

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter! A little overdue, for which I am very sorry, but this is because it's been a very busy few months, and by the time you read this we will be reaping the rewards of those months by making another trip, delivering aid to Ukraine.

As usual, we are travelling to the town of Chernigov, and delivering the aid in the first instance to the "Arratta centre for children and youth". Since this will be the first newsletter many of you have received, there is a little of the story of the centre later on.

Summer 2001 proved to be a great time for making new connections, and remembering old ones. In this newsletter there is a short article detailing some old friends from my school-days whom I met up with in Edinburgh. They, hopefully, can help us bring some very productive equipment to the farming community in Ukraine.

I would also like to mention a musician called Bernd Rest who is a talented guitarist. I approached Bernd at the Edinburgh Festival to ask him about his song, "Odessa". It turns out he has not visited the city (in the south of Ukraine) but has long been fascinated by Eastern Europe. Well, one conversation led to another, and I hope that the outcome will be that Bernd may travel with us in the spring to help run some music workshops for the young people in Chernigov. Particular thanks to Bernd for being pro-active and seeking me out by email, rather than waiting for me to call him!

Finally, many thanks to all of you who have given your time, efforts, and even hard-earned money over the last few months. It's not always easy to convey to people just how much good can be done in our target countries, but I hope some of the information in here will help share the feeling of achievement we have every time we take an aid convoy.

Kieran Turner, Co-ordinator

## ***Letter from Kosova***

We were thrilled in September to receive an email from an old friend, Admir Polloshka, who was a great help to us back in 1999, acting as a translator and guide in the Eastern Kosovan town of Gjakova. He talks about life and his friend Xeni, a local photographer whose studio was destroyed but who worked hard to get photos of orphaned children to help unite them with relatives from other towns. Here is an extract from the email:

I'm fine and I'm enjoying freedom (most important thing in life). Since October to the date I'm working for British mine clearance NGO "The HALO Trust" as Office Assistant and Radio Operator in one village near Gjakova. I have a good job and I earn enough, but till end of this year because demining programme will be finished.

Sometimes after work I go to Xeni to help him. Xeni is good and he has buy new computer equipment and he's working very hard. During weekend I go out with my friends usually in pubs. Now town looks much better than in summer '99, when you were in Gjakova after war. A lot of shops, houses and roads are rebuilt.

## October convoy to Arratta

As you may have read overleaf, we are currently engaged in a trip to Ukraine. Our destination is an organisation established to support children and young people, especially those in hospitals, orphanages, and with foster families. In practice, however, the “Arratta” centre has become so much more than that.

The centre takes all the guesswork out of our aid deliveries. Our friends there, under the excellent guidance of the centre’s director, Victoria, let us, and the other charities who help them, know about which of the “members” - or individual projects, families, etc. - are most in need. They let us know what to bring, and they deal with local distribution of the aid long after we have had to come home. They even sometimes act in a way which resembles a “credit union” - re-allocating equipment to new homes as and when it has served its purpose in the first home.

But they also look after their “members” and volunteers in other ways. They run English lessons, bring-and-buy sales, and other educational courses. The current trip includes a donation of six computers which will hopefully form a kind of classroom. (Fortunately the Ukrainian power supply, when it is functioning, is the same voltage as the UK.)

Travelling on this occasion are just two vehicles. This is unusually small for us, but we have managed to completely pack them out with aid, and for the first time ever, the decks are clear at home - at last, some space for the next batch of donations!

In one of the vehicles will be a young student nurse, who hopes to eventually be able to do medical work in crisis situations. We are honoured to be able to

provide her first “taster” of life in the aid business! Good luck, Emma. Also travelling (and leading this trip) is our frequent companion from Horsham, Bob Chase of “Bear Essential Aid”. We have been working with Bob since early on in our Kosova days, and it’s a real privilege to benefit from his experience.

## Growing potential

In September contact was made with two generous individuals who in their own ways may be able to make a substantial impact upon the sustainability of the farming system in the area where we deliver our aid.

Firstly, Ian Robertson. Ian works in Zimbabwe, and has developed a system for producing potato seedlings which are free from various common pests. He would very much like to lend his expertise to helping set up laboratories in Ukraine to take advantage of the same technology which is ensuring successful crops in Africa.

At the same time we met Paul Craig, who has himself travelled to Ukraine in the past and has offered to introduce us to some colleagues at the Scottish Agricultural College who are working on crops which help to remove pollutants from soil. This could be of great use in the areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster 15 years ago.

Separately, during October, a chance conversation with a local (Brighton) author has opened up the possibility of some further seed-stock being donated for future aid convoys.

To follow-on from these lucky meetings, the current (October) convoy will attempt to make contacts with the agricultural officials and farmers in Ukraine, to investigate who might be an appropriate person to make use of these new resources.

## Afghanistan

Many people have been asking whether we will be helping the refugees from Afghanistan who are fleeing both the Taliban and the current bombing campaign. In short, we are highly unlikely to travel there ourselves, because of the distance involved, and because there are other groups better suited. However, since Ukraine is so close to neighbouring Turkmenistan in the east, it is entirely possible that we will be able to help some of the people migrating in this direction. Watch out for more information. Meanwhile, Miri Stoltzenberg is organising a “benefit gig” with bands and DJs at the Gloucester Nightclub for 28th October. The money raised will be given to a charity working in the region.

## A little history

Or, “Weren’t we called Brighton Lifeline for Kosova”? Well, we were. The collection of volunteers who collect aid and fund-raise, and who drive the aid vans, began doing so when the crisis in Kosova was at its peak. Kosova is still a long way from being a peaceful, happy place, and we will be returning in the future. But whilst the tension in Macedonia makes the journey extra expensive, we are working with other local aid groups to help in an equally needy place, the former Soviet republic of Ukraine. It seems appropriate to adjust our name to reflect this, hence “Brighton Lifeline Humanitarian Aid”, which is rather more explanatory. Look out for it on the side of our vehicle!

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4 Atlingworth Street, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 1PL  
Tel: [UK+44] (0)1273 680414  
Email: info@kosovaconvoy.com  
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