

# PERM NEWS

The newsletter of the Perm Association

June 2005

## **Perm International Festival of Snow and Ice**

### Background

*Produced with OOMF!* was awarded a grant from the Perm Association and given assistance from the Perm City Administration to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Snow and Ice in Perm as part of a cultural research trip.



The cultural research trip was initiated by *Produced with OOMF!*, an Oxford based not for profit art events company, to explore potential cultural collaborations between Perm and Oxford based artists. As part of a year-long Oxford-wide cultural programme called Evolving City (coordinated through Oxford Inspires), *Produced with OOMF!* has been commissioned to create a wintry environment called the Winter Garden that will encompass ice and snow. The Winter Garden will take place in central Oxford in December 2005.

We were keen to attend the festival as it linked to our themes of ice and snow, and as Perm is a twin city there was also a strong Oxford connection. As project manager I was sent to the festival to meet artists and organisers with a view to bringing Perm ice sculptors to Oxford to work alongside Oxford artists to create ice sculptures for the Winter Garden. Within my freelance capacity I was asked by the Perm Administration to bring information regarding London based events that I have links with such as the Coin Street Festival and the Mayor's Thames Festival.

We approached May Wylie at the twinning scheme in September 2004 and proposed a visit to the festival. This proposal was forwarded to the Perm Association and resulted in us being awarded £100 per person towards the cost of flights for up to two people. In addition the Perm Association put us in contact with the Perm City Administration Foreign Relations Department, who coordinated the itinerary for the trip and hosted me.

Having the support of the twinning scheme and of the Perm City Administration was central to the trip's success. As Russia was a new destination for both my colleagues and me, it was useful to have contacts that were able to advise on travel arrangements and visas and to construct a useful and varied itinerary.

The communication between the twinning scheme and the Perm Administration was extremely efficient. As the representative from *Produced With OOMF!* attending the festival, I was put in contact with Tanya Grigorieva and Natalia Nefedova from the Foreign Relations Department who coordinated my stay in Perm. During the actual visit Natalia Nefedova was my host.

The key aims of the research trip were to:

- Gain an insight into the festival and learn more about Perm.
- Develop a relationship with the Perm Administration, with a view to future collaborations with Ice Sculptors from Perm as well as exploring wider cultural collaborations between Perm and Oxford.
- Meet with sculptors and learn more about the processes and techniques used.

A number of meetings were set up for me including a meeting with the Director of Gorky Park (festival location), the Commissioner for Culture, Youth and Sport and Yuri Lapshin (Perm's best known artist and one of the founders of the festival).

In addition to attending meetings I was taken on a number of excursions around the city by Natalia and was able to enjoy the hospitality laid on by the City Administration for the sculptors that included a visit to a specially created Ice Café and Perm's world renowned ballet.

## Working together with Perm

### Genesis

Some years ago a Foreign Office official was trying to interest a hardened old Urals politician in British projects in Russia. His audience was bored. Then he spoke of the Perm-Oxford project. The cynical politician came to life. "That's very good!" he said. "You helped that? Tell me more." And he started to listen.

Fifteen years ago when the Perm region opened to foreigners Karen Hewitt went there with her proposal for academic exchanges with Oxford University. A year later, building on her work, in 1990 the Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action offered to work alongside Perm voluntary and social work organisations to bring together and exchange the concepts and practice of what has come to be known as "good governance".

In November 1990 Liz Brighthouse (then Director of OCVA) and I were invited to Perm to discuss possible co-operation. We were welcomed off the Kama train into a dark winter evening by our hosts: the newly legal Regional Society of Disabled People. That same evening we sat with them planning how to bring examples of voluntary organisation practice to Perm, and to take members of their organisations to Oxford to see these ideas at work. We felt like revolutionaries!

Both sides had much to learn. This was never a one way exchange of ideas. We all learnt from each other. After meetings at the city hall with the official non-government organisations and the Mayor, and visits around the city (then virtually without traffic) with interpreters from Perm University, we had a memorable evening at the ballet and signed a "letter of intent" - a plan for future exchanges - and came back to Oxford.

The Society of Disabled People wrote to say that the visit had confirmed their belief that there should be equality between disabled people and able bodied - a belief that the Perm Association might like to consider for future programmes ...

Back in Oxford we had to find the money ... We learned early how to make the sort of funding applications with which many more people are now familiar.

### Who came? Who went?

Looking back at the records, it was an amazing programme. In March 1991 the first group came to Oxford. They included the chair of the Disabled Society, Stanislav Pastukov, (hero of an industrial fire in which he lost both legs - now dead, and one of the finest men I have ever met), the Vice-Chair of the Regional Council, the chief officers of the Red Cross and the Deaf Society, the Mayor of Kungur, a minister of the Orthodox church, and an interpreter (who came on holiday as a friend to Oxford this summer). It was a team put together by the Disabled Society itself. It was the first time a disabled person from Perm had been given an exit visa. We laid on a complex programme; students from the Russian department were enthusiastic and hard working volunteer interpreters. At the end we signed our next "letter of intent" - an excellent Russian idea for ensuring continuity of a friendship.

Over the next years the exchange programme grew and grew. Oxfordshire people went to Perm to talk about their work; Perm people came to see and experience voluntary work and official health and social service provision in Oxfordshire. Perm put ideas into action. Following the example of PHAB (the Physically Handicapped Able Bodied clubs) disabled children joined in the activities of the Perm Children's Palace for the first time - as they still do. One of them became the champion chess player. Guided by Oxford's Ormerod School. Perm set up its first nursery for disabled children. On one of our visits we were proud to see the nursery being shown off to Mrs Yeltsin. A Perm police officer came to look at community policing; a Thames Valley Chief Superintendent and a probation officer went to discuss working with Perm young offenders and with drug addicts. There were exchanges between blind societies and deaf societies, and housing managers and, very successfully, occupational therapists and day centres for the elderly managers. One of the greatest successes was work between Sobell House and the Perm hospice movement - work which still continues. Through our introduction, the Perm Pedagogical University cooperated on two major EU funded projects

with Oxford University's Education Department. Social work training began in Perm guided by staff from Ruskin College.

Perm was receptive; their people highly intelligent and perceptive. Ideas were taken back, adapted and often put successfully in place. We introduced Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) to Perm and many teachers, social workers and others who served there. The work extended to official environmental work at a regional level. One year there was a programme entitled "Democracy at Work" in which we looked together at expectations of government and governance. The Perm Region and Oxfordshire County Council were twinned in 1994; in 1995 a friendship link was established between the two cities, and this became an official twinning in 2001.

Perm as we first knew it was facing poverty, raging inflation and deprivation brought about by the rapid turn-around demanded from the West for "a market economy". In 1990 the city council had one mini-bus which they generously put at our disposal. There was little to buy in the main department store apart from plasticine and pomegranates. When new stock – like, for example, cups and saucers - came in, an eager queue formed and flowed out of the door. Our university inter-

preters feared that they would not be able to afford essential winter boots for their children. In 1992 our first interpreter wrote to me: "This winter we have severe problems in food supply, but we all hope for the best".

And yet the people of Perm were always generous and eager to share. Liz Brighthouse summed it up on our return in November 1990: "This was the very first visit of its kind to Russia. We could never have expected to experience so much kindness or to have such feelings of how valuable Perm's links with Oxfordshire might be for both of us ..."

Looking back at the records of the activities, it was, as I have said, an amazing project. The greatest praise came from a senior regional officer at the 10th anniversary celebration. He said, in public, "What Perm knows of democracy we have learnt in Oxford and Oxfordshire."

*Deborah Manley*

*Editor's note.*

*Deborah Manley played a pivotal role in the early stages of the links with Perm city and region, and it is good for those of us whose involvement is of more recent date to understand the remarkable genesis of the Oxford-Perm links.*

## **Auction of Promises**

All members, friends and acquaintances are invited to this grand fun- and fund-raising event at Oxford Town Hall on Saturday 8 July. Outline programme as follows.

- 7.00 - 8.00pm: vodka tasting and refreshments
- 8.00 - 8.45pm: auction of promises
- 8.45 - 9.15pm: vodka, bar, quiz
- 9.15 - 9.45pm: music

This promises to be a convivial evening, so please book tickets with May Wylie, on the enclosed form. And, if you can offer a promise of a service - such as an hour or two's gardening, or a taxi service to an airport, or cooking for a dinner party - please let Karen Hewitt know by 1 July.

## **Perm Guide**

The draft guide now runs to over 40 pages. Anyone visiting Perm is welcome to request a copy from Richard Sills (e-mail richardsills@btinternet.com or telephone 01865 721644) - and is invited to suggest additions or amendments, and to contribute photographs.

## About the Festival

The vast majority of my trip was spent in Gorky Park at the festival to see the sculptors at work. I was provided with a translator from the University.

The festival opened on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February with a press conference and official launch in Gorky Park (where the festival was held) and closed on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February. Each year the festival is held in Gorky Park, a focal point for the city with a wide programme of events and activities throughout the year.



This year was the 11<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Snow and Ice. There were fewer foreign teams present than usual, as many had attended the year before to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the festival. In total there were 4 international teams; Dutch, Italian, American and French. There was also an American team competing in the championship category. Teams competing in the ice category were all from Russia.

Each category was situated in designated areas within the central area of the park. Near to the artists' areas there were a number of pre-made ice slides for children and adults and ready-made sculptures.

Each team was allocated a block of snow/ice through a ballot that was held during the press conference at the Palace of Culture. Snow blocks were prepared many weeks in advance and created by compressing tons of snow into crates. Ice sculptors were allocated 20 blocks of ice each. All competitors had to provide their own tools and each team was allocated a parks worker to assist with removal of their unwanted snow/ice.

Power tools were only permitted for those working in ice. Ice sculptors used a range of tools including irons, chain saws, manual saws and chisels. Snow sculptors used spades, hacksaws and trowels. Competitors were allowed to start sculpting on the Tuesday from 2 pm and had to finish by 12 noon on the Saturday, giving them only three full days to sculpt. The panel, to a range of criteria including technical complexity and concept, assessed each entry.

In order to enter the competition each team had to submit plans to the panel for consideration. If they were accepted they had to find their own funding to attend the festival. The Administration subsidised accommodation and food, provided a translator and transport within the city, as well as providing entertainment in the evenings.

All the foreign teams had paid to attend the festival from their own personal funds. It is a testament to the organisers and to Perm that a number of the teams attend every year. The Dutch team have taken part nearly every year, one of the team members even paid for a colleague to cover his teaching timetable to attend the festival. It is easy to understand why the teams are eager to return, as the festival is a unique experience and has a wonderful atmosphere. All the international teams were made up of individuals who although mainly working in the Creative Industries are not full time practising artists and do this in addition to their everyday lives. Most teams spend months refining their designs, coming up with a concept and organising both the funds and time off work to attend.



It was fantastic to witness first hand so much skill, creativity and generosity among all the teams regardless of nationality. For example the Italian team were without most of their tools for the majority of the festival; all the other teams rallied round and lent them equipment so they could take part. This was typical of the attitude of the competitors, as although everyone was keen to do as well as they could one did not sense rivalry and ill feeling amongst the teams. There was a very social and good-natured feel to the festival, with all the teams sharing ideas, techniques and general life philosophy.

Thirty teams from all over Russia and abroad took part in the XI Snow and Ice Sculpture Festival and in the 1st All-Russian Snow and Ice Sculpture Championship.

The results of the XI International Snow and Sculpture Festival were:

#### **SNOW nomination**

1st prize – “Where are You, My Cinderella?” - Tim Allen (Louisville, USA) and Vadim Skrylnikov (Perm, Russia)

2nd prize – “The Differential” - Michel Boisgerault, Benoit Duboc, Florent Senay (France)

3rd prize – “A Cactus in Winter Desert” – Gianmario Bonfadini, Nadia Braitto, Luca Bonetti (Italy)

#### **ICE nomination**

1st place – “The Bears Riding a Bike” - Alexander Petrov (Perm, Russia)

2nd place – “The Beginning of Happiness” – Konstantin Selskikh (Arkhangelsk, Russia)

3rd place – “A Source” – Ilya Kolchanov (St Petersburg, Russia)

In the 1st All-Russian Championship the first prize in the SNOW category went to a team from Izhevsk – Dmitry Postnikov and Alexander Shklyayev. The champions of Russia in ICE sculpting are Alexander Zaitsev and Mikhail Kucheryavykh from Krasnoyarsk.

#### Outcomes of the visit

During a meeting with the Commissioner for Culture, Youth and Sport it was agreed that I would on my return speak to the Board of Trustees of *Produced with OOMF!* and the Oxford International Officer (May Wylie), to investigate the possibility of a Perm team of ice sculptors coming to Oxford to sculpt as part of the Winter Garden project. To date the twinning scheme has confirmed that they are able to provide translators and home hosting for the team. *Produced with OOMF!* are currently waiting until



the lead designer for the project is on board before taking discussions forward. We anticipate that the designer should be in post by the end of April. We are very keen to have a Perm team come to Oxford to collaborate on the Winter Garden and are currently looking into potential funding for this aspect of the project.

Following my trip I contacted Adrian Evans, the Festival Director of the Coin Street Festival and the Mayor’s Thames Festival, both located in London. During my meeting with the commissioner it became evident that the City Administration were eager to develop links not only in Oxford but also in London. The high profile nature of the Mayor’s Thames Festival particularly appealed to the Commissioner. The Mayor’s Thames Festival is currently in communication with the City Administration and is seeking to do a collaborative project in September 2006. This is a direct result of my visit to Perm.

#### A final note

We cannot thank the Oxford twinning scheme and Perm Link Association enough for all their generous support that enabled this trip to take place. In particular we would like to thank May Wylie who was extremely generous with her time and was always patiently at the end of the phone to deal with queries and offer her advice. In addition we have to thank the Perm City Administration who showed such great hospitality throughout. In particular the Foreign Relations Department (Tanya Grigorieva and Natalia Nefedova), were absolutely fantastic in coordinating the visit and ensuring my stay was as pleasant as possible. I cannot recommend a visit to Perm and the festival highly enough and all of us at *Produced with OOMF!* are looking forward to seeing our partnership with the Perm City Administration develop.



*Catherine Boyd, Project Manager for Produced with OOMF! and attendee of the festival*

## Recent events

### Ice Sculpture Festival

Catherine Boyd visited the Ice Sculpture Festival in Perm in February, with a view to advising Oxford on a winter festival to be held in December 2005.

### Perm Hospice

The Perm Association made a donation of £250 to the Perm Hospice for the purchase of equipment for the patients.

### Architectural conservation

Nikolai Belov from Perm visited Oxford on a conservation exchange in May 2005, as a guest of the Perm Association.

### Academic visitors

Mikhail Lyukanov, historian, and Elena Bazhenova, linguist, visited Oxford in May and June for research purposes.

## Forthcoming events

### City Council visit

A group of city councillors from Perm plan to visit Oxford in June-July 2005, to shadow the work of their Oxford city counterparts. Their visit, to mark the tenth anniversary of friendship links between the two cities, will include the naming of Perm Street. The visit is timed to coincide with a civic service in Christchurch, to celebrate 60 years of peace in Europe, in line with national celebrations.

### Fund-raising function

We plan to hold a fund-raising function on Friday 8 July 2005, to coincide with the visit by the Perm city councillors. There will be vodka tasting, light refreshments, together with a bar, a quiz and an auction of promises. Offers of "promises" should reach Karen Hewitt no later than 1 July. Tickets for the event at £8 per head are available from May Wylie at the Town Hall.

### University exchange

A group from Oxford will visit Perm in September as part of the annual exchange programme with Perm State University. There is still one vacancy, so anyone interested should contact Karen Hewitt as soon as possible.

### 10th anniversary

This year is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Perm link, and there are to be performances in Perm by all the groups that have visited Oxford. May Wylie is going to Perm as guest of honour in September, and the group visiting Perm as guests of Perm State University will also represent Oxford.

### Bernstein Mass

See item under "OIL", below.

### Hockey

Planning has begun for a group of women hockey players from Perm to visit Oxford in 2006.

## Oxford International Links

OIL held an Irish Celebration Evening, to raise funds for Oxford's link activities, at St Aldate's Church Hall on Friday 11 March.

There were stalls promoting each of the international links at the meeting of Annual Council at the Town Hall in May.

Plans are well advanced for an international performance of Bernstein's Mass in late October 2005. This will involve the East Oxford Community Choir, singers and musicians from all the twin towns and 24 dancers - 8 from Perm and 16 from Oxford. In June, John Lubbock, who will direct the work, will visit Leiden and Mel Holdershaw will visit Bonn, to rehearse with the local groups. Cecilia McFarland will visit Perm in September to work with the Perm dancers prior to their visit.

Mayors from the various twin towns will visit Oxford in July, and attend a service in Christchurch to celebrate 60 years of peace in Europe.



## News of other links

### Bonn

Over 260 guests from Bonn visited Oxford for Bonn week in the last week of May. The programme included art exhibitions, a barn dance, a civic parade, church service and Lord Mayor's reception, a visit to the Botanic Gardens, a youth football tournament, youth theatre performances and gospel choir performances, a Burgerfest in Gloucester Green and the Lord Mayor's Parade.

Following Oxford School's exchange visit to Bonn in December, a group from Bonn made a return visit in May.

### Grenoble

The choral group Interlude visited Oxford in May 2005, as part of their exchange link with East Oxford Community Choir. The folk dance group Rigodons et Traditions from Grenoble visited Oxford at the same time. Also in May, Norbert Pignol an accordianist from Grenoble came to Oxford to take part in the festival of folk music.

The ARK T project in Cowley will send a rock band to Grenoble to take part in a music festival from 15 to 22 June.

### Leiden

Link members visited Leiden in early May, to coincide with Dutch Remembrance Day.

Following the successful visit to Bonn, a youth group from Barton and Wood Farm visited Leiden in mid-April.

A delegation from Leiden will visit Oxford in November for the annual Remembrance Day commemoration.

### Leon

The Nicaraguan Day on 25 February raised over £600.

The annual Misa Campesina (Nicaraguan Peasant Mass), held on Sunday 6 March at Blackfriars, raised over £70.

On 16 September, Quentin Hayes will again give a recital in aid of the Leon link. Tickets at £15 from May Wylie at the Town Hall.

### **Perm Association contact details**

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### **Note from the Membership Secretary**

It would be appreciated if all members with email could send their email address to me at: djrouls@aol.com This will help in maintaining communications about events where it is not always possible or convenient to use the post. All paid up members should receive a membership card with this issue of the Newsletter. If you have not received one and have paid your £8 subscription, please contact me at 01993 813215 so that our records can be corrected. Thank you for your cooperation.

*David Roulston, Membership Secretary.*

## Maslennitsa

This year spring came to Perm very late: snow started to melt only in the first week of April. Meanwhile the “official” farewell to winter took place all over Russia on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March. I mean the so called Maslennitsa (or Shrovetide) celebrations – an ancient tradition that came out of paganism and managed to become a part of Christian and modern popular culture to some extent. According to Russian traditions these celebrations last for the whole week – the last one before Lent. Meat is already forbidden, but fish, eggs, milk products and butter are still allowed (by the way, the name “Maslennitsa” is a derivative of “maslo” – either “butter” or “oil”). So traditionally it was a week of having very hearty meals – really necessary before seven weeks of fasting. The main course and one of the symbols of the Maslennitsa are (as in England) pancakes with very different fillings: sour cream, caviar, mushrooms, honey, jam... Nowadays the eating of pancakes (home-made or in cafes) is actually the only thing that most people really follow at Maslennitsa.

Meanwhile every day of this week traditionally has its own rituals and name connected with them (not all names are translatable, unfortunately). Monday is called Meeting. On Tuesday it was a tradition for young men to invite young women for a walk, to flirt. On Wednesday a son-in-law with a wife went to his mother-in-law to eat pancakes. He could come with a rather big company of friends and – what’s interesting – there was a ritual when mother-in-law poured “maslo” upon his head (one of the versions – to make him be tender to his wife). From Thursday really mass celebrations started, more and more people went outdoors, took part in fairs and other amusements: in riding down snow slopes or specially built ice hills or in sleighs with horses, in fist fights and so on. All this – with songs, round dances and games. On Friday it was already a son-in-law who had to treat parents-in-law with pancakes at his house (no pouring of maslo in this case). On Saturday young women invited their unmarried female friends.

Sunday was a real culmination of the whole week, a day when the inhabitants of a village became an integral whole at the climax of the festival. This day has a few names: Sunday of forgiveness (connected with a tradition to apologize to and forgive everyone, including dead people at cemeteries), “send-off” and other names. The central event of this day was a burning of a Maslennitsa straw figure, which symbolized a farewell to winter. Before this the figure (usually dressed in female clothes) “travelled” around a village escorted by a whole procession. The process of burning was accompanied with jokes, mocking at Maslennitsa and special incantations: “Good-bye, Maslennitsa, come next year!”, “Go away, send us spring!” And the last ritual for Sunday and for the whole festive week was going to a bath house – to become pure not only spiritually but also physically before Lent.

Of course, all this was only a part of the customs devoted to Maslennitsa. And as I have already mentioned very few of them are really followed nowadays. However, Maslennitsa is a ritual that it is still possible to take part in. For example, inhabitants and guests of Perm can do it in the ethnographical open-air museum at Khokhlovka. Every year on the Sunday of forgiveness thousands of people come there to take part in mass celebrations. Pancakes, traditional amusements and a lot of fun are waiting for them. Those interested in folk culture – you should be in those thousands!



*Olga Kirianova*