

The Anglo-Russian Research Network (ARRN) was founded in 2011 by Rebecca Beasley (Queen's College, Oxford) and Matthew Taunton (UEA) to bring together those with an interest in cultural and intellectual relations between Britain and Russia in the period 1880-1950. Its members include students and scholars from a variety of disciplines who are conducting research in this field, professionals working in relevant areas based in institutions such as the British Library, the Imperial War Museum, and the BBC, as well as interested members of the public. While dedicated scholars of Russian history, literature and culture play a vital role in the Network, the Network's interdisciplinary and cross-cultural emphasis means that it attracts members from a wide range of disciplines and specialisms including English Literature, Comparative Literature, History, Art History, Music, Theology, Theatre Studies, and Film Studies, as well as Slavonic Studies. Knowledge of Russian language is by no means mandatory and members whose interest in Russian culture comes primarily through works in translation are welcomed.

The Network supports a variety of activities designed to promote discussion of Anglo-Russian cultural relations within academia and in the wider public sphere. Primary among these is a termly reading group at Pushkin House in London. Each meeting is led by an invited guest speaker, who nominates a selection of primary and secondary texts that are circulated digitally to the group in advance of the meeting. The invited speaker introduces the reading materials and a lively discussion follows.

To date, topics explored fall under three main headings: politics and diplomacy; literary and cultural relations; and the mediation of ideas about Russia's spiritual and folk cultures.

Several reading groups have explored the interactions between British and Russian culture in the context of political or diplomatic debates. From the pre-revolutionary period, Barbara Emerson (Oxford) led a discussion about 'The First Cold War', investigating the pervasive hostility between Russia and Britain in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, before the mellowing of relations that culminated in the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907. Official relations quickly soured again in 1917, but the advent of the Bolshevik revolution stimulated a new brand of left-wing Russophilia that was vigorously debated and challenged: this cultural and political constellation has been the subject of a number of meetings. Emily Lygo (Exeter) led a discussion about the important role played by the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR (known as the SCR) in promoting Soviet literature and culture in Britain. She discussed her recently published research article about the society, alongside a section from *The New Spirit in the Russian Theatre* (1929) by prominent SCR member Huntly Carter, and a 1946 edition of the society's organ, *The Anglo-Soviet Journal*. Ben Harker (Manchester) discussed the British reception of the most widely circulated text of Stalinist historiography, *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union / Bolsheviks (Short Course)* (1939). Focussing on the Communist poet, novelist and historian Jack Lindsay, Dr. Harker shared with the group the fruits of his archival research: an unpublished paper Lindsay delivered to the CPGB's cultural wing in 1945. In spring 2016, John Connor (Colgate) will lead a session about British Communist writers, drawing on his recent archival work in this area. Further and more specific details of that session will appear on the Network's website.

The literary and cultural relationship between Britain and Russia has been explored from a similarly diverse set of perspectives. Several reading groups have looked at how particular personalities inflected the British reception of certain cultural forms and events: for example, Laura Marcus (Oxford), led a discussion of the reception of Soviet film in Britain, through extracts from Bryher's *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929), Angus Wrenn and Olga Soboleva (LSE) examined George Bernard Shaw's role in representing Soviet Russia to British readers, with extracts from their recently published book on the subject and Shaw's play, 'Annayanska, the Bolshevik Empress', and Philippa Burt (Goldsmith's) discussed Theodor Komisarjevsky's production of Russian plays in the British theatre, through contemporary reviews, interviews and Komisarjevsky's autobiography. Kimberley Reynolds (Newcastle) solicited Network members' knowledge and personal experience in presenting her research on British children's books about the Soviet Union, such as Pearl Binder's *Russian Families* (1942), Marjorie Fischer's *Palaces on Monday* (1937), and Geoffrey Trease's *Red Comet* (1936). A recent reading group led by Anna Vaninskaya (Edinburgh) reversed the focus by examining how Russian correspondents, such as Dioneo (Isaak Shklovsky), Semyon Rapoport and Korney Chukovsky, interpreted Britain for the readers of Russian periodicals at the very beginning of the twentieth century. Dr. Vaninskaya is currently overseeing the translation of some of this material for publication in English.

The British fascination with Russian religion, spirituality and folk culture has also provided the focus for a number of reading groups. Simon Dixon (SSEES) led a reading group on the relationship between the Anglican and Russian Orthodox Church during the nineteenth century, and Michael Hughes (Lancaster) introduced extracts from the works of Stephen Graham, the immensely influential early twentieth-century travel writer and pilgrim. The very first reading group was led by Stuart Eagles, and examined connections between John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy and the leading British Tolstoyan John Kenworthy through Kenworthy's contributions to *Saint George*, the journal of the Ruskin Society of Birmingham. The knowledge gained from these accounts of Britain's perception of 'Holy Russia' provided an informative context for the reading group. Louise Hardiman (Cambridge) led on the market for Russian crafts in Britain, focusing on Aleksandra Pogosskaia's successful business, 'The Russian Peasant Industries', on New Bond Street.

These termly reading groups are the main occasions at which members of the Network convene, and the reading group is followed by a convivial dinner at which future plans and projects are discussed. Anyone interested in becoming involved in the group's activities is encouraged to attend one of these reading groups, details of which can be found on the website listed below.

The Network has also organised and contributed to larger, day-long events. In August 2013, the Network held a day symposium on 'Anti-Communism: Culture, Literature, Propaganda', hosted by the Institute of English Studies, University of London. Selected papers from that symposium were collected in a special issue of the journal *Literature and History* (Vol.24 No.1, Spring 2015), edited by Benjamin Kohlmann and Matthew Taunton. The Network also co-organised an event with the British Library, 'Britain and Russia in the Great War: Centenary Reflections', which took place in September 2014, marking the UK-Russian Year of Culture and the centenary of Britain's formal alliance with Russia during the Great War. Talks by academics and curators

explored the relationship by comparing British and Russian cultural, diplomatic and personal responses to the Great War, showcasing the British Library's collections in these areas.

The website (<https://anglorussiannetwork.wordpress.com/>) provides information about all the Network's events and publications, collects relevant research materials, hosts podcasts of several of the reading groups, and provides information about our members and their research. It aims to provide a context for the development of future research projects and intellectual exchange, and to that end contributions, links and notice of relevant events are warmly welcomed. Please contact Rebecca Beasley (rebecca.beasley@ell.ox.ac.uk), Matthew Taunton, (m.taunton@uea.ac.uk), or the Network's website administrator, Nicholas Hall (nicholas.hall@wolfson.ox.ac.uk) if you would like participate in the Network or contribute to the website. Membership is free and open to all.