Burren Chernobyl Project.

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CHY 13002

Activity Report

for

Presentation

at the

Annual General Meeting

held on

August 13th 2016.

A Brief Summary

Burren Chernobyl Projects in Belarus and Ireland since 1993.

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CHILDREN'S VISITS

In the beginning a few children came to Ireland for a holiday. They stayed for six months and went to school, each to a different school in North Clare. Later the numbers increased and the paperwork to go with it did also.

Since 1994 we have been involved in organising children's visits to Ireland. This includes

- working with the orphanages and families to select children
- organising travel
- drawing up a child protection policy
- checking out host families
- organizing accommodation
- arranging insurance for the children
- preparing all documentation with the Irish Embassy in Moscow
- preparing required documentation for the Department of Humanitarian Aid and Ministry of Education in Minsk
- liaising with Host Families
- organising social and cultural events and overseeing the visits
- arranging interpreters and carers to accompany the children
- arranging flight tickets

Children have travelled from Cherven, Gorodishche, Gomel, Minsk, Kobrin, Mariyna Gorka, Lida, Pinsk, Yastrebel, etc.

Since 1997 we have been working very closely with the very ill children in Cherven and Gorodishche orphanages

We have helped other Chernobyl Groups organise and locate children and interpreters for visits to Ireland and offered information on the whole procedure involved.

Then some people went to Belarus for a visit and to see were the children had come from. These were our first contacts, the first places where we tried to help. Some of the contacts are still as strong as ever and families keep contact with the children they got to know then, even thought they have now grown up and moved on.

YASTREBEL CHILDREN'S INTERNAT

This was one of the first orphanages – more like a boarding school - that we visited in the early. It was where we got our first taste of Belarus. Here we met wonderful workers and gorgeous children. Some began visiting Ireland many years ago and continue to this day to keep contact with their Irish families. Others have moved on to other things. Some we have lost touch with. Yet the memories of the early days remain, when Belarus was poorer than it is now and when first impressions were the ones that set the tone for the years ahead.

- we have provided children's visits to Ireland for several summers
- we have delivered Humanitarian aid for the children there
- we have helped some students advance to higher education
- we support some who are still at university
- we try to keep touch with those making their own way in the world
- we try to help as much as possible those who are finding the transition to the real world rather difficult

We visited this German sponsored project in the early days. It consisted ten of six houses with a house mother in charge of about eight children. Today the village has expanded to about twelve houses and our contact there is now minimal.

KOBRIN CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

Again one of the early places we were brought to visit. Since then we have

- provided assistance to the Children's Village
- bought beds, paint, etc. and helped with repairs
- purchased a flat for former resident children of the Children's Village
- helped with children's holidays in Ireland over several years

KOBRIN DEAF SCHOOL

We co-operated with the East Clare Chernobyl group in setting up a new computer room in this institute in Kobrin. They now have several new computers in a modern room and this is clearly a great help to their deaf students. We have also had some children from this school visit in Ireland, our task being to help out with documentation, transport, accommodation, etc.

Many groups of children from the Deaf School holidayed in Spanish Point in Clare for several years.

In 1996 I decided to take a year off school in Ireland. I ended up teaching in a school in the town of Luninets, in the south of Belarus. It was a terrible winter that year as I remember that lasted long and was very cold.

LUNINETS AREA

- made contact with Lyceum School there
- spent some months teaching English in the Lyceum School
- helped students with English lessons after school hours
- provided summer work experience in Clare and in Dublin for student group in the summer of 1997
- made contact with the local collective farm
- through Ben Johnson provided cheese-making equipment and set it up
- provided training in the use of the cheese-making equipment

Gomel

Again this was one of the places visited in the early days as our first children came from Gomel. It is the nearest large town in Belarus to the Chernobyl reactor accident site, across the border on the Ukraine. The abandoned village of Vetka, which features in *Nuclear Families*, is not far from Gomel.

GOMEL AREA

It was from the Gomel that our very first children came to Ireland. It is nearest the Chernobyl zone. The children came for six months and stayed with host families in Clare. They were put in separate schools to encourage them to learn English. Some of these children are now grown up and have their own families. The contact is still maintained after all the years. Some have gone to live and work in America, no doubt speaking English with a Clare accent!

We also provided kitchen equipment for school, number 4 in Gomel in the early days.

The WOMEN'S JAIL

We first made contact here because of Sergei. Teresa was looking after Sergei in Ireland and she was very anxious to locate his mother and see how she was. She wished to know if it was possible to reunite the two. We found out that mother was in jail and decided to go and visit. It was just at this time that the RTE Would You Believe team expressed interest in filming the trip. A full account of the trip may be got in *Fallout*. Details of how to acquire a copy of the RTE programme may be had through Burren Chernobyl Project office.

After visiting the jail, we returned to Ireland, we sent a lorry load of humanitarian aid to them to distribute. It included mostly women's clothing. The jail caters for several thousand women, some with babies born in the jail.

Shoes for the babies born in jail.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd.
Project 6

After spending several months teaching in Luninets, I had decided to return to Ireland and get back to normal. Then, a phone call from Maria Mitskevich issued an invitation to visit Cherven Children's Orphanage. That visit changed everything.

CHERVEN CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE

300 SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Since 1997 we have undertaken the following in Cherven Orphanage

- repairs to the thirteen units of the old building
- linoleum on all the rooms
- painting and curtains in all units
- installed new laundry equipment at a cost of $18,000
- provided piping for heating system
- provided kitchen equipment
- started a feeding programme in the old hungry days
- provided volunteers to run the feeding programme
- provided Sudocrem, shampoos, soaps, detergent
- provided clothes, shoes, slippers, runners, socks
- installed washing machine in each unit
- bought electric kettles for each unit
- provided holidays from groups to Ireland in summer and autumn
- bought divans, radios, TVs, music players
- bought soup boilers, water heaters
- provide Pampers at a cost of Euro 2000 per month ongoing
- sent 5 lorry loads of Humanitarian Aid from Ireland
- toilet paper, wallpaper, glue, paste and school materials
- kitchen fridges, blenders, knives, calculators,
- provided playroom equipment, toys, games and puzzles
- bought timber, cement, electric goods
- installed new toilets in each old unit
- provided showers in units and in central shower area
- set up sauna room
- * multi sensory room provided by volunteers Edel and friends
- set up volunteers programme
- provided children's trips out of orphanage
- helped some families take their child home for a break
- bought power washer, tractor repairs, tyres for tractor and bus repairs
- provided transport for children for tests and to hospital
- * provided cemetery upgrade with new headstones, by Marianne and friends
- provided Christmas gifts, Christmas trees and decorations

♦ we have on occasion been the ones carrying the dead children to the morgue and to their burial at the cemetery.

The conditions we saw in the orphanages in the early days quickly convinced us that it were better if the children did not have to go there at all. It would be better to help families keep their child at home. So we began to plot and plan how to make this a reality. Our first success was Sarah's House Dom Zara in Minsk.

MINSK DOM ZARA - SARAH'S HOUSE

This day centre, the first of its kind, caters for special needs children living with their families. The children come to the centre from eight o'clock every morning and are looked after until evening time. There is sleeping accommodation if required in time of sickness, or other need. The foundation block was placed by James O'Shea, Consul from the Irish Embassy in Moscow in 2003. Dom Zara Day Centre opened in October 2004 in the presence of many Irish representatives and Liz Keogh of the Irish Embassy.

Dom Zara was funded with help from the Ireland East European Fund, and Roche Pharmaceutical Ireland and by donations from many volunteers, some of whom came to help with the physical building work. Thanks to their support Burren Chernobyl Project have managed to do the following:

- to buy an old house and re build it as a modern Day Care Centre for special needs children who live at home
- to provide all costs for materials, building instruments, equipment and labour involved in the demolition of old site and re-building of the new premises
- to provide linoleum, carpets, tiling
- to ensure plumbing, electric work, kitchen, equipment of top quality
- to install washing rooms, showers, toilets -to set up a playground and equipment
- to build a workshop with equipment sponsored by volunteers. Some items were sponsored by Italian people. -to buy a minibus for collection and transport of the children
- to provide ongoing running costs for Dom Zara

VOLUNTEERS

We have helped many people travel to Belarus to work in the orphanage and experience for themselves being with the children.

This involves

- paperwork, passport collection, form filling,
- liaising with orphanages in Belarus
  - dealing with Embassy of Belarus in
  - London for Visas
  - getting references and resumes from
  - Volunteers
- gathering information and feedback from Volunteers
- getting information and feedback to Volunteers
- getting passports and visas to Volunteers
- providing funds to spend on the children in Belarus
- organising travel, pick-up and delivery to and from airport
- providing accommodation for all volunteers at/near orphanages and in Minsk
- arranging trained interpreters to accompany the Volunteers

Organising special groups

- Physiotherapists
- massage groups
- builders
- Special Olympic group work camps.
- Medical personnel
- Transition Year groups

For full information on Volunteering visit the Burren Chernobyl website

www.burrenchernobyl.ie

GORODISHCE CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE

300 SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

For the year 2000 the good people of the Parish of Shannon asked us through Fr Brendan and Fr Tom to find an orphanage in need which they would take on as their Millennium Project. And so we found our way to Baranovichi and out the road to the orphanage of Gorodishche, where there were over three hundred children, some in quite appalling conditions. Thanks to the ongoing fund-raising of the Shannon Parish we have been able to make a real difference.

Amongst other things, we have done the following:

- washed and massaged the children in the old days when things were not good
- provided kitchen equipment
- bought new laundry washing machine, drying machine, centrifuge as well as doing repairs to the building
- bought cows, horse, boar -provided seeds, apple trees for orchard, fish for lake as food
- helped repairs to the main building - spent ten thousand dollars for old building doors, windows
- provided curtains, beds, bed linen, pillows - set up playground equipment and verandas
- sent 6 lorry loads of Humanitarian Aid—provided wheelchairs, walking aids, supports, crutches
- continue to provide Pampers at a cost of Euro 1,000 per month
- set up a Physiotherapy programme
- set up a Volunteer programme every year, which is now year round - given them a chainsaw
- provided summer visits to Ireland for children
- improved the cemetery with head stones for the children's graves
- arranged day trips for the children to town and to the restaurant
- provided extra food, yogurts and fruit for all the children

- paid for holidays in summer camp in Belarus for children
- helped to finance furniture and fitting for the new orphanage there

Many thanks to Irina our wonderful, caring Interpret, a mother to all the children and Volunteers.

Humanitarian Aid

AIR FREIGHT and Overland/overseas shipments

Thanks to our happy contacts with Elite Kamino Air Freight Company in Shannon we were, for several years, able to send Humanitarian Aid by freight from Shannon with Belavia Airlines. This was met in Minsk by Sakavik Fund who did the paper work. The aid was then distributed

- to Cherven Orphanage
- to Gorodishche orphanage
- to Minsk Mothers Invalid Association
- to Gomel Women's prison
- to various people in need.

Belavia were very good to us and carried the goods at a very cheap rate. Indeed there was a time when the extra boxes which couldn't be fitted in the cargo section were carried onto the plane and placed on the empty seats. This was at a time when smoking was allowed on planes. It was before 9/11 turned the air business on its head. They were good times then! We remember them.

In 2016 we sent our 100th Freight Container for distribution to the orphanages and social service centres throughout Belarus.

Burren Chernobyl Project **Project 11.**

MEDIA

- The local Clare newspapers have always been very interested in covering the work of Burren Chernobyl Project. The Clare Champion and the Clare People have both helped in getting information to our helpers and supporters. They treat the material and stories fairly and with sympathy.
- Clare FM local radio has also been a great support.
- We have also worked with RTE Would You Believe Team who filmed two programmes around the work of Burren Chernobyl Project. One filmed in Ennistymon showed the care the visiting children were receiving. The second programme showed the story of Teresa and Sergei, a boy she was caring for and the return to Belarus to link up with his mother who was in jail.
- We also worked with TG4 to do an Irish Language programme. This was filmed in Belarus
- We also launched 'Fallout' by Liam O'Meara in the Falls Hotel Ennistymon in 2003
- 'Nuclear Families' was published in Minsk in 2006
- we also have provided people for radio and newspaper interviews
- we have arranged speakers at various school, masses and public events

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 12.**

DZE YA Theatre Group

For several years we sponsored this Children's Theatre Group from Minsk to travel throughout Belarus. Their task was to visit the many orphanages and adult internats around the country. It provided entertainment for the residents in the orphanages and was also a useful soured of information of which places were most in need. Some of the adult places were very depressing, especially when improvements were being made in the children's orphanages. It was difficult to think of the children moving on into ugly places.

The DZE YA Theatre Troupe put on performances in the orphanages over several years to brighten up life for the children who lived there. This was organised by Maria Mitskevich. I traveled with them. When the children were sitting watching the show on stage, I sat facing them and watching the joy in their faces. It would make you cry, the simple things that can light up lives.

Some members of the Theatre Group are also staged a version of McCabe's *Beauty Queen of Linnane*. A dark psychological drama is how they see it. This was for public audience in Minsk and must be the first Irish play translated into the Belarusian language.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 13.**

MINSK INVALID CENTRE

People working here have special needs themselves yet they cater for many needy families throughout the city. We have been able to assist them in simple ways by

- sending a truck load of Humanitarian Aid
- providing a computer for their office as they deal with hundreds of families with special needs people

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 14.**

HOMES FOR NEEDY FAMILIES.

It has always been our hope to keep children with their family as far as possible. Often the big problem is that the family does not have accommodation, somewhere suitable to keep their child. This is especially true of special needs children. Thanks to supporters, volunteers and fund-raisers we have been able to purchase a flat or house for each of the following and thus to ensure that

- Ilya lives at home with his mother in Minsk
- Alosha has a flat with his family in Novolukoml
- Natasha in Berezino could bring her Vita home from the orphanage
- Vanya was able to go home to his family
- A former resident of Gorodishche has her flat with her daughter
- Igor has his own home and is free from the adult orphanage
- The children in Kobrin village have a place to return to as their own
- A family in Cherven have their own flat
- Sergei's mother and family have their own flat
- Artum and his family in Smilavichi have their own home

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 15.**

CHERVEN CATHOLIC CHURCH

After the fall of the Communist System, the believers and organized churches began to emerge from their hidden past and tried to construct a new way of life. Only the old people remembered a different world. The young people had largely been living without obvious religion. It was time for perestroika, for rebuilding.

The main problem at the beginning is always financial. When the local few Catholics in Cherven began to hope to build their own church, they had energy and people but no money of the order needed. They had little hope of any in the amount needed. On my first visit to Cherven I was drawn to a building on the right side of the town square. It seemed to hold a significance. It was this site that the Catholic people acquired as their site for a new church.

In the initial stages we helped with the foundation work for this church through sponsorship of the work team required to make the site suitable and safe. Later, through a sponsor, we contributed to the building costs of the church and were responsible in no small way for getting the project under way.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 16.**

ADOPTIONS

At the time of writing it is not possible to adopt a child from Belarus to Ireland. However, earlier it was. We have been involved in helping the following adoptions from Cherven Orphanage to Irish families:-

two children, Kristina and Andrei, to Sheila Murphy in Dublin

one child, Vitali, to Teresa Kehoe in Wexford

one child, Alosha, to Caitriona Winters in Dublin

All these are special needs children and have found wonderful families who love and care for them in their new homes..

BELARUS-EIRE SOCIETY

In order to further strengthen the links between our countries, and to bring a greater sense of Ireland to Belarus, we have helped set up the Belarus- Eire Society. This was inaugurated on St Patrick's Day in 1999 at the House of Friendship in Minsk. Burren Chernobyl Project was partnered by the Sakavik Fund, Minsk on the Belarusian side. The President of the Belarus-Eire Society is Mikhail Constantinovich Mitskevich, son of the poet Yakub Kolas. Each year since then we help to keep the Irish interest alive. To this end we:-

- organise an annual programme of cultural events around St. Patrick's Day in Minsk
- organise newspaper events and radio, TV coverage.
- help local young people in Minsk to get dancing shoes and music from Ireland
- help to arrange parades, youth meetings, cultural events dealing with matters Ireland
- help get some young musicians to Ireland, such as Pasha and Vera who visited and played with Matt Molloy and Sean Keane of The Chieftains, as well as attending the Irish Feis Ceoil
- arrange for visit of the music group Ragneda to Ireland to play in Doolin and elsewhere and soak up Irish culture.
- arrange for music groups to visit and perform in the children's orphanages

YAZOVKI ADULT INTERNAT

300 ADULT PSYCHIATRIC

We have helped here with the following

- provision of laundry equipment – washing machine ,drying machine, centrifuge, ironing machine at a cost of 10,000 euro
- helped with the cost of buying and installing double glaze windows
- provided equipment for making windows
- sent lorry loads of Humanitarian Aid including clothes, shoes, slippers, detergent, etc
- help out the Northern Ireland Volunteers in any way we can as they have spent three years doing major work in Yazovki
- (Work on renovation the entire building continues up to 2017)

Roche Pharmacautical Plant in Clarecastle came on board as major supporters of BCP and have for several years worked in yazovki and other Belarus state institutions. (Fuller reports further on).

Burren Chernobyl project Ltd. **Project 19**

KOSOVO ADULT INTERNAT

400 ADULT PSYCHIATRIC

We first went to this adult orphanage seeking out children who had been moved on from Gorodishche Children's Orphanage. In particular we were trying to find Andrei, a boy in whom Rose Mary had been particularly interested in helping. The building was off the beaten track as usual but in good condition, apart from the unit for invalids which was in need of a general overhaul.

We have since been fundraising to in Kosovo with the invalid unit. Their main need is Adult Pampers. We have begun already to provide these and now must source supply for ongoing availability. The new director has undertaken to upgrade the Unit where the invalid people are housed.

We also sent a lorry load of Humanitarian Aid with clothes, socks, slippers, toiletries, sudocrem, etc. to help the 400 plus residents in this orphanage.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 20.**

KYLB (KOOL) ADULT INTERNAT

514 ADULT PSYCHIATRIC RESIDENTS

This was a three year work programme which we began on October 25th 2004. The work was done by Yura Kryk and his helpers from Belarus as well as some groups of men going out from Ireland to help out. It was a huge job and psychologically difficult for the men who went there to work. However, conditions have been greatly improved and for the adults living there things are much better.

The work involved amongst other things the following:-

- Repairs to the entire building
- Provision of new freezer room for food
- Provision of freezer doors on old units, and new fridges
- Industrial Laundry equipment – washing machine, centrifuge, etc.
- Building materials- cement, timber, flooring, acryl, etc.
- Re- hanging of all doors in the five floor building for 500 people
- Provided a main new dishwasher for kitchen

- provided plants, seeds, plastic sheeting, weed killer sprayer, for farm area
- Installed toilets in each floor with plumbing materials
- Helped with transport, tyres, repairs to machinery
- Oil for heating, chainsaw for wood cutting
- Improvements to grounds, landscaping, flowers and plants
- 5 lorry loads of Humanitarian Aid
- Instruments – saws, drills, sander,
- Improvements of facilities for washing of invalided persons
- Lamps, bulbs, electric wiring to all building
- Linoleum for rooms
- Sound system equipment for concerts for residents
- Set up and stocked library

Work and support for *Kylb Internat* continues over the years.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 21.**

RUDNYA OLD FOLKS HOME

The village of Rudnya is eighteen kilometres from Cherven. We were asked to help there with an old building which is being renovated to care for thirty old men and women in need of care and support. Some residents are mobile while others are confined to bed. The building was formerly a village hospital but has been out of use for some years.

- We are helping to provide a new laundry with proper equipment for washing, drying and treating clothes.
- We also hope to set up proper wash/shower facilities and to have the place properly equipped and comfortable before the coming winter.
- Doors and fittings are also in the plans and have been installed
- New windows were sponsored by volunteers.
- A truck load of Aid has been shipped with new beds, linoleum, clothing etc.
- New furnaces have been installed to improve the heating of the building.

The residents are very pleased. We are also arranging for two blind young adults to get residence here as they are living now in very poor conditions in a village where they receive little care. Soon they will have their own home in Rudnya.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 22**

TARASIKI ADULT ASYLUM

300 ADULT PSYCHIATRIC

Some of the children from Cherven Children's Orphanage get moved on to the adult orphanage in Tarasiki. We went there to see them and to see ho things were. They were awful. It is one of the worst. 'I didn't think there were still places like that,' is how one person described it after a visit. Now however help is underway. The State of Belarus is helping in some ways. We are doing our bit as follows:-

We have organised visits by groups of workmen to Tarasiki who are involved in a huge makeover job there. This includes

- upgrade of toilet facilities
- upgrade of shower and washing facilities
- upgrade of wiring, power supply, lighting, electrics
- installation of hot water for units
- improvements to laundry
- improvements to TB unit
- installation of new toilets, showers in that unit
- new floors and flooring to get rid of the rat runs underneath
- new linoleum, beds, for all units
- three trucks of Humanitarian Aid trucks have been sent with clothes, shoes, toys, building materials and requirements, timber, etc.
- in September 2008 , the Newry group of Volunteers came on board as part of the workforce and also sent a truckload of building materials, as well as plenty men and women to dig in and help.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 23**

CHERVEN HOSPITAL

When Sergei and other children from the orphanage got unwell they were sometimes moved to the local hospital in Cherven, to the children's ward. As usual Teresa followed on. Wherever the children lead us, we accepted and then tried to help in those places. Cherven Hospital had not been on our agenda but now it was. Unwanted babies from the locality get sent here before being sent on to baby orphanages. And so Teresa and others took on the challenge of improving the Children's Ward.

So we have helped to:-

- furnish the children's unit with new beds, purchase new presses as well as bedside lockers.
- buy new sets of bedding, duvets and covers for each of the twenty-five beds in the Children's Unit.
- helped with TV, antenna and installation—provided new furniture, presses, tables, etc. in the kitchen area
- bought new outfits for the nurses and helpers
- bought two new pieces of equipment which are for the slow administration of low dosage medicines to replace the outmoded equipment they had in the Intensive Care Unit.
- provided wheelchairs, medicines, clothing and pampers for the children.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 24**

Charity Fund *Dobra Tyt.*

One of the great difficulties when working as a Foreign Charity in Belarus is the transference of funds from abroad. Unless properly documented, money brought in can be subject to a very high Government, up to thirty eight percent. In most countries nowadays there are restrictions on the amount that can be carried on a person through an airport. There is always the suspicion that large sums may be used in drugs or terrorist-related activities.

To get over this and to ease the pressure on people having to carry large sums on them, we have opened a charity fund in Belarus. I called this fund 'Dobra Tyt'. It is the Belarusian language and literally means 'Good Here'.

On one of me early trips to Belarus, I was walking down a street with Maria, my interpreter. We met a friend of hers, a Professor of Mathematics. He went over to a kiosk and bought three cans of beer. We stood in at the back of the kiosk, it was very cold, and the professor said, 'Dobra Tyt'. These were my first words of Belarusian and I remembered them.

Also when later trying to make out some of the Bible in Belarusian, I was ploughing through that scene where Jesus went up a mountain with a few of the apostles. He was transformed before them and Peter said, 'It is good here,' Dobra Tyt. So it seemed a fitting name for a charity fund in Belarus.

The fund is registered to accept funds from abroad in Euro currency and to use these funds to assist invalid persons in orphanages or families. It is up and running and providing pampers already to Cherven, Gorodishche, Kosovo Adult Internat as well as to families with special needs children. We hope to build on this and to improve as time goes on.

The Dobra Tyt Charity is also licensed in Belarus to arrange the trips abroad for children.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. **Project 25**

Mary Rice Day Care Centre

It has become Government policy in Belarus to open day centres for invalid children who live at home with their families. Our first centre had opened in the year 2000 and its offshoot, Dom Zara, opened officially in 2004. Now it was time to move on again and open another one. We had had great support from the men in Roche Aid in Clarecastle who had raised a huge sum of money through a sponsored cycle. This had been added to by a large contribution from Wurth Irl. Company, as well as other donations from family, friends, volunteers and others.

The State gave us a building in Cherven to work on. It was formerly used for locking up the drunk and disorderly, so was in an awful condition. The agreement was, Burren Chernobyl Project would do it up and make it a suitable place for children, the State would look after the running costs and payment of staff from then on.

Yura and his helpers took on the job, beginning in October 2007. By March the place was in use, though not complete. Work continued and then, on July 25th 2008, the new centre, called Mary Rice House, in memory of Br. Edmund Rice's handicapped daughter, was officially opened. Many Irish people attended and Br. Philip Pinto represented the Christian Brothers.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd. Project 26

Mogilov Hospital

So following on the life of Sasha we undertook to help Mogilov hospital in this small way. Sometimes a small thing can have a huge effect.

To date have got two of the special pumps for administering medicine in their intensive care unit. Next on their list of needs is a laparoscope which we hope to arrange soon.

Bobruisk Hospital

When Sasha was moved onto Bobruisk Hospital we followed on there and simply helped them with special invalid mattresses, pampers and wipes. Even these relatively small purchases help a lot.

Tamara's Hospital

There is another small hospital in the small town of Khalopenichskaya which had no way to wash bed linen. We got them two washing machines and now they are doing fine. They need some help with other hospital equipment and we hope to cater for their needs here as well.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd Project 27

Pukhavichi Adult Internat 400 Residents

This has over four hundred residents. While much of the building is fine, one section is in an appalling state and needs serious investment of funds to make it fit for the people who live there. This project is at present being planned and fund-raising is ongoing to get the work underway. It is a major project and will require serious funds. We spent many months working there to renovate and upgrade some of the living condition.

Burren Chernobyl Project Ltd Project 28

Svir Adult Asylum 180 Residents

Home to approximately 180 residents, a few hours north of Minsk in a beautiful area. Work carried out there on the building used for invalids. It was in a very serious condition unfit for human habitation. Yura and his men, with the help of a group of people from Roche as well as John Quinn and his men from Wexford also helped. See separate accounts.

Rakov Internat Project 29

This is an adult internat which had mainly been used as a summer *lagir* camp but fell into disarray. Yura and his men did some basic cosmetic repairs to the wash areas and shower areas as well as general work in trying to improve the section for special needs children and adults. Some of our friends form Cherven are in this institution.

Smalovichi Social Service Centre Project 30

This Centre caters for several families with special needs requirements. Over the years we helped out mainly with helping with humanitarian aid and improvements to their current centre. (In 2016 looking at the possibility of helping them with the opening and refurbishment of an old school as a retirement old folks home)

Kopyl Adult Internat for former jail residents Project 31

Again we found some of our past pupils and former acquaintances in this institution south of Minsk. The director was in great need of help with refurbishment, Yura and his men undertook this. We continue to supply cleaning agents and humanitarian aid as requirements arise. It seemed a s sad place for some people to end up and many difficulties with the residents due to their mixed and various backgrounds.

Operation Eva Liver Operation. Project 32

Having highlighted this little girl's plight we managed to raise a huge amount of money to enable her have an operation. Her mother was the donor and as two year old Eva was one of the youngest to have such an operation carried out. Mother and Eva are both doing very well since and Eva is a bit of a celebrity as a result. Thanks to Clare FM for allowing publicity on the story. It is one of many such requests received regularly by Dobra Tut office in Minsk.

In 2017 Eva celebrated her eighth birthday.

Gorodishche Children's Summer Holidays in Dom Zara. Project 33

Instead of the expense and bother of getting children to Ireland for a holiday it was decided to bring small groups to Minsk to Dom Zara for a break from the orphanage. These trips proved very successful and the children really love going there. The cost per group is about one thousand euro – which would probable only cover the cost of one child going to Ireland. Thr children visit the zoo, the botanical gardens, the cinema and other shows, have clown shows and whatever else is on offer. Sometimes tickets are free, other times we must pay. Thanks to sponsors especially Marie and Julia for their funds and attending Minsk with the children.

Home for Tolya, former resident of Tarasiki. Project 34

Thanks to Ned and friends form Dublin and Cork a flat was bought in the nearby town so that Tolya could have his own place to live and be free of the institution . It was long felt he should not have been in an institution and so the funds were collected and the paperwork done. Tolya was then employed in the orphanage so has the support of the carers there if needed. All going well so far and he is happy with his new life and lifestyle.

Gorodishche Children's Winter Holidays in Minsk. Project 35

Who would not want to see Minsk in the winter and skate around the huge Christmas Tree in the city centre or see the place lit up? That and *Father Frost* were the big attractions as well as visits to the Circus, the Zoo, the and other outings. Even in minus twenty degrees the children enjoyed it all. Many thanks to Tamara for al the driving, planning and looking after everything.

Cherven and Gorodishche Children's Holidays in Minsk Project 36

These holidays continued from 2012 as well. Then it was decided it would be easier get more children out if the local children from Cherven were brought on day trips. These were also very successful and lots more children got a break away from the orphanage. These are also an ongoing yearly event.

Yazovki Adult Internat renovation of the TB Isolation Unit. Project 37

This was a large project and was carried out by Yura and his regular helpers. Men from Roche also travelled to help complete the work. It was a difficult undertaking and the old building as always threw up more problems than anticipated once the floors and old infrastructure was opened up. However the work was completed and a great job done thanks to Yura and the men. There are over thirty residents in this isolation TB unit.

Humanitarian Aid Deliveries 2011, 2012 and 2013. Project 38

Thanks to all who donated goods and to all who packed and sorted, we were able to send lorry loads of aid twice a year for each of the years mentioned. This was shipped by *Schenker* and delivered to our house in Minsk where Tamara and Lena did all the paperwork and distributed the goods as needed to the orphanages and social service centres for distribution to needy families. See separate list below of where the aid was distributed.

Sergei former resident of Cherven Children's Orphanage. Project 39.

The plan was to get Sergei a home for himself but as this proved a problem and it was felt that he would not survive without support – which he would not have outside the orphanage system. So plans were altered and Seregei was moved to an open institution in Lagoisk. Here he has the support of the institution but can go out to work, earn some money and live his own life. He has the institution to fall back on when things get difficult. Sergei still keeps in touch with Tamara occasionally but has other new friends now and is doing well.

Andrei's medical needs Minsk. Project 40.

When approached by his father I did not know if we could help with the medicines that were needed to help Andrei's situation. They were expensive and not available in Minsk. However we managed to supply the requirements for a couple of years and Andrei made huge improvements. He is still not completely recovered but the family continue to try to keep him going. It was good to help when the crisis was most powerful and the family are very grateful. His father is a great motivator to his son to battle on. Insoiring stories happen daily and go unnoticed.

Transition Year Gael Coláiste Ennis Project 41

This was our first time organising a trip for Transition Students. Thanks to Kathleen Austen in Ennis and the teachers from the GaelColáiste plus the lovely students the trip was a major success. Students were interviewed and vetted before travel and had to fund-raise their own costs and a contribution to the orphanage. Irina looked after them all in Gorodishche. The student have kept in touch and travelled again for further trips to the orphanage. We commend them in their enthusiasm.

2015 Ongoing Projects

Burren Chernobyl Project — Project 42

Yazovki Adult Institution Renovation of Typhus Unit. This was a major and risky undertaking but one badly needing to be done. Yura and his men with the aid of the Director and local workers took on the job. Again the infrastructure of heating and water systems proved a huge added task once the system was opened up and this added to the cost and time taken to carry out the work. The project began in late 2015 and so continued into 2016. Thanks to our special sponsors who saw the need and provided funds towards the completion of this project.

Edel Smith House for Supported Living — Project 43

House for Supported Living in Yazovki. This project was completed in 2015 and mainly sponsored by Edel Smith with support from Killarney Group. Workers were from Athlone Chernobyl Group who made two visits to build walls and do the roof – and also the Roche men made a couple of trips to complete the work with Yura and his men. It is a big undertaking to build a house so compliments to all who undertook the project and partook in the year long effort. Happily now a group of young ladies are living in the house and learning life skills to ensure they can safely cater without living in an institution. The official opening was in September 2015. See separate account of the opening below.

Burren Chernobyl Project — Project 44

Graveyard Care and Headstones in Cherven Children's Plot. All new graves were marked with a new headstone in the railed off children's section. Thanks to all those who sponsored this project. Each headstone plus delivery and erection on site cost approximately 160 euro. In 2016 we have ordered eight more new headstones which we hope to erect during summer 2017. Thanks to all who continue to help fund this important project.

Burren Chernobyl Project — Project 45

Gorodishche Graveyard Care and Headstones. Again thanks to those who sponsored this work and thanks to Irina for making all the arrangements to see that each grave was marked for the children and young adults who had passed away. Headstones in Baranovichi cost approximately one hundred euro including delivery and on site erection.

(Note: there are now some more graves in need of headstones and we are dealing with this in 2016/2017)

Burren Chernobyl Project — Summer Camps — Project 46

2015 saw Summer Camps in Gorodishche each week from May through to October. Instead of taking a small group of children off some place, volunteers arrived each week to spend time and organise outings and events for all the groups. Those who could not be out and about were still attended to with indoor activities, while the active ones had lots to do – right up to late evening football followed by bread and jam each evening. Thanks to all involved and all those volunteers who cover all their costs in relation to these wonderful times for all the children. A sample outline of activities is available below for anyone interested in volunteer as an activities organiser or support helper in the Summer Camps.

Burren Chernobyl Project — Home for Sasha — Project 47

Sasha, former resident of Cherven, and Katya married in 2013 and needed a home. We managed to purchase one in Smilovichi but it was in much need of upgrade and repair. Yura and his men took it on and did a great deal of the work. Sasha then continued the finishing off to make it a nice home. They live there now with daughter Ksyusha and work is still ongoing on a new roof replace the asbestos as was and to make the outside more homely. It has been a long road for Sasha from Cherven to his own family and happily all is going well.

Humanitarian Aid Shipments No 97 and No 98 March and September — Project 48

Continuing our ***Aid Programme*** in 2015 saw the collection, sorting, packing, loading and sending of a 45ft container in March and again in September. This was shipped by Schenker, paper work done by Helen on the Irish side and by Tamara who did the Custom Bonded Warehouse documentation on the Minsk side as well as dealing with all the other customs regulations. Lena did the paperwork with Tamara for distribution to the orphanages, social service centres and needy families. Great thanks to all those who collect, who donate and collect the boxes, and to those who help with the loading in Ennistymon and the unloading in Minsk. See gallery for photos of the loading experience!

BCP Operation for Savileiy Zmurchyk in Spain — Project 49

Again, just one of the many families looking for help to fund expensive operations in foreign countries we were approached by Savileiy's mother to see if we could help in any way. We were able to highlight the case of Savileiy and people were glad to help with the financing of the trip. The operation was successful but is just on of a number he will need ongoing. Mother has great hopes of much improvement and we wish them both well as they face the difficulties ahead.

Project 50 Summer and Winter Holidays in Minsk for the Children. — Project 50

During the beautiful, cold, snowy winter of December and again in January children's trips to Minsk were organised to *Dom Zara* in Minsk. Winter holidays are very popular as Father Frost brings presents and it is also one of the few times the children get our of the orphanage building due to the extreme cold. Everyone wants to come for the trip and it is a pity what we can only take a small group each time.