes none of them deserving of it. Immigration detention is one of the ugliest manifestations of this.

I am the product of migration, of wars, conflict, forced displacement - of language barriers, ESOL classes, disapproving looks and racist micro-aggressions - and equally of ancient

human rights charters, renowned poetry, philosophy, a rich culinary history, pioneering contributions to science and mathematics and an unshakeable sense of pride. There is so much that I wish to give back, taking the opportunities I have been granted through my parents' migration and with justice as my driving principle, as I know how easily our lives could have looked very different.

The work of GDWG is so crucial in a climate of increasing hostility and veiled injustice, and I am very grateful to be a part of it.



Our Creative Writing Group

By Anne Jakins

Wellbeing is at the heart of GDWG. During Lockdown, while volunteers were giving phone support to detainees, GDWG was also bringing its volunteers together. Despite all the huge disadvantages of Lockdown, we have been given a gift of time-out from our busy lives, a time to try something different. We were grateful to Daniel Eichner for organising a Creative Writing Group and we focused on producing our memoirs.

We never know the true story of someone's life and anyway this was never going to be my intention but we all have an interesting story to tell. We have dates, people and locations but the accounts of what happened will often depend on the perspective from which the event is viewed. I think that when looking at past events I have often been too quick to judge without knowing the whole story, so I have tried to write only those things that I know are accurate. In the words of L P Hartley, 'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there'

I started with a tragic, life defining event that happened in my twenties, the impact of which I wanted my children to understand. The rest of the memoir followed.

During our weekly sessions we read extracts from our writing. Reading aloud and listening to each other's contributions has been inspiring and made us self-critical and discerning while Daniel's 'homework' stretched us to tackle and confront new areas. Our memoirs are full of people who have touched our lives, travels to countries some of which are no longer accessible and stories that would otherwise have been forgotten. Through this group, trust and friendship have emerged and what a legacy we have to pass to our children and grandchildren.

'Three Sisters at Play': Writing from the Creative Writing Group

by Margaret Lawrence

The murmuring elms were swaying against the indigo skyline of dusk when three young sisters kneeling on the padded window seat peered out from their bungalow at this eerie scene. They

pulled out the dressing up box stored beneath the seat and rummaged through for something suitable to fit this witchery atmosphere. One had plaits and the other two's sensible 'window' haircuts were soon transformed with the many purple strands of old elasticated raffia skirts. Sugar paper found in the depths of the box was soon converted into the pointed hats as black as those worn by the three witches meeting on that blasted Scottish heath. Now for the cloaks. A pile of old blackout curtains was discovered piled up behind the dressing up box and with this swirling around them the girls danced and sang 'when shall we three meet again, in thunder, lightning or in rain.'

The daylight had faded rapidly and the only remaining light in the room was from the flickering embers of the coal fire. This glowed too brightly, so the sisters retrieved the largest of the blackout curtains and anchored one edge along the stone mantelpiece with two, heavy, carved, ebony elephants their dad had brought back from his recent demob in India. The fabric was spread out like the ripples of a full skirt and almost perfect darkness was achieved.

Needless to say, almost immediately a tiny spark caught the centre of the blackout screen and the resulting hole expanded as exponentially as the girls' screams reached the ceiling.

Their father came thrashing down the hall corridor, thrusting open the wooden trolley aside, chipping the paint and it crashed into the kitchen door and rucking up the damask carpet runner. Bursting in he grabbed the blackout's skirt, bashed it down and using the bronze poker beat it into submission onto the now blackened

lily patterned tiles in the grate, whilst the defeated witches cowered guiltily in the corner.



Film Review 'A Safer Place - a film by Edward Lawrenson with Dr Bayes Ahmed'

By Marie Dewson

On a drear, dark December evening the Refugee Tales “family” settled down to watch on Zoom a film called “A Safer Place” about the displaced Rohingya people in Bangladesh. I admit it was with some trepidation on my part as I steeled myself possibly to watch more despair and desperation after seeing, two or three years ago, so much news footage about the Rohingya fleeing their burning homes and hearing about killings, rape and pillage by Myanmar troops. So - what was this film going to be like? More horror for us to witness and feel helpless about?

It opened in the most unexpected way with photos being taken of youths and then the sounds and sights of people enjoying happy times at the beach. In the distance were blue and white umbrellas. People were laughing and having fun, doing what people do beside the sea -

swimming, surfing even riding horses instead of our more familiar donkeys, all watched over by lifeguards to ensure their safety...

You can picture this kind of scene the world over. However, only 10 kilometres away from this particular scene lies a refugee camp where over 1 million Rohingya people are not swimming and surfing. The realisation that the people at the beach may have no idea of what is happening so near to them made for a strange sort of juxtaposition which caught the imagination of the viewer, shocking it.

And suddenly the sounds of the seaside are replaced by the sounds of the camp. Of course any bazaar is going to be noisy. So it is with Cox’s Bazaar, the strangely odd name given to this enormous refugee camp, bazaar being a name which to western ears describes a place of hustle and bustle and people coming and going freely.

Instead of being at the beach, we are treated to happy scenes of children playing, of children with rucksacks going to or from lessons. Lads playing footie. Interspersed are the voices of adults answering questions once they are reassured of the provenance of the interlocutors. We see the classroom of young ones learning by rote and although rocking backwards forwards and sideways all the while, these are not the movements of sick, isolated children but of an old-fashioned (to us) way of learning. To a background of dappled sunshine through latticework we hear the adult voices tell of what happened to them even though “it hurts”.

From there the discussion leads on to the fragility of their shelters as that region of the world, Bangladesh, is subject to cyclones in June and/or July with flooding and landslides a distinct possibility. It is pointed out that there is no place of greater safety for the refugees in a country highly populated and with particular conditions in the camp such as soil erosion coupled with the soil type. There is no coming and going freely in that bazaar.

Against the backdrop of the beach the Rohingya are asked in the camp if they would go back to Burma (interestingly they called it that and not Myanmar). The reply was basically that if they are given equal rights and allowed to live peaceably - yes - but they are sure they would be cut down "like taro plants". They would rather be bombed and die. And yet, and yet, the children we heard were speaking and learning to read Burmese. Is this in the vain hopes of adults that they return to the land of their birth? Or is it because the Bangladeshi government do not want to consider a longer residency than the supposed temporary one? Of course we all hang on to our languages and customs no matter how displaced. It can be how we define ourselves and our place in the world.

In the meantime their immediate place of safety, Cox's Bazaar, is not safe when the floods come. There are no lifeguards sitting waiting to raise the alarm for them. They are trapped in effect because neither the UN nor the Bangladeshi government seems able to help. Or wants to? A warning system would at least alert the refugees to imminent danger and to

this end Dr Ahmed is part of a larger project trying to set up such a system.

I found this film very interesting and yes, moving, as much as for what we didn't see as what we did. Not seeing inside refugee homes didn't make it any less relevant and powerful. It helped me to try to see a bigger picture.

Thank you, Dr Ahmed, and thank you, Edward Lawrenson, for taking us to that place, safe or not.

"We Cannot Walk Alone"

By Denise Beardshaw

Refugee Week is a UK-wide festival celebrating the contributions, creativity, and resilience of refugees. It was founded in 1998 in response to the growing hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers. Sadly the need to address this hostility is now more urgent than ever.

This February saw the start of the 'Slow Conference' of weekly online workshops to inspire and support the planning of events and activities for Refugee Week in June 2021. Refugee Week is a partnership project coordinated by Counterpoint Arts who are a national charity that supports and produces art about migration and displacement. Through partnerships in the UK and beyond they bring together a network of groups and individuals who share a vision of society in a world where everybody is safe, welcomed and valued. With combined knowledge and experience the message of Refugee Week is able to reach more places and communities than could be reached alone.

Refugee Week is a festival that uses arts, culture, sports, and education to make spaces where people can connect to fellow human beings beyond labels as well as promoting a deeper understanding of why people are displaced and the barriers they face along the way. It is an umbrella festival that is open to all and anybody can hold their own event or activity as part of Refugee Week. Some events stand alone, others are the culmination of longer projects, and some are just the start of a longer legacy. It is planned, for example, that Refugee Tales Cymru will hold Refugee Tales events for Refugee Week in June this year.

The theme of Refugee Week 2021 is "We Cannot Walk Alone". Very appropriate for Refugee Tales events! The starting point is the shared values and principles which will be reflected in each initiative. As was the case last year, Refugee Week 2021 is likely to be at least partly online, although it is hoped that some in-person events may be possible. The Refugee Week website offers plenty of resources and tools for organisers as well as contacts across a network of supporting organisations and individuals together with regional contacts. Over the next six weeks there is also a range of free workshops exploring arts and culture for change ahead of Refugee Week 2021 Refugeeweek.org.uk

My Refugee Tales Walking Playlist *By Andy Barnes, Refugee Tales Walker*

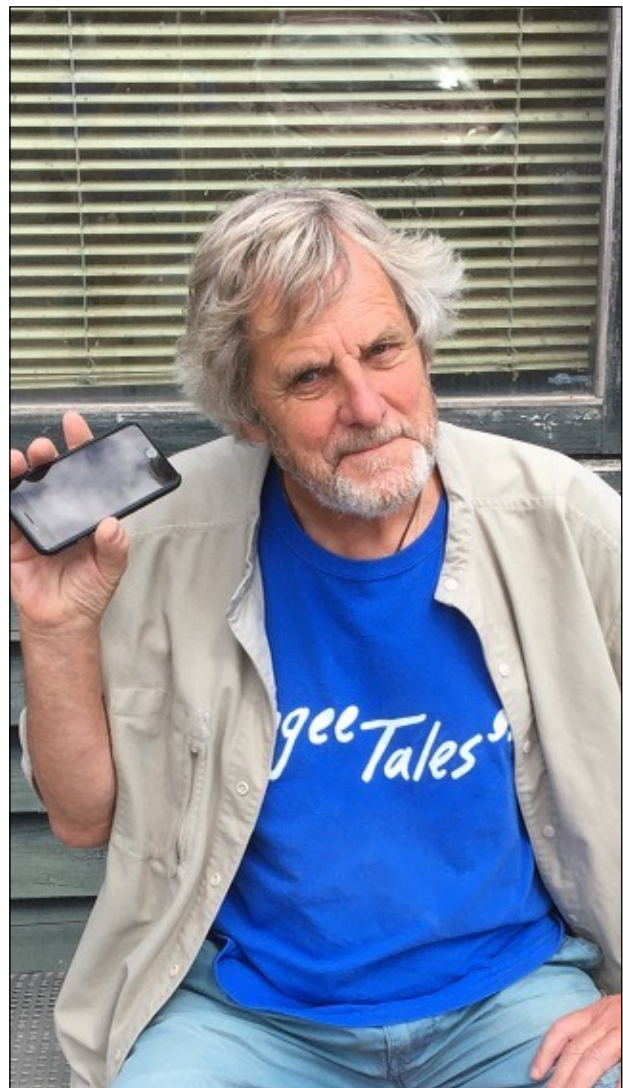
In the spirit of Desert Island Discs, going now for over 78 years and more than 3,200 episodes - I'd like to present eight

of my own favourite 'gramophone records' that I've already brought to this lockdown 'desert island'. Here's why I chose them, when and where I listen to them, and what they mean to me.

My first song is from an album called "Song to a Refugee", by Diana Jones. I think the music is beautiful, the singing is gorgeous - and the lyrics so very relevant to what we are trying to achieve in Refugee Tales.

1. 'Song to a Refugee', by Diana Jones.

I first came across this next singer, also a song-writer, at a free afternoon concert in the Union Music Store in Lewes, five or six



years ago. She was solo, acoustic and her voice just blew me away. A few weeks later I saw her with a full band (including her now-husband Lukas Drinkwater) and realised that she was also a very accomplished band musician. I'm talking about Australian-born, now living in Stroud, Emily Barker. And then about three years ago I went to see her and Lukas together in the Harrow-on-the-Hill Baptist Church (as you do!) where amongst other songs they did Emily's 'Over my Shoulder'. It was stunning, atmospheric, made my spine tingle, and I realised it was about asylum-seekers looking over their shoulder to where they were leaving, or maybe over the shoulder of the trafficker who was taking them away from their homeland, or maybe the trafficker looking over the asylum-seeker's shoulder to where they'd come from so that they could return for another boatload. Or maybe all of the above. I managed to have a chat with Emily after the show, and she told me she also had written two or three other refugee-supporting songs, and to cut a long story short, I managed to arrange for her to sing for us during the evening session of the 2019 Refugee Tales Walk in Alfriston. Those of you who were there will remember what a stunning performance this was, and that it fitted in perfectly with the theme of the evening.

2. 'Over my Shoulder', by Emily Barker.

Some 15 or so years ago I used to help run a Folk 'n' Blues Club at the Six Bells pub in nearby Chiddingly. One of the up-and-coming artists there was Sean Taylor from Kilburn, now a fully-fledged singer-songwriter with 11 albums to his name - and a couple of times he stayed overnight at our house after a session at

'The Bells'. Sean's unique writing covers blues, Americana, folk, spoken word and social commentary. (Think about a late-night cocktail of Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen and Jack Kerouac, with a voice that's a cross between John Martyn and Van Morrison and a guitar style that sounds like Stevie Ray Vaughan jamming with J J Cale - you'll get the picture!) You can guess what his song 'Lampedusa' is all about - and you'd probably be right.

3. 'Lampedusa', by Sean Taylor.

Moving on from refugee-related songs, but not entirely so, 'Along the Pilgrim's Way', by the Albion Band, from their album Demi Paradise is a traditional folk song, here beautifully sung by one Chris Leslie, perfectly evoking for me the Refugee Tales walks we have taken over the Pilgrims' Way - an ancient tradition in tune with today's needs.

4. 'Along the Pilgrims Way' by The Albion Band.

And one that's not at all refugee- or walker-related (well, maybe slightly so!), but it always lifts my spirits, from Steeleye Span, one of my very favourite folk-rock bands for the past 50 years!

5. 'One Misty Moisty Morning', by Steeleye Span.

I did say I'd mention when and where I listen to music. Well, firstly I never listen when I'm out walking, even though I have perfectly good earphones. I much prefer to listen to the sounds of nature when I'm walking alone, or make conversation with different people when I'm walking in company - particularly with Refugee Tales.

So I listen in our cottage or in our caravan when we're away, sometimes using headphones and sometimes including Barbara in the listening, usually when relaxing with a glass of wine after dinner or just before bedtime, and sometimes with headphones on when I go to bed. There are portable loudspeakers all over our place! Some voice-controlled, some Andy-controlled. And I particularly enjoy listening to music in my car, especially if I'm on my own when I play it really loud! One of the reasons I bought the car I have now is because it has a great music system!

So, moving swiftly on. Now to a great song that keeps me thinking about when we can open our houses to guests and socialise again. I think a lot of people think Leonard Cohen is morbid and drear, but this one - together with loads of his writing in my view - should urge them to think again. For about 50 years I've always found him deep-thinking, highly articulate, humanitarian, humorous, mischievous and musically perfect!

6. 'The Guests', by Leonard Cohen.

And one that perfectly summarises Lockdown during 2020. About 12 years ago we met with another up-and-coming singer-songwriter in the Cactus Café, in the Texas State University Students' Union building in Austin (also 'as you do', but a bit different from the Church in Harrow-on-the-Hill!). He was on stage with one Anais Mitchell - now an established Broadway musical composer, and they sang alternate songs of their own writing, finishing with a lovely duet version of Bob Dylan's 'Spanish Boots of Spanish Leather'. No, it wasn't Dylan that we met

there, but one Danny Schmidt, now also well-established in his own right, also with 11 albums to his name. And his writing also includes much social commentary, especially about the last four years of US politics, and he wrote this during last year's pandemic lockdowns.

7. '2020' by Danny Schmidt.

And finally, an unashamedly romantic choice! Eleven years ago Barbara and I were on holiday in Croatia, and had just finished dinner and were taking a glass of wine on our apartment balcony as the sun went down. Suddenly, we heard shouts from the locals in the street below which sounded like: 'La Luna, La Luna' (although I think this is Italian, not Croatian!). Anyway, it turned out that the locals were getting excited about the massive orange harvest moon that was just beginning to appear over our balcony and slowly rise. It was a totally gorgeous sight, and I rushed into the apartment to find my iPod. Luckily, the moon stayed with us for quite some time, time enough for me to find Neil Young's 'Harvest Moon' on the iPod - and for Barbara and I to dance on the balcony to the song until it finished. I said it was unashamedly romantic - and so it was, and here it is!

8. 'Harvest Moon' by Neil Young.

So, that's my eight choices, but on this lockdown desert island, how about my book and my luxury item? The book choice is a hard one, hundreds to choose from. Maybe 'Refugee Tales, Volume 4'? Please?

And the luxury item has to be my iPhone. Not because I want to make phone calls where there's no mobile signal, nor to

stream music where there's no internet connection - but to listen to the stored music on my phone, on which there's currently about 27,076 songs and 58 music videos. I can't be without music! Anywhere! If you've got this far, thank you for listening.

The View from Penally

By Sally Eaves

We were sitting in the quiet of an online Zoom Quaker Meeting in Pembrokeshire in late September. Yes we were in Covid times, but basically it felt safe enough here in our rural haven. At the end of Meeting, someone started to talk about Penally and around 200 asylum seekers who had been more or less dumped in the Army Training Camp there. I didn't even know that Penally near Tenby existed, or about the camp. Later that week I was talking to a Quaker friend in Bristol and mentioned Penally. An Asylum Seeker who had approached her local network had suddenly been removed and whisked off to Penally. I started writing to him, asking him if there was anything he needed. The reply was short and surprising. A laptop. I guess other agencies had supplied him with some basic cold weather clothes. Some of them had only the summer clothes they stood up in, or were wearing only flipflops. A member of the Meeting had a Tablet they wanted to pass on. Since then I have followed O's progress: The stomach ulcers he could not get seen for. That took 45 days during which time his health declined. He didn't talk a lot about the depression, but I could see from his emails that he was not sleeping at night. He was the first to be assessed virtually by one of the doctors of the medico legal

group who have been doing vulnerability assessments against all the odds in the camp. There is very poor internet which is only available really in the classroom which is often busy, and the mobile phone signal is poor. Men are referred for these assessments largely by the camp residents union, CROP, who also find a space to do them, and set up the technology. No support for this from Clearsprings who manage the camp. Unsurprisingly, high levels of trauma were identified in my friend. Finally he got himself transferred to another Initial Accommodation placement in Cardiff. The doctor who had assessed him asked me to make sure he got registered with a doctor and he did indeed need quite a lot of support to achieve this. A good surgery with an Arabic speaking receptionist. I continue to be on the end of an email, though in his new setting he has virtually no internet access as this is not provided in Clearsprings houses in Cardiff, and his room is on the inside so has no phone signal. However, as best we can, I am there when things go wrong, when he needs someone with the necessary language skills to sort things for him.

All this in our rural idyll, these ambassadors from every trouble spot of the planet have woken us up. From knowing very little about the asylum system, I am in deep shock at how awful it is. I now know all that is going on in Pembrokeshire to support them; we have set up a Quaker group from the 4 meetings in West Wales; I spend my time campaigning, writing letters, networking. QARN, excellent; Detention Forum, excellent; StatusNow4All, excellent; the medico legal consortium who are doing these vulnerability assessments, amazing.

So much wonderful effort. I now know about the GDWG, Refugee Tales and the Walking Inquiry, about Early Day Motions, the work of the Select Committees, the Independent Inspectors of Prisons and of Borders and Immigration; UN special rapporteurs. We will find ways and means. We will change things.

Do you speak Arabic, Farsi, Tigrinya or Kurdish Sorani?

By Felicity Dick

If you do Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group would welcome your help.

We support asylum seekers and other migrants held in detention at Gatwick Airport.

We have been working with people who have come across the Channel in small boats. They arrive traumatised only to find they are then imprisoned.

We want to help them as best we can but many do not speak English.

They come from many different countries but at present in particular from Yemen, Iran and Iraq.

If you would be able to help please contact Karris (karris@gdwg.org.uk). We will need to take references, carry out an interview and DBS checks as we do with all of the many volunteers who support our work.



GDWG and Refugee Tales get everywhere...

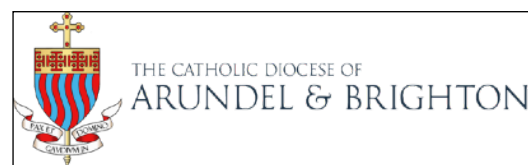
Thanks to Busra from South Korea who sent us this photo of herself with a copy of Refugee Tales in Seoul.

**Thank you to our volunteers.
Thank you to our funders for
making our work possible.**

Stay well everyone.

Wishes from all the GDWG team.

With thanks to:



The Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust

The Three Oaks Trust

