

PERM NEWS

The Newsletter of the Oxford Perm Association

June 2011

Re-tracing the steps of the Royal Navy on the Kama River

Readers may recall an article “The Royal Navy - in Perm” (pdf version available) in the January 2005 Newsletter describing the exploits of Captain Thomas Jameson of the Royal Marines in 1919, assisting the White Russians on the Kama River. The author of that article, your present editor, was astonished to receive some months ago a phone call from Captain Jameson’s grandson Alastair Grant. After several interesting exchanges by phone and email he was persuaded to write the following article. *Ed*

In April 2011 I returned from a two week trip to Russia with a friend, Martin Graham, to retrace the footsteps of my Grandfather, Tom Jameson. I used to live with him when I was a teenager whilst my parents were posted overseas. We all served in the Royal Marines. He was a good story teller. One of his stories was about his time in Russia in 1919 at the height of the Civil War. The story revolved around two key themes: A long journey from Vladivostok to Perm and secondly a series of battles fought on the mighty Kama



River as part of a flotilla of White Russian tugboats and barges based in Perm. When my Grandfather died, in 1986, I inherited all his documents including his written account. Last year, with encouragement from friends I made the decision to take the same journey. I quickly discovered that the local travel agency knew all about the Trans Siberian railway but once off the standard tourist route they knew little. In my searches on Internet I discovered that there was a link between Oxford and Perm and I was quickly in contact with Karen Hewitt. She in turn put me in touch with Tatiana Grigorieva (*see photo*). This link proved to be very helpful in my planning and later when we arrived in Perm. We are so grateful to them.

We set off in mid April to Vladivostok via Moscow. Our first big challenge was to get to the rail head in Vladivostok from the local airport. A distance of 50 kilometres. Our Russian only stretched to understanding the alphabet and not much more and the locals had a similar problem in English but we found the bus and arrived at the railhead in good time. Tom Jameson had arrived in a British naval cruiser, HMS Kent, in January 1919 in the depths of winter. The political situation was confused and many nations had an interest, including the Americans, Japanese, and French. In addition there were many Czechs in Siberia at the time. In 1919 Admiral Kolchak, short of artillery, asked the British if they could assist. Tom Jameson and his marines volunteered to take a 6 inch gun from their ship, HMS Kent, and some smaller 12

Pounders.

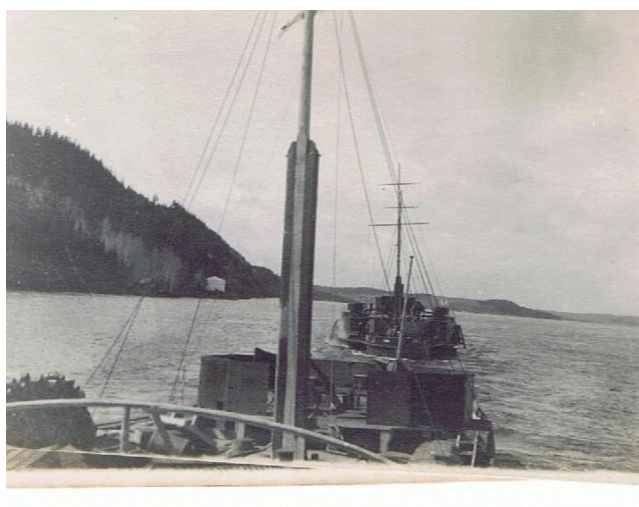
They set off towing the 6-inch gun behind the Siberian Express. We set off towing our wheelie cases to a comfortable sleeper cabin. We took four days to reach Omsk and found the journey restful and fascinating. It certainly gave us a sense of the scale of this enormous country. We arrived at Omsk on Easter Saturday and were met by relatives of Tatiana Grigorieva. How lucky we were! They were so kind as they showed us the sights of Omsk. A superb Fine Art Museum and an excellent concert were the highlights of the day but the main event was to attend the Midnight Mass in the main Cathedral. This was where Tom Jameson (*see photo*) stood 92 years ago. He described the beautiful singing at midnight. I heard it too and was moved by it very much. I have captured it on YouTube and you can find the web site quickly by typing in Google:

Russia Omsk Cathedral – Midnight Easter Saturday 24 April

Grandfather would have been delighted that I had done this.

And then on to Perm where we were met by Tatiana Grigorieva, Professor Boris Povarnitsyn and Dr Natasha Okonskaya. They kindly drove us to our hotel to change. Tatiana had put us in touch with Boris who is a History Professor at the University. He took us exploring along the riverfront. We located the probable place where the White Flotilla was moored up and could see the old Motovilska factory which was instrumental in turning their boats into warships. Later we stopped for lunch and were joined by Dr Nechayev who had an interest in the civil war of that period. We then looked at the options of how we might best travel down the Kama River to the battle sites near where the Kama meets the Viatka and in particular the town of Yelabuga. Boris very kindly agreed to come with us. We decided that hiring a car and driver was the best option.

After a fast and bumpy ride of 6 hours we arrived at Naberezhnyye Chelney and stayed in the grand but rather faded Tatarstan Hotel with a commanding view over the river. A taxi was hired and soon we, the gang of three, were off to Krasny Klyuch or Red Spring. It was here that my Grandfather as part of the White Flotilla (*see photo*) clashed with the Red Flotilla. His tugboat and the barge carrying the 6 inch gun were responsible for disabling two of the Red ships. One was driven aground close to where we stood. By coincidence, this event was written about by a certain Tatiana Carson, née Staheyeff, who was in her Dacha overlooking this beauty spot. I was fortunate at to be given her account translated into English by her son, Peter Carson, who lives in London not far from my home – how we met is one of those extraordinary coincidences which you might



think unlikely if written in a novel. I met his daughter, a stranger to me but friends with someone we know well. I told her we were going to Russia. She said her family came from Russia. Oh whereabouts, I asked? You would never have heard of it she replied. Tell me anyway. Yelabuga, she said. But that's where I am going!

Boris left us the next morning to take the bus back to Perm. We were so grateful to him for generously giving us his time. We then went to Yelabuga and – thanks to Peter Carson, met Racima Yunusova, an English Teacher, in the University. Once again kind Russians took care of us. Soon we were off in the direction of Kazan to see a second battle site above the junction of the Viatka and Kama Rivers (*see photo*). More on this by using Google, just type in:



Tom Jameson Russia Sokolka.

This will bring up the Youtube web sites. We stayed in Yelabuga for three days. The sun shone and we had a good chance to look around. We also watched the Royal Wedding and were aware that most TV channels were doing the same thing. An early morning start to catch a flight to Moscow and then homewards.

Our trip exceeded all my expectations for two distinct reasons. First we managed to get to all the areas described in Grandfather's journal. But second we were most touched by the kindness of all we met. I knew little about Russia before I went apart from the stereotypes one picks up. But all those we chatted with seemed to be on the same wavelength, shared our sense of humour and irony and humbled us with their generous nature.

Alastair Grant

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The AGM at Pegasus and Pegasus at the AGM

After the formal proceedings, then wine and snacks in the new and exciting venue (new to us and the Pegasus dancers), we were treated to an exhilarating performance by the young people who went to Perm last autumn.

A large screen at the back of the theatre acted as a backdrop and the actual performance in Perm was replayed on it. Cleverly, the dancers enacted excerpts with the same choreography in front of the screen, creating an almost four-dimensional effect, really bringing the film to life.

In between the excerpts, the dancers individually stepped forward and told us what impressions the visit to Perm had made on them. Not surprisingly, they obviously found the whole experience an eye-opener (as we have done!) in terms of the food, opportunities for extending their dance skills, making new friends, appreciating similarities and differences between performers from other participating countries and themselves, overcoming language issues etc. For some it had been a 'life-changing experience' and one they would never forget.

The retelling of their visit made us realise how valuable these twinning exchanges are for all ages, not only for the enhancement of personal experience but also as ambassadors for our own countries, backgrounds, abilities and interests. Long may such twinning continue!

Rosalyn Roulston

Forthcoming events

Summer Party

The Oxford Perm Association will hold its annual summer party on 14th July from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Karen Hewitt's home, 6 Rawlinson Road. If the weather is fine, the party will be in the garden. We hope to have at least three visiting Permians at the party. Any others in Oxford at the time are warmly invited. If you can come, please contact Karen karen.hewitt@conted.ox.ac.uk so that we have an idea of numbers. Food will be provided on a bring and share basis. In order to get a good mix of savoury and sweet food please contact Ann Davis by Sunday 10th July with a description of the food you are able to offer. Minor adjustments may then need to be made. annharvarddavis45@hotmail.com or if you are not on e-mail tel 01993-811923.

Oxford International Links events

Leiden

65th Anniversary Concert Friday, 24th June, 2011 7.30 pm, Town Hall, Oxford

Leiden Toonkunst Orchestra:

Schumann: Overture, Scherzo and Finale (op 52)

Ignaz Moscheles: Concertante for Flute and Oboe

Ralph Vaughan Williams Symphony no 5

Tickets: John Chipperfield tel: 01865 374 877; or Oxford Town Hall Box Office 01865 252 351

Grenoble

10th Anniversary Concert

Friday 3rd June 2011, 7.30 pm Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford

Ensemble Vocal Interlude (Grenoble)

East Oxford Community Choir orchestra and soloists

Mendelssohn St Paul, conductor Mel Houldershaw

Tickets: Oxford Playhouse 01865 305305 or at door

Mesh: Oxford International Youth Arts Festival (Pegasus)

20th to 30th July 2011

The Oxford International Youth Arts Festival is just around the corner and with things hotting up, plans are in full swing to get the festival up and running for when the young people from Europe, Russia, Gaza and Oxford descend on Pegasus for 10 days!

Pegasus: see www.pegasustheatre.org.uk for Mesh performance details

or contact: Emily Winfield, 01865 812 166 Emily.Winfield@pegasustheatre.org.uk

Salt

Millions of years ago Perm Region was covered by a shallow sea. Then the waters evaporated, leaving rich salt deposits on what had been the seabed. The salt was laid down in thick layers, marked out from each other by their slightly different densities which depended on the degree of salt concentration. Slowly the salt hardened into rock; and slowly other materials overlaid the salt. Millions of years later the native Permiaks made good use of this vital ingredient, while the Russians who came eastward set about exploiting it from the seventeenth century.

The first systematic extraction of the salt involved pumping fresh water down into the rock where it dissolved some of the salt – and then pumping it back up again. Since iron and other metals are corroded by salt, the pipes and troughs and wells were made almost entirely of wood, which was in any case the most abundant material in the region. There is a fine outdoor museum of the process where one can see the original wooden structures near Solikamsk.

Salt contributed hugely to the prosperity of Perm region, since it could be extracted and then immediately floated down the Kama and thence along the river transport system of the Russian Empire. In the nineteenth century around a third of the salt for European Russia came from this area. However, unfortunate Permians employed to carry the sacks of salt on their shoulder found that in the cold weather the sacks rubbed the skin on the lower part of the ear – and salt was constantly pressed into the raw area, inflaming and eventually distorting the outer ear. Even today Permians are sometimes called ‘the salty-eared’.

This year I was invited to visit one of the salt mines at Berezniki, just south of Solikamsk, and around 200 kilometres north of Perm. Here mining is on a vast international scale; mineral salts as well as other local chemicals are used for making fertilisers not just for Russia but for China and other parts of the world. The mine I visited was almost exclusively made of salt; in fact what was amazing about the visit was watching the great circular drill boring into the rock face at

a rate of 8 metres an hour and breaking up these solid salt deposits into small pieces which could be licked (or presumably melted into one's soup).

The lift or cage held dozens of men who (with our party of four geographers and myself) were lowered noisily hundreds of metres down the shaft. The tunnels were capacious; lorries drove merrily up and down, tipping the broken-up rock into elevators which brought the material to the surface. Where the chemical composition varied, this could be traced by colourful swirling layers on the walls, ranging from whitish grey, through orange to dark blood-red. In some great 'halls' mined in earlier years they were dumping ground-up salt for times when repair works meant that extraction would be temporarily stopped. There was a kind of extravagant ease about the whole process: 30 tonnes for each load into the dumper truck; 1170 tonnes an hour – almost all of it salt.

The main tunnels stretched up to 20 kilometres from the mine shaft and were of course extensively mined on each side. Further than 20 kilometres, and it was cheaper to sink a new shaft and start another mine. 'And how long will this one last?' I asked. 'We began in the late seventies, brought out the first salt in 1985, and can look forward to another 35 to 40 years of production.' But they will start work on the next mine years before this one is worked out.

I have been in a coal mine, crouching and stumbling and breathing in the dust and the damp. Here the air was dry, so dry that when these mines are no longer in operation they are used for asthma and bronchitis patients. We all know about people condemned to hard labour in the salt mines. I'm sure it was grim then, but with today's arrangements for proper ventilation, safety equipment and effective clothing, salt miners can be (as they appeared to be) a notably cheerful lot.

Karen Hewitt

The meeting that changed our life...

Petrova Irina – Headmistress of the lyceum №8, Perm

Petrova Ekaterina – Head of European Club (Lyceum №8, Perm)

We had a very good chance to get acquainted with a very interesting person, Robin Carr. He came to Perm in 2004. We were the hosting family. Before his visit we were not completely aware of the relations Perm-Oxford and he was the first to open up them for us. Since then we keep in touch, ring each other, exchange mails, presents, discuss news. Later, Robin came with the delegation for Perm city jubilee and we were lucky to get in touch with Robin again and his friends. We could understand how wonderful these people were. We could see how greatly they contributed in the relations. They were very friendly and easy-going. We decided to become a part of the relations as well. As far as we worked at school and taught foreign languages, we wanted to share our knowledge about the relations with our pupils. That is why European Club was founded in the lyceum.

Now we can say that European club is an organisation founded in Lyceum №8 to promote creative skills of pupils. It was opened on 1st September 2008. Those pupils who want to take part in different activities connected with foreign languages attend this club. There are no special castings. Everyone can be a member. Everyone has a chance. Every year the club

develops and creates something new. There are some branches which are ruled by the pupils. These branches are like subsidiaries. If to be precise, there are the following directions: ecology, theatre, design, research, international, Perm-Oxford relations.

We have already staged three performances in English and French: “A story in Magic land”, “Chimney-sweep from Rochester” and “European East”. We are like amateur theatre but we try to perform better and better. I am (Ekaterina) the author of these scripts and also the director. These short performances are really worth watching as the actors are children of our non-language lyceum. They have a strong will and a great desire to speak English and European Club theatre is the way to upgrade the knowledge.

As for the ecology we have set up a special direction “EC eco” where we work on saving the planet. The club members created the items for running an advertising campaign to promote energy-saving and other ecological aspects. A group of our pupils took part in shooting one ecological film in English called “Future depends on us”.

Every year since the time our club has been founded we arrange summer camp for children. This year it will be the third time to do it and we are planning to mix theatre activity with ecology and make up “Ecological theatre”. The script is already written.

Working on Perm-Oxford relations we could notice that very few people are aware of them. We decided to spread the information among pupils who will develop these relations in the future. This year is full of many activities in terms of Perm-Oxford relations. We are the people responsible for these projects. The project “Perm-Oxford: 20 years together” is in progress. We started collecting interviews with those people who were the first to set up the relations of twinning and those who continued and keep on developing them. We are planning to finish with all the editing till September. As we live in Perm we have a chance to take interviews only with Perm citizens. The idea is to make up a reference book about people who were somehow connected with Perm-Oxford relations. The book will be called like this “Perm-Oxford: history in faces”. This is only the first step. The next step will be taking interviews in Oxford with the people who contributed in the relations. Moreover, our pupils fulfill this project. Their names are Fatin Anton and Trafilova Anastasia. They have already got different awards in All-Russian and International contests where they presented the theoretical part of the relations and the necessity of these relations exemplifying the connections between Petrova Irina and Robin Carr families.

Another project is about promoting Perm-Oxford relations via images. Sibirtsev Roman is a pupil responsible for this project. He did some research in Perm asking people about their first thing in mind when they hear the name “Oxford”. Very few people could say something to the point as they are not aware of the relations. Roman has already made design of copybooks, notebooks where Perm and Oxford are together. These stationeries and also Perm-Oxford plastic bags will be manufactured and sold in Perm. He is also planning to create and launch fashion collection and perfume that can tell everyone about Perm-Oxford relations. It will be next year, everything as it must be, with the perfume presentation, cat walk show and other obligatory things. Fashion collection will depict the symbols and the things that exemplify the relations.

In June we are going together with one pupil who came up with the idea to make a project connected with charity, painting and communication.

It is not a secret that there are only few young people who try to develop the relations. The details will be announced later when the preliminary results are achieved and everything is prepared. There are some more projects in European Club which we are planning to launch next year such as a video excursion around Perm connected with Perm-Oxford links and Perm-Oxford taste. We see that this work is interesting to our pupils and we hope it will help Perm-Oxford relation promotion among the youth.

Beadwork – and the Oxford Perm Association

Last autumn the Oxford Perm Association sent £100 to the Perm Society of the Disabled as a contribution to their beadwork activities. Liudmila Tarunina who was always thinking up schemes to involve members in social and craft work proposed the idea, but by the winter she was very ill, and died in March. However, by that time she had recruited another enthusiast, Margarita Kazantseva who has overseen the project since then.

The Society bought beads, needles, thread, lots of wire and explanatory books. The women were taught to weave bracelets and bead bangles, while some of them incorporated these skills into making bead flowers and pictures. I was shown the work in April, both at the Disabled Centre in the middle of Perm and in community centres, such as that in Kirov District, where craftwork from several organisations was on display – and for sale.

The Society for the Disabled and Margarita asked me to thank the Oxford Perm Association for its donation – which came from money-raising in all the ways you know.

Karen Hewitt



Balalaikas in Bletchington

The Black's Head at Bletchington is a typical stone-built seventeenth-century Oxfordshire pub facing the village green. It has hosted many folk music and Morris dance sessions over the centuries, but I think April 12th this year was the first time it had ever had Russian musicians playing in its back bar.

Karavai have played music with Oxfordshire folk musicians on their previous visits to the Oxford Folk Festival but, as far as I know, not in a village setting. At The Black's Head, Kirtlington Morris (from Kirtlington, the next village on from Bletchington) danced as Karavai arrived and then joined them and local folk musicians for a session of Russian and English music.

Despite the language barrier and with the unflagging help of Elizaveta (Karavai's interpreter) Oleg of Karavai put people at ease and created the friendly and informal atmosphere of a folk music session. Karavai played a set of Russian tunes including well-known ones like "Kalinka" and then the English followed on with theirs. Although Karavai are professional musicians and the 'locals' are not, the Russian visitors did not dominate the evening but encouraged people to start their own tunes up as well as playing along with theirs.

The music evening ended with Karavai playing their Beatles medley and everyone joining in. They have been challenged to have some traditional Oxfordshire tunes in their repertoire by the time they come back again. Here is a quote from one of the Morris musicians who took part.

“It was a real treat to see Karavai at the Blacks Head, Bletchington on 12 April 2011. They are obviously a group of very talented and entertaining musicians who can engage with an audience even through the services of a very good translator. They have an extensive repertoire and the relaxed style of the evening suited an English pub perfectly. The invitation to join the jam session was a wonderful experience for all.”

Many thanks to Karavai, to Mari Prichard, May Wylie for ensuring that Karavai arrived on time and were looked after, and to John Leslie, musician of Kirtlington Morris, who acted as host. Although I organised the session, at the last minute I had to miss it, so I must say my especial thanks to everyone who made sure it was a success.

Karen Hewitt has kindly put me in touch with an organiser of the “Kamvai” folk festival in Perm, so I hope that next year we can return the favour and Oxfordshire folk traditions will be seen and heard by the Kama.

Andrew Adams

Karavai

This was Karavai’s third visit to Oxford and like all good (Georgian) wine it just gets better every time. Karavai are now part of the Oxford music scene, renowned for both their brilliant musicianship and innovative arrangements. The Newman Rooms were filled to such capacity that it could have been a Papal visit, and as Oleg, Karavai’s founder and leader, told me ‘last time there was a man and a dog in St Michael’s in the Northgate – this time people had to stand in the aisles.’

The whole ten days of the tour were packed with concerts of every style. Karavai are, I suspect, used to playing to more formal Perm audiences, but here we do it a little differently. As their ‘roadie’ I particularly enjoyed Sally’s Barn in deepest Garsington where, surrounded by artefacts and paintings, Karavai played to raise money for a hospice in Perm. Then there was a recital in Don Rouse’s very, very large conservatory to raise money for Thames Valley Air Ambulance. Being the law abiding citizen he always is, Don applied for a temporary entertainment licence. Faced with endless form-filling Don decided to enlist the P.M to defeat bureaucracy and the licence fee of £21 was refunded by WODC – yet another triumph for Don.

The Cheltenham recital resulted in the Mayor inviting Karavai to play at the Everyman Theatre as part of the Cheltenham Festival. I hope she plans to do the wheeling and dealing herself. Since most of the audience were G.C.H.Q employees who revel in their twinning with the beautiful resort of Sochi on the Black Sea, I had the feeling I was among Smiley’s people.

My personal favourite venue was ‘Far from the Madding Crowd’. Those poor exhausted shoppers who thought they were going to escape for a quiet afternoon pint were faced with a pub full of musicians playing along with Karavai - or at least attempting to. In true session style the band just grew and grew, not to mention the little old man in the corner quietly playing a comb. I wonder how he got on with Karavai’s superb arrangement of the theme from Dr Zhivago.

Russians do like to shop and never have I seen so many Primark bags. Primark must have thought the UK recession was truly ended. Then there was 'Stan the Man' (Stanislav the bass player) who insisted on buying a Peruvian woollen hat with ear flaps. He will certainly cut a dash with that on the streets in Perm. Lisa needed a green bag but since TK Max were selling a blue bag in Italian leather, at a mere £59 reduced from £300, then blue it was. Now of course another outfit has to be bought to match the bag.



I fear Karavai have a rather skewed impression of the homes Oxford people live in. Ken and Francis have a magnificent converted school house half way up a track in the Chilterns – getting to this venue was a struggle for both the roadie and the minibus, which resembled a Sherpa tank. Then there was the boat trip to Marlow, with each of the group trying their hand at being the captain. My bleating about 'we don't all live like this', was not taken too seriously. I was regarded as the old commie lady who drives the bus!!



My only complaint was the lack of proper Irish music in Karavai's repertoire. However I hope to have remedied this since my best Irish cd's have been taken to Perm.

One day perhaps I will hear an arrangement of Danny Boy. After several vodkas they made me promise to take them to Ireland next time. After that I shall truly retire.

May Wylie