



GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Summer 2021



Thank you to our visitors, walkers and supporters. I hope you find hope in the pages of our Summer Newsletter. It brings news from Wales where Refugee Tales Cymru are leading our response to Refugee Week and we thank them for their untiring support.

After a difficult few months of lockdown and Covid cases in detention and in Napier Barracks, after we have all submitted our responses to the government's New Plan for Immigration, after news of plans for a new detention centre in County Durham, we are pleased to get walking again with Refugee Tales

to show our solidarity for people who have experienced detention. Please walk with us in Canterbury or elsewhere in the UK or overseas on 3rd and 4th July.

With our visitors returning to in-person visits and our staff team meeting people in detention for initial assessments, we celebrate the one-to-one connections we build every day and the transformative power of our welcome.

Thank you all.

Anna Pincus
Director GDWG

Straeon Ffoaduriaid Cymru Events Refugee Tales Cymru (18 - 20 June 2021)

By Sue Hofsteede

Dw i'n dysgu Cymraeg - I'm learning Welsh. Anna Pincus knows it and keeps asking me for more Welsh: 'solidarity', 'community', 'walking'. Why am I telling you this? Because we're organising a video, a walk and an online meeting at the end of Refugee Week in June, and here in N. Wales it's vital to keep the language alive and use it. Fortunately, Catrin is fluently and eloquently bilingual and will present and co-present our video and online meeting. We have imposed on the generosity of Lloyd as a translator and we learners have struggled with our dictionaries....

We are lucky to have other supportive people around, too: Natalie, Curator of Bangor University's Botanic Garden, Eirian from the independent, community-minded, Caernarfon bookshop, Palas Print, and Neil & Meg, talented multi-instrumental musicians. As a result, our exhausting walk (all 4.27km) will start and end at the Botanic Garden and have the use of its facilities to offer music, a bookstall, video screenings and refreshments - and even a visit to the orchid, temperate and tropical houses if Covid rules allow. During the walk Ben, who accompanied Refugee Tales walkers in 2015, will tell us about migrating birds and point out swift nesting boxes and Tony will tell us about the World War I refugees from Belgium, who had a promenade built beside the Menai Strait in gratitude for welcome and sanctuary.

Our online event, taking Refugee Week's theme: 'We Cannot Walk Alone' as its title, will include the Oasis World Choir from Cardiff and participants from elsewhere in Wales and beyond. In this way we hope to make the call for a future without detention louder - too loud to ignore.

Thanks to GDWG for permission to use videos from 28 Tales and the Walking Enquiry. For more information go to Refugee Tales Cymru Facebook and Eventbrite pages:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/refugee-tales-Cymru-the-walk-tickets-152907286811>

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/refugee-tales-cymru-the-online-event-tickets-153551626047>



Thoughts from a visitor

Anonymous

I recently read a book that made reference to the starfish story. It revolves around an old man who goes for a walk on the beach after a big storm has passed. That day, the beach was littered with starfish. From a distance, he spotted a little boy. (I believe some versions say it is a girl.) The boy seemed to be picking something up and throwing it back into the sea. The man could see that he was doing this over and over again. The man asked the boy what he was doing. The boy replied that he was throwing the starfish back into the ocean. He said that if they were left there on the beach, they would die when the sun got high. To this, the old man replied that there were thousands of starfish on the beach! "You won't make much difference" he told him. The boy picked another starfish and threw it back into the sea. Smiling, he then turned and told the man, "I made a difference to that one!"

Sometimes as a visitor I feel overwhelmed at the plight of people in detention and my ignorance over how I can help them. Yet for some reason as I read the above tale I immediately thought about GDWG. We must carry on if only to help one person at a time realise that they are not invisible.



Using Skype

Whilst the COVID lockdowns begin to ease, and more of our visitors are looking forward to visiting Brook House in person once again, some of our visitors may prefer to continue virtual visits whilst adjusting to a post-lockdown world. Over the last few months some of our visitors have begun to use Skype as a means to visit people in detention. Skype calls are one way to overcome language barriers and the poor phone signal in the centres, as you can use body language and facial expressions. Below is an account from one visitor who has begun to use Skype to visit people in detention:

'Either S himself or the Brook member of staff must have opened a Skype account for him so I assume that S had an email address so this could be done. He had to reserve a computer in the computer room for a certain time and we would agree the time by text. I then loaded up Skype. I kept dialling his name until finally he appeared. I must say it felt like a huge breakthrough to actually see him. I could see a member of staff had been on hand to help him the first time. Sometimes it didn't work, or he wasn't able to get on a computer. I don't think their wifi is very good but we persevered. I still couldn't understand much of what he said and I think he had problems understanding me, but we did a lot of smiling and waving and that felt great. It allowed us to bond. I would say that Skype was a brilliant break-through even though it didn't solve all our problems.'

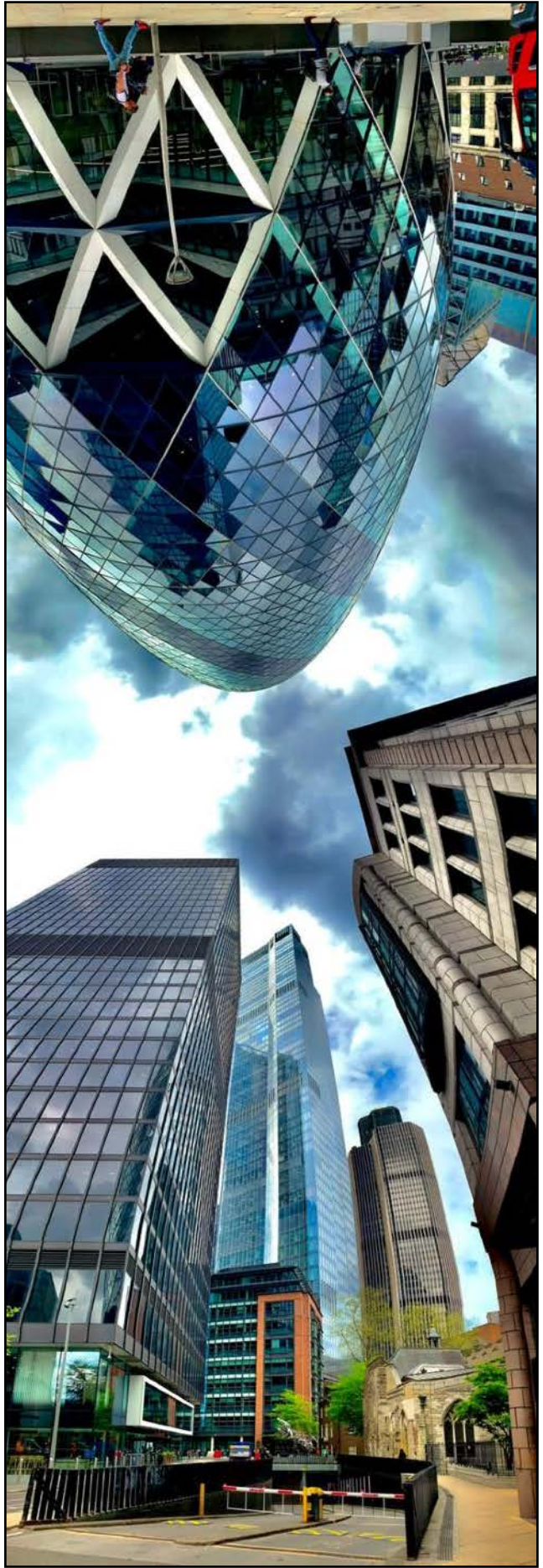
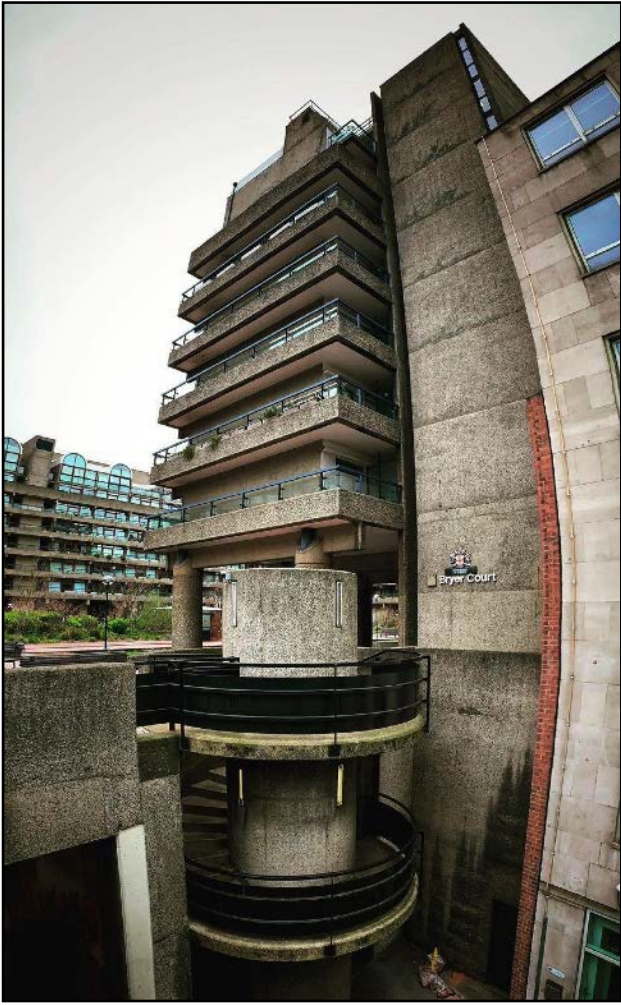
We look forward to more smiling and waving as our visitors make use of every avenue open to us to keep connecting in spite of the hurdles to overcome.

The Beginning of Elyas' New Life in London

Photography by Elyas

My name is Elyas. I am from Iran and grew up in the capital city Tehran. I am 33 years old and I have qualified as an architect engineer and martial arts teacher. When I was 9 years old, I won my first gold medal in martial arts in Tehran. I came to the UK in September 2020 and I have been living in London for the past few months. I love photography and visiting the old buildings and architecture of London. I am very happy to live in the UK and London because of the history and the beautiful buildings. In my spare time, I work as a volunteer and help refugees by distributing clothing and food to them. I am passionate about drawing and sport. I get my drawing ideas when I go for a walk or exercise. Currently I'm studying English and trying to improve my English so I can communicate better with others; I believe communication is the key factor for me to find friends. Thanks to Gatwick Detainees Welfare for everything they have provided to me.







Running for GDWG

By Izzy Sutherland

It's been an absolute privilege to fundraise for Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group. I've known about the charity since being a teenager and, after growing up in Crawley where the charity is based, it has a very special place in my heart. After volunteering and working for GDWG, I saw first-hand the incredible work that they do. The staff, volunteers, visitors, trustees and the wider GDWG community are truly some of the kindest, most hard-working and hospitable people I have ever met.

Although it is reflected in all their work, it is most evident in the front-line work with people in detention. GDWG ensures that everyone they support, in detention and beyond, is treated with humanity, dignity and respect. GDWG gives people who

are so often forgotten about a chance to be heard and listened to again. Without the work of GDWG, many people may have given up, GDWG is an organisation that evokes a sense of hope and positivity by making people feel welcomed and being part of their community. I think this is so important which is one of the reasons why I wanted to fundraise for GDWG. GDWG's work has never felt more important, they are very used to supporting isolated people who are in limbo or detention but, since the pandemic, this has intensified. We've all felt the impact of loneliness and isolation during the multiple lockdowns but for people in limbo or detention, these feelings have been overwhelming. GDWG has been amazing in supporting people feeling like this despite having very limited resources. It's been a very difficult time for small charities, with every cancelled event being a lost fundraising opportunity. This is another reason why I wanted to fundraise for GDWG.

It's local charities, like GDWG, that are instrumental in creating long-lasting, positive change. This is reflected through Refugee Tales, the Walking Inquiry and calling for a future without detention. It's unbelievable that such archaic measures like detention centres still exist. I'm sure that the generations to come will learn about this and be shocked at how people were treated in the 21st century. I hope that by fundraising for GDWG I also help to raise awareness about the grim reality of modern detention centres. I can't stress enough how absolutely crucial GDWG's work is, what Anna and the team have done is create the most wonderful community that so many people love and cherish. I'm so proud to be a part of it and what a privilege it has been to volunteer,

work and now fundraise for GDWG. Thank you.

I only really started to get into running in the first lockdown, mainly just to get out of the house! If someone had told me a year ago that I would be training for a half-marathon, I would have laughed them out the room! But I really have found a love for running. It's been such a brilliant hobby during all the lockdowns and has certainly kept me feeling sane. I felt as though I was getting better at running and wanted to have something to work towards which is why I decided to sign up. I've been following a training plan for the last 12 weeks and have been pretty good at sticking to it, apart from having to have about 10 days off due to a very small injury. If there's one thing that I've learnt, it's that rest is essential in order to recover. I've been on some epic runs all through South London and have discovered some of the most beautiful places that I would never have seen if I wasn't running. I'm also incredibly overwhelmed by how much we've managed to raise for GDWG. It's been a team effort. Thank you so much! *Note: since writing this article, Izzy completed her half-marathon in an incredible 2 hours and 17 minutes! Congratulations Izzy from everyone at GDWG. Izzy has also raised £2,226 so far and if you'd like to donate to her fundraiser, here's the link: <https://bit.ly/3wpTJS7>*

Safeguarding Matters

An interview with Pious

Our new trustee, Pious, is the trustee who oversees our safeguarding policy and strategy. When we talked to Pious about this area of our work, he expressed from

the heart that safeguarding is all about protecting people from inhuman treatment and all kinds of harm. Pious offered to take on his oversight role because safeguarding is a crucial area to him. He feels that as an asylum seeker he was not protected from harm himself and believes it is essential for other vulnerable adults and children to receive protection. Pious also has experience in caring for the elderly and is adamant that the elderly should be protected. Pious has previously undertaken safeguarding work with the Red Cross. He assessed Red Cross clients through in-person interviews to discover whether clients had safeguarding issues. These conversations were often guided by intuition, by inferring what was unspoken and by recognising indicators. In this way, Pious enabled the charity to follow-up with a further meeting to explore safeguarding issues. Pious is keen for GDWG to continue its six-monthly safeguarding training for volunteers and recommends that our visitors undertake the WSCC online safeguarding courses. These are mandatory for new volunteers but Pious recommends them for all visitors. They take less than 20 minutes and are an important part of our safeguarding strategy. Pious is happy to discuss safeguarding issues with our volunteer visitors at any time. He reminds you that the safeguarding staff lead is the Director. Please report all safeguarding issues to Anna in the first instance. Please also discuss safeguarding in your local group meetings. It is on every agenda. Pious thanks our visitors for all they do to ensure that people in detention and after detention are protected and we all send appreciation that you report safeguarding issues for us to work with you to keep people safe.

Laptops for people in the community

By Josie Wade

It's fair to say this year has made many of us realise how dependent we are on technology. Lockdown and isolation have made it a necessity for staying in touch with the people we love. At the beginning of the pandemic, many organisations recognised the impact that a lack of IT access could have within our communities. Charities working with school children said it presented an 'unprecedented threat' to mental health and well-being. Social connection is a core human need.

With essential public services such as libraries closed, accessing the internet is largely dependent on owning a personal device. People who have recently been released from detention, especially those who have recently reached the UK, may not have the resources to access individual devices. This year, GDWG has partnered with organisations around the country to provide smart phones and laptops to people we are supporting in the community. We've kindly been donated laptops from a variety of groups: West Fleetwood Computer Clinic in Lancashire, Ockbrook and Borrowash Tec hcycle in Derby, and Community Laptops in London. Care4Calais have also donated several smartphones for those who were held on bail in Tinsley House IRC.

The difference these devices have made during the pandemic is huge. They have enabled people to access ESOL classes, leadership courses, work on their immigration cases, communicate with

friends and family, and of course join Refugee Tales online Zoom gatherings! Whilst those currently housed in hotels do have access to WiFi, much NASS accommodation does not provide internet. We're so fortunate that individual donors have helped us to offer monthly phone bundles to those we are supporting post-detention. There are still so many people we support who would like access to a laptop or smartphone. If you have an old device lying around at home, please let us know! We can connect you with an organisation who will wipe the device clean and give it a second life.



Poem

by Rosalinda Maog

the EARTH is red
the earth is heart
the heart is earth
the earth is body
seems, only on earth
can growth be found
In what we awaken to at birth
breathe, breathing, will breathe
in the land I grew up into
whomever, whatever, wherever
will return, will squeeze in, will sidle
will center, will lie down
will sit, stand, fly
be quiet
be calm
will gush forth
will seep out
will stream
will stay
on the ground ...
Let's you embrace, kiss, soothe
with every pulse of the earth
hope will be as dew
a drizzling delight
mercy will be sprinkled
pouring grace will come
radiating energy
goodness will hail
emptiness swells
blazing creativity
shine will melt down
water will spring forth
earth will be filled
in awesome stillness
the whisper will heed
love will bleed
in the land I was born into.
loving without fading
endless harmony
the birds will hum
the clouds, gesture
the wind will play

the colors are blooming
the leaves are singing
light will brighten up
fire will heal
the heart will plummet
What is WITHIN will be felt.

(In the original Filipino language)

ang LUPA ay pula
ang earth ay heart
ang puso ay lupa
ang lupa ay katawan
pawang sa lupa lamang
masusumpungan ang pagtubo
sa kinagisnang pagsilang
huminga, humihinga, hihinga
sa lupang tinubuan
sinuman, anuman, nasanman
babalik, sisiksik, gigilid
gigitna, hihiga
uupo, tatayo, lilipad
tatahimik
kakalma
bubulwak
babalong
dadaloy
tutuloy
sa lupa...
papayakap, papahalik, papayapa
sa bawat pintig ng lupa
hahamog ng pag-asa
papatak ng tuwa
aambon ng awa
uulan ng biyaya
aaraw ng lakas
babagyo ng buti
dadaluyong ang kawalan
uunos ng likha
malulusaw ang kinang
bubukal ang tubig
pupunuin ang lupa
manghang titigil
makikinig ang bulong
babalong ng pag-ibig

sa lupang kinagisanan
nagmamahal ng walang kupas
magmamayaw ng walang maliw
huhuni ang mga ibon
kukumpas ang mga ulap
maglalaro ang hangin
namumulaklak ang mga kulay
aawit ang mga dahon
sisigla ang liwanag
apoy ang maghihilom
bubulusok ang puso
LOOB ay dadamhin.

Rosalinda L. Maog, a member of Medical Mission Sister, an international Catholic religious missionary, loves writing and is currently attending poetry class "Tungko sa Tula" 3rd wave as part of her journey after leaving the UK, where she worked with refugees and migrants for 6 years. When Linda was with the JRS in the UK, GDWG worked with her on many Refugee Tales walks. She was loved by the Refugee Tales community who miss her very much and appreciate hearing her news, receiving her poetry and solidarity from the Philippines.

In memory of Mohammed

By Kasonga

I represented GDWG staff, trustees and volunteers when I attended the funeral of Mohammed, a young man in his twenties who we supported when he was detained. Mohammed sadly passed away in a hotel in November 2020, shortly after his release from detention. I was deeply saddened by the loss of Mohammed and extended our sympathies to all those who knew and loved him. His was a life taken far too soon after going through much hardship to reach a place of safety. Many of Mohammed's friends were able to attend the funeral in London thanks to the support of Care4Calais who arranged for them to travel from all over the UK. 30 people attended to honour Mohammed's life. We will keep Mohammed in our thoughts and hearts and continue to work against a system that does not provide adequate support for people like Mohammed.





Building Fortress Europe - A project inspired by Refugee Tales

By Johannes

During my time as an anthropology student at the University of Kent, I was invited by a friend to join him for a walk with Refugee Tales. I had never heard about the group before, but I was met by the most lovely people and for hours we had heartfelt conversations in the Kentish countryside. The Refugee Tales books I bought that day turned out to be much more than souvenirs: chapter by chapter they moved me to tears, made me sad, very often angry. At the time I kept thinking of ways to tell complex stories about the world in non-academic terms, just like the accounts collected in Refugee Tales,

Building Fortress Europe is a tale about the European migration control regime within and beyond EU borders. Using interactive maps, visual media and data, it exposes the illegal and cruel practices of migration control and documents the countless human rights abuses committed against migrants. The project transparently threads a narrative around statistical, journalistic and ethnographic

evidence, in an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of sentimentality while simultaneously giving the reader the opportunity to critically engage with hyperlinked references. Building Fortress Europe is an educational tool just as much as it is a call to hold those accountable who implement and uphold inhumane strategies against seekers of refuge and opportunity.

More than two years in the making, the project is entirely self-funded and independent from any organisation. After having conducted the research, I reached out to US-based cartographer Dru Sexton and together we managed to translate my findings. We also have become close friends along the way, despite never having met in person. Once the pandemic situation allows for safer travel, we will get our chance. More than ever, I now see free movement as a privilege many will never get to experience, when it should be a fundamental human right to those seeking safety.



Self-Advocacy Group - Understanding your Strengths

By Caroline Connor

On May 18th I was really happy to have the opportunity to meet the self advocacy group and run a session about their strengths.

As a facilitator and coach, the work I'm most passionate about the work I do around strengths - the things that we are great at, that we love to do and that energise us because they make us happier and more fulfilled. Our strengths are different to the skills and knowledge that we develop throughout life. By the time we reach puberty - so the neuroscientists say - we pretty much are who we are. We can learn new skills and behaviours but the "real" us doesn't change that much. So often - at school, at work, in our personal lives - we are told to focus on improving our weaknesses, but even if we work really hard at them, we usually only get to be "ok". Our strengths are the things that make us unique and when we use them we feel more confident and resilient - they help us be our "best selves".

In the session we started with a quick exercise to experience what it's like when we use our strengths. We spoke for a

minute in pairs in breakout rooms about the things that we love doing, followed by the things we don't like doing, noticing how our body language and energy levels change when we are using our strengths. The group then had a longer conversation in pairs to identify some of their clear strengths. They had asked for some feedback about this prior to the session from people who knew them well - often our own strengths are so natural for us that we don't really value them!

Finally, the group came back together and, one by one, everyone shared some thoughts about their own strengths to help the group get to know each other better. When each person had finished, their colleagues on the call also added their own feedback, sharing what they appreciated about each other's strengths - a lovely way to end the session.

A response to a GDWG talk

By Tony Webster

When Quakers in the South East met at a Regional Meeting in April the major item on the agenda was a presentation from Anna Pincus about the immigration detention centre at Gatwick airport and the work of GDWG. Some of the group had close knowledge of the issues here already, others know something of the Refugee Tales books and most had been aware of the protests about the conditions at the former barracks in Kent which we had read about in the press earlier in the year. Some of us had little idea of the insult to humanity that the immigrant detention centres represented.

Detained persons are kept in conditions which appear to be worse than prisons.

They may be living 2 and sometimes 3 together in one cell. The length of their stay is indeterminate, and they are subject to being moved to another holding facility for unexplained reasons at very short notice and with no explanation. The rules which they are faced with seem arbitrary - an example was a musician who wished to transcribe the songs from his culture was refused manuscript paper. Anna and Pious, a former detained person in the centre, talked so powerfully that one Friend was so distressed that she had to leave the Zoom meeting.

Pious spoke of an incident when the guards told him that they were watching out for him. How? - by CCTV surveillance of his cell. Why? - because many men were visiting him. As a result, he was suddenly moved to a different centre. The reason men were visiting his cell was that he was helping them to read and write letters from home. With a little imagination and compassion this work might have been seen for what it was - a supportive gesture to men far from their homes. In 1933, J.B. Priestly wrote in his "English Journey". "Let us be too proud, my mind shouted, to refuse shelter to exiled foreigners". We don't seem to have made much progress since then - the appropriate feeling is shame rather than pride.

Barnardo's meets GDWG

By Kasonga

As an expert-by-experience and GDWG staff member, I agreed on 2 February 2021 to take part in "Barnardo's Surrey-Sussex Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Day". Barnardo's is a charity that supports the UK's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Barnardo's was

interested to hear and understand what I had to say about my experiences, about detention centres and the UK immigration system as it is frequently a hidden area that people do not know about. The event took place via Zoom with an audience comprising 60 of Barnardo's staff with a Q&A session at the end. It was an interesting topic to explore with Barnardo's, as their organisation had promised to tackle institutional racism by acknowledging the British history of slavery and current injustices that have deeply entrenched inequalities and prejudices. It was an opportunity to tie the above legacy to the current policy of immigration detention which is also part of the hostile environment created by our government to harm migrants including asylum seekers and refugees - in short, to anyone subject to immigration control. Immigration detention deters people from having the opportunity to properly integrate into the community since it is a torture that deeply affects people's mental health.

Following my intervention, the audience recognised that GDWG gives power to those it helps; I am the example of GDWG trusting a migrant not only because of my skills, but also my ability to call for an immigration policy with humanity. Pastoral organisations really need to be among activists who strive to balance social power by promoting social justice, combating social inequalities and voting for social change. The day after my talk, I received feedback from Barnardo's senior manager for the SE region stating "Kasonga was utterly moving and powerful in what he shared with us. His openness, trust and candour taught us such a lot. The feedback has been overwhelming thanks from the teams."

GDWG community member joins Leeds Playhouse Theatre of Sanctuary

By Mana Shamshiri

We met Ali Rajabi in December 2020 when he was detained. We supported Ali during his time at Brook House and then connected him with local charities when he was moved across the UK after his release.

After joining a Refugee Tales Walking Inquiry Zoom event, Ali was inspired by the creative and artistic approach to calling for change to immigration detention policy. Ali Rajabi expressed that he was a playwright in Iran and wished to write and direct a play or a film surrounding his experiences of immigration detention to counter the general public's misconceptions about asylum seekers and so that they may have an insight into the reality of immigration detention in the UK.

Whilst trying to connect him with local theatre groups, as he was moved across the UK and through the Home Office's gruelling immigration system, we finally hit our luck when he was housed in Leeds. After reaching out to Leeds Playhouse we had a Zoom meeting with the team, and Ali told them about his ideas for his play. Ali's play, which he has been writing for the past several months, follows the story of a young man who leaves Iran due to danger for his life, fleeing torture and experiencing abuse and rape by smugglers. He finds solace in friendship with a young woman who is abused at the hands of smugglers and does what he can to support her out of her situation. They cross the channel with

the well-known Kurdish-Iranian family who passed away in October 2020, and the man finds himself in a land where human rights are promised but is instead faced with the terrifying reality of an immigration detention centre. The play is largely based on personal experience.

Since being in touch with Leeds Playhouse, Ali Rajabi has become a member of the Theatre of Sanctuary Company and is working with the team and other Farsi-speakers to make his project a reality. Ali said, "I wanted to thank you for all of the efforts and kindness you have shown me to this day. When I was in Brook House, I will never forget what a horrible situation I was in - I didn't have anyone. It was only you who would call me, and your voice would make me feel safe, supported and hopeful. You helped me find a solicitor and get in touch with charities who still help me to this day. With your efforts, we were able to find a group in Leeds for my idea for my play to help make it a reality. I'm very thankful to you and your organisation for all of this. If I ever need

Ali had his substantive interview last week and is awaiting the decision. We hope to one day see Ali Rajabi's project come to fruition.



Walking Inquiry Letter Exchange

In our Walking Inquiry, members of our community have been exchanging letters, and it is with great pleasure that we share the letters from Mohammed to Emma and Emma to Mohammed:

Dear Emma,

Do you remember the first time we walked? I remember the first time we went to your house. We had dinner, and stayed the night, chatting a bit. We ate at a long table, there was maybe ten of us! We walked from Finsbury Park to Hampstead Heath. Some guys came from Cardiff, some from Birmingham, some from Brighton and London. It was really amazing. Everyone was smiling and laughing.

Your house was an open house for everyone, it was really, really nice. It is a really good memory. When I go to your house, I feel like I'm with my family. Patrick and Rosie, they are my brother and sister. Little Leila is really amazing. When I feel bad, she makes me feel so much better. It is not easy to describe all those feelings. If I want to describe all of them, I would write an entire book and even then I could not describe them all. Your family are really kind and generous people. Still now, you are thinking of me, even more than yourself sometimes.

When we walk together we just chat and walk, it makes me feel really fresh and forget everything in my mind. I'm really, really happy that I met you through Refugee Tales. I also have to say thanks to Helen, who introduced me to Refugee Tales, which led me to know all these kind, generous and very friendly people.

My favourite Refugee Tales walk was from Brighton to Hastings. We had people from so many different countries, not just countries, different continents! We talked and walked, and sometimes had sight of the sea and the forest. I don't think I will forget that in all the time of my life. I was looking forward to this year, but this pandemic destroyed everything. But still, we are alive and safe. Even though we can't meet all of us, we will meet again. I'm looking forward to that day.

Now we have the Walking Inquiry. I think detention centres are not for human beings. The way they treat you. When you ask why they are keeping you there, they don't even have an answer. So why are they keeping people there? It is really important for people who are responsible for the country, to know all of this is happening. Are they aware of it or not? If they are aware, then why are they doing this? If they are not, they need to know exactly what is happening. In detention centres, you have time. Lunchtime or dinnertime. Then you just go back to your cell. Why don't they let visitors see your room? They are hiding, they don't want anyone to know. That is really unacceptable. It's really important that everyone knows what is happening.

What do you think of this Walking Inquiry? When more people know about detention, then it will change. That's what I think. I am hoping that Refugee Tales just keep doing what they are doing. Raising awareness of hidden things. Now, so many people from different countries know what is happening. I'm just hoping to continue until everything changes.

Lots of love from Mohammed, to all the family.



Dear Mohammed,

Thank you for your beautiful letter. It made me feel very emotional. In a good way. It reminded me of so many good times with you, with my family and with the many, many friends I have made through Refugee Tales.

I remember that night at my house very well. I have some great photos of us all squeezed round my table and, like you, my main memory is of everyone smiling and laughing. And then the next day, I remember sitting in the sunshine outside Kenwood House on Hampstead Heath with a picnic and enjoying the sound of about fifty people (many in blue Refugee Tales T-shirts) chatting to each other. We have been to Hampstead Heath a few times since then. Do you remember the time we went with little Leila and you and she picked a bucketful of blackberries and you carried her on your shoulders on the way home?

I too will never forget that epic pre-pandemic Brighton to Hastings walk. I have a joyful recurring image of a group of you young people, my children included, running down a bright green grassy hill overlooking a sparkling blue sea. You once said to me that walking is

like a medicine for you. I feel exactly the same. It's a medicine for me too. If I am feeling low, I tell myself to get out and walk and feel the air on my face. It always makes me feel better and helps me to sort out my thoughts. On my own, or with others.

The power of walking and talking is what has driven the Walking Inquiry. You ask me what I think of it. I think the Walking Inquiry is an idea that is full of strength and human connection. I believe the Walking Inquiry has the power to influence those who can bring about change. I completely agree with you that it is as if the whole broken detention system is something that has been kept hidden. Like a dirty secret. Why? Because it's shameful. Detention is, as you say, simply unacceptable.

I know you will remember that time in West Drayton when we thought we had found somewhere nice to walk by a stream and then realised that we were looking at the back of Colnbrook and Harmondsworth detention centres. It was a shocking moment and we both went very quiet. I didn't need to ask you what you were thinking. But then some people walked past us with two funny little dogs and you said the dogs had faces just like some monkeys you remember from your childhood - monkeys that sit up in the trees and throw mangoes at each other. We both burst out laughing. Now whenever I see dogs like that I think of those mango monkeys and I think of you laughing.

Lots of love to you Mohammed, from me and from my family. I am so glad you are part of our lives.

Emma

Walk with Refugee Tales in July

On 3rd and 4th July, Refugee Tales walkers will assemble in Canterbury. This includes 32 walkers with lived experience of detention travelling from Accrington, from Birmingham, from Cardiff and more. All our walkers will be joined in solidarity by people walking all around the UK and overseas. We are finding that in the time of a pandemic we have an opportunity to connect online all over the world and to gain strength from walking around the globe to call for a future without detention. On 4th July we have a Refugee Tales event online and if you sign up to walk in solidarity wherever you are, we'll send you the link to hear music and new tales from the new forthcoming Volume 4 of Refugee Tales. Our host for the online event will be a trustee of GDWG with lived experience of detention. Don't miss the online event, don't miss our Canterbury walks, don't miss walking in solidarity wherever you are.

Here's the link to book: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/refugee-tales-july-walk-2021-tickets-152538872875>

As Frances in our team wrote:

What does it mean for us to walk through places that are hostile towards some of us, hospitable to others? What does it mean to listen to people's experiences of immigration detention from an entirely different continent, thousands of miles apart, bridged by an internet connection? It means breaking down borders between 'us' and 'them', 'here' and 'there'. It means acting out our imagination and our desire for a more welcoming world, revealing what that

might look like. As GDWG trustee and walker, Avril, wrote:

This year I'm not able to join the walkers and tellers of tales in Canterbury. I can, however, take steps in solidarity and support, not only with Refugee Tales, but also with the wide network of groups and organisations that put their energies into creating the Hospitable Environment. I've signed up to be a Worldwide Walker, and as I live in Brighton, on 3/4th July I might ramble on the Downs, or stroll by the sea, walk up the stairs, do a little dance in the kitchen or have a picnic on the beach - whatever I can manage on the day. Taking steps.

Steps is the theme of our walk. Our walkers Nicky and Sal wrote:

The theme of the Walk for 2021 is Steps - because Refugee Tales continues to step out in support of people in immigration detention. Each small step on its own feels tiny and perhaps a bit pointless, but all the progress RT has made in tackling detention since the first Walk of 2015 has been step by single step. The momentum against detention is growing, and the more of us there are stepping the more distance we cover and the more noise we make.





So get your hobnails, sandals or flip-flops on and send RT photos of you or your friends out walking and finding, climbing, building, sitting on, draped over steps. They might be physical steps:

- flights of steps
- a spiral staircase
- a ladder
- a mounting block
- an escalator

There are steps that might not be physical but that take you places and change things:

- a toddler at a school gate waiting to go in
- footprints in mud or sand
- steps in the recipe of the cake you took on your walk

And then there are more obscure steps

- steps in your walking friend's haircut
- steps in clouds in the sky
- a hopscotch diagram on the pavement
- the Russian steppes (surely someone's walking for RT there!)

Keep stepping, and connecting, and sending in the photos with the hashtags: #RTSteps and #RTStepChange.

We invited Mary Molyneux, Chair of the IMB in Brook House to contribute to our newsletter in her own words with reflections following the publication of the IMB 2020 Annual Report.

Brook House IMB Annual Report

By Mary Molyneux

The Independent Monitoring Board for Brook House has recently published its annual report for 2020. We were particularly concerned about events in the last five months of the year, when the Home Office ran a concentrated programme of charter flights to EU countries for removal of people who had arrived in the UK on small boats crossing the Channel.

The IMB found that

- Circumstances in Brook House related to this charter flight programme amounted to inhumane treatment of all those detained there and meant it was not a safe place for this especially vulnerable group of people. The impact led to unprecedented levels of self-harm and suicidal thoughts and attempts.
- Some systems did not adapt quickly enough to the needs of this vulnerable population. For example, men detained at Brook were not adequately informed of what would happen to them on removal to the EU; there were serious delays in assessing torture claims; accommodation was shared with others who had self-harmed or

attempted suicide, and healthcare services were over-stretched and did not have sufficient resources to provide support to manage the increased levels of fear and anxiety.

We wrote to the Home Office Minister in October to raise our concerns, but the flights did not stop until December.

Our report for 2020 does note that men detained at Brook House were generally treated humanely while there, and staff-detainee relationships are generally positive, and we acknowledged the work done by staff in very challenging circumstances last year.

Art Workshop

In February the self-advocacy group took part in an art workshop facilitated by Steph Turner, an artist who combines creativity and artistic expression with well-being. Steph suggested three focus points: solidarity, walking, and a future without detention. As you can see, this was interpreted differently by everyone who took part, and the result is a rich tapestry of visual images, which demonstrate the complexity and depth of the Walking Inquiry. A huge thank you to Steph, and to all of the incredible artists!



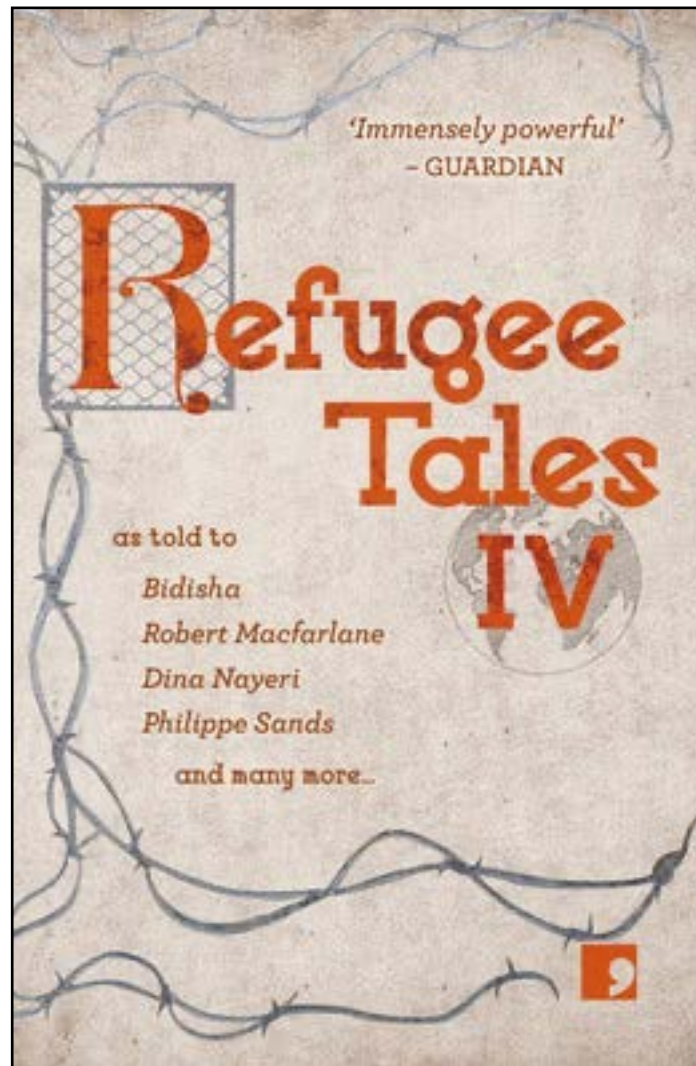
By Temi



By Samson

Coming Soon!

Refugee Tales Volume 4



Refugee Tales Volume 4 is coming soon and you can place your advance order with Comma Press. We can't wait to share the new tales with you, including tales of the detention experience overseas in Italy, Switzerland, the USA and Canada. Our thanks to all those who shared their tales and to the generous writers who worked with us. 'The Stowaway's Tale', 'The Chef's Tale', 'The Waiting Man's Tale', 'The Poet's Tale' and more are all featured and writers include Philippe Sands and Bidisha. After reading the book, Shobu Kapoor described it: 'Heartbreaking and heartwarming in equal measure. Every page is filled with quiet dignity.' **Pre-Order: <https://commapress.co.uk/books/refugee-tales-volume-iv/>**



A Tasty Treat

By Mana Shamshiri

In this quarter's newsletter, I'd like to share with you my vegan recipe for Shirini Danmarki - a well adored Persian pastry. Shirini Danmarki translates to 'Danish Pastry'. Iranians do not take our baked sweet (shirini) addiction lightly. In Iran, baked goods are sold in boxes of a minimum 500g (1.1lb) going all the way to 2kg (4.4lb).

The origin of this pastry dates back to the strike of bakery workers in Denmark in 1850. The strike prompted bakery owners to hire workers from abroad, including some Austrian bakers. These Austrian bakers also brought with them new methods of baking pastries, which the Danish adapted to their own taste after the strike. This is the Iranian take on the Danish pastry after it was introduced to the country (rumoured) by Armenians - but, veganised!

Find more of my recipes and Iranian food history on www.theiranianvegan.com or @theiranianvegan on Instagram and Facebook to follow my mission of continuing my rich and beautiful culture whilst sustaining a vegan lifestyle.

Vegan Shirini Danmarki

Ingredients:

For the dough:

- 90g sugar
- 430g self raising flour
- 1 tsp yeast
- 1 tsp vanilla extract or essence
- 125ml oil
- 230ml / 1 cup of plant milk (soya, almond, oat milk etc.)
- 1/6th spoon of ground saffron
- A pinch of salt

For the filling:

- 100g sugar
- 70g plain flour, sifted
- 1 tsp vanilla extract or essence
- 1 tbsp rosewater
- 500ml boiling water

For decoration:

- Sesame seeds
- Agave syrup
- Vegan 'egg wash': 1 tbsp agave syrup mixed with 5 tbsp of plant milk

Instructions:

1. Heat up one cup of plant milk on the stove or in the microwave and mix in 1/6 teaspoon of ground saffron. Cover the cup and leave this to bloom for at least 4 minutes.
2. Mix the dry ingredients for the dough: the sugar, flour and yeast. Mix the wet ingredients separately:

the saffron milk, vanilla essence and oil.

3. Slowly add in the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and knead well until you are left with a plump dough which does not stick to your hands. Leave the dough to rest, covered, for 1 hour.
4. Meanwhile, in a medium sized pot, stir the plain flour on medium heat for 1-2 minutes.
5. Next, add in the sugar and the boiling water. Mix well until you reach a custard-like consistency. Add in the vanilla and rosewater and mix before taking it off the heat and allowing to cool completely.
6. Separate the dough into two equal parts and roll out the pieces into large rectangles around 5mm thick on a floured surface.
7. Spoon the custard filling across lengthwise and roll up the dough, creating a rose-like spiral. Repeat for the second piece of dough.
8. Cut the pastry into 5cm long pieces and place on a lined oven tray. Cover with a towel cloth and allow them to sit for 30 minutes.
9. Brush the pastries with the vegan egg-wash, sesame seeds and bake



for 25-35 minutes at 180C or until golden brown.

10. Pour over agave syrup (optional), and enjoy with tea!

Book Review: *I Belong Here: A Journey Along the Backbone of Britain* by Anita Sethi.

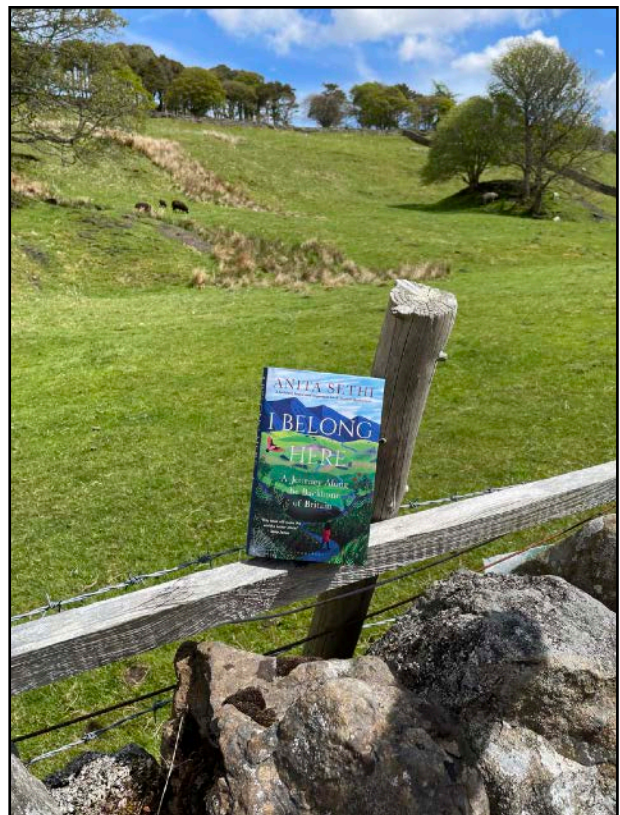
By Frances Bell

In 2019, journalist and author Anita Sethi was travelling on a TransPennine Express train from Liverpool to Newcastle when a man racially abused her, swearing and shouting at Sethi to “get back on the banana boat” and “go back to where you’re from”. After the attack, Sethi experienced anxiety and panic attacks; she was advised to avoid travelling alone. And yet, Sethi writes, “I was intent on not letting a hate crime stop me moving about freely and without fear in a country where I belong.” The man on the train told Sethi to “go back to where you’re from”, and she did. Born and bred in Manchester, Sethi decided she would explore her home, the North of England, on foot. But as she hiked across the

Pennines, Sethi was also journeying inward, examining the complexities of belonging in a country that can be so hostile, even when its landscapes are so deeply inviting.

In April this year, Sethi's explorations culminated in the publication of *I Belong Here: A Journey Along the Backbone of Britain*. And although the book focuses on her journey through the North of England, it also recounts another pilgrimage in the South. For anyone who joined the *Refugee Tales* walk from Brighton to Hastings in 2019, Sethi's writing revitalises this journey by conjuring up the heat, the poppies, the stories, and the sparkling sight of the sea. It is wonderful to read and to remember, especially when this five-day walk is woven into Sethi's longer journey of reclamation. For anyone interested in the power of walking and sharing stories, even the most painful ones, this book is well worth reading.

Thank you to Anne Jakins, one of our GDWG visitors who walked in the Pennines and who told us the experience was greatly enriched by her reading of Anita Sethi's book. Here's Anne on her walking holiday. We love picking up a book and finding that it references Refugee Tales and the work of GDWG!





In Remembrance - Shirley Williams

It was with sadness that we learned in April of the death of Shirley Williams. Shirley was Patron of GDWG from the early 2000s until 2016. She cared passionately about asylum seekers, she hated their mistreatment, and she appreciated the way that we express our value of migrants through our work. In a letter congratulating Visitors of over 10 years' service, she wrote:

"Thank you for your kindness to so many detainees. If any of them remember this country kindly it will be thanks to you and the humanity and compassion you have brought to this difficult and demanding work."

She felt very strongly that asylum seekers should be allowed to work, and she desperately wanted to see a time limit on immigration detention.

Shirley was very generous to us with her time and always responded to requests for help for individual detained persons, doing her best to stop flights, and speaking to Ministers. In 2006, she, and our other Patron Lord Dholakia, held a Reception at the House of Lords for GDWG and invited their friends and colleagues. She attended both our 10th and 15th Anniversary events and at each event she spoke brilliantly and passionately, without notes.

In 2012, after she had attended the "Longest Day" at the Hawth in Crawley,

she spoke glowingly about GDWG in the Lords and said of the event:

"450 people turned up at a theatre in Crawley to listen to what the refugees had to say about what they had been through and about the songs and poems that had kept them going. This was a crowd of our fellow citizens, not specially selected but men and women who cared about the wellbeing of their fellow citizens."

She went on to show her compassion, emphasising that it was the "human help to one's peers" that was important and "not the endless, complicated, inexplicable and incomprehensible processes of immigration rules." She is such a sad loss - a great mind and a very big heart. We received many responses to the news from our community including:

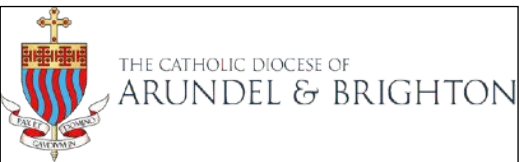
She was certainly one of the most inspirational women and she inspired many of us at that event at the Hawth with her genuine compassion. RIP and much gratitude for all her efforts. - Jane

Thanks so much for sharing this sadness. Indeed, she is a sad loss, and we will miss very much her human approach in this difficult field which is immigration field. - Kasonga

She has been a true inspiration to all of us down the years. I know from personal experience how ready she was to get involved. When you had Shirley's active support you came very quickly to realise how resourceful and committed she was. A true inspiration and wonderful person. - Jim



With thanks to:



The Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust

The Three Oaks Trust



