



*A view from
the edge*

Doncaster
Conversation
Club
Newsletter

07 November 2019

STANDING ALONGSIDE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DONCASTER

IN THIS ISSUE

Remembrance

By Paul FitzPatrick

We didn't publish the newsletter last month. This was because I, as the compiler/editor, was preoccupied with the death of my father. He was 103 years old, born in the year of the battle of the Somme, of the Easter Rising, of the Sykes-Picot agreement and the incorporation of Darfur into Sudan by the British, events which continue to shape the contemporary world. He justly felt that in the course of his life he was able to engage in things which he found fulfilling, despite opportunities being closed off to him, and which he believed of value for the common good.

How different from the 25-year-old, as yet unnamed, Nigerian man found dead in his tent in Calais last week after lighting a fire to cook a meal and keep warm. How different from the experiences of the 39 people

found dead in a refrigerated lorry in Essex.

How different from those who lived through, or died during, the siege of Aleppo in 2016. *For Sama*, shown recently on Channel 4, unsparingly recorded the deliberate targeting of hospitals in the city, surely a war crime.

How different from those laid to rest in the Cimetière des Inconnus, in Zarzis, Tunisia.

The UN estimates 491 people have died or gone missing crossing Europe since early 2014, not including deaths in migrant camps or detention centres. Then there are the estimated 18,500 people who have died, or gone missing, crossing the Mediterranean.

All lives matter, equally.



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A visit to York

Visiting the Peak District



We (33 of us from DCC) travelled by Northern rail to Grindleford. In spite of misgivings, the trains were on time - and, as we arrived in Grindleford, so did the sun. We were met at the station by some of the Peak Park Rangers and welcomed to their offices - ten minutes walk from the station. Tom Lewis, in charge of the Park Rangers had recruited a team of 6 volunteers to accompany us for the afternoon and 2 cars from DCC carried our picnic which meant we didn't have to carry it on the train this time! This swelled our numbers to 39.

Country	Numbers
Albania	2
Cameroon	1
El Salvador	2
Eritrea	5
Ethiopia	1
Gulf region	1
India	1
Iran	3
Mauritius	1
Sudan	5
Syria	4
Togo	1
Tunisia	2
UK	8
Total	39

We ate at the Barn - basking in the sunshine outside, then splitting into several groups to walk through the park. Our hosts knew the footpaths and countryside well - so we had information about the area as well as following trails best suited to each group.

It was just a jewel of a day.

The visit

By Farouq Aldandashi

Throughout my life, I never did appreciate the countryside, never considered it as place of escape. A place where you shelter yourself from that chaotic form of life the city has created. Even so, never questioned myself why I don't find a place of nature, which has connotation of origins, calmness and serenity, a safe environment to reorganize what the city life has caused. Maybe because I always been a clumsy chaotic and very-bad-at-planning kind of a person, which suits an urban lifestyle. Also, I think that the lack of park-culture in my home country created this kind of feeling.



My lack of appreciation of the countryside and the nature started to decrease exponentially after I arrived to the UK. I have to admit, what makes a city life easier is some

green scenery. I have started to notice this due to the remarkable investment and attention to parks in the UK.

I am not here to talk about my park-culture in the UK. I am here to share with you a landmark that taught me to appreciate the countryside, and my future willingness to consider the countryside as a destination to escape the crazy urban life. The National Parks, specifically, Peak District National Park.

A trip organized by the lovely Doncaster Conversation Club (DCC) to Peak District for the asylum seekers in Doncaster in the weekend. We headed in the morning to Sheffield and from there to the national park by train. Upon our arrival, I was stuck by the fact that it is habitable. Around 38,000 people reside in Peak District. They live in their fantasy-like suburban houses, surrounded by vast amount of different kind of trees, and leftovers of old water-powered mills. The way to the Rangers' office in Peak District was a simple 10 minutes' walk in between high trees, bushes, a pub in the middle of this beauty, and by a small bridge over a stream pouring down from top of the hill. Have you seen how films depicts the magical walk in a park? Yes, it was exactly like that!

The park itself is as glamorous and lush much as the walk to reach it. We walked for around three hours; it didn't feel like it. The beauty of the park just manages to steal time and engulfs you into this luxuriant vibe that sucks you into the park for hours and hours. We passed by a climbing area by a small pond covered with leaves. This is where some world-class climbers train. This is, also, where Leo, the DCC's jumped into

the pond and splashed while barking happily.

Life seemed much simpler, time has stopped, burden was lifted while I was in Peak District. My humble attempt to describe Peak District would undermine its flourishing atmosphere and the serenity it provides. The best way to describe it, is by being there physically, indulging your senses with its magic.

This experience won't happen without the DCC people. A big, massive shout-out for them as they spend time and effort to organize and provide a welcoming environment to refugees and asylum seekers. To give them enough credit, they are the people where you feel for that hope has been restored to humanity.

Thank you very much, DCC!



DCC United in action

Learn for Life organised a football tournament at the U-Mix Centre in Sheffield on 12 October. DCC took part.



Doncaster Rovers appoint ambassador to DCC United

Doncaster Rovers striker Alfie May has been named the football club's social inclusion ambassador with a focus on supporting DCC United, the Conversation Club and people seeking asylum in Doncaster.



Alfie May in action

The 26-year-old has always been a firm supporter of Club Doncaster Foundation community programmes, but this season he has taken on an ambassadorial role for the first time and will look to better champion the work of Football Welcomes. Football Welcomes is a nationwide push by Amnesty International to use football to create common ground for people seeking asylum in a new country.

Alfie said: "I'm really looking forward to my new role and to meeting everyone at DCC United and the conversation centre. Football Welcomes is a really important project and I'm proud to be the ambassador for it.

"The club and the Foundation have put in a lot of work of the past 18 months to help ensure that people seeking asylum in Doncaster feel welcome at the football club and in the town. I'm really looking forward to meeting everyone involved."

DCC goes to York

By Christine Kyte on behalf of York City of Sanctuary

Hello! I am Christine, one of the members of York City of Sanctuary group. We want to make all visitors, especially refugees, feel welcome when they come to our city. On Saturday 5th October we met a group of visitors from Doncaster as part of our Welcome to York.



York City of Sanctuary volunteers

The visitors from Doncaster and hosts from York met over lunch at the United Reform Church hall near the ancient city walls. We were a big group and filled the hall. Some of the visitors had prepared food for us all which was lovely. It also gave us the chance to meet new people and find out a little about each other.

After the meal we split into small groups - about 6 people in each including one guide from York. We walked into the centre of York to see the Minster. At the door to the Minster, Canon Collingwood greeted us all and welcomed us to York Minster. He was interested to know which countries we were from and told us that the Archbishop of York had to flee his country of birth Uganda, and move to the UK. We then looked around the inside of the Minster which is 800 years old and famous for beautiful stained glass

windows, such as the 6th day of creation.



A couple were getting married in the Minster and a choir was singing. We also sat in the stone chairs that were used by the men who were governing England 100s of years ago. Outside the Minster we looked at the statue of Emperor Constantine and a stone column from Roman times.



Lunch

Later we walked through the old, narrow streets of York. Sometimes we looked in the shops. Sometimes we stopped to watch the street entertainers. These included a “man with no head”, and a juggler escaping from chains. There was also an opera singer outside the Mansion House where the Lord Mayor lives. We walked through the most famous street in York- The Shambles - which is full of Harry Potter shops.

We passed Clifford’s Tower which is the remains of York castle on top of a hill. We just had time to go into the Castle Museum. This is like stepping into the streets and shops of England

at the time of Queen Victoria. We got a chance to play with some old mechanical toys before heading back for the coach.

I enjoyed meeting and spending time with our visitors from Doncaster. I hope they had a good day and will come to York again.



Country	Numbers
Syria	3
Tunisia	2
Eritrea	5
Ethiopia	2
DRC	1
Iraq	13
Iran	7
Mauritius	1
India	2
Sudan	3
El Salvador	2
Zimbabwe	1
Afghanistan	2
UK volunteers	6
Total	50

Parlez francais à Doncaster!

By Ben Hales [former DCC volunteer]

French Corner is a regular meet-up of Francophiles who want to improve their French language skills.

It’s an opportunity for anyone to practise French and we’d especially welcome any native speakers who’d like to meet new people.

Beginners are welcome too – the best way to improve your foreign language skills is to practise!

We’re a small, friendly group of improving French learners. We started out at the Real Junk Food Project, and we now meet in the cosy snug room at **The Railway** pub near the station.

The next meeting is on **Saturday 16th November at 1:00pm**. You can expect French conversation, word games, and even some amuse-bouches!

We have a Facebook page – search “Speak French in Doncaster”.

A bientôt?!



FORTHCOMING DATES

15 November Leeds Playhouse, the first Theatre of Sanctuary is hosting an assembly for theatres in partnership with City of Sanctuary. 11-3 pm. The intention of the day is to support and share best practice for theatres to include people seeking sanctuary and promote welcome in the performative arts.

16 November DCC outing: a walk in Sandall Beat Wood, followed by soup at the Meeting House.

20 November Leeds Civic Hall MESH Networking event to share good practice on working with adult ESOL learners

22 November DN Light Night VIP Launch 4pm - 5pm Doncaster Minster. This year Right Up Our Street have commissioned Novak Collective and sound artist Ed Carter to create the artwork 'Tectonic', which will form the centrepiece of the festival and will be open to the public between 22nd and 27th Nov. The work has been commissioned as a unique, immersive, light and sound installation, which, through projection mapping technology, will highlight the beautiful interior of the Doncaster Minster and appear to 'play' the architecture like a musical instrument.

23 November 'Conchies' – a play about conscientious objectors in North Lincolnshire during World War II

Brief news headlines

1. Lessons Not Learned: 15 Years of Failure to Improve Asylum Decision-Making

Freedom from Torture, along with seven other leading organisations, has published a new report, *Lessons Not Learned*, which exposes the historical and systemic failures of asylum decision-making in the UK. It examines 50 reports from 17 organisations, including parliamentary committees, the United Nations, non-governmental organisations, academics and independent inspectorates. The reports identified a striking convergence of views on the fundamental causes of poor decision-making, including: flawed credibility assessments; the unrealistic and unlawful evidential burden placed on applicants; a starting point of disbelief and a broader 'refusal culture' in the ethos of the Home Office; an inadequate learning culture and a lack of independent oversight.

Source: *Freedom from Torture*

2. The Alarm Phone needs money

In 5 years the Alarm Phone project has accompanied and supported nearly 3000 boats. They pledge to continue with their hotline, until the dying at sea comes to an end! With their work they aim to create concrete corridors of solidarity. They fight for the right to freedom of movement and for equal rights for all people on this planet.

See their report on 5 years work:

<https://alarmphone.org/en/publications/anniversary-booklets/>

Source: *Alarm Phone*

3. Changes to immigration rules: third country asylum inadmissibility policy

The rules have been changed to reflect the position in the event of a no-deal Brexit, by widening the scope of the rules and ensuring continuity after the UK exit from the EU. Although the UK will no longer be able to send asylum applicants to an EU country relying on the Dublin Regulation, they may still declare a claim inadmissible on the ground that another country is the "first country of asylum". The definition of "first country of asylum" has been expanded as follows (change in bold):

A country is a first country of asylum, for a particular applicant, if:

(i) the applicant has been recognised in that country as a refugee and they can still avail themselves of that protection; or

(ii) the applicant otherwise enjoys sufficient protection in that country, including benefiting from the principle of non-refoulement; or

(iii) the applicant could enjoy sufficient protection in that country, including benefiting from the principle of non-refoulement because:

(a) they have already made an application for protection to that country; or

(b) they could have made an application for protection to that country but did not do so and there were no exceptional circumstances preventing such an application being made, and

(iv) the applicant will be readmitted to that country."

In other words, even after Brexit, if an asylum claimant passed by an EU country and claimed asylum or could have claimed asylum there, their claim in the UK may still be deemed inadmissible.

Source: *Free Movement*

A visit to Glenthorne

Joy for Mubarak and DCC family

By Abraham Mdlongwa

Lucky for some! This saying is so true of Mubarak who is originally from Sudan and was alongside 14 other members of the DCC family, selected for a weekend break at Glenthorne Quaker Guesthouse under the Welcome Project. At the time, little did he know he would get more than a holiday experience. Whilst enjoying a gentle walk on the rugged cliffs, muddy paths and highlands near Glenthorne ahead of a boat cruise on Britain's longest lake, Lake Windermere, Mubarak received a text message from his solicitors advising he had been granted refugee status. He went into a frenzy, ecstatic and visibly overwhelmed and rightly so. Like most people seeking asylum in UK who are forced to navigate a complex and often stressful asylum journey, this was a rare feel good moment of joy for Mubarak. We all shared in his excitement for this was the real deal at long last!



A day earlier on Friday 18 October, we set off from Doncaster to Glenthorne soon after midday with Julia at the wheel arriving soon after 1700 hours. John Roe accompanied by Firaz pulled in later that evening bringing in Rasha and her brother Delir. Shortly afterwards, we received a truly warm welcome from

our guests Terry and his wife Laura who took the opportunity to familiarise us with features of the guesthouse and the surroundings, plans for next two days, optional morning devotion as well as housekeeping rules. Next, we were treated to a tasty three course dinner delight which included fruit salad, lamb and almond. Kudos to the catering staff for a job well done throughout our visit!!



On Saturday after a nice continental English breakfast, we set off to nearby seaside port of Ambleside which Terry described as "the nerve centre of the lakes district" driving through Grasmere town and an adjacent lake bearing the same name. We each took along packed lunch comprising sandwich, fruit, fruit juice, crisps and a chocolate bar courtesy of the guesthouse. Once at Ambleside, we split into two groups. Led by Terry, I joined the group which went for an hour long 2 mile steep climb navigating through cliffs and highlands, some muddy paths and tracks and grass slopes some of which were slippery in the wet (guess which 2 people slipped and tumbled to the ground!!). After reaching Post Knott Viewpoint which gives a spectacular view of Windermere and has plenty of potential picnic sites, Terry declared mission accomplished and we returned to re-join the other group that remained in Ambleside touring the city. The houses in the city are

built from slate which makes them unique like houses of stone.

No doubt one major highlight of our visit was the boat cruise from Ambleside to Bowness in Lake Windermere which at 10.5 miles long, is England's longest lake. This is a guided round trip of 5 miles taking approximately 3 hours of fun and utmost bliss. The journey includes scenic and iconic sights along the way including Rabbit Garden in Hill Top Farm, a legacy from legendary English writer Beatrix Potter. In the evening, young Hadassah (Elizabeth's daughter) once again rang the bell as she had done the night before, signalling we could, once again, treat ourselves to another delightful 3 course meal.

On the last day, Sunday 20 October, the group split again after breakfast with the majority going for a 2 hour long scenic walk with Terry. Others including me opted to visit Grasmere town where we had the opportunity to attend holy mass at St Oswald's Church of England and to buy gingerbread from England's only ginger bread bakery Sarah Nelson's Grasmere Ginger Bread. Nick joined the group in the morning to pick up Delir and Rasha. Two days earlier, he had driven to Heathrow to pick up a Syrian family of 7 coming from Lebanon.

It was raining cats and dogs on our return journey in which Julia was again at the wheel, gliding us safely home in just under three and half hours. We arrived in Doncaster 1730 hours, fulfilled, happy and renewed!

What a fantastic advertisement of humanity at its best! This trip radiates love, care and compassion in action. From Terry to Laura and their staff and from Julia, John and

Nic we get a glimpse of human kindness in action and why we cannot afford to despair despite being weary from our traumatic and stressful asylum journeys! We are eternally grateful to all our volunteers and the wider DCC family.

Finally, this adventure organised and coordinated by Julia with her usual meticulous attention to detail, also made a difference in that those in the travelling party got to know each other better. We are one family – stronger together.



Waterfalls gracing the Glenthorne highlands and muddy paths

By Frances

The silence was great just after the breakfast. I and my daughter have been doing it was great. The first time my daughter enter into the boat and she enjoyed the walk with Julie. She said she enjoyed the game of UNO – lovely people she meet. A great breakfast and host. I enjoyed the mountain and different trees, listen to the birds. It was a great time for me and my daughter we really enjoyed ourself. She love the part that she has to ring the bell before people come into the dining room. At big thank you for supporting us. God bless you all.

What were the best things about the visit?

Excellent hospitality. Superb accommodation. Delicious food. Exotic boat cruise on Lake Windermere. Great walking experience. Great customer service and entertainment value including games. Terry and his team are great ambassadors for the human race. So often we struggle to find God's **angels**. We overlook the terrific work, car, love and compassion of people like Terry, Laura and their Glenthorne team.

I am really appreciate that it's everything here are the best for me. Waterbus, high mountain, sheep, river and a wonderful view. The people here are very kind, respectful, friendly. A very good service – beds, rooms. I cannot find a word to express my happiness. Thank you for your generosity, support, love.

The best thing, I like the place. First of all on my way to Grasmere the views was amazing and beautiful – first time ever in my whole life. I had such a wonderful time with friends from DCC groups. I feel myself was in a different world. This place is very good to relax and go for a nice walks around the village. A lots of mountain and forest and lakes.

I liked the mountains and the hills – everything which is natural. I met very good people and the service was good. People were respectful and more friendly. I loved everything here. I would like to come back again.

The view of mountains, nature and being with the people full of laughter, love and just being free with no-one judging anyone. I found peace within myself.

I liked the services and the mountain. Splendour in beauty and the trip was very beautiful and good steamer.

I was chosen to be one of this group. The best things for me is the lakeside and the hike and the mountain. I am so happy with the hospitality of the place. Nice room and nice food. So thank you so much.

It made me very happy when I saw the very natural places and the very attractive views. It felt very relaxing.

I loved the hills and the mountains. I liked the ship ride, the lake and the walk on the hills and mountains. It was very interested views of the places. I enjoyed about the village and the lake. They were very good people and friendly. This trip made me very happy to meet a lot of very good people.

How has it helped you?

The first thing it makes me very happy to visit this place. I liked the food and the people. I do not like the Home Office house I live in. There is a big difference with this house and my house. The service from the staff was very good. I like the bed and the room . When I saw the ship I was very happy because I remembered the ship which took me out of Libya to Italy.

I was very stressed and now I feel calmer. I came here with good people. I now feel closer to the friends I have come with.

It has help my daughter to know she can have a good life like other children.

It helped me by being together like a family. It was my first time in a boat.

A view from the edge Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

Based at the
Quaker Meeting House
Off St James St
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, 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

Doncaster Conversation Club
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