

# PERM NEWS

The Newsletter of the Oxford Perm Association

January 2012

## Professional Exchange of Lawyers

The idea of a Perm-Oxford lawyers' professional exchange was not mine – Committee members of the Oxford part of the Association had been thinking about it for a while. Almost a year ago to the day it came up at one of the meetings again and I thought it would be an interesting thing to organise. With the help of the Association, Daniel Scharf and I contacted as many legal professionals as we could in 3 or 4 months. We had some very enthusiastic responses as well as “what’s in it for us?” straightforward “business – making” attitude...

In the meanwhile Natasha Cherniadieva (Perm Advocate and PSU lecturer in European law) brought the idea of the exchange to the table in Perm Association of Advocates (Пермская Коллегия Адвокатов) – an organisation not dissimilar to the Bar in England and Wales. Very soon she had a group of 5 very experienced lawyers eager to come on the exchange to Oxford in late October. I can't say I wasn't nervous at the time. Was I able to actually pull it all together: visas, accommodation, the program itself? Natasha was great: encouraging and reassuring. “It is the first visit” – she said – “we'll do our best and we'll do it together”.



Natasha (I will go into a reminiscing mode now) was my first ever teacher of law and my great academic inspiration. Back in 1995 she taught me law in Perm secondary school N65 (what would be in England – an advanced 6<sup>th</sup> Form College course). I am afraid I was rather a disappointment to her. Not because I didn't do well – I came up with the top results in my year - but because I decided not to go into law at that point. My dad was a deputy-head of district police headquarters and a qualified criminal lawyer. He gently pointed out that the mid-nineties legal system in Russia was probably not the best place to start a career for a seventeen-year-old girl... So I chose languages. Anyway, having met Natasha in Oxford in November 2010 and then working with her on the project was one of the main incentives for me to make it work.

By September 2011 we had a full program including meetings with Oxford law firms (LLPs) (specialising in a wide range of areas including social sphere), a Human Rights specialist, Oxford Brookes University Law Department, visits to the County Court, and meeting with a Magistrate and a Local Councillor. The 10 days were exciting for the Permians and probably even more exciting for me! The dedication of the Oxford participants was amazing – busy practising lawyers put off their meetings and kept talking to us for much longer than agreed hours. They later told me that they had learnt a bit of the Russian legal system, a bit of the Russian mentality, and a bit of the Russian language. As for the Permians – we had many long discussions about the two legal systems, the realities of both countries affecting the development of law, the conditions of work in the Public Sector, teaching law, training of the lawyers and lots of other things. I witnessed several heated professional debates between the Perm lawyers about their own legal system, methods of working in it and the principles on which it is based.

On the last night of the visit Mari Prichard (Chair of Oxford Perm Association) invited the Perm group and myself for a dinner. Natasha and the others wrote to me later saying it was one of the most interesting nights of their visit. Mari also invited an old friend of hers who is a Judge, who debated and disagreed and listened to and questioned what the group thought of the English legal system. We talked about the legal system and the politics, the history and the morality of it. Mari then asked each member of the Perm group to explain one thing which they found interesting or surprising or just useful to have learnt during their visit. Some of them talked about how much history is ingrained in the English system of justice. Some of them expressed concerns on how the British Government deals with immigration and the difficulties of governing in a multi-national society like Britain. And one of them, after a glass of wine, asked the question: “Why do all these people in Oxford want to talk to us, spend their time and share their knowledge with us, and accommodate us in their homes? How do you make a profit out of it?” The answer was - we don't. And the full answer is the story of more than 20 years of a constantly developing relationship between the two cities of Oxford and Perm. This 20-year story has been written by the people who want to make things happen. This is why the future success of this particular professional exchange now depends on whether the Perm group follows up on the connections and links they made during their stay last October.

*Ksenia Hewitt*

## Membership notices:

Subscriptions for 2012 are now due. If you are not paying by Standing Order please send your cheque for £8 per member to the membership secretary or better still, contact him for a bank Standing Order form: Daniel Scharf, 122 Abingdon Road, Drayton, OX14 4HT, tel 01235 531107

If you are not receiving emails from the association and you have an email address please email the Membership Secretary Daniel Scharf at: [pause.forthought@googlemail.com](mailto:pause.forthought@googlemail.com)

The Association committee has a vacancy for someone who would like to join them with a brief for the practical organisation of events. There are currently around three to four events per year, including the AGM and the summer party, where the activity and venue, and the drink and food (usually brought by members) need to be co-ordinated. The committee would also welcome new proposals for events. If you want to discuss or find out more, please contact the chair, Mari Prichard, by 13 February: mobile 07768 908341 or email [mari.prichard@hcarpenter.co.uk](mailto:mari.prichard@hcarpenter.co.uk).

Newsletter articles are always welcome. The submission deadline for the summer issue is 30<sup>th</sup> April but it greatly assists planning if you let the editor know as soon as possible if you plan to submit an item or to discuss an idea you may have: contact David Roulston: [djrrouls@btinternet.com](mailto:djrrouls@btinternet.com) tel: 01993 813 215.

## Forthcoming events

### Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Oxford Perm Association will be held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February at 6 pm in Wolfson College buttery. The evening starts at 6 pm with an informal meeting of members over finger food and drinks. The official AGM starts at 6.30 with the following agenda:

- Minutes of last AGM
- Reports
- Election of officers and committee
- Future Association activities
- Other business (please communicate in advance to the Chair on 07768 908341)

*Note: Any offers to serve on the committee, or proposals for nominations, should be discussed with the Chair prior to the meeting.*

This is followed at 7.30 by a **talk by Ivan Kalpakov**, a Perm journalist who has been dealing with stories of significant Russian-wide concern. His approach proved to be very popular but has brought him into conflict with some powerful groups so his talk should be extremely interesting.

*Note: it is planned to have printed copies of the Oxford Perm History available at the AGM.*

Wolfson College is at the end of Linton Road (an 8 minute walk from St Margarets Road bus stop on Banbury Road). Parking is available on the adjacent roads or in the car park beside or behind the college (turn right on entering).

## Oxford International Links

### Oxford Leon Link,

On the first weekend in March, members of OLAT will sing *La Misa Campesina* or 'Nicaraguan Peasant Mass'. This Mass was written by workers, fishermen and tenant farmers in the style of local folk music and was celebrated in churches throughout Nicaragua during the revolution. This year it will be sung twice in Oxford and the collection will be for OLAT:

Saturday 3 March at 5.30pm in the Catholic Chaplaincy, Rose Place, St Aldates

Sunday 4 March at 9.30am in Blackfriars Church, St Giles.

After the Saturday performance of *La Misa Campesina* at the Catholic Chaplaincy, there will be a screening of a Nicaraguan film "La Yuma". No charge, donations welcome.

Singers welcome to join in. No auditions, all levels welcome. There will be two rehearsals. For details please contact Jan Marshall on [charltonmarshall49@yahoo.com](mailto:charltonmarshall49@yahoo.com) or 01865 728429

### Oxford Leiden Link.

Events for 2012 include a visit by a Leiden hockey team to an Easter hockey festival in Oxford.

#### Oxford Perm Association contact details

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## Book Reviews

### The Russian Dreambook of Colour and Flight by Gina Ochsner

Portobello books, 2009 (now available in paperback, published by Mariner books)

I noticed this book on the Orange Prize longlist in 2009 because one of the judges mentioned that it was set in Perm. However, if you want to read a novel that tells you something of life in Perm, this is probably not the book for you. In fact, Perm is mentioned very infrequently, we learn that it is the 5<sup>th</sup> coldest city in Russia, and that it is 'the heart of orthodoxy'. In earlier times it was 'A closed city, a red circle on the map. A city of fly ash and coal, salt and tanks, bicycle parts and sighting mechanisms. Smoking hills of mine wastes. A city of bad luck'.

The book is set in the 1990s, the post-soviet period, and the day to day life described is harsh. Plumbing

is poor, toilet facilities limited, and the winter so cold and the ground so hard that a body could not be buried until the spring. This is a problem because the unburied visit the living 'while they sleep and bite and scratch them'. The main characters in the book all live in the same block of flats. They are of different nationalities and backgrounds, and have arrived in Perm from different places. They come with their stories, a mixture of myths and fables, personal histories and dreams which provide a contrast with the realities of their lives.

Part of the novel concerns the attempt to persuade an American Foundation, which wishes to support the arts in Russia, to donate funds to the museum. However, none of the exhibits are genuine and many have to be created by museum staff, the mosaic is made of chewing gum. The American visitors come to the museum, but it is not the museum they expected. They wanted the Russia of dreams, and not the Russia as it was.

I found this a strange and curious novel, but engaging nevertheless. It contains elements of magical realism and mixes stark reality with dreams and fantasies. If you are curious to read a harsh account of life in Russia, which also tells of a people who dream, you may well like this.

*Sue Gregory*

### **Russian Prison Theatre**



Members who went to see the Russian Prison Theatre exhibition in the autumn at Pushkin House in Bloomsbury (web site: [www.pushkinhouse.org/en](http://www.pushkinhouse.org/en)) will certainly value the experience. It consisted of a fascinating collection of photographs by Sebastian Lister and Sergey Ponomarev illustrating life in Prison Colony 29, Perm. The visit was part of a larger project run by Creating Freedom - an international theatre, film and educational company based in London and directed by Alex Dower. He was invited by Alexander Reymer, Head of the Russian 'Federal Service for the Execution of Punishments' to run a theatre group consisting entirely of prisoners, over a period of a few weeks. During this time the prisoners selected, rehearsed and presented three short plays based on stories/plays by Bebel and



Chekhov. The photographs show extraordinary glimpses of the prisoners as they go about their daily routines as well as performing in the theatre project. The monochrome collection lends itself incredibly well to capturing the atmosphere of this prison life and also the enthusiasm of the inmates in participating in the project. The small selection shown here (reproduced by permission of Sebastian Lister ([www.sebastianlister.co.uk](http://www.sebastianlister.co.uk))) gives some flavour of the exhibition.



Sergei as Babushka © Sebastian Lister

On the opening night we had the added advantage of a group of Alex Dower's London actors performing silent roles as prisoners, some outside the basement windows of Pushkin House; this added a degree of poignancy to the evening. In a subsequent talk, Alex Dower used video clips of the performances and described the experience in more detail, including choice of interpreter and the writing down of key facts to be explained to the prisoners at each stage. He highlighted his use of the Stanislavski method and the tremendous enthusiasm of the prisoners; also the fact that governors and admin staff were very impressed with the outcome. A return visit to Russia - to Kazan - is planned for the near future. The whole evening was a moving and very worthwhile experience.

*David Roulston*

## Two Russian Portraits

by Derek Summers

Written after visiting Perm and St Petersburg ,  
September 2010

1

Catch the tram along Petropavlovskaya  
Note the unsmiling conductress.  
Return by Lenin St,  
glimpse the imperious driver.

Window-shop at Ecco or Hugo Boss  
or choose from a thousand items  
at the street kiosk.  
Fix your eyes on your choice:  
a small window will open.  
Pass through your roubles.

Visit the public library  
where Zhivago met Lara or  
stroll down the Komsomol Prospekt  
to the Kama River and take tea  
on a river cruiser, long out of service.

Totter on high heels  
across the tramlines and broken roadway  
to the university:  
'Read 'Vivat Academia, vivat professores' on the  
wall.  
Ask questions, speak your mind

though Gulag 36 still stands  
lost amongst the birches  
under a dazzling sky  
which your professors saw only at night  
through a square metre of barbed wire.

2

Visit the opera house:  
its classical façade  
still bears its hammer and sickle.

Here ballerinas danced  
before tsars, before Lenin and Stalin,  
Khrushchev and Putin.

Learn at the museum of Soviet History  
not far from the palace in Petrograd  
where Matisse's 'Dancers' was commissioned

how Lenin made his office  
in this house of a dancer  
and laid his revolver across her desk .

## Sveta's Box of Words

by Derek summers

for Sveta Yasinsky

Not tarot, not poker  
though these cards might  
tell something about your past  
perhaps help secure the future.

Not beautifully engraved and waxed  
But cut from old punch cards  
and kept in a curious box  
with marbled paper covers.

Long enough for a whole lexicon  
of English words and phrases  
culled from Moscow News, circa 1979.  
The careful latin script  
evokes for me an earlier time

and prompts a nostalgic chill:  
pull out three yellowing pieces  
and learn how with 'goodwill'  
a 'bilateral agreement' might avoid  
'mutually assured destruction'

cold diplomacy for difficult times  
however politely phrased.  
But now in an open city you greet us, warmly,  
with kindly daily words  
which are entirely your own.

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*Derek, a former lecturer in English Literature, is the author of *The Foots and The Poets: Poetry and a Political Family* (Jarndyce , 2010). His poems have been published in several little magazines including *The Interpreter's House*. Derek and his wife Carol visited Perm in 2010.*

## Travelling to Perm

Part of my childhood was spent in the flatlands of East Anglia and, from an early age, I understood that the first higher ground to the east was the Urals, some 2000 miles as the crow flies and much further by land.

This image of the vast plains of central Europe was initially reinforced by visits to the Low Countries, northern Germany and onto Poland, but the picture was completed by travelling from Moscow to Perm, the first twenty four hours of what is surely the World's most exciting train journey. It gave me a sense of the vastness of Russia. After all, Moscow to Perm is about a sixth of the total journey to the Pacific and the train passes through endless, dense and flat birch forest with just the occasional town.

The railway reached Perm in 1878 and the extensions into Siberia began in the 1890s, initially single track which soon proved inadequate especially during the Russo- Japanese War of 1904 -05 when large numbers of troops needed to be quickly moved east. This led to an urgent upgrade to a more robust track, passing places and stronger bridges, developing ultimately into the modern electrified system of today. The biggest hurdle, apart from the extreme cold and building on permafrost, was the section around the southern tip of Lake Baikal. The early trains were carried across on ferries.

But how was Perm reached before the railway? To go back to the earliest records of travel in Russia, it is thought that the Scandinavian traders, who sparsely colonised Kievan Rus in the south towards the end of the first millennium, travelled by boat, dragging their boats over the watersheds. Even allowing for the flatness of the land, this seems an astonishing feat. There must have been considerable fluctuations in water levels from snow melt floods in spring to sand banks due to poor flow in the autumn. Marshland may only have been crossable when frozen and there must have been dangerous areas of white water. And how did they struggle upstream? The huge teams of the Volga boatmen who hauled boats by hand from the bank were in the distant future.

A glance at the map shows an extensive system of very large rivers with a mainly north- south alignment, which would have helped journeys going south – as to Kievan Rus - but been of less use if going east. However, the western branches of the Volga do ultimately join the Kama. By boat it would have been a protracted journey lasting many weeks.

Nonetheless Russia did gradually expand eastwards, initially, after the Mongols left in the mid fifteenth century, for reasons of security from Siberian tribes, and then later in order to exploit the natural resources – furs, salt and minerals.

The rights to the salt mines in the Perm region were first put in the hands of the powerful and entrepreneurial family of Novgorod merchants, the Stroganovs, who were given tax concessions to develop and colonise the Urals and land to the east by Ivan the Terrible in 1558. Some visitors to Perm were, like me, lucky enough to be taken north to Solya and Solikamsk where early salt works can be seen. In Solya, where excavations are ongoing, the eighteenth century "Russian Baroque" offices built by the Stroganovs beside one of the many tributaries of the Kama river have been superbly restored. This must have been an outpost of civilisation in a very wild and remote area populated by animist Komi with their Finno-Ugrian language. They remain a distinct ethnic group and can still be found in and around Perm today.

Perm city is said to have been founded around 1730 and it is a splendid site on a hill above the river. A



copper foundry in the area was established in 1723. Soon after – the date is given as 1763 – work began on the Sibirsky Trakt, a route passable by wheeled vehicles and sledges through the forests via Perm into Siberia. Apart from early settlers, a stream of exiles and criminals would later painfully wend their way on foot along this route during the nineteenth century, starting with the aristocratic Decembrists in 1825 and then increasing with later political upsets. Those who ended up working in the mines faced a 30 percent death rate. The flow slackened in the early twentieth century but then increased, but travelling now by train, in Stalinist times continuing until Perestroika in 1989 and the abolition of the gulags.

Although travel along the Trakt must have been slow and intensely uncomfortable, there is plenty of evidence that Perm was cultured and highly civilised well before the railway reached it. It was for example prosperous enough for the superb opera house to be built in 1870.

My visit to Perm was memorable in many ways and not least the train journey. I am not sure however, that I would want to do the full eight days to the Pacific; certainly not without a bath!

*Andrew Reekie*

### **Political Demonstrations in Perm**

*Two of our visitors from Perm State University, teachers in History and in Politics, have contributed to this commentary on the demonstrations which were held across Russia after the Elections to the Duma (Parliament) on 4<sup>th</sup> December. There were widespread allegations of electoral fraud, although the results themselves indicated that this was a real election insofar as the main party which supports Putin lost a large proportion of its vote. (Karen Hewitt)*

(1) Why were people protesting? This is a very complex question. Russian authorities didn't expect so powerful action and didn't know what to do. I think the biggest reason is a crisis in relations between government and society. People are tired of Putin's policy and Putin's rhetoric. People are no longer satisfied with mere 'stability', they want development, expansion of civil and political rights. The current situation, especially corruption, is associated with Putin and his party. A new generation of Russians - well-educated, intelligent young people, middle-class - was born. They receive information from the Internet, don't believe state television, they want to live in comfort and are ready to defend their rights. Specifically in Perm, many citizens disagree with the policy of our governor, especially in the cultural sphere, and believe that too much money is spent on obscure projects. But people can't influence the policies of regional authorities (governors are not elected), except to participate in rallies.

Now the authorities are trying to find a way out of this crisis. In mid-December Putin talked to people in a live broadcast. It became clear that he doesn't want to hear our demands. But Dmitry Medvedev proposed a number of initiatives to further develop the country's political system in his address to Federal Assembly. For example, it was announced the return of governors' elections (although by some complicated scheme). We hope this is only beginning of changes.

*Elizaveta Troitskaya*

(2) Previously I preferred to ignore all the stuff connected with Russian politics. Like many people of my age I didn't watch TV because I didn't agree with the authorities in Russia and didn't want to take part in our pseudo-democracy. But right now as a historian I'm happy to take part in this event which can turn Russian history. But I don't know yet to what direction it can turn it. It can be the same situation as in March of 1917 but it can lead to some other situation. Or it can change nothing. I don't know yet.

What I do know is that on the 11th December in Perm I tried to show my disagreement with the situation in Russia – for the first time actually. I know that many people don't agree with the method of demonstrations. But there were more than one thousand citizens at the demonstration in Perm. They were mostly young or middle-aged, well-educated and ready only for peaceful protest. As far as I know many of them were not interested in politics until those elections. What they saw at the elections was the total ignorance of their choice, the usage of administrative resource and unfaithful behaviour. I'm sure that unfortunately all those falsifications took part earlier but people didn't have so many phones with cameras and only on 4<sup>th</sup> December they managed to take all those pictures and videos. So for the first time in contemporary Russian history young people decided to show their attention to the power. Social networks played the main role in mobilizing people throughout Russia so it was Internet that helped to organize all those demonstrations. In all big Russian cities thousands of people demanded the re-elections but Putin and Medvedev aren't going to agree with the opposition. So we are going to have another demonstration on the 24th of December.



(Later) Yes, I did go to the second demonstration on 24<sup>th</sup> December. There were about 2000 people – nearly twice as many as two weeks earlier. But the atmosphere was very different. It was more formal with speeches about serious politics from people who were already in political positions. They represented different political parties. I think that is inevitable and necessary, but somehow it wasn't the same. In the earlier demonstration the atmosphere was more emotional and there were many more young people. In the second demonstration, most people were older. There were a lot of older Communist Party members; people like myself were less well represented.

*Darya Vershinina*

For pictures of the first Perm demonstration on 11<sup>th</sup> December see:  
<http://nk.perm.ru/news.php?year=2011&month=12&day=11>.