

Brighton Lifeline Humanitarian Aid

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2003

Something old, something new...

Hello to old friends and new readers! In this issue I'm delighted to report on our most successful fund-raiser *ever*, an exciting return to Albania, and excellent progress in Ukraine where the Berezna orphanage toilets and showers are almost finished. I'll also be asking you to delve deeper into your pockets than ever before, and I promise you, the need is truly desperate.

In August I travelled back to Albania for the first time since late 2000. Our fact-finding mission was to re-establish contact with old projects to see how they had fared, and what more we could do. With me were Simon Varwell, who was part of our epic venture into a Kosova in 1999, when fighting was still going on, and a man called "Devilstick Peat" whose description of himself is "a professional fool"! He's also known as a childrens' entertainer.

You can read overleaf about the desperate situation we found and our urgent new project to supply clean water to several hundred families.

Our original involvement with Albania was in support of Kosovan refugees, and the villages most affected by their influx in Albania and Macedonia. We quickly realised that there was also desperate need in Albania as a whole, dating back far further than the terrors in Yugoslavia.

In 2001, as we took the happy yet sad decision to move on from a recovering Kosova, we knew we must someday soon find the funds to return to Albania and get back to work, helping the people there develop at least some kind of infrastructure.

In the meantime we continued working with Chernobyl victims in Ukraine. Now at last we are at a point – as part of a firm network of humanitarian aid volunteers around the country – where we can work in both Albania *and* Ukraine, delivering the most appropriate of our supplies to the most needy situations. Thank you all for helping to make this possible with your support and donations!

Kieran Turner, Co-ordinator

"Canvas" art raffle – our biggest single fund-raiser ever!



It's a regretful "so long, and thanks for all the miles" to our truck which had to be retired after four years of heavy loads, appalling roads, and even close encounters with munitions.

In June local artist Claire Fearon produced a unique art event in Brighton. 31 artists donated 31 paintings and photographs. 31 people bought tickets. The result: each ticket-buyer went home with a fantastic prize; each artist was delighted with an exceptional amount of interest and publicity; and Brighton Lifeline was almost £6000 better off! We'll certainly be doing this again!

Just around this time, "Truck", which had served us so well since Kieran bought it to take us to Macedonia, and ever since on trips through Kosova, Albania, Chernobyl, and all the hazardous and random places in between, was finally wearing out and asking to be allowed to rest in the great scrap-yard in the sky. Even



And just at the critical moment "Canvas" provides the funds for the perfect replacement vehicle. With a (large) trailer & roof-rack this Land Rover carries as much as the truck – anywhere!

though a good deal of effort had gone into keeping the vehicle on the road – and on a shoe-string budget, being efficient with aid money at every turn – we knew the end of the road had come, and we must not endanger future convoys with an unreliable vehicle.

But now, thanks to the "Canvas" event, we've been able to buy our very own Land Rover. This flexible vehicle will transport us to the most out of the way villages, and has already shown it's worth in Albania's shanty towns. Plus, we'll carry on the "moving canvas" idea by letting children here and abroad paint messages – but now on the trailer (we hope), and not the vehicle itself! More about Canvas online: www.canvasuk.org

Donation inspiration

Once again we would like to say a huge thank-you to James Watson at the *New Downland Housing Association*. We collected another batch of 20 computers during their latest round of upgrading. Some of these will keep patient records in an Albanian hospital – where there are three doctors, each of whom is proud to at least have a desk. Right now, they have *nothing* else. There's more about them in the August convoy report.

We are also very grateful to Hull-based graphic designer Andy Briscoe, who has donated fantastic computer graphics equipment which will go to the "Our Generation" youth group in Ukraine who produce a newspaper there which fights against drug and alcohol abuse and the spread of HIV & AIDS.

Many sincere thanks too for the often unmentioned but much appreciated and superbly consistent support from all of you in Brighton who we love to know are busily knitting and collecting clothes & books for us to take to the orphanages!

I should also mention *TransEuropa Ferries* whose charity discount came to our salvation just as *SeaFrance* withdrew theirs with three days warning!

Finally, I must encourage you to take a look at the website of the "Canvas" event which has examples of the work of the artists who helped us. You can find it at <http://www.clairefearon.com/canvas/>

Horsey-business?

Our October Ukraine trip will include "NoseBag". No, we've not started transporting horse-feed across Europe. It is in fact the name used by two women and a pantomime horse who run a children's parties business!

One of them, Gus – and the horse – will be coming with us, armed with hobby-horses and sacks of materials. We aim to get them to as many orphanages & schools as we can manage where they will show the children how to make the toys, and let them have a great time with sacks of glitter and rolls of fabric, eventually leaving behind the materials, and the knowledge to make lots more toys!

If you'd like to know more, you can contact NoseBag on (0)1273 623379.

August convoy report

by Kieran Turner (in Bathorë, pictured right)

Well, I started to tell you about it on the front page, and I'm going to get straight to the point. We've revisited an old friend, the mayor of a shanty-town, where people are living in converted cow sheds, and children spend the first few hours of each day walking over a mile into town and *begging for water* which they then carry home, in wheelbarrows full of plastic bottles.

It's often not even very clean water. The health staff in the empty hospital built three years ago by another charity wouldn't even list the equipment they need from us. They just want the water situation to be sorted out – everybody here is frequently ill, and it's always because of the water.

So, the bottom line is we're going to build them a bore-hole (a well) to provide 3000 people with safe water. This is the biggest project we've ever undertaken, but it is estimated to cost a very achievable £8000. Pitiful when you consider what it's for, and in a country so close; only the other side of the Adriatic from Italy.

This of course is where we really, really need your help. We have another "Canvas" art event in view for December, and also hope to run a benefit night of cabaret entertainment soon. But we still rely on your individual support.

And so, a little about the rest of the trip to Bathorë. Noting the empty hospital and empty school (built by the World Bank who omitted to fit heating or consider the



source of books) we were very careful not to make any promises. These people have been let down several times by other organisations who *have* made promises, then broken them. So in the short term we have a trust-building exercise to perform, and we will begin a.s.a.p. by taking out the medical equipment and supplies which we have waiting.

Gratitude and a desire to trust was emphatic from Fatmir, our host. On the first night we had the horrible realisation that we were sleeping in *his* bed, while he slept on the roof! Thankfully it was the hottest week of the year, but this was still a measure of how well received *any* outside interest is. Here we were in the shunned shanty-town home of the most notorious and desperate of Albania's poor, and at no time did we feel threatened in any way whatsoever. These aren't the monsters of tabloid myth. They're *families* in a totally denuded country. Most of them came to the city to find work, not to beg. Albania has so much willingness to work and to improve. They just need a little help to start to overcome the lack of investment or infrastructure after decades of corruption.



Some children in Bathorë look on as Peat gives one of his juggling shows. These kids are all close to illiterate; the lucky ones get one hour of school per day, and then only if their parents can afford to buy the school books as well as food.

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We are a non-profit Charitable Organisation composed entirely of volunteers, with no political or religious affiliation. Donations can be made in various ways: cheques payable to "Brighton Lifeline"; or deposits to our account at Royal Bank of Scotland, a/c 10105992, sort code 16-14-24. You can also give via our website (but for this method we pay a small bank fee.)