



International Fire and Rescue Association
Convoy 20 – Bosanska Krupa, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Day 1 - 15th April 2008

Still running about picking up kit at 1300hrs. All members met at Rosyth Fire Station where we were met by Irene and Davie for photo shoot with Willie Rennie MP. Final kit and document check before the photos. Irene handed keys over to Tam (Chef Tam)



Willie was impressed by what we were doing and is going to look into funding for future convoys as he is sure there are funds available somewhere.

Quick brew then off to Rosyth Ferry Terminal where we dropped Jim off as he is going as a foot passenger. Got to waiting area at 1530hrs and had to sit until 1645hrs when we loaded onto the ferry. Found our cabins and then onto the bar!!!! Plenty of pics of the Forth Estuary and then it was time for dinner. Met an Englishman called John who remembers the Green Goddess from last year. He does this trip twice a week so he gave us his discount card for the ferry. 10% off all drinks, bonus!!!!

Sat until 0030hrs swapping stories and getting to know each other. Tam went to bed early as he apparently needs his beauty sleep.

Day 2 – 16th April 2008

Got up at 0630hrs, showered and a walk around the ship. Breakfast excellent and would recommend crossing to anyone. Docked at 1100hrs.

Tam driving. Vehicle would not start!!! All other vehicles off ferry before it finally did and just before they towed us off. Bad Omen?!?! Gears sticky and a few strange crunching noises were heard, Brian did offer Tam some money to buy a gear but this was declined politely!!!!

Followed signs for Antwerp as per instructions and were looking for signs for Maastricht. Unfortunately there are no signs for Maastricht on the Antwerp ring road so ended going round twice. Stopped for directions and fuel in a place called Strauboek. We should have been heading for Hasselt then onto Aachen. Stopped just over the German border for a driver change. Brian took over, first time driving a HGV on wrong side of the road. The look and smell of confidence in Brian was evident from Tam and Jim.

Our aim was to get to a resthaus at Bad Camberg on the A3 Autobahn as Tam and Jim had done the previous year. We made it 2000hrs local, 305 miles covered today. Good meal and then proceeded to empty the bar of the local white beer.

Day 3 – 17th April 2008

Up at 0700hrs, showered then onto breakfast. Tried to get vehicle started to no avail. Brian then proceeded to wake everybody up in a 5 mile radius when his foot slipped off clutch and hit horns button. Unsure on how to switch the horns off, he hit every button in the cab in blind panic. Much to the amusement of Jim. After about 15 seconds of ear shattering noise he found the foot button and turned horns off. After a few minutes of teasing the Paramedic, Jim and Tam reverted back to trying to get the vehicle started. Decided to call in the RAC or equivalent. The number we had was not connecting so we called Davie in the UK for help. Davie wanted a more precise location as Resthaus at Bad Camberg on Autobahn A3 was not precise enough!!! After

Day 3 – 17th April 2008 cont.

failing to get longitude and latitude readings we felt that the original location would have to do. 3hrs later the breakdown chap arrived and hey presto the vehicle started. You could have knocked us down with a feather.

Brian driving at start of day and again gears a bit sticky. Tam commented that although it is economical it is not recommended to coast all the way down the autobahns!!! Jim having kittens in rear of vehicle!!!!



Tam took over the driving in the afternoon while Brian slept in rear of vehicle. Moans of the snoring being louder than the engine were ignored by Brian.

Brian took over driving again at 1700hrs and drove into Bicsshopshofen at 2030hrs to the Fire Station. The station is a volunteer station with nearly 60 volunteers who were having their weekly meeting when we arrived, so there was a big welcome. Invited to pub with Commandant Christian Machink and Helmut Pelzer. Unknown to us the whole station was there to greet us. Nice supper and beer followed with our presentation of the IFRA paperweight going down very well. More pictures and beer!!!! Quite a late night drinking schnapps and wine.

Day 4 – 18th April 2008

Long lie this morning with us not getting up until 0830hrs. Walked into town for 45 minutes then back to Fire Station for coffees and goodbyes. Tam driving this morning. The Alps are beautiful with breath-taking sights everywhere. Going through tunnels then out into snow clad mountains, a high point of the journey so far.



Tam drove into Slovenia then Brian took over. Brian thanked Tam for smoothing the gears for him!!!!

Planned to drive to Novo Mesto near the Slovenian and Croatian border and look for a hotel. For 45 minutes we drove around the very narrow streets of the town scaring lots of drivers and pedestrians who looked on in amazement at these nutcase Scots in their Fire Appliance. Found a lovely hotel called Pri Belokranjcu. Clean and cheap!!!! Had an amazing 3 course meal for only 11€

Went down the local town to see the sights but left early as shattered. Hotel bar closed so off to bed.

Day 5 - 19th April 2008

Up at 0700hrs to thunder and lightning storm with torrential rain. Jim slept through it all. Did comment that the only thing that kept him awake was Brian's snoring!!!! Brian now holds record for snoring louder than thunder!!!!

Left at 0900hrs and drove around town looking for road to motorway, signs are wrong so we rely on Tam and Jim's navigating. Even with this we found the correct road.

Husein has told us he is now not coming to the Croatian border to meet us as he has faxed all documents to the checkpoint and we will not need him. Concern is rife as it was at this border last year that there were problems.

1000hrs. As predicted we were stuck at the checkpoint. Husein faxed the wrong checkpoint!!!! Aargh!!! Tam is now mad as hell, we know this as it is the first time he is not smiling. Tam phones Husein and tells him to get it sorted out as the guards are now ignoring us, even when Tam asked Brian to go with him for heavy backup.

Tam has phoned Husein again and told him if it is not fixed soon, we are abandoning vehicle and getting taxi to local town for the night and Husein better be at border in the morning.

Day 5 – 19th April 2008 cont

Released at 1500hrs to proceed to final checkpoint. This is with the same paperwork we gave them 5hrs ago which was at that time unacceptable. Given warning by armed guard to be out of Croatia that night!!!! No pressure then!!!! Brian driving it has been commented by Tam that Brian is a more aggressive driver, in other words, Brian drives like a madman!!!!

Whilst driving along road we are met by a landrover on our side of the road with both people in it taking photos of us. Turns out it is Mike from Acorn Aid and Husein. Mikes excuse was that he wanted to catch our attention, job done mate!!!!

Stopped for greetings and a drink with Husein and Mike then onto the border where we were refused entry!! Vehicle impounded until Monday when the department we wanted opened. They did allow us to remove the medical kit from the appliance so we could at least train on the Monday. Nesvit was our local driver.

Travelled down windy roads with beautiful scenery and minefields. Arrived in Bosanska Krupa at 1840hrs where we put our own personal kit into Huseins house where we would be staying. Went to the Vatrogasci Dom(Fire Station) where we met Refic the Fire Commander, fire fighters and Nermin another translator. Our first Preminger and slivovich of the trip was drank here. Taken to a restaurant for a meal where we met 3 other Englishmen. 2 had rebuilt the pharmacy and Rae Nix who is starting landrover tours in Bosnia with the help of Nermin.

Day 6 – 20th April 2008

Awoke to morning prayers at dawn, quickly back to sleep and officially up at 0800.

We met with Refic to make sure everything is in order for the week. He did answer all questions to our satisfaction but seeing is believing. Visited sites we will use for training, happy apart from a wooden bridge which we will have to cross to get to a training area. We are all unsure about weight limit for bridge.

Met Emir Besic who is a fire-fighter and a local hero from the war. He took us to a local football match for youths. The pitch was in the middle of nowhere near Otackar where Emir stays. Drank many beers as it was roasting hot.

Back to town for a meal where we had our first cevapi of the trip. Very filling. Down to a pub near the river for more beer and slivo. This was when hand, eye, leg co-ordination became difficult. A lot of the fire fighters were there in uniform drinking, quite strange as who was looking after the town?

Back to house at 0100hrs where Tam did his dad bit and helped Brian get boots off. Brian sobered up for 30 seconds when Huseins mum came out onto the landing to greet us, then back to drunk again afterwards.

Day 7 – 21st April 2008

Early up to get stuff ready for medic training. Tam going to get appliance, Brian and Jim to training. Went to theatre which was what we were using for medical training. 57 people in attendance.

Trained them in BLS, De-fib, trauma, burns, fractures with Jim helping and Husein and Nermin translating. Refic happy when he learned the equipment was being donated to the Fire Station when we were finished. Finished at 1300hrs which was a bit short but will do more tomorrow.



Tam arrived with appliance at 1600hrs where we went for a walk around town. Came on torrential rain so we ducked into a building which we found out to be a pub!!!! Quick pint and by that time sun out again.

In trendy pub for 1hr where we met Jasmin from night before then back to house.

Day 8 - 22nd April 2008

Up early again and down to Fire Station where the Green Goddess and Dodge waiting. We were happy as we thought there was something strange about the Green Goddess as we had not seen it around and had heard it was at the Police Station.

Elvir had equipped dodge with everything we had asked for, he is a credit to the Fire Service in Krupa.

Through town in convoy with lights and horns going, Edin the driver smiling from ear to ear the whole way. Edin went straight onto wooden bridge and did not give Brian time to bale out. Fear was evident but they made it without getting their feet wet.

Pumping and sucking water from Una, vehicle and equipment familiarisation and more medical training. Tam gave a fire extinguisher talk and demonstration. Much to the amusement of the gathered people.

Refic again cut short the training which was unacceptable as the Buzim fire-fighters not up to standard yet. Watched Liverpool game in local hotel then back to house where Husein and Mike sat and chatted with us for a few hours.

Day 9 – 23rd April 2008

Up very early and breakfast at Tunel restaurant with Nesvit our driver. The Tunel is where we were to be fed as an account had been set up for us by the mayor. Very decent of you old chap!

At Fire Station Jim went to lecture theatre for RTC lecture while Brian and Tam were to go to RTC site where cars were. Vehicle would not start. Rae from Rockingham Landrovers came and he thought it was a sticky solenoid valve. After tilting cab and hitting valve with iron bar it started!!!!

Off we went up the winding roads with no crunching of gears.

Set up the RTC area with the donated cars and waited for the rest of the fire-fighters to come after their lecture. The first car was used to show the 5 phases of RTC. Scene assessment and stabilisation, initial access, glass management, space creation, immobilisation and casualty extrication.



All were impressed especially the fire-fighters from Buzim. We then put Emir as a casualty in the other car and told them to get on with it with as little input from us as possible. Quite impressed with the fire fighting techniques but were amazed by the medical techniques. Edin and Elvir were excellent with casualty management. Finished up by 1400hrs and went back to the Fire Station in Krupa where the mayors of Krupa and Buzim were there with local radio and TV reporters. The official handover of the Green Goddess Buzim and the handover of the Dodge to Krupa was complete. Lots of handshakes and thanks.

Easy evening with us watching the Man Utd game in the trendy pub. Not too much drink consumed today thankfully.

Day 10 – 24th April 2008

At Fire Station at 0920 where the vehicle not starting again. With the gentle persuasion of an iron bar it did get going. We got a great bit of praise from Elvir today, he said that in 100 years of Krupa having a Fire Service, it was only now that they had one which could respond to any type of incident and that he and the rest of the fire-fighters were truly grateful. Breathing Apparatus training today at the new Opcina(council) building which is still being built. After being expertly shown how to search a building by Jim and Tam it was

the turn of the Krupa crews. Having no flash hoods with them it was decided to use ambulance dressings to blank out the masks. All did it well.

Day 10 – 24th April 2008 cont

Back at the Fire Station we put the crews through a final check to make sure they know about the de-fibs and resuscitators. Elvir, Edin, Sudo and Ramsic were as usual the better of the lot.

Walked back through town to get back to the house. We ended up going through the bombed out railway station and buildings. It is good that they are rebuilding the town but more is needed.

Mike took Brian and Tam to a local orphanage to see what they do there. 14 children in the house and seemed to enjoy themselves. They do however have very little educational resources.

Back down at trendy pub to watch Rangers game the back to house for a few drinks with Husein and Mike.

Day 11 – 25th April 2008

Last day of training!!!! Again vehicle not starting. The fire-fighters say it will be fixed soon. Off we went to the training ground over the same old bridge.

The Krupa fire-fighters then put on a show for us to prove they had taken in what we had been telling them. Again they did very well. Jim and Tam showed them how to do an improvised water rescue as the kit from Scotland did not come. This was done using a hose and an air cylinder. Everyone was more than happy with this, even Refic.



A quick demonstration with the foam branch and that was it, end of training.

Back to Fire Station for celebratory beer and then we went to the internet café at the theatre to get the certificates printed.

Met Rae, Mike, and Nermin at the Tunel for dinner as it was Raes' last night in Bosnia.

Back to house for a few rums and a good chat with Mike. He showed us all the pics of his travels, a truly remarkable man.

Shock of the night, Jim refused a drink!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Day 12 – 26th April 2008

Long Lie 0745!!!!!!!

Picked up by Emir at 1010hrs to be told that the Mayors BBQ had been cancelled as it was too cloudy. We were quite happy about this as we had been invited by Emir to be with him for the day.

Emir took us to a restaurant by the river for fresh fish. Then off to a hunting lodge by a lake. Very concerned about a canoe they were telling us to get in to. It had just come from the other side with an old man and a young boy and they were bailing it out as it had holes in it. Then 4 adults were put in it and off we went. Water rapidly came in and there was only 2 inches of canoe above the waterline. Husein proved he had never been in a canoe before by panicking and nearly tipping us over a few times and when he got out he jumped and nearly tipped us over again. The lake was beautiful so we decided to walk back to the car.

Day 12 – 26th April 2008 cont

Visited Emirs' house and met his wife and daughter then back to house. After dinner we went to the theatre as it was being opened officially by Mayor after being rebuilt. Were promised it would only be for 30mins but we smelt something fishy when we saw Nesvit had been sent out to look for us. We ended up being at the theatre for 3hrs and were presented with letters of thanks from the mayor. Chef Tam sweating in case a speech was necessary but happily we all got out of that one. We were treated to traditional dancing, miming and music. We say miming as the band was obviously miming due to there being a delay in the music coming on and the band starting to play.

Day 13 – 27th April

Tam, Mike, Nermin and I went to Buzim to see the Green Goddess. Met the Fire Chief who was truly grateful for the Green Goddess. We then visited a war museum for the soldiers of 505 Brigade, 5th Corps, Bosnian Army who defended the area from the Serbs during the war. Over 500 military personnel killed during the war in this area alone and countless civilians. It was very sobering indeed. Nermin pointed out a picture of his brother Reuf who died 5 months prior to the end of the war.

Nermin raced Mike back to Krupa on the winding roads in a Vauxhall Corsa. It was only after about 5 miles did he tell me his back brakes did not work!!!!

Back to house to get Jim then up to the hills for a BBQ. Roast lamb cooking on the spit when we got there. Much pivo consumed. Mike went off-road driving and got stuck. Had to winch himself out. He took me on a cross country drive to see the countryside. Went down and up a 1:2 ½ gradient ploughed field. This man can handle a landrover, no doubt.

As it was last night we went downtown but due to being pivo'd out we did not drink too much. Back at house early as we knew we had early start.

Day 14 – 28th April 2008

Up early and packed as soon as possible. Had breakfast then to Fire Station to say our goodbyes. Then up to mayor's office for a drink and thanks from him. He apologised for not seeing too much of us but he was busy with an Italian party which was also in town at the same time.

Husein did not want to go in the usual car as he felt it was unsafe. We did not agree as we had been driven about in it all the time. The Općina gave Nesvit a newer car to get us to the Airport and again Husein moaned about it. This time it was too small. After trying unsuccessfully to bully Mike into going to the airport Emir said he would. We did not want to split up the team so Husein went in Emir's car and the three of us with Nesvit.

The drive was long and we were again delayed at the Border with Croatia. Husein tried to speak to the border guards to help us and all it ended up in doing was having them search our bags fully. Husein again tried to help but we told him to shut up as we were afraid that his help was only getting the guards more annoyed, plus I am sure I heard rubber gloves getting snapped on and KY being opened!!!!

Up to the airport and we were on our way home. All flights on time and we landed at Edinburgh just after 2200hrs.

As a first timer, I felt the trip was excellent in many ways but without the humour and the teamwork it would have been a nightmare. The three of us got on with the job in hand and as they say **PLAY HARD, WORK HARDER.**

Brian Miller
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