

The Tale o' the Glasgow Girls

by Euan Girvan

Illustrated by
Jamie Squire

GLASGOW
CAMPAIGN
TO WELCOME
REFUGEES

WELCOME TO
DRUMCHAPEL
HIGH SCHOOL

When

Ah went tae the bilingual unit at Drumchapel High
Ah hid been teachin' English but keen tae gie this joab a try
Teachin' the weans o' asylum seekers and o' refugees
Tae learn the English language and its qs and ps!
Weil they came from war-torn Iraq and Afghanistan
Fae Rwanda, Algeria, Sri Lanka and the Sudan
A' different nationalities, languages and regions
An' first they hid tae learn tae understaun' Glaswegian!

Noo the background tae this speil is that the UK government
Needed easin' public pressure doon south so they sent
Asylum seekers roun' the UK but maist up tae Glesga fair
Cos we hid empty public hooses needin' rentin' and repair.
But the locals livin' here hidnae any wind o' this
Maist gied a great welcome but some thought things were amiss
That those jist arrived got the hail jing-bang for free
So sittin' doon together for a blether wiz the key.

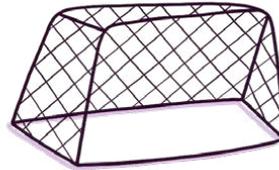
Information, get it oot there
Education, no less-mair,
Inspiration, get yer community
Tae unite and fight against
racism and poverty.



The schule wiz challenged by those kiddie-on performance tables
 Wi' teachers workin' to dispel stereotypes an' labels
 The empathic wans, who wurnae hell-bent on promotion
 Hid been nurturin' city weans with duty and devotion.
 Yet it wiz a challenge tae take oan kids who had suffered fear
 Distressed by family separation, war and danger gettin' here.
 But in the base they cooried, then slowly came aroon'
 Then got intae mainstream classes wi' the new hope that they'd foun'.



Amal's first day, gret her heart oot
 When Ah asked her, 'What's this about?'
 She turned tae me, her een a' tearful
 An' said, 'Ah'm just so happy
 tae be back learnin' in a school.'



Oh, we needed experts in tae deal wi' the trauma in the weans
 Art therapy, music, drama, dance were keys to effect change
 Richard Morran wi' Save the Children and other charities
 Hid the kids creatin' plays and films and scrivin' melodies.
 Aileen Ritchie, Paragon Ensemble, the Carnival group
 Got kids a' thegether, they were freens afore they knew it
 And for the lassies and the lads, daein' sport was jist the ticket
 We staired winnin' trophies for athletics, fitba' an' ...cricket!

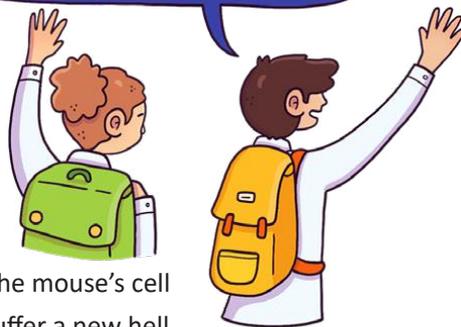
Roza came fae Kurdistan
 Her family fleein' fae Saddam
 Roza, feart at first but keen
 Tae settle doon tae learnin'
 Wi a twinkle in her een.



An' Drumchapel weans learned of other cultures, stories, songs
 An' staired djembe drummin' and dressin' in sarongs
 We learnt what to ca' oot in Somali when your goats are runnin' wild
 And the song you sing with sadness when you're buryin' a child.
 And although at lunchtime kids hung in their race and gender pack
 And we teachers thought we couldnae find the integration knack
 The school wiz slowly changin', it had gone so very far
 Wi' friendly first years chirpin',

How's it gawin' Mohammed Omar?!!

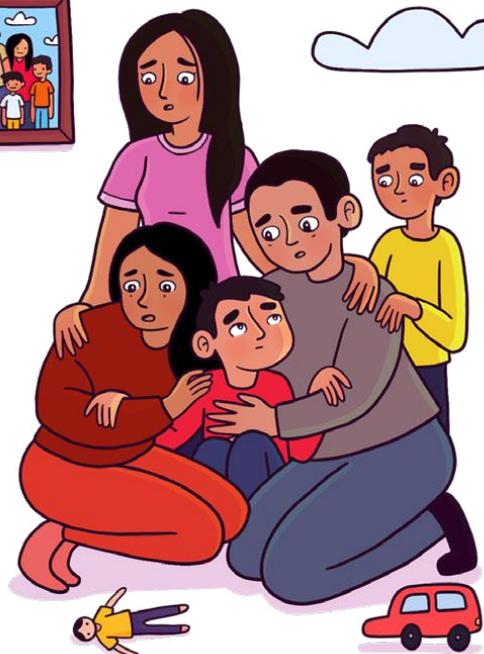
Older weans, great fur teachin'
 Older weans, don't do preachin'
 Older weans, reachin' oot
 Tae the younger weans on
 Whit prejudice is about.



But crash! Just like the plough into the mouse's cell
 Asylum-seeking families were tae suffer a new hell
 Dawn-raided, separated and forced into detention
 Ripped from their family home, deportation the intention.

The Home Office, duty-bound to assess every single case
 Ran a racket cuttin' numbers in the numbers race
 Illegally, they picked on national family groups
 And chartered planes for 'removal', of these wee 'low-hangin' fruits'.

At schule, asylum-seeking children just fell down tae the ground
 They feared that they, their families, would be next to be detention bound
 The Drumchapel weans were appalled this was happenin' to their friends
 The staff were shocked that these kids were bein' traumatised again.
 The heidie, Wilson Blakey, phoned tae find where they'd been taken
 Staff and pupils signed petitions on behalf of those forsaken
 And seven lassies came thegither wi' wan united aim
 To dae anything they could tae get their dear friends back again.



They were shakin', they were reelin'
 They were ragin', they were bealin'
 School chums taken aff at dawn-
 Naw, that's no right
 Naw, that's no on!



Noo this wiz well afore the social media malarkey
And wiz real social history - despised by David Starkey
Locked up weans in Dungavel was beyond our comprehension
So we visited families there who had been forced in tae detention
And the girls faxed and emailed cooncilors and oor MSPs
And wi' hand-held cameras we made twa documentaries
We contacted the media gettin' features in the press
We found ourselves engaged in the democratic process.



Martin Coyle and Kingsway Centre wiz central to our cause
We staired patrollin' the estate wi'oot breakin' any laws
Jean Donnachie and Noreen Real stood shou'der tae shou'der
They became Glasgow Girls but as Grans -just a wee bit aulder
They would make sure that families would get some decent sleep
If the Home Office vans appeared then their mobiles would go beep
Tae the centre the failmies dashed less feart, less afraid
And the Home Office were thwarted- another failed dawn-raid.



Home Office, inhumane
Home Office, causin' pain
Home Office, a racist institution
Still 'not fit for purpose'
Needin' dissolution.



Naw, the Home Office didnae always have the upper hand
By trackin' flight paths and aeroplanes comin' in tae land
Frank McMaster wiz on the website an' wi' oot a doobt
He kent which nationality they were tryin' tae root oot.
And the girls used the footage that they'd shot wi' Lindsay Hill
Whose BBC films told oor story and gave us hope until
Driven by Jassim Johe tae Edinburgh, we'd been sent
To take oor campaign and testimony tae the Scottish Parliament.

Gie weans a voice, they'll use it
Gie weans a choice, they'll choose it
Gie weans a good cause, they can be trusted
Tae campaign for fairness equality and justice.





So what did we achieve? Well some detainees were set free
After campaignin' for years, there wiz a Scottish amnesty
Followin' a school meetin' wi' a Home Office high-heid yin
Kids sittin' exams would not be subjected tae detention.
Some families got leave to remain, free tae tell their stories
We got all-party support in Holyrude-even fae the Tories
By challengin' the system, wi' oot raisin' any fists
Seven Drumchapel High School girls became political activists.

Wi' the help o' community groups an' faiths an' charities
An' support fae The Glasgow Campaign tae Welcome Refugees
Health and school trade unions - all civic society
We a' worked together tae set oor pals and their families free.
Let me name these lassies -now independent women
Jennifer McCarron, Ewelina Siwak, Amal Azzudin
Agnesa Murselaj, Roza Salih, Toni Henderson
An' Emma Clifford - all fought to free children from detention.

Nearly finished, Ah'll soon be gone
The campaign though, keeps goin' on
So when tacklin' society's ills
Dae it wi' the inspiration
O' the Glasgow Girls! ●



·UNITY·
MIGRANTS AND
REFUGEES
WELCOME HERE

CHILDREN
SHOULD
NOT
BE
DETAINED

POSITIVE ACTION IN HOUSING
FIGHT
AGAINST
RACISM
& POVERTY

SCOTTISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL
REFUGEES
WELCOME
HERE

PEACE
JUSTICE

WE ARE YOUR
FUTURE
& WE
BELONG
HERE

Scotland's largest
and most effective
education trade union

