



DEVON & EXETER
INSTITUTION

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

Press Release

The Devon and Exeter Institution

For immediate publication

Russians in Devon, Devonians in Russia

Monday 2 October - Friday 22 December 2017

A display and lecture programme in collaboration with the University of Exeter and the Keep Museum, Dorset.

“From Albion to the regions of the North: Russians in Devon, Devonians in Russia”

In June 1919, in a tiny village called Ignatovskaya in the mosquito-ridden forests of North Russia, troops from the Devon Regimental Company withdrew after heavy fighting with Russian Red Army troops. One of them, a young subaltern named Norman Hughes, ‘was taken prisoner badly wounded, he tried to snatch a grenade and throw it at his captors before he died. A very gallant act and typical of him. He died at the age of 20. His home was in Newton Abbott and he was an old boy of Newton College. Well may they be proud of him’.

This extraordinary tale of a young Devon officer’s brave death in a faraway country near the Arctic Circle comes from the memoirs of his fellow Devonshire Regiment officer, Colonel N.A. Wilcox, and it is one of many forgotten histories of the British intervention on the losing side in the Russian Civil War between 1918 and 1920. Several men and officers of the Devonshire Regiment were killed, and many were honoured, during this brief conflict.

“From Albion to the regions of the North: Russians in Devon, Devonians in Russia” is a new exhibition at the Devon and Exeter Institution, in collaboration with the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Exeter, and the Keep Military Museum, Dorset, showcasing historical and cultural links between Russia and Devon to commemorate the centenary of the Russian October 1917 Revolution. The exhibition runs at the DEI from October 2 to December 22 2017, and it includes much exciting visual and archival evidence of these Russian-Devonian connections, from a Cossack

sword and scabbard presented by White Russian officers to Devonshire officer J. Crichton Pain, to an 1821 first edition of *Specimens of the Russian Poets* by Sir John Bowring, the influential Exeter merchant and Radical MP who compiled the first English-language anthology of Russian poetry in translation.

Did you know that Exeter is twinned with the beautiful medieval city of Yaroslavl, near Moscow? Or that Lawrence Palk, 3rd Baron Haldon of Haldon House, near Ide, married a Russian dancer in 1893? Visit to discover these stories, and more.

Since the 1700s, commercial and cultural links between Exeter and Russia (a major customer for Devon's thriving wool trade) have encouraged travel in both directions, as illustrated by the many travel books and war memoirs by Devon writers in the DEI's collection, many of which are included in the exhibition. The South Devonshire Regiment of Foot ("the 46th") fought in major battles of the Crimean War (1853-1856). In the 1900s, as increasing civil unrest (leading to the 1917 Revolution, the Civil War and the Soviet government's ruthless consolidation of power) drove many Russian intellectuals abroad, some important figures came to Devon.

In 1913 the Russian-Jewish poet and translator Samuil Marshak (1887-1964), then studying at the University of London, not only visited Exeter for a walking trip through Dartmoor with his wife – he wrote a poem about his experiences! This is probably the only poem in Russian (or indeed any language) to describe drinking cider, Okehampton, and Exeter's statue of Sir Redvers Buller. What he called 'the wilds of Devonshire' helped inspire Marshak's love of British literature; back in Russia, he would become that country's greatest translator of Shakespeare, Blake and Burns, among others, and perhaps its best-loved children's poet. A later, exotic visitor was the brilliant actor and theatre director, Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), nephew of the playwright Anton Chekhov. Michael Chekhov led a theatre school of about 20 students between 1936 and 1938 at Dartington Hall, near Torquay, then run by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst.

Since 1960, the University of Exeter has offered courses in Russian language, culture, and history; Russian is now a degree option within the Department of Modern Languages. The exhibition is curated by Dr Muireann Maguire, Lecturer in Russian at the University.

This programme has been made possible by the renewed partnership between the Devon and Exeter Institution and the University of Exeter.

In addition to the exhibition, which is free and open to all on Wednesday afternoons from 1-4, or by ringing the bell at other times, there will be a series of three lectures on topics related to the main exhibition. The Exhibition runs from Monday 2 October until Friday 22 December.

1. Dr Muireann Maguire, translator and lecturer in Russian at the University of Exeter, "Cheerful country Russia!": The Devonishire in the North Russia Campaign of 1918-19", 6th October at 1pm in the DEI.

2. Dr Roger Cockrell, Emeritus Fellow of Russian at the University of Exeter and eminent translator, “Exeter University: the Russian Connection”, 13th October at 1pm in the DEI

3. Trefor Thynne (former Head of Russian at Torquay Boys’ Grammar), “Russian teaching in Devon Schools- a personal perspective”, Nov 3rd, 1pm in the DEI

Lunchtime lectures are free and open to all.

The Institution is a subscription library and new members of all ages are warmly welcomed.

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Notes to Editors

About The Devon and Exeter Institution

Founded in 1813, the DEI is a product of the Eighteenth Century Enlightenment and civic pride.

The founders established the Institution in 1813

“for promoting the general diffusion of Science, Literature and the Arts; and for illustrating the Natural and Civil History of the County of Devon, and the History of the City of Exeter”.

The Institution occupies historic premises at the heart of Exeter in the Cathedral Close. Adapted from what was once a medieval house belonging to a canon of the Cathedral, the library of the Institution is housed in two elegant Georgian rooms which provide space for individual research and for cultural events, lectures and musical evenings. There are also two smaller meeting rooms enjoying beautiful views of the Cathedral and a members’ dining room.

The Institution is cherished by members and visitors alike for its calm and peaceful atmosphere in the midst of a busy city. Many scholarly books and articles have had their origins in its quiet spaces and a number of leading academics acknowledge the part the Institution has played in the early stages of their careers.

Further information

For further information, images and interviews please contact:

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