

Summer Trip Report July 2015

Where to start ? Well, we're Brits so maybe - the weather ! It was pretty cold to start with and by mid trip we had two days of absolutely continuous torrential rain.

But is this piece of news necessary? After all, we were staying with the deputy mayor in a nice house - we had a bed, warm covers at night and a roof over our heads.

Not like a family in the gipsy are of Buia. Their home - a one room hut built of mud and wattle, as they all are - had collapsed in a storm a few weeks ago and they had 'nowhere to lay their head' (sound familiar?)

Fortunately no-one was hurt and they'd salvaged some bedding which they put in some hay (like a story we hear in December?). This hay is 8 - 10 foot up in the barn, with access via a **very** rickety ladder. Pretty hard to get up to bed there.

The little 24 year old mum, Iulia, has two toddlers and a baby due any day, and she has to climb this ladder to rest. And it gets worse. The end of the barn is open to rain and storm - and rats ... Maybe the weather IS an important factor in the trip report.

We thank the Lord that we were on the trip at this moment in time or they would have to stay in the barn a lot longer.

Her husband and father had started to rebuild on the old area using bricks which they 'found' around the village, but they had no hope of getting a roof.

Florin asked us if we could provide the materials for rafters etc . It all cost £400.00. We already had £100.00 given in the UK, the rest needs to be covered by fundraising or ...

The weather did change mid-trip and got hotter - 39 degrees on the day we left and people working the fields in blistering heat - it had come so quickly they had no time to acclimatise.

Our own health was a bit wobbly at times but we praise the Lord for all the strength we received when some days were tough - thank you for your prayer support.

Our main task had been to get the paperwork for the Rainbow Centre. The meeting with the mayor was very positive. He's keen to work with us on many matters - including the fact that their sewerage station is non-functioning. We can make enquiries but it's doubtful that we would be able to facilitate any help. He invited our mayor to visit and hopes he will be able to return that visit and come to Chard next summer.



There are divisions at the Town Hall with some 'rebellious councillors' who want to pull the mayor down in this pre-election year, and we need to pray that they will respect our wish to take on the Rainbow Centre again, and recognise that it will help the whole commune.

The meeting with the leader of the NGO was put off twice and then he said he'd call a members meeting. That too was cancelled about half an hour before it was due, and we waited

another week to 'enjoy' a Romanian Committee meeting in all its splendour. However, those who came agreed to change the constitution and accept the Centre. They will meet again on 25th July with all the members to ratify this. This change will be sealed in law before the Council can let the NGO have the Centre. So still much to pray through!

We talked with Florin about who will run the Centre. Another NGO run by a Christian family in the village will work with EuroTransilvania to run things, and Florin is seriously considering not being deputy mayor for the next 4 years. He really wants to manage the Centre, and has all the experience and credentials needed.



Progress on the Pharmacy: this was less encouraging. A villager now brings prescription medications to the villagers, and the doctors no longer support the idea of a pharmacy for casual medical requirements such as paracetamol etc (which cannot be sold in a general store). The Pharmacy cabin is in the grounds of the Rainbow Centre and we may need to re-think its use when the paperwork for the Centre is sorted.

Prizes and Annual Bursaries : the charity has financed these for approximately 10 years now and we were asked to give out the 13 bursaries at the school Prize Giving. Bursaries are given to the top children in the senior school to help them prepare to start 'college' in Sibiu, at 15 ! This was an interesting occasion - informal and a little chaotic with each class performing a short play or poem. Florin's daughter Cati received a bursary as she came top of the school with a 10, plus 2 boys from sponsored families as well, which was encouraging.

Sponsored Family Visits : We were pleased to see how well most of these families are doing - one especially poor family has two teenagers at school in Sibiu. Without sponsorship they'd have stayed home with no chance of employment. One small girl with only one leg was amazingly agile and another with cerebral palsy is improving through physiotherapy



Heath Seica: Florin offered to take us to visit the 4 people who benefit from the Health Seica programme but we felt it wasn't necessary and maybe inappropriate as they are older and quite unwell. One 65 year old man is in the terminal stages of bladder cancer, another lady has cancer and looks after her handicapped daughter, two other ladies are equally disabled and very grateful for the monetary support. There is no real help from the government for these people and often, if they do not have family, they are in dire straits.

We visited Marius and he and his mum were delighted to see us. He is well and she too at this time, after a dodgy winter with arthritic problems. She is a remarkable lady - but very aware that she can't care for him for ever.

Bread4Buia stops in July and August as there is more food available from the fields and the weather isn't so harsh. It's difficult to give out bread if the children are not in school.

Gipsy families : some have fenced off an area and are growing vegetables in little gardens. However many men are unemployed.

We discovered that the Town Hall have started a 'Literacy programme' aimed at the gipsy people and Romanians in the more remote villages. A couple of firms in Copsa Mica will employ them IF they are literate, and will send a bus for them.

One dad from a sponsored family in Buia is already taking advantage of the bus, as he could read. We've asked that the young man from the Veltan family, who currently does the occasional seasonal work for other villagers, be placed on this scheme in return for help with his house. Florin thinks there is a strong chance that he will accept this and go along.

Medical emergency : Dumitra Orlandea, 12 years old, and hurt in a chance accident in June. She was standing outside her house and a boy kicked a football which struck a bicycle. A sharp piece of plastic flew into her eye, damaging the lens. She had emergency surgery to remove this and was given drops, but a cataract like substance had grown over the eye. She'd already lost 50% of her sight when we visited, and needed surgery in Sibiu the day after we left, costing 1000 Euros.

The family had no way of finding this, so we covered £500.00 from the charity and some teachers also gave. She's a very good child, always helping other children and the teachers wanted to help.

She's been told she must live a quiet life and only read for short periods of time - quite devastating for a pretty little schoolgirl. Dad's in Germany trying to earn for the family so mum has had to cope on her own.

Baptist Church :

Dawn went and was delighted to see Cosmina, a Seica gipsy girl with her sister and her child in the small elderly congregation. They'd been baptised a week before and were a great encouragement to this small gathering. It was a humbling experience, as always, to be with them as they **all** prayed long prayers of thanksgiving for all the Lord had done for them - and yet we know how hard life is as a 'repenter' in these villages.



Other news : We travelled along several of the **newly tarmacked roads** in the commune including an entirely new road carved out of the hill to a village on the other side - cutting a journey time down from $\frac{3}{4}$ hour to 10 minutes for the villagers needing the station.



Florin showed us the **new sports field and pavilion** and the caretaker asked if we could sponsor some balls and other equipment for them! The money for this and the new small 'parks' around the commune comes from the EU - it seems crazy to be given money from the Environment Department to beautify the place and yet not all the commune has water and the sewerage system needs to be sorted out! Florin understands why some councillors are rebellious as they and the people cannot understand why this money can't be used for necessities instead of 'frivolities'.



We were excited at the **new initiative via Natura 2000** to erect many more storks' nests in the commune and enjoyed seeing storks flying overhead on many occasions.

Florin has the **High Viz Gear** and is keen to get school involved next term. He thinks they will use it when the teachers take children on excursions. He's not sure if older people would wear jackets as it's not in their culture but maybe as Gicu's mum died on the road it will be taken up by older people too.



Finally - we left as much 'to be done' as we managed 'to do'.

This is Viorica, a lovely but sad young gipsy lass in Buia.

Her husband is in hospital with TB and pneumonia.

- ♥ she has no money to go and visit him,
- ♥ no money to feed her 4 children,
- ♥ no water and walks 5 minutes for a bucketful
- ♥ no electricity - it's expensive so she uses candles
- ♥ no wood burning cooker, her very old one collapsed.

She asked if we could get her a cooker so she can cook the potatoes she's grown on her patch.



She's an intelligent girl of 24, caught in a system that says she has to marry as a teenager and have children.

She could have gone to high school and got a job and brought her family out of this cycle of poverty - instead she accepts her lot and tries her best.

She was very happy that her littlest boy of 10 months had been baptised.



What could we do for her, and others, at a Christian run Centre ?

God has given us the opportunity - we just need to pray it into being.