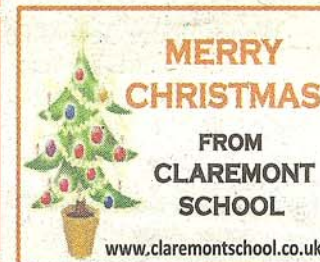




BATTLE Observer



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Friday, December 11, 2009

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Editorial/Advertising: 01424 854242

Price: 43p

CAR CRASH NIGHTMARE FOR CHARITY WORKER

by **Laura Button**
laura.button@trbeckett.co.uk

A BATTLE charity worker cheated death when he was involved in a night-time car crash in South Africa on Sunday.

British pilot Robert Vallier was on his way to deliver 2,000 books to schools in Mthatha and East London as part of the Ufosa Foundation's ongoing Education Programme Books for South Africa when a cow crossed into the path of his truck on the N2 Freeway.

Mr Vallier said: "It was about 3.30am, maybe 30 minutes before sunrise. The cow just came from nowhere. It was pitch black still and I had just come over the crest of a hill. It just came from the right and all of a sudden was there in the way. I barely had time to brake at all. I was lucky that the trailer didn't jack-knife and the two vehi-

cles roll."

Another driver stopped to help, and officers from the Peddie Police Station were quickly on the scene.

Sergeant Gaca, of Peddie Police, said: "Animals strolling onto the road in front of traffic in this area is a constant problem, and accidents like this are frequent and of-



Police with Robert's car after the crash

ten fatal for the driver.

"The animal is thrown up into the windscreen causing great damage and loss of life or the collision throws the car off the road, with the same result to the driver."

The cow, which was not fenced in properly, was killed instantly.

Although severely shaken by his ordeal, Mr Vallier was physically unharmed.

It has been a tough week for Mr Vallier, who was in South Africa on a sponsored ticket at short notice after discovering two consignments of books, delivered by British Airways four weeks before, had not been cleared through customs.

Mr Vallier said: "The officers there wanted a R5,000 payment to release the books

or more paperwork. We chose the paperwork. But even when all paperwork had been completed they still dragged their feet and avoided any fast-track option, I understand, causing further havoc with schedules organised at our recipient schools, and making my job very difficult.

"They were thoroughly uncooperative at customs, caused disappointment of school children and teachers, acted contrary to what I am led to believe the nation aspires towards and, frankly, are a disgrace to South Africa."

Mr Vallier complained to Nelson Mandela's office and several international media outlets about customs and the customs officials involved and the books were cleared the following day. Earlier in the week, Mr Vallier had opened a Ufosa Library at Beaufort West.

For more about the Ufosa Foundation, visit www.ufosafoundation.org



Robert Vallier

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