

PERM NEWS

The Newsletter of the Oxford Perm Association

June 2012

Annual Report of the Oxford Perm Association Chairman

Our committee

I've again reflected on how fortunate we've been to attract such a good committee, drawn from members who all so generously support the aims of the association. Committee members this year have delivered your exceptional newsletter, fed, hosted, driven and entertained Russian guests, and many very good ideas and contacts for visitors have come from our general membership. Thank you all.

Special projects, educational and professional exchanges, and support for Perm events and organizations

We had a superb visit from the Karavai balalaika quartet in April. We will all remember one or more of the concerts, probably with different favourites – for me it was sitting in a pub in Bletchington while Karavai jammed with local Morris men and amateur folk musicians, whom we could see were pretty scared by Karavai's virtuosity. But Karavai encouraged and charmed them into making it a real exchange and learning experience.

In July 2011 we were helping local young people to host the MESH International Youth Arts Festival at Pegasus, with participants coming from Perm and our other twin cities, from other European centres and from Gaza in Palestine. There was an excellent programme of work by each company separately, then a joint production in the Town Hall, which was a very special and moving event. The twelve Perm dancers in the Drive company were brilliant, artistically as well as socially: hard-working, positive, unfailingly helpful, and a huge asset to the festival.

We've been trying to set up a schools exchange after Councillor Cooke's visit to one enthusiastic Perm school. Nick Peters, the County Council international officer, took this on and it's begun to bear fruit. The Watlington School Partnership has had several successful video-conferences with partner schools in Perm and Watlington school, which is the hub of international activities for the whole partnership, is keen to develop a dedicated space for the video-conferencing link.

The Oxford group visit to Perm, and Perm State University's visit here, both led by Karen Hewitt, took place and, as in previous years, the Perm group were able to take part in the Remembrance Day ceremony in St Giles.

Our final major project in the year was the lawyers' visit in October. Ksenia Hewitt, who studied law as well as languages in Perm, and is now a law student here, was perfectly placed to co-ordinate it, and other Association members added contacts which made it a very good experience which we hope will go further. Ksenia's account was in our last newsletter.

Cultural and social activities for our members

The 2011 Association Garden Party in July was, as usual, a lovely way to spend a summer afternoon.

Members were alerted to an exhibition in Pushkin House in London, documenting an extraordinary theatre and photographic project in a Perm prison (reported in the last newsletter) and Sebastian Lister, the project's photographer, was a guest at the AGM.

Oxford International Links has enabled us to attend splendid events put on by other twinning associations, including the last concert of the Bonn-Leiden-Oxford choral pilgrimage, with singers and musicians from all the European cities performing Beethoven's Mass in C and John Rutter's Magnificat. All in all a very full cultural and social year.

Mari Prichard

The above is an abridged version of the report presented at the February AGM - ed.

Membership notices:

Subscriptions for 2012 are now past 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 at present receiving emails from the association and you have an email address please email the Membership Secretary Daniel Scharf at: pause.forthought@googlemail.com

Newsletter articles are always welcome. The submission deadline for the autumn issue is 15th Sept. 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 tel: 01993 813 215.

The web site for the Oxford Perm Association is now established at: www.oxfordperm-assoc.org. It contains a brief introduction to the city of Perm, the History of the Association completed earlier this year and important contact details plus links to related Oxford and Perm web sites. There is a section at www.oxfordperm-assoc.org/members-only which contains all issues of the Newsletter from June 2001 to the present. If members have any comments regarding the web site please contact David Roulston at: djrrouls@btinternet.com.

Forthcoming Perm Association Events

The Oxford Perm Association Summer Garden Party

Tuesday 17 July, 2012 From 5 pm to 8 pm at 6 Rawlinson Road, Oxford.

Do come and bring your friends to our Summer Supper Party. Wine and soft drinks will be provided but please bring a small platter of savoury or sweet finger food to share. This is a great opportunity to meet other people who are interested in Perm/Russia/ Russian culture and language etc.

Please email Ann Davis at annharvarddavis45@hotmail.com or telephone Karen Hewitt: 01865 515 635 to let her know if you can come and what you are bringing.

MESH at Pegasus Theatre

A new young dance group is coming from Perm, and performing at Pegasus Theatre, in a double bill with a company from Thailand, on: Wednesday, 25 July, 2012 4.30pm and 8.30 pm. This is part of MESH (*see Oxford Links Events below*). Details on www.pegasustheatre.org.uk/our-shows. Box office 01865 812150

Oxford Links Events

MESH - Oxford's annual international youth arts event taking place over 10 days from 19th to 29th July. 160 young people from the UK and around the world will be coming together to take part in workshops, performances and debates. Booking information on www.pegasustheatre.org. Box office 01865 812150

On Saturday, 28 July, 2012 at 7pm, at The Newman Rooms, Rose Place, St. Aldates, there will be a performance involving all the MESH groups, based on Aristophanes' play The Birds, first performed in Athens in 414 BC - a comic and political satire as relevant today as it was all those years ago. It will bring together a cast of 160 from Oxford and all the international visiting countries.

Oxford Leon Link

The Oxford Leon Association annual sponsored swim will be on Monday 2nd July at Hinksey Pool. No minimum - swim as few or as many lengths as you like. Funds are for water-based development projects in or near Leon, Oxford's twin town in Nicaragua. If you would like to swim help out or make a donation please contact oxfordleonlink@gmail.com

Oxford Leiden Link

In July, young Leiden dancers will return for the Mesh Festival at the Pegasus Theatre (*see above*).

Our annual meeting was held the day after the Link's 66th anniversary and we celebrated in traditional style with a cake and a robust rendering of Happy Birthday in both English and Dutch. We are delighted to report that one of our members, Don Deaney, has been declared Citizen of the Year in his home town of Witney for his charity work.

Oxford Perm Association committee and contact details

At the AGM on February 2012 the officers, and other members were elected to serve for the following year. At a subsequent committee meeting Rosalyn Roulston resigned as Secretary, but remains on the committee, and Ksenia Hewitt volunteered to take her place. In addition to Robin Carr (OIL rep) and Cynthia Styles, the contact details for those holding constitutional and other responsibilities, are listed below.

Oxford Perm Association contact details

Position	Name	telephone no.	Email address
Chairman	Mari Prichard	07768 908341	mari.prichard@hcarpenter.co.uk
Secretary	Ksenia Hewitt	07809685539	kсениya.a.petrova@googlegmail.com
Treasurer	Sue Gregory	01865 72298	sue@pear-tree-farm.co.uk
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Newsletter	David Roulston	01993 813215	djrouls@btinternet.com
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Events coordinator	Rosalyn Roulston	01993 813215	r.roulston@btinternet.com
Oxford City Twinning	Rachel Capell	01865 252537	rcapell@oxford.gov.uk

Perm Pie

One of the enduring results of my visit to Perm is a recipe for apple pie which has since come to be known in my family as Perm Pie because I have made it so many times since returning.

Lena and Sergei, our hosts in Perm, wanted to take us to the Central Market on Saturday morning and cook lunch for us before we left on the early afternoon train. Their timetable was, I thought, ambitious and so it proved. In addition two small children, as I am sure many of you know, are enough to disrupt even the most carefully planned schedule. This indeed happened and we found ourselves an hour before we were due to leave sitting in the kitchen while Lena cooked demonically. The plan was to have home made vegetable soup using vegetables from Lena's mother's dacha together with vegetables bought from the market. This was to be followed by the piece de resistance - Lena's Apple Pie.

The soup was delicious but time was running out. Torn between the need to get to the station on time and eat the apple pie, the station inevitably won. We left reluctantly, enveloped by the wonderful aroma of the baking pie. The final irony was that the train was late so we could have stayed and finished the meal. However I had watched Lena and Sergei preparing the recipe and I was determined to write to Lena afterwards to confirm quantities.

The recipe is incredibly successful and quite unlike any apple pie I have ever tasted. Friends and family agree. Try it and see!

LENA'S APPLE PIE

- Cover the bottom of a pie dish with apples cut into chunks. I use an oblong dish 20 x 24 x 6 cm. which takes about 2 to 3 Bramleys. I'm sure other kinds of apples would be just as good.
- Meanwhile whip 1 cup of caster sugar with 3 eggs until thick and pale coloured.
- Fold in 1 cup of flour. I have used self raising and plain - both seem to work! You can add some mixed spice or ginger or whatever you fancy to the flour or scatter on the apples.
- Pour mixture over apples and bake at Gas 4 for 45 minutes in the middle of the oven.

That's it - incredibly simple. I have tried all kinds of combinations of fruit - apples, rhubarb, (together or separately) rhubarb with raspberries, apples with pears. All good. The crust has a wonderful meringue-like texture which, in my experience of apple pies and Eve's puddings, is unique.

Judy Palmer

ed: with icing sugar added!



Salt (СОЛЬ)

This is a shortened version of the talk given by Ivan Kolpakov to the Perm Association at the AGM in February 2012, submitted at our request

I come from Perm. After several years in journalism in the best and liveliest print media in the city, I decided to found 'Salt' – a new kind of web newspaper.

My idea was to write not from Moscow but from *Russia*. Moscow people (journalists, media bosses, and other influential people) always think in Moscow terms. They believe that 'provincial places' are dull, inward-looking, and need only the reflections from Moscow.

We wanted to show that was not true. Most people in Russia live outside the capital and outside St Petersburg. Many of them are well-educated and ready to read and think about national affairs.

So why Perm?

Because in many ways it is a typical provincial city – in its demography, economy, political situation etc. Because it is an untypical city – very ambitious, progressive in its cultural ideas, eager to experiment and with potentially sympathetic financial backers. And third thing – just because of chance. Perm is my city.

For this experiment I had to find good journalists. Most of our journalists came from Perm, but we had to avoid those who had spent their lives working on provincial papers because such journalists never lift their heads to look beyond their city and their region. We also invited a couple of journalists from Moscow. We had long discussions about our ideology and our plans. And it is important for my story that we all agreed on this ideology.

We proposed to publish different kinds of articles. Some would be directly about Perm – its ballet and arts, some political, business, social problems which would interest readers beyond Perm. Others would be articles of federal Russian significance, using new technologies and fresh approaches.

What do I mean by 'new technologies'?

I don't mean simply new software technical developments although of course we had to keep up with them. I mean the different ways that people use those technologies. An example everyone knows – how Twitter now brings us the first information about disasters, political violence, celebrity secrets. But we also had to understand that Twitter cannot produce serious journalism because one needs facts, selection, checking, analysis.

Fresh approaches: In Russia, as in other countries, many problems and issues are discussed in terms which always lead to a stalemate.

One for you in Britain is:

'Bankers have huge salaries and huge bonuses. This is wrong when the average citizen is now getting less money than he was and many people are out-of-work.'

"If you don't pay bankers huge salaries and huge bonuses they will leave Britain and take their business overseas. We will lose their expertise and the money we collect from them in tax."

This argument goes on and on.

In Russia we have a similar discussion for example about the Kurile Islands in the Pacific Ocean which once belonged to Japan and now belong to Russia. Japan wants them back. Russia won't give them back. Everyone

gets bored with the discussion going nowhere. But we found through internet a Japanese observer who has a fresh and unexpected view of the problem. Also we spoke with Russian fans of Japanese culture. And we got extraordinary views and thoughts. The story comes back to life.

We started publishing at the beginning of 2010 and closed at the end of 2011.

So although we published articles which were widely read and unusual in the Russian press, we only survived for 2 years.

Why?

Because some of what we wrote upset the Kremlin administration.

Especially interviews with opposition leaders and other controversial figures such as: Eduard Limonov (a left-radical politician of rather extreme views), anonymous football leaders who fought with immigrants, Oleg Kashin (journalist who was beaten up and almost killed). [This is like interviewing a Muslim cleric who insists on Sharia law in Britain; some BNP supporters, and a notable investigative journalist who has discovered links between government ministers and shady businessmen. i.e. upsetting almost everybody]

We wanted to hear the voices of people whose views are not acceptable to the Kremlin.

From spring 2011 when I published such an article, I was phoned first by the high-ranking Perm bureaucrat – and then by Kremlin spokesmen. It became quite regular. They asked me to remove the offending article. I said ‘I can’t’ and ‘I won’t.’

Then our financial sponsors decided to withdraw their support. We knew that pressure was being put on them because they explained this themselves.

What could we do?

We didn’t stop publishing articles which offended the Kremlin – indeed we increased them *because our articles were attracting attention as something new*.

The investors could not get us to change our editorial principles. Instead I told them we would have to close 'Salt'. This put them in a difficult position. They did not want us to go on publishing articles which upset the Kremlin, but neither did they want to close us down because that would be against the Kremlin strategy.

As far the media is concerned the Kremlin prefers to manipulate rather than to suppress. If they have to deal with a subversive newspaper, they prefer some arrangement in which a new editor is put in place who is more compliant. Or they produce articles from the Kremlin which should be published in this newspaper. So each bit of the media is slowly brought into line.

If 'Salt' was closed down – that would be evidence of censorship and suppression which is not their strategy. So this was the dilemma for our investors. The Kremlin was telling them to make us change the policy of the paper. But that was impossible because all the journalists were committed to this experiment. They could not just replace me. Everyone would go. So for many months there were discussions with our investors – who are a mixture of Perm businessmen, and quite decent as far as they can be. They kept wanting a compromise, including selling part of the shares to a Kremlin official.

But we said ‘No. We have not broken the law. We have kept our journalist ethics. We are providing a news service for an increasing number of readers and showing that our experiment is a success. And we will not change our editorial policy.’

So eventually our investors had to agree that 'Salt' should be closed down. And now the experiment is ended.

Ivan Kolpakov

Presidential Election: Putin Again

I have recently returned from a three-month winter sojourn in Perm, during which I had the happy assignment of teaching English, learning Russian and generally enjoying the famous hospitality of the country. The duration of my stay meant that I was in the country when the Presidential election took place on 4th March. As a student of Russian history and politics, I was enthused at the opportunity to witness such an event at first hand. As the date approached I eagerly sought to nudge, prod and lever conversations in the direction of the forthcoming *vuibari*. It has to be said that this enthusiasm marked me out from the majority of staff and students at Perm State University. Most seemed to anticipate the forthcoming ballot with all the enthusiasm normally reserved for a dentist's appointment; expecting a dull, inevitable and likely painful experience. Perhaps this shouldn't have been surprising; the result – a comfortable victory for Vladimir Putin – was hardly in doubt.

Most of those at the university with whom I discussed the election were happy enough to let me know that they wouldn't be voting for Putin. They tended to be more reticent in revealing who they *would* vote for – the general impression I had was that they planned either to spoil their ballot paper, to plump for one of the other candidates in an 'anyone but Putin' gesture, or simply not to vote at all (possibly with the intention of attending a rally or demonstration in the aftermath of the election). Again, this was not particularly surprising; university students and tertiary educators are not exactly Putin's key demographic.

Their complaints were by and large along the following lines: they saw Putin and *Edinaya Rossiya* as being both responsible for, and symbolic of, the widespread corruption that blights Russian society. They saw talk of reform and anti-corruption schemes as empty rhetoric spouted by a highly centralised political hierarchy, which in reality is determined only to continue serving its own narrow interests. Such grievances chime more broadly with those of the burgeoning urban middle classes. These are the people who have reaped the economic gains of Putin's system, but are increasingly looking towards a more open democratic future, free of that system's constraints. Also notable was the problem of a perceived inertia in the political life of the country: the choreographed handover of the presidency, from Putin to Medvedev and back again, means that the 'Putin administration' has already been in power for twelve years, with the prospect of another dozen to come. The 'bald-hairy' pattern has loosely held in Russian politics for a long while now, with the country alternating between 'bald' and 'hairy' leaders since the accession of Nicholas I in 1825. This time however, Russia would be again be welcoming the glabrous dome of Putin rather than the sparkling pate of a new official. It is not only western commentators who are making analogies between the current era and the period known as *zastoi* (stagnation) under Brezhnev in the 1960s, 70s and early 80s.

By late Sunday the result was fairly clear, on Monday it was officially confirmed: six more years for Mr. Putin. Much was made in the western press about supposedly egregious levels of malpractice during the ballot, though my own feeling was that this was somewhat overstated. With none of the other candidates posing a serious challenge; and with extra scrutiny surrounding the vote after the debacle of the December elections; Putin had more to lose than to gain by engaging in blatant electoral fraud. For what it's worth, during my own rambles along *Ulitsa Lenina* on Sunday I saw no sign of voters being bussed from polling station to polling station, as was being reported in some parts of the country. One of my students, a formidable devotee of the hard left, spent her whole Sunday assiduously working as an observer, on the look out for ballot-stuffing, intimidation, repeat-voting and the like. When I asked her about the experience the following day, she somewhat dispiritedly told me that she had witnessed no such irregularities. I got the feeling that she would have preferred to have been party to massive fraud, or had a confrontation with a group of state-sponsored

cronies, rather than simply observing an orderly trudge of her fellow Permians, sixty-odd per cent of whom were casting their votes for Putin.

In Britain we are used to elections ushering in new political eras. This most recent Russian Presidential election represents more of a stage in a process than the beginning of anything discernibly novel. Opposition to Putin and United Russia has been growing steadily since last December, but in the election there were no candidates who represented this nascent movement. On the ballot paper one did not find the names of Alexey Navalny or Evgenia Chirikova, but instead the familiar ones of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and Gennady Zyuganov – candidates which for the Kremlin have long been controllable repositories for the votes of the very right-wing and the very old respectively. In an election where the choice was essentially between voting for Putin and casting a protest vote, it is telling that the only candidate not to have stood in a presidential campaign before – billionaire businessman Mikhail Prokhorov – polled far better than expected.



It will be fascinating to see how the next year or so plays out in Russia. Putin is back, but his aura of invincibility has gone. The expanding, internet-using middle classes are increasingly organising to demand an end to ‘managed democracy’, as well as a concerted effort to curb corruption (something which Medvedev promised but did little to fulfil). However there is every chance that a weakened Putin will be more dependent on business and bureaucratic elites, and therefore less inclined to rock the boat in these respects. The economy is also a concern. In his campaign, Putin promised an ambitious programme of social spending that he can ill afford if the economy continues to grow only at its current modest rate. Overdependence on energy means that Russia remains susceptible to a sudden drop in oil prices. Most intriguing of all will be to see exactly how the growing current of political opposition manifests itself. At the moment there is no ‘government in waiting’, so to speak, and the leading opposition figures remain disunited and outside of official politics. Over the next few months and years this may well change. Putin has built his reputation as the guarantor of stability. Whether such stability will endure throughout his third term as president is looking increasingly questionable.



Tom Brothwell

Ed note: Tom (MPhil Russian & East European Studies, St. Antony's College, Oxford) has just returned from a winter teaching in Perm hence the inclusion of his seasonal Perm photographs.