

The Romanian Aid Foundation
UK Registered Charity Nr 1060828



Newsletter, Autumn 2004

[Home](#)

[Contents Page](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Please Note!](#)

[Priority Items](#)

[Harvest Appeal](#)



[After the Orphanage](#)

[Prayer Notes](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Locate us](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)



[Joy in a Box](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Co-ordinators](#)

[Downloads](#)

[J-box Photos](#)



[Photo Gallery](#)

[Members'](#)

[Webmail](#)

Package tours

Each Friday afternoon, a dedicated group of supporters gathers at Horley Baptist Church to pack clothing for destitute people in the north east of Romania. For over 12 years the Church has been sending aid to Romania. The clothing is donated by local people, but also includes unsold stock from charity shops, obsolete uniforms and surplus bedding from local hotels.

Earlier this year, eight members of the group went out to visit Dorohoi where the aid is distributed, and were able to see how the clothing that they had packed was being used to alleviate the poverty that still exists in this area. The group, ranging in age from 19 to 76, took the opportunity to join in the aid distribution that continues year-round, visiting people in their homes and experiencing first-hand the desperate conditions that some people are having to endure. The group stayed at the Centre of Hope in Dorohoi. The Centre is run by Peter and Lesley Butcher, two members of Horley Baptist Church, and provides free meals for some 25 people each day.

The Centre hosts social activities and provides other facilities such as showers and, in conjunction with the Romanian Aid Foundation, distributes food and clothing to those in need. In an area of 70% unemployment and virtually no social security, the Centre has quite literally become a centre of hope in the local community.

By mid-September some 80 tons of aid had already been taken to Romania with help from local businesses and individual supporters. Another 30 tons was on its way to Romania at the end of October, with a further 20 tons in store awaiting sorting and packing prior to transport to Romania early next year.

This time last year Jaq Burgess accompanied her father on the October lorry - click the photo to read her story of that trip.



Questions ...

... So why have a warehouse - is it not better just to send the money?

... Why send computers? I thought the people were hungry!

We often get asked questions about Romania and the work that we are doing there, and we are happy to talk (sometimes at length) about the people, their needs and our efforts to help. From time to time we do get asked more fundamental questions such as those above, and these give us an opportunity to reappraise our priorities and the way we do things.

It would be great to be able to send money - it would be used to address areas of need more specifically and spending it would help the local economy. We could dispense with all the hassles of premises, storage and transport, and it could all be done by just one person in Dorohoi. But it does not work like that.

People in the UK are very generous with their things but only a few are in a position to give the monetary value as an alternative. In September we sent a lorry carrying 25 tons of aid to Dorohoi. That consignment included 20 tons of tinned food and 3

tons of clothing; together valued at some £25,000 at UK prices. Even at Romanian prices that would cost well over £7,000 but we are able to collect, deliver and distribute that aid for about £2,000, plus provide employment for 8 Romanians whilst doing so. There is no way that a cash injection of £2,000 could have such a wide impact on so many people in Romania. That describes the effect of one lorry - late October sees the departure of our sixth lorry for this year.

Even with our heavy commitment to providing for immediate needs, we recognise that donated aid is not a viable long-term solution. Employment, and therefore education, is essential for a sustainable economy. This area of Romania has produced world-class composers and writers, but today's students will have to compete in a global economy and will need appropriate skills, including computer proficiency.

In May we were told of a young boy was denied access to school because he did not have the appropriate uniform. The cost of the uniform was £10, but that was nearly 70% of the family's monthly income. There would have been no money for food if his mother had had to pay for the uniform. By providing computers, calculators and stationery (and uniforms) we are helping the bread-winners of the next generation to develop the abilities to support themselves and their families. The equation is quite simple: money that does not have to be spent on stationery or clothing can be used for fuel and food.

Another 'RoAF' wedding

Congratulations to Steve and Sarah Vaughan-Turner who were married during August. Steve has been very active for RoAF for a number of years, being involved in the playground project, the Friday packing and, more recently, the warehouse at Salfords. Sarah is very supportive of her new husband's "hobby" and we wish God's blessing on them both.

However, this does mean that Steve now has some domestic chores to attend to and so he cannot give as much time to the warehouse as he has done in the past. We are looking for volunteers to join a rota to help at the warehouse on Saturday mornings.

Romanian Aid Northern Ireland

The members of RANI have been out and about on the streets of Northern Ireland, eliciting support for the gift box scheme and working towards their target of sponsoring another lorry next year. For several weeks now, cartons of gift boxes have been arriving at our Redhill warehouse, en route to Dorohoi for distribution by a member of the team at Christmas. There is even a rumour that, following this year's success, there is to be another opportunity to enjoy a Boxing Day dip in the Irish Sea.

Romanian Aid Northern Ireland can be contacted c/o Millisle Post Office, 73 Main Street, Millisle, Co. Down, N. Ireland, BT22 2HR or by email at [rani @ roaf.org](mailto:rani@roaf.org).



Focus -: Property developments

Earlier this year we told you about the warehouse in Dorohoi, and the urgent need to make the building weatherproof before the winter. Now the current phase of building work is nearing completion.

The building itself has been underpinned ready to take another storey. The structure for the upper floor is complete and watertight, but fitting it out will be left for a future phase of development, after the outside of the building has been re-rendered. A well has been dug to provide water for the construction. It is a measure of the severity of this year's drought that the water was found at a depth of nearly 30 feet, whereas in other years the water table has been within 2 or 3 feet of the surface. A basic solid fuel heating system was installed last year - this will be upgraded to allow packing work to continue during the winter.

The longer-term intention is to provide a small workshop for the electrical items as well as accommodation for a caretaker or groundsman who would keep the property securely maintained.



The roof structure nears completion in October 2004

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Link to previous newsletter: [Spring 2004](#)

[Contents page](#)

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