



# The Scotland-Russia Forum Newsletter

Issue 4 December 2003

scotrussforum@blueyonder.co.uk

Welcome to the last Newsletter of 2003: as well as looking forward to Forum activities in the New Year, there are reports on the Forum's first Autumn programme and several other events of interest. Please send reviews, articles and any other items of interest to the editor: contact details below.

### Forum Programme, January-April 2004

All talks (except AGM) start at 7.30, and cost £2 members and students, £4 non-members, including informal drink afterwards. Details: 0131 662 9149 or scotrussforum@blueyonder.co.uk

#### **Wednesday 14 January: The recent Russian elections - Mike Pringle MSP**

Mike Pringle visited Moscow as an observer at the December elections and will discuss his impressions.

7.30pm English Speaking Union, 23 Atholl Crescent (Basement), Edinburgh

#### **Thursday 26 February: AGM. Vladimir Malygin – In conversation with Dairmid Gunn**

After the business of the Annual General Meeting the new Consul-General of the Russian Federation in Scotland, Mr. V. A. Malygin, will talk about Russia today with our Vice-President, Lt. Commander Dairmid Gunn. Members will then have a chance to meet him, and each other, over tea, coffee and biscuits.

NOTE earlier starting time: 7pm. European Room, Council Chambers. No charge.

#### **Thursday 18 March: 'Crying forever'. The Soviet Nuclear Test Legacy in Kazakhstan - Struan Stevenson MEP**

Mr Stevenson first visited Semipalatinsk in August 2000 and was profoundly affected by the suffering he saw there, the awful legacy of 40 years of Soviet nuclear testing in Kazakhstan – the equivalent of 20,000 Hiroshima bombs. He is striving to help by bringing the plight of the people of the Polygon to the attention of the world and to direct aid to the villages where it is most needed. There will be a photographic exhibition at the Scottish Parliament to coincide with this talk.

7.30pm Teviot Row House (Edinburgh University Students' Union), Bristo Square, Edinburgh. The Dining Room (1st floor).

#### **Thursday 22 April: A Republic by the Volga: the Chuvash people and their culture - Peter France**

Professor France, a specialist in Russian and French literature, has translated *An Anthology of Chuvash Poetry* (Forest Books, 1991), as well as several volumes of the (Russian) poetry of the Chuvash national poet, Gennady Aygi. He has visited Chuvashia three times and is a foreign member of the Chuvash National Academy.

7.30pm English Speaking Union, 23 Atholl Crescent (Basement), Edinburgh

#### **Films:** coordinator, Natasha Black

Films will be shown monthly on a day to be decided after first meeting, which will be on Monday 19 January at 7pm. Venue: 23 Blackford Road, Marchmont, Edinburgh. This will be *Prezident Vseia Rusi* (President of All Rus'), 1999-2000, directed by Evgenii Kiselev for NTV. Part 1 (and 2 if time). Concerning El'tsin and his role in the events of 1993.

Suggestions for future films would be welcome. They might include: *Dom Durakov* (House of Fools), 2002, directed by Konchalovsky; *Chaikovsky*, 1970, starring Smoktunovsky; *Idiot*, 2003, directed by Todorovsky (TV event of the year prizewinner).

### **Kruzhok**

Informal discussion group held at 7pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month. No charge.

Venue: Room 9.01, 9<sup>th</sup> floor, David Hume Tower, University of Edinburgh

12 January: Ballet Russe, Dairmid Gunn (in English)

9 February: Fishskin Tatars and Tigers: Past and Present in the Russian Far East, David Prynne, author of *Amur Tiger*, to be publ. Jan 2004. (in English)

8 March: Traditional Russian arts and crafts, Zoya Beaton, Edinburgh Russian Shop (in English and Russian?)

There will be no meeting on Easter Monday, 12 April.

**Business Seminar:** Friday 26 March. Contact the Secretary for further details.

### **UK@SPb - the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of St Petersburg**

2003 was St Petersburg's tercentenary year. The UK government co-ordinated a programme of events and visits to mark the anniversary year and to complement the city's own programme centred on the last 10 days of May when it was St Petersburg's official birthday. During this period the city prepared an extensive programme of celebrations when Tony Blair and other world leaders visited St Petersburg at the invitation of President Putin. The UK programme was very varied with an emphasis on partnership - hence its title UK@SPb - and included high-level visits: HRH the Prince of Wales was Patron of UK@SPb and, in this capacity, visited the city in mid July. A dedicated website was set up with up-to-date details of the programme, links to other relevant websites and information about St Petersburg.

The Scottish contribution to the development of St Petersburg was significant and is still evident today. 'Window on Scotland' reflected the continuing interest in St Petersburg in the rich cultural traditions and vibrant future of Scotland and highlighted aspects of the historical links between them.

- "Evolving Identity - New Architecture of Scotland" was the first international exhibition of contemporary Scottish architecture to tour Scandinavia and northern Europe and presented the best new architecture constructed in Scotland since 1998. Intended to update external perceptions of architecture in Scotland and escape the stereotypical image of castles and romantic landscapes, the exhibition highlighted the work of six architectural practices whose recent projects represent the range and diversity of new design currently taking place. With complete sections on the work of Zoo Architects and Gareth Hoskins Architects from Glasgow, Malcolm Fraser Architects, Michael Laird Architects and Reiach and Hall Architects from Edinburgh and the Nicoll Russell Studio from Dundee, the exhibition (held in the University of Architecture and Civil Engineering) displayed more than 150 of the best new buildings completed in the past four years.



- George Watson's College Pipes and Drums performed a series of open air concerts in venues in and around the city of St Petersburg from 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> July. In scorching summer heat they

played to a capacity crowd of 23,000 football fans in the Zenit Stadium and entertained St Petersburg residents at the Peter and Paul Fortress, the Artillery Museum, Arts' Square, St Isaac's Cathedral and the Kapella courtyard. They also played in the park and along the main fountain cascade at Peterhof (Petrodvorets).

- The Edinburgh Youth Orchestra (EYO) with Scottish international soloists Tommy Smith (saxophone) and Evelyn Glennie (percussion) performed a Jubilee concert in the St Petersburg Philharmonia Hall on Sunday 20th July. The Tommy Smith Trio played a 'gig' at the JFC Jazz Club and Evelyn Glennie was joined by some of the EYO players to give a workshop for special needs children, their parents and teachers.
- 'Scotland - the view today' (an FCO publication) was translated into Russian and circulated widely throughout the city.
- 'Scots who served Russia' - an article (by *Margaret Street*, Vice-Convenor of the Saltire Society) about Scottish doctors in Russian service, was posted onto the website.

2003 is also the 450th anniversary of Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations and the St Petersburg programme highlighted the UK-Russia relationship in the 21st century. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office worked closely with the British Council, government departments and organisations in the private sector. The UK@SPb programme was much appreciated in St Petersburg:

“significant events in the cultural life of St Petersburg”

“serves as an example for close partnership between our two countries”

“the most significant international events for the university this year which made a great impact on professionals in this field”

“those unforgettable days in July”

“More please!”

Meg Luckins

### **Work at Kitezh children's home, Russia, September 2003**

Robin Thomason's initial impressions of Russia appeared in the last issue of the Newsletter. This is his final report on his whole trip.

My visit to the Kitezh centre was organised by its UK contact office in Morayshire, Scotland. Volunteers such as myself travel to the centre as paying guests, thus providing both much-needed funding and useful labour, particularly concerning English language teaching, which is considered to be of special importance for the children. The volunteers benefit in turn from work experience in a quite different environment to their own, a candid insight into Russian life and rewarding friendships and closeness to children at the centre.

Kitezh is a purpose-built 'village' of wooden houses and a school building located in the south-west of the country, some 280km from Moscow. The name alludes to the city of Kitezh in Russian legend, for centuries hidden beneath the surface of a lake, but preserving the kernel of the Russian soul and waiting to rise and save its people at their moment of need. The founders of the centre consider the future generation to be the bearers of the Russian spirit and the present time to be one of great need, and Kitezh as a phenomenon and as an institution seeks to rescue children from dire individual situations of homelessness, neglect, abuse and the like, and to allow them to heal and instil in them a sound education and the best values of their culture.

The aims of my visit included making a practical contribution in Russia in an area of need; to apply my own skills to the situation there; to participate in a cultural exchange and one of skills and knowledge; to increase my knowledge of the Russian language and gain a sense of rural life in Russia and a measure of the country in the years since the end of Communism. The period at Kitezh was the second part of a project in which I travelled by bicycle from Scotland to the Ukraine, aiming to make contact with the various cultural regions along the way. My intention had been to ride the entire distance to Moscow, but this was cut short by lack of time. Having first been a traveller, the Kitezh phase was intended to be its logical counterpart – to be settled in a place, to assist there and live among the local people as if one of them.

The extent to which my aims were fulfilled is varied. It was of course naïve of me to expect to live among the Russians as though I were one of them: my limited knowledge of Russian prevents this, as do significant differences in social customs and routines. Somewhat disappointingly, it was not possible to cease feeling foreign, nor being regarded as such by the inhabitants. A month is simply too short a time for this. On the other hand, the children and staff at Kitezh are familiar with foreign visitors and made an effort to make them welcome. Likewise, the short time period made it difficult to assess the effectiveness of my contribution as a teacher. The daily school routine was often interrupted by events, and this particularly so at the time of year when I was there. Kitezh is largely self-financing through its own agricultural arm, and thus much of September is devoted to the potato harvest, in which more than half of the teaching is suspended so that both adults and children can participate in the three weeks of work in all hours of daylight. The lessons that I did teach were however generally a success, though I lacked experience of working with children, some of whom have learning difficulties arising from psychological damage done in early experiences. This was often shown in lack of concentration or exaggerated behavioural traits. Mostly, however, the children showed high spirits and were very close-knit, with a healthy scepticism for school!

The potato harvest provided a welcome counterpart to school. While hard work, this had the effect of lifting spirits, relaxing us and making redundant any sense of cultural separation. We all have to eat, and we all live from the land – and know what potatoes are. It is somehow not coincidence that many such international meeting and exchange projects involve outdoor and/or farming activities.

As for gaining insights into Russian life, there were many opportunities for this. Except for Sundays, when the children eat in ‘families’ in individual cottages, all staff and children eat three meals per day in the communal dining room, which also serves as the place for sharing information. Here it was possible to converse with children and adults – subject to language ability – and it became clear that what constitutes a conversation in Russian differs from British ideas. It is difficult to engage Russians (adults or children) by posing questions about background, job, interests – such a barrage of questions are perceived as rude or nosy. This principle applies in general and not only where painful early life experiences may be an issue. Rather than question, it is important to launch confidently into conversation with a topic that others can then respond to and question, offering one’s companions a positive quantity, as it were, that can then be evaluated. Also visible was the fierce closeness of the children to one another, both within and across age groups. Russians are famed for the value they place on friendship, which extends to willingness to sacrifice one’s life; by contrast Western usage of the term appears to them to be frivolous. The children at Kitezh have routine, nourishment and stimulus, and share their lives to a very great extent.

The Kitezh village is modern and its wooden buildings well-kept, with levels of comfort increasing slowly with time. By contrast the traditional villages in the local area look run-down, with inhabitants who are more or less peasants. Water is drawn from wells and sanitation is rudimentary. The local town of Baryatino, some six miles away, whose main features are its war memorials, Lenin statue and Soviet-era administrative buildings, becomes animated once a week with its Friday market. It seems that little has changed since the end of the Soviet period, with the exception of the range of products available in the market and local shops. Equally, perhaps, little is fundamentally different now to the situation before the 1917 revolution, except, of course, for the electricity supply and radio. For me the question remains as to why there is so much apparent poverty in Russia. Judging by the fields, the country can produce plenty; resources are readily available. Russia has all it needs to be powerful and prosperous – except, perhaps, the will to sacrifice itself to that end.

My visit succeeded in giving me a taste of the country “away from the news”, of the daily situation of people in rural areas, as well as brief visits to Moscow at the beginning and end of the stay. Whether my aims for cultural understanding and contribution to Kitezh were fully realised is unlikely. Yet it seems impossible to expect concrete outcomes here, or indeed to measure success.

Nor was a quantitative outcome anticipated prior to departure: what was and remains of value was the initiative and the perspectives gained. In so far as the issues were relevant and were faced, however, the visit was a success and has provided me with a basis for further work and exploration in Russia.

I wish to end by expressing my gratitude to the Allen McTernan Memorial Fund for its generous grant which made this project possible. Robin Thomson, Heriot-Watt University

### **Reports on Forum events**

#### **Professor Paul Dukes on 450 years of Russo-British Relations**

The Forum's first talk of the season was given at the Royal Overseas League by Professor Paul Dukes of Aberdeen University in the presence of our President Tam Dalyell, who supplied a stimulating introduction. Professor Dukes provided an entertaining overview of Russo-British relations from the first commercial contacts of the mid-16th century right up to the varied cultural initiatives of the present day. The talk was enlivened by illustrations drawn from the speaker's special knowledge of the North-East of Scotland - there can have been few in the audience who knew that the first Russian ambassador to England had been shipwrecked off the coast of Aberdeenshire. Professor Dukes concluded

his talk with some interesting reflections on the present-day state of Russia.

John Bowles



Professor Paul Dukes, Forum Secretary Jenny Carr, and Forum President Tam Dalyell, MP

#### **Tim Binyon on Pushkin**

It was standing room only for the talk 'Pushkin' given by writer's biographer, T. J. Binyon, on 23 October in the Conference Room of Edinburgh University's David Hume Tower. Winner of the 2003 Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction, T. J. Binyon lectures in Russian Literature at Oxford, where he is a Senior Research Fellow at Wadham College. He is also a well-known reviewer and writer of crime fiction. His talk considered the dichotomy apparent throughout Pushkin's life and work, resulting from the very different family backgrounds of his father and mother. On the one hand the aristocratic lineage rooted deeply in Russia's past, on the other the exotic African strain, of which he was equally proud, descending from Abram Petrovich Gannibal, '*Arap Petra Velikogo*'. The profound scholarship behind Binyon's biography was obvious, both in the talk and in the lively question and answer session and informal conversations that followed it. The audience was pleased to hear that the same learning is now to be applied to a projected biography of Lermontov, and it will be fascinating to see how that author's Scottish connections are reflected in Binyon's next work.

Ian McGowan

#### **Peter Semple on working with Russian Doctors in St Petersburg**

There was only a small audience for Peter Semple's talk on Russian doctors in St Petersburg, but there was keen interest in how sympathisers abroad can help.

#### **Alexandra Tolstoy and the Last Secrets of the Silk Road**

This was one of our most popular events, with a record audience of more than seventy people. Alexandra was a great hit with everyone present and some of the audience were inspired to buy her book and explore the secrets of the silk road further.

#### **Kruzhok**

The kruzhok meetings have been varied, covering a range of cultural topics, including the music of Kastalsky, and contemporary Russian writers. The meeting led by Neville Long, in which he discussed a selection of Chekhov's stories with great insight, was a particular highlight.

### Christmas Party

The Forum Christmas party was very well attended, and was held thanks to the proprietors of Dom, in their gallery in Advocates Close. The new Russian consul-general in Edinburgh, Mr Malygin, was able to attend for a while. The preview version of the Forum's website was on show: it will be available in the New Year.

### Orthodox Community of St Nicholas

Christmas services at Laighill Loan, Dunblane:

Tuesday 6 January 2004, 2 pm: *Vigil. Christmas Eve. Nativity Fast.*

Wednesday 7 January 2004, 11 am: *Liturgy. Christmas.* There is a communal meal after the Liturgy.

Further information: Russian Orthodox Church in Britain and Ireland (Diocese of Sourozh) - Father Alexander Williams, Arranmhor, Laighill Loan, Dunblane, FK15 0BJ tel. 01786-822750

Ecumenical Patriarchate (Diocese of Thyateira) - Fr Constantine Papageorghiou, Greek Cathedral of St Luke, 27 Dundonald Road, Glasgow, G12 9LL, Tel. 0141-339 7368

Archimandrite John Maitland Moir, Community of St Andrew, 23a George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9LD, tel 0131 667 0372

### Orthodox Community of St Andrew

Christmas Services: Orthodox Community of St Andrew, 23A George Square, Edinburgh. Tel. 0131 667 0372

Thursday 1 January 2004, 10.30am - Circumcision of our Lord & St Basil.

Monday 5 January 2004, Eve of Theophany: 10.30am - Royal Hours & Vespers  
6.30pm - Great Blessing of Water

Tuesday 6 January 2004, Feast of Theophany: 9am – Matins

10.30am - Divine Liturgy

11.45am Great Blessing of Waters

### St Andrew-Aid Relief visit to Russia in September

A group from the Scottish charity St Andrew-Aid Relief visited Russia during September in order to distribute the funds they had collected to their partner organisations. They visited an number of schools, children's homes and hospitals, and bought equipment and supplies to help the staff in their work.

### The Nevsky Prospekt Exhibition

A number of Forum members attended the official opening of the Nevsky Prospekt Exhibition, *Per aspera ad astra*, of photographs by Natasha Hull, held at Ocean Terminal to commemorate the Tercentenary of St Petersburg and Russo-Scottish links, and others were there at the Russian Party held on Friday 5 December. £700 was raised for Orphanage 13 in St Petersburg from sales of gifts and cards during the exhibition. The Baltic Trading Company would like to thank all those who attended the private views and visited the trade stand.

### Other events

**Music in Moscow. Tutor: Stuart Campbell (with the participation of Svetlana Zvereva).**

The music of Kremlin cathedrals, tsars' palaces, nobles' and merchants' houses, theatres and concert halls will be studied in its cultural context. Muscovite composers, great and not so great, will be heard. Glasgow University Campus, Tuesdays from 13 January 2004, 7.30-9.30 (10 meetings) (cost £57/£28.50). Code C137. Edinburgh University, 11 Buccleuch Place, Thursdays from 15 January 2004, 2-4pm (NB time) (9 meetings) (cost £65/£43 concessions). Code M213. Details: Department of Adult and Continuing Education University of Glasgow St Andrew's Building, Eldon Street, Glasgow G3 6NH. Tel.: 0141-330 1835 E-mail: enquiry@ace.gla.ac.uk Web: www.gla.ac.uk/adulteducation Office of Lifelong Learning, The University of Edinburgh, 11

Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW. Tel.: 0131-650 4400 (24 hours), E-mail: OLL@ed.ac.uk  
 Web: www.lifelong.ed.ac.uk

**Screenings of *The Cuckoo* (Kukushka)** *The Cuckoo* (1h39m, 2002) is the Winner of Russia's Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress and Best Actor Academy Awards, as well as the Audience Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival 2003. Directed by Aleksandr Rogozhkin. Cast: Anni-Christina Juuso, Ville Haapasalo, Viktor Bychkov, Aleksei Kashnikov, Mikhail Korobochkin. Screenings in Scotland: The Filmhouse Edinburgh, for two weeks from December 19, The Glasgow Film Theatre in Glasgow, for 1 week from January 2, The Belmont in Aberdeen, for 1 week from January 16 (certificate 12A). Details: www.sodapictures.com

**Exhibition of new works by Ludmila Kosmina and Elena Kourenkova.** Two well established Glasgow based artists, working with colours and ceramics. The exhibition runs throughout December till the 31st December 2003. Russian Café-Gallery Cossachok, 10 King Street, Merchant City, Glasgow G1 5QP Tel: 0141 553 0733 cossachok@yahoo.com www.cossachok.com

**Small paintings for Christmas** Over 125 works by over 50 artists from Scotland and abroad in various media including Russian crafts and Kirghiz sculptures. The exhibition runs from 24 November until 3 January and 20-31 January. Gallery hours: Monday-Friday 11am-6pm, Saturday 10.30am-5pm. Hanover Fine Arts, 22a Dundas St, Tel/fax 0131 5562181

**Russian Gala Night** Royal Scottish National Orchestra, with Anthony Inglis, conductor and Roger Owens, piano. Programme: Rachmaninov, Piano Concerto no 2, Rimsky-Korsakov, Capriccio Espagnole, Borodin, Dances from Prince Igor, Tchaikovsky, Sleeping Beauty Waltz, Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture, Swan Lake Suite, and 1812 overture (with indoor fireworks). Saturday 27 December, 2003, Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow; Monday 29 December 2003, Usher Hall, Edinburgh

**The Fourth International Ballet Festival in St Petersburg** The Festival will feature performances by the Mariinsky Ballet, the Bolshoi Ballet, ABT, the Paris Opera Ballet and the Royal Ballet, Covent Garden. Russia Travel are organising a tour for this from 4-8 March 2004: costs, excluding air fares from £415.00 per person. Contact: Russia Travel UK, 103 St. Leonard's Street, Edinburgh EH8 9QY, Scotland. Tel/Fax: 0131 667 2303/0131 667 8921. Email: info@RUvisa.co.uk Web: www.RUvisa.co.uk

**Cats – Not the Musical !** For those interested in Siberian tigers: Dr Andrew Kitchener, Curator of Mammals and Birds, National Museums of Scotland, will discuss his controversial proposition 'The Myth of Tiger Subspecies and What it Means for Conservation', and David Prynne will talk about his new book, 'Amur Tiger'. 7.30pm Thursday 29 January, Education Centre, Edinburgh Zoo. Tickets; £5 (members £3) including refreshments. Booking advisable: 0131-314 0324

**Inside Putin's Russia: Frozen North**, by Bridget Kendall, BBC diplomatic correspondent. Inside Putin's Russia is a series looking at life outside Moscow. In the third part of the series, Bridget Kendall visits Vorkuta in the desolate far north. The series will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 from 5 January, 2004 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3335201.stm>

#### Notices/Advertisements

**Congratulations!** Chris Brandie, SRF's 1st paid up member after last year's AGM, teacher of Russian at Boroughmuir HS, expert on Russian pop music ... has another achievement to his name (this time with a little help from his wife). We are delighted to welcome Thomas and Olivia Brandie to the world and look forward to signing them both up as student members of the Forum in due course.

**The Russian Tavern** was awarded "Best Real Ale Pub for Scotland" and "National UK Real Ale Pub of the Year" by the French organisation LES ROUTIERS. The tavern's proprietor Dr Olga Crawford, her husband Dag and their daughter Natasha received the plaques dressed in traditional Russian costume, in London on 25 November. The Russian Tavern is a recreation of a Russian hostelry at Port Bannatyne, Isle of Bute. Further information: Tel: 01700 505073, email: stay@butehotel.com website: www.russiantavern.co.uk

#### The works of Pushkin in English

The complete works of Pushkin have now been published in English. The multi-volume set is available from Milner & Company Ltd, PO Box 18, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 0LT. There is a website: [www.pushkininenglish.com](http://www.pushkininenglish.com)

# ARCTURUS EXPEDITIONS

**Solovetski Islands and the White Sea:** In summer explore the islands looking for Beluga Whales, seals and arctic birds. Enjoy wild-flower meadows, lakes and historic sites including the legendary Solovetski Monastery.

**Dates: 5 June - 17 June 2004**

**Solovetski Islands and the Russian North in Spring:** Travel across the crisp, snowy landscape by horse-drawn sledge, visiting monasteries and traditional wooden churches.

**Dates: 18 March - 29 March 2004**

**Kamchatka:** Renowned for Brown Bears, Steller's Sea Eagles, spawning salmon, beautiful endemic plants. Explore spectacular snow-covered volcanoes, hot springs, geysers, lush valleys and fast flowing rivers. Visit Eveni Reindeer Herders and enjoy vivid autumn colours.

**Dates: 27 August - 15 September 2004**

**Dog-sledge in Kamchatka with the Native People:** Travel by dog-sledge over the pristine snow-covered mountain passes, high plateaux and valleys. Stay at a Reindeer herders' winter camp. Watch the preparations for the Beringia Sled Dog Race.

**Dates: 29 February - 15 March 2004**

**For further details contact:**

**ARCTURUS EXPEDITIONS**

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