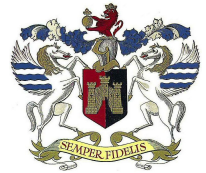


Exeter/Yaroslavl
Twinning Association

EYTA NEWSLETTER

December 2007



Honorary President
the Right Worshipful
The Lord Mayor of Exeter

From February onwards you will have the choice of either receiving this printed version of the Newsletter by mail as before, or receiving a full colour and fully interactive e-copy, delivered directly to your email letterbox.

Would those members wishing to receive the new e-copy please send their email address and details to enewsletter@eyta.org.uk

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1. Your New Look Newsletter

Welcome to your new format EYTA newsletter!

As you will see, your newsletter has been completely re-designed and expanded so that each month we can:

- Deliver you more information on what we as a twinning association are doing.
- Provide you with a forum for discussion, and the opportunity of sharing your twinning experiences with the other members.
- Give our friends at the YEFS the opportunity of providing us with their news and some insights into daily life in Yaroslavl.

In 2008 the newsletter will not only have this different layout, it is also going hi-tech.

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2. A View from the Chair

Christmas is nearly upon us again, a time when we think of not just our own families and friends, but also those of our extended families and friends in Yaroslavl. It is also the time when we reflect upon what has been done over the last year, and hopefully learn from our mistakes, in readiness for the coming New Year's activities.

As it is the start of the festive period, this month we have a contribution from Tatyana Kasatkina of the YEFS, whom I am certain most of you know well, on how she will be celebrating the Christmas and New Year holiday.

But before we go any further I am certain that you would like to join with me in wishing all the members of the EYTA and the YEFS a very Merry Christmas, and a happy and prosperous New Year!

3. The EYTA Russian Christmas Fayre & Coffee Morning

Christmas wouldn't be the same without the EYTA Christmas Russian Fayre and Coffee Morning, which this year will be on Saturday 15th December at Exeter Guildhall between 10.00 am and 12.30pm. We look forward to seeing all our members there, both new and old.

This year our Honorary President, The Lord Mayor of Exeter, Cllr Hazel Slack will be attending, and whilst with us will present the EYTA's an Honorary life membership to Celia Smith, in recognition for her many years devoted service to the association.

Apart from the usual coffee and mince pies and an opportunity to catch up on the latest news, there will be Bill Stanbury's famous Bottle & Tin Tombola, a Russian goods stall, cakes & produce, and a Russian bear stall (you will have to come to the event to find out what that is!).

**Offers of help with stalls and enquiries to our Secretary Julia Upton on 01392 681428.
Offers of help with the coffee and mince pies to Angela Samuel on 01392 258021**

Items can be taken to the Guildhall after 9 am on the morning of the "do".

This is our annual fundraiser and main meeting point for our members. It is important that you come along and show your support for the EYTA, and also bring your friends!

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4. Recent Events

On Saturday 6th October Alan & Ann Jones held an auction of art in Colyford Memorial Hall, with works by artists from Yaroslavl, St. Petersburg and Belgorod. A great many pictures were sold, and the proceeds will soon be winging their way back to the artists.

On Friday 19th October at the Heavitree Social Club, we were entertained by Leo Baker, who gave us a most enthralling talk on the Russo/Japanese war of 1904 to 1905. His mastery of the subject was obvious, matched only by his enthusiasm, which judging by the number of questions fielded afterwards, he had succeeded in passing on to a great many of those others present. Many thanks go to Leo for the most interesting talk. Also, thanks go to Ron Crabb for stepping in at the last minute and organising the event, and to the Heavitree Social club for the venue and eats at the end of the evening.

On Friday the 16th of November the New Inn resounded to the sounds of Twinners eagerly trying to destroy the pub's best set of skittles. Luckily they survived the onslaught and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves and £40.00 was raised for EYTA funds.

Many thanks go to Wendy Bates for organising the event, and more importantly for her supervising the various miscreants and vagabonds who attended.

5. New Members

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members who have joined since our last newsletter:

Terrie Hill
Wendy Barrett

6. Projects for 2008

In 2008 we plan a slight change of direction, as although we will still carry on our humanitarian aid work, we will be concentrating more of our efforts on two slightly different projects, but both which are more mainstream twinning based than those of recent years.

The YEFS Teachers' Resource Centre

Firstly, we will be attempting to provide the YEFS with a teachers' resource unit. This will consist of DVDs and CDs they can use to complement their educational work. Many members will already know that currently they train their students from books, but hopefully the results of our efforts will give their pupils a more rounded view of the works they study. As was commented during the visit to Yaroslavl this year, "it is one thing for a student to read a book, but to be able to hear and possibly see those same words spoken by a native speaker, gives them a much greater understanding of the language". In the next newsletter we will be providing members with a "wish list" of what is needed, so that you will be able to see where you can help. Surprisingly, a great many of the disks we need

are now given away free with newspapers, so we ask that from now on instead of throwing them away, throw them our way!

The Robin Smith Bursary

As was mentioned in the last newsletter, in honour of the late Robin Smith, the EYTA will be offering an annual bursary of one air ticket and related visa costs for one person from Yaroslavl who could gain both a positive and measurable benefit from visiting their twin city of Exeter, but for whom without the bursary the trip would not be possible. We are currently awaiting suggestions of possible beneficiaries from the YEFS, and will keep you informed as and when we know more about the successful candidate.

7. 2008 Exchanges

This year's twinning visit to Yaroslavl is planned from Tuesday 24th June 2008, returning on Thursday 3rd July 2008.

The incoming group visit from Yaroslavl will from Sunday 26th July 2008, returning on Monday 4th August 2008

Because of the tightening of Russian visa regulations our group list must be with the YEFS before 1st February, at the latest. So if you wish to be included in the outward group, get in touch with Nick Goodwin on 01404 815029

ASAP!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

8. A letter from a young visitor to Exeter

We have received a letter from one of the youngest visitors we have had the pleasure of hosting, Polina Smirnova, who visited with the YEFS group this summer.

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My name is Polina Smirnova. I'm a Russian schoolgirl. This year I've visited Exeter with a group of members of Exeter-Yaroslavl Twinning Society. I think this journey will stay in my memory vividly up to the end of my life.

The first impression which England made on me was the roads and the houses and hills - all buried in greenery and bright, amazing flowers everywhere. That's why, in spite of the sleepless night and all that tiredness after the flight, I spent the whole way from London to Exeter clicking the button of my camera. Not that I let it hung aside throughout the journey.

Soon, driving down the beautiful, coloured with flowers streets we (I mean me and Maria, another Russian girl who kept an eye on me, as I'm only fourteen) got to the house of our hosts Tony and Julia Upton. We were given a nice, cosy and very pretty room in their house. From the minute of our arrival and to the moment when we left for Heathrow to go home our hosts treated us as members of their own family, we really felt at home at their place. They did everything to help us enjoy our travel, and I'm very thankful to them.

The first day which we were supposed to stay with our hosts, they took us around the town, showed us the most famous sights of Exeter, including the Cathedral. During our journey we visited it even twice though it was, unfortunately, not in the program.

The Cathedral is another topic. As we walked inside, it amazed me with its magnificence and sacredness, real beauty and, at the same time, a feeling of belonging to the atmosphere of the service, though I'm Christian.

Generally speaking, Exeter is a place where modern rubs shoulders with the past. It's a beautiful ancient town with glorious gothic churches and buildings which have their own history, maybe even ghosts, and its own charming spirit. And at the same time, it's a modern one, with large shops, busy traffic and people hurrying down the streets.

Our visit enclosed several interesting, unique and impressive events, including sailing down Tiverton canal on a horse drawn barge, where we felt calm and peaceful, listening to the sound of water beside the board, and then feeding ducks on the shore; an excursion to the recycling plant which appeared to be very interesting, though we wondered if there might be anything to be shown about rubbish (but there was indeed!); a visit to Lord Mayor, so that we had a chance to thank her officially and then have a little talk, which was quite interesting; and of course, a trip to

London, which, not meaning to reduce my impression on Exeter, was absolutely striking. We hardly could imagine eating ice-cream under Big Ben and having a rest at a lawn near Westminster Abbey, so that, as well as the view of Exeter smothered in flowers, still appears in my mind when I try to remember the brightest moments of my life.

The rich and exciting program nevertheless provided us with some time to visit our friends, even meet some more people, so we also had the opportunity to appreciate the hospitality and kindness of Exeter people. Everyone treated us really nice, and I guess this was the most important part of the whole impression.

A curious thing happened to us at a stop on our way to London. The group left the bus to have a meal and a little rest, and I stayed at the bus because I was too tired. But something made me come out, and that was a peacock. It was so unusual to see such a rare bird walking down the parking lot and pretending to read the numbers of the cars, feeling quite confident! This made me remember one evening when our hosts took us around the town that appeared to be even more beautiful in the darkness. That evening walking down some alley we suddenly saw some geese and a black swan, quite comfortable on their own in the street. They cannot be met in Russian streets, so we girls found it very exciting.

The whole visit, of course, made a great impression on me, just too strong and bright to be expressed in words. I am thankful to everyone who made it so brilliant and, besides, who made it possible. And I sincerely hope that after a while I'll have an opportunity to come to Exeter again.

Polina Smirnova

9. Winter Holidays in Russia

The Russian people, unlike any other people in the world, have four winter holidays – Catholic Christmas on December 25, New Year on December 31, Orthodox Christmas on January 7, 'Old New Year' on January 13.

Christmas (on December 25) is marked by English-learning schoolchildren, students and English teachers who organise the so-called Christmas parties. YEFS also holds a 'Christmas party', which is actually a social gathering of all YEFS members. We get together to talk about Western Christmas traditions, to discuss our current activities, to raise money for the children's psychiatric hospital (through the auction of things brought from home), to enjoy being together. I like these parties. We come festively dressed and have delicious things to eat, we sing and dance. This year we also meet on 25 December, the preparations are in the pipe-line.

The main winter holiday in Russia is seeing the New Year in. We used to have one day off, January 1, but for a few past years we have been given long New Year holiday from 30 December to 8 January. People start preparing for the New Year celebration a couple of weeks before it, rushing from shop to shop in search of suitable presents. It is our tradition to give New Year gifts to relatives, friends, workmates, even neighbours. The choice in the shops being wide we can choose something unusual and/or unexpected.

The New Year celebration is a family holiday in Russia. In my family it has been a long tradition to get together at my parents' place round a lavish festive table. The younger generation does not usually stay in the whole night, but at the stroke of 12 the whole family, old and young, are together clinking wine glasses with champagne. Now that the parents are no longer with us, the family comes to me to see the New Year in leaving soon after midnight. Those of the folk who don't come for some reason call at 12 sharp so that we can feel the family bond. Actually the span between midnight and 1am is a very busy time - people call each other even from other towns and countries. It is another tradition of Russians - to wish a Happy New Year within the earliest hours of the year.

The New Year night is spent differently in different families. I will share with you my own experiences which may be the way many people see the New Year in. My New Year table is festively decorated with a small Christmas tree, candles and glass balls, and little figures of Father Frost and Snow Maiden.

I don't cook much for the night of New Year meal – just some salads made with fresh vegetables (cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, carrots, cabbage, celery, parsley) or cooked vegetable salads (potatoes, carrots, green peas, beetroots, boiled eggs, cooked mushrooms). The mixture may vary.

I like sea food salad – boiled shrimps, potatoes, green peas, eggs. There is also a plate of assorted fish, salted and smoked, - herring, sturgeon or salmon, - on the table and a tin of red caviar. Fruit is in abundance – grapes, apples, oranges, mandarin oranges and nuts.

After the President's TV statement people wish each other a Happy New Year. The night is spent in merriment, watching entertaining TV shows, drinking champagne, vodka, wine (each to his taste), and singing.

At 2 or 3 a.m. many people go out to take part in entertainment activities and performances on the squares, on the Volga Embankment. Returning home, chilly and hungry, people drink vodka to get warmed and have a hot meal. It is usually prepared beforehand and so it doesn't take much time to heat it up.

On January 1 after a long sweet sleep people get up to greet the New Year. It is the day of meeting relatives and friends, exchanging gifts (in the families the gifts are presented after the last stroke of the Kremlin Tower Clock).

The New Year holidays are followed by Christmas. The Orthodox Christmas on 7 January has been celebrated as an official public holiday since 1991. At Christmas the majority of people attend church. Old Russian traditions and customs have been revived –Christmas Eve, breaking fast, Christmas tide, fortune-telling, carol singing.

We like Christmas, it makes us think that God created the world to be a happy place for everybody and instead of saying 'Merry Christmas' (or in addition to it) I would say – be compassionate to everyone near you, and you'll feel happier for this.

I have a dream, a song to sing
To help them cope with anything

If you see the wonder of a fairy tale
You can take the future even if you fail.

Believe in your fairytale!!!

Tatyana Kasatkina

10. The Legend of Babushka

Legends abound of many gift-givers besides St. Nicholas in connection with Christmas. In old Russia, that is before the revolution of 1917, the most commonly known giver of gifts was an old woman known as Babushka (which means grandmother in Russian).

Babushka lived alone in a big house that required constant upkeep. She had lived so long alone that her days and her thoughts were filled only with cleaning, cooking, mending, spinning and looking after her empty property. She had no remaining family and rarely received visitors. Her large home near the road consumed her days.

As she busied herself one cold evening in scrubbing her floors, she heard the sound of trumpets coming from the road. She looked out the window and saw off in the distance three noblemen, finely dressed, moving down the road. She thought nothing of them until she heard the knock at her door.

"We are traveling to Bethlehem to find the Child who is born a King," said one of the wise men to her. "Won't you please come with us to find him?"

The old woman explained that her floors were not yet clean and that she could not possibly leave her home. She invited them in from the cold but they explained that they could not be delayed. They bid her farewell and went on their way.

Late that night by the light of a fire, she pondered upon the men who had visited her and, more importantly, of the Child of whom they spoke. She regretted deeply, for some reason, not having gone with them now. She gathered a few trinkets from among her meagre possessions and set off into the cold night to find the noblemen. She

walked and walked, inquiring after the traveling men and the Child who would be King but no one knew where to find them.

Legend has it that she continues to this day, traveling the lands in search of them. On Epiphany Eve she leaves her trinkets in the homes of good children she visits in hopes that they too will search for the Child.

David Parsons

11. From A Russian Kitchen

Here is a seasonal receipt for all those looking for something traditional, but a little different for this Christmas.

Pryaniki

The word “pryanik” comes from the Russian “pryanost” meaning spice. In olden days spices were very expensive, so these traditional cakes were a treat baked only for special occasions, of which Christmas was the main one. Initially, pryaniki were shaped by hand, later they were pressed into carved boards, but now they are cut out with pastry cutters. Regardless of the method the most important thing is that these sweet cakes contain spice, look festive, and taste delicious!

Try this simple recipe and see for yourself.

Ingredients

400 gms rye flower
200 gms honey
100 gms butter
1 egg
2 tbsp soured cream
1 tsp mixed spice
½ tsp baking powder
1 tsp lemon juice
For the icing:
½ or ⅓ cup icing sugar
1 egg white

Method

Melt the butter, remove from heat add the honey, egg, soured cream and lemon juice, and mix well. Add the sifted flour, baking powder and spice, and knead into soft dough on a floured surface. Leave to rest for 20 minutes, covered with a clean cloth. Roll the dough into 1 cm thick sheet and cut out with your favourite cutters.

Brush with lightly beaten egg to glaze and bake at 200° – 210° C until they are golden brown. Cool on a wire tray. When cooled decorate with icing through a fine nozzle.

Be bold, use your imagination and draw whatever you want, or write a Christmas message and give your masterpieces to your friends.

Galena Goodwin

You may try pryaniki with your coffee at the EYTA annual Christmas Russian Fayre and Coffee Morning at the Exeter Guildhall, 10am till 12.30pm on the 15th December.

And Finally

Bill is still awaiting payment of subs from some members. These subs are our lifeline, without which we could not exist and we ask all members make certain that their subs are paid on time.

**We would like to wish all
our members a very
Merry Christmas and a
happy New Year !!!!!**

