



C h r i s t m a s 2 0 0 2

Well, this started off as a diary!

Friday 25th October 2002

I knew this trip to Romania was going to be different but I had no idea just how different it would become. Always, when you drive up from Cornwall to Heathrow, there is the worry that you will break down & miss the flight. In eleven years our worries have never come to anything - until today!

What a nightmare!

Travelling with Chris Saunders, my son Philip and with Viorel, Ana, Julia & Lorena, we left in the White Cross minibus from the Rectory at 2.00 this morning. It was dark & wet & windy, & the children giggled & slept, & the minibus hiccuped & coughed but got us to Taunton Deane services in really good time. We stopped, feeling pleased with ourselves & congratulating Philip for coaxing the old bus along. I sent everyone ahead of me into the garage to get a coffee while I filled up the bus with fuel. We left, relaxed & happy, & set off in good heart. It was about 4.30am. Almost immediately, however, Philip said that the engine was worse. He made me get out the bill & by the light of a torch I read the details in horror. I had filled the tank with unleaded petrol instead of diesel! Just as we discovered the error the bus coughed its last & drifted to a halt onto the hard shoulder. We were on the north-bound section of the M5, a couple of miles south of Gordano, where the motorway splits & is at different levels. It was dark & wet.

I phoned the RAC & they said that, as it was driver error, I would have to pay for help. Of course I agreed. We really had no choice. They told us that we were on priority but to get out of the minibus & to wait on the other side of the barrier. We put on our anoraks & climbed over the barrier only to find ourselves on a 4-5 foot ledge that dropped away to nothing. It was a bit scary & there we waited & waited & finally, 2 hours & several phone calls later, a tow truck, with a very bad-tempered driver, arrived, followed by 2 taxis. We had approximately 1 hour & 20 minutes before the gate closed for

our flight, and, although the taxi drivers did their best, we missed it by 3 minutes!

We left from Heathrow for Paris 3 hours later & now, as I write this, we are just taking off on our Air France flight to Budapest & its 4.00pm continental time. We've had a 5 hour wait in Paris! We're all tired & hungry - and it's all my fault! The taxis were very expensive & taxi drivers don't take plastic, so we had to pool all the kids' spending money to pay them off. Luckily Bureaux de Change do take plastic so everyone has been repaid &, although we're tired & we still have to face a 5 hour journey by road once we get to Budapest, we are still smiling - just!

(If I had known that the minibus would be a complete right off I'm not so sure I would have been smiling. Luckily I didn't then know. That bit of news was waiting for me when I got home!)

We all enjoyed the food on the plane & Ana had a glass of red wine & promptly dropped fast asleep just as we started the descent into Budapest.

We're taking the young people back to see Romania, to visit the orphanages & find people who may have been kind to them. If possible we're going to try to find Ana's birth parents & Viorel hopes to visit his family again. It's going to be a week of very mixed emotions. It is the first time Julia has been back since she came to England in 1995. She came a frightened, wide-eyed child & she's going back a beautiful, fashion-conscious young woman.

Lorena has been back once before & is so excited by the prospect of another visit that, even though she's obviously exhausted there's absolutely no chance of her dropping off to sleep *(Last time she & I shared a hotel room at Heathrow the night before the flight & each time I woke to turn over there she was - huge brown eyes staring at me! I didn't sleep much either! Jenny)*

That's the end of the diary I'm afraid - life became just too busy & so the rest is down to memory!



The taxi driver was waiting for us in Budapest & with no complaint at all for his 6 hour wait he drove us to Popa's house in Beznea. It was 1.30am before we all fell into our beds.

Because my house is on top of a hill we needed Popa or André to pick us up & take us back in their 4x4s each day. The route soon became a quagmire of mud because, although the sun did appear occasionally, it rained for most of the week. The wind was quite strong at night when it swooped up the mountainside & tried to lift the roof right off my summerhouse.

On Sunday morning, however, the sun shone & the countryside looked breathtakingly beautiful as it shimmered & sparkled as the sun caught the raindrops of the night before. We all got up to go to **Church** & we arrived in style in the middle of the 4 hour service. I thought that Popa looked a bit surprised to see us & it wasn't until afterwards that we discovered that the clocks had gone back in the night & we had arrived an hour early! As a result we had to stand & sit & kneel & genuflect & cross ourselves for 2½ hours! Popa was most amused!

We spent some time after the service with the children from the houses & with 2 dear little fat, flea-ridden puppies belonging to Popa's family. Lorena was bitten badly - by the fleas not the puppies!

On Sunday afternoon Viorel went with Adi & André to visit his mother & family. The visit went well. They are a colourful, boisterous family who live crammed into a tiny 2 roomed house. He gave them money & is now worried because they have asked him to buy them a bigger house & he's not sure how long he'll have to save in order to do so. They were pleased to see him & he them but he finds it hard to understand why they never made any attempt to find him when he needed a family so much.

We visited **Cadea** during the week & saw our children there. Rita is still sullen but much calmer. Bujorel is being given a lot of responsibility & is Mr Negrut's favourite. Déju works on the land but took me on one side & begged me to get him out & so did Elena. This was so unlike Elena that I was worried. I'd really like to know what goes on at Cadea when there are no visitors around.

Everything was good at **Cenalos**. Josif loves being in the house across the road with the children & is wonderful at looking after them. Apparently an eye surgeon believes it may be possible for him to regain a little of his sight. Dr Oros is promising to organise an operation. The

children were all delightful & seemed very content. Rodica walked us over to the house & proudly showed us around. The roads in Cenalos are very straight & flat & families of geese browse along the grass verges or walk in stately procession down the middle of the road. Luckily traffic is usually limited to 2 tractors a day, so geese rule o.k.!

We visited **Remeti** & were impressed by all the work Mariana has done. Her mother has moved into her flat where Mariana can take better care of her. All the children had comfortable beds, cupboards for their clothes, tables, soft chairs & carpets on the floor. The work rooms have all been lined with wood & looked delightful. The showers work & the central heating has been converted to gas, the whole place was clean & warm & the children were calm & well cared for.



At **Bratca** they have started repairing the 'new' building & have divided off part of the dining room to make a play room. The children were not as calm as they had been at Remeti. Chris was head-butted when she bent to kiss a child & Popa nearly lost half his beard when one youngster caught hold of it & swung herself off her feet!

Next door at the **old hospital** the 23 older youngsters who are classified as severely mentally handicapped were warm & clean. Dr Negrulescu is now in charge of them & has been given money by a new department to care for them. There was, apparently, a problem in September while the Health Department handed over the reins. For 3 days no-one thought to feed the young people. Luckily a few of the Redruth & Camborne Friends' Group were out in Romania at the time & quickly jumped to the rescue with money for food. Dinu, Petrica & Mirella were among the young people & I guess that their calmness was due to the fact that they were sedated. But, perhaps that's a good way to pass the day when there's absolutely nothing to do.

At **Casa Fericita** little Lucian is happy to be back from hospital, where he was being treated for pneumonia. The other children are happy & doing well & Bela is excited about coming to UK next year.

At **Casa Trandafir** Cristi Cerbu made quite a hit with Julia. He looked after her & Lorena so well. He's turning into a delightful young man. Livia is trying to get all the children to visit the village

more often. Florin & Georgie & Cristi enjoy these excursions but the girls are still a bit shy.

At Casa Sfintul Nicolae we, sadly, found that Moma Florica was undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer & a new housemother, Maria, was standing in for her. A large barn has been built & a family of pigs installed. Lorena thought that Elemer was a star!

At Casa David Gusti & Popa sang for us & Cosmin charmed all the girls, as usual. They are all excited about a trip to UK next July, when I hope to get them to perform in 2 or 3 venues around Cornwall.

At Casa Sfintul Petru the children have made so much progress that they are almost unrecognisable. Even Ana-Maria is starting to talk now.

Everyday it rained & the paths got muddier & muddier & poor Lorena struggled & slipped but always kept smiling. Julia managed to look elegant & beautiful, even when the rest of us were mud-spattered & wet, & Chris made up the fires in the evening & talked soothingly to us all. She was great! The skies were dark grey & when the sun did shine, the yellow leaves & the pale trunks of the silver birches gleamed & danced in the sunlight & gave a magical quality to the scenery.

It was a good trip with some lovely memories to counteract the disasters. A special moment was watching the girls happily dancing at Paulina's gypsy party on the last night; a really fun moment was watching Popa's face when his youngest daughter, Joana, appeared on the village hall stage in a micro skirt that definitely didn't cover her backside!

Another nightmare moment happened at Charles de Gaulle airport on the way home. A charming Frenchman took charge of Lorena's wheelchair & then seemed to lose the ability to communicate in any language at all. If our plane hadn't been delayed we would have missed it - again!

I suppose the most moving moment during the week was when Ana found her family. I've left telling you about this until last because it was really a very traumatic experience. Ana has dreamt about finding her real mother & had a picture in her mind of a fairy tale, beautiful mother & a warm, comfortable home. When we reached the place where we thought the family should be living, we actually drove past it because it didn't appear to be a house - just an old pig sty or wood store surrounded by rubbish

& mud. Ana burst into tears & wouldn't get out of the car. When she did pluck up courage, she managed very well. I was really proud of her. Her mother & father & 2 of her sisters were there, as well as 2 handicapped aunts & her sister's boyfriend; 3 more siblings were away in the village & we didn't meet them. Ana, at 4 ft 10", was taller than her mother. We were led into the shack & 2 pigs scuttled out between our legs as we went in. The house was one small room, with a wet, muddy floor & 2 bed platforms covered in blackened rags. Seven people share that room. There was a table on which there was half a loaf of bread, covered in flies. There were flies everywhere. It was a shock to see people living in such hopeless squalor here in Europe. Somehow a mud floor was ok as part of the scene when I lived in Africa, but winter is coming & the thought of that little family surviving through the severely low temperatures during the coming months is certainly going to give us a few sleepless nights.

Since we've been home Ana & I have drawn the plans of a simple house that we could build for them & we think we could do it for between £4000 & £5000. Ana has started saving already. Be warned - if you see her approaching you she's after your money! She's not going to rest until her family are living in a house rather than a pig sty.

We are always asking you for money. It's the boring, regular money that is the hardest to raise, the money that keeps our projects going. But, however we spend your money, please be assured that it goes to people who desperately need it. We can't feed the world but we have, and do, make a difference to a lot of people.

Thank you all so much for all your support. I hope you have a very happy Christmas.

Pat

2002 CHRISTMAS CARDS
on sale

£3.50 per pack of 10 from the
office, including post & package
£2.99 personal callers at the shop in
New Bridge St, Truro.

Merry Christmas!


It is with great sadness that we have to tell you of the sudden death of Peter Inns. Peter was a lovely man who honoured us by agreeing to be



on our first Board of Directors. He retired from the Board a few years back because of a heart problem and died, suddenly, on

November 10th. He was on his own with Pauline and just sat down, saying he felt a little giddy, and died. It was how he would have wished to go - quietly and in the presence of his best friend and loving wife.

God speed, Peter. Heaven is an even better place now.

I had hoped that we would get another newsletter out at the end of the summer. This was not to be. Jeff & I had decided to take a 3 week break in the summer to visit Amsterdam, Berlin & Poland before heading through the Carpathian mountains via Brasov to spend a week with the children in our houses.

We managed to see Amsterdam - the rain stopped just long enough for us to take a canal trip to Ann Franke's house & to visit a *very interesting* side street opposite our hotel! The following day we were just entering Berlin (in torrential rain) when Liz phoned us to say that our youngest daughter had been rushed into hospital & was to have her baby delivered by caesarean section the following day - 12 weeks early! Our invasion of Poland would have to wait for another time!

We had a fitful night's sleep & left for home early the next morning. By the time we arrived at Treliske Hospital in Truro, baby Zara was 2 days old, having weighed in at just 754 grams (1lb 10½oz) & was fighting for her life in an incubator.

She has made steady progress &, as I write this, is now 4lb 15oz, has been home for a week & has, today, come off oxygen & been declared fit & healthy.

We thank God for this tiny grand-daughter & thank all who have kept her & Louise & Leigh in their prayers. Special gratitude must be given to the wonderful staff of the Neo Natal Unit at Treliske Hospital.

Looking back since the last newsletter, there seems to be so much that we haven't really reported on.

At the beginning of May I escorted the Triple Echo film crew to Romania. I could fill a newsletter with those exploits alone, beginning at the Ibis Hotel at Heathrow where I met the crew to discover that they had had an accident with a piece of equipment, to the road journey from Budapest airport where we saw a car that had overtaken us in a very reckless, but typically Hungarian, manner, overturned, almost burnt out, surrounded by Hungarian police, ambulance & fire crew. I wish I knew that the driver had survived.

The crew were there to film Pat as part of a series on the Diocese of Truro. While we were there they filmed us having an emergency Directors' meeting. Jeff & Tony had driven out in the minibus with a crew to work on the dental surgery. If any of you see Tony on your travels just ask him about the electricity supply at Casa Anoushka - & stand back to receive the answer, which will probably be something like "That bxxxxx Jeff Townsend!" You may just catch a glimpse of me on film - driver extraordinaire - how I will miss that minibus!



Tony Rule & electric drill!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our supporters for their loyalty throughout 2002. In particular I would like to thank our Friends' Groups here in Cornwall, without whom we would find it very difficult to continue. Thank you to the Penwith Friends for your support for Casa Fericita. Thank you to Redruth & Camborne Friends for your support for Casa Trandafir. Thank you to St Agnes & Perranporth Friends for your sponsorship of our Field Manager's (Popa) salary. Thank you to Ron Watson for organising the second Annual Golf Competition. Thank you to Adrian Allen for maintaining our website.

Thank you, too, to *you*, for continuing to support us in your own way, whether you sponsor a child or teacher individually or through your church, workplace or school, or whether you pray for our work with the children or just hold them & us in your hearts. Every one of you has a valuable contribution to make to the family that is White Cross Mission.

Wishing you all a very happy & holy Christmas 2002 & peace & joy in 2003.

Jenny

