

# PERM NEWS

The newsletter of the Perm Association

October 2008

## Celebrating the 285th anniversary of the city of Perm

On the occasion of the 285<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the City of Perm, a group of six (Robin Carr, Harold Burnett, Ken and Frances Cugnoni, David and Rosalyn Roulston) from the Perm Association went to Perm as the official delegates representing the City of Oxford. Duisberg, Germany, a new twin city for Perm was represented by a party of about a dozen delegates. Perm City Council laid on a full and varied programme. We enjoyed visits to the ballet and the opera, we were accorded the honour of a place on the VIP tribune at the city parade, an outdoor celebration in October Square. It was wonderful to see hundreds if not thousands of young people take part in the superbly organised display, with folk dancing, gymnastics, cheer-leaders, parading with flags and circus performing, demonstrating an irrepressible pride in every aspect of the city's life, from the bliss of the newly-wedded couples, to the sterling achievements of the seven main districts, a pride moreover that was not aggressive and bombastic, but charming and inclusive, in which we from the twin cities could feel invited to share and find inspiration.



We visited “Dom Druzhyby” (House of Friendship) to hear about good causes and social projects, see their magnificent cloth puppet collection and enjoy a most fetching performance of home-made English pop songs by four teenage girls from the local school. We had a tour of the Diaghilev House and a fascinating walking tour of locations in Perm connected with possibly the city's most famous sometime resident, Boris Pasternak; this included several interesting references to Dr. Zhivago (his Yuriatin was based on Perm). We also enjoyed an especially convivial boat trip on the river Kama with Mayor Igor Shubin and his senior officials.

Nor did we lack for creature comforts. We were put up in the “Hotel Ural”, the best hotel in the city and we dined in several of the best restaurants, enjoying a variety of “ethnic” cuisines, but all undeniably Russian, and of a standard to be compared with anywhere in Europe. Time and again we found ourselves commenting to our hosts how very good their food is and how unaware we are in the West of the excellence of their cuisine.

But more importantly, underlining the real purpose of our visit in promoting and strengthening links between our cities, we attended two other events. First, the mayor’s reception where Harold gave a speech in Russian followed by Rosalyn’s short speech in English (with interpreter) at the end of which she presented the mayor with the official gift from Oxford city of a clock with the Oxford crest. The second event was a tree-planting ceremony, one tree representing each twinning link, along a new path to be named, “Twinning Alley”. At this event Ken gave a speech in Russian and the Oxford tree was planted in the presence of the British Consul Jenny Lock (based in Ekaterinburg). We also attended a separate meeting with Mayor Shubin, during which we were given official gifts and messages of friendship and were also able to discuss directly with Mr Shubin the key features of our link.

But it was not just with the mayor and his senior officials that we were able to present the Oxford side of the link. David Roulston and Robin Carr were invited to give an interview with the Perm regional TV company “Riffyey” (pronounced “Riff-yay”). We answered questions about how many times we had been to Perm and whether we had seen any changes; what was our impression of the Anniversary Parade in October Square; what links did we have with ordinary citizens in Perm; and what direction would the link be taking in the years to come. Our replies were that we had seen many changes, but much had remained the same, especially the warmth, kindness and hospitality of the people; our sense of wonderment at the October Square display; that over the years of exchanges and visits where people have been hosted in private homes in both Oxford and Perm, countless personal and deep friendships had been forged; that the prospects for the future of the link were now fully secure, with many events planned, including a large event in Oxford in 2010 in the BMW plant at Cowley in which we hoped to see many performers from Perm take part.

To our very great satisfaction and excitement, in a deliciously Russian equivalent of a GMTV breakfast regional slot, complete with couch and glamorous interviewer, the item was transmitted at 7am on the morning of our departure and we were told that it would be repeated throughout the day.

In our talks with Mayor Shubin, he agreed with us that of particular value was the growing network of close and personal friendships that have grown up between the ordinary people of the two cities. All the members of the group had ample opportunity to experience this at first hand, adding to an already substantial fund of goodwill and friendship which bodes well for the future of the Perm-Oxford link.

*Robin Carr*

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## Perm volunteers

A group of six from Perm City Council and Dom Druzhby (House of Friendship) came to look into how Oxford runs its community centres. The Perm visitors rated their visit as by and large a great success. Perm is intending to open fourteen such centres. A reciprocal visit by Oxford community centre organisers is in prospect.

## Dates for your diary

### Permians in Oxford

The group of university teachers on the annual exchange will arrive in Oxford on about 15 November. The traditional welcoming party will be held on Wednesday 19 November at 7.30 at Rewley House. All members of the Perm Association are most welcome to attend. If you can contribute to the refreshments, please contact Ann Davis (01993-811927).

### AGM

The AGM of the Perm Association will be held on 11th February at 6.30 at Wolfson College. More details to follow.

### Future plans

Plans are under way for Oxford Fiddlers to visit Perm in 2009; and for Permians to participate in the Oxford Folk Festival in 2010.

## Oxford International Links News

### Band Festival

A Band Festival for all Oxford's twin towns was held during the first weekend in August 2008. Bands from Oxford, Leiden, Bonn, Perm and Grenoble performed separately in a variety of venues in and around the city. The climax of the visit was a performance by all the bands of Vaughan Williams' English Folk Song Suite, under the direction of John Lubbock. See also the article on page 4.

### Flood Management Seminar

A seminar for all the twin towns on Flood Risk Management will be held on 6-9 November 2008, culminating with all the delegates from Oxford, Leiden, Bonn, Grenoble, Perm and Torun taking part in the annual Remembrance Day parade and service.

## News of other links

### Bonn

Planning is under way for Bonn Week in Oxford, in May 2009. The festivities will include the formal opening of the revamped Bonn Square, a Burgerfest, Barn Dance and Lord Mayor's Parade.

### Grenoble

In October, an Oxford delegation will visit Grenoble on the occasion of the British Weeks, held to celebrate 20 years of the twinning link. Planned events include an exhibition by Oxford artists, an exchange between farmers from the two areas and a concert to include Oxford's Pavlova Quintet and works by Oxford and Grenoble musicians.

### Leiden

In June, two groups from Leiden visited Oxford – a hockey team which played a tournament involving three Oxford clubs; and the choral and orchestral group Sempre Avanti, who played in various venues throughout a busy weekend. The choir of The Queen's College, Oxford, performed in Leiden in September during a tour of Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.

### Leon

A sponsored swim in July raised about £2,000 for the latest phase of a water project in Leon. There will be another operatic fund-raising evening, at £20 per head, on 20 March 2009.

## Karavei in Oxford

Over the years we have come to expect magnificent artistic talent from all the Perm groups visiting Oxford but Karavei the balalaika players who came in August surpassed all expectations. They were quite magnificent musicians but apart from that they were such wonderful people to be with. Nothing fazed them not even our most ghastly summer on record.

They enraptured audiences in every location. These included a children's workshop at Blackbird Leys, the Lord Nuffield Social Club where even the darts players paused mid flight to listen, providing background music to the jousting tournament at Blenheim, enthralling diners at a restaurant at the Castle, and of course some lucrative busking for hordes of Saturday shoppers in the Westgate Centre.

Their most prestigious concert was at the Newman Rooms when they performed a double bill with an Oxford wind quintet. After some nail-biting days we finally had an excellent audience of over 200 who gave them a standing ovation.

The final events were again in the Newman Rooms when the massed bands from all the twin towns played Vaughan Williams' English Folk Song Suite under the baton of John Lubbock. Karavei members had written a specially adapted balalaika part – if only VW had been alive to hear it! The sight of these four balalaika players in front of all the brass band players was immensely moving.

It would seem hard to follow that but Karavei then played along with the Oxford Fiddle Group to accompany the barn dance- a new musical experience for all and one it is hoped will strengthen the resolve of the fiddle group to visit Perm.

I am glad to say you have not heard the last of Karavei – John Lubbock has asked them to be guest artists at the Dorchester Festival next September and he will pay half of their air fares. An offer they will not refuse.

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## Understanding Britain in 6 and a half months...

During these several months of living in Britain I've learnt two things. The first one is: coming out of the house - take an umbrella – absolutely categorically necessarily take it! ... even if THE GUARDIAN, BBC RADIO 4 and your English husband all together try to assure you that it's going to be a sunny cloudless day – TAKE THE UMBRELLA!

The second one is: when you are doing the school run in the morning and the traffic is bad someone will surely let you turn right (from the left hand lane you are in) flashing to you with a friendly smile.

Making a comment on the first one I can only bore everyone with the “changeable English weather” story (which is as old as the world - but so very true) and say that now I have a nice umbrella which I am also using as an accessory.

As for the second one – politeness is a characteristic feature of this country. It's not that I didn't know it before but it still takes me by surprise in some situations. Being Russian I find it pleasant (though slightly unusual) when a hairdresser asks me to “please turn my head slightly for him if it's not too much trouble” or a school receptionist makes a compliment about my “lovely Russian style shawl”. But the real shock comes when a paediatrician knocks on the door of the delivery suite room (three minutes after my baby is born) and asks me whether I mind if he comes in and examines the baby!

Now I think I need to mention that having children in Britain differs from having and bringing them up in Russia. Babies are worshipped and older children are strongly encouraged to explore things for themselves. The learning process is concentrated on the essence of the things other than the technical side. It took my daughter a while to explain that she is only supposed to do homework for 20 minutes (reading and multiplication

revision) – as opposed to the 2-3 hours tasks I was given when I was her age - because (she emphasised) “school isn’t just learning, it’s learning for fun and fun learning!”

As for me the most challenging thing was learning to drive along the narrow English roads. For the first couple of weeks I had to force myself to press the acceleration pedal as I was sure I couldn’t possibly squeeze between two cars parked on the two sides of the road. Whilst driving on the left side seemed surprisingly natural though new for me...

The other novelty was to be introduced to and embraced by a big and friendly Hewitt family. During the first month I got phone calls from various members of the family saying: Hello Kseniya, this is Mark (or Conrad or Alex), *Adrian’s brother*. They must have thought that for someone in my situation it would be extremely difficult to remember all of them straight away and differentiate from one another. My daughter found it hilarious that she suddenly had nine cousins to play and run around with at granny Karen’s house!

Now the life-style I lead is very different from what I had in Perm. It involves looking after children, reading quite a lot (I only read more getting ready for the final state exam in literature at the University), walking (mainly in Wimbledon which was slightly unreal for me before: as if existing only in the imaginary world of Graham Swift’s books), driving as a family around lovely English countryside etc, etc... And of course regularly coming to Oxford – which has been from the first day I came to England in 2005 the heart of the life in Britain for me - a beautiful and “intelligent” place as my daughter calls it... the place where my English story started.

*Ksenia Troshcheva*

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## Perm Welcomes Donald Crawford on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Michael Romanov’s Death

When some of the Oxford delegates to the Perm jubilee celebrations were at the Opera we had the good fortune to meet and have a fascinating conversation with a Russian (Vladislav Krasnov) and an Englishman Donald Crawford. The following article was sent to me subsequently by email. *David Roulston*

Donald Crawford, the co-author of a most surprising book on modern Russian history, was the guest of honour in the city of Perm on June 10 to 15. His visit was timed around the fateful night June 12 to 13 1918, when Mikhail Romanov, the younger brother of Nicholas II, was abducted by a group of Bolsheviks from his hotel room in Perm, taken to the outskirts of the city and executed along with his secretary N.N. Johnson.

As soon as he arrived at Perm, Crawford asked to see the hotel. Located on Sibirskaya Street 5, it is a stately three-storey building, constructed in 1907-1910. When Mikhail was exiled to Perm by the Soviet government, local Bolshevik authorities, after some hesitation, allowed him to stay at this prestigious hotel which was built by a merchant named Korolyov, and goes by the name of Korolyovskiye Nomera.

“What a wonderful location!” exclaims Crawford. “It’s just across from the Opera and Ballet Theatre where Michael loved to go. It’s near the mighty Kama River which Michael often crossed on a rowing boat. It’s on the lovely Sibirskaya Street which takes one straight to Siberia.” The book, which Crawford co-authored with his late wife, Rosemary, is entitled *Michael and Natasha: The Life and Love of Michael II, the Last of the Romanov Tsars*.<sup>1</sup> It is by far the best researched book on this subject. Since its first printing in 1997, the book has been translated into French, German, and Spanish, and a Russian translation has just been published.

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<sup>1</sup> Rosemary and Donald Crawford, *Michael and Natasha: The Life and Love of Michael II, the Last of the Romanov Tsars*. Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London. 1997

An accomplished barrister and the publisher of *Parliamentary Briefs* that record the proceedings of the British Parliament, Crawford is adamant that “legally, albeit just for one day, the last Russian tsar was not Nicholas, but Michael.” However, when I ask him, “Why, of all people, a Brit like you would take such abiding interest in Russian history?” Donald is quick to credit his co-author and late wife, Rosemary, for the book’s inception. A chronicler of European royal courts, in 1992 she came across the name of Michael who, as a Romanov, was a close relative of the reigning British queen. “It was not the common genes that intrigued her,” says Donald, “but Michael’s uncommon love for Natalya Sheremetevskaya, not only a commoner, but twice divorced wife with a child. She immediately felt it was a very modern story.”

Michael’s secret morganatic marriage to Natalia in 1912, in a Serb Church in Vienna, was a scandal. The tsar punished him by forbidding him to set foot in Russia, impounding his property, and depriving him of a chance to succeed to the throne. “But it was not the scandal that attracted Rosemary’s attention. So strong, unwavering and unselfish was his love for Natalia that one is forced to take another look at his character and political role,” says Crawford. “And when we did,” he goes on, “we discovered that his romance with Natalia was as beautiful as any in world history. Moreover, we saw that Michael was not a superficial nonentity, as he is often portrayed, but a person of strong convictions whose love and devotion to his country were exemplary.”

Indeed, as soon as war began in August 1914, Michael, who was then enjoying his married life in one of the best estates in England, asked his brother for a pardon so that he could join Russia’s defenders at the frontline. Pardoned he was, only to become the commander of the Caucasian cavalry division which, under his command, became one of the best at the front. He soon advanced to the rank of Lt-General and commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cavalry corps.

No wonder, when the February 1917 revolution forced Nicholas II to abdicate, he turned to no other but Michael, first, as a regent for the underage heir Alexis, then, within hours, as the Emperor Michael II. Alas, it was too late, and Michael knew it. In fact, more than once he had urged the Tsar to act sooner to pre-empt the revolution by a promise of constitutional monarchy. When the Tsar’s decision reached Michael, he knew that his ascent to the throne would precipitate a civil war and, ultimately, lead to Russia’s defeat by Germany. After consultation with prominent public figures, Michael concluded that the only chance for the monarchy to survive was by gaining the support of a majority of Russian people. He then signed a manifesto making his accession to the throne contingent upon approval by a Constituent Assembly.

Michael empowered the Provisional Government to conduct the election to the Constituent Assembly on the basis of a “general, equal, secret and direct” ballot. It was one of the freest elections in the world. As a lawyer, Crawford is aware that “There are some legal problems and language ambiguities in both Nicholas’s abdication and Michael’s conditional manifesto.” Still, considering the circumstances, Crawford finds both documents consistent with the spirit of the law. Convinced that Michael’s manifesto was a product of considerable statecraft, Crawford calls it one of the most under-rated documents of world history.

In their book, the Crawfords argue that at the very least Michael’s manifesto stopped the revolution and postponed the Bolshevik take-over by focusing Russia’s energy on the Constituent Assembly, an idea that was supported by all political factions, including the Bolsheviks. Unfortunately, the breathing space Michael gave to Russia’s politicized parties was not enough for them to come to their senses. First, Alexander Kerensky ignored Michael’s manifesto by proclaiming Russia a republic before the Constituent Assembly had been elected. Then, the Bolsheviks seized power through a coup d’état in St. Petersburg in November 1917. Finding themselves outnumbered in the Constituent Assembly, they forcibly dissolved it in January 1918. In June they got rid of its initiator.

Crawford's visit to Perm was arranged by the Perm regional branch of the All-Russian Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments (known in Russia as VOPIK), a grass-roots organization which, since Soviet days, has been fighting "historical nihilism." In the last few years, the Perm VOPIK formed a coalition of civic groups in favour of recognition of Michael's outstanding role in Russian history. The coalition includes educators, local historians, university students, war veterans, human rights activists, Cossacks, and clergymen.

The latter have gained prominence since it became apparent that, while canonizing Nicholas II and his family in 2000, the Moscow Patriarchate somehow overlooked Michael. The omission was all the more striking because both brothers were canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church Overseas in 1981. Since the two Churches have now decided to re-unite, they need to arrive at a common list of "new martyrs" of the Soviet era. In fact, even though the movement for the recognition of Michael is secular, they call their project "St. Michael," in the hope that Michael's canonization would go hand in hand with his recognition as Russia's last Emperor.

In the past few years the pro-Michael coalition has received the blessings of the bishop of Perm and Solikamsk. Last year, the first Cross-Bearing procession for Michael took place in the outskirts of Perm, taking the pilgrims 5 kilometres to a place where Michael is believed to have been murdered. This year, the Cross-Bearing procession will be extended to more than 400 kilometres, stretching from Perm to Yekaterinburg and Alapaevsk, the three principal locations where the Romanov dynasty was destroyed. Involving thousands of pilgrims and onlookers, the procession will end with the memorial service in the impressive Church-on-the-Blood built in place of the Ipatiev House in Yekaterinburg where Nicholas, his wife Alexandra and five children were brutally murdered on July 17, 1918.

In his presentation at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Michael, Crawford emphasized the unique role Michael played in Russian history. "We shall never know for sure what was lost when Michael's life was cut short in Perm. But what we know about him, no doubt, deserves the highest honours and eternal memory," Crawford went on. "Each nation needs to preserve a full picture of its past, and if there is a person who could bridge a gap between the Tsarist Russia and the New Russia, it has to be Michael, the most wholesome and the least contradictory personality among the last Romanovs." While admitting that Michael had his faults, Crawford insists that those faults "only accentuate the integrity of his personality which I cannot help but admire."

Other presenters at the conference gave high marks to both the quality and range of archival research on which the Crawfords based their findings. There has been recently some tightening of access to archival materials and some documents on Michael remain inaccessible if not entirely out of reach for researchers. The Crawfords, on the other hand, were able to travel widely to the archives of not only Moscow and St. Petersburg, but also London and Leeds, as well as Paris, Vienna, New York, Berlin and Copenhagen, where Michael's correspondence, photographs and other documents have been preserved.

This was Donald's first visit to Perm. But he is just as familiar with Perm's archival holdings on Michael as anybody. In their book the Crawfords acknowledge their indebtedness to Perm's Sergei Diaghilev Gymnasium whose personnel helped them find and translate pertinent documents. During a press conference, Crawford paid tribute to the Gymnasium for taking up the cause of the forgotten Emperor. "We are determined to do for Mikhail Alexandrovich (Romanov) what you have done for the memory of Sergei Pavlovich (Diaghilev)," Crawford assured the students. In fact, a group of students headed by their media instructor Vyacheslav Dimov already runs a very informative website on the fate of Michael, featuring key documents in both Russian and English (see

<http://diaghilev.u-education.ru/node/68> or [www.permonline.ru/~museum/romanov/rus/index.htm](http://www.permonline.ru/~museum/romanov/rus/index.htm)).

“Both Rosemary and myself have always wanted to come to Perm not only because that’s where Michael’s life so tragically ended, but also because we knew that, thanks to the grass-roots civic movement for the recognition of Michael, Perm is way ahead of both Moscow and St. Petersburg in giving Michael his due.” Donald recalls how disappointed he was when during a 2003 trip to St. Petersburg he and Pauline Grey, Michael’s step



grand daughter, went to see the building on Millionnaya Street 12 where Michael signed his manifesto. “Right there, at a turning point of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when one of the greatest empires expired, there was not even a memorial plaque on the wall. Look, there in Yekaterinburg, the Ipatiev House was razed to the ground when Yeltsin was the boss. But the people of Perm have managed to protect Korolyovskie Nomera. As soon as the world learns what happened here 90 years ago, tourists would stream to Perm in their thousands,” Crawford predicts.

Sadly, Donald’s wife and co-author, Rosemary Crawford, died last January. “Our only consolation was that, on her deathbed, she was able to hold a freshly printed copy of the Russian translation that had been rushed to the Crawford home in York, from the Zakharov publishing house in Moscow. Finally, the project which the Crawfords commenced in 1992 and which resulted in a 1997 book was brought to fruition in the country for which it was primarily intended. “Rosemary always wanted to go to Perm, and before she died, she bequeathed me to go to Perm, and that’s why I’m here,” admitted Donald.

In his interview with the local TV and radio stations, Donald Crawford said that even though he had come to Perm on such a sad occasion as the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Michael’s death, he was filled with the hope that Russia would turn to honour a man who was “the only lighthouse pointing to Russia’s future rebirth.” According to Crawford, Michael did not care whether he was an emperor or not. He was just as proud to be New Russia’s first citizen. “In this respect Michael is a symbol of Russia’s great future rather than a reminder of the errors of the past.”

*W. George Krasnow*

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