



NEWSLETTER 3 • SUMMER/AUTUMN 2012

## Too early to think about `Harvest`?

No! Much of the food and other supplies we give to our clients during the year come from the generous Harvest gifts and offerings of local schools and churches. They plan their activities and giving in advance and so now is a good time to remind all of our supporters **how much we depend on these gifts** and what the most pressing needs are.

Here is a list of those items most badly needed (top priority in bold):

- **Nappies – all sizes**
- **Washing powder**
- Washing up liquid
- Rice
- Biscuits
- Breakfast cereals
- **Tinned tomatoes**
- **Tinned goods** especially meat, fish, fruit and veg
- **Coffee**
- Tea bags
- Sugar
- Toiletries.

If you are able to donate any or all of the above (at any time of the year), please contact Joy Hobbs on 01923 228171.



Please join  
us at our **WTRRP**  
**Summer**  
**Garden Party**

on 10 June 2.30 to 4.30 pm  
at 43 Parkside Drive, Watford  
WD17 3AU

**Afternoon tea with cream  
teas including home  
made scones!**



## Annual General Meeting 2012

**Our AGM was held in February and we were honoured to have the Revd Professor Nicholas Sagovsky as our guest speaker. Dr Sagovsky's chosen subject was Refugee Rights and Asylum Wrongs – a summary of his talk is outlined below.**

Nicholas Sagovsky was previously the canon theologian of Westminster Abbey, was a Commissioner on the Independent Asylum Commission, and currently works for the Helena Kennedy Foundation.

Nicholas started by saying that he was touched his late mother was passionate about asylum seekers and refugees as she herself was a refugee. Nicholas congratulated Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Group for continuing to support refugees and asylum seekers.

Nicholas divided his talk into two sections: refugee rights and asylum wrongs.

### Refugee rights

We should be grateful and proud that we have an asylum system in the UK, and he emphasised the need to treat people as 'fully human'.

Nicholas explained the history behind refugee rights – the principle that there is a right and a wrong way to treat people and that this should be the yardstick or standard. Modern human rights stemmed from the

aftermath of the second world war when a consensus emerged that people should be treated fairly. This was stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 with which the Human Rights Act 1998.

He said that the UK should be proud of our record on how we treat people who come here stating that they have been persecuted, and the fact that they are given a fair hearing and judgement. Refugees continue to enrich our society. However, in practice the asylum system is not clear enough.

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the Human Rights Act 1998 were brought in, we didn't realise the numbers of people who would choose to migrate to the UK. Nicholas commented that 'a well-founded fear of persecution' is the basis for allowing asylum and the difficulty around making decisions about this. Is the person's 'fear of persecution' well-founded, for example. Another issue is that some people do not have evidence of persecution – these are complex issues.

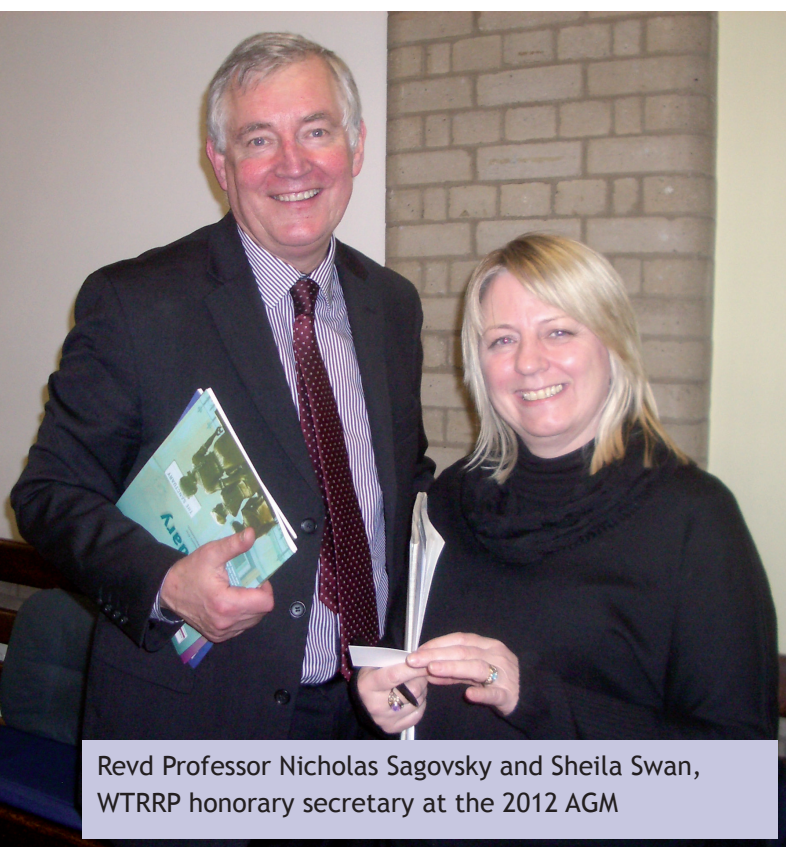
### Asylum wrongs

Nicholas noted that if the word 'asylum' was changed to 'sanctuary', the response to the surveys was more compassionate. The Saving Sanctuary report gave 192 recommendations to the UK Border Agency and he reported that they have taken some into practice.

Nicholas felt that the UK Border Agency is not the best government department to be handling asylum claims as this is a bolt-on function to their main focus on protecting the public from drug trafficking, mafia-type activities and protection of our borders.

Nicholas said that it is important for organisations to avoid giving legal advice. Help can be given by supporting the claimants and accompanying them to tribunals for example. It is also important to have a plan B if claimants are completely refused asylum eg prepare them for returning home. He also said that sometimes returning home might be a good decision. He added, 'We shouldn't make UKBA our enemy.'

Nicholas was asked, has asylum for children and young people improved? In his experience with the Yarlwood detention centre, progress is mixed. Social workers are now involved in decision making for them because of the Baby P 'Every Child Matters' report. Smaller numbers of children and young people are now being detained. Nicholas also commended accompanying clients to tribunals, something which WTRRP volunteers are increasingly doing.



Revd Professor Nicholas Sagovsky and Sheila Swan, WTRRP honorary secretary at the 2012 AGM



## What have our volunteers been doing?

Our volunteers are the backbone of WTRRP and between them, in addition to friendship and delivery of foods parcels, carry out a wide variety of tasks in support of our clients. Here are some examples from the last six months:

- Escorting clients (and children, on occasions) to tribunal hearings, or meetings with solicitors or Red Cross to Liverpool, Birmingham, Feltham, Luton and Rayners Lane
- Taking a client and her little girl swimming
- Helping a client and her little boy move house (many car loads)
- Acting as `birth partner` to a client and helping her with visits to hospital and with accommodation problems
- Supporting a client at a `children in need` meeting with Social Services
- Putting up curtain rails
- Provision of furniture and other goods to various clients ( including a table and chairs, a high-chair, a cot, a bike, and a baby `buggy`)
- And a whole lot more.

## What does the Committee do?

We meet every couple of months and address the sort of issues that all small charity committees address (recruitment, money, publicity, and `governance` more generally). Current more specific issues include:

- Setting up a web-site
- Organising a meeting with a representative of BRASS (Bedford Refugee and Asylum Seekers Support) with a view to exchanging ideas and good practice
- Investigating the possible setting up of some sort of English language coaching for some of our clients
- Investigating a relationship with the Watford Food Bank, which is currently being developed
- Development of a volunteer handbook
- Authorising grants to two clients in support of their nationality applications and to a third in respect of her rent
- Simplification of our constitution, which is currently more appropriate for running the United Nations than a small local voluntary body!)
- And a whole lot more, too.

## Party on!

Why do we have parties? Our clients' lives are really hard emotionally, financially and physically so it's great for them and their children to meet up and have time together. And we had a party at St Luke's church in February.

Many joined in games, had as much food as they could eat, got to know each other and realise yet again that they are no different to other people even though their status makes them feel so. 21 adults and 19 children attended plus six volunteers.

A wonderful spread had been provided by Joy, Eva and Aneira, greatly assisted by Rebecca Palmer (lavishly supplying crisps) from Watford New Hope Trust, delicious fruit platters from Seema, and Joy's house group providing cakes.

Eva and Aneira had organised a boisterous collection of games which the children especially enjoyed. The party bags were received as real treats, thanks to Eva and Aneira's purchases.

STOP PRESS: We will be holding another party at Cheslyn Gardens, Watford on 1 September at **2.30 to 4.30 pm**. You will be given a warm welcome.

## Volunteer coordinator URGENT!

As WTRRP has become more comprehensive and is reaching more people we need support with our volunteers and administration.

We are looking for someone who can help to coordinate the volunteers. This involves processing applications, keeping in touch with volunteers through text, telephone and email, ensuring volunteers are safe (training needs come in here) and are happy in their role, assisting volunteers with expenses claims and keeping them involved in the work of the project.

Compiling statistics would also be helpful so that we are accountable to our donors.

Our organisation needs your professional touch. Do consider approaching Joy Hobbs 01923 228171 about the need. Hours would be very flexible and only a few a week.

Thank you for reading this.



## Watford & Three Rivers Refugee Project

### What do we do?

- Befriend asylum seekers and refugees (our clients)
- Give practical help – food, toiletries, nappies etc
- Help in finding accommodation
- Work with the statutory authorities on our client's behalf
- Publicise the plight of our clients

### What you can do to help

- Become a volunteer, befriend and offer practical support
- Donate canned/dried food, toiletries, nappies and other basic household items
- Donations, large or small, to support our work (donations to WTRRP treasurer, 23 Kingsfield Road, Watford WD19 4PP, 01923 460508)

If you can help, or if you need to refer a client please contact **01923 252434**.

## Watford & Three Rivers Refugee Project Standing Order Instructions

If you use online banking: Please set up your standing order and complete sections B and C

If you do not use online  
banking:

Please complete all sections (A, B and C)

Return this form to WTRRP, c/o Chris Carter, 23 Kingsfield Rd, Watford WD19 4PP

### Section A

To the manager.....Bank plc

ADDRESS.....

.....POSTCODE.....

Please pay to Watford & Three Rivers Refugee Project at:  
Lloyds TSB Bank plc, Edgware Branch  
P O Box 1000, BX1 1LT

Sort code    30-98-07        Account        03770168

### Section B

The sum of    £..... (figures) (.....) (words)

commencing on the .....day of .....20..... and a like sum:

(annually) (quarterly) (monthly) until (notified)/.....20.....  
(delete as appropriate)

This order cancels all existing standing orders in favour of the Watford & Three Rivers Refugee Project

SIGNED.....DATE.....

### Section C

ADDRESS.....

.....POSTCODE.....

Account name.....

Sort code.....Account number.....