



## **2015: Winter Study Day & Nutcrackers**

And so 2015 has gone.....this year`s study day took us to Sara`s home in Preston where we were very well catered for. The focus of our study was short talks and Q&A`s on the theme of a `Christmas Memory`. This was followed by the cultural section on the famous Russian folk-tale, `The Firebird`. We read the tale in both English and in the original Russian.

After the study came the important bit.....our Christmas meal; this time at the excellent Garstang Country Hotel where the three-course meal was really lovely. The table was set beautifully as you can see from the photo. My apologies to the group because this was the only photo which was not out of focus...too much excitement, I think!!

This enjoyable event was then followed ten days later by another visit to The Atkinson, again arranged by Liz. Her description of the event is below.

Thanks Liz,

Chris.

### **`The Nutcracker`**

On December 13th, the U3A Russian group made our second visit to the Bolshoi Ballet, courtesy of the Atkinson live screening programme.

After meeting in the cafe for afternoon tea, we settled down to be transported again to the grandeur of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow.

This time we were treated to the Christmas classic, Tchaikovsky's well-loved 'Nutcracker', which offered a sharp contrast to the first ballet we had enjoyed, 'Ivan the Terrible'.

The two principal roles were danced by the same ballerinas who had entranced us in 'Ivan', Denis Rodkin and Anna Nikulina. They displayed fine acting skills in conjuring up very different characters this time, interpreting Tchaikovsky's sweeping melodies with sweetness, grace, and emotion.

Afterwards we enjoyed a glass of good cheer at Chris and Tricia's, and all felt that Christmas was off to a perfect start.

The next Bolshoi screening at the Atkinson is 'The Taming of the Shrew' a new production which has enjoyed excellent reviews, but in the meantime let yourself be swept away with the music and dance of the 'Grand Pas de Deux' from the 'Nutcracker' in this YouTube clip -

<http://youtu.be/HNALQbOYLNU>

Liz Johnson