

# 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.

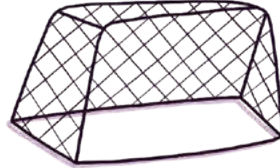
Information, get it oot there  
Education, no less-mair,  
Inspiration, get yer community  
Tae unite and fight against  
racism and poverty.



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' thegither, 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 together 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 faimilies there who had been forced in tae detention  
And the girls faxed and emailed cooncillors 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 faimilies would get some decent sleep  
If the Home Office vans appeared then their mobiles would go beep  
Tae the centre the faimilies dashed less feart, less afraid  
And the Home Office were thwarted- another failed dawn-raid.

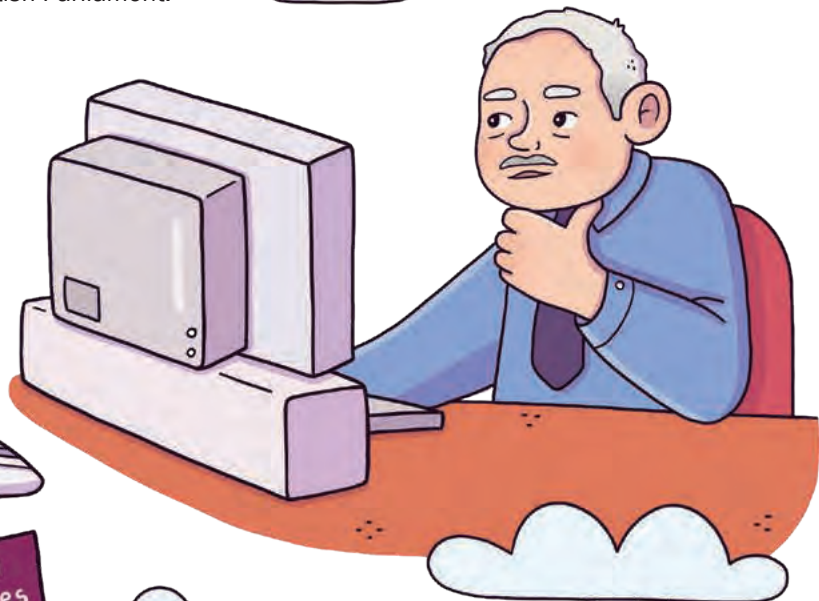


Home Office, inhumane  
Home Office, causin' pain  
Home Office, a racist institution  
Still 'not fit for purpose'  
Needin' dissolution.



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 thegither tae set oor pals and their faimilies 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

eis