

IFRA log Serbia (by Fred Metcalfe)

Day 1 21st August 2008.

I arrived at Rosyth Fire Station to meet with David Kay and David Wardle, a short while after Gary Bennett and ten other lads appeared with 4 fire appliances and 1 ambulance all going to Serbia via Rosyth/ Zeebrugger ferry then driven by us the rest of the way to Lubrovia in Serbia. Dave the camera man arranged the appliances and ambulance along with us forlorn travellers to take photos for the Courier and various other newspapers. Once all photos were taken we drove the convoy to the ferry terminal, well! Apart from 1 Scania appliance which decided NOT to allow any gear changes, eventually the problem was sorted and onto the ferry we went.

After settling in to our respective cabins, a few drinks were in order then a very nice meal a few more drinks a flick a few more drinks then staggered off to cabin (once I found it Hic!!)Fell instantly to sleep and woke up at 08.00 for a very nice breakfast at 09.00.

Arrived at Zeebrugger approximately 11.20, once all vehicles disembarked we were on our way to Serbia via Holland, Germany, Austria, Hungary and finally the Serbian border (ALAS 4 hours to process us through) then another 4 hours to reach Lubrovia arriving 05.00 on the 23/08/2008.

We parked all the vehicles in the Motel grounds and then got allocated our rooms, once settled we slept till 1pm, the rest of the day was scripted for us----- a visit to a monastery where we met the Arch Bishop and a musical show was put on for our benefit by some Russian musicians. The evening was spent rafting down the Dria River with the local fire-fighters and a lot of their local beers (YELLEN PEEVO), a meal back at the Motel then off to bed again for an early start the following morning.

Up at 07.00 for breakfast at 08.00 then the task master SCARY Gary Bennett had planned our day of training the 30 local fire-fighters in the use of the equipment and appliances we provided. Fire kit was issued to all the fire-fighters and BA was issued to the local fire-fighters. Then the training started in earnest, BA search procedure theory followed by practical sessions, lunch, and then BA search and rescue theory followed again by practical sessions. The troupe we were training were split up into 3groups whilst one group were training on BA procedures another group were doing BA search and rescue and the last group were being taught pumps and ladders,



finishing at 20.00hrs for our evening meal(by the way ALL meals consist of meat, you cannot be a vegetarian in Serbia).

A few Yellen then knackered we retired to our respective rooms for a much well earned sleep.

Next day up again at 07.00 for (meat) breakfast at 08.00, more BA plus road traffic crash training, stabilisation, glass management and the use of power tools,



lunch (more meat) then BA training using a building on the grounds of the Motel which we placed straw in and set it alight to create real smoke (which incidentally set the wooden roof joists on fire--- OOPS!!!! Just as well we as PROFESSIONAL fire-fighters were there to put it out HA HA!). 20.00 For evening meal (O JOY meat again!!!) quick shower then we all went down to the local drinking spot with one of the interpreters for a few Yellen, returning to the Motel knackered once again for a good nights sleep.

Next day being Wednesday I was off to Bania Bashda to train the fire-fighters up there



in water rescue procedures, The use of survival suits, throw lines and how to inflate their fire hose using compressed air and a hand controlled branch, a great day all in all as the temperature was in the early 40s and I was playing about in the fast flowing cool water (such BLISS).

Got back to the Motel at 16.00hrs in time to shower, change then off to Ken and Tia Mantel,s Summer home up in the mountains for a fantastic Barbeque,(consisting of -- -YEH you guessed it MEAT & Yellen Peevo), an enjoyable night all the same.

Next day same procedure up at 07.00 for breakfast at 08.00 but this time Tia had given the Motel boxes of CORNFLAKES and WEETABIX (WE all had a soft spot in our hearts for her after that kind gesture-----HOORAH for TIA), after our delightful breakfast more BA, RTC, pumps and ladders and in the afternoon I got to teach the

Lubrovia fire-fighters water rescue techniques, after the final scenario they wanted a demonstration by me on how to wear BA under water?? (Which I successfully completed-----obviously because I'm here righting this).

A scenario thought up by Scary Gary consisting of two teams using portable pumps to provide water to a controlled dividing breaching then to a foam branch and a hand controlled branch being held by a fire-fighter at the head of the 13.5m ladder, whichever team got both branches to work first got to soak the interpreters with foam (a lot of cheating went on i.e.; sabotaging pumps, disconnecting hose etc etc)The end result was fun for all.

20.00 evening meal a few Yellen then off to bed. Next day being Friday a final scenario by the local fire-fighters in the town high street consisting of a car on its side on fire, a three car crash (with persons trapped), a fire on the roof of a building and a live rescue from same building, all in front of the general public and the media, It went well considering the short time spent training them.

The rest of the day was spent on celebrations in our honour for the vehicle donations and the training of their fire-fighters, (lots of praise and gifts from dignitaries and fire-fighters alike).A few yellen peevo then off to bed for a 4am wakeup, off to Belgrade airport at 5am to arrive at 9am for our flight to Heathrow at 11am, flight was on time and we arrived at Heathrow to await our connecting flight to Edinburgh, finally getting home at 19.30hrs (exhausted---YAWN!!!).

All in all an exhausting but enjoyable trip.

