



PERM NEWS

Оксфорд и Пермь — города-побратимы

О П А

Oxford Perm Association

Newsletter May 2020

Anthony Jenkinson: Tudor traveller, navigator, merchant adventurer, ambassador *Richard Sills*

Some years ago, Gilliane and I acquired a print of a map, described as follows: “*Russiae, Moscoviae et Tartariae Descriptio, Auctore Antonio Jenkinsono Anglo, edita Londoni Anno 1562 et dedicata illustiss. D. Henrico Sydneo Walliae presidi*”. The map covered a huge tract of land from the White Sea and the Baltic to the Black Sea, and as far east as Tashkent. Topographical features were labelled in Latin; many towns were identified; and half a dozen Latin texts, describing local peoples, were scattered across the map. Its origins remained an intriguing mystery, until discovery of a book on Jenkinson by Kit Mayers. The book – “*The First English Explorer*” – revealed that our print was not of Jenkinson’s original map, but of a version published in 1570 by the famous Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius in his atlas “*Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*”. It also provided much information about Jenkinson’s travels during the 1550s and 1560s.

Jenkinson travelled throughout the Mediterranean lands for seven years – between the ages of 17 and 24 – possibly for trading purposes, though no records are preserved. While he was away acquiring all the navigating and seafaring skills, a group of enterprising merchants had founded the Muscovy Company, with the aim of finding an alternative route to the Orient, bypassing the southern sea routes dominated by the Portuguese

and the Dutch. In the space of three years, they had sent out nine ships via the North Cape into the White Sea, and had established trading links with Muscovy; but only four of the ships had returned



Jenkinson’s map, in the Ortelius version

safely to London, the remainder being lost in the poorly charted waters between the North Sea and the White Sea, or trapped in the Arctic ice.

Nevertheless, the Company resolved to send a further expedition in 1557, and Jenkinson was appointed Captain General of the fleet of four ships, at the age of just 27. Despite a succession of groundings, the whole fleet arrived safely at the estuary of the Northern Dvina river. Jenkinson made his way upriver to Kholmogory, where the Company had established a rope walk, processing Russian hemp into ropes for the English navy. After sorting out Company affairs there, he continued upriver to Vologda – all the way wild camping overnight on the river banks – then overland to Moscow, where he was regally entertained by the Tsar Ivan IV “The Terrible”.

After overwintering in Moscow, Jenkinson proceeded downriver all the way to Astrakhan – which Russia had captured from the Tartars only two years earlier. He purchased a ship, loaded his goods for trading and set off across the treacherous waters of the Caspian Sea – now beyond the protection of the Russian Empire. On the eastern shore, he engaged camels for the hazardous journey across the Karakum desert. After a 14-week trek across the desert - surviving a prolonged battle with well-armed bandits - Jenkinson arrived in Bukhara, where he was well received by the local Khan. He had finally made it to the Silk Road, with the possibility of opening up trade with Persia, India and Cathay. However, further progress to Samarkand was impossible, because of warfare among the local khans; and the alternative of a journey south west was prevented because the Uzbeks were attacking Persia.

The only option was to overwinter in Bukhara then return by his outward route, via the Karakum Desert, the Caspian Sea and the Volga to Moscow – where he delighted the Tsar by introducing to him six ambassadors from the Tartar lands and presenting him with various gifts – including 25 freed Russian slaves. After another winter, he set off back to the White Sea, reaching England in 1560. His achievement was recognised with free admission to the Mercers Company, with the citation that “he hath bene as farre in all partes as anye englishman hath bene, to the comfort of our engellische merchants”. It was probably during this period in England that he drew up his map of Russia. It was long thought that the original had been lost, and survived only in the copies made by Ortelius and others. However, a copy of the original map turned up in Poland in 1987, and eventually found its way into the library of the University of Wrocław. It can be viewed [online](https://www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/dlibra/publication/40164/edition/40845/content) at <https://www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/dlibra/publication/40164/edition/40845/content> and magnified to show a wealth of details.



Jenkinson's original map

A comparison of the original with the later copies reveals fascinating differences. In the original, there are no fewer than twenty cartouches, containing detailed descriptions in Latin of the various peoples inhabiting the fringes of the Russian empire, and here is just one example. “The Permians were once heathen, but now they have been conquered by the Tsar of the Russians they largely embrace Christianity. In winter they travel through the snow on sledges, drawn for the most part by dogs or white deer. They live mostly on venison, and do not know how to make use of bread. They go about in large groups. Their clothing is animal hides or skins.” This was a map drawn up by a merchant adventurer, whose aim was to inform those back home about the peoples with whom they may wish to trade. Whereas Ortelius was a cartographer who was more interested in publishing a map simply as a topographical record; so he removed most of the cartouches and also Jenkinson’s delightful depictions of flora and fauna, and local people going about their daily activities.

Jenkinson was sent on a further exploratory trading mission, to Persia in 1562. He again travelled via the White Sea, Moscow and the Volga to Astrakhan; then down the west side of the Caspian Sea, eventually as far as the then Persian capital of Qazvin, and was well received by the Shah Tahmasp. This trade mission had limited success, because the Persians were keen not to upset the Ottomans by opening up a new trade route to the north, bypassing Turkey, and Jenkinson narrowly missed being handed over to the tender mercies of the Ottomans. Nevertheless, he returned to Moscow by his outward route, and was able to present silks and precious stones to the Tsar. Ivan was so impressed that he confirmed the Muscovy Company’s rights to operate in Kholmogory and to trade throughout Russia.

The Muscovy Company continued to trade for another fifteen years, using the routes opened up by Jenkinson; but they were then discontinued because of the inherent dangers. Jenkinson made no further journeys to Russia for the company; but he was sent on a number of missions on behalf of Queen Elizabeth, in 1566, 1567 and 1571. These involved confirmation and extension of trading privileges; but also negotiations about a possible alliance and the supply of armaments to Tsar Ivan. The Tsar was keen to seek a guarantee of asylum in England, in case he should be dethroned; and even sought the Queen’s hand in marriage. Jenkinson’s delicate task was to seek to defer these demands without jeopardising trading relations. It is a testament to his ability and integrity that he appears to have been one of the very few people who won the trust of the paranoid Tsar.

In the light of all Jenkinson’s achievements, it is remarkable that his exploits are not more widely known, by comparison with the adventurous seafarers who came after him, and opened up England’s explorations westwards, across the Atlantic. The answer to this puzzle may be that his achievements were short lived. By the end of the century, the Dutch had largely supplanted the English in trade with Muscovy via the northern sea route; and the route to the orient via the Caspian Sea was judged to be too hazardous to continue. So Anthony Jenkinson never gained the renown that was accorded to those English seafarers who opened up the access to colonies beyond the Atlantic.

Perm's New Governor – Dmitry Makhonin
from the OPA talk by Vadim Skovorodin on 19th February

Martin Spence

Perm's recent change of governor was the main focus of a highly informative talk given by Vadim Skovorodin, editor-in-chief of the Perm weekly newspaper *Business Class*, at Karen Hewitt's house on 19 February. The sudden need for a new governor, Vadim explained, was triggered by a major reshuffle of the Russian Government in January, as part of which Maksim Reshetnikov, who had been Governor of Perm Region since 2017, was summoned to Moscow to become Minister of Economic Development.

The governor's role and status at regional level are comparable to those of the president at national level: in the absence of a governor, regional officials are reluctant to make any decisions and all projects initiated by the previous governor are put on hold. The normal procedure is for President Putin to nominate an acting governor within a day or two of a vacancy arising. This time, however, Perm remained headless for as long as 16 days. Capturing the general mood of impatience for someone to take the helm, Vadim's newspaper carried a striking front page – blank apart from the words "Governor, Come!"

There was no shortage of candidates, but for some reason the Kremlin elites took longer than usual to reach a decision. When selecting a governor, one factor the Kremlin has to consider is whether to choose an "outsider" – someone with no personal connections to the region – or a local person. An "outsider" has the advantage of being without ties to any local factions, but someone with local roots generally has a better chance of winning a convincing victory in the election that follows a few months after nomination.

This time the Kremlin opted for a local man: Perm's new acting governor is Dmitry Makhonin, who was born in 1982 in a village near the historic town of Cherdyn, about 200 miles north of Perm, in the heart of Perm Region. After graduating in Law from Perm University, he began his career in the Federal Antimonopoly Service, initially at the Perm regional office, but transferring to a federal-level post in Moscow in 2013. Provided he wins the election (scheduled for 13 September) – and Vadim believes there is absolutely no doubt that he will – he will have a four-year term of office ahead of him.

Makhonin's predecessor, Reshetnikov, was also a local man, born in Perm itself and a graduate of Perm University. But Vadim stressed the differences between the two men. Reshetnikov was perceived as a high-flyer for whom the Perm governorship was merely a stepping-stone to a career at federal level. He had a reputation for pressuring everyone to work faster because he was eager to get quick results that might persuade the Kremlin to give him a post in the federal government. Makhonin, by contrast, appears to have a longer-term commitment to serving the region and less aspiration to higher things in Moscow. Given his career so far, it came as no surprise when he announced that one of his key priorities would be to increase competition in all spheres. Another priority for him is continuity. He has talked of the need to plan for 8 to 10 years ahead, which suggests he hopes to serve Perm for longer than his predecessor.

Encouraging competition may be a worthy aim, but Vadim pointed out that attracting investment to Perm is not easy: most investors focus on Moscow and St. Petersburg, and among regional centres Perm is often regarded as just an ordinary industrial city, lacking the prestige of, for example, Vladivostok, Novosibirsk or Yekaterinburg. This is illustrated by an ongoing project to build a Water Park leisure facility in Perm. Because of the difficulty of finding private investors, the Perm government eventually allocated a large sum to the project, but certain local people have criticized this use of public money at a time of other, more basic social needs.

On a more positive note, Vadim is pleased with the work done to improve local roads, and also with the recent introduction of electronic payment cards for public transport. Much has already been achieved in a project to develop the Perm river embankment as a pleasant place to walk and relax. Vadim was also glad to report that his newspaper – both the paper version and the website – are flourishing. (To read more about Business Class, see the June 2017 issue of Perm News for a report on an earlier talk by Vadim.)

We are very grateful to Vadim for all the insights he shared with us, and we look forward to following developments under Governor Makhonin.

Recent and Future OPA Events

Recent Events

Sergei Kachkin, a documentary film maker from Perm, introduced and showed his film, Perm-36: Reflexion (2016) on 12th February. The film interviews three former inmates of the camp, and observes the counter-culture festival centred on the Perm-36 Museum in 2013.

An illustrated talk by Richard Sills was given at St Antony's College on the sixteenth century explorer Anthony Jenkinson. A version of his talk is included in this newsletter for members who were unable to attend in January.

After the AGM on 5th March at the Town Hall members listened to a talk by Daria Baybakova who explained the work of Nochlezhka, the charity for homeless people in Russia. Tim Sadler has written an account of the charity on page 9.

Vadim Skovorodin, Editor of Business Class, the Perm paper and website, spoke to members on 19th February. A report by Martin Spence on a key theme of his talk is included on page 3.

Perm historians, in celebration of the 75th anniversary of VE Day, have created a virtual exhibition of daily life during wartime in Perm and its twin cities, Oxford and Louisville. The Oxford sections include photos and images, written articles, reminiscences and a few objects – almost all contributed by Perm Association members. This ingenious and surprising exhibition is now available on our website. www.oxfordperm.org under Contribution to Victory.

Future Events

Currently we have no events planned because of coronavirus lockdown in both cities. We are keeping in touch with our friends in Perm, and are thinking about a Zoom activity

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Newsletter information

David Roulston

We are very grateful to our members who continue to submit interesting articles for Perm News. Please note that articles, including book reviews, etc. are always welcome. The submission deadline for the autumn issue of Perm News is 21st September but it is helpful if you let the editor (contact details below) know sooner if you plan to submit an item. Articles should be sent as email attachments preferably in docx format and not exceed about 650 words plus two jpg images, or approximately 850 words with no images. Shorter articles are always welcome. Note that individual

permission for publication is now required for any photos which include recognisable people. Readers can browse past newsletters on the web site www.oxfordperm.org. The editor is grateful to Sue Gregory for her invaluable proofreading and general help with each issue of Perm News.

Web Site

Jessica Vlasova

Please send any photos of visits to Perm or Perm Association events for the website photo gallery to Jessica at jessica.vlaslova@gmail.com or to her WhatsApp on 07766 025313. Note that under GDPR rules, individual permission is required for any photos which include recognisable people

BOOK REVIEWS

We Need To Talk About Putin: How The West Gets Him Wrong

By Mark Galeotti Ebury Press 2019 £9.99

Marianne Talbot

Mark Galeotti is the author of many books about Russia (most recently: *Russian Political War* (Routledge 2019), *The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia* (Yale 2018)). He is also a regular writer for *The Moscow Times*. If he thinks we need to talk about Putin we probably ought.

One reason we need to talk about Putin, according to Galeotti, is because we in the West keep getting him wrong. We spin myths and legends about Putin that actually say more about us than they do about this ambiguous and secretive man. Putin undoubtedly encourages this by staying as private as possible, but the myths are ours.

So what is it that we get wrong about Putin? Well we have a tendency to think that he is a grand strategist, with a Machiavellian aim to take the world where he wants us to go. Or we think that his once being a KGB agent tells us all we need to know. Some of us are sure that, on ideological grounds, Putin is plotting to revive the USSR or return Russia to the days of the Tsars. Is Putin's Achilles' heel his love of money? Some would have us think so. Yet others argue that Putin is Russia's mafia Godfather – a macho adventurer who ruthlessly murders anyone who gets in his way.

All such myths, according to Galeotti, are simplistic. Far from being a strategist Putin is an opportunist. Judo, not chess, is his game. He waits until his opponent makes a mistake then he exploits it. He may have been a KGB agent, but he was relatively junior and not obviously successful. His desire to surround himself with spooks is, Galeotti implies, still the desire of the wannabe he was when, as a teenager, he went to KGB headquarters and asked how to become a spy.

Putin is certainly not a communist. He did say that the “collapse of the USSR was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century” But he later added “those who regret the collapse of the USSR have no brain”. Nor does Putin hanker after Imperial Russia. Putin is a pragmatist not a philosopher. He may be one of the richest men in the world, and he may once have looked for money, but these days money looks for him. And whilst he is sanguine about the death of enemies, and cheerful about the death of traitors, it is unlikely that he actively orders such deaths. He plays the macho part when all the risks have been taken care of, but actually he likes clarity, safe choices and guaranteed successes. It was fun to have Russian jets ‘buzz’ US planes and warships until Trump was elected. Trump's unpredictability rendered this far too dangerous for the cautious, risk-averse Putin.

So what explains Putin's popularity amongst the Russian people? Until recently he polled above 80%,

and even since his popularity plummeted because of his unpopular pension reforms, it is still 66%. Any Western politician, points out Galeotti, would kill for such figures (for comparison Trump stands at 42%). The answer, says Galeotti, is that Putin has become an icon, a figurehead, to such an extent that Russians vote for him to express their patriotism.

But we would be wrong to take these figures as a vote for Putin's policies or his regime. In fact in a recent poll only 11% of Russians were happy with the status quo, 89% wanted reform. Galeotti explains Putin's status as an icon in three ways. Two of them appeal to gratitude; of some Russians for the stability of the 2000s after the disasters of the 1990s, and of other Russians because Putin has made them feel that Russia again matters on the world stage. But mostly, thinks Galeotti, Putin's iconic status can be explained by appeal to Stockholm syndrome, a "perverse sympathy that kidnap victims can feel for their captors".

Russians respect Putin without necessarily backing him or his regime. This, says Galeotti, is why Putin feels forced to interfere with elections, why he funds a puppet opposition whilst hampering at every step any real opposition (as represented, for example, by Alexander Navalny), why he controls the media, why he surrounds himself with cronies who are unlikely to tell him the truth and why he stays so loyal to those he trusts.

Our failure to understand Putin, together with our belief in the myths we have constructed, have resulted, says Galeotti, in our turning a potential ally into an embittered and malevolent trouble-maker. They have also led to our allowing ordinary Russians, whose feelings are largely "embodied and channelled by Putin", to think we hate them, their country and their culture. If we continue to misunderstand him, and therefore them, this bodes ill for global stability.

I found this a very interesting book. It is a short book and my guess it was written in something of a hurry. But it answered many of the questions that I had about Putin (why he bothers to interfere with Western elections) and made sense of things I'd previously found unintelligible (why he is so popular domestically). At the end of the book Galeotti asks three questions: has Putin run out of ideas? Is Putin tired? And, most importantly, does Putin want out? There is plenty of evidence, says Galeotti, that the answer to all these questions is 'yes'. But unless and until Putin can find a successor he trusts, he will stay put.

Well we all know that Putin has recently ensured the possibility of his staying in power until 2036. But before we complain about this, says Galeotti, we should recognise that another, bigger, Putin could be waiting in the wings.

Maybe Esther, Katja Petrowskaja

Sally Richards

translator Shelley Frisch, 4th Estate (2018)

Maybe Esther (Vielleicht Esther) was first published in 2014 in Berlin. This translation, from the German, appeared in 2018 and was shortlisted for the Pushkin Prize 2019. Katja Petrowskaja was born in Kiev in 1970 in a Russian speaking family and studied in Estonia and in Moscow. She has a German husband and since 1999 has lived in Berlin.

Petrowskaja's biographical details are significant. In part this is a family memoir, an exploration of memories and written accounts of incidents in the lives of the author's grandparents. It reveals the importance of chance, ingenuity and loyalty in the fates of individuals and families caught up in the

chaos and tragedies of Eastern Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. *Maybe Esther* is also an investigation of what is said and unsaid, of the difficulties of recounting events when no witnesses survive and of the uncertain boundary between constructed memories and what may have happened. This is wonderfully illustrated in the account of Petrowskaja's Jewish paternal grandparents' flight from Kiev in 1941. She had remembered, from her father's tale, that there was only sufficient space on the truck for the family because a ficus plant was removed and left on the street. So her father, and therefore she herself, owe their lives to this plant. But on reading her father's account of his evacuation there is no mention of the ficus. The eponymous maybe Esther, her great grandmother, was too frail to flee, the doubts about her name are mirrored in the uncertainties and silences about how she met her death.

In such troubled times and places the role of chance in who lives and dies is a recurrent theme. Petrowskaja's Jewish great grandfather had fled with his family from Warsaw to Kiev in 1915, his relatives who stayed behind perished in the Warsaw Ghetto. His daughter, Petrowskaja's maternal grandmother Rosa, in turn escaped from Kiev with her children in 1941 eventually finding sanctuary in the Urals. A teacher by profession, she was put in charge of an orphanage of starving children evacuated from Leningrad. With the help of local residents and soldiers she managed to find food for these children who turned out, when their strength was restored, to be young musicians and dancers. Rosa's memoirs, indecipherable scribbled writings produced in her blind old age, are described as an Ariadne's thread intended not for reading but for holding onto.

The journeys that Petrowskaja makes, to Warsaw where her Jewish grandmother Rosa was born, to Mauthausen the concentration camp near Linz where her Ukrainian grandfather Vasily Ovdienko was imprisoned, are filled with scenes and chance encounters which provide material for reflecting on the construction of memory and of identity. She speculates on the possible explanations for the actions of her grandfather Vasily who did not return from the war until 1982. Russian soldiers who had been captured were often treated as traitors, or maybe it related in some way to his Jewish wife. Having grown up in a secular family with very few relations, Petrowskaja's walk through Kiev to Babi Yar where so many Jewish people, including her missing family, perished is painful reading. One journey that the author does not, cannot, make is to the archives in the Lubyanka to find out what they may reveal about her great uncle Judas Stern who was tried and executed after he assassinated a German diplomat in Moscow in 1932. Fortunately the German archives reveal a great deal about the events from his trial in Moscow, but the key question whether Stern was a rational political actor or just insane is left unresolved.

Why did the author choose to write this book in German - a language she learned only in her twenties? Here is her answer. "My German, truth and illusion, the language of the enemy, was an outlet, a second life, a love that does not leave if it does not get, a gift and a goad, as if I had set a bird loose."

This is a fascinating and thought provoking read that I recommend for anyone interested in the history of this period, in memory and in truth.

Book Suggestions

Social distancing

Richard Sills

During this period of enforced confinement, members of the Oxford Perm Association may like to exchange ideas on what we are up to. Gilliane and I are using this period to catch up on some reading; so I'd like to bring to members' attention some interesting books with a connection to Russia.

Scythians (subtitle: *Nomad warriors of the steppe*) by Barry Cunliffe (pub OUP) explores the history of the Scythians living on the Pontic steppe (modern day southern Ukraine) and further east, and the wonderful artefacts they created in the first millenium BC. Herodotus also wrote a lot about the Scythians- particularly in book 4 of his Histories - because the Greeks living in colonies on the north coast of the Black Sea had many dealings with them. Cunliffe's book shows photos of wonderful Scythian gold and silver artefacts found in barrows (kurgans) throughout the Eurasian steppe lands.

Let Our Fame Be Great by Oliver Bullough (pub. Allen Lane, 2010) explores the history of some of the peoples of the Caucasus, especially Circassians and Chechens, and their dealings with Russia, following the expansion of the Russian Empire south-eastwards in the 18th century. Not a story for the faint-hearted. The Russians were as careless of the interests of the peoples of the Caucasus as Western European colonisers were of the interests of the indigenous peoples of Asia, Africa, America and Oceania. As a result, there is a huge Circassian diaspora in the old Ottoman Empire, from Kosovo to Israel.

The Long Hangover (subtitle: *Putin's new Russia and the ghosts of the past*) by Shaun Walker (pub OUP) is a splendid book. Walker travelled all over the old Soviet Union, from Crimea to Kamchatka, interviewing a wide range of people about their experiences and opinions. He is keen to let people have their say, and to avoid taking sides. A recurring theme is how memories of the triumphs and tribulations in the Great Patriotic War are harnessed to create a particular world view, and consolidate among the Russian people an impression of a country under constant threat, and in need of a strong leader.

From Russia with Blood (subtitle: *Putin's ruthless killing campaign and secret war on the west*) by Heidi Blake (pub Collins) is an eye-opener. Her team of researchers had investigated a whole spate of unexplained deaths of Russians living in exile in the UK - and of some of their British associates. The evidence for extra-judicial killings is compelling - despite disinformation to the contrary - especially since the Russian parliament had previously passed a law legitimising precisely such actions. Organs of the Russian state may have been emboldened by the astonishingly weak response of the UK government to the poisoning of Litvinenko, because they did not want to damage relations with Russia when BP was negotiating an energy deal. So, a thorough inquiry into the Litvinenko poisoning was put on hold for many years.

And finally, for light relief - and to keep in touch with the Russian language - I've been dipping into Chekhov's short stories. The early ones are very short, so offer the chance to dip into them whenever one has a few minutes to spare.

Oxford supports the work of Nochlezhka

Tim Sadler

You may have seen that Daria Baybakova, the Moscow Director of Nochlezhka addressed the AGM this year about the work of that charity in helping the homeless in Russia. Daria explained how Nochlezhka started up in St Petersburg some 30 years ago, helping the homeless in that city since then and has recently started to operate in Moscow.

Nochlezhka operates at a number of levels. First of all it provides humanitarian assistance on the streets with food, clothing and access to medical care. This is primarily with their night bus operation, which they also use as a means of engagement to link those sleeping on the streets with their other services. These importantly include legal and advice services to support people with the documentation that they need to get a job and rent a flat. Nochlezhka also have a relatively small

hostel in St Petersburg, the one planned for Moscow is currently being held up by Corona virus restrictions. Perhaps most importantly Nochlezhka is dedicated to system change, seeking to tackle the root causes of homelessness and the lack of support services to end homelessness in Russia. You can find out more about Nochlezhka here. <https://homeless.ru/en/>

So what has this got to do with Oxford? In 2018 the British Embassy in Moscow decided, as part of their humanitarian work in Russia, to fund an exchange programme through the Euclid network to connect social enterprises in the UK with their counterparts. I was invited to join the programme due to some of the exchange work that I had previously done with Russian cities and my connections with the social enterprise sector in Oxford. Early on I was paired up with the Director of Nochlezhka, Grigori Sverdlin, due to the range of homelessness services in Oxford and our buoyant social enterprise sector. There have now been three exchange visits to Oxford by staff from Nochlezhka to see our services for the homeless and explore means of raising money through social enterprise. They hope to open a café similar to the Crisis café in Oxford later this year and are exploring other ideas picked up from organisations such as Tap Social and RAW.

I have been able to see at first hand the vital work that Nochlezhka do and experience the ingenuity and commitment of their staff who are often working in really challenging circumstances. So these are particularly challenging and unusual times – how are Nochlezhka responding. Well their main activity has been galvanised around their campaign “you are not alone” which places humanitarian aid in packages in places where homeless people frequent, which they can pick up whilst maintaining social distancing. This programme has been greatly supported by a surge in the number of volunteers.

Meanwhile what’s happening in our city around homelessness during this crisis? Services have been extended by the use of hotels and student accommodation so that every single person who is sleeping rough has somewhere safe to sleep. The council is also providing them with food delivered to their accommodation. The additional funding and relaxation of the rules by the Government has truly meant that no one needs to sleep rough on the streets of Oxford at this time. Sadly for complex reasons, a small number still choose to remain outside the system.

The big question for us now is how we take this “housing first” approach into the new normal that we will emerge into and build back better into our future.

Meanwhile in Russia support for the homeless has a long way to go. If you would like to support the work of Nochlezhka they have a link that enables donations in foreign currency. :

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/nochlezhka/>

