



PERM NEWS

Оксфорд и Пермь — города-побратимы

Oxford Perm Association

Newsletter October 2016

Karavai in Liverpool - a positive extension of the Oxford connection

The following report from May Wylie tells us about the recent visit of the Karavai balalaika group to Liverpool. Most of our members will have seen these superb players in Oxford. The photos below were taken by Mari Prichard.

Our friends in Karavai, the Perm Balalaika group who gave us such pleasure in Oxford last year, brought their skills to the annual Beatles festival in Liverpool this summer and I had the great privilege of being their minder for a few days.

Initially it was rather disconcerting after waiting for them at the coach station to see only their interpreter arrive. Their plane had failed to leave Perm due to an engine problem and the seven hour delay had a knock on effect with their other connections to Manchester. They eventually arrived in Liverpool a day and a half late. I gave this bad news to the festival organiser, who, with typical Scouse resilience, was totally unfazed and re-scheduled other groups to cover their initial planned appearances.

The lineup outside the Cavern is, from left to right: Pavel Starodubcev, keyboard; Diana Bell and her young guest from Grenoble; Vladimir Jakovlev, percussion (I think that's his name - it's the name of the percussionist on their disc, but best check with May); Tatyana Kulikova (alto domra), Mari Prichard, Oleg Zgogurin, (prima balalaika), Anna Talnikova (prima domra), and Stanislav Yunkind (bass balalaika), May Wylie, Lisa Balashova (managing Karavai's visit and interpreting at their performances).



Several others of their Oxford fan base from the Perm Association also travelled to Liverpool and, as always, we were stunned by their professionalism and the obvious joy they took in what they were playing.

Dressed in their new outfits –retro style with sequin motifs, they played in several different venues, including the famous Cavern club, and each presented its own acoustic and other challenges, but Karavai were equal to the task.

They have, as you would expect, now gained a Liverpool fan base. Some friends of mine, one of whom is an accomplished musician, sent me this email

Terrific concert today! The band is completely professional – able to switch tempo, mood, genre in the middle of a number: jazz, rock, funk, blues. It was so great to hear those familiar Beatles tunes in such original and versatile arrangements. We're groupies now, and have bought their CD.

May Wylie

One day in the life of a PSU student

It is the third year of my studies at the Perm State University. Still being at school I was told that university time is the best time in life. And those people were absolutely right! Let me introduce you my usual day of the studies.

It will be logical to start with the morning. Every day it is the struggle between conscience and desire to stay in bed (well I think everyone faced with such problem when being at school or university). That's because of the talent to leave all the business on the last day and then with panic attacks drink litres of coffee just to not fall asleep in such crucial moment. Finally I get up and start getting ready to go to the university.

After an hour I am ready to go outside. I wish the study wouldn't begin at 8 o'clock and I could walk instead of using public transport in which practically everyone looks so sad. Sometimes it seems to me that I am the happiest person in this morning.

It takes about a half an hour and I am at the university. That's so good the territory of our University looks like a small town. It is full of life. And one of the million advantages is that every building is close to each other. I can't imagine how students of other universities have time to reach building that they need if these buildings are located throughout the town.

When it was time to choose the direction in which I want to continue study I stopped my choice at "Finances and credit" department. I thought that is very simple to study in University but now I have a lot of respect for people who study without bad marks and problems. Every day I learn new facts about that sphere that in future I hope will help me in my job and so far as I know only theoretical part it seems to me interesting. It is extremely important to me to be a professional in what I have chosen myself.

I admire the University which I study for its opportunities. Different conferences, Olympiads and offers to write some articles. Not be lazy and you'll have many chances to build your portfolio for the future.

Now let's return our minds to the small town for students that is situated in the city. Imagine you are walking through the territory and meet a lot of people you know and everyone has what to talk about with you and you just come to the auditorium you need but already know all the news and now it's time to concentrate on the lectures and practical lessons. And believe me it is very hard to do that!

Well, between hard work in classes we always find time to have a rest and of course to eat (in every

building there is a canteen and we haven't got any problem with the choice of what we want to taste). Probably for every student breaks in study are the best time and if the lecturer accidentally forgets about it there will be a courageous person who will remind him or her.

When study ends we are not in a hurry to go home. There are always what to do in the University. As for me I often stay with friends and make plans, share impressions about the day and talk about everything and nothing. Then it is a ritual to make another photo on the background of University (hope I have not bored my friends who have to take photo of me) and with clear mind go home. On the way back home the dream of walking instead of public transport comes true. You can walk slowly, thinking about the past time and planning the rest of the day. Sometimes I take a skateboard and ride across the streets (only with good roads because I don't want to break my limbs and I know I can do that). And I ride past people, all these serious, busy people and feel like I am a pupil and not a student on a third year in the university and I wish every one of these busy and always running somewhere people could feel like I do at that moment.

How it was said in the beginning an ordinary day of my university life looks like this but even days like this are not the repeating of each other. They differ by the emotions I feel, people I meet, information I get and plans that I build and I hope that all these days I spend in the Perm State University will give me a great opportunity to achieve all my goals.

Tatyana Chudinova, Faculty of Economics, Perm State University

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Important Notice: New Subscription Rate

It has been decided that in order to meet running costs of the association the annual subscription for members will be increased from £8 to £10. We will be very grateful if all members would amend their Bank Standing Orders accordingly, to take effect on 1st January 2017. You can easily and quickly do this if you have online banking.

Your cooperation in this matter is much appreciated.

Rosemary Page, Treasurer

Newsletter and web site

Newsletter articles, book reviews, letters are always welcome for this Newsletter. **The submission deadline for the Febuary issue is 15th January** but it greatly assists planning if you let the editor David Roulston know if you plan to submit an item or to discuss an idea for the newsletter or web site (this web site is updated regularly) www.oxfordperm-assoc.org.

Forthcoming and Recent Events

5th October 5.15 pm - Professor Julia Mannherz will talk about Perm and music, particularly traditional music of the region. Last year Professor Mannherz spent some time in Perm researching folk music and Russian traditions.

Wed 16th November 7.30 pm: Our annual Association Party for the Perm University Teachers will be held, as usual, in Rewley House, Wellington Square, the home of the Department for Continuing Education. We will meet at 7.30 on Wednesday, 16th November. This is usually a very cheerful occasion, and we warmly invite you all to come and meet the teachers.

‘Postcard from Perm’

Our regular two-way journalism project is bearing fruit. Several articles have already been published about life in Perm in the monthly ‘inbusiness’ supplement to the *Oxford Times*. They appear under the title ‘Postcard from Perm’. The articles written by journalists working for the Perm magazines *Business Class* and *Novy Kompagnon* include, for example, in the September ‘inbusiness’ supplement, an article about funding extra kindergarten places in Perm region. It shows another side of the consequences of President Putin’s decrees to improve education, and makes an intriguing contrast with articles about how Oxfordshire County Council funds pre-school education. The article appears not only in the newspaper but also online. You can find it at www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/eeditons/ There is no fee, and once you have signed on you can click through the pages.

A ‘Russian discussion group’?

Some members of the association are considering meeting regularly to discuss what is going on in Russia. We are concerned that the mainstream media offers limited views of the country, and, while there is much more information on the internet, it is difficult to know what is worthwhile or, indeed, how to interpret it. Our plan is to meet at least once a term, circulating beforehand by email some of the relevant articles that are available. If anyone is interested in this proposal, please contact David Roulston or Karen Hewitt (contact details on page 3) .

Recent events

21st June, Dr Tina Jennings of St Antony’s College: ‘What’s going on in Russia - Penetrating through the Haze of Western Propaganda’. This took place in St Antony’s College, where Tina talked about the stereotyping of Russia in western media since the start of the Ukraine crisis..

30th June Rip Bulkeley, gave a talk on ‘Bellingshausen, Antarctica and Global Warming, 1819 -- 2048’ at Rewley House, Wellington Square. The following is a summary of his talk.

The maritime historian and Anderson medallist Rip Bulkeley explained and illustrated his thesis that an Antarctic expedition carried out by two ships of the Imperial Russian Navy between 1819 and 1821, and commanded by Junior Captain Faddei Faddeevich Bellingshausen, still plays an important part in Russia’s Antarctic policy today. It does so, he contended, by means of a poorly supported but dearly loved interpretation of the expedition, according to which Russian seamen were the first to sight the mainland of Antarctica in January 1820, and by means of an equally doubtful reading of

international law which holds that first sighting of itself, however brief, unclaimed, uninformative, or unpursued, should confer permanent political rights over a territory which outweigh those of other explorers in the region.

Regrettably, modern Russian historians have yet to reexamine this ‘national treasure’, which was first put together in the last years of Iosef Stalin in response to considerable provocation in Antarctic matters from western governments. The Bellingshausen priority claim is quite unnecessary for the purpose of sustaining Russia’s entitlement to participate in the Antarctic Treaty System, the modern arrangement whereby the continent is reserved for peaceful scientific activities. However recent official and unofficial policy statements suggest that Russia may be preparing an unusual diplomatic *démarche* for 2048, the year in which the Protocol on Environmental Protection, the heart of the Antarctic Treaty System, comes up for review. The idea being voiced in significant quarters appears to be to advocate opening up more of the continent’s natural resources for economic exploitation, by weakening the provisions of the Protocol, and then in that new context to make a strong bid for Russian access to a large share of those resources, based on the alleged priority of the Russian expedition in 1820. In short, watch this white space.

The talk was illustrated with slides showing the people involved, both ancient and modern, and the real achievements of the expedition, and it was followed by a lively Q&A. Rip hopes to be able to offer another, rather different talk in 2017 or 2018, about the great Armenian-Russian marine artist Hovhannes Aivazian, better known as Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovskii (1817–1900). Ideally he would hope to visit Feodosiya in Crimea, which was the artist’s lifelong home, before doing so.

On Friday 8th July the Summer Garden Party of the association had another very enjoyable evening at Karen’s house.

A First Trip to Russia

My husband Mike has always wanted to visit Russia, so when we attended the Lord Mayor of Oxford, Rae Humberstone’s Charity Dinner he was drawn to one of the auction prizes - a week’s holiday in Perm. I didn’t think any more about it until after the meal and the auction was underway – and I realised he had bid and won the holiday.

I was very busy in my role as Mayor of Abingdon at the time, so we decided to postpone our trip until the end of the summer. In due course an introductory email arrived from our host family and we set about arranging dates, visas and flights.

As the date of the holiday drew nearer, we realised that all we had been told about our holiday was that it would be a week’s accommodation with a family. We had no idea what would be planned for our visit and anticipating a certain amount of free time, we took plenty of books to read and movies on our ipads - but all these remained in our suitcases, as it became clear we had a very full cultural programme planned for us.

Our first day in Perm included a car tour round the city with an English Speaking guide including the Motovilikhinskiy Plant History Museum and the Perm Bear; a visit to the stunning ‘Best of Russia’ photography exhibition at the Modern Art Museum; late lunch in a typical Russian restaurant where we ate our first pelmeni; Swan Lake at the Opera House, and finally a high speed drive across town to catch the dancing illuminated fountains in front of the Drama Theatre.

After beautiful sunny weather on our first day, we woke on our second morning to heavy rain. Having convinced our hosts that, as we were English, we were used to rain and braving the streams now running down the streets, we walked the Green Line tourist route, diving into coffee shops out of the rain as we went. However, in the afternoon the weather changed completely and our host met us with his English-speaking friend Anna to drive us to the Khokhlovka Architectural and

Ethnographic museum. It would have been worth it just to walk on the hillside in the sun with beautiful views of the countryside and river. However, with a personal guide and with Anna's translating, we learnt so much about the history of the Perm region. We were particularly interested in the salt factory buildings from Solikamsk, which were operated by the Stroganov family – and of course, the story of the Perm Salty Ears!

Our host family lived in a flat at the top of an 18th floor building on one of the highest points in the city and on our return that evening we were taken onto the roof as the sun set over the most spectacular view of the city, with the Kama river in the background – and a ski jump school in the foreground.

During the week we were introduced to Tatiana Grigorieva at Perm City Council who we then realised had played a large part in organizing our trip. She took us to lunch and organized English speaking guides to take us to the Perm State Art Gallery and the Local History Museum. With the aid of the Google translate app linked to the cameras on our phones and our young guide, we learnt a great deal about the history of Perm, setting off the alarms in front of the displays in our eagerness to see more!

No account of a trip to Russia would be complete without mentioning Russian driving. Our host had a large, modern car fitted with every possible safety option so we always felt perfectly safe, but I still only dared to sit in the front passenger seat once! The drive from Perm to Kungur to visit the Ice Cave was both exciting and interesting. Exciting



when unexpected chicanes took us off the stretches of newly laid main road onto broken remains of the old road, and interesting as the journey took us through countryside past dachas, villages and local people selling mushrooms by the roadside. We were told that our host's brother regularly collected mushrooms and later had a chance to sample these home pickled with sour cream. Delicious!

On our final day in Perm we were privileged to be given a guided tour of the Perm Ballet School, including viewing some of their archives of posters, photos and costumes, and we were invited to sit in on two of the ballet classes. We were so impressed by the commitment and hard work of the young students.

In the same day we visited an exhibition of hand made Russian dolls and a quirky little doll and toy museum. This had fascinating exhibits including Christmas tree decorations from the Soviet era in the shape of sputniks, stars and spacemen. I was also intrigued to see a little red Alfonzo bear that, according to the accompanying certificate, had been especially made for Teddy Bears of Witney. Of course the original Alfonzo bear is in Witney, but how did this little pocket replica get to Perm?

And how did the photo of Jeremy Clarkson end up in the Paddington Bear display – the museum proprietor clearly had no idea who he was!

Our final evening before our early flight back to Moscow was spent with our hosts Valery,

Lyuda and Leona around their dining table with wine, vodka, Russian specialities to eat and good conversation. And the final surprise ‘treat’ of our visit? Karaoke! We were lucky to have such warm, welcoming and generous hosts. We plan to remain friends and we hope they will visit us here one day – we will certainly be going back to Russia.

Helen Pighills

Cruising down the Kama to Kazan (and back)

It was all Susan’s idea. Cruising’s not really my thing. But then, it was down the Kama; it was to the exotic-sounding Kazan; it was with Susan, who is a laugh; and, I can never say no to an adventure.

On a freezing cold 1st June we made our way to the boarding station in Perm. Chaos! Queues to get on the boat; people getting on and off regardless of queues; crowds of friends and family; no idea what to do. Reassurance came from the name of the boat – Vladimir Mayakovsky – what could be wrong with a boat named after a poet?

Once safely aboard, we got our wrist tags (worn throughout, never checked), our meal sitting (first), times to book trips (trips? We thought we were on the trip) and key. Our cabin was a haven. We were in a twin en-suite. It was great. Everything in its place, such a clever arrangement for having a shower without getting the toilet seat wet. And, the most beautiful view, with seats outside the window on the deck in case it ever warmed up.

First thing each morning we had to check the times of our meals – a little different each day to accommodate the trips and still fit in both sittings of all three meals. The meals were ample and delicious. Susan was well catered for as a vegetarian (as was I, although not). We thought we were a big disappointment to the ladies sharing our table. They had come on a jaunt. Once we had gone through our names, where we were from and what we did, conversation came to a halt. We were all ready to tell them our ages, but they never asked. Then, on the last day, they wanted photos with us. Being foreign was enough.

Not only were we the only British on board, we were the only foreigners. It was wonderful. At first the other passengers smiled and returned our “good mornings”, but by the 4th day (of 5), some overcame shyness and asked where we were from and revealed impeccable English.

The weather improved and we got into a routine of watching the Kama go by, sometimes from the café/bar at the front of the boat, sipping coffee, and listening to the classical piano concert. We never quite made the evening entertainment, though we caught sight of the folk dancers having a drink on the last day, job done.

I don’t wax lyrical, but if I did, now would be the time – the vast river, the trees, the dachas, the gentle drift, past industrial towns, past historical sites, through giant locks. All beautiful, all interesting.

And then we got to Kazan. What a city! We were lucky in that a friend of a cousin of a friend offered to take us round and practise his English. Kazan is an elegant city, capital of Tatarstan. There is still a neighbourhood (rather touristy) of traditional Tatar houses. What impressed us most (apart from a statue of a young Lenin, unrecognisable with hair) was the mosque and cathedral alongside each other in the kremlin, reflecting the joint heritage of the city. Both impressive buildings, and impressive in the image of respect for each other’s religion in our age of intolerance and suspicion.

We had signed up for trips, not really knowing what we were signing up for. On the way out we visited Yelaburga: over an hour on the bus each way for about an hour there – still the gift shop and ice cream were good. Shame there was no time for the museums. We had a local guide with us on the bus who gave us a wealth of information about the town we were visiting, the town where we

boarded the bus, the places we passed, the surrounding area and much, much more besides. After this experience, Susan decided to stay on the boat on the way back. However, I'd signed up. I was going, whatever it was. Well, imagine my surprise to find I was visiting the Buranovskiye Babushki, who competed in the 2012 Eurovision song contest. It sounds weird. It was weird, but strangely endearing. They greeted us outside the community centre. We ate. We drank. We visited the museum of the babushki. We visited the new church. They sang. We sang. They danced. And it all ended in a communal hug.

It was a privilege to cruise in the Vladimir Mayakovsky under the auspices of the Volga-Wolga company. We couldn't have been better looked after. When back in Perm and telling friends about the trip, they all reminisced of when they did the

trip as children, commenting that it was a "soviet-style" holiday. How many foreign tourists get such an opportunity? How lucky we were!

Next time we're going to Astrakhan!

Alison Watt

