

PERM NEWS

The newsletter of the Perm Association

January 2003

Forthcoming events

AGM The Annual General Meeting of the Perm Association will be held at 6.30 pm on Wednesday 5 February 2003, in Oxford Town Hall.

Integrated Transport Study It is hoped that a group from Perm will visit Oxford for this event in January or February.

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). We are hoping that 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.

Tours in Perm Region One of the young teachers from PSU who visited Oxford in 2001 is working for a 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 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 4). 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, may include a group from Perm (see item under OIL on page 4).

Recent events

Perm State University A group of six academics from Perm State University visited Oxford from 16 November to 7 December, as part of the annual University exchange. Members of the Perm Association welcomed them at a party in Rewley House, on Wednesday 20 November.

Projects

At a committee meeting in December, it was agreed that the Perm Association should support two projects - one for large and low-income families (see paragraph below); and one for a school in an old coal-mining town, recommended by Lyuba Proskurnin.

On a recent visit to Perm, Karen Hewitt handed over a donation of \$150 to Galina Goussarova, who runs an autonomous social non-profit organisation called Centre for Family Support, founded in 1998. The money is to be spent, at Galina's discretion, on two projects, a Toy Library and "Anthill". Galina has written about these projects, as follows.

The Toy Library is a way of getting more toys, games and sport items to children in their own homes. It is very important for us to buy more items for the Toy Library. Besides leading the above-mentioned projects, I'm the consultant of the two Councils of Large Families on the Children's Projects (all seven districts of Perm have such councils). The Council of Large Families of the Industrial District of Perm is very active and arranges different activities for children all year round. In summer it is the "Anthill" summer camp. At other times they run the "Anthill" Club which

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One Hour Nearer to Europe?

Visitors to Perm know very well that Perm time is two hours ahead of Moscow time. Since Russian trains and their stations always run on Moscow time, this is the reason why anyone looking at Perm 2 station clock will receive a heart-lurching jolt and wonder why it says, for example, 10 o'clock when you *know* that it is midday; or why the train scheduled to arrive at 7 pm arrives late into the evening.

Russians are used to making automatic adjustments between local time and Moscow time, but now there is a campaign to change Perm's own time, so that the city is only one hour ahead of Moscow. In December this was a subject of some amused discussion among the sceptics; but if the regional government has its way, local time will indeed be changed.

The reasons for the change are political, backed up by the astronomical. As far as the sun is concerned, Perm is not much more than one hour ahead of Moscow; hence the very late sunrises and sunsets in the city. More importantly, President Putin's appointment of 'Super-governors' in 2000 led to some rearrangement of 'Super-regions'. Perm was included in the Volga-Vyatka region of central Russia. The 'super-governor', Kirienko, operates from Nizhny Novgorod (formerly Gorky) which is about 7 hours from Moscow on the train to Perm – which means another 14 hours of travel to Perm itself.

Permians were surprised by this arrangement for Perm is by history, geography and industry a Urals city. In the nineteenth century it was the capital of the whole Urals area, a role which was passed to Yekaterinburg on the eastern side of the Urals as more mines and industrial areas opened up across the Urals range. So Perm became instead the capital of the Western Urals: 'east of the Kama, west of the Urals' with its own hinterland rich in minerals and industrial resources, and with a wonderful river system for transport and water usage. In the new reforms most people expected to become part of the Urals super-region. But Perm is a go-ahead city, and Kirienko, with Putin's blessing, wanted it as part of his vibrant Volga region. And so the Regional administration has been adjusting to this new arrangement which has advantages for politicians, bureaucrats and some businessmen. How better to confirm the semi-divorce from Yekaterinburg and the new semi-wedding with Nizhny Novgorod than to change the Official Time of the city?

A committee was set up to look into the question. Nizhny Novgorod and the Volga region operates on Moscow time, but even Kirienko could see that Perm is *too far to the east* for Moscow time to be possible. But perhaps Perm could change to *one* hour ahead of Moscow, one hour closer to Moscow/Volga time? But there was a problem: Urals people are suspicious of Moscow so a better reason was required. Someone had a brilliant idea: 'One hour nearer to Europe'. It is the official slogan of the campaign.

The slogan may be seductive but the signs are that the people will not be seduced. They are Urals people, working on Urals time. Why should they change to this time-zone which is 'one hour ahead of Moscow', a narrow strip currently occupied by the Udmurts of the Udmurtia republic. As the train trundles from Kirov on its way to Perm, it stops at Glazov and Balezino, the stations where women sell home-made buns and pies and warm potato salad, and bravely crawl under the trains to reach another lot of customers. This is Udmurtia, a poor region with which Perm has no particular wish to identify itself. Joining the Udmurt republic is hardly getting closer to Europe.

Although the Governor and some businessmen would like the change, the proposals will probably get little further than the slogan. For eventually there will have to be a referendum, and how can any government, even a local one, persuade its citizens to change their local time? It would be like asking us to change our pints of milk and beer. Still, it's a slogan we might adapt. How about changing our time to 'European time' and describing it as 'one hour closer to Perm'?

Karen Hewitt

A fairy tale?

In September 1999 my wife, Frances, and I went to Perm as members of the annual delegation from Oxford University (with no little trepidation, as far as Frances was concerned!) We arrived and were picked up by a middle-aged Russian and his daughter, who conveyed us to their very comfortable flat. On the way there Misha mentioned that he was an ex-MIG 31 fighter pilot, which, considering that I had served for nearly 20 years in the Royal Air Force, was quite an interesting coincidence! We had a tremendous two weeks staying with the Bukharovs, so much so that we returned in September 2001. We were in fact there when the obscene terrorist acts took place in America. It happens that 11 September is my birthday and we were in the middle of a little party in the evening (Perm time) when the news came through.

The point of this preamble is to set the scene for the return visit by Misha and his wife, Ira, in May of this year. Finance was, of course, the first problem but, once that had been overcome, there were other obstacles to be surmounted. With a lot of help from Karen Hewitt, who put me in touch with the British Consul in Yekaterinburg, I eventually found out what was required of me by the British authorities. Among other things, I was asked to fax copies of my bank statements to the Consulate to show that I was financially capable of funding the return to Russia of Misha and Ira should they go broke whilst in UK! I also had to fax a copy of the back page of my passport to prove that I was a British citizen (perhaps understandable in view of my surname).

When all these formalities were finally completed the miracle happened and I met the Bukharovs late one evening at Heathrow. The thing which is difficult to comprehend is that, despite Misha's service in the Air Force, they had never been out of the Soviet Union so, discounting other Soviet republics like Ukraine, this was the first time they had stepped on to foreign soil. Driving through Henley-on-Thames on the way from the airport on a balmy summer evening it occurred to me that anything less like Russia would be hard to imagine and, judging from the way Misha and Ira stared out of the car, I was right. Next day there happened to be a show of classic cars on the Hambleden sports field and then a large lunch party in Henley given by some friends who were delighted to have Misha and Ira along.

So their holiday started and from that point their feet hardly touched the ground. In spite of having almost no English they coped brilliantly with everything that was thrown at them. Our friends all over the country were amazingly hospitable but their task was made all the easier by the fact that the Bukharovs were the easiest people to feed and ate literally everything that was put in front of them. In restaurants their tactic was always to have whatever Frances and I were having, thus obviating the need for stressful decisions - except when Frances and I were not having the same thing! Scotland was particularly interesting in this respect. Although I am fiercely English and have not a drop of Scottish blood in my veins, I am particularly partial to haggis. I advised them to go with Frances' choice, which was something less controversial, but they insisted that they wanted to try this traditional Scottish dish. I was dubious, but I need not have worried. Immediately they tasted it 'ochen vkusno' was the cry, the Russian equivalent of 'very tasty'.

Second-hand shops were a source of great delight and they quickly learned how to say these words in English. This predilection was becoming almost an obsession and we eventually stooped to all kinds of subterfuge to distract their attention from these institutions - particularly when there was a train or bus to be caught. Even shops selling new goods were a great attraction and, interestingly because my perception was that comparing like for like anything would be much cheaper in Russia, there were sometimes things in the UK which were declared to be cheaper than the Russian equivalent. All in all it was a fascinating experience for us just to see how Misha and Ira reacted to what would have seemed to all of us only 15 years ago to be beyond the bounds of possibility - two officers from potentially enemy air forces enjoying each others' company and hospitality. As Misha kept saying, 'eto skazka' - 'this is a fairy tale'.

Ken Cugnoni

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includes walks, excursions, going to the cinema and theatre, sport competitions, ecological actions at weekends and in vacations. The leader of the Council is Vera Tokareva, a widow, a mother of 6 children. We support this club: we help in working out projects, write letters of support to the authorities for them, collect stationery and clothes for children. Of course, they use the Toy Library all the year round. They need the money for club T-shirts as they often participate in various competitions. It would also be good to use some money on tickets to the theatre, museum and planetarium.

Sotsial'nii Innovatsii (Social Innovations)

This is the name of a new publication, the first edition of which appeared in Perm in December 2002. It is the newsletter of the autonomous non-profit-making organisation "The Regional Centre for International Projects". It is hoped that future editions of the Perm newsletter will carry summaries of some items from SI, to keep people in Oxford informed of news from the voluntary organisations in Perm, which are supported by the Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Associations.

News of other links

Bonn Plans are taking shape for Oxford Week in Bonn, 26 May - 1 June 2003. Many groups have expressed interest in being represented – Oxford Artists, City of Oxford Morris Men, a string quartet from the County Youth Orchestra, Cyclists Club, Doyle Academy of Irish Dance, Masons Aprons, Museum of Oxford, Oxford Photographic Society, Oxford University Press Choir, Woodpecker Folk Band, Youth Basketball and Youth Football, as well as a civic delegation. Oxford Artists and Oxford Photographic Club plan to stage exhibitions during the visit. Anyone else interested in taking part in Oxford Week in Bonn and/or finding a partner group in Bonn should contact May Wylie (tel. 01865 252537).

Gosford Hill School has taken part in an exchange with Bonn.

The Bonn link is clearly thriving – but they do need people to take on the roles of Secretary and Treasurer.

Leiden On 8 November, representatives from Leiden and Oxford took part in a joint seminar on crime. They made a commitment to sharing initiatives and good practice, and there will be a follow-up seminar in Leiden in May 2004.

The Leiden link held its Annual Dinner on 9 November, when friends from Leiden were in Oxford for the Remembrance weekend. A return art exchange is planned for 2003, when a group of Oxford artists will visit Leiden.

Grenoble The Oxford Grenoble Association held a wine and cheese party in Wolfson College on 29 October, as a follow-up to the highly successful visit to Grenoble in May. The OGA will hold its Annual Dinner on Friday 7 February 2003, at Oxford Brookes University. The French Circle has a full programme of meetings on the third Wednesday of each month.

Cheney School is making an exchange visit to Grenoble in February 2003.

Leon The Leon Link held a Nicaraguan Evening, with music, food and entertainment, on 2 November - which raised over £500. The Leon Link will be holding two more fund-raising events - a Salsa event and demonstration on Friday 14 March in the Newman Rooms, St Aldates (tickets on the door: £5 waged and £3 unwaged, proceeds in aid of women's projects in Leon); and 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.

OIL Oxford International Links' planning for the International Youth Performing Arts Festival is taking shape. Groups from Bonn, Leiden, Grenoble, Perm and Toruń (in Poland) will stay at Hillend Camp from 12 to 20 July 2003. There will be workshops, rehearsals and performances every morning, afternoon and evening, as well as community performances in and around the city. As a direct result of this project, Pegasus Theatre will exchange with Toruń in 2004.

OIL plans to arrange an international youth sports event in July 2004, and is looking for ideas from people with experience of organising sporting events. A group from Perm will be invited - possibly an ice hockey team.