



When we gather for our annual GB Conference I am always aware of the care and concern we have for each other.
Evelyn Goodsell Gamma Chapter

**GREAT BRITAIN STATE ORGANISATION
 ANNUAL CONFERENCE APRIL 2017
 TEACHING TODAY: CHILDREN OF HOPE**

I was privileged to attend the GB State Conference. The theme was child refugees and asylum seekers. The speakers were involved in working with these children. Louise Fahey is based in London where the emphasis of her work is on helping them to come to terms with the harrowing experiences they have had; there are even facilities for the interpreters to have counselling - no more needs to be said about what these children have suffered. Anne Hardy and Jessica Maddocks work in Kent for KRAN, a charity which helps young asylum seekers prepare for life and education in their new environment. KRAN aims to give a positive direction with emphasis on the future opportunities they will have. We were given a clear idea of the challenges faced in providing help and support.

In true DKG style we had uplifting entertainment from an Ethiopian asylum seeker, now settled here, a wonderful example of success. Haymanot Tesfa sang and played beautiful songs on a traditional Ethiopian instrument.

It was a wonderful, humbling day and I have found myself telling many people about it, particularly the work which is being painstakingly done to help those whose lives have led to them having to flee their countries and former lives. It was also an opportunity to exchange news with DKG friends, old and new, and reinforced the huge value of the Society.

Hilary Goy Alpha Chapter.

I drove along Sluice Lane at 6 am on Saturday morning, asking myself why I was making all this effort to hear a few talks at a conference, leaving behind a sunny beach scene. Asked on Sunday morning, "Was it worth it?" my reply was, "Absolutely!"

I arrived home at almost midnight with a day full of inspiration, friendship, awe, adventure on the highways (ask Evelyn, Mary and Roz) and so many ideas that I haven't space to write them. Fantastic speakers who raised one's awareness in a thoroughly credible way. Thank you, Kathy and her team.

Bettina Kulsdom. Gamma Chapter

Three distinguished women, describing their work with refugees to Britain, gave us an insight into the positive behaviour of our communities towards those who have few advocates.

An inspiring day.
Sandra Blacker Gamma Chapter

It was really a pleasure to be able to go to Greenwich! The speakers were all excellent – I feel now that I know more what it is like to try teaching asylum-seeking or refugee children. It is definitely hard work, but if things go well, the possibilities are enormous. The venue was an excellent choice.

Kate York Gamma Chapter



Dorcas Rogers and Louise Fahey



I couldn't 'have guessed that lunch would be such fun!
Gloria Redston, lively waiter and Hilary Goy

Very enjoyable, the venue was comfortable and the lunch and refreshments good.

The programme gave us a very comprehensive account of a refugee's progress in Kent. The speakers were very enthusiastic in their descriptions of their work at KREN. But sometimes the outlook is bleak for the children as it was made obvious that they are at great risk of being sent back.

The inclusion of Hyanamot's contribution was a good foil for the teaching reports.

Patricia Johnson Gamma Chapter

Very much worth the effort (with injured elbow) to be there. Gripping speakers.

Haymanot's haunting musical contribution set just the right tone (in both senses), and took me into another world.

Barbara Kern Alpha Chapter

As the conference was so well organised with Kathy at the helm I found it flowed very seamlessly and we were able to enjoy the day in a relaxed way. The speakers were so well prepared and obviously very much committed to their work

I found this heart warming and very positive for the students' future life in this country

Liz Malik Gamma Chapter

Thank you, Bettina Kulsdom for the photographs.

We were very privileged to have the beautiful and talented Haymanot Tesfa sing and play several songs from her homeland of Ethiopia for us. Haymanot is a painter and singer who fled Ethiopia in 2003 and sought asylum in England. After a difficult journey, helped by the charity 'Freedom from Torture', she now has permanent leave to remain in the UK.

Although we were unable to understand the actual words of her three songs, as she sang in her native 'Amharic' tongue, we were left in no doubt about the sentiments and emotions of the songs. Sometimes they were pensive, sad or nostalgic and sung almost at a whisper. At other times the mood changed to playful, joyful and triumphant. Whatever the emotion, she seemed to pour her whole being into her singing. I certainly experienced goose bumps



listening to the sadness of some of her singing

She played her 'krar' to accompany her first two songs. The 'krar' is very different from our western instruments and bore a very slight resemblance to a small primitive harp with a drum at its base. It consisted of 6 strings which she plucked, sometimes strongly and at others so gently and slowly. The 'drum' was a round based metal bowl, covered in a goat's skin.

Haymanot explained that her first song, 'Ambasa' was about life in an Ethiopian village of that name, with the lyrics written by a friend; the second was her own composition and the third was a country song, which she sang without accompaniment.

Last October, during National Refugee Week, she sang solo at a big rally in Parliament Square.

After this memorable performance, Liz Malik presented Haymanot with flower seeds for her balcony and a wonderful cushion which she had knitted using jewel coloured silk strips from old Indian saris. The brilliant colours seemed such a perfect match for an amazing lady.

Sheila Roberts Gamma Chapter



Brigitte Wichmann, Diana Bell Diane Billam

A very enjoyable conference with excellent informative speakers who gave us real insight into the plight of refugees and asylum seekers and the support available to them.

Diana Bell Alpha Chapter

Evelyn Goodsell recipient of the GB Achievement Award 2017 with State President, Kathy Hodgson



As always I enjoyed thoroughly every moment of this year's GB Conference. The venue was very calm and classy and close to a park full of spring blooms. It was a big pleasure to see all of you again – thank you so much for the warm welcome! I missed Dorothy very much – she never failed to attend a conference if it wasn't for health reasons. Like last year in Eastbourne already, where I had left early in order to drive on to Torquay to see her. I was so glad to see Kate attending this year again, full of energy and plans. Congratulations to Evelyn Goodsell who received the GB achievement award!

The conference theme was one that has been foremost on most European teachers' mind for at least the past two years.

The case studies Louise handed out showed how different the fate / background of each young refugee can be and how varying therefore the approach; as an example for an 'ice-breaker' she gave us blob-tree-posters to discuss with the person sitting next, emphasizing the importance of not asking any too direct questions. The topic was taken further by the following two speakers working for the Kent Refuge Action Network preparing young asylum seekers for every day life and further education .

The last item of the morning agenda was on International Committee Membership, and it was awesome to hear how many members have already held positions on international committees, and not just one – even if one takes into account that it's much easier for British members than for those of other European countries English not being their mother tongue...

The overture of the afternoon session was a very special one - music from an Ethiopian artist and singer, a former asylum seeker herself, that really went under your skin..

Looking forward to next year's conference already!

Brigitte Wichmann Germany State Organisation