Kevin Dalley [1953-60] who was President of the Society in 2005/6 helped to drive a truck load of humanitarian aid to Kosovo in October last year [2008]. He recounts his experience of the whole process in the following article which he has entitled “Remember Kosovo?”

Remember Kosovo?
Working for a charity was not something I had ever given much thought to. As an excuse for not giving, I had convinced myself that most of the money I had donated to large charitable organisations supported the long administrative tail or was high-jacked by the government whose people you sought to give aid to in the first place. My excuse for doing nothing changed last summer when, fielding in the slips, I fell into conversation with a slightly older chum, Paul Dyer who in 2007 had been a co-driver for one of nine 7.5 tonne trucks laden with humanitarian aid bound for Kosovo. The charity Hope and Aid Direct is an organisation founded by Charles Storer who became totally disillusioned with banking long before the current crisis. With a small force of volunteers they fund trucks and material goods to provide humanitarian aid for the starving people of Kosovo. This they do with a convoy that makes the pilgrimage twice a year. Their charity’s motto is: “we take aid not sides”.

I will spare you the Geography lesson [a slight personal disappointment, for it was the one and only “A” Level that I achieved] but you need to have sight of some facts to set the scene. Kosovo has a population of 2.2 million; 92% are Albanians; 600,000 have no tap water; 36000 live on 60p a day; a family of 7 receives an EU funded allowance of £50 per month but the cost of living is similar to the UK; there is no investment in the country; 40-50% of the working population is unemployed; there is a small elite population which is largely corrupt; there is a small number of middle class people who have a limited impact on the economy. Got the picture? So did I.

By about the end of June 2008 our target was clear. With two other drivers from the east of England we would take two 7.5 tonne trucks each with 4 tonnes of aid and join up as a convoy of nine departing from Dover on 10th October and returning on 24th. We needed to
accumulate material aid. Much was donated by local companies but most came from charitable groups like Rotary, Probus and WI. I negotiated use of the redundant dental centre at RAF Brampton which we used as a sorting and packing area…….. and then we had to raise some money.

A good friend of mine was quick to point out that there is no easy way of asking for cash no matter what the cause, and to begin with I found the subject embarrassing. You can raise money on tombola stalls and selling cakes at fetes and we did, but it’s a long haul to raise £2400 required to hire one truck and include the fuel, ferry charges, toll fees and insurance. Separately we needed about £350 from our own resources for food and accommodation.

I took a deep breath, used rough mental arithmetic to divide £2400 by the total sum of friends and relations. It was too much to ask, so I got out the last Christmas card list and wrote letters to those who felt would not be too surprised to hear from me out of season. The result was astounding. Because of my long military career I had never given much thought as to how people might react beyond the “main gate”. I was about to have my eyes opened. The money and good will just flowed in; the 30 people to whom I wrote donated over £1000. We sought other ways for fund raising and by the middle of August the goal was in sight. In the event that was the easy part.

We picked up the hired lorry the day before departure and loaded the stores: food, bedding, toiletries, handbags and nappies. We set off for Maidstone early the next day and things got off to bad start. I drove the first leg and soon realised that on a slight incline in top gear the engine RPM would increase but the forward speed decreased. Now, I never got anywhere near obtaining “O” Level Physics but I can recognise the mechanics of a slipping clutch. We limped into Maidstone at 12.00 hrs on a Friday with failure staring us in the face on the first day.

When you strip out the ridiculous hats, the “how is my driving”, the Jeremy Clarkson jokes and the dismissive “if I cannot see you in my mirror, I cannot see you” attitude, it becomes clear truck drivers and their supporting staff are a loyal and united bunch. We soon discovered the “if we can fix it mate, we will” attitude when a company called Haynes turned out to tow us to their repair depot, instructed us to go and have lunch and come back at 3.00pm. We did just that. The clutch was repaired and, with the convoy now split, we made for the ferry at 8.00pm. Beef stew [a third of the price in the truckers’ canteen] revived us after which we drove through the night to catch up with the others; we slept fitfully in the back of the lorry and for a brief moment between Paul’s deafening snoring I wondered if this was such a good idea.

Most truck stops on the continent provide good food and bedding for about £45 a night. To save money we had decided to use sleeping bags and stay in the trucks. Two nights of that was quite enough. We chose the worst truck stop ever [probably] Jebbeke in Belgium but at dawn the filthy ablutions paled into insignificance. Our lorry: no brake pressure on start up, then the power steering failed due to a fractured hydraulic line. Equipped with CB radios we all had individual call signs and I suggested that ours be changed to Apollo 13 only to be told by our team leader “not until we are on our way home. So we pressed on through Germany, Austria, Hungary, Serbia and finally Kosovo. Customs delays at the Serbia/Kosovo border were irritating but eventually we arrived at the capital Pristina. Our next task was to offload 10 trucks into a huge underground warehouse. The next day we started to deliver aid to those families selected by the Maria Theresa organisation. Most of the drops were to the southeast of the capital with some deliveries to villages in the mountains. Our guides in their beaten up 4 by 4s scrambled up some pretty rough un-surfaced roads and we gingerly followed. We kept up this routine for 4 days during which Paul and I delivered to 239 families.
The Albanian of average working age has lost the will to work even if he could find any in the first place. As we drove through Austria and onwards we had observed the quality of peasant style strip farming gradually deteriorating. The soil and climate in Kosovo support crops very well but there is no economy to speak of. Garish sign advertise new filling stations and smart hotels, but most of these are hardly used. We were told that hey exist simply for the purpose of money laundering gained through the slave trade, prostitution and drug dealing. The people generally were polite and charming. They have their dignity despite hardship of a kind that we will probably never know. The children were like children everywhere. If we had taken a truck laden with footballs and a strip it would have been high jacked but we could not afford that luxury.

There were highs and lows on our journey and some “never agains”!! Here are some tips. Never sleep in a sleeping bag in a truck laden with cardboard boxes. Everything moves when you move and it is very uncomfortable. Never visit Belgrade, with its 1950s Soviet style buildings, grey forbidding concrete and an atmosphere polluted with sulphurous fumes from burning lignite used as fuel for power stations. The Hotel we stayed at for one night was quoted as 5 star but would not make half a star in the UK. Corroding iron pipes, leaking toilets and awful food. Finally, never share a small hotel room with two other chaps for longer than 12 hours. I will spare you any descriptions.

For all the discomfort and strain, it was well worth the effort. The team was united and splendidly led. Everyone was well motivated and the aid we gave was always politely and gratefully received. Wherever we went we were needed and, if I might say so, I feel a better person for having made a contribution to a cause that required more physical and mental energy than I could have imagined. It was like a military operation that might have been designed for people half my age! We drove nearly 4000 miles in 14 days and it was no picnic. But there we were: people from a Christian country assisting a mainly Muslim community in its dire need. In a troublesome world, what beats that?

**Forthcoming Events**

1. **Wednesday 14 October 2009: Annual Golf Match v Saffron Walden Golf Club; 13.00.**
   Anyone wishing to play in this match should contact Michael Price, 20 Mandeville Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4AQ; Tel. 01799 525275, Mobile 07890868824
   Email: mike.price@hotmail.co.uk  Michael Price who has now taken over organising the ON Team from Don Hirst, hopes that as many good players as possible will respond to his request to get a really strong ON Team together this year.

2. **Saturday 3 October 2009: 18.00 Annual General Meeting at the School in the Memorial Library.**
   Please note that the AGM will start at 18.00 [not at 17.00 as in previous years]
   1. Apologies; 2. Minutes of last AGM [4-10-08]; 3. Matters Arising; 4.Treasurer’s Report
   5. Secretary’s Report; 6. Election of Officers for 2009-10  7.AOB
   The President Designate for 2009-10 is Ian Tweed [1961-68]

3. **Saturday 3 October 2009: 19.00 for 19.30: Annual Dinner in the Main Hall at the School**
   The cost will be £19.00 per head. Wives and partners are very welcome to attend. As usual no tickets will be issued. All money will be taken on the door on the night. **Therefore it is important that all those who complete the enclosed proforma to say they will attend do actually turn up on the night so that the secretary can give accurate numbers to the caterer. It is also important that no one turns up on the night without first informing the secretary of their intention to do so.** If you wish to attend, and the committee hope that as many ONs as possible will do so, please complete the enclosed proforma and return it to the ON Society Secretary at the school as soon as possible but no later than Friday 25
September 2009. In the last few years two or three ONs have organised a number of their own particular year to attend the annual dinner which has proved most successful. To get ONs of a particular year to attend requires someone in that year to act as an unofficial year secretary to make contact with those of their year and urge them to come along. All those who do attend as a result of a particular year getting together always find it most rewarding and thoroughly enjoyable. The Secretary can supply a list of names and addresses for any particular year group. In recent years round tables have been used and those of a particular year are put on the same table. The proforma for attending is on page 8 of this email.

4. Friday 19 February 2010: 20.00 onwards; Gathering of ONs at the Coach and Horses Newport

The President and Committee hope that as many ONs as possible will be able to drop in to the Coach and Horses if only for a short time. It is always a most enjoyable occasion and often brings together ONs who have not seen each other for many years. If you are in the vicinity of Newport on 19 February 2010 please try to come along.

5. Sunday 21 February 2010: Church Service to Commemorate Foundress Day

At the 2009 AGM it was suggested that a service be held at Newport Church to commemorate Foundress Day which is on the 20 February. The Committee decided that the best way to organise this would be to have such a service as part of the normal Sunday morning service at Newport Church. The Vicar of Newport, the Reverend Barbara Sherlock and the Newport PCC have expressed great enthusiasm for this and they are very happy for their Morning Service on Sunday 21 February 2010 to have as its main theme the Founding of Newport Free Grammar School. This service will be advertised to everyone connected with the School [Parents, Pupils, Governors as well as ONs]. Members of the Society will be involved in the service. This is the first time that such an occasion has been arranged and it is hoped that as many members of the Society as possible will try to be at Newport Church for this service on Sunday 21 February 2010. Further details will be given in the December Newsletter.


The Football match will start at 10.15 and the Cross Country match at 11.00. Further details will be given in the December Newsletter. Those ONs who wish to take part please make a note of the date. As last year there will be an all girls hockey match starting at 9.15am as well as the men’s hockey match starting at 10.30am. Further details will be given in the December Newsletter.

6. Sunday 4 July 2010: 11.30am Annual Mixed Hockey Match v the School

As usual Di Reed will organise the ON Team. All those who would like to play please make a note of the date.

7. Sunday 4 July 2010: 14.00 Annual Cricket Match v the School

As usual this match will be a 40 overs per side game in the afternoon and evening with tea between the innings [about 16.30]. For those who wish to take part please make a note of the date. Further information about the mixed hockey and cricket matches will be given in the December Newsletter.

March 2010 or March 2011: Dinner at Gonville and Caius College Cambridge

At the AGM in October 2008 a request was made for the Committee to look at the possibility of arranging An Old Newportian Society Dinner [to include wives and partners] at Gonville and Caius College Cambridge. There have been three ON Society Dinners at Gonville and Caius College in the past 20 years; 1988 to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the Founding of the School; 1996 to celebrate the Centenary of the Society; and 2000 to celebrate the Millennium. Gonville and Caius College was fully involved with the Founding of the School.
in 1588 and still has a very close connection with the School. The idea has been put forward that the Society should try to hold a dinner at the College about every 10 years and hence the suggestion to try and organise a dinner in 2010 or 2011. Before going ahead with any detailed arrangements the committee decided that it would be best to find out if there would be sufficient support for such a dinner. If a dinner at Gonville and Caius College is arranged it will be in addition to the Annual Dinner held at the School in October of each year. The cost of such a dinner to include a drinks reception, wine and port will be about £65 per person. Please complete the enclosed proforma if you would definitely support a dinner at Gonville and Caius College and return it to the ON Society Secretary at the School. There will be a committee meeting in September when a decision will be made as to whether there is sufficient support for a dinner at Gonville and Caius College so it is important that those who are interested return the proforma as soon as possible but certainly no later than Tuesday 1st September 2009. The proforma is on page 8 of this email.

Reports and Results

Friday 20 February 2009: Gathering of ONs at the Coach and Horses, Newport
As ever this was a thoroughly enjoyable and successful occasion. Over 20 ONs turned up at some time during the evening. Some, including several who were contemporist of the President [1961-68] attended this event for the first time.

Saturday 25 April 2009:
1. Annual Football Match against the School
This was an excellent game which the ONs won by five goals to one. This was the second year in succession that the ONs have won this game and the team must be congratulated for another excellent performance. The following played for the ON team.

2. Annual Cross-Country Match:
The School won this match by 65 points to 73 points. Although the School yet again won this match the result was much closer than it has been for several years. The individual winner was Andrew Mynott [1987-94] in the quite excellent time of 18 minutes and 23 seconds. This time is thought to be a record for the course. The Old Buggers Cup [awarded to the oldest runner to complete the course who has not won it before] was awarded to Colin Almond who is a staff member of the Society. Rick Reynolds must be thanked for all his efforts in organising the Cross Country Match. The following ran for the ON team

3. Annual Men’s Hockey Match against the School
This match was drawn three goals all. For much of this game the ON team were losing but in the last few minutes they came back strongly to score two goals and draw the match. The following played for the ON team [including substitutes]:
  R.Hollidge[96-03], J.Totty[95-02]; A.Mitchell [98-05]; T.Jeffries [2003-08]; M.Wigens [2000-05]; N.Dawson[98-05]; S.Green[02-07]; J.Chinque [96-01] B.Wyatt[02-07]; C.Hollidge [98-05]; A.Harmer [94-97]; J.Snelling[99-06]; O.Wickham [2001-08]; D.Tovey [97-02]; M.Falconer [01-08]; M.Chapman [01-08]
4. Annual Woman’s Hockey Match against the School
This was an excellent game which the ON team deservedly won five goals to one. The following played for the ONs: J.Westnedge [School]; D.Reed[69-]; C.Turner [School]; G.Deary [01-08]; E.Deary [2000-07]; N.Evans [93-2000]; L.Willson [98-05]; S.Thompson [02-07]; K.Furze [School]; G.Sammons [05-09]; A.Bohannon [School]; L.Baldwin [01-08]
This was the third time an all-women’s ON Hockey match has taken place. Di Reed must be congratulated for again getting this match organised and for helping Gordon Scott to arrange the men’s hockey match. It proved very difficult this year to get a full woman’s team together but in the end and after much effort DI.Reed managed to organise a very good ON side. The Society are most grateful for all the efforts she makes to ensure that the ON Hockey teams are always properly organised.

In the last three years there have been four ON v School sporting fixtures on the last Saturday in April [Football, Cross-Country and two Hockey matches]. Over 100 people [players, parents, ONs] attended this occasion which is most certainly very good publicity for the School.

O.N.Society 100 Club
This year [2009] the highest number of membership tickets [219] has been sold. The committee are most grateful to all those members of the Society who have contributed to the 100 Club.

The response to the 100 Club continues to be marvellous and this year especially so. The President and Committee sincerely thank all members of the 100 Club for their continued magnificent support. The success of the 100-Club is essential if the Society is to thrive and be really effective in supporting the School in a variety of ways as it most certainly has since the 100-Club was formed some 16 years ago. As 219 tickets have been sold it is possible to have three prizes for each of 10 months this year and six prizes in both March and October. Over £1000 has been raised from the proceeds of the 100-Club to support the School and help run the Society. This year amongst other things the Society has been able to support Tom Berry [1992-99] who is currently training to become a Vet. He has been selected to take part in the Royal Veterinary College project to eradicate East River Disease in cattle in Zanzibar. Although some funds are provided by the College Tom Berry still needed to raise £3000 towards his personal costs of going to Zanzibar. He has made a huge effort to get this money together but did ask if the Society could help him financially in any way. The committee felt that this was a thoroughly worthwhile cause and agreed to make a donation from the Society.

100 Club Winners since the last Newsletter

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<td>158</td>
<td>A.Bush</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>08</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>P.Holland</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>J.Schoop</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>J.Lee</td>
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<td>A.Bush</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>R.Tebbitt</td>
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<td>W.Kemp</td>
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<td>M.Green</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>K.Dalley</td>
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Mar.   1       127   P.Dicks                 120
09  2        1 J.Lee                      80
  3       95  R.Reynolds                 60
  4       20  C.French                   50
  5      124  A.J.Richardson             40
  6      167  W.B.Johnson                30
Apr.   1       93   J.Purser                 25
09  2      148  N.Burman                 20
  3      104  M.Smither                  15
May  1      133  J.A.Smith                25
09  2       63  R.Tebbitt                 20
  3      126  S.Howe                    15
June  1      122  E.Holland               25
09  2      110  P.Holland                 20
  3      157  S.Hampson                 15

New Members since the last newsletter:
PROFORMA FOR ATTENDING THE ANNUAL DINNER
ON SATURDAY 3 OCTOBER 2009

I will definitely attend the Annual Dinner on Saturday 3 October 2009

Name [Block Capitals]_________________________________________________

Postal Address [Block Capitals]__________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

___________________________________Years at the School_________________

Email Address________________________________________________________

Signed_______________________________________________________________

Name of Wife/Partner [if attending]______________________________________

Please return to the O.N.Society Secretary at the School as soon as possible but
no later than Friday 25 September 2009
Returning this proforma will be taken as a guarantee [emergencies excepted] that
you will attend so that correct numbers can be given to the caterer.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------

Proforma for supporting a
Dinner at Gonville and Cauis College Cambridge
March 2010 or March 2011

I would definitely attend an Old Newportonian Society dinner at Gonville and
Caius College, Cambridge if one is arranged

Name [Block Capitals]_________________________________________________

Address [Block Capitals]_______________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Email Address________________________________________________________

Please return to the ON Society Secretary at the School by Tuesday 1 September