

The Baltic States and Russia

Lynn Pollock prepares for her journey from St Petersburg



It was with some apprehension that I set off in late August on this year's holiday. Would I cope physically with the demands of travel? Would I be disappointed after so much effort in fulfilling a desire to visit Russia? The trip included a week in the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, followed by a fortnight on a cruise ship going from St Petersburg to Moscow.

An article in an in flight magazine informed me that a large farm in Lithuania would have 6 cows, rather different from the 80 I had grown up with. But then we didn't have to milk by hand. Efforts to modernize were made difficult by EU agricultural policies of subsidies to original members.

The influence of Soviet rule was evident in the drab blocks of apartments and in the empty factories. A visit to a former KGB building was eerie for what was imagined rather than what was in view. Our guide referred to difficulties of allocating land and buildings to traditional owners. September 1 meant an excitement for children and parents with the start of the New Year, the meeting of new teachers and friends and for some, a reminder of that day in Chechnya.

In the Baltics our attention was focussed mainly on the town centres with their medieval influences, their historical monuments, varied architectures and cobbled streets. Unfortunately we did not hear Riga's Dome Cathedral organ with its 6,767 pipes. Some of the churches had been restored and used for worship. Others were museums, including one that the Soviets had used for parachute training.

In how many ways can Russia be described as vast? In approaching Estonia's border town of Narva we passed 6 kilometres of trucks waiting to be processed. Our journey from St Petersburg to Moscow covered 1700 kilometres, a mere fragment of European Russia. The waterway of lakes, canals and rivers was created by drowning hundreds of villages, a few of which could be located by the church steeples in the water. Most of the locks were capable of taking 2 cruise ships, of which there are about 80 making summer voyages.

St Petersburg is a city with much variety and vitality. A tour gave us a taste of monuments, palaces, museums, canals and churches. One of the stops made was at the Church of the

Saviour on the Spilt Blood. It was not clear if the blood was that of Christ or Tsar Alexander II. It has walls showing Biblical scenes, and is regarded as a museum of Russian mosaic art of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It is impossible in one morning to even scratch the surface of The Hermitage with its 5 palaces, over 400 rooms and 3 million exhibits. The Winter Palace, a residence of the Tsars from 1762 to 1917, is now the largest part of the Hermitage museum. Apart from the architecture, there are many works of art, including two of Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt's Return of the Prodigal Son, and the Peacock Clock.

Other places of interest included St Isaac's Cathedral with its very large dome, Yusupov Palace where Rasputin had his poisoned meal, and Peter and Paul's Fortress where Peter the Great is buried. A monument to Peter the Great (the Bronze Horseman) stands in Decembrists Square. Another equestrian statue is of Nicholas I in St Isaac's Square. On the outskirts of St Petersburg are a number of former imperial palaces such as Catherine Palace with its Amber Room and Peterhof famous for its fountains.

Shipboard life was varied. Meals included both Russian and international foods and we became more adept at eating soups with tablespoons. We had lessons in survival Russian, talks on arts and crafts, videos on Russian history and resident musicians. The highlight was the lectures given by Prof. Inna Gritsenko on "The Russian Monarchy and its Tragedy". The Tsar was divinely appointed and had a mystical union with the Russian people. Any problems were blamed on ministers and autocratic decisions increased as leaders tried to prevent chaos and as Russia expanded its Empire. Communism with its strong leaders was supported by most of the people. Stalin began his rule as a Russian Robin Hood but this grew into terrorism. Many Russians today still find individuality foreign, which partly explains the popularity of Putin.

Of our stops along the way, Kizhi held much of interest as it was an open air museum of wooden architecture. A feature of later stops was the vocal ensembles.

Moscow impressed me more than I expected. Perhaps it was the night tour or just being in Red Square and the Kremlin, then the Gum Department Store and St Basil's. I was sorry to miss seeing the metro stations but they were the one thing I was advised not to attempt. A side trip was made to Trinity-Sergiev Lavra. It is the residence of the Patriarch of All Russia, a working monastery and the religious centre of the Russian Orthodox Church. It has a rich collection of icons as does the State Tretyakov Gallery.

Quotes from the Litvinov Daily Log:
"The best vitamin to be a happy person is B1." - Anon.

"If you wish to travel far and fast, travel light. Take off all your envies, jealousies, unforgiveness, selfishness, and fears." - Glenn Clark.

- Article by Lynn Pollock

From the Archives: Communion Tokens

When settlers arrived in New Zealand from Scotland in the nineteenth century, it was no surprise that they brought their Church with them, leading to the establishment of St Andrew's on the Terrace in 1840 and St John's in Willis St in 1853. The settlers also brought the custom of using Communion tokens with them from Scotland.

An 1886 St John's example is shown here, offered on Trademe recently by a New Zealand numismatic dealer, Jim Johnson:



The reverse side of the St John's lead token carried a verse, "Let a man examine himself", as a reminder to prepare for Communion. Preparation was aided by mid week preparatory services which continued until the 1980s at St John's, at which point members of the Congregation must have felt sufficiently prepared, as declining attendances meant the services could no longer be sustained.

St John's currently holds 11 of these tokens in uncirculated condition. In condition somewhat worse than shown here, the present catalogue value is \$1200. St John's also issued a similar token in 1878, now much rarer, with a catalogue value of \$1800.

Quite a number of New Zealand Presbyterian churches issued tokens in the nineteenth century. The St Andrew's on the Terrace token is only known from one example, purchased in a Wellington Antique shop in 1971 by a lucky collector. Its nominal catalogue value is now \$5000. Others, mainly from South Island churches, are more common, with values down to \$45 in nice condition or much less when damaged.

The greater value of the tokens for most people lies in their history. It is said that they were first recommended by John Calvin with the intent that no unworthy person would be admitted to the Communion service. They were first used in the Reformed Church of France in 1860 and quickly taken up by other Churches including some Catholic churches and the Scottish Presbyterian Churches.

Tokens took a much greater hold in Scottish Presbyterian churches, possibly because of conflict in the 17th century over Church governance, with those favouring Presbyterian Church governance pitted against British authorities who favoured Episcopalian government. Tokens could be used to indicate who the trustworthy members of the Kirk were at a time when meetings were illegal, under the Stuarts.

Five thousand or more types were issued in Scotland and ultimately many more in the new world colonies settled by Scots.

The use of tokens declined in the late nineteenth centuries. They were replaced by Communion cards, distributed by elders more as a reminder to attend Communion than as the earlier indication of worthiness to attend. Communion cards lasted until the 1990s at St John's, but a card based list of services and the veritable Messenger continue to fulfil the role of providing something for our elders to deliver to their flocks.



The St Paul's, Oamaru token.



Sources:

Howard Mitchell (2007), The New Zealand Coin & Banknote catalogue, Premier Communion Tokens of Pennsylvania, http://www.coinlibrary.com/wpns/club_wpns_pr_communion.htm



Article by David Galt



The congregation is in good hands at the moment with Rev. Denzil Brown and Rev. Tom Cuthell looking after us.

Journeying

The theme of this edition of The Messenger is 'journeying'. We feature members of the congregation who have recently completed journeys to Europe. Mark Edgecombe and Ashley Milkop visited Paris and attended the World Cup final, although the team they went to support somehow had contrived to miss the final. Lynn Pollock had an entirely different travel experience. She spent six weeks touring Russia. Recently we have welcomed The Reverend Tom Cuthell who has made the long journey from Edinburgh, Scotland to fill our pulpit over the summer. Tom has rapidly endeared himself to the congregation. We have been enthralled with Tom's story of the pilgrimage to Assisi that he leads every year. This will feature in the next Messenger.

During this season of Advent many people will be

making journeys to spend Christmas with family or friends. The first Christmas featured various journeys. Mary and Joseph, victims of a petty and dictatorial regime were forced to journey far and uncomfortably



The flight to egypt

to Bethlehem, Joseph's birthplace, to be recorded in a census. Following his birth Jesus was visited by those mysterious 'travellers from the East'. Within weeks the Holy Family were forced to undertake a sudden, gruelling and potentially hazardous

journey to Egypt to escape the wholesale slaughter of all male children under two years of age ordered by the psychopathic King Herod.

Jesus, like so many children today was born into less than ideal circumstances. The festive season accentuates these circumstances. There may be little money for gifts or a grand Christmas meal. Mum and Dad may no longer be together or there may be violence in the home. This advent we, as a congregation have the opportunity to help some children. Following the ceremony of lessons and carols on 9 December there will be a retiring collection for Downtown Community Ministry and a further retiring collection on Christmas Day for Christian World Service.

Receive graciously and give generously this Christmas.

Rob Anderson

Fashion at the Abbey

Once again the St John's congregation rose to the occasion and produced another successful Fashion at the Abbey on September 11th, 2007.

Without a Minister for most of the year, the congregation continues to impress with its strength and vitality during the vacancy. Everyone pulled together, not only to raise \$4,000 for outreach projects, but to show how a spirited congregation can have fun, a most important factor in church fellowship. It was a joy to see all ages together supporting and encouraging one another.

Whether you worked behind the scenes, sold tickets, made supper, created decorations, arranged flowers, applied makeup, tivated hair, washed dishes, strutted the catwalk, were part of our very colourful multicultural display - or you simply came with your friends to enjoy the show - you were all essential to the success of the evening. It was a team effort and you all were the vital cogs in the large wheel. SINCERE THANKS TO YOU ALL.

Margaret Gilkison



Margaret Gilkison doing what she excels at; serving others .Ed

Calendar of Events

9 December

10am - Communion

7pm - A Ceremony of Nine Lessons and Carols

16 December

10am - St J's Kid's Pageant

7pm - Evening Service

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Views expressed in
The Messenger do not
necessarily reflect those of
St John's in the City.

Prayers

Did you know that you can be prayed for any Sunday after church? This 'service' is staffed by other congregational members who have been trained in this ministry. It may be that you are anxious about exams, you are worried about a family member, you need someone to listen to you for a few minutes,

after

or you might want prayer in a general sense, because you feel 'not right'. Your prayer requests do not need to be of 'major' importance, but they are all important to the prayer ministry team. Please come forward after the service to the front of the church on the right, where there will be two people, one of whom

Church

will pray with you. They will have a red dot on their name tag to show that they are the people you are looking for. Remember, any need or topic will be prayed for and you will not be judged, but supported and affirmed.

Lesley Shaw

Prayer Chain

The St John's Prayer Chain has been operational for a few years now, and is available for members of the congregation who would like to request prayers for themselves, family members or friends. The Chain is convened by Elizabeth McKenzie (380 0969) so

please contact her should you wish to avail yourself of this ministry. The convenor will contact other members of the chain who will add your prayer request to their daily prayers, so your request will be mentioned in prayers every day by several other members of St John's. All prayer

requests are confidential and if you request it, only a first name will be circulated to the Chain members. Please do remember the Chain if you require prayer support, as it is a valuable part of our mission.

Two St. John's lads at World Cup Final

Although there is little in sport to match the grandeur of the late Athletic Park's Millard Stand (top deck), Paris's Stade de France isn't bad. This was confirmed in person by St-John's-in-the-City members Ashley Milkop and Mark Edgecombe in October when they attended rugby's World Cup final.

Ashley arrived in Europe several weeks in advance of the final. He took the opportunity to watch the All Blacks play Romania in Toulouse, as well as embark upon some cycle-touring between Clermont-Ferrand and the south. Mark arrived some weeks later, joining Ashley and quiz-mates Matthew and Barry* in the

Languedoc region in southern France. The week leading up to the final saw the four engage in a wide variety of pursuits: from castle-mongering in Carcassonne to bull-watching in Arles and cycling on the Tour de France's notorious Mont Ventoux.

Paris, when reached, was sparkling. Ashley took the chance to drive the rental car up and down the Champs Elysées and, most impressively of all, around the Arc de Triomphe. On the Saturday night, the two took their seats inside the Stade for the final. They can each confirm that the three penalty goals taken from an amenable angle to their seats did indeed clear the crossbar.

The Sunday after the match saw a visit to the Scots Kirk on the Rue Bayard, an English-speaking Presbyterian church near the heart of town. Here, Ashley was able to renew friendships made during his two previous stints living in Paris.

Meanwhile, up and down the Champs Elysées, throngs of men and women in Springbok green basked beneath the Parisian sun.

- **Mark Edgecombe**

*Ashley, Mark, Matthew and Barry were winners of a nationwide rugby quiz competition earlier this year, the prize for which was a trip to Paris to watch the World Cup final.

The

A certain man went on a journey from Featherston to Wellington and he fell among yobbos who relieved him of his hub-caps and car stereo system. Then they overturned his car into a ditch and departed.

By chance there came a family on their way to worship, for it was the day of rest. But as it fell to the lot of the husband to purchase vegetables from the market and the wife to

play the piano for the choir prior to church they resolved not to stop, lest they be duly delayed. So they accelerated and passed him by. Likewise, also a minister did see this unfortunate man. However, being dressed in his best and not wanting to run late for the service he too passed by.

But, a certain youth as he journeyed, came to where the man was. And

Awesome

when he saw him he had compassion on him. Now this youth had neither the education nor the bearing of those who earlier had passed by. For he toiled not and thus was a burden unto the state. Moreover, one ear had aforesaid been pierced by a sharp instrument and now held a circlet of precious metal finely wrought. And besides on parts of his body visible to public gaze there were designs

curiously fashioned by ink.

And behold, the youth did halt his vehicle and using the rope that he did prudently carry, did pull the vehicle from the ditch. Thus, did he strive to undo the mischief, pouring oil and water into both sump and radiator and towing the car to his humble flat. And there with much diligence he worked on the car well into the night, until the designs on his body

Samaritan

were obscured by grease.

On the morrow when the man started up his car ready to depart, the youth refused earnestly all offers of recompense saying "Yea, for she will be alright mate, and if not I will be willing, yea eager to toil yet again."

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour of him who fell foul of the yobbos?

The Ministers and Session of St Johns wish you all a blessed and safe Christmas.