

PERM NEWS

The newsletter of the Perm Association

April 2003

Annual Dinner

The annual dinner of the Perm Association will be held on Friday 2 May in the Town Hall. Tickets (£12 to include entertainment) are available from May Wylie (tel. 01865 252537). Voirrey Carr, the wife of our treasurer Robin Carr, will give a short recital. She is a pupil of Christine Cairns (John Lubbock's wife) and played the part of Mrs Noah in the international production of Noye's Fludde in Oxford Town Hall in August 2000. Profits from the dinner will be used to pay the fares of young people from Perm taking part in the International Youth Theatre Festival, and also to provide practical help for deprived children in Perm and the Perm region - so please do your utmost to support this event.

Other forthcoming events

Youth Theatre

Oxford International Links Committee is organising a Youth Theatre Festival in Oxford in July 2003, involving groups from all Oxford's twin towns (see item under OIL on page 6). The group from Perm will come a week early and be hosted by Cheney School for the week preceding the festival.

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. Anyone interested should contact Karen Hewitt (tel. 01865 515635, e-mail karen.hewitt@conted.ox.ac.uk).

International Youth Sports Event

This event, planned by OIL for July 2004, will include a group from Perm (see item under OIL on page 6).

Recent events

AGM

At the Annual General Meeting of the Perm Association, held on 5 February, all current committee members were re-elected.

Integrated Transport Study

A group from Perm visited Oxford for a week in March.

Sotsial'nii Innovatsii (Social Innovations)

The first edition of this new publication appeared in Perm in December 2002, and the second edition in February 2003. It is the newsletter of the autonomous non-profit-making organisation "The Regional Centre for International Projects", which maintains close links with the Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action. In order to keep members of the Perm Association informed of developments in the voluntary sector in Perm, some items from the second edition are published on the following pages - translated and slightly edited. On page 2 is an article by Tatiana Grigorieva (May Wylie's counterpart in Perm), in which she offers a summary of the history of the link - which should be helpful to recent members. On pages 3 and 4 are items about projects in the voluntary and civic sectors. Thanks are due to Veronica Goussarova (currently studying at Oxford Brookes University) for making the original publication available.

Oxford and Perm- twin towns

Perm has a twin town – Oxford, in Great Britain. A city founded in the 10th century, with an ancient and renowned university. And the first contact was indeed brought about by the universities of our two cities, in 1989, just after Perm became an open city. It turned out to be a durable friendship – which has not faded in 14 years. The most important thing is that this twinning involves not just links between two town halls or trips by bureaucrats, but also interesting projects by voluntary organisations, courses for teachers and lecturers, youth exchanges, environmental camps, - and just the friendly relations of ordinary people who can say: “This is my English friend.”

Links between different nations always involve first and foremost an interest in each other’s culture. Oxfordians have already heard the Russian songs of the folk group “Rossiyanye”; they have seen the “Yarmarka” group dancing in their streets and squares; and in the Town Hall they gave a standing ovation to the students of the Perm Ballet School. And Permians also still remember the virtuoso Irish dancing of the Oxford Doyle Academy and the drama productions of the North Oxfordshire College of Visual Arts. As a result of its projects with its twin towns, in 2001 Oxford was awarded the Gold Star of the European Union. Oxfordians said: “If Perm had not been involved in these projects, we would not have received this award.”

Our Oxford friends helped us to open an information centre for the disabled in Perm (the first such centre in Russia). The Perm hospice uses the organisational working methods of Sobell House Hospice and receives methodological support from it. Environmentalists from both areas have created a worthwhile two-year collaborative project. In the Aviagorodok district a children’s playground was built with money collected by Oxford residents and by local charitable organisations. Each year Perm State University sends a group of teachers on a course at Oxford University, and teachers from Oxford have become familiar guests at PSU. Perm State Teacher Training University is carrying out another large project “Education and Health” as part of the TEMPUS-TACIS programme.

What is the main benefit of collaboration with another city or region? It appears that, with each new activity and each new project, the level of mutual confidence increases, so the opportunities for collaborative working are continually widening. For example, five years ago Oxfordians didn’t send us their children – but it’s now four years since the firm conviction arose, that nothing untoward would happen to children’s groups in Perm and that friendship with Permians would be an interesting stage in their personal development. So it is that schoolchildren also now come to visit us – environmentalists, young dancers, artists from Cheney School.

Both Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council take their links very seriously. There have been joint municipal projects and forms of economic collaboration are being developed. “To know each other and trust each other is a starting point. Investments will follow,” said Martin Stott, Head of External Policy and Partnerships at Oxfordshire County Council.

The Perm municipal committee on the naming of streets has decided to name one of the streets of Perm “Oxford Street”. There is an Oxford Street, incidentally, in both London and New York. Such a name on the city map will be yet another concrete sign of the international significance of Perm.

The British Consulate in Yekaterinburg also considers that the twinning of Oxford and Perm is one of the most effective and practical of all existing links between British and Russian cities. Such an appreciation is of course very pleasant – and well deserved.

Tatiana Grigorieva, Head of the Department of International Links at Perm City Council.

Women's Projects

There is a huge number of projects initiated and run by women in Perm, for the benefit of children, parents and others. Here are a few examples.

The Council of Large Families of the Kirov district is well known for its good works – and in the Novy Krym sub-district, another new one has appeared, initiated by a woman. Natalia Os'kina, mother of ten children, has created a project for children from deprived families – the “Republic of little boys and girls”. The RLBG operates all year round, organising events, competitions, handicrafts, excursions and social contacts, based in the “Ural” House of Culture.

Last year another community organisation appeared – the “Family” social and legal centre, based on the Council for Large Families of the Sverdlov district of Perm. The council has ten years' experience of working with needy families, invalids and orphans. The centre offers advice to large and needy families, and teaches people how to cope with financial difficulties and defend their rights. A related aim is to enhance the role of the family and family upbringing. It pursues its aims through a range of programmes. In one, called “Granny's Box”, children learn dancing, knitting and drawing, and much attention is given to family history and traditions. The leader, Tatiana Kononova, mother of five children, is an indefatigable source of ideas. In the kindergarten, the children of the members of the community organisation make paper decorations which are sold to raise money for charitable purposes. Together with the Parents Committee of the children's section of the Perm Oncological Centre, she prepared presents for sick children. At a discussion initiated by the Regional Centre for International Projects, she proposed a new project – raising funds for an aquarium for the children's oncological department.

Lyudmila Kadyrova is a well-known figure in the Aviagorodok sub-district of the Industrial'ny district, where she has long played an active role in the work of the council. She is also an excellent gardener and is keen to pass on her experience to others. It hardly needs saying how essential such knowledge is to the survival of families in the current difficult economic conditions. Her new initiative consists in publicising an effective means of soil improvement. She calls her project “Wise Husbandry” and aims to create a network of clubs under this name. The core of the project is the introduction of “EM technology” – soil improvement through effective microorganisms, using the experience of researchers in Japan, Buryatia and Novosibirsk. Lyudmila thinks that EM technology will be suitable for the greening of wasteland and former building sites.

The Social Services Centre for the Industrial'ny district of Perm is a kind of laboratory, since many models of social action are developed there. This is where foreign volunteers are sent to exchange experience and where young future social workers can practise their skills. Marina Mikurova is keen on working with many services and was one of the first leaders of a municipal service to start collaborating with local Non Governmental Organisations.

In April 2000 a Women's Crisis Department opened in the Centre. Women go there from various districts of the city to seek the help of psychologists and psychotherapists: victims of domestic violence, the bereaved and those who have suffered emotional violence. The team of six is led by Natalia Nikulina. Women can use the centre, which operates round the clock, for up to two months; and working women can stay there for one or two weeks. Women are offered group sessions, individual consultations and therapeutic help. There is also a legal advice surgery. The department has the capacity to deal with twenty women per week, but actually handles more than that. The Women's Crisis Department collaborates with many organisations working in the fields of psychology and health and maintains close contact with the provincial psychological service.

Oxford-Perm-Aviagorodok

Great Britain has a long tradition of developing neighbourhood associations and various local residents' organisations; and in various districts of London there are specialist support centres. Some of these bring together professionals – psychologists, economists, sociologists. As a rule they receive government and municipal grants for their work and assist a variety of local organisations. Such a centre is the Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action. And in Perm an organ of local self government was created in the Aviagorodok sub-district. Liz Brighouse drew attention to its work when she visited Perm in April 2000.

Indeed, the Aviagorodok council has much to be proud of! Ever since it began operating in 1995 the council has continually taken steps to improve residents' quality of life, paying particular attention to public services and the greening of the landscape and drawing children and young people into this work. The council has repeatedly won municipal and district competitions for socially useful projects (such as “Green Wall”, “Workplaces for the young”, “Green Patrol”, etc.).

In 1999 the council implemented a “Focus Groups” programme on work with young people at risk, organised sports events, arranged meetings with doctors, educationalists and psychologists on measures against anti-social behaviour and drug addiction, created clubs and interest groups, implemented culture and leisure programmes, found placements for children from high risk groups for the summer period – all in order to divert young people away from alcohol and drug abuse. And then the lovely Victory Park in the sub-district was severely damaged by these same young people.

... And then the Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action, in collaboration with Oxford City Council and with the help of contributions from commercial organisations and residents of Oxford, funded a joint project “Oxford-Perm-Aviagorodok” to create a playground. The contributors to the project on the Perm side were: the “Gorod” foundation, the “Unity” party, DU-2, 50 young volunteers, 20 parent volunteers, English children from an environmental camp, community organisations, the “Karpinsky” local council and a council of veterans.

Thus was a bridge built between the residents of Perm and Oxford.

Web sites

Further information on Perm is available on the following web sites.

<i>Web site</i>	<i>English Version?</i>	<i>Contents</i>
www.perm.ru	No	Perm Regional Server – access to information about Perm regional administration.
www.gorodperm.ru	Yes	Perm municipal administration site.
www.psu.ru	Yes	Perm State University site.
www.raid.ru	No	“Perm Business Portal”. Local and national news, politics, economics, society, sport – and GMT!
www.list.perm.ru	No	Magnificent site for access to any site relating to Perm, with sections on leisure (cinema, hotels, clubs), culture (art, religion, exhibitions, theatre – and Yarmarka folk group!), science and education, industry, etc. etc.
www.permonline.ru	No	Local and national news, finance, business, higher education, etc.

Allotments and Dachas Exchange

Last Summer, Biddy Hudson and I went to Perm in order to learn more about dachas – Russia's equivalent to allotments. It was an extraordinary and wonderful opportunity to visit Russia and meet fellow gardeners on the other side of the world.

Dachas are small areas of land that have been officially allocated for growing vegetables but they are usually 1 – 2 hours away from home by car instead of just around the corner as our allotments are. Nearly everyone seems to have a dacha and every dacha appears to have a Banya which is a small self built sauna room as well as a small house. (We had a great time being beaten with birch twigs in a room full of steam!) Money is very tight and food from dachas really makes a difference. Anatoly and Valentina, the couple we stayed with, provided themselves with all their vegetables, juices, jams, honey and fruit as well as providing enough for their son and his family too. Since the end of communism, 90% of the food consumed in Russia has been grown by amateurs.

One of the first things we learnt was that there are no slugs (slizniki) in Russia so their plots were full of healthy plants without a sign of damage. How easy can it be? However, they do have –30 degrees in the winter (which kills the slugs and just about everything else) and + 30 degrees in the summer. It was astonishing that the dachas were so flourishing and productive.

Our hosts had beehives for honey, medicine and to protect the house from burglars. They used the stream running alongside the dacha to water the garden but also as a cooler for the jars of pickles they make to tide them over the winter months. They had a huge compost heap which was steamingly hot and attracted various frogs, toads and snakes. We were alarmed at the thought of the snakes but since they came, the house has apparently been completely free of mice.

Not only were we welcomed into Anatoly and Valentina's home and dacha but we were taken to a number of other dacha sites and met people growing their food, enjoying the countryside and the community feeling on dacha sites as well as using their land to research food growing techniques and alternative fruit and vegetable species. We were also shown the tourist sites including the fantastic ice caves but I realised that the organised link to people with similar vegetable-growing passions, meant that we experienced so much more.

Biddy and I also had other interests and while Biddy visited the town hall to meet those responsible for transport and land issues, I headed across the city to visit the HIV/AIDS centre and the hospice. Both were inspiring and run by a very dedicated group of people working on shoe strings. The Hospice is immensely proud of the link with Michael Sobell House here in Oxford and the support and friendship is clearly much appreciated. However, since funding had been cut, they had closed the beds and now only run an information service. The HIV/AIDS organisation was in an overcrowded wooden house in the centre of town. There were queues of people in the corridors waiting to see the doctors but there is very little money for treatment and the numbers becoming infected are increasing daily. It was a stark reminder of how lucky we are in the west.

In all, our visit to Perm was one of the highlights of my year. I felt I learnt so much and really made a connection with the people I met. We were treated so well by everyone we met and especially by our hosts, our translators and Tanya and Yevgenie who organised our every move. Thank you to everyone who made it possible.

Anna Eden

News of other links

OIL Planning for the International Youth Performing Arts Festival, from 12 to 20 July 2003, is well advanced. Groups from Bonn, Leiden, Perm and Torün (in Poland) have been identified, while Grenoble is still seeking a suitable group. There will also be local participation, with groups from Pegasus, Cap and Stocking, Oxford Playhouse Youth Theatre, Oxford School and Cheney School. Workshops, rehearsals and performances will be held at the Oxford Playhouse, and at venues elsewhere in the city. As a direct result of this project, Pegasus Theatre will exchange with Torün in 2004.

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

Discussions are also under way about marking the year of Oxford's application to be designated as the European Capital of Culture – regardless of whether Oxford is the chosen city. It is hoped that there will be a choral festival, and that all of Oxford's twin towns will be involved.

Bonn Over 200 people will take part in Oxford Week in Bonn, 26 May - 1 June 2003. Groups include Doyle Academy of Irish Dance, Woodpecker Folk Band, City of Oxford Morris Men, Cyclists Club, Masons Aprons, Oxford Artists, Oxford Photographic Society, Soroptimist International Oxford & District, Youth Football, Youth Basketball, St Edwards Choir, Bonn Club Oxford, Oxford Inspires and a Civic Delegation. Anyone else interested in taking part and/or finding a partner group in Bonn should contact May Wylie (tel. 01865 252537).

Leiden About 40 members of the Leiden link are planning their annual pilgrimage to Leiden in May. They will be accompanied by a contingent from the Royal British Legion, who will take part in the Dutch Remembrance Day service and parade through the streets to the war memorial for the wreath-laying ceremony. Other activities will include a visit to a flower garden.

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

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

Grenoble The Oxford Grenoble Association held its Annual Dinner on 7 February, at Oxford Brookes University. Members of the Alliance Grenoble-Oxford will visit Oxford in May, together with the Grenoble choral group Interlude, who will be hosted by the East Oxford Community Choir. The two choirs will be performing at Merton College on 30 May and in Woodstock on 31 May.

Cheney School made an exchange visit to Grenoble in February, and welcomed a group of students from Collège/Lycée Stendhal to Oxford in March 2003.

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

Leon The Misa Campesina (Nicaraguan Folk Mass) held in Blackfriars on 7 March raised over £200. Blackfriars has agreed to contribute over £1200 to a women's agricultural project in Leon. The Leon Link also held a fund-raising Salsa event and demonstration on 14 March in the Newman Rooms, St Aldates, which raised £400. The next event is a recital by Quentin Hayes and friends from the Royal Opera House on Friday 13 June in the Town Hall. Tickets (£15 to include supper and £10 unwaged) available from May Wylie. Raffle prizes include 2 tickets to Covent Garden.