

Biggin Hill Romania Group

c/o 145 Sopwith Crescent,

Wimborne

Dorset

BH21 1SR

Telephone: +44 (0) 1202 905340



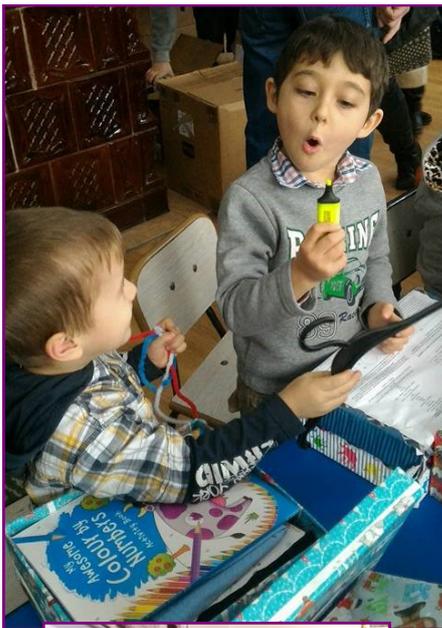
www.bigginhillromaniagroup.com

sandra.dolan9@gmail.com

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Why do we do it?



Because we can!





For those of you who have been on one of these trips— does this look familiar? Order out of Chaos—thank goodness!!



Our driver, Razvan, had promised to cut up some wood and take it to an old lady who was his neighbour, living on the top floor of the block of flats. Team 1 offered to help. Razvan said that he could not believe what they did. Up and down the stairs, up and down, up and down, carrying wood without complaint. Even laughing hysterically when the light in the stairwell kept going out with the timer! Making a joke out of the situation. I think it was hysteria from overwork! Bless them!



This little lad gladly posed for photos in his traditional dress just before the class performances of song and dance. This took place in the entrance hallway. No school hall? Sound familiar? Yet it was a lovely school with all rooms and public areas showing neat and effective displays of pupils work. The Headteacher was wonderful—full of enthusiasm for her school, staff and pupils. Very grateful for all that we had taken for them.



This young man just smiled and laughed the whole time we were there. He laughed with delight at everything he found in his box. When he performed traditional dances with his classmates he smile and laughed all the way through! Such a joy!



This little girl was not allowed to open her box so she was not going to let go of it until she got home!



This three year old brought tears to the eyes of the assistant who came with us to translate. He blew kisses to us all as a thank you!



Whilst delivering boxes to this school which is in an urban area, we paused for refreshments whilst the pupils changed over shift. The youngsters come in the morning and the older ones in the afternoon. We were sitting chatting and the sports teacher asked if we had any bats that they could have for lessons. After some confusion between us as to the type of bats, we were told that there was no outside space for sport so definitely not tennis racquets! So where did the pupils do their sports lesson? In one of their classrooms. He said they had an old table tennis table and some rather old bats. Football? Gymnastics? Tennis? Hockey? Athletics? Etc? all usual in British schools. I asked to see the sports area and so the teacher took me to see. Attached are some of the photos of the equipment they use on a daily basis. I am absolutely sure that the schools in the UK would have thrown all of it away years ago. The floor mats had lost their plastic covers and the foam was crumbling. The cork cover to the table tennis bats was disintegrating. For some strange reason this made me want to cry. Maybe just one step too far? We have so much in British schools in comparison. In most of the secondary age sector here, the teachers move around to the pupils. Science labs? Foreign language labs? Design and technology? Food technology? Music? Drama studio? Sports hall? Don't make me laugh!! Lets not think about interactive whiteboards and IT rooms!



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After having a think, I went back to the Centre and had a look at some table tennis equipment which was no longer being used. Razvan kindly collected some footballs and together with a few table tennis bats



and balls, he delivered them to the school in Cucuileti. Later on after we had left, a table tennis table that used to be used in the Foundations For Life Centre, was also donated to the school. It was a very heavy table and despite what might be indicated from the photo, Mickey Mouse didn't even help to carry it! Let's



hope this will help a little. If anyone would like to help in any way please contact us. **The Editor**



Graeme has been promoted! He was given the responsibility of the clip board for Team 1 - checking in and checking out the labelled boxes for classes. I am pleased to say that he conducted his task with great aplomb!



Today, the numbers of young people attending the Robert Cole Centre have gone down but those remaining still put on a great show at Christmas. The staff work very hard to engage the youngsters and to encourage them to work together as a team. They learn the words, the music and the dance moves off by heart and it is obviously really important to them and their families.





December 2017-deliveries:

Team 1 managed to visit many families in need, taking family boxes with provisions, plus toys and presents for the children. It seems like a very small thing to do, that it can only bring a temporary support but at least they know there are people who care enough to send it and to deliver it.



The original orphanage building we visited is still there, slowly falling into disrepair. It holds many dreadful memories for some people in the teams.

In the grounds however, the support work for young people and adults with disabilities continues to thrive.





Team 2 had a really rubbish start to their trip. They were stuck at the airport because of heavy snow affecting flights. "Not such a surprise" I hear you say dismissively—after all, the temperature had reached minus 20 in Comanesti in December. However, it was not in Romania where they were stuck but at Luton Airport! For 24 hours! So their trip was very intense and busy when they finally arrived. Yet there are still so many smiley faces rising to the challenge.



'As always, it is a privilege to be a part of this amazing charity and to work alongside such hard working and committed people. May God continue to bless this charity, bless all the people we seek to serve, bless our families in the UK and Romania.' **Sue - Member of Team 2**



Celebrating the Queen's Birthday at the Romanian Embassy: this year, 2017. we were invited to attend the



celebrations for Her Majesty The Queen's birthday and to present information concerning the Charity to those who were there. There were fewer people than we expected to visit the exhibition area, partly because it was so very hot. However, national Press provided quite a bit of coverage of the event and as a result, the word was spread. In situations like this, it is not easy to see how much what we did has affected our support but we will see. Paul Brummell - British Ambassador - said to me whilst he was admiring the BHRG stand, that he wanted to show the Romanian government, as well as business leaders, the sort of things that British charities are doing for the Romanian people, not only in Bucharest but also elsewhere in Romania. He emphasised the work and activities of the British charity sector working in Romania during his speech at the event - which was attended by around seven hundred dignitaries and other prominent people.

Without exception, each of the thirty five charities there had at least one of the roll-up banner displays which we have invested in. I think ours had more words on it than any of the others and so although perhaps not quite as eye-catching as some, it did mean that people who looked at it read about what the charity has been up to and I think that helped them gain more information and understanding. Our table-top display looked good and worked well – we covered our table with eye catching, bright yellow material, placing my and Cristina's laptops on it, one showing the Christmas shoebox video, the other showing the PowerPoint award ceremony at the RCC on the last day of this academic year. The table also

had BHRG newsletters, sponsorship packs and RCC leaflets (the latter being in both English and Romanian), as well as some of the art & craft materials and origami works from the Centre.

Ten minutes into the official start of the event and the charity that had been allocated next to us hadn't turned up, so I asked if we could use their table as well. Permission was granted and we were able to place one of our yellow covered boards straight on top, giving us twice the amount of table-top space compared to the other organisations there which was an added bonus. We were the only ones to have laptops showing moving images, which also caught peoples attention. Cristina, the Centre manager, and I spent some time on planning and preparation for this event and only time will tell how much of an impact it has had. It was also great to see our Honorary Patron, Sam Fullbrook there to give us his support. I wonder if he is coming to play Santa Claus this Christmas?... **Adrian Woodroffe**

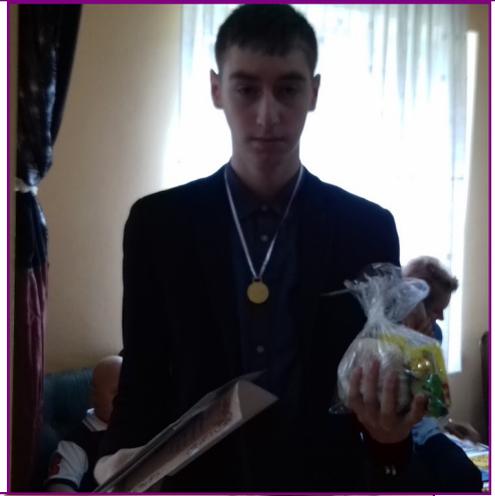




Robert Cole Centre End of Year Graduation

Ceremony—July 2017

A bitter/sweet day for staff as we say goodbye to a class of youngsters, many of whom had been with us for many years. There were tears and smiles alike, both from the adults and youngsters . They were so proud of all that they had achieved. We wish them all the best and good luck for the future





Crina at work with Alessia

Thank you very much to all of you who enabled this to happen. One of our pupils in the Kindergarten class, Alessia, was in desperate need as she is unable to control her limbs, is unable to hold up her head and can only attend school because her mother, Nicoleta, comes with her to hold her in her arms. Alessia attends kindergarten at the Robert Cole Centre from Monday to Wednesday each week and while at the Centre has physiotherapy with Crina Mares on Mondays and Tuesdays. On Wednesdays she has speech therapy. She remains at home with her mother on Thursdays and Fridays. This specialist chair cost over £1,230 but can be adjusted to Alessia's body to support her and enable her to develop her skills. Nicoleta learns day by day from Crina how to use it. You can see that Alessia likes it very much and it will continue to be suitable until she is an adult! **Cristina Chirila—**

Centre Manager



Alessia with her mum, Nicoleta

I drove Alessia and her parents, in the Robert Cole Centre minibus, to their home some 10kms from the RCC (the last three kms of which are up an extremely steep, unmade and uneven, very bumpy road). The walking frame, plus a lovely large, heavy, red wheelchair (that Toni Shave had sent to the RCC over a year ago) were also in the minibus and taken to Alessia's home where she'll be able to use them both each day. Her parents were also delighted with the two pieces of equipment which will both be of great help. Alessia is such a delightful little girl and she was smiling and chatting away all the time in the minibus to her home.

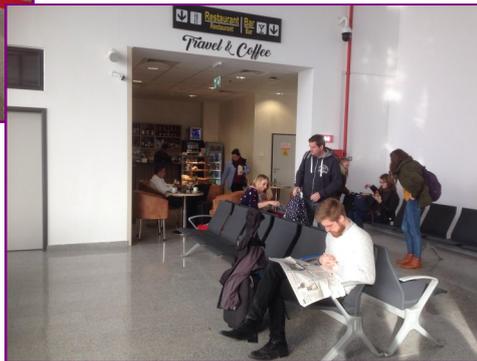
It was following assessments of Alessia by two Occupational Therapists from England - thanks to Virginia Darley - and a Physiotherapist in Bacau that the selected standing frame was considered to be most suitable for her.

Very close to where Alessia and her parents live, the local Mayor is having a children's play area built and equipped. There are a lot of young children in that rural area and Alessia enjoys spending time outside with them. It'll be lovely for the little ones once the playground is finished and can be used and enjoyed by them all. **Adrian Woodroffe**

A **HUGE** thank you for all the **Sainsbury Active Kids Vouchers** collected and sent to me for BHRG and to let you know what we got with them. We collected a total of 3567 vouchers and received: four rockers, a farm croquet set and a target ball pack, all of which I am sure the children will love! -**Lyn Jenkins**



Marks out of 10 if you guess where this is!



This, my friend, is the swanky new airport at Bacau! Are you impressed? It has several check in desks, a duty free section, a coffee bar in the departure lounge, rows of seating, yet still only one gate and one baggage reclaim area. But there are four ways to dry your hands in the ladies toilet. The old building is still there and when you see it, you can't believe it was the only place for arrivals and departures until so very recently!



St Mark's Church in Biggin Hill continues to give great support to us. Just before Christmas we held a coffee morning in the church building itself and there was a lovely, chatty feel to the morning. Lots of cake was eaten, coffee and tea drunk, and money spent on last minute Christmas bargains. It all seems so long ago now....



Note from our Chair: over the years, since we started on our journey for the people in Romania, things have changed, moved on and here we are today, Romania a member of the European Union with opportunities for people to move between countries, to change their lives and in many cases have the chance to make their own decisions about their future. Yet it is not all easy going. Many who live in poorer, rural areas have limited opportunities. You still need money to move and start again. There is no doubt that membership of the EU has benefitted many areas—just in Comanesti the roads and pavements have nearly all been replaced, there are supermarkets and even a DIY superstore. But there is definitely change.... **So on to our news.** The Rose Centre is still poised in readiness to open but we are still awaiting the building of the external fire escape and all the other changes to enable us to receive our fire licence. This has now been incorporated into the plans for all public buildings in Comanesti and so although all our plans have been agreed and passed, we must wait for all the others. At the moment, we do not know when this will be. Very frustrating! **The Shop** run by Carmen is doing really well and has now moved to a larger premises just a few doors away. So if you have anything worth sending to the shop please let us know! **Cristina, our new manager** is working very hard to ensure that everything in the Centre is rolling along nicely, that the children are happy and stimulated and that the school is taking advantage of every opportunity offered to work with other schools and organisations, integrating as far as possible into the community. **Last July,** we sadly had to let go our driver Razvan who many of you know. We had already, for the previous year, been provided with transport for pupils by the Education department and so we had no need for a driver. He decided not to accept a position of social worker which we could offer but to leave to look for another job. However, should he be available when we need him to deliver shoeboxes, he has promised to drive the minibus for us. We wish him and his family all the best. We all know Adrian and all that he has been involved with in the past years. Even in this Newsletter there is evidence of what he has been up to. Sadly, he has decided that times are changing and he has chosen to resign from the Biggin Hill Romania Group. However, he has promised to continue to distribute money which needs to be passed on to various families and to help with the Christmas distribution of the boxes at Christmas. We wish him and his family God's Blessings in the future. And Finally—Sadly, I have to report that Barbara Cole, one of the original members of BHRG, whose son, Robert, is remembered through the naming of the Robert Cole Centre, passed away at the end of January. Despite her many health problems, she was a constant supporter of our group and will be sadly missed by family and friends. As I said earlier, “the times they are a changing!” **Sandra Dolan**