

## UZDA CHOSE US

**Mike Worton (photo below) has been leading the charity “Chernobyl 2000” for seven years. He managed to bring together people who do not just think about themselves, but care about the needs of others, who want to help people. Last year the Queen gave Mike a medal for his humanitarian work. The charity is a family thing for the Wortons. On every convoy Mike is accompanied by his wife Maureen, his son Steven and daughter-in-law – average Belarusian girl Natallia, who worked as an interpreter with the delegation and later connected her life with a foreigner. Most of the members of “Chernobyl 2000” are not young, but they still have enough energy to go long distances and to help people who don’t even speak their language.**

*- Mike, tell us why of all places you chose to help Uzda.*

- We did not choose Uzda, Uzda chose us. We had never heard about this town until we met Nikolai Dubovik (about five years ago). It was a chance meeting in Minsk; he told me that people of Uzda need help. Today Uzda is a great part of my life, and the life of my family. Not a day goes by when we don’t mention Uzda. A lot of people in the area we live know about Uzda and the Belarusian people now.

*- Did you have a chance to know history of our area, its beautiful scenery?*

- Last September we came here for our holiday – no trucks, no convoy, only my family and I. We were shown around and learned more about your town, its history and culture.

*- And what are impressions of the visit to Uzda, of the relationships between the people here?*

- Last time they kept us 10 hours at the Polish border. I was so fed up with everything that I promised myself never to come again. But here I am! Uzda has wonderful and very generous people. You take all the hardships and still look into the future with hope and optimism. It the other way round in England – the life conditions are good but people are still not happy.

*- When are you planning to come over again, not just with the convoy but also for a holiday?*

- We are planning to come in summer. All our members are volunteers; they have jobs in England and to the charity in their spare time. The convoy drivers (they drive the trucks with aid) book time off work and pay their own expenses in order to bring the aid here. I am the director of this charity, but without all their help I would not be able to do anything.

We like it here and we will be back.