

Romania July 2016

After my visit in October 2015 it became more transparent to me, the need for Steve Gardner's request of a fire engine for the Community of Carand in Romania.

My story truly begins after I received an inspiring reply to my request to purchase a disused fire appliance from the service, from Chief fire officer Lee Howell.

The journey was not without its challenges as one would expect, but those challenges were met, overcome, achieving all the main objectives and providing crews with the skills that are already proving valuable to the community.

There are many people and organisations I need to thank for their help, guidance and support since my previous visit to Romania,

Staff at Devon and Somerset fire and rescue service for the guidance and information support with this project.

Steve Gardner from Community action Romania, for all his hard work and perseverance from the original request to where we are to date.

Tidcombe community church who's donated funds to purchase the retired fire engine (Wetheridge) from DSFRS and 300 Carbon Monoxide alarms from Fire Hawk.

Steve Smith (DSFRS) Safe Southwest, for the donation of 30 water bottles, PPE for the volunteer fire fighters and £500 towards flights, transportation and accommodation/ food costs for the DSFRS crew.

FF Adam Edwards (Bampton) a very inspiring teacher.

And my family for their support throughout and allowing me to miss yet another birthday this time my partner Alison.

Day one, on the road.....

On Sunday 17th July Steve Gardner and Gelvin Williams meet up at Tidcombe Community Church at the Primary School to say a few words of thanks for all the support received with funding for the Fire appliance and for their encouragement that inspired us with getting this project on its way.

We were also joined by CLLR Brian Greenslade who is a member of the Fire Authority who showed us his support.

Day 1
19/7/16

Leaving Tiverton at 10:00 heading for Portsmouth started with good speed until we reached the A34 near Winchester where we had delays. The delay caused us to miss the ferry we were aiming for. We booked on the next ferry, a wait of seven hours.

Day 2
20/7/16

After an awkward night's sleep on the ferry we set off from Caen at 7.15. We drove through France at a good pace stopping at tolls on route and entered into Germany where we stopped for the night near Mannheim. We Stayed at Alcatraz Prison, Am Japanischen Garten; the prison was a female institution and reopened as a Hotel in 2010.

Day 3
21/7/16

After breakfast we set off at 08:00 stopping at a service station to enquire about the vignette (road toll charge) a very helpful German Lady rang BAG E (road authority) and explained the purpose of our journey and they gave us free passage through Germany. We had moderate rain most of the day, and lost time in heavy traffic due to various spats of road works throughout Germany. We arrived at Wels Austria at 20:45. As we pulled into the car park the frontage of the hotel was covered in graffiti, which was there design. The hotel was a very pleasant overnight stop.

Day 4
22/7/16

Slept well with a 6am alarm call, Breakfast and on the road at 07:10 covered good ground today with an easy run through Austria, Hungary and into Romania. The Hungarian/Romania boarder initially looked like we were going to be sat around a while with a 5k queue of trucks. We decided to go through the car/bus lane and had no problems at all. On enquiring about road toll charges the Romanian authorities let us carry on through due to the Vehicle being a charity donation. We drove into Arad stayed the night at a friend's house.

Had a good night in Arad meet some lovely people, sat beside the Morish River, and had some good food.

Day 5
23/7/16

We set off for Carand around 11:00-11:30 the run took one and a half hours and the roads varied in conditions with some very deep ruts in places. We came across some horse drawn carts going through some of the villages, and noticed some big differences in lifestyles and homes. As we drove into Carand, Pastor Daniel gave us a very warm welcome from the grounds of his home and was soon joined by Vetutsa, Daniels wife and some of the family. We Parked up the fire engine, unloaded our bags, cleaned up and a meal was prepared for us. After we all

On arrival and whilst sorting through kit sizes, Steve took the standpipes to be adapted to the nearest fabricating workshop who was able to cut the two pipes and joint them up. On his return we filled the tank with water and started looking at the equipment on the appliance.

Due to the number of chimney fires I made sure there was an old stirip pump hose/ rose and good sturdy bucket on board the appliance, As it was 35 degrees in temperature so this was a good task to demonstrate and the children got under the mist of water while the crew assembled the rods and I talked through the process of twisting the hose around the rods to keep it tight to pass through the flue and cooling the fire inside.

With the cultural differences and the language barrier having Danny Ispas guiding with interpretation and direction from Gelvin Williams and Adam Edwards, worked very well, Danny is also one of the volunteer firefighters and very quickly became the lead on the ladder drills.

After three days of 30-35degree heat, a lot of hard work and perseverance the crews proved good competent skills in the safe use of the 135 Ladder and use of the MAN fire engines and all its pumping and priming use, the setting up and improvised dam to store and draw water, using portable pumping equipment and setting up a water relay to the fire ground.

The inspiration continue with the volunteer firefighters having actively extinguished two potentially devastating fires in the past three weeks of our visit and proving the validity of the equipment donated to their community.