

Calais Update – 6th visit – it rained in biblical proportions and brightened up later..

It was the usual 7am start on Sunday 5th July.

We were:

- 2 staff, 3 companions and 1 volunteer travelling in: 1 van and 2 cars from Emmaus St Albans
Joined by..
- 2 staff and 1 volunteer travelling in 2 vans from Emmaus Oxford

There was no sign of any delay or disruption from the strikes in previous days (contra to media reports) and we all met in queuing area to board the ferry.

We went straight to 'Secours Catholique' the warehouse and distribution centre for migrants in Calais. With 3 van loads we wouldn't have enough time to distribute everything, so decided some stock would be left at Secours Catholique. While waiting for Pascal to arrive, we sorted what we would distribute on the day and what we would leave. The thunderstorms and heavy rain didn't help.

When we looked round the warehouse we noted that there was a significant decrease in stockpiled items in Secours Catholique since our last visit.

We set off on the first of 5 trips to the migrant camp with shoes and food. The vans were left behind to avoid being mobbed and everything was prepacked by item and size to ensure a more even distribution. This is very time consuming but has proven to be the only fair method avoiding conflict among the migrants. This process went on all day, exhausting, soaked but nobody complained. We even elected to catch a later ferry at about 8pm. The gratitude of the migrants and inexhaustible need is enough to keep you going.

Things have become increasing desperate for longer staying and new migrants:

- We understand that the recent strikes had provided opportunity for many to get into England through the tunnels
- This had made little impact on the overall numbers which are increasing in and around the site area and all day we saw new people trickling in.
- The camps have expanded significantly since May and as reported during visit 5 (see report from Emmaus Europe) probably in excess of 3,000.
- We could see evidence of some reasonable quality tent builds some of which have been built by Emmaus Dunkirk. We will be joining Emmaus Dunkirk in September for a weekend of building more substantial accommodation.
- A number of new latrines have been erected (we saw 3 sets of about 7 or so in different locations). These were provided by Doctors of the World
- Doctors of the World have also set up 3 or 4 large marquee style tents for first aid use.
- There were 2 new standpipes making water a little more accessible, we understand a number of charities pulled together, withdrew their support out of sheer desperation until the local council provided improved facilities.
- There is even a handful of 'shops' selling food. Whilst this might seem surreal, it provides some community normalcy. This can happen where a migrant has a successful application to stay in France, they are provided with an allowance and they use this to set up their shops.
- There are still countless migrants with no shoes, jackets and basic survival equipment.

There is a desperate need for trainers in decent condition

- We tried to get deeper into the camp, so this wouldn't be a first come first served.
- Our aim was to find individuals who had greater need.
- When they knew we had shoes we were quickly surrounded
- However those who found us first were also desperate and we soon off loaded what we had with us
- Our second trip provided shoes hidden in bags with other items for men and it didn't take long for them to work this out.
- We understand that trainers are also becoming a currency.

As in previous visits the migrants are ill equipped for camping in makeshift shelters on an old chemical waste ground.

The Jules Ferry centre (the sheltered section of the camp) that opened in May to house 100 women and children in sheltered accommodation is still full and there are more now, an estimated 150 women camping on the chemical wasteland with the men. We also met others who we have seen on previous visits, including a couple of women who are pregnant.

Observations

- We still feel that what we are doing is worthwhile and much appreciated but is totally inadequate even though there are several other charities working in the camps.
- Our next trip is being planned for August and Emmaus Oxford will be coming with us. Emmaus Bristol intends to join the growing number of Emmaus communities who are donating.
- Local charities in France say they are hearing of increased levels of police brutality and of migrants drowning in desperate attempts to swim the channel!
- Also notable is a survey carried out by Secours Catholique that concludes that the vast majority of migrants do not have a final destination in mind when leaving their country. They move to the next 'friendly' country then get moved on by the traffickers until Libya, then Greece and Italy. About 10% then end up in Calais.
- Emmaus Europe met on 24 & 25th June in Emmaus Dunkirk to discuss migration and trafficking. It was attended by Emmaus France, Belgium, UK, Italy and Germany. A report is to be distributed shortly.

Shahzad update:

Shahzad (our trip 4 stowaway) is staying in a shared home for vulnerable children. He has been aged assessed as 16

- He has been joined by Bashir a 17 year old Eritrean who entered the UK via the rail tunnel
- Shirley has been in regular contact with both of them
- They came to the Emmaus St Albans Open Day and had a great reception from the staff and companions.
- They have been assessed for their language and academic capability and will start school in September. In the meantime, they'll be attending a local college to help them with their spoken and written English skills.
- They are both Muslim and are observing Ramadan.

Some photos below.

Tony 14.07.2015



Would you keep your pet dog here?



About 10% of the donated food. Thanks to Emmaus Colchester and Village Carlton.



A few of some of the tents that were not in this area one month ago.

The picture below represents about 25% of the area of the 'new jungle' site around the Jules Ferry centre on the site of a chemical waste ground.



An innovative build by Emmaus Dunkirk

