

# BRITISH HUMANITARIAN AID NEWS FEBRUARY 2016

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Hello dear Friends, we hope you have all survived the stresses of Christmas and the New Year. Normally this period of the year is fairly quiet while everyone recovers, but has not been so in 2016! We have had huge quantities of very varied aid and are only just getting it under control. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the individuals and organisations which have been so generous. We have managed to get a new provider for our internet domain and we are now back with our original email addresses should you wish to contact us. We did try to send out an email update with our annual report in December but some of the mailings failed. Sorry! The report is now available on the website.

## In Memoriam

For many years we have been visiting and supporting the wonderful Olga Markovna, 105 years old in 2015.



Olga Markovna

During the New Year celebrations we visited her. She had been bed bound for some time and was dreadfully frail in body. However, she gave us a spirited welcome and her mind was as sharp as ever. Sadly, at 3am. On 25<sup>th</sup> January her heart stopped. She will be missed by many. May you rest in peace dearest Olga.

## Changes don't always equate to progress!

Following last year's elections there have been yet more changes required with the paperwork, not all of them positive! This has led to delays in processing the aid but we have at last managed to satisfy the authorities and the September load should be free soon. Because of the embargo on Russia lorries passing through the amount of traffic passing through Ukraine the Customs lorry park at Kozelets, by the road to Moscow, has been severely reduced. As this park is owned by one of the wealthy elite the Customs in Chernihiv is being closed to lorries so that his income is increased. Business owners in Chernihiv are furious as this being 50 miles will increase both their costs and the time taken for processing goods.

## Aid for Chernihiv Region

Thanks to the generous collections and donations in December we were able to despatch a load mid-month and, unusually thanks to an individual from Harpenden gifting us the funding for a lorry and kind weather in Chernihiv we were able to send out another in January.



We still have more aid ready and waiting for us to amass sufficient funds to send it out.

Unfortunately, both vehicles have decided to require major repairs, an expense that we could have done without.

## Winter in Chernihiv Region

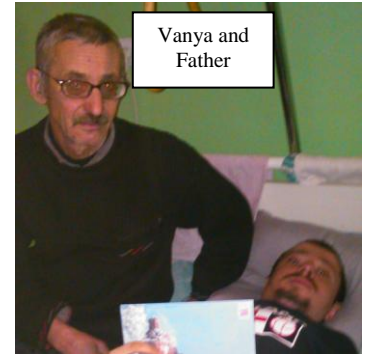
Once the December collections were finished, and lorry loaded, we made a trip out to Ukraine as another load had just been cleared from Customs. Heavy snow fell after we had been there for a couple of days but only for the one day and although the temperatures dropped to -10C midday and -23C at night we were able to shift an entire lorry load to various the district Arattas and to organisations in several of the districts in Chernihiv Region.



This aid is ever more vital as the refugee situation continues to escalate while for the resident population their grivnas continue their downward slide. Current exchange rate of 1 grivna = £0.026 puts pensions and minimum wages down from £100 a month in early 2014 to just over £30 now when the prices for most items have increased by 60%. A couple from Crimea when seeking help from the authorities were given 800 grivnas per month and a small room in a hostel. The kitchen and toilets were shared, and filthy! They were then expected to pay 500 grivnas for the room's rent leaving £10 for them both for the month.

## Survival is tough!

Many of you will remember, Vanya, who suffers from dwarfism and cannot walk. We were approach for help because he had fallen and broken a hip. Because of his fragile bones he had to stay in hospital for a month while the bones mended naturally. The cost charged for treatment, £200, is half of his annual invalid pension. In addition, this followed on from his mother falling and breaking both arms in the Autumn. Father has had a hard time caring for both of them but remains amazingly cheerful. We were glad we were able to offer our support.



Vanya and Father

Once the loads of aid had been distributed we spent some time over New Year with "Piglet Family" in Vaganichi Village where we are creating the old peoples' home. We are still renting the ex-school building and have managed to get the rent down to £1 pm. They are well ahead with the sanitary work and have built a new wood store for the logs purchased from nearby forests. Some of the furniture and fittings have already arrived with more to follow from the September lorry, and Philip's trailer loads which should be cleared soon. There are many local people impatiently waiting to move in. The family and friends have been able to spend valuable time on the buildings and grounds as it is a quiet time on the farm. The bad weather has reduced the clientele at the farmers' market but the dairy products they offer are still very popular.

## Minor Problems?

We have been trying to tie down the ownership of the school's land which does not automatically attach to the buildings. Apparently, according to local authorities we cannot purchase the land as there is no map for the site or the village! We have been trying to source appropriate maps but no-one has any idea where they are held, or if any even exist. We have had to try to take this up with the government in Kiev. A recent surprise was a visit to Vaganichi by the Mayor of Gorodnya, the District capital. He proposes that Nadia and all the children should move to the town, and should then create a home for the elderly there. This is a blatant attempt for him to appear to be doing something for his town. It does not take into account the children's future on the farm, the fact that those over 18yrs will get no foster money, who will fund the restoration of a really poor building and who will pay to run it. He presumably expects us to. The problem is that we do not need to antagonise him as we need his support for our original project. Well we shall see what happens!

Our best wishes to all of you,

Philip G Edmonds