

PERM NEWS

The newsletter of the Perm Association

October 2003

Perm Youth Theatre

For those of you who supported the Perm link annual dinner and raised £500 for the visit of the Perm Youth Theatre, what a wonderful return you had for your investment. The young people from Perm excelled themselves in every way - as performers, team players, minibus co-navigators, luggage-humpers etc. Nothing was a problem for them. Flight costs were an initial hurdle, the project taking place in school holiday time. The only solution was to ask the group to go via St. Petersburg, which involved a train journey to Moscow and then another endless train journey to St Petersburg – a total of three days travelling.

Such was their stamina that they accepted with enthusiasm, or perhaps their usual good



manners, my offer to show them Windsor en route from Gatwick. I hope the Queen enjoyed the impromptu rehearsal in Windsor Great Park! The pre-programme included the obligatory visits to London and the Cotswolds. Tanya, who it must be said is navigationally challenged and does not drive, asked if they could visit the Globe. (I was of course heading the wrong way on the wrong side of the Embankment at this point. This was a bit of a challenge for the Perm navigators and the 'beast' of a minibus not to mention the driver. Next time I will hire a special chauffeur's outfit and a flag for the minibus - anything to impress parking attendants.) This required us to cross Tower Bridge yet again. However the highlight for me was the young Perm lad who spent his entire money on a limited edition Shakespeare Royal Worcester plate. His was number 498 out of a run of 500. I can guarantee he will be the only one in Perm to have such an object.

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National 'camp' for student journalists

At the end of April I went to Chuvashia, a national republic of the Russian Federation situated in the southwest of the Perm region, for a week. The purpose of my trip there was to take part in a festival of youth mass media "Meetings on the Volga". I was sent there by our editorial office with a boy who also writes articles for our university newspaper and studies in the History faculty.

The festival was held in a place situated one hour by bus from Chuvashia's capital Cheboxari (in a former "pioneer camp" where parents still send their children to stay in summer). The way to Cheboxari turned out to be not easy. There is no through train, so we had to use three means of transport to get to the destination - on the whole it took us about 20 hours. In the "pioneer camp" we were absolutely isolated from the rest of the world: forest around, the nearest populated area - a village 6 kms away and no transport to go to the city on our own (that's why I can't tell you anything worthy about Cheboxari). Conditions in the "camp" were very, even too, simple: almost no furniture and absolutely no locks; besides there were no separate rooms and toilets for boys and girls. My mother joked about all this "You have been living like in a communist society".

About 250 young people participated in the festival: school-pupils, students and those who are already more than 20 years old. There were delegations from more than 50 Russian cities, even from Vorkuta which lies beyond the Arctic Circle and from Kaliningrad - also situated much further from Cheboxari than Perm (so I am afraid to think how these delegations got to Chuvashia). Besides there was a delegation from Ukraine and one man from Poland who came only on the last day of the festival because his car didn't survive in a "fight" with Russian roads and got broken.

Beyond our expectations the programme of the "Meetings on the Volga" turned out to be very interesting - no dull conferences or seminars. Every day we had different master-classes and "round tables" where we discussed vital problems of youth mass media and exchanged our experiences. There were a lot of different "talk-shows", games and other events.

One of the main tasks at the festival was making newspapers. There was a daily "official" newspaper and also a lot of alternative ones made by different delegations or groups of delegations. It was a rather difficult task because in such isolation it's not easy to find what to write about. There were only four or five computers and we had a limited time - the bus carried our materials to a printing house only once a day. So sometimes we had to work at night (for instance, I finished my first article at 4 am). In my opinion a few days of such a rush job were wonderful experience for young journalists.

The most striking (though in no way connected with journalism) event of the festival was a facetious celebration of the 1st of May. From early morning we could hear over the loudly working radio different slogans and invitations to take part in so-called "communist physical jerks" or "communist dances" (actually they didn't differ from usual morning exercises or dances in the open air but were much funnier). Outside there walked a few people in red clothes (some of them had "USSR" inscriptions on their T-shirts) holding red banners. We had our own "comrade Lenin", sang the "International" (it was a surprise for me that many young people know the words of this song - I don't) and there was even a march to the village. Of course all this was just a big joke, well organized and traditional for the "Meetings on the Volga" festival. All slogans and speeches were not serious but funny and didn't refer to communist ideology at all. The only thing really borrowed from socialist experience by our "speakers" was excessive bombast (I hope you understand what I mean) which made people around laugh.

On the way back (we chose another route, but also with two changes) we spent a few hours in the capital of Tatarstan - Kazan. This city impressed me very much by its contrasts. On one hand Kazan is very beautiful. As the native population of Tatarstan is Muslim there is a specific architectural style and colours in the streets (especially bright sky-blue and green). On the other hand Kazan is very dirty, there are many ruined buildings and a high criminality rate.

On the whole the trip brought me a lot of wonderful impressions, experience and also a feeling of pride because the newspaper we are making in Perm was recognized as one of the best.

Olga Kyrianova

(Igor Kyrianov is the Dean of the History faculty at PSU, and his daughter Olga is currently a student there, doing student journalism and hoping for a career in the media afterwards.)

Perm Association Party

The annual party, to welcome the group of visiting academics from Perm State University, will be held in the Acland Room at Rewley House, Wellington Square, at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 19 November. All members of the Perm Association are warmly invited to attend.

Other forthcoming events

Academics from PSU

Several academics from the Faculty of History and Politics at Perm State University will be in Oxford from 1 to 9 November.

The group of academics from PSU, coming to Oxford under the annual exchange programme, will be here from 16 November to 6 December.

Anyone living in Oxford with bus routes to the centre and wishing to offer accommodation to visitors from PSU (with a generous grant to cover all expenses) should contact Karen Hewitt. Please also contact Karen if you would like to invite one or more of the visitors for an evening. Telephone 01865 515635 or e-mail karen.hewitt@continuing-education@ox.ac.uk

Folk dance group

Yarmarka will visit Oxford for a Folk Festival in April 2003. Members may recall their memorable contribution to the Folk Dance Festival in 2002, and no doubt they will again sing, dance and play in their usual superb style. They will perform in Oxford and London - including an event in the Botley Road Community Centre (past Oxford station and adjacent to the allotments) on Thursday 22 April at 7.30pm. Tickets £12 (£10 unwaged) to include a buffet supper. Easy parking and of course a pay bar. Book now to avoid disappointment - numbers are limited. Tickets available from May Wylie on 252537 or e-mail mwylie@oxford.gov.uk Cheques made payable to Perm Link. Please also contact May if you can offer accommodation - you will find it a great pleasure!

International Youth Sports Event

This event, planned by OIL for July 2004, will include a group from Perm (see item under OIL on page 4).

Recent events

Annual Dinner

The annual dinner of the Perm Association was held on 2 May in the Town Hall. Voirrey Carr, mezzo soprano, gave a recital of songs and operatic arias in several languages, and inspired diners to join in some well known folk songs. Profits from the dinner totalled over £800. Of this money, £500 was used as a contribution to the fares of young people from Perm taking part in the International Youth Theatre Festival, and over £300 to provide practical help for homeless and otherwise deprived children in Perm and the Perm region.

Youth Theatre

Oxford International Links Committee organised a Youth Theatre Festival in Oxford in July 2003, involving groups from all Oxford's twin towns (see article on pages 1 & 6).

Visit to PSU

A group from Oxford visited Perm for two weeks in September, as part of the annual exchange with Perm State University.

Perm Guide

The draft guide now runs to over 30 pages. Anyone visiting Perm is welcome to request a copy from Richard Sills (telephone 01865 721644 or e-mail richardsills@btinternet.com) - and is invited to suggest additions or amendments.

News of other links

Oxford International Links Groups from Bonn, Leiden, Perm and Toruń (in Poland) took part in the International Youth Performing Arts Festival, from 12 to 20 July. There was also local participation, with groups from Pegasus, Cap and Stocking, Oxford Playhouse Youth Theatre, Oxford School and Cheney School. Workshops, rehearsals and performances were held at the Oxford Playhouse, and at venues elsewhere in the city. As a direct result of this project, Pegasus Theatre will exchange with Toruń in 2004.

Planning is also progressing for the international youth sports event in July 2004. Each participating group will offer a specialist sport, giving demonstrations and acting as coaches to the other participants. Each young person will learn two new sports in the course of the project – which is designed to be a sports festival, not a competitive event. It is hoped that participating towns will offer the following sports: korf ball (Leiden), basketball (Bonn), gymnastics (Perm), fencing (Grenoble), ice hockey (Toruń) roller hockey (Oxford).

To support the international sports festival, OIL is holding a Victorian evening at 7.00 pm on 16 January 2004 in the St. Aldates Centre, Pembroke Street. There will be dinner and a recital, with a string quartet and Voirrey Carr singing Victorian songs. Tables of 6 or 7; book early to avoid disappointment. Tickets at £15 available from May Wylie on 252537 or e-mail mwylie@oxford.gov.uk

Despite the failure of Oxford's application to be designated as the European Capital of Culture, "Oxford Inspires" is keen to explore the possibility of future cultural festivals. They are currently conducting an audit of current festival activity in Oxfordshire, and all festival organisers are invited to contact Liz Gresham, e-mail liz.gresham@sbs.ox.ac.uk They are also asking people's views on the best way to promote major cultural festivals. Their web site (www.oxfordinspires.org) has a consultation paper and questions which correspondents are invited to answer.

Bonn Over 200 people took part in Oxford Week in Bonn, 26 May - 1 June 2003. Groups included Doyle Academy of Irish Dance, Woodpecker Folk Band, City of Oxford Morris Men, Cyclists Club, Masons Aprons, Oxford Artists, Oxford Photographic Society, Soroptimist International Oxford & District, Youth Football, Youth Basketball, St Edwards Choir, Bonn Club Oxford, Oxford Inspires and a Civic Delegation.

There are plans for a possible Rosehill youth exchange to Bonn in February 2004.

Leiden About 40 members of the Leiden link took part in their annual pilgrimage to Leiden in May. They were accompanied by a contingent from the Royal British Legion, who took part in the Dutch Remembrance Day service and paraded through the streets to the war memorial for the wreath-laying ceremony.

A link has been established between the Divinity Road residents association and a similar group in Leiden, who joined forces for a street party in Oxford in July. A group of Oxford artists will visit Leiden in the autumn. Sine Nomine choir and a pensioners forum are also sending delegates to Leiden to develop exchange programmes.

K & G Marching Band performed at the Lord Mayors Parade in Oxford on 26 May.

Grenoble Members of the Alliance Grenoble-Oxford visited Oxford in May, together with the Grenoble choral group Interlude, who were hosted by the East Oxford Community Choir. The two choirs gave two concerts - at Merton College and in Woodstock.

The French Circle has a full programme of meetings on the third Wednesday of each month.

Leon The Leon Link organised a fund-raising recital by Quentin Hayes and friends from the Royal Opera House on 13 June in the Town Hall. This was a hugely successful event, much enjoyed by all, which raised about £3000 for projects in Leon.

Across Europe by bike

The plan for this journey arose in winter 2002/2003. At first I planned to travel by bicycle from Ekaterinburg (in Asia) over the Urals and through all of Europe to Oxford. But after cycling the road from Ekaterinburg to Perm (360 km) I understood that it takes too much time. So I chose 'Plan B' - train to Warsaw and cycling through Western Europe.

During all of the trip I stayed for the night in youth hostels. It was interesting to compare the youth hostels of different countries – Poland, Germany, Belgium, England. All of them were different, but always hospitable.

There are no special cycling routes in Poland, but the roads are wide enough for such travel. German roads are narrower, but you can meet special cycling lanes near the motor roads. At first when I was in Berlin I was amazed. There are more cyclists than car-drivers. You can even take special cycling taxis.

In the Netherlands I saw another strange situation. There are plenty of special cycling roads. You don't even need to use any motor road. But ... those cycling roads are so curved! And you have to cycle to North and then to West in order to go North West. It seems to be a doubled journey there. And I ran to the straight roads of Belgium.

During past times Belgian canals were served by horses which pulled the boats. Nowadays those horse roads beside the canals are transformed into special straight cycling routes. And there are hundreds of cyclists cycling there!

After 10 days of cycling, early in the morning I arrive in France. Oops ... Road signs only in French, and nobody – nobody! – speaking English. Somewhere between Dunkirk and Calais I found the car ferry, and three hours later I arrived in Dover. Near London I got the first (and the last) two punctures of the trip. And the next day I left London by the A40. One hour of adrenaline cycling alongside trucks. In the evening, after 2 weeks of travel I arrived in Oxford! The 1930 kilometre journey was finished.

Ilya Levchenko

[Ilya stayed in Oxfordshire with Geoff Ward. He was due to meet the Mayor and travel back by bus to Warsaw and then train to Perm.]

Presents for your Russian friends

If you are wondering what to send any Russian friends for the New Year or as a birthday or 'Thank you' present, Karen Hewitt has a suggestion. You probably know that she publishes books in Russia for Russians. This year two new books have been published which might solve your problems. One is a beautiful volume 'An Anthology of Contemporary English Poetry'. The poems are *in English*, with an extensive commentary *in Russian*, and introductions in both English and Russian. The other is 'A History of Britain 1789-2000' by Martin Pugh *in Russian*. (Martin Pugh is a well-known historian of modern Britain, until recently Professor at Newcastle.)

Both books are illustrated, and are strongly-bound attractive paperbacks. Both books cost £7.50 for British buyers. You can buy them from Karen and post them yourselves, or you can ask for them to be sent direct from Nizhny Novgorod where they are published to your friends in any Russian city. All payments go directly back into 'Perspective Publications' to pay for more books for Russians at prices they can afford. The company is non-profit-making.

Please contact Karen Hewitt on 01865-515635 or karen.hewitt@conted.ox.ac.uk

Good causes

From time to time the Perm Association gives money for urgent and useful causes in Perm Region. In Kizel, an impoverished ex-mining town, one comprehensive is working against the odds to teach lively English to the town's children. On the recommendation of a school inspector who was impressed with their enthusiasm and effectiveness, we sent some OUP English Language Teaching books to the school, which we were able to get at a reduced price from OUP. We have had a letter of thanks from two of the teachers, Helen and Irina, who hope to keep in contact with us.

Karen Hewitt

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Blenheim Palace tends to bring out the old communist in me but in true Russian style I persuaded the gate-keeper that we should all be admitted for a picnic by the people's lake for a small fee of £10. It was one of those many idyllic hot days and Marina the theatre director made a wonderful speech about lunching with the Duke of Marlborough. Yet again I hope the bystanders enjoyed the impromptu show of gymnastics. I know many of you came to the Playhouse and were stunned by the grace, energy and sheer star quality of the Perm group. Their story of the Perm lands was utterly magnificent. The other young people were spell-bound and that is the true litmus test.

But for me it was the 'other' moments I shall never forget. A rehearsal in near darkness at Hillend when a theatre friend of mine worked with them on facial expressions. A voice coaching session on Shakespeare's sonnets in the middle of a field. Russia versus the rest of Europe at football. And then the legendary team spirit to the accompaniment of Russian folk songs whether it was humping luggage or emptying bins the Permians were always there. I have great hopes of many youth groups who wish to visit Perm. A marriage that seems to be made in heaven would be a possible visit by the Oxford Youth Dance for the Diaghilev festival in Perm in 2005. Stand by for more Perm Association fundraising dinners!!!



May Wylie