

ALBANY CHARITY TAKE CHILDREN FROM CHERNOBYL TO HERNE BAY

Despite absolutely torrential rain and strong winds, a convoy of taxis set off from London down the M2 to Herne Bay on 7th July. The weather could not dampen the spirits of those taking part in this trip and as the convoy made its way along the motorway the brightly coloured balloons stood out on such a miserable day. Many of the children on this 3rd annual trip came from Chernobyl and also from Belarus. These guests were joined by some more children from Demelza House, in Eltham, who also enjoyed the day. Demelza House provides care for life limited children and their families.



It is now more than 20 years since the accident at the nuclear power plant in that area of Russia but the effects are still being seen today. At the time the people there were exposed to radiation 90 times greater than that of the first atomic bomb at Hiroshima. It will be another 24,000 years before the land is safe and the

children will no longer suffer. In December 2000 the last working reactor at Chernobyl was closed down, but the sarcophagus built around the exploded reactor is in a poor state. This means the reactor still continues to spread its cloud of death on the Ukraine and Belarus. Thanks to the Friends of Chernobyl's Children (FOCCV) children from the areas affected are brought over to the UK to stay with families for a month and take them for medical help as well as dental treatment they would not get at home. The fresh foods and uncontaminated air in the UK mean the immune systems of these children receive a boost to increase life expectancy. These are the children who enjoyed their day at the seaside in Herne Bay, rain or no rain.

This trip is organised by The Albany Taxi Charity Fund. The Herne Bay Catholic Social Club plays host to the event and as the weather was wet, their hall was the venue for the disco party held for the children. On arrival the Lord Mayor of Canterbury, confusingly a lady, Carolyn Parry, welcomed the convoy along with the Herne Bay and Whistable Lions and members of the Herne Bay Catholic Club. During the afternoon, the Mayor of Canterbury also came along to see the children. A meal of fish and chips was enjoyed



by everyone, followed by ice cream. The local Brownies also came along with trays of cakes they had baked for the children to enjoy, although some adults were also spotted enjoying these. Girls from one of the local

colleges had hoped to organise games outside in the grounds of the club but the inclement weather meant games were indoors, which meant they had to think on their feet due to a smaller space being available. For many of the adults present it was a real lump in the throat moment when the children stood together and sang some Russian folk songs. As the group had interpreters they had also learnt a song of thanks which they sang to an audience of taxi drivers, carers and those from Herne Bay. Thank you, thank you very much for all your love and care they sang – it was a really lovely moment in the day.

The committee would like to thank everyone involved for making this such a great event. In particular, but in no special order, thanks go to Michael Glassman of Colts Cabs for sponsoring the diesel for the trip, the Herne Bay and Whistable Lions for supplying the food, Henry Forrester for providing the amusements, Councillor Vince McMann for all his help and The Herne Bay Catholic Club, as well as ROK the Nation's Builders for their sponsorship and providing the children with goodie bags and balloons. Thanks also go to the drivers for making the outing possible.

