

PERM NEWS

The newsletter of the Perm Association

June 2002

Folk Dance Festival

A group of 18 folk dancers from Perm, together with over 50 from Bonn, Leiden and Toruń (Poland), will be participating in the forthcoming festival, entitled "The Unbroken Circle of Dance". The group from Perm arrives on Sunday 16 June, and will be taking part in the Cowley Carnival that afternoon. On Monday they will perform at St Ebbe's Primary School, an Asian Lunch Club in Manzil Way, Cowley, and at Bayswater Middle School. On Tuesday they perform at John Callie Court, and at Blackbird Leys.

The other groups arrive on Thursday 20, and all groups will be officially welcomed in a reception in the Assembly Room of Oxford Town Hall. A buffet supper will be followed by dancing. On Friday 21 there will be informal dancing (10.00-11.00 am) in the city centre - in Christchurch Meadow, Westgate Shopping Centre, Cornmarket Street, and near the Kings Arms - during which there will be collections for community projects in Leon (Nicaragua) and Perm. The day continues with an afternoon street parade in the city centre; community performances and workshops at Blackbird Leys Community Centre (Perm), Barton Community Centre (Toruń), and West Oxford Community Centre (Bonn and Leiden); performances at city centre pubs and hotels (7.00-8.30 pm) and at the Victoria Arms (9.00-11.00 pm).

On Saturday 22, from 11.00 am onwards, there will be all-day performances in the Town Hall and the city centre; a Grand Finale at the Town Hall from 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm; and a Ceilidh and Supper from 7.30 to 11.30 pm at the Emperor Ballroom, Rover Sports and Social Club, Roman Way (see note below). On Sunday 23 the groups will tour the Cotswolds, dancing mid-morning at Burford; then at Standlake and Bourton on the Water, before having a barbecue and farewell party at Youlbury Scout campsite. A very energetic few days comes to an end with the departure of all groups on Monday 24.

Note. Anyone still requiring a ticket (£6) for the Ceilidh should apply without delay to Oxford, telephone 01865 374836, or to May Wylie, telephone 01865 252537 (e-mail mwylie@oxford.gov.uk)

Other forthcoming events

Allotments and Dachas Exchange One or two keen gardeners from Oxford will visit Perm this summer - anyone interested should contact Karen Hewitt (tel. 01865 515635, e-mail karen.hewitt@conted.ox.ac.uk) or May Wylie.

Youth Art Competition Fifteen students from Cheney School are visiting Perm in July, to take part in this event.

Igor Volkhin Igor Volkhin, keen canoeist, engaged in research and teaching in Physics at Perm State University, will be in Oxford in late July and early August. Anyone wishing to entertain him should contact Karen Hewitt.

Visit to PSU A group from Oxford will be visiting Perm for two weeks in September, as part of the annual exchange with Perm State University.

Tours in Perm Region One of the young teachers from PSU who visited Oxford last November is earning a little money as head of a section of a new tourist agency in Perm. Anyone interested in the possibility of a river trip, or other expedition, in the Perm region, can contact him via Karen Hewitt.

Youth Theatre Pegasus Youth Theatre plans to twin with a youth theatre group in Perm, and visit Perm in 2004.

Perm Olympiads

In early April a couple of hundred Perm teenagers gathered in one of the city's schools to compete in the annual 'Olympiads' which cover all school subjects. For the second year, I was a member of the jury in the section on 'British and American literature *in English*.' From schools all over Perm Region senior pupils had contributed essays to their chosen section, and the jury, which in our case consisted of Boris Proskurnin, Tatiana Paludina of the Pedagogical University and myself, had spent several hours during the previous week reading them. The thirteen essays, all in English, in our section ranged from accounts of the stories of Somerset Maugham to a sophisticated analysis of a recent Irish novel. *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and *A Room with a View* were among the novels these sixteen and seventeen-year-olds chose to write about. The competitors arrived with friends or teachers for support. Each of them had to give an account of their work and answer critical questions from the jury and the audience. Despite the presence of an unexpected English native speaker, most of them seemed remarkably self-possessed. Russian students are trained to defend their work orally (rather than in written examinations) so they learn to be articulate even when providing impromptu English answers to unexpected questions.

Some of the essays were very elementary, like the work of younger children. On the other hand, the winning essay, submitted by a 17-year-old boy, would have been remarkable if it had been the work of an English undergraduate. Interestingly, the jury were in almost complete agreement about their criteria and their judgements. We looked for fresh, individual, carefully-thought-out literary enthusiasm, and brisk answers to our questions. Finally we addressed the competitors, disparaged pages of copied criticism and irrelevant presentations of computer graphics (which two candidates included!) and awarded certificates. The winning student will go on to an 'All-Russia Inter-Regional Olympiad'. The atmosphere throughout was serious but lively – and warm.

At the same time another competition was being held to find the best teacher in the region. After early rounds in which competitors had to submit essays explaining and justifying the content and teaching methods of their lessons, the finalists were taken to an unknown school and required to give a specimen lesson to a suitable class. Again the jury were – to their own surprise – unanimous. A young physics teacher who until recently had been teaching in a distant village school managed to keep children and teachers agog with his exposition of complicated ideas in physics. His methods were unorthodox – but they worked!

Teachers are paid a pittance in Russia; many of them have to do two jobs and still struggle to make a living. And now they have to cope with new ideas, untried methods and old materials – a mish-mash out of which they have to produce both information and enlightenment. In Perm, this April, many of us felt genuinely enlightened.

Karen Hewitt

Oxfordshire/Perm Voluntary Action Link

More than 200 voluntary organisations in Oxfordshire have had significant links with counterparts in Perm for over ten years, and their participation has been encouraged and coordinated by the Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action, under the leadership of Liz Brighthouse. For example, Sobell House has assisted with the establishment of a hospice and with the training of nurses and volunteers.

Just over a year ago, a Voluntary Action Link Centre was set up in Perm, under the auspices of OCVA and the Regional Centre for International Projects (RCIP) in Perm, with

financial support from the Community Fund (i.e. funding from the National Lottery). Under the Soviet system, it was expected that the state would provide for the needs of society, and citizens were receivers of services. Now that the state is not expected to fulfil this role, there is a need for citizens to progress from passive to active citizenship. The purpose of the link is to support agencies in the Perm Region as they try to establish new levels of voluntary activity, to meet social needs.

The first task was to establish a base and a management structure. An office was opened in the Teachers Centre (Dom Uchitelya) on ulitsa Sibirskaya, opposite "Space Jam". The link project is managed by a Coordinating Committee, with representatives from the Society for Disabled People, the Society for Environmental Protection, the Teachers Centre, Perm City, Perm Region and Perm State University. The Committee is responsible for planning the project and overseeing its finances, maintaining collaboration between the various public and private bodies and commercial companies, and for appointing staff. It duly set up the office and appointed four staff—a Project Coordinator, an Administrator, a Disability Worker and a Finance Manager. The project has focussed on five areas, as follows.

Disability. The Disability Worker set up mutual support groups for disabled people, with the aim of helping them to overcome obstacles in the surrounding world. Members are encouraged to take an active part in problem solving, to increase their confidence and enable them to combat loneliness, isolation and misunderstanding. Topics covered included relationships with family and others, how to enter higher education and how to get a job.

Environment. This section focuses on environmental projects, such as analysing the influence of forests on the environment, and involves the participation of various bodies, such as Perm State Technical University, and the non-commercial partnership "Ecological Technologies of the Urals".

Renewable Energy. Russia lags behind Europe in energy saving and the development of renewable energy resources. RCIP has established collaborative links with commercial and non-commercial bodies, with the aim of developing wind energy for rural communities.

Young People. Russia has a well established education system, but there is a rather low level of parental involvement. This section, entitled "Arranging Family Upbringing Clubs in Perm", aims to demonstrate the benefits of active citizenship through seminars and conferences. It also aims to create a bank of innovative ideas for needy families, create toy libraries, create a database of Family Clubs in Perm and initiate new Family Clubs.

Child Health. The RCIP and the Perm Heart Institute presented a proposal for collaborative work to the British Council's Health Department, with a view to finding exchange partners in the field of child heart surgery

NGO Leaders' School. There are more than 1500 non-profit organisations in the Perm Region. Their staff are well educated but, because of the move to a market economy and democratic reforms, they need to improve their knowledge of management, law, etc. To meet this need RCIP, in collaboration with Perm City and Perm Region, set up training courses for the leaders of non-government organisations, tutored by leaders of NGOs in Moscow and by teachers from various institutes of higher education.

The project has almost another year to run, and there is still plenty of scope for collaborative working. For example, there is a need for voluntary organisations in Perm to develop expertise in attracting funding from local government, in the context of service agreements specifying standards required by the local authority. There is also a need for further environmental work on issues such as waste minimisation, clean air and transport strategies. It is to be hoped that the fruitful links between NGOs and local authorities in Oxfordshire and the Perm Region will continue well beyond the period of the current project, and that there will be plenty to report in future newsletters.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Current membership rates

Individuals: £8.00
Organisations: £16.00

I/we wish to join the Perm Association

DATE:

NAME:

ORGANISATION (if any):

ADDRESS:

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.....POSTCODE:

Affiliation fee £

Donation £

Total £

(Cheques payable to the "Perm Association")

For more information on membership contact the Treasurer

To: Tom Meinhard
22 St John Street
Oxford
OX1 2LQ
Tel: 01865 557615



The Doyle Academy of Irish Dance

The Doyle Academy of Irish Dance from Oxford was offered an amazing opportunity to travel to Perm to be part of an International Link between the Cities of Perm and Oxford.

In August 2001, thirteen dancers and our teacher Anne-Marie, along with a few parents, embarked on a journey to our twin city in Russia, which took in a plane journey to Moscow via Vienna, and then from Moscow to Perm by train, which took twenty-four hours. May Wylie, Oxford's Town Twinning Officer, was keen for the Doyle Academy to have a link with the Perm Ballet School, as our mutual love of dance was a common ground to develop the relationship between the two cities.

While in Perm we stayed at the Perm Ballet School and we were welcomed most wonderfully by our friends there. We were there for just over a week and we performed every day alongside the ballet dancers to people in the local towns. Our largest performance was in a Palace of Culture and we were greeted by a packed audience of approximately 800 that came to see a show jointly prepared by the Ballet School and the Irish dancers. It was undoubtedly a great success and attracted a lot of local media attention which is an experience often recalled by the dancers, now that we are back in Oxford.

We are extremely grateful for the opportunity, which holds so many fond memories, and we are looking forward to the development of the link between the two cities.

John Allan

News of other links

Grenoble East Oxford Community Choir visited Grenoble at Easter, performing in the Olivier Messaien Hall and in the Eglise Notre Dame des Neiges in Alpe d'Huez. In early May members of OGA and North Oxford Tennis Club visited Grenoble as part of the bi-annual exchange. In early July the Cap and Stocking Players will be representing Oxford at the *Rencontres* (Grenoble International Youth Theatre Festival).

Bonn and Leiden It is hoped that Oxfordshire Youth Orchestra will visit both Bonn and Leiden in August 2003; that singers from Bonn will team up with Oxford and Leiden orchestras for Oxford Week in Bonn next year - and even that all the orchestras will hold a joint festival in Perm! At Easter, Kidlington young footballers entertained a group of 39 young footballers from Racing Club Leiderdorp.

Leon During a visit to Leon in February, a group from Oxford visited several projects which the Oxford Leon Trust has supported over the years. The Trust continues to raise money for projects to help children in Leon, and to encourage links between children in both cities.

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