



## 'It's so painful - like being blind'

Catherine Hartley writes about the importance of English language lessons

These are the words of one of our students, describing what it felt like not being able to read. Eleven of our current 27 SWVG students have come to us in this situation. Some, like this one, are desperate to learn, and feel embarrassed, isolated, or dependent on other people. Others have never really imagined what it would be like to be able to read, and can't picture, until they begin to progress, the way the world will open up to them.

The opportunities for adults to learn to read are extremely limited, and for adults with language difficulties, almost non-existent. What is more, most language classes teach at least partly through the written word, which means that people with low literacy face an additional barrier to learning to speak. We are determined to break that vicious circle and help as many of our students as possible improve both their literacy and their language.

Besides teaching reading, our teachers offer ESOL at all levels, one to one or in groups, preparing students for exams or for a visit to the GP, using text books, computers or home-made games. If you are tempted to join the



teaching team, there's sure to be a place for your skills.

**In particular we need volunteers for our Literacy Assistants Scheme**, to support students learning to read by enabling them to practise in between lessons. There will soon be a training session to give potential Literacy Assistants some technical skills and confidence in their own ability. If you would like to help your client or another learner in this way, or any future client you may have, please sign up! If your client can already read English fluently and would enjoy being in a position to offer something of value, please suggest this to them as well. Anyone who can read can help.

*For help for your client, or to volunteer with the group, please contact [catherinebartley1@gmail.com](mailto:catherinebartley1@gmail.com) or [ruth@keithandruth.me.uk](mailto:ruth@keithandruth.me.uk).*

## Testing Way

*On one of the wettest days of the year, 13 SWVG members took part in a sponsored walk along the Test Way. Home and dry, Jackie Batchelor reports.*

The 26 miles (if you include the extra walk to return to the car) was a glorious, if gruelling walk, spoiled only by the heavy rain for more than the first three hours.

I never took any of my five layers off at all. Mike and I were most impressed by the Rotary Club's organisation and stewarding of the whole event.

It was lovely to have markers every mile and smiling marshals at every turn or decision point. Both were certainly highly motivational when one was trying not to think of which muscles ached or which clothes were soggy. There was a lovely friendly atmosphere throughout, which was very uplifting, and the route took us through beautiful woodland and river crossings.

Although there were over 700 walkers over the day, there were times when one could walk by oneself and just hear the birds, which was magical. Mike enjoyed chatting to the marshals and told a couple they were 'outstanding in their field'. One liked this quip so much that, when he spotted us at the finish point, he proudly showed us the selfie he had taken out standing in the field.



**Congratulations to the walkers who raised a magnificent total of £4,001.70 for SWVG**



### Urgently Needed

**We need a Southampton-based Member to co-ordinate a team to run local fundraising events. The team would typically meet 5 or 6 times a year to plan and organise a variety of events. For more information contact [anneleeming31@btinternet.com](mailto:anneleeming31@btinternet.com)**





*'Beauty for Ashes' by Susan Kamara, a refugee member of the SWVG family, is currently on show at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester. It is part of an exhibition called Threads Bearing Witness featuring textiles by renowned artist Alice Kettle, who has been working with migrants to explore the themes of cultural heritage, displacement and movement.*

Susan learned the traditional crafts of beadwork and stitching from her grandmother in Uganda but her ambition to become an artist was thwarted when persecution forced her to flee the country. She says that SWVG supported her during some of the darkest moments of her life and helped her recover the ability to create.

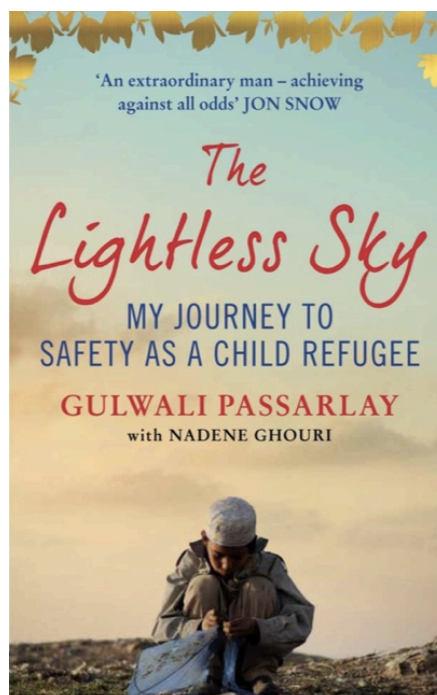
'Beauty for Ashes' shows the stages of entrapment, despair and crying for help. "It describes a transition of my journey from being in bondage, seeking help to be set free but not finding it. Finding the courage to flee with nothing, torn between leaving those that I love so dearly like my life and making a decision to set myself free through pain, so those I love so dearly could be set free. Vibrant bustling with colours represent my African heritage that always gives me joy and courage to go on in spite of all that comes my way."

### **Celebrating the talent of Southampton refugees**

There are many gifted asylum seekers and refugees like Susan and we would like to showcase their work in a newsletter. If you visit someone who enjoys arts and crafts, whether painting and drawing, knitting or sewing, or model making and who would agree to share it with other SWVG members, please take a photograph for inclusion in an up and coming edition, with a few lines about the maker. Send it to [jennycuffe@icloud.com](mailto:jennycuffe@icloud.com).



To raise money for SWVG, Gulwali Passarlay will be talking about his journey on 1 November at 7.30pm at Winchester Discovery Centre.



## A new charity for SWVG?

The trustees are considering applying to register a new charity to replace our existing charity.

SWVG in its current form is an “unincorporated association” registered as a charity. It does not have a separate legal form but carries out its business legally through its individual trustees (executive members). An example of this concerns the lease of the house that we run as the hostel. The lease was signed by 2 trustees on behalf of the charity and those trustees are legally responsible under the lease.

It is now possible to set up a charity called a Charitable Incorporated Organisation which is a separate legal entity, which removes the issue of personal responsibility for individual trustees. The process involves writing a constitution for the new charity (based on a model document produced by the Charity Commission), obtaining the agreement of members to the new constitution and then registering the new charity with the Commission.

A sub group of trustees is working on producing a draft constitution. Once the trustees have agreed the draft we will share it with members before asking for their formal agreement.

## Lift the ban

SWVG is supporting [a national campaign](#) asking that asylum seekers have the right to work if their claim has not been determined after six months.

The campaign, *Lift the Ban*, is being run by Refugee Action and Asylum Action and is backed by more than 60 organisations from across the UK. Baila Chaudry, a SWVG client, is backing the campaign by highlighting the skills she has as a teacher of maths and science. At present, Baila is only permitted to do voluntary work. “I would love to utilise my time and energy in a more effective way,” she says.

SWVG members can help by [signing the petition](#) and writing to their local MP. A template letter was attached to the weekly notices earlier this month it is not necessary to use this.

If members prefer, they can personalise any letter, perhaps by including details of their client (anonymously), or any other thoughts and ideas. Letters can be sent to MPs by post or as an attachment to an email.

The deadline for contributions to the Nov newsletter is 19 Nov. Please send to: [jennycuffe@icloud.com](mailto:jennycuffe@icloud.com).