



Cambridge Russian-Speaking Society

Est. 1999

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Old Library, Fitzwilliam College, 7 pm 2 December 2011

Committee members and supporters present:

Ksenia Afonina, Marina Burrell, Don Forbes, Lena Karl, Natalia Kalyaznina, Barbara Laughlin, Marion McLeod, Katya Parker, Tanya Yurasova, Christine Watts, John Wilkins, Rosemary Edridge. The Meeting was attended by about 60 in total, including renewing members and non-members.

Agenda:

1. CamRuSS President's Report for 2010/11
 - 1.1 CamRuSS activities and main achievements
 - 1.2 Membership
 - 1.3 Areas for improvement
2. Report of the outgoing Treasurer
3. Plans for 2012
4. Election of the New Committee for 2012
5. CamRuSS Survey
6. Plan of events for 2012
7. Projects
8. Clubs and Groups
9. Date of next Organising Committee meeting
10. AOB

1. CamRuSS President's Report for 2010/11

1.1 Activities & main achievements

Ksenia Afonina reported that CamRuSS had a busy year, managing on average two events monthly. Based on feedback from the participants, the main highlights of the year were: the talk by ex-Ambassador to Russia, Tony Brenton on "Shakespeare The Russian"; the literary evening with the renowned and very popular Russian author Dina Rubina; the events devoted to Soviet Memorabilia and our regular social events for the Russian-speaking community, such as Old New Year, attended by around 100 participants, the Maslenitsa pancake day party and the annual May picnic.

Ksenia reported that the following events were held in 2010-2011:

1. *Soviet History from Inside and Out: Our Memories and Memorabilia*
2. *“Shakespeare The Russian” – Talk by Sir Tony Brenton*
3. *Old New Year Party*
4. *Soviet Memories and Memorabilia- Part Two*
5. *Spring Concert and Feast to celebrate International Women’s Day and Maslenitsa*
6. *“Molotov’s Magic Lantern: A Journey into Russian History” – Talk by Dr Rachel Polonsky*
7. *Literary Evening with Dina Rubina*
8. *Olga Slavnikova, and Young Writers of Russia*
9. *Early-May Picnic and BBQ at Wandlebury Country Park*
10. *“Proletarian Art: Myth or Reality?” – Talk by Dr Natalia Murray*
11. *Theatre Visit to London- Bezrukov Theatre “Passions by Yemelyan”*
12. *“White Nights” Party – Fort St.George, Midsummer Common, Cambridge*
13. *Evening with poet Igor Irteniev and journalist Alla Bossart*
14. *Mushroom Walk and Barbecue, Thetford Forest*
15. *Talk by Professor David Phillips, President of the Royal Society of Chemistry, UK*

Ksenia reported that the main organisational achievements of CamRuSS in 2010-2011 were:

- The launch of the new CamRuSS website, which attracted new subscriptions and members, and had an average of 1000 visitors per month
- Registration of a Facebook community page for CamRuSS, which increased the society’s presence and helped to promote its activities and attract new people. Website analysis showed that a good proportion of visitors came to the CamRuSS website via its Facebook page.
- a grant of £200 was secured from CCVS (Cambridge City Voluntary Services) for website development, thanks to the much appreciated efforts of Marina Burrell
- much work was done to set up an ongoing working relationship with the CCVS
- the society provided continuous support to its members and newsletter subscribers thanks to the effective work of our Communications Officer, Tanya Yurasova, who presented a short report on the CamRuSS Newsletter circulated to e-mail subscribers
- a Local History Walking Group was organised and four guided tours of Cambridge were arranged by Tanya Yurasova, who is a qualified guide

1.2 Membership

Ksenia reported that there are currently 76 active members on CamRuSS database, some of the memberships are due for renewal, and subscribers to the Newsletter number about 1,000.

Ksenia reported the Organising Committee decision that the price of membership at £10 (single) and £15 (family) per year will remain unchanged. She also reported that new cards are being ordered, which will be renewable annually over a period of 4 years. There was no debate on the price of membership.

1.3 Areas for improvement

Ksenia reported the following key areas for improvement identified by the organising committee:

- financial control & planning: management of finances and forward planning is essential
- timely membership renewals: tracking renewals can be difficult and requires updating the membership list and establishing a clear timeframe for renewals
- collection of entrance fees at the door: some members and non-members neglect to pay the small entrance fee sometimes charged for more costly events

VOTING RESULTS

FOR: All voting members present voted to approve the President's report for the year 2010-2011.

AGAINST – none. ABSTENTIONS – none.

2. Report of the outgoing Treasurer–Marion MacLeod

Marion McLeod, the outgoing Treasurer, reported that our current account shows a balance of £2,707.95. She stated that there had been some problems with coordinating the management of the accounts during her absences and she was unable to account for an extra £800 in the bank, as she lacks the documentation for this. It is possible that some members have not claimed for expenses incurred for the society and separate records were not always made for membership subscriptions and event entrance fees. For the above reasons Marion presented Interim Accounts which are attached to these Minutes and need to be reviewed and updated.

VOTING RESULTS:

FOR: All voting members present voted to approve the Treasurer's report. AGAINST – none. ABSTENTIONS – none.

ACTION: MARION AND THE INCOMING TREASURER, NATALIA KALYAZINA TO UPDATE THE INTERIM ACCOUNTS.

3. Plans for 2012

Ksenia outlined the following key plans for 2012 which the Organising Committee has identified for consideration, relating to the society's financial status and position:

- To possibly register CamRuSS as a charity (after thorough research and evaluation)
- To find premises to rent in Cambridge
- To apply for grants such as the Heritage Fund, Big Lottery Fund, Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, etc. **Marina B**
- To explore new income flows, for example, from the website

Marina Burrell reported that the CamRuSS organising committee had discussed possible plans to change its legal status from a voluntary organisation to a Registered charity. She very briefly outlined the advantages for the society, such as eligibility for funding from a variety of sources and attracting sponsorship, which would enable us to launch exciting new projects. She reported that Committee members have already attended a few consultations at CCVS and have been assured of support from specialists in this area. She asked participants to vote on whether they support such a proposal.

Barbara Laughlin noted that such a major proposal should not be put to the Meeting without more detailed information and discussion of what is involved and the implications for running the society. She proposed an alternative motion that CamRuSS members agree to consider the change of status in principle, on condition that a thorough investigation is made of what this involves and members are given detailed information on which to base a final decision.

The members agreed unanimously to support the alternative motion.

4. Elections of the New Committee for 2012

Ksenia reported the following nominations for positions on the CamRuSS Organising Committee and asked for votes from the participants in the Meeting. She also announced open vacancies which need to be filled to improve the running of the society and spread the committee's workload:

| Positions | Candidates |
|---|-----------------------------|
| President | Ksenia Afonina |
| Deputy President – Head of Finances and Fundraising | Marina Burrell |
| Secretary | Barbara Laughlin |
| Deputy Secretary | John Wilkins |
| Treasurer/Membership Officer | Natalia Kalyazina |
| Deputy Treasurer | Marion McLeod |
| Communications Officer | Tanya Yurasova |
| Deputy Communications Officer | Lena Karl |
| Deputy Membership Secretary | Katya Parker/Ludmila Lukina |
| IT Officer | Don Forbes |
| Outdoor Events Officer | John Wilkins |
| <i>Vacancies:</i> | |
| Assistant Secretary | |
| Advertising Agents | |
| Social Networks Officer | |
| Graphic Designer | |
| Assistant Webmaster | |
| Video/photo reporter | |
| Reviewers/journalists | |
| Entertainment Officers | |
| Fundraisers | |

VOTING RESULTS:

FOR: All voting members present voted in favour of appointing the nominated candidates to these posts.

AGAINST – none. ABSTENTIONS – none. The motion was passed by a unanimous vote to appoint each of the above candidates.

5. CamRuSS Survey

All the AGM participants were asked to fill in a survey/ need's analysis where they were invited to volunteer to help with CamRuSS activities. 2 members – Rosemary Edridge and Christine Watts offered their help on the Committee as catering assistants and to distribute flyers.

6. Plan of events for 2012

Ksenia reported the following plan of events for 2012 prepared by the Organising Committee and explained what each event will involve. She welcomed any offers of help with organising these events and any other suggestions for events or activities.

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | January, 15 th Sunday | Old New Year Party (St Luke's or St Paul's); performance, shared feast, quiz, disco |
| 3 | 26 th Feb | Maslenitsa with Polina Proutskova (ethno-musicologist, jazz-folk singer) - TBC |
| 4 | 28 th Feb | An evening with Lyudmila Ulitskaya -TBC |
| 5 | 23 rd March | Coal Mines of Wales and Ukraine by Roderick Heather. Russo-Welsh Night. |
| 5 | April | Photo-Event "My Favourite Image of Russia" |
| 6 | Mid-May | Victory Day – Faces of WWII Art Exhibition-TBC |
| 7 | June, 10th | Sports Day at Wandlebury – in preparation of the Olympic Games |
| 8 | June, 29th | White Nights |

7. Projects:

Ksenia reported on the following CamRuSS projects planned for the forthcoming year:

- Corporate presentation about CamRuSS to provide information about the society and attract patrons, sponsors and funding
- Patrons for CamRuSS: a concerted effort to identify and approach potential patrons who can help to promote the society and attract funding. Barbara suggested approaching Cambridge colleges
- A feature about CamRuSS to be included in a book about Russian-speaking community in the UK
- Applications for funding to run events and activities such as language courses, exhibitions, a sports event before the Olympics, via CCVS
- Charitable status: further investigation of the process of conversion to a Registered Charity
- Website optimisation: further work on improving the website and making the best use of this as a key society resource
- Soviet Memories and Memorabilia: Marina Burrell reported on this ongoing project organised jointly by CamRuSS and Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, including transcripts of interviews with project participants and a presentation at a recent symposium held at Anglia Ruskin.

8. Clubs and Groups

8.1. *Russian Book Club:*

Lena Karl presented a report on the activities of this very lively and enthusiastic CamRuSS group, which was set up a year ago in **December 2010**, and coordinated by Ekaterina Gorodova. The group has read works by Dina Rubina, Olga Slavnikova, Mikhail Bulgakov, Mikhail Veller and Mikhail Shishkin and also held a special meeting devoted to Pushkin's poetry on his anniversary on 6th June 2011. Club members took turns telling about "The book that changed my life". The Club has also published a few issues of "Literaturniy Listok", an electronic newsletter, covering the most recent happenings in the Club and literature news in general. On the initiative of Ekaterina Gorodova and the Club members, an internationally acclaimed contemporary Russian writer, Dina Rubina, was invited to Cambridge, and met with the Russian-speaking community in King's College in April 2011 after an annual London Book Fair. Future plans include theatre and cinema trips to see plays and films based on the books read by the group, attending authors' readings and book fairs.

8.2. *Drama Club.*

Tanya Yurasova read out a report on the Russian Drama Club on behalf of the acting director, Ulyana Bashtanova.

The theatre group of about 12 people was organised about one year ago, thanks to the energy and efforts of our theatre director, Ira Deych. They have undertaken some very complex multi-layered works during the year and their **first show** is planned for **11 March 2012**. Rehearsals are held every Wednesday evening from 19:45 to 21:45 on the big stage at Arbury Community Centre. This year they staged a sketch called Hero and then read roles from different works, looking for a work to stage. The play selected for their debut performance is **The Dragon by Shvarts** and a list of works has also be drawn up to do in the future.

8.3. *Conversation Exchange Group*

Ksenia reported that Brian Roberts has set up a conversation exchange group for members wanting to practise Russian or English conversation skills. There will be a page on the CamRuSS website for participants can liaise with one another.

9. Date of next Organising Committee meeting

The following dates were suggested for the next meeting of the organising committee: 19, 20th or 21st December or 6th January. Marina Burrell and Barbara Laughlin reported that they cannot attend on 19th December and Barbara cannot attend on 6th January as she will be away in Australia

ACTION: Ksenia Afonina – ask the remaining committee members whether they can meet on either Tuesday 20th or Wednesday 21st and confirm time and venue. **Next meeting will be held in January 8th to discuss next event – preparation for the Old New Year celebration.**

10. AOB

Ksenia welcomed the new Treasurer, Natalia Kalyazina, and thanked all the committee members warmly for their contributions to the running of the society. She very kindly presented some tokens of appreciation to members of the organising committee and Tanya Yurasova presented a gift to Ksenia in appreciation of her hard work and expressed our deep gratitude and admiration for her revamping of the society over the past 9 months.