



# A view from the edge

## Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

04 July 2019

STANDING ALONGSIDE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DONCASTER

IN THIS ISSUE

## British values?

By Paul FitzPatrick

There are certain statements routinely repeated (and not only by the Government) which make me want to throw things at the tv (or any other convenient object). Top of the list comes 'The UK has a long and proud tradition of providing sanctuary to those fleeing conflict and persecution', when the reality comes much closer to grudging reluctance and minimal action. Large sums of public money are now spent on preventing people from seeking refuge in Britain.

Next comes 'The UK played a key role in drafting the 1951 Refugee Convention, which has helped to protect millions of people'. On this topic, I refer interested readers to Lucy Mayblin's recent book 'Asylum after Empire' which shows how reluctant the British Government was then to extend human rights or refugee rights to non-European refugees, particularly colonial

subjects. She argues further that these attitudes continue to influence contemporary policies.

Now to this list we can add a third. A new Home Office policy document on women trafficked from Nigeria (a Commonwealth country) says that those who become 'wealthy from prostitution' enjoy 'high socio-economic status' and are 'often held in high regard' when they return home. This appears in a newly updated Country Policy and Information Note used as a guide to whether asylum seekers face persecution or serious harm in their home country. Asked for comment, a Home Office spokesperson said: 'Sadly, modern slavery, forced labour and human trafficking are not evils of the past. Through the Modern Slavery Act, the Government is committed to ensuring victims get the support they need and perpetrators are brought to justice.'



A visit to the Wildlife Park  
Page 2



Cooking through time  
Page 5

## A visit to the Wildlife Park

On a warm Saturday in June, almost 80 of us made the short trip from the Meeting House to the Yorkshire Wildlife Park.

As is usual, our group consisted of people from across the globe. There were twenty children in eight family groups.

Albania	1
Algeria	2
Burma	1
Chad	2
El Salvador	4
Eritrea	16
India	1
Iraq	17
Kuwait	1
Lebanon	6
Saudi Arabia	1
Stateless	1
Sudan	9
Syria	2
Tunisia	1
UK	13
Total	78



With nearly 400 animals and 70 different species of animal, Yorkshire Wildlife Park is a fantastic place to experience a walk-through wildlife adventure. Most of the animals at the park are either endangered or threatened. Yorkshire Wildlife Park works closely with charities to help

the conservation of endangered species in the wild and captivity.

The polar bears are a star attraction. Project Polar is an innovative habitat for polar bears and a dynamic programme for their conservation and welfare. It is also a centre for research to help bears in the wild and in other zoos around the world.

*Into Africa* is a new immersive reserve with amazing views of some favourite African animals: the critically endangered black rhino, Eland and Lechwe antelope, ostrich, giraffe and endangered Grevy's zebra. The animals roam together in the landscaped reserve. While *Into Africa* is 'the closest to a view over the Savannah that you will find outside Africa', it is hugely paradoxical for African visitors.



### Some comments from participants

Park is so good. There were lots of animals. I felt that I am in Africa's jungle. I spent lots of time watching and taking photos. Thanks for all.

I feel happy watching tiger, lion, zebra, giraffe, polar bear and others.

A good day – walking round site to see the animals. Very interesting and would like to come again. We liked the lions, and tiger, giraffe and other animals from African. African house with Meercats reminded me of home.

I am come to park and I watch everything. But I like animal giraffe and zebra. I enjoy.

I enjoyed today. I saw giraffes and lions, okapi, ostrich. I have never seen lions in Sudan. I took lots of photos to remember today.

The trip has been enjoyable and interesting due to the exposure of various wild animals from the smallest species to the tallest one (giraffe). Hence, in general, it is worthful to be here to have this experience. Therefore than you very much the meeting centre office which also providing the opportunity to accommodate us.

Today is very happy. Today is am looking at lions. Today good day. Today I can look leopard. Today I looking ostrich. Today I enjoy by foot and by car. Today very nice because I like animals.

Today I enjoyed a lot. I liked the animals – lions, tigers, camel, giraffe. I have seen lions in Eritrea and tigers. I enjoyed because I am with my friends.



## Refugee Integration Project in Doncaster

By Gavin Nicholl

We are a new project in Doncaster which is co-funded by the European Union Asylum Migration Integration Fund as part of Migration Yorkshire, it is a pilot scheme initially funded for 18 months finishing at the end of December 2020. The aim of the project is to help refugees integrate into society by working with them for 3 months helping with housing, benefits, training and education, health and anything else they may need assistance with. We can work with individuals and families who have been given Leave to Remain, Humanitarian Protection, Leave to Enter and Indefinite Leave. The funding only allows us to work with those who've had a decision within the last 2 years but predominantly we find we are picking up those who've recently had their decision and have been given 28 days to leave their NASS accommodation. This is obviously a critical time and we've already built up some good relationships with local supported housing providers who are helping us accommodate people when they leave their NASS accommodation. We are also building links with the Job Centre, St. Leger homes, training providers, health centres and other relevant organisations to assist us in integrating people as smoothly as possible.

We are based at the Civic Office in the town centre and are a small team consisting of Gav Nicholl (Support worker), Elliott French (Admin Assistant) and Katy Scott (Manager), we aim to help 240

individuals/families by the end of the project. We will be at the Conversation Club weekly from 12-4 to pick up any new referrals and catch up with others we are already working with. We can then make further appointments to see people at the Civic Office, we are able to visit people in their own properties, attend the Job Centre for appointments as this can be a daunting experience for some, go with people to health appointments, attend assessments for housing and assist with tasks like applying for Universal Credit, opening up bank accounts, applying for driving licences, getting NI Numbers etc.

When people move into supported housing we work in partnership with the key workers there and then gradually take a step back once the individual is settled and the workers there will take over fully providing the support. We also liaise with support workers from other organisations involved in supporting the individuals including health workers, interpreters, social workers, housing officers etc.

On our first meeting with someone we will complete a baseline assessment form to see what their needs are and what help they require from us and then a Personal Activity Plan is developed and updated throughout their time working with us with actions for us to complete and outcomes achieved.

The contact details for the project are

Landline 01302 215352

Mobile 07971 395959

Email [amif@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:amif@doncaster.gov.uk)

## The 6-a-side football league

Our participation in this Monday night league at the Keepmoat Stadium was a learning experience for all involved.

LAST SEASON LEAGUE TABLE										
		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	
1	BULGARIA	10	6	1	1	38	20	4	18	
2	DCC UNITED	10	6	1	1	25	22	3	18	
3	VACANCY AVAILABLE - SIGN UP TODAY // NEW SEASON MOVING TO BAILEY CAREL 2 DIVISIONS A SIGN UP									
4	YLF DONCASTER	10	5	1	4	32	23	9	11	
5	INTERYUGOSLAVIAN	10	3	0	7	22	34	-12	6	
6	VACANCY AVAILABLE - SIGN UP TODAY // NEW SEASON MOVING TO BAILEY CAREL 2 DIVISIONS A SIGN UP									

There were six teams in this 'premier division' and this is the final league table above. Two things are noticeable: DCC United ended up second, on goal difference. And only four teams are listed in the final table. This is because the remaining two teams were involved in a brawl in the course of the last match and appear to have been expelled from the league. This may indicate something of the passion with which the matches were played!

Football is full of 'if only's. No other teams had to contend with the demands of Ramadhan half way through.

We are grateful to all those who turned out for the team, to the opposition, to the match officials (who did not always have an easy job) and to the organisers.



## DCC and CAST: Working with diverse communities

By Nicola Doyle

On Monday 10th June, CAST held an event for local and regional theatres and arts professionals to share the learning from the Social Seats projects. Since the project's inception in September 2017, there have been over 500 attendances to the theatre by sanctuary seekers in partnership with DCC.

The event was attended by over 60 delegates from a range of organisations including the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Tate, Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, The Lowry, Opera North and many more.

Paul and Denise were asked to present 3 workshops for up to 25 delegates per session, exploring the issues and challenges faced by individuals who seek asylum in Doncaster. Delegates were afforded the opportunity to ask questions and explore the many barriers people face and how engaging in the arts can provide a much needed, and enjoyable, social outlet. The day explored how sanctuary seekers can benefit from taking part in workshops, performances and activities, and shared some of the challenges and opportunities that other arts organisations may benefit from being aware of.

Jan Foster also attended the event and took part in a Q&A panel taking questions from the attending organisations about how best to support sanctuary seekers. Three

people who are currently in Doncaster seeking asylum supported the workshops, and provided a personal overview of their experiences to show how taking part in theatre trips and activities had benefited them.

The feedback from the workshops was very positive, and identified the following points:

- Interesting overview
- More comments from asylum seekers as this was extremely interesting
- Really interesting - great background
- Great to meet Paul and Denise doing such important work
- Very interesting
- The topic area was fascinating
- Great to learn about the challenges faced by refugees and think about how we can involve them in the arts.

CAST are committed to becoming a Theatre of Sanctuary and working in partnership with DCC to create meaningful opportunities for engagement.

## Songs of War and Peace

By Ann Hindley

For the past five years, Doncaster Museum has been running a project about World War 1 in Doncaster and their project worker, Jude Holland, has worked closely with DCC. She has been clear that the project is not just about recording and remembering the stories of those who fought but also about those who refused to fight and those left behind.

On Wednesday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, a performance was held at CAST featuring folk singers Findlay Napier, Bella Hardy and Greg Russell, who sang songs they had written based on stories collected by the museum. Examples include the story of the women workers who had staffed the brick works for many years before the war but were forced into unemployment to make jobs available for men returning. Another concerned a soldier from Wheatley called Albert Drury, whose daughter was in the audience, and who had smuggled his dog back from the trenches to Doncaster. Many soldiers apparently adopted dogs in the trenches which were then shot as the soldiers returned home. Oswald Clark, a Quaker conscientious objector, also featured, as did a song entitled 'Thou Shalt Not Kill', questioning why this commandment no longer applies during war time.

The evening ended with a rendition of "When This Lousy War is Over" from Oh What a Lovely War. The evening could have been a glorification of war, given that it coincided with D-Day celebrations but it wasn't. It was an open and honest look at the realities of war and the impact it left on everyone involved. Not only was it an opportunity to hear some very good musicians but it evoked a range of emotions in the audience – laughter, shock, outrage and sadness at the impact of war.



## ESOL and Cooking through time

By Victoria Ryves

During June 2019, Heritage Doncaster joined forces with Doncaster Council's Adult, Family and Community Learning and Doncaster Conversation Club to put on ESOL and Cooking Through Time sessions at Central Family Hub.

In the first session we found out about Roman Doncaster and Roman soldiers. This session saw us having a go at baking Roman bread (some people didn't like it very much!) and stuffed dates. The dates were really popular with one person commenting 'I really like the dates as they are so sweet and I really like sweet things.' In the session people were also able to get hands-on with objects that were over 2000 years old that are usually kept at Doncaster Museum.

In the second week we learnt about the Vikings and Viking Doncaster. In this session we had a go at cooking a Viking soup, making our own butter by hand and baking blackberry parcels. In this session people were also able to hold a Viking shield and have a go at guessing what some Viking objects were used for.



In the final session we found out about Victorian Doncaster and Queen Victoria. This time we made

scones, which we tried with clotted cream and jam. We also tested our artistic skills and had a go at making and painting marzipan sweets. The group also made a 'salmagundy', an unusual Victorian salad made in a teacup! The scones were the favourite recipe from this week.

## Refugee Week

On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June Heritage Doncaster celebrated Refugee Week at Central Family Hub with Doncaster Conversation Club and Doncaster Council Adult, Family and Community Learning. We had a great morning of conversation, games and food from around the World, including some special treats from Zaytuna Mediterranean Cuisine. Over 25 people attended from 12 different countries.

We were joined by Civic Mayor Linda Curran, Victor Joseph from Doncaster Public Health, and representatives from CAST and other local organisations.

A special thank you has to go to Mazen and Adam who in the run up to the event spent weeks recreating Sudanese furniture for the celebration.

## Looking back at the football match

By Zarish Basil Nadeem

We were invited through Doncaster Conversation Club to watch the football match between Doncaster Rovers and Coventry teams. Well I was very excited as I have never in my life (40+ years) had a chance or opportunity to go into a football

Stadium and watch a Live MATCH. I was so happy and excited to watch the players and the match of course. The great Donny fans did not stop singing the songs and the whole stadium was singing together. When the ball and players gets closer to the goal post, me and my family and all the people on our side stand up to watch what's happening. Those moments and the whole experience was the life time, unforgettable experience for me.

During the half time, kids who escort the players came on pitch and try to score the goal while Donny the Dog defend the goals. At the same time in a corner of the pitch extra football players came out and practiced their exercise routine for all to watch. The excitement was doubled when Doncaster Rovers scored the goals and won the match by 2 : 0.

It was the lovely family fun outing which brought great joy and happiness into our life and it helped us to forget our worries and stress. It was an amazing wonderful experience. Thanks very much to Denise and Paul for organizing this for us all Asylum Seekers.

Thanks to Amnesty organisation and Keepmoat Stadium for welcoming & inviting asylum seekers to watch the matches. Thanks from the bottom of my heart.

## Sudan: suppressed news

By John Poole [Sudan Link Working Group, with long experience of travelling to Sudan]

Report dated 24 June 2019

Is anything happening in Sudan at the moment? It's all gone quiet since Hemeti's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) crushed the street protests in Khartoum on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**The internet is still down**, a common device nowadays where governments want to suppress people power, preventing activists from publishing their views. Emails, news sites, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp are all inaccessible. It is an attempt to isolate the Sudanese people from the world and to disrupt news sharing within Sudan. Phones are working. 'We struggle with verifying information. This whole situation now is creating isolated locations where we don't really know what is happening and what kind of abuses are taking place there.' 'We can't access world news sites to get an independent view of what is happening in Sudan'.

Banks and economic, educational, and media institutions rely for their work on the internet and cannot work without it. Medical professionals say the lack of internet access has made it more difficult for them to organize ways to provide care.

The block on internet access has also caused serious safety concerns by denying access to information

that could help people safely navigate roads during the current unrest. "It is dangerous now with all the RSF in the streets, and checkpoints to walk or drive around. Without internet access, we can't be warned, as used to be the case, on what streets to avoid and what are the safest routes."

The military say the internet is a threat to national security. Meanwhile they fill the vacuum with rumours and misinformation. It is a blatant repression of the rights of the very people the military council claims it wants to have a dialogue with. Access to information is crucial for the credibility of the ongoing electoral process. And journalists are still being arrested, and editors dismissed, if what they are writing is considered critical.

**The army is still on the streets**, injecting fear into daily living. In Sudan the school year begins at the end of this month. The Khartoum Teachers Committee called for schools to remain closed as the heavy military presence on the streets has a psychological and social impact on the pupils, and families have concerns and worries over their children.

A reason the military are there is because the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), the driving force behind the revolution, is still calling for comprehensive civil disobedience action until the handover of power to a civilian government, stressing that there is no reconciliation, no concession or truce and no handshake with those whom it describes as criminals. Their call is

for people to continue to set barricades in main streets and on bridges, but without guarding them, and to rebuild them if the so called 'Janjaweed and the militias of the military coup' remove them.

The military say that 'the method of closing roads and building barricades is contrary to law, customs and religion and goes beyond the limits of the practice of political action and represents full elements of crime', whilst describing the killings of June 3<sup>rd</sup> as 'unfortunate mistakes', and 'perpetrated by groups who impersonated RSF militiamen by wearing their uniforms'.

**Demonstrations are still continuing**, launched from mosques in Khartoum and in many of the state capitals. Thousands of people in Wad Madani, and thousands in Port Sudan, took to the streets on Thursday, demanding a civilian government and an independent investigation into the violent dismantling of the Khartoum sit-in on June 3.

In Kassala there were five separate protest vigils on Thursday, organised by doctors, teachers, lawyers, university lecturers, and staff of the Kassala state Ministry of Health, in front of the Kassala Teaching Hospital, the Ministry of Education, the Court, the University of Kassala, and the Health Ministry. They held banners condemning 'the massacre of the sit-in in front of the army command in Khartoum on June 3', and demanding the handover of power by the military junta to civilians.

Hundreds of employees in Sudan have been arbitrarily dismissed because they participated in the general strike after the June 3<sup>rd</sup> massacre. Doctors working at a hospital in Khartoum stopped working on Thursday evening, after having been assaulted by militiamen. They beat a doctor who refused to write a false report and then attempted to force other doctors at gunpoint to write the report. The United Doctors Office has condemned 'the systematic violence used against doctors and medical staff in public and private hospitals', and demanded the removal of the military from residential areas.

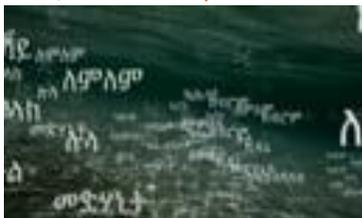
**Banks are still maintaining strict cash rationing.** Withdrawals are limited to SDG 500 (£8) per person, especially for emergencies, so traders and the public prefer to keep their cash at home, rather than deposit it into banks. That means banks are suffering a chronic shortage of hard cash.

30 June  
It is widely reported that peaceful demonstrations have resumed across Sudan.



## 'Sink without trace'

An exhibition at P21 Gallery, London, reviewed by Paul FitzPatrick



The picture above is a still from a video by Dagmawi Yimer, an Ethiopian-Italian filmmaker, in which a voice-over reads the names of all 368 people from Eritrea who drowned on 3 October 2013 off Lampedusa. The artist thus insists that their names will not be forgotten.

For otherwise it is all too likely that they would be forgotten, along with the thousands of others who have perished on the Mediterranean crossings, people who have families, who are brothers and sisters and sons and daughters, and husbands and wives.

This picture illustrates the sense of moral purpose and protest which drives this exhibition, the most comprehensive exhibition in the UK dealing specifically with the subject of migrant deaths at sea, the sea being the Mediterranean. It offers an overview of artistic engagement with this challenging, distressing and politically charged subject, featuring work by eighteen artists from ten countries, including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Israel, South Sudan, Iraqi Kurdistan and the UK. In addition to the videos and paintings, the exhibition includes found objects from shipwrecked migrant boats, as well as images of

anonymous drawing made on these boats and works made by unaccompanied minors in transit camps in Calais. It challenges the ungrievability of migrant bodies and contests our collective failure to acknowledge these deaths – a failure, one could argue, which denies a core tradition of European identity which has insisted on the duty to respect the bodies of the dead (as is still observed in the case of plane crashes or humanitarian disasters). It is as if, dare one say it, these deaths do not matter.

And this is what this exhibition challenges, powerfully and insistently.

ترك او البقا *Leave or Remain* is a found object, the remains of a migrant boat from the 'boat graveyard' in Portopalo, Sicily, where boats are usually destroyed by the authorities.

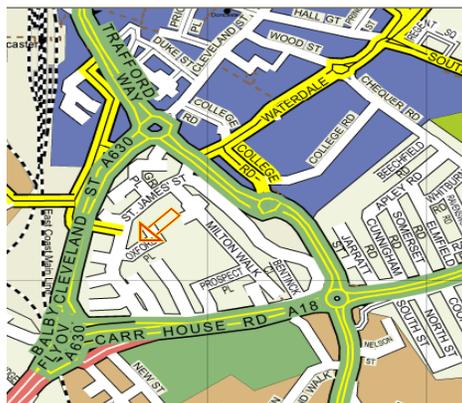


The exhibition does not avoid awkward questions – the complex relationship between an iconography of predicament and an insistence on refugee agency; or the relationship between art and political change.

We Europeans speak proudly of our traditions of humanism, of rights, of justice and of liberty: where are these to be found in the silence surrounding these completely avoidable deaths? Do we care?

# A view from the edge Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

Based at the  
Quaker Meeting House  
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To receive a copy of this newsletter by email, send a message to [Paulfitzp@aol.com](mailto: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, IAPT, St Leger Homes, Club Doncaster Foundation, Ongo, YMCA, DARTS, CAST, DEMRP, Changing Lives, The Health Bus, Fareshare, The Brelms Trust, The Ruth Hayman Trust, Doncaster Minster, Doncaster Central Library, Doncaster Museum, Doncaster Prison Bikes project and Doncaster College.**

The Doncaster Conversation Club is run entirely by volunteers with the support of occasional grants for specific activities.

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

**Paul FitzPatrick**

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Doncaster, South Yorkshire

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