



A view from the edge

Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

05 August 2021

STANDING ALONGSIDE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DONCASTER

IN THIS ISSUE

Unity in a bowl of soup

By Julie Page

What does a bowl of soup mean to you? It's a simple meal, but wholesome, and while you cradle your bowl, perhaps you don't realise it, but you are engaged in an act that resonates through history and cultures. Take for instance the humble chickpea. It's a common ingredient, but it might surprise you to know that as well as the Indonesian chickpea soup I enjoyed today, this superstar of the pulse world features in most if not all of the diverse culinary cuisines represented by the DCC community. It's small but mighty: packed with protein, fibre, other nutrients, and a low glycaemic index.

The chickpea is one of the earliest cultivated legumes, having been domesticated at least 9500 years ago, in southeast Turkey. Its use gradually spread across West Asia, the Mediterranean region and India,

by 3000BCE. If you survey the cuisines of the world, the chickpea, or chana or garbanzo, features in most vegetarian and vegan traditions. It seems that this modest pulse has had quite a role in building bridges between different cultural groups.

Let's finish our soup in the company of a well-known polymath. Leonardo da Vinci may well have enjoyed a bowl of chickpea soup. This may have had something to do with his family connections. The genius of Leonardo is traditionally viewed as the epitome of European achievement, but there is rather more to his story. His grandfather, Antonio, in whose home he was raised, regularly had contact with the Arab world.

Geographical cultivation is spread across time and the globe. In a small but tasty way, this is unity.



A visit to Scunthorpe

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RNLI to the rescue

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The Ground Beneath Our Feet Part Two

By Sarah Villeneau

“It’s like having a baby!”



This article follows on from a piece I wrote in October 2020 for this newsletter about the project I was embarking on with asylum seekers in Doncaster, giving them the opportunity to work with clay.

The work produced will be on show in the town alongside numerous other projects that took place throughout lockdown. The exhibition is from 5th August - 29th September and will also be featured as part of Artbomb, a four-day Festival of art events in the town 5th - 8th August. The Opening Night is 5th August 5-30 - 8-00 pm. Details can be found at <https://www.artbombfestival.com/>

The project took place between September 2020 and January 2021. Although I had been really anxious about how this project would be received given Covid restrictions and working remotely, this turned out to be one of the most rewarding projects I have ever worked on and I am quite sure that the benefits to me were

as great as to the participants. It kept us all going through lockdown.

I was completely bowled over by the enthusiasm, dedication and ingenuity of the participants - their engagement far exceeded my expectations....in fact, it felt a bit like the floodgates had opened and they couldn't seem to get enough of working with the clay. None of them had done pottery before and most of them said they had never done any kind of art, although a bit of probing revealed that they had of course participated in creative activities like singing and dancing, and craftwork in textiles and wood. Considering this and the fact that English is not their first language, they were exceptionally articulate about the benefits:

“It takes away stress - it makes you think of positive things - you think about what you’re going to make and how, instead of thinking about the things you cannot change.”

“It brings out the creative mind. You realise you have that imagination. You start conceiving all these other ideas of what you can do.”

“It was a social activity that kept our hands and minds busy on something that was not corona.”

“It’s good to learn by doing.”

“When I wake up I dream about what I can make.”

“We’ve never done it before, but for the first time everyone was busy together.”

And my favourite: “It’s like having a baby!”

At the end of the project I produced some ‘stones’ which I took back to the participants to squeeze, leaving their handprints in clay. These will also be on display.

I feel so lucky to have met these kind, generous, open and friendly souls who wholeheartedly embraced this opportunity with such thoughtfulness and care. It was good to hear, also, that they found Doncaster a warm and welcoming town.

Two pieces from the project are on show in the new Danum Gallery Library and Museum as part of The Story of 2020, a record of activities that took place during lockdown.

I would love to be able to continue working with asylum seekers and refugees and am looking at ways to take this forward. If any readers can offer ideas about this, please get in touch.

This project was funded by funded by Doncaster Creates and Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust.

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Well, Hello Sunshine!

By Andrea Banegas

What a warm welcome from Scunthorpe and specially from the North Lincolnshire Sanctuary group, I was so thrilled for this very well-timed picnic. Myself and Didi (Audrey, my baby) and the Caceres family enjoyed it with them.



We were received by Vicky, Irene and Dave, they show as the way to Central Park. It was an exquisite walk, we stop for some tourist pictures at the Pods. Sophia, Beth and her daughter Naomi were expecting us already there; later on Hugh, Doris, Carly and Beth's husband arrived to meet us.

Our picnic on our sunny day was more than we expected. I mean, who gets the chance to do so many things in one warm afternoon? We meet an awesome archaeologist and artist (Irene) that has been in some Mayan ruins near our country, we dance our typical Garifuna music

with Vicky who organised our trip, Mavis Caceres and her husband Leo rode Doris and David bikes around the park like 2 love birds, we even got a private guitar concert from Josh a cool guy we met when we were taking pictures at a Lilies Pond at the Pod on our way to the park and he then joined us, the kids played soft tennis and Beth got them some ice cream. We lost track of time with all the fun we were having.

We headed back to the train station not before visiting the beautiful fountain that was full of kids splashing water to cool off in the heat and I personally stopped to take a picture of some lavender and little garden next to a bench.

The most gratifying feeling we have from this picnic trip it is definitely to be included, and that's something anyone can agree with. I guess no matter if you are from here or faraway we all want to feel we belong, and these two amazing organisations (the Conversation Club and the Sanctuary group) know how to do it for sure.



Get Ready with Pedal Ready!

By Solav Mohammed

Fancy biking, but cannot ride a bike? Or you want to build confidence to cycle on complex routes? The learn to ride properly with the help of a friendly and patient trainer.

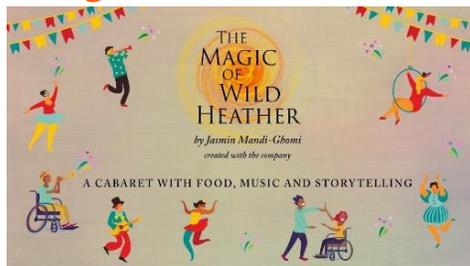
Pedal Ready is a 'bikeability' programme which was set up around 2007. They are twelve trainers. They first trained children from school, aged 10-11 years old. Now they train adults in Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster.

They first start training in the parks, then help cyclists to become confident on roads. They train in both Sandall Park and Woodfield Park, on Saturdays and Wednesdays.

There is no need to pay. They offer free bikes and free tuition. The training is paid by DMBC and a bike is included to learn on. All the instructors are fully trained and DRB-checked. They are qualified first aiders and carry a First Aid kit.

The idea is to get people healthier and to cut down on car usage. All you need to do is email admin@pedalready.co.uk. Then they ask you to register on their website, book you a lesson and have FUN.

Coming to CAST: The Magic of Wild Heather



The Magic of Wild Heather is a cabaret which incorporates food, music and storytelling.

The story is co-created by members of the Public Acts community company and features performances from local artists.

The Magic of Wild Heather is a community performance project through the National Theatre's Public Acts program to create extraordinary acts of theatre and community.

Five community organisations across Doncaster, B:Friend, Doncaster Conversation Club, Edlington Community Organisation, Cast Young Company and Darts, have been taking part in the programme.

Rehearsals are under way.



Tickets for *The Magic of Wild Heather* are pay what you decide and audiences are invited to share a celebratory feast on Cast's main stage whilst celebrating a long-

forgotten story, mixed with movement and a sprinkle of magic.

The show was written by Jasmin Mandi-Ghomi, directed by James Blakey and designed by Hannah Sibai.

The creative team is completed by composer musicians Hayley Yule and Nick Lewis, plus filmmaker Ranjish Madaan.

Performances will take place on Saturday and Sunday, 28 – 29 August, on CAST's main stage.

Seating is unreserved, and will be allocated on arrival. The event will adhere to government guidelines around social distancing. CAST are currently planning for the audience to be at full capacity.

Tickets are pay what you decide, the experience will be the same with whichever option you choose, and the experience includes the opportunity to share food and drink with the company.

Transformation

By Julia Burne

Rebwar came here with his family in 2017. I have vivid memories of going on a trip with them 9 months later when they were in fear of deportation. Somehow they got through the system – and were granted Leave to Remain in 2020 after 2.5 years of waiting.

They have worked hard since then – dad working long hours and at the same time making a home. They were given a very run down council house with a jungle of a garden – the

family apparently cried when they first saw the house as it looked so inhospitable.



But now – they are growing vegetables, have neighbours they can count on and a beautiful home inside and out.

There is hope – don't give up.



Donny Doodles

11. Funding for Stainforth

Stainforth has been awarded £21.6 million in funding for projects as part of the Government's Towns Fund, which has been providing Town Deals of up to £25 million, or more in exceptional circumstances, to towns in order to foster economic regeneration, stimulate investment and deliver vital infrastructure. The Towns Fund will invest £3.6 billion into over 100 towns, as part of the government's plan 'levelling up' agenda. A list of the confirmed Town Deal offers for all 101 places invited to develop proposals was published on 15 July.

It would be very interesting to compare these 101 towns with those which are designated as asylum dispersal areas. Stainforth now contains seven asylum houses.

The projects in Stainforth which the money will cover include:

Station gateway

This proposal will aim to transform the gateway between the station and the town by creating a better 'arrival experience'. A bespoke replacement overbridge of 'architectural significance' is planned.

Town centre hub

This scheme will focus on improving the 'sense of place and support business growth' in the town centre. It includes a raft of initiatives including streetscape and shop front improvements, a new civic space and a new community hub to 'drive

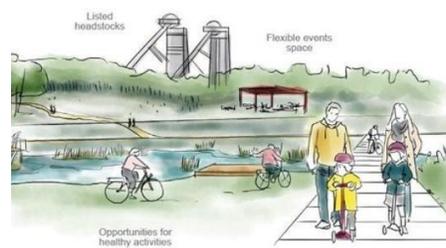
footfall to the town and support the regeneration of Stainforth'.

Activated network

Council bosses are also planning an enhanced street network in Stainforth which aims to create a 'safer and more attractive place helping to support regeneration and growth'.

The new CCTV network is also hoped to deter crime and anti-social behaviour along the new link connecting East Lane with the Unity Way roundabout.

Headstock Park



This project will result in the former colliery headstocks restored to become a site and visitor centre. New infrastructure will aim to unlock employment land and a new country park will provide new green space for outdoor events and activities.

The award has been welcomed by local politicians and business leaders.

Ros Jones, Mayor of Doncaster, said: "The funding will make a positive difference for Stainforth, benefiting local residents, businesses and visitors. We have ambitious plans to transform all parts of our borough and tapping into this Government funding is going to see a number of vital projects totally change the look and feel of Stainforth and bring

renewed pride to the area. It's going to help take Stainforth to a new level and is exciting times for the community."

Doncaster North MP Ed Miliband, said: "We welcome this funding and are glad that the government has listened to the strong calls we made to Robert Jenrick the Local Government Secretary last month for this money to be brought forward. Money from the Towns Fund will not excuse continued austerity which will continue to undermine the local services people in Stainforth desperately need and deserve. This is just the start of what is needed to tackle the deep inequality in our country."

Stainforth businessman John Roe and chair of the Stainforth Town Deal Board, said: "The Town Fund is a once-in-a generation lifeline from the Government to help 'Level-up' Stainforth. It's an exciting and inspirational bundle of projects designed to kick start a process to reverse decades of decline and neglect since the closure of Hatfield Main.

"In the coming weeks and months, the Town Deal Board will be reaching out to everyone in the local community to get behind the Fund and work together to make Stainforth a vibrant and connected town with good jobs, a healthy environment and a great future.

"Thanks to all the Board and community members for their hard work and dedication in securing the funding, and to the Government for recognising our needs. Now the heavy lifting begins as we enter the Delivery Stage and bring lasting improvements to Stainforth."

Less reported news

1. The Refugee Olympic Team



The Refugee Olympic team is competing in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The Refugee Olympic Team's official acronym is EOR, based on the French name: équipe olympique des réfugiés.

The 29 Olympians in the team come from Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Eritrea, Venezuela, Iran, Afghanistan, and Cameroon.

The team will compete in 12 sports, including athletics, badminton, boxing, canoeing, cycling, judo, karate, taekwondo, shooting, swimming, weightlifting, and wrestling.

The team has increased in size since 2016, from 10 to 29 members. This is also the first year that there is a Refugee Paralympic Team.

2. Deaths in asylum accommodation

More than 50 people have died in Home Office asylum seeker accommodation in the last five years, with the number increasing steeply over the past 18 months. Three babies are recorded to have died, as well as three people who died as a result of Covid and four who killed themselves. Some of the deaths were because of health conditions such as heart problems, cancer or stroke. The 51 deaths, recorded in Home Office data and provided through a

freedom of information request by The Guardian, date back to April 2016 with the most recent documented in June 2021. The causes of 31 of the 51 deaths, however, remain unconfirmed. The Home Office does not provide a year-on-year breakdown of the deaths in the FoI response, but does state that between February and June 2021 there were seven deaths. A separate FoI request by the Guardian revealed that there were 29 deaths in 2020. This suggests there were 15 deaths between 2016 and 2019.

Source: The Guardian 25 July 2021

3. Sudan Cabinet decides to hand Darfur war crimes accused to ICC

June 27 - 2021 KHARTOUM In a 'unanimous decision', Sudan's Cabinet has pledged to hand former officials indicted for war crimes in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, the Netherlands.

The decision shortly follows the visit to Sudan and Darfur by outgoing ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, during which she stressed the necessity of handing over former Minister of the Interior Ahmed Haroun, accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, to the ICC before the end of July so that he can be tried along with Ali Abdelrahman (Kushayb).

Sudan's Minister of Federal Governance, Buseina Dinar, confirmed the cabinet decision, saying that 'the unanimous decision is aimed at establishing peace and stability in the country'. She assured a press conference in Khartoum that "the court needs to resolve its procedures".

Source Radio Dabanga

4. Home Secretary Priti Patel has defended a new £54.2m deal with France to stem the rising number of 'migrants'

crossing the English Channel.

The number of people crossing the Channel this year is now more than the total for all of 2020.

She denied it was "sending good money after bad" after a £28.2m deal last November failed to limit crossings.

Calais MP Pierre-Henri Dumont suggested it would not have an impact as the French coastline is too long to patrol.

Giving evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, Ms Patel said it was an "evolving situation", with the numbers of those attempting the crossing having "increased considerably".

Recently, at least 430 'migrants' crossed the Channel - a record for one day. The previous daily high of 416 was set in September last year. Subsequently, a group was seen arriving at Dover, bringing the total number this year to more than the 8,461 who made the crossing in 2020.



Dan O'Mahoney, clandestine channel threat commander, said:

"We have doubled the number of police officers on the ground in France, leading to more interceptions and arrests."

French authorities intercepted seven small boats, preventing 129 people making the crossing on a single day. The Nationality and Borders Bill will make it a crime to knowingly arrive in the UK without permission, punishable by a prison sentence of up to four years.

Book Review

Crossing

*How We Label and React
to People on the Move*



REBECCA HAMLIN

Crossing: How we label and react to people on the move

By Rebecca Hamlin

Stanford University Press 2021

ISBN: 978-1503627871

By Paul FitzPatrick

This is a timely, stimulating and deeply challenging book for all who wish to support refugees. At a time when more restrictive policies for admission are proposed, and when the Refugee Convention is rhetorically supported but subverted in practice, Hamlin looks again at the contested concept of 'the refugee'.

She argues against advocacy positions which cling to the sharp binary between refugees (often also identified as forced migrants, politically motivated, and deserving of support) and economic migrants (often identified as voluntary migrants and economically motivated, who can thus be legitimately excluded by potential host states). The reality is much more complex, if only because economic development, political corruption and armed conflict are closely linked processes. The migrant-refugee binary, she argues, is deeply damaging for all people on the move.

This distinction rests on three assumptions which she finds questionable: that refugees and migrants have distinct and distinguishable motivations for crossing borders; that refugees are the neediest among the world's border crossers; and that true refugees are rare, for refugees represent only 10% of the world's border crossers.

She pursues the workings of this binary contrast in academic studies, in global refugee institutions (UNHCR), and in policy debates in actual crossing situations, such as Syrians in the Middle East, Venezuelans in Latin America (the largest-scale displacement in the history of the Western Hemisphere, but little noticed in the media of the Global North), and the so-called 'crisis' of arrivals in Europe between 2014 and 2018.

Academic studies include a discussion of the historical roots of the refugee concept, which I found subtle and informative. While the act of seeking protection is ancient, the idea that an individual is 'a refugee' is not. Hospitality to foreigners in the ancient world stemmed from a kind of moral obligation which was not a function of state sovereignty. There was no concept of a refugee as a distinct category of border crosser before the modern period. But the link between modernity and the invention of the refugee can also be misunderstood. The persecuted Huguenots were highly skilled artisans and therefore economically valuable, and their admission did not create an official process for receiving people. It continued to be the case that some forms of displacement were linked with being 'refugees' while others were not. The birth of the modern European state did not immediately coincide with tight border control. It was the end of empire, not its rise, that led to the peak of anxiety about borders and containment.

The earliest version of the refugee concept emerged as the Westphalian system was altered by the decline of the colonial project, increased global mobility in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the rise of ethno-nationalism that these two phenomena produced. Decolonization is thus a key moment in the construction of the refugee concept.

So, what's to be done, especially when insisting that people are refugees does not make states more open to receiving them? Hamlin is well aware that (some) advocates will find her arguments woefully misguided and will put refugees at risk. Her contrasting fear is that the binary logic she has exposed makes harsher border control measures more palatable to the general public, precisely because they will exclude the non-deserving. It justifies restrictions on the mobility of people from less powerful states to wealthier states with little regard for their level of need, thus justifying border control, so long as it makes some rare exceptions for refugees. She argues that it is difficult to distinguish refugees as uniquely deserving group without discrediting the deservingness of other border crossers. Language which suggests that most border crossers are migrants posing as refugees allows cruelty to take place within a framework that pays lip service to protecting refugees.

Her study highlights the roles of borders and border controls, and she wants states to accept their responsibility for displacement. An active commitment to using non-binary language, even in simple forms such as 'all are welcome' can herald new possibilities for protecting those in great need.

A view from the edge Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

Based at the

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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, 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.

Paul FitzPatrick

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