

The Romanian Aid Foundation
UK Registered Charity Nr 1060828



The Romanian Aid Foundation Newsletter Autumn 2003

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The work continues

The summer months may have offered the prospects of holidays for most of us, and Romanians are no exception. Many of those who can afford it will have been on holiday during this period but for the RoAF and Asociatia Neemia teams these have been months of intense activity.

At the Salfords warehouse the clothing and other items have been mounting up - quite literally. The aid has continued to flow in and has kept our packing and warehouse teams busy. We have had many visitors coming to the warehouse, so much so that we have had to commit ourselves to regular opening hours. The warehouse at Salfords is now open from 9:30 to 14:00 each Saturday. A map is available on our website. We have published a list of priority items as a guide to those who want to know what we need - a copy is available on request.

During the autumn over 30 tonnes of aid was delivered to Dorohoi by Steve Flegg and Richard Burgess. This was Steve's 10th trip on behalf of RoAF but it was his first as the sole driver. Inside Steve and Linda write about their experiences of making a trip without having another lorry to follow. Richard estimates that this was his 19th visit; he took with him many of the Gift boxes that have been prepared during the summer. Once again many thanks to those who have donated so many things - in an area of 70% unemployment there is little spare cash for presents at Christmas, and your gifts do help to bring joy at that time.

Meanwhile in Romania the AN team continued to help families, just stopping that for a week and then restarting to prepare and distribute the aid. They again helped some families with money, and in the mornings they gave tinned food to many families. At the block where the office is located a team of some boys from the orphanage and one of their teachers have painted the walls. AN had to contribute towards the cost, but it looks much better. Beni writes about the summer's activities on the back page.

To date (from Jan 03), some 2,090 families have received help via Asociatia Neemia. 1,517 households received food and toiletries through the office, 573 families received clothing, furniture items etc. and there are another 132 families registered to come into the office to receive clothing etc before the end of December. Maria has estimated that the average family is 5-6 people. As well as this assistance, there are those families that have received meals at the Centre of Hope, which averages about 80 people a week, approximately 3,520 meals supplied by GLIA.

Steve and Linda give an account of their trip to Dorohoi

Thursday 18th September: **Outward bound.**

After a lot of hard work by a lot of people,



we set off at 14.30 on Thursday afternoon. We had the easy bit; so much has to be done by others to get the lorries on their way, and we knew that the team tried that bit harder to make our first trip on our own go smoothly. So with a lot of excitement and a few butterflies we were on our way. Even though we had been before, we were a bit worried about all the paperwork, we didn't want to mess it up. It felt strange not having Richard with us - how would we cope without his catalogue of jokes, mind you, we should know them all by now.



We arrived at Dover at 16:00, got a customs seal, paperwork within 30 minutes, around to the port, straight onto the weighbridge, SteveH was spot on, the weight was 26500, he's too good, caught the 17.45 ferry. We always feel a bit happier when we're on the boat, we've got a couple of easy days ahead, time to think about the friends we were going to see again, and May seems a long time ago. Arrived at Calais at 20:00 hrs, drove for a couple of hours, found a nice quiet service area, and settled down for a nice snooze. Now, you don't expect to be woken up at 05:00 hrs by a cockerel and his chums, in a motorway service area. They didn't understand English, I don't speak Flemish, so was this a problem? No, one good idea later, a size ten boot bouncing off his head did the trick, it must be the same in any language.

Sunday morning was bright and sunny but, with a bit of a tight stomach, we approached our first hurdle, the Hungarian border. At 09:25 we got on the weighbridge, at 10:10 we were through and on our way down the motorway. What happened? Did we forget something? This is easy, this job, what's all the fuss about? At 16.30 we stop for a meal, half an hour from the Romanian border. At 18.30 hrs we arrive at yet another weighbridge, 15 minutes later we were out of Hungary and trying to get into Romania. Apart from an inquisitive customs official - I think he was hoping we would give him a little something, but wrong - we had no trouble, we were through and settled by 23:00 hrs, and that's with the hour added on.

Monday morning bright and sunny again, we drove off to see Vivi. Oradea isn't the best of places to drive a truck around, but surprise, surprise, a new ring road, yippee! And an even bigger surprise, the road to Cluj is nearly finished; what a nice welcome back to our second home. Vivi and her family made us so welcome and comfortable we didn't want to leave, what a lovely family, an example to us all.

Tuesday morning found us clean, refreshed and rather full, on our way to Dorohoi. After a brief stop in the mountains, we arrived at the deposit at 15:30 hrs, the rough Romanian roads having come back with a vengeance. We had forgotten just how bad the roads really are after the road to Cluj. We were met by Beni, Ionela, Laurentiu, Pete and Les turned up late and Amy. We both felt proud of ourselves, got there on time, in one piece and feeling very calm. It was really nice to see all our old friends, and some new ones; people that we've come to know and love over the years, the people that can teach us so much, and make you feel so humble.

Sunday 28th September: The return journey

After a great few days spent with Peter, Lesley, Amy and Helen at the Centre, we left with a heavy heart and a few tears just after 10:00hrs, the memories we carry with us will stay for ever; the poverty, and heartache of these people, yet the smiles stay on their faces. Amazing. Just outside Cluj we got stopped by a policeman, 600,000 lei please, I told him England drew the test series with South Africa and he let us off.

We spent another night with Vivi and co, every time we leave, it gets harder, the autumn trip always seems worse, it'll be eight months until we see them again. Vivi took us to the outskirts of Cluj, just to make sure we wouldn't come back I think, then we arrived at the border at 12.00hrs. 40 minutes saw us through into Hungary, had an argument with lady who wanted us to pay another two days' road tax for Romania, cheek of it, still had to pay though, you wouldn't think we were trying to help. Still, 40 minutes and on the way to Austria. This is easy, should have done it years ago, what could go wrong now? That's the trouble when you get too confident, a 6 kilometre queue at the Austrian border, it's dark, it's wet and a thousand trucks in front of us, so out came the coffee and books. Seven hours later we got to the last weighbridge, 15 minutes later we were in Austria, 7 hours of queuing for 15 minutes of paperwork, ridiculous. Now we were home and dry - well, it was still raining. The hardest part about next few days was keeping a certain person from the cake, chocolate and dessert counters in the service areas.

We caught the 11:30 ferry from Calais and arrived back at Salfords just after 14:00. Happy and sad, happy to see our families and very very happy that we had done the trip, it might not be much of an achievement for some, but for us - I can't even close a cupboard door without trapping my fingers. Sadness, because it was the end of another trip, the pain and sorrow you see out there doesn't seem to be getting any better, in fact, despite the efforts of a lot charities it's getting worse. It certainly drives you on and gives you the encouragement to try that bit harder for these poor people.

Once again, thanks to everybody for allowing us see this through, from the collection of the clothes or even the pound coins, right through to the lovely smiling faces of the Romanian people. We are really pleased to be able to do this, and know that goes for everybody involved in it.

Multumesc foarte

Steve & Linda

Romanian Aid (Northern Ireland)

Following on from the Supporters' visit in the spring a new group has been formed in Northern Ireland. [Romanian Aid \(NI\)](mailto:rani@roaf.org) can be contacted via Colin Reid by email rani@roaf.org -more details next time.

Beni writes about the summer's activities:

We are very grateful to you all for the two loads of goods sent in May, which are a blessing for people here. In June we had the highest value of donations made to

people, which were more than 100 million lei

The **office** was very busy, we had people in the office during all the day, in the morning for getting tinned food and corn flower, in the afternoon the families which were planned to get clothes, bedding, soap, stationery, toys, food, etc. We gave out the tinned food we received in May. There was very little rain during May and June, which affected a lot the crops and will affect the price of bread for this year. We meet a lot of critical situations in families and many times we are surprised seeing worse situations then we've seen before. It is difficult to realise how many families may survive in such conditions. From June we employed Maria to work 7 hours per day in the office. We've made registration of families to receive aid until the middle of October, we hope that the clothes we still have in the warehouse to last until then for families and shop.

The **shop** has done well during the last four months and we hope to keep on like this. That involved more work from Ionela, Maria and Valeria. We also hope that will be sufficient clothes to put in till October. In May we have done a general cleaning to the shop and refreshed it and seems to look much better inside. We also keep given Christian tracts and magazine free from the shop and many people are interested to take them. Florentina has left to get married. Elena Halus is taken her job and she started very well.

We managed to get the **warehouse** connected to the electricity during the summer. It cost a lot but because the shop has done well last months we afford to pay about 33 million lei. The sunflower is grown very well, so we expect a good harvest this year. In July it did rained a lot and because the situation of the roof is worse and worse, it did rain in the warehouse as well. The goods have not been affected too much but we still hope that will be possible to put the roof of the warehouse.

At the **farming project**, Nelu has done work in May with the tractor and has brought a good income. Since then he has done a lot of work to the combine harvester, which seems to run very well, Nelu is pleased with it. Unfortunately, he had only a little work to do with it in July because the crop of wheat is very bad this year.

Laurentiu had a lot of work to do to the electrical things which have been brought in May. Mainly it was computers repaired for donation to students who couldn't afford to buy themselves. Also he had some things for sale. Laurentiu has prepared some printers ready to be sold and repaired and prepared a photocopier for the use of the office, which work very well.

We have been able to help many families with money from Lampeter Fellowship fund, in desperate situations for medical treatment, taxes to pay etc. This made our work to be expanded and to be able to help many of the situations that come to us. It is very important this work here, but without your help we cannot do anything. I want to thank you and to assure you that all this work is God's work and the benefits of this work are great.

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This newsletter is published on behalf of the Romanian Aid Foundation and Asociatia Neemia. For further information or to be added to the newsletter mailing list please use our [response page](#) or write to us using the contact details below:

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