

AUTUMN NEWS

Our volunteer run organisation provides friendship and assistance to Asylum Seekers, Refugees and non EEC migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

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WTRRP.ORG.UK



INCONVENIENT TRUTHS

With migrants and refugees regularly jumping to the top of the news agenda, a change in the conversation is overdue to correct some of the claims and assertions about those escaping from oppression, war and persecution through to female genital mutilation.

We need good journalism to shape a better world. Here are some of the substantiated truths:

62% of migrants who reached Europe by boat were from Syria, Eritrea, and Afghanistan, fleeing from war, dictatorial oppression and religious extremism – these are not economic migrants.

1% of migrants who have arrived in Europe so far this year made their way to Calais – not a major destination.

0.027% represent the number of migrants of Europe's total population who have arrived so far this year in Europe – very small percentage of Europe's 750 million population.

1.2 million of the Syrian refugees are in Lebanon, which has a total population of 4.5 million – it is Lebanon that has a refugee crisis, not Europe!

The UK is not a magnet for refugees - just 26,000 sought asylum and less than half were accepted in 2014 – Turkey has 1.6 million by comparison



IMPORTANT NOTICE AND DIARY DATE 2017

AGM: Monday 20th Feb at 7.30 pm

**Nascot Wood Recital Hall
Nascot Junior School WD17 4YS**

We are pleased to invite you all to join us at our AGM in February. The usual formalities and business proceedings will be supplemented with some stories from our clients, and also from our volunteers who provide all the ingredients to make sure Watford and Three Rivers is as welcoming and supportive a place to refugees and migrants, as we all can make it. As part of our tribute to our hardworking team of volunteers, there will be a special recognition to John Shaw who will be standing down as a Committee Member after 10 years of service.

We are thrilled that Dame Helen Hyde will be our guest speaker.

Dame Helen is a well-known figure in Watford, having recently retired as

Headmistress of Watford Girls' Grammar School. She received the DBE for her services to education and as a holocaust educator. Only recently Lord Alton reminded Parliament of the origins of the Human Rights Act – Article 18 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) which came into being as the aftermath of the second world war and the Holocaust. In the short debate on Article 18, Lord Alton said in his summary *'we should be proud of the freedoms we enjoy and must work hard to achieve the same freedoms for all'*.

So Dame Helen Hyde as our guest speaker will no doubt in her talk refer to her all-consuming desire to help others in this way.



Look out too for our 2016 Annual Report which will be published on our website in early January as well as being posted out in printed form. But do also come to our AGM in February and bring your friends. All are very welcome as we explain – among many other things – how we work in partnership with other organisations to support our clients in rebuilding their lives and in encouraging them to play an active role in our community.



GREAT PARTY AND GREAT PARTY SPIRIT

Refugees and migrants are often seen as statistics or news stories full of misery, but anyone who came to St. Mary's Church, Watford on Saturday 17 September for our family party, would have seen a hall full of children and grown-ups, having fun from taking part in traditional party games that remain a big hit like Pass the Parcel, Musical Islands, and Musical Statues to name a few – timeless and old fashioned fun. But this was a bigger and better party based on sheer numbers present – more came than ever before – over 100)

A key moment – food! A mountain of it, plenty for everyone and so everybody tucked in with a will. Anything left over was gratefully carried off by our clients, and not a crumb remained. And then party bags for everyone to round off a hugely successful party. Pinner Liberal Synagogue is hosting another party for our clients on Mitsuah Day (in the Jewish tradition of giving your time to benefit others in society). So the countdown to the next family party on Sunday November 27th has already begun!



1 - Dame Helen Hyde 2, 3 - Summer Party Scenes 4 - WTRRP Volunteers Front Cover - Party snacks

WE ARE NOW WTRRP '60'

WTRRP now has 60 volunteers who are a mixture of experienced hands and new recruits – but all with amazing fortitude and commitment. Gone is the stereotype volunteer of a person with time on their hands. Our 60 volunteers come from many walks of life, all ages, many backgrounds, numerous occupations, and with a range of available time ranging from a couple of hours every day, or just available to help at parties or otherwise 'now and again'.

The enthusiasm to volunteer has been infectious especially over the last year with the sharp and unnerving pictures in the media. Still more volunteers are needed: especially caseworkers (who provide advocacy, help with access to statutory or community support) and those with a legal background (or willing to learn about immigration law). We also have other openings involving training, copy-writing or even joining the removal team rota! Please contact our volunteer co-ordinator Marie-Jo Churchill for more information if you feel you could help in any of these areas or others. Marie-Jo can be contacted on marie-jo@wtrrp.co.uk

A huge thank-you to Guy Buckler who has stepped down as our Drop-In Centre Co-ordinator. Guy has done a terrific job with our volunteer team in creating this friendly setting at St John's Church where our clients can be open about their circumstances in the safe knowledge that they will be welcomed and listened to as well as receiving practical help. We are delighted that Paul Tucker and Ruth Jinadasa have taken over this role and especially for their willingness to commit time and care to this chief WTRRP undertaking.

HOME OFFICE IMMIGRATION FEES RISE AGAIN

For many years, Asylum seekers from countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iran, Afghanistan, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Somalia, Turkey, Congo, Sudan, Angola, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Kenya, Algeria, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe have sought asylum in the UK.

They have brought with them a wealth of skills, language, experience and knowledge. Yet successive UK governments have tried to restrict their access here and create harsher conditions in

an attempt to curb potential new comers.

Whilst many fees increased last year and also earlier this year, a **500% increase in tribunal fees – from £150 to over £850** – is now being implemented for those who are not classified as 'destitute', defined in law as someone who has no money or property. Whilst many of our clients meet this criteria, the solicitors are often unsuccessful when they apply on their behalf.

High fees like this appear to be designed to have a deterrent effect, and they are simply unaffordable now for some families.

HARVEST FESTIVAL - TINS AND PACKAGED FOOD ON THE MENU!

Harvest Festival time remains as popular as ever especially in schools and churches. Where fresh flowers, perishable produce and wheatsheaves previously dominated, there is now an emphasis on bringing tinned food and packets to celebrate harvest. These extra harvest supplies continue to be essential for boosting our stocks, which we now hold and distribute from – and in cooperation with – the Watford foodbank

We are extremely appreciative of all these harvest gifts that have been collected this year; and sincerely wish to thank all the innumerable kind-hearted people from schools: parents, children, and teachers, and indeed all those connected with the churches for their outpouring of generosity once again.



SUPPORTERS, HOW YOU CAN GIVE & MORE

FUND RAISING IS 'ON THE GO'

We are fortunate to have volunteering friends at WTRRP who do a fantastic job raising funds for WTRRP through a variety of activities.

Immense thanks and well done to Manju Anand and colleague who recently raised **£700** and **£641** respectively from their Walk Marathon challenge with Discover Adventure. Manju tells the story:

Every year thousands of people flood the streets of London to do this Walk Marathon, whatever the weather. Thankfully the weather was firmly on our side when on Sat 24th September, my colleague and I joined people of all shapes, ages and fitness levels, all walking for their chosen charity.

The intense preparation, dedication and discipline were now mercifully behind us and the time had finally arrived to put it all into practice! So having enjoyed a sausage bap and coffee, map in hand and an adrenaline rush, we set off from Burgess Hill Park in South London and walked the Monopoly Board, taking in the iconic landmarks, peaceful parks and waterways through the historic heart of London, fully supported by the Discover Adventure crew.

You meet lots of determined people, enjoy the banter and give help to some along the way. It's not easy, but it wasn't supposed to be. Hours and hours of walking, 5 hours for



1 Manju Anand

some and over 10 hours for others but together and with the support of fellow walkers and spurred on by my sponsors, we just kept walking to the finish line when the urge to just stop walking immediately hit! But not a blister in sight!

THE ROARING GIRL

St Michael and All Angels Church raised a great **£155** for WTRRP from a dazzling performance of 'The Roaring Girl' staged by drama students from Wesley College in Melbourne. Good on you!

RECOMMENDED 'WINTER' READING

Refugee Stories: Seven personal stories behind the headlines by Dave Smith, founder of the Boaz Trust in Manchester.

Dave Smith has been working with destitute asylum seekers for many years and has recently published this collection of first hand accounts by individuals forced to flee their own country and seek refuge in the UK.

STANDING ORDER (OR SINGLE PAYMENT) INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete all sections (A, B, C and D). Then return this form to **The Treasurer, WTRRP, PO Box 2474, Watford WD18 1XT**. You can also make donations by cheque, payable to **Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership**, to the same address.

SECTION A*

**not needed for online banking SO's*

To the manager

.....Bank plc

Bank Address

.....

.....

POSTCODE

Please pay to Watford & Three Rivers Refugee Partnership Lloyds TSB Bank plc, Edgware Branch, P O Box 1000, BX1 1L
Sort code 30-98-07 Account 03770168

SECTION B

The sum of (figures)

.....(words)

Commencing the Day of.....20....

And the same 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 Partnership

Signed

Date.....

SECTION C

My Address

.....

.....

Postcode

My Account name

Sort code

Account number

SECTION D

Please complete if you are a UK taxpayer

I am a UK taxpayer and would like all my donations to Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership to be Gift Aid until I notify you otherwise. I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given

Signed

Date

IF YOU USE ONLINE BANKING PLEASE ALSO SET UP YOUR STANDING ORDER ONLINE AND TICK HERE TO CONFIRM YOU HAVE DONE SO