



A view from the edge

Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

04 April 2019

STANDING ALONGSIDE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DONCASTER

IN THIS ISSUE

Time for some figures

By Paul FitzPatrick

Away from the sound and fury of Brexit, it is worth remembering that there are still people escaping from persecution who are applying for asylum in the UK. And it remains a very difficult process.

In 2018 there were 29,380 asylum applications, compared to 26,547 in 2017, an increase of 11%, a much lower number than in 2015 and 2016, and there were significant increases in applications from people from Iran, Iraq and Albania. The total number of asylum applications to the EU in 2018 was an estimated 612,600, down 11% from the previous year, following the 45% fall in 2017. The UK received the 6th highest number of applications of all the EU member states.

There were 21,119 initial decisions in 2018 and 33% were granted asylum or other forms of protection (6,933),

of which 5,558 were grants of asylum. There were 11,292 appeals received in 2018 and 11,422 appeals determined, of which 38% (4,379) were allowed. Furthermore, since it began in 2014, 14,945 people have now been resettled under the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme.

The *Independent* discovered through freedom of information law that of 15,200 deportations cancelled in 2018 more than two-thirds were called off in the week they were scheduled and 45 per cent within the same day. And, according to the Home Affairs Select Committee, in 2000 UK immigration detention centres had capacity to hold 475 people and approximately an additional 200 were held under immigration powers in prisons. 18 years later in 2018: 'the UK immigration detention estate was

one of the largest in Europe with an average of 2,204 held in detention.'



Caphouse Colliery

Page 2



At the Keepmoat Stadium

Page 4

A visit to Caphouse Colliery



Around 40 of us visited Caphouse Colliery near Wakefield, England's National Coalmining Museum. The pit itself was a working mine from 1791 until 1985. The museum provides a unique opportunity to travel 140 metres underground to explore England's last deep coalmine. To take part in the underground tour, you get kitted out with a hard hat and battery lamp, then step into the 'cage' to descend 140m underground. The organizers are not exaggerating when they speak of discovering the harsh realities of coal mining through the centuries, from Victorian times when women and children worked in darkness underground alongside men, to the introduction of miners' lamps and pit ponies, and how modern machinery changed coalmining.



Our visit

By Simaa Jebabli

Being an asylum seeker is very a stressful and difficult situation, but always there is something good in every bad situation that we are facing, which is Doncaster Conversation Club, and all the caring and loving volunteers who work there to make our lives much easier and help us with all their strength to support us.

As I think, everyone knows the types of support that they give to the asylum seeker. But today I am going to talk about one type of support that DCC provides us with which is the trips.

On Saturday, we went to the national coal museum with a very well organised trip. It was a real adventure. For me, it was my first time being 140 metres under the ground. After we arrived, we divided into two groups. Both groups were led by a tour guide to talk about the mine. Our tour guide was very informative. He told us how the mine worked and how the people were suffering from the work in very difficult conditions to make money for the mine owners. And even the children started working when they reached five years old to help their parents. The guide used humour effectively to describe some difficult situations.

After we finished the tour under the ground, we went to have our lunch and then Nic took us for another tour around the mine to see the animals that were used to collect the coal, the bathroom, the medical rooms where workers took shower and were treated for work injuries. There was also a small museum which we

saw briefly. That was the last thing on the trip. Then we returned to the bus and came back to Doncaster safe and happy.



Some further comments

Today is good. It was very interesting place. It is first time in my life I go somewhere like this. Good to be with friends.

It was good. It was first time I went to a place like this. Very interesting. The guide made it very funny. I was interested to see how the machines moved underground. How did the women and children stay so long in the dark?

The museum was amazing and really interested. I felt I was living in ancient times.

It is very nice and big experience. I am proud of the people who was work at that time. I know how it's difficult mining is and I pass that in my life time. Generally I like it. And thank you for giving us this kind of amazing opportunity.

Today I enjoyed myself down in the mine. I saw how people used to work down in the tunnel with their children as young as 5 year old. It was a good experience for me. I will remember this day and I would love to go back again in future.

The opening of Zaytuna

By Louise O'Brien



So last week I travelled 200 miles round trip to eat falafel in Doncaster. Why? I hear you ask. I'll tell you. Until a few years ago falafel was, at best, something stodgy and not very tasty which I sometimes had if there was nothing else around to eat.

Then in 2015 at the height of the so-called 'European Refugee Crisis' I travelled to the island of Kos to assist refugees arriving in Europe. I met hundreds of refugees of many nationalities, including Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, Iranians, Malians, Pakistanis and others arriving in Europe in tiny, overcrowded boats. I started to hear about the places which people had fled and they became like places I knew; Latakia, Homs, Aleppo, Raqqa, Mosul, Deir al-Zour, Hawja, Idlib and Damascus.

When working at Doncaster Minster in the town centre, we set up an English language learning project to complement the work of Doncaster Conversation Club to support asylum seekers and refugees who are living in Doncaster, with opportunities to practice their English. And it was there, in Doncaster, that I discovered that falafel was in fact anything but stodgy and bland....

I have become friends – like so many others – with Rania Al Arnab and

Thabet Kalthoum from Damascus who have RETRAINED my taste buds to understand what makes falafel a truly egalitarian street food worth travelling 200 miles for. I'd be embarrassed to tell you how many times I have eaten beautifully made Syrian and Mediterranean style food at the home of Rania and Thabet! It's always about fresh flavours... parsley, cumin, pomegranate seeds, freekeh, some garlic, good olive oil, roasted aubergine and so many other lovely things. And it's about knowing how many times to blend the chick peas so that they remain crunchy on the outside and cooked to perfection on the inside when deep fried. Don't be afraid of the deep frying! They are so light and so very tasty. I definitely ate way too many on the opening day!



So on the 26th of March 2019 the newly refurbished and designed Wool Market opened in Doncaster town centre with a soft launch, leading to 3 full days and evenings of entertainment over the weekend where people from all over the borough came to see what the place had to offer. There are a lot of new businesses in the Wool Market, but the one which I travelled 200 miles to see and buy from is Zaytuna, Mediterranean Cuisine, a lovely, fresh looking unit in the market hall specially designed with vintage looking tiles and a new logo. I was there first thing on the 26th and could

see how the customers were responding to the food, especially the falafel wraps and it was all very, very positive. People were enjoying the simplicity of the food and something new in Doncaster.

What will bring people back to Zaytuna will be the welcome, the simple fresh food and the fact that the Wool Market will be open during the evenings, especially in the spring and summer months.



It's so important that people who make the UK their home having claimed asylum have opportunities to build new lives for themselves and their families and that means finding work and being able to participate fully in society. Seeing this family setting up a new business in Doncaster using their already existing skills and expertise as well as bringing something new to the town is brilliant. They in turn will be able to offer opportunities to others and so the positive effects are passed on. If you love inexpensive and tasty street food and you're in Doncaster make sure you visit Zaytuna in the Wool Market; not only will you enjoy the food but you may find yourself being seriously impressed by the drive and commitment of this family to put down roots and grow something new in their new home town.

Doncaster Rovers welcome DCC to the Keepmoat Stadium

By Hayley Ford [Club Doncaster Foundation]



Rovers joined with the Viking Supporters Cooperative to welcome local refugee football team, Doncaster Conversation Club United, to play a football match with supporters and members of Fit Rovers Veterans at the Keepmoat Stadium.

The match was an evenly contested and entertaining affair. The team in yellow t-shirts took an early two-goal lead and had a penalty saved before the team in bibs launched an impressive comeback to win 4-2. After enjoying a match on the pitch, there was also a chance to look around the stadium and enjoy some food.

The event took place on the English Football League's Day of Action – a day when all 72 EFL clubs put on community events – and launched Rovers' two weeks of action in order to raise awareness of equality and diversity within Doncaster. EFL Clubs across the Sky Bet Championship, League One and League Two hosted events designed to showcase the very best of their work to tackle a diverse range of social issues, from homelessness and mental health, to community cohesion and the battle against plastic pollution.

Doncaster Conversation Club United have recently started playing matches in a seven-a-side league and while funding for kits and shin pads has been easily accessible, they are struggling to provide boots for their players. If supporters have any boots (either astro trainers or football boots) which are no longer in use and can be donate to the team, the club will be holding a boot drive at both Rovers home matches against Bristol Rovers and Walsall FC. Supporters who would like to donate a pair of boots can do so by dropping them off at the Club Doncaster Box Office.

LEAGUE TABLE - PREMIER LEAGUE										
		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	
1	BULGARIA	5	4	1	0	27	6	21	9	⊕
2	VIKINGS	5	4	1	0	19	1	18	9	⊕
3	DCC UNITED	5	4	0	1	14	7	7	8	⊕
4	INTERYAGRAN	5	3	0	2	20	12	8	6	⊕
5	WARREN PARK WANDERERS	5	2	1	2	10	14	-4	5	⊖
6	MINISTRY OF DEFENCE	5	1	0	4	5	17	-12	2	⊖
7	THE PIST-ONS	5	0	1	4	4	25	-21	1	⊖
8	WE NEED PLAYERS	5	0	0	5	7	24	-17	0	⊖

Six-a-side league table

Further note

Grant McCann is the manager of Doncaster Rovers. Speaking after it was confirmed that Rovers had won Sky Bet League One Family Club of the Year for the third time, he said that Rovers' off-field work and family club ethic was one of the reasons he was desperate to join the club. Rovers are one of only six clubs to have achieved the Family Excellence standard 11 years in a row. The club do so much work behind the scenes to make things like that possible.



The opportunity to play on Rovers' pitch was greatly appreciated by all.

Doncaster Rovers vs Bristol Rovers

Thanks to Club Doncaster Foundation, about thirty of us were able to attend the League One match on a Tuesday evening between Doncaster and Bristol Rovers.

This turned out to be a very enjoyable affair, especially since Doncaster won the match 4-1. Even better, they scored the first goal after four minutes and the second after about twelve minutes, so there was plenty going on to keep interest alive.



It was good match. I am enjoy!

We are very happy to come and enjoy a lot. Doncaster a good team. And they won!

A magnificent goal!!

We are happy. We are very happy. Thank you.

To be here is very good night.



Za'atari refugee Camp: unknowing and uncertainty

By Anna FitzPatrick [Project Coordinator at the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, London College of Fashion]

Anna is supporting Professor Helen Storey in her role as Designer in Residence in Za'atari Refugee Camp, Jordan. Here she reflects on some of the challenges.

Za'atari is a refugee camp in Jordan. On 31 October 2018, it housed about 78,357 refugees, of whom nearly 20% were under five years old. 20% of households were headed by females. Its economy is largely informal and there are high rates of unemployment. Income is generated in various ways: by selling humanitarian aid or by cash for work (in organisations within the camp, and the market) which can be both a form of income generation and of resistance. Basic material needs in Za'atari are met through aid as food rations, but not cultural and individual needs.



I joined Professor Helen Storey for a week in February 2019 at the beginning of her time as Za'atari Refugee Camp's first Artist in Residence. Helen is working in various ways under the umbrella of her project 'Dress for our Time,' which started in 2015. During 2019, Helen aims to find collaborative ways to empower women and girls in

camp through nurturing entrepreneurship, creativity and financial independence including a perfume and soap making lab, a kitchen, hydroponics 'garden', a shop space, children's play area. It is a women only space. It is here that Helen will run certain workshops and activities over the course of the year, including a jewellery workshop taking place in Za'atari over 5 days in March and involving women from across the camp.

The purpose of my brief visit was to experience the possibilities and constraints that working in Za'atari presents for Helen. The challenges are broadly two-fold: the real need for self-sufficiency for the refugees on the one hand, but also the paradigm shift which is needed in ourselves in order to address social and environmental concerns here in the UK. My understanding of transformation is heavily influenced by the ideas associated with transformative social justice, in which deep change is both individual and collective and must take place both at a systemic level and within ourselves.

As the shiny, white 4x4 of the UNHCR pulled up at the camp and my passport was demanded, I understood that my ability to move freely, arrive and leave, was a privilege and not a right. I became 'official'. I have a verified identity that brings with it abilities to belong, to have freedoms. To arrive at Za'atari as part of the frontline staff is to be verified and badged. This verifying and validation also means I can leave. It also means my belonging is legitimated through structures and organisations which contribute to the problems faced by those living in Za'atari. It also means I am unable to walk around the camp unaided, my role limited to seeing,

looking, watching, perhaps talking (through an interpreter).



My challenge, therefore, is to unlearn, or decentre myself. How can I possibly capture the complexity of my feelings about Za'atari in words permanently tied to a page? How will I respond to pain and trauma? How will that be manifest? But how then can I communicate if not through language? How can I decentre myself if I cannot place myself in relation to others, which is difficult without language? In what ways can artistic/design practice overcome this barrier? How will I cope with uncertainty? How can I begin to unknow and breakdown the powerful narratives created by Live Aid (for example) and perpetuated by Comic Relief? The cultural dominance of these in my expectations formed layer upon layer of discourse about suffering, victimhood and need, which immediately felt uncomfortable and simplistic. I saw bread being made and sold in shops. I heard that food was distributed by the NGOs present in Za'atari (not that all refugees want to be recipients of this aid). The provision of basic needs so much more complex and so much unknown. Yet, the people living in Za'atari were not famined, and life was continuing. Not a complete breakdown.

What of people's emotional needs? The support needed to be away from home, dealing with unbelonging, unknowing, uncertainty, of your home no longer being home, since many people have been in Za'atari for five years or more? Can their lives in Syria be returned to?



Earrings from pencils, made in Za'atari

The first sentence I wrote was: "I am surprised by how unshocked I am". I had prepared myself to be shocked. To feel rage and anger, be outraged – as proof of emotion, as a form of action. Or to be used to create action. The layout of Za'atari was as the images I had seen: rows of caravans, external water tanks, hazy sun, endless sky. In some ways it takes on elements of urban organisation familiar to me – rows of housing, numerical markings. Yet it is also outside of my knowing. In both form and practice it is beyond the normative. In her recent work Aya Musmar (2019) describes Za'atari as being 'conditioned by its 'extraterritoriality' and 'exceptionalism' that were destined when its boundaries were decided by the UNHCR and the Jordanian government, Za'atari camp has opted out of the normative order of life to develop its own norms'. In what ways would I be able to see these new norms?

As our 4x4 pulled in, Helen pointed out a queue of people who were hoping to leave Za'atari that day to work. Refugees are able to leave daily to work in the local vicinity. This was an official route out for the day and a way to earn an income. Yet, I'd seen this line before, both in Doncaster and on the main road in Lewisham, every morning at 8am, groups of young men gather in groups, waiting. Shortly after 8am a mini-van pulls over, and the men pile in. Casual labour. Seasonal. Perhaps, in contrast to those queuing in Za'atari, this is unofficial labour. The question lingers in my mind about the role of work for those with no official status. The official and unofficial. The knowledge gathered about how systems can work for you or be worked upon you. How important is the fairness of the system? How much does fairness correlate to survival?

Brief news headlines

1. Letter from Zimbabwe

'Nothing's been fine or normal since armed soldiers shot unarmed civilians in broad daylight in the capital city last August. Nothing's been fine or normal since armed soldiers were again released into our towns and cities in January 2019 resulting in multiple deaths, rapes, abductions, torture, assaults and detentions. The Human Rights NGO Forum say there were 1803 violations attributed to our security forces during January. Numerous MPs and civil society leaders who called for stayaways at that time have been arrested and charged with treason; two more were arrested this week: MP Joana Mamombe and MP Charlton Hwende.

'As I write, massive construction work is underway to repair roads and enable big trucks to get in to Chimanimani. More private trucks of aid are on the way and people are preparing to help deliver our donations, to make sure they are not looted, stolen or corrupted and reach only the victims of this tragedy. One week later our government has still not declared a day of national mourning or lowered the flags to remember those lost in the Cyclone but we, the people, know, grieve and stand with the victims.'

Source: Cathy Buckle

cbuckle.zim@gmail.com

2. Armthorpe concern



The picture above shows a sticker promoting the English Democrats, with the slogan 'England for the English'. It is on a lamppost less than 100 metres from the newest asylum house in Doncaster. It was probably put there before anyone seeking asylum arrived in the property. It is difficult to see this as a very welcoming message.

Who is he?

This is unashamedly adapted from an article by Colin Yeo, an immigration solicitor, who runs the recommended FREE MOVEMENT website.

By Nic Burne

Seeking a new home in a far-away land, his own having been devastated by a disaster, ##### stows away to London. His link to London derives from a colonial-style explorer his aunt and uncle once met. His English is learned from that era and sounds quaintly old fashioned to cosmopolitan ears. In his new environment his customs and manners cause all sorts of misunderstandings. Some open minded, open hearted individuals welcome him. Others reject him. Some merely turn their backs but others are more overtly hostile, worried that more of his kind will follow. ##### learns and adapts — to an extent — and finds a place in his new host society.

Hint 1 Ask a child.

stows away and deliberately avoids the immigration authorities on arrival. He is, in formal legal terms, an illegal entrant and as such commits a criminal offence under Section 24 of the Immigration Act 1971. It is an offence punishable by up to six months in prison. If or when detected by the authorities it is more likely he would simply be forcibly removed back home than that he would be prosecuted. To avoid that fate he would need to make out a legal basis to stay.

Incidentally, for offering a home to ##### - or harbouring him, as the Home Office would have it - the host could potentially face prosecution under Section 25 of the Immigration Act 1971, entitled "Assisting Unlawful Immigration To Member State". The maximum sentence is 14 years.

Although he seeks refuge from a natural disaster, ##### would not qualify as a refugee under the terms

of the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Refugee status can only be claimed by those fleeing persecution for certain specified reasons and natural disasters are not among them.

The Home Office would not believe ##### anyway. Unless reported in specific country information sources, the disaster back home would be considered a fiction. It would be observed that genuine refugees supposedly travel to countries close to them rather than far away ones. They don't, of course, and many have the same kind of cultural and language ties that bring ##### to London. ##### does not claim asylum at the first opportunity, another consideration to be held against him. His lack of knowledge of the immigration system would be no defence. Words like "liar" or "untrue" are for some reason avoided by civil servants; instead they would say in more sanitised and impersonal tones that #####'s "credibility" was damaged and his account "not accepted".

The refusal letter would go on to say - asylum refusals appear to be auto-generated by an early and imperfect type of form filling software - that even if the disaster back home had occurred and ##### was a genuine victim, he could easily relocate within his own country where the authorities would also be able to provide protection from persecution.

If detected by the authorities while living with his host the authorities, having been tipped off by Mr C... on David Cameron's 'shop-a- neighbour' hotline, ##### would in all likelihood be detained, perhaps after a dawn raid, in one of our virulently multiplying private immigration detention spaces. Unless his home country embassy accepted him as one of their nationals, he would languish there indefinitely, generating profits for the private contractor and costing the public purse a small fortune. The Home Office would be unable to remove him

but as a point of principle would be unwilling to let him go.

Like others caught in apparently indefinite administrative detention, his mental and physical health would likely deteriorate. The atmosphere inside the detention centres can be poisonous. ##### would be in a sorry state after a few months.

is hunted in the UK. His presence is tracked through video cameras and intelligence from members of the public. His home is even raided. This is what life feels like under the Immigration Act 2014, which turns landlords into immigration officers and co-opts banks, building societies, doctors and others to detect the undocumented immigrants who dare to roam amongst us.

Hint 2 Think London stations.

Worked out who he is? Answers on form provided, completed in capital letters, black ink, in triplicate, with no corrections and a witness who has personally known you for more than 5 years or see www.gov.uk/Form-being-updated-and-currently-unavailable.

Here's a clue:



A view from the edge Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

Based at the

Quaker Meeting House

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Doncaster DN1 3RH

To receive a copy of this newsletter by email, send a message to Paulfitzp@aol.com

Please send your contributions and suggestions to the same address.

Doncaster Conversation Club offers opportunities for local people and people who have sought asylum in the UK to join together to share friendship, while offering support and practical help.

The Club seeks to create a relaxed, friendly and supportive environment, and works on the principles of

Ownership – everyone can get involved

Impartiality – it is not affiliated to any political or religious body

Confidentiality – what you say is private

Respect – for each other's differences and individuality.

DCC is pleased to acknowledge the support of **Doncaster Society of Friends (Quakers), The Red Cross, The Refugee Council, Migrant Help, DIAL Doncaster, The Doncaster Clinical Commissioning Group, St Leger Homes, Club Doncaster Foundation, Ongo M25 Services, YMCA, DARTS, CAST, Fareshare, The Brelms Trust, The Ruth Hayman Trust and Doncaster Minster.**

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The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors.

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