



RO-MAN-AID

Newsletter: Spring/Summer 2009

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Overview

2009 started with a splash for RO-MAN-AID! Many thanks to all of you who sponsored the double dip in Peel and Castletown Bays. Between us we raised over £600 for equipment for the Multiple Sclerosis Day Centre. Marcel Morar commented that it was a never to be repeated experience! The sand in Peel, where we waited for some time before the start of the event, was covered in frost and so it was a welcome relief to go into the water which felt definitely warmer at 3.5° centigrade.



A much more auspicious event was Chief Minister Tony Brown's visit to Romania in order to officially open the Giriş Fire Station. He also viewed projects which the Isle of Man have been involved in over the past eighteen years, all of which, we are proud to say, have been successful. A report of the visit appears later.

The Multiple Sclerosis Day Centre, thanks to our help in supporting its funding crisis last year, is flourishing once more and there are some exciting new developments as you will read.



The rural fire service continues to develop with the help of Bruce Kirkham and his team. The fire station is now manned overnight as there are now three firefighter/drivers permanently employed. The whole Romanian team continue to be very dedicated. They were delighted to come second in a county firefighters competition last May. Next year they are determined to win so that they can represent their county in the national event.

Please visit us on-line at www.connect2charity.im/romanaid and have a browse.
Please use the donate button if you wish to use a credit card to make a donation.

This year we are developing a project to help the Roma communities in Giriş Commune. We have been asked by the mayor to be partners in a housing project for Roma and by the Greco Catholic Church to be partners in building a social centre on some land that they own in the centre of the village. We are combining the two proposed projects with the work we are already developing with the school to help the education of the Roma children into one major development project for the Roma communities. Just as we think our work is settling down, once again, along comes another project even bigger in scale than the previous one!

Without the support of volunteer work, expertise and donations from the Isle of Man and elsewhere, none of this would be possible, so many thanks to all of you who contribute in any way so that RO-MAN-AID can continue to help some of the poorest people of Europe



Visit of Chief Minister

A week before the Chief Minister's arrival, Giriş was a hive of activity. The Community Hall and school were being redecorated and the whole village was being smartened up. Everyone from the Mayor's Office appeared to be involved, whether it was window cleaning, planting flowers or clearing up rubbish from the rear of the mayoral building. The paint was barely dry before he arrived!

An arrival late at night was the first occasion for a festive meal provided by the mayor and councillors. The following morning the Chief Minister was awarded the distinction of „Honorary Citizen of the Comune of Girişu de Criş” as representative of the Isle of Man who has done so much to help the community. This was followed by a tour of the Comune which took in the King William's College projects of the Community Centre and outdoor playground for the kindergarten, the school hygienic facilities, the mini village central park and the rural fire service, complete with fire appliances donated by the Isle of Man Government.

In the afternoon, the Chief Minister visited the Oradea Fire service, where he was presented with a video which demonstrated how the donated hydraulic platform had been put to good use in the city. This was followed by a reception in the Town Hall by the City mayor on behalf of the Municipality of Oradea.

The next morning included a visit to the Multiple Sclerosis Day Centre and national MS office, both organisations created with the help of RO-MAN-AID, which included Isle of Man Government Overseas Development Aid grants. Following a festive meal, the Chief Minister was guest of honour at a Fire Safety Event for 700 children at the city's impressive „House of Culture”. Children from Giriş Tărian and Toboliu village schools performed the four specially written plays about fire safety. Following this, a short visit



was made to a Roma family who received a cooking and heating stove, bought initially as a stage prop for one of the plays.

The final day started with a visit to the famous Bear Caves in the foothills of the Transylvanian Alps which, as it included yet another festive meal, made the official party one hour late for the official opening of the Fire Station! Fortunately the remaining guests were patient and the opening finally took place followed by a demonstration of their skills by the rural firefighters. The final celebratory meal, following this, was held in Tărian village community centre. Musicians and dancers led by Florin Miescu and Ioan Silaghi, who were both in the Island leading the Romanian group for the 1990 International Festival of Music and Dance, entertained the guests. During the course of the celebration almost everyone wanted to have a photograph taken with „Prim Ministrul” and Tony Brown very generously obliged. We suspect that over the course of the three days he was filmed and photographed more than in the course of a year on the Island!



European Commission Rural Development Day in Romania



We were very proud to be invited to make presentations about our work at the international exhibition, “Agraria” held in Romania last May. The European Commission felt that the Rural Fire Service in Girișu de Criș represented an ideal example of a project to demonstrate how Romania’s infrastructure can be improved. It is the sort of “village development” project that the EU would be prepared to help finance. The invitation came directly to RO-MAN-AID from the Brussels Coordinator for Rural Development in Romania.

Rosa went over especially to Cluj to make the presentation (in Romanian language!) and was also delighted to make contact with others working in Romania as well as representatives from the Romanian Ministry and European Commission.

Multiple Sclerosis Centre

In April Marcel Morar retired as president of the Bihor MS Foundation and members unanimously elected Laurentiu Lazar as his successor. Laurentiu was formerly executive director of the National MS society and so comes to the role with a great deal of experience and knowledge about MS.

The Day Centre, in partnership with the city social services, has recently obtained a major grant



from the EU to completely renovate and re-equip the Day Centre. This will include a lift and so the first floor will be able to be used for facilities for people with MS. This is a major step forward. Work is likely to start early next year and it will mean that the Day Centre building will not be available for use during that time. Laurentiu has planned for the summer pavilion (pictured here) to be converted so it can be used as a temporary space for activities during the winter months. In order to achieve this he is organising groups of volunteers to work on the project. The first group are working in August. We should also like to send a

group out to work on this, so if you are interested please contact us. You will need to pay your own expenses and any funds raised towards materials would also be very welcome.

Visit to Bratca Comune

Last June we were invited to visit Bratca comune where we met the mayor, and his deputy as well as visiting a small village school near a Roma community.

We were able to advise the mayor and his deputy about EU rural development grants that may be available for their community. Information about EU grants often does not reach the village communities and so they were very grateful to receive information and advice from us.

Afterwards we visited a school where the majority of children are Roma as part of the background information for Rosa's PhD work on Roma education. It was very heartening to see a successful integration programme in action because, in the country as a whole, the situation of Roma children appears to be deteriorating. Rosa has now visited four counties in Transylvania as part of her studies.



Flog-it Day

On Sunday August 9th between 10am and 4pm in Noble's Park, Douglas, we will have a stall. Please come and visit us if you are able. We will be selling some Romanian porcelain and pottery as well as other items

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