

The Southport U3A Russian Group's Summer Study Day 2018

The culmination of another year of intensive and exciting research, both in the language and culture of Russia, was crowned by a visit on the 7th June to Manchester University, where a cosy study area had been allocated to us in the Whitworth Building Library, which doubles as a restaurant, offering meals which would not look out of place on TV's `Masterchef`.

The room was very interesting, the walls being decorated with massive tomes, the dustiness of which bore all the hallmarks of never being read. Our multi-talented leader, Chris Devereux, who is as much at home performing on his collection of musical instruments, as in his chosen profession of teaching several languages, directed the course of the day, which was intellectually invigorating and a source of pleasure for all concerned.

As always, the first activity on arrival was the consumption of coffee and biscuits and a general chat to set our minds at rest for the first of the proceedings for which we had come together specifically. These are two-fold; the main thrust of our group is learning the Russian language and putting this into practice, which has been realised with visits to St Petersburg and Moscow. We have linguists of varying degrees of attainment in our group; one even has total command of Mandarin Chinese. On this day we worked through the set book, each person guided to a degree by Chris, giving a short resume of the written text and an adequate translation into English.

This was followed by the secondary thrust of our group, namely the dissemination of Russian culture in all of its extremely interesting aspects. To this end, over the year, we have examined the visual arts, literature, politics, social history and music; the latter having a special place as a major European art form. A very interesting summary of the relative musical attainments of Sergei Rachmaninov and Igor Stravinsky was delivered, focusing on the major differences of style between these two contemporaneous composers.

After this, we were all ready for a quick move to the refectory where a first-class meal was enjoyed by all.

We re-gather at the end of August and would be extremely pleased if other people would like to join our small, well-motivated and friendly group.



John Hill

June 2018

