



Cleaford News

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We particularly wish to send

- ⇒ New clothes and shoes
- ⇒ Toys (including soft toys) for children over 36 months
- ⇒ Pens, pencils, exercise books, etc.
- ⇒ Paints, brushes and craft materials
- ⇒ Toothpaste, toothbrushes, and soap
- ⇒ Medical items—must be at least 6 months within expiry date
- ⇒ Incontinence pads

We are no longer sending food, knitted blankets, second-hand clothes, computers, monitors and printers.

November 2006

A Romania Diary

Our previous Cleaford News written in a 'diary' style was so well received that we have adopted the same format this time, and have been writing the diary during our visit to Romania in late October.

Although the charity was not registered until a little later, this year marks the fifteenth anniversary of Abigail and Angus Cleaver's first visit to the country. After making around 30 trips, this is the first time we have seen significant change in the visible evidence of increasing material prosperity. However this change is mainly limited to the cities and the main roads—get off the main road and there has been little change, and for the typical poor older person in a village things may even have become harder.

Almost all the roads we used in the week were in very good condition, there were



more nice cars around, and petrol stations and restaurants have multiplied. The first big international supermarkets are arriving on sites outside the cities.

In the old square in Brasov (left) young people (many university students) are generally better dressed, mobile phone 'enabled' and there are hardly any beggars. There are now lots of police and security men everywhere.

Sunday

It's turning colder! Every building we are in is now cold, and radiators are only just warm. The electric kettle at the pastor's house is now not used - electricity is too expensive.

There is an announcement in church that study groups will now all meet in one room before the main Sunday service, in order to save heating too many rooms. There is to be yet another gas price increase on 1st January 2007 - rumors vary between 50% and 100%. The government have been telling everyone that this is part of the programme to bring fuel prices into line with Europe, but the other results of joining the EU will be good ones!

As we look around we realise that the time has come to stop sending knitted blankets to Romania. We are asked to pass on thanks to the very many people who have worked hard producing them for so many years.

Monday

Brasov Children's Hospital

Worries here about the gas bill - will the Hospital get any government help? Hopeful of some grants from the EU for equipment, but how long will it take to arrive after Romania joins in January 2007? The guess is 3 years! Meanwhile they continue to struggle with inadequate funding, so we still need to send the quarterly medicines. Review the list - will need more of the more expensive penicillin variants if we can find room in our budget. While they are plucking up the courage to ask us for Isoflurane (general anaesthetic) which they know is very expensive, Abigail says that 48 bottles have been donated by Abbotts, and are on the way. Universal rejoicing for 10 minutes!

Hand over a new pulse oximeter (complete with infant size sensors), donated by Duke of Kent School - great delight in the ITU. See a very sick baby being treated in one of 'our' incubators. Hospital have been very happy with the UK medical students we have sent, and we arrange for two more to go in 2007. ITU doctor makes a point of saying how much she enjoys being able to teach and work with English students.



We meet an English visitor from another south of England charity, and introduce him to our RIAC service. He is sending gap year students for play, etc.

The cheap VCRs are failing, and breaking the video tapes. Dana, the chief therapist, would like to move over to DVD, but cannot find the money. We check the list of craft items she would like. She is keen to have our new Bible Colouring Books and will send us the Romanian translations of the captions so we can produce a version the children will understand. Meet a little boy we have met before with a terrible squint. His parents have no money and no insurance. He is awaiting a spleen operation.

Dr Sisak

After lunch visit our ophthalmologist friend at his consulting room. Hand over fluorescein which he needs, and which is still unobtainable in Romania - just as he is using the last of our previous delivery. Tell him about the squint case - he will operate free of charge for us.

On the way home we stop at the new enormous Carrefour store and do a deal on 4 DVD players at £30 each. No suitable children's DVDs but we will ask UK supporters to let us have any spares for the Children's Hospital.

Tuesday

Start with a brief stop at the Children's Hospital to collect a list of items required by Dr Simion in the path lab. Quite a short list as more of the plastic items are becoming available in Romania. Hand the 4 DVD players to Dana, who is overwhelmed. Says she can find children's DVDs locally.

Then on to visit FAST projects at the village schools. Sit in on a maths lesson at Tarlungeni school. Although they are 8 year olds, the standard is very low - these are Roma children who have had no pre-school preparation (they start school at 7), and little home support from illiterate parents. The children coming along later will do markedly better as they will have been through the FAST pro-



gramme to prepare them for school.



In the Tarlungeni school yard a team of UK university students are working on building the new community centre, which has been organised by FAST, with significant support from the local Town Hall. We shoot

a short video for a UK Rotary Club who are planning to support the project.

Visit a very poor family with 4 children living in a postage stamp size cottage. FAST used help from Canadian contacts to replace windows, doors and floor (in place of earth), and provide a washing machine and wood stove.

Wednesday

Drive from Brasov to the Harghita Christian Camp, for lunch and to show our friends, David and Morag Palmer, Farnham Baptist members making their first visit to Romania, the scope of the place. Various building projects are underway there, as part of a continuing development that has been running since shortly after the revolution when the Camp was founded on land purchased by a UK group.

Then on to Sangeorgiu de Padure, where we photo the development of the new church we are funding, have a meal with Pastor Janos Totos and Elizabeth, and then preach at a special evening service that has been called to fit in with our visit.

The old church is full (about 40 people of all ages), and the children seem to enjoy some visuals when we

do a slot for them. The service ends with much emotional and heartfelt prayer from almost everyone, followed by many hugs, tears and kisses. Susan Garbor, the wife of



the Roma leader, makes an emotional speech of thanks for the help that has been received by the church that meets in her house. The evidence that we are completely accepted by this church is found in the record number of Roma men with luxuriant moustaches who kiss Angus as they leave. We get to bed encouraged, emotional, uplifted and humbled.

Thursday

Drive to Gornesti, where work has started on the new village church building - we bought the piece of land some years ago and now the church have just about finished the foundations. The next thing is to cast the main floor plinth in the Spring of 2007, as the weather precludes any more work this year. Then they wait to hear whether the superstructure will be provided by the American Standard Chapels project. We are asked to set aside £1,250 from our projects budget for the plinth, and then we will see about the rest of the job when the American decision is known (unfortunately well into next year's building season).



After lunch visit the Garbor Roma family in Viforasa, where we funded the conversion of a room in their little home into the church meeting room. They have done an excellent job. The barn was demolished, and the new structure will house the younger Garbor family, together with their workshop for producing rainwater goods. Mrs Susan Garbor makes another most touching and emotional speech of thanks for the help, and we explain that this has come from a number of UK supporters. She 'adopts' us into the family and opens up with fascinating personal information. She was converted in 1985, and has been married 33 years. She has had 10 children and the family has always



lived in only one room. Five of the children have died, two at age 16 years, one aged six, one at 9 months and one aged 21. Every Tuesday she fasts and prays for Abigail's health.

We need to provide £1,500 to finish the job, and are shown the detailed accounts kept by one of the church members who has managed the project. There is also an urgent need to buy (£700 estimate) a piece of land for a cemetery for Baptist believers, as the local Reformed church are charging £140 per burial in their cemetery. This is an unimaginable sum for a Roma family, and causes great upset.

Then we drive a short distance to the village of Balauseri (pronounced Bala-oo-share), where a new congregation was formed about 6 months ago. We are welcomed into a small, immaculate, Roma house, containing about 40 Roma mothers and children. Already all ages are heartily singing translated Kendrick songs they have learnt by heart, accompanied by Pastor Istvan Borzasi on the guitar. This is yet another plant by Pastor Janos Totos from the nearby town of Sangeorgiu de Padure, and it is obvious how popular Janos is with all the local groups of whatever ethnic origin.



Back to the Targu Mures church just in time for Abigail and a recently widowed visitor from Hungary to speak to a Women's Meeting, arranged by Marta Borzasi. There are about 80 ladies there, many having been brought in from outlying villages.

Friday

The last working day starts with a 'business' meeting with Istvan and Marta Borzasi, as overseers of the work in the whole of Mures county.

Marta now has over 300 children in various groups, and allocates the materials we send to all her leaders in the towns and villages. Our shopping list includes bulk supplies of paint, more brushes, much more A4 than we have been sending, and also A3 coloured paper. Coloured pencils and felt tips are needed (we already have some we have received from school harvests), plus glue sticks and bulk pva glue.

Marta shows us large cards she has with the words of children's songs, and also the teachers' books she distributes. She needs more of both, and as they are obtainable locally, we hand over £200 to meet those needs. Our quarterly subsidy of £60 for the children's newspaper the church produces need to increase to £80 as the readership is growing!

Our last Trustees' meeting wrote figures into the budget (we run a rolling 12 months ahead) for the various building projects, and now we review these with Istvan. They are looking for help from other sources for Sangeorgiu de Padure, so we can review that again in the Spring when work is due to resume.

We drive back to Brasov for our last night in Romania, before getting up very early on Saturday morning.

Over lunch we reflect on an amazing week's experiences:

- ⇒ The evangelism 'explosion' is so exciting and encouraging; Janos is a modern Paul, going round starting churches in private homes!
- ⇒ The trauma of not being able to afford to bury your child because of denominational conflict.
- ⇒ The openness of the Roma people to foreign visitors, when as a group they have been treated so badly for so long.
- ⇒ Our delight that different ethnic groups are now worshipping together.
- ⇒ What a difference our funds (small in UK terms) can make when deployed correctly.
- ⇒ The massive workload of the pastors and wives, Daniel and Ema at FAST, etc.
- ⇒ The poor pay of the staff in church and hospital (Dana's gas bill is more than her salary).
- ⇒ Fear for the old people who won't be able to afford to have the heating on as winter approaches.
- ⇒ Good progress with FAST's Roma assistance projects in the Brasov area.
- ⇒ Fear of disappointment across Romania when EU membership does not solve all problems on 1st January 2007!

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Prayer Points

Thank God for the growing groups of believers in the villages.

Pray for their witness to those around them, which can be strong in such close-knit communities

Pray for wisdom and energy for the church leaders, wives and evangelists.

Thank God for the financial and prayer support received by the Trust, and pray for its continuance. May we be helped to keep awareness of the needs high in UK minds after EU accession.

Pray for the developing Christian witness at FAST, as their social help to the rejected Roma people is complemented by the communication of the Good News of Jesus to the poor.

Pray for the staff in churches, schools and hospitals faced with the temptation to abandon their people for a materially better life outside Romania.

Pray that we may all see the way God wants us to go in both the short term and long term life of the Trust, and that we may follow his will.