

AGM report 21 Feb 2018

- Thanks for coming.
- Will be brief, summarising the current situation and saying something about future prospects. Apologies for not preparing a slide show this year.
- What is the SRF and why do we exist? Our aim is to promote interest in Russia and her neighbours in order to improve understanding. We are therefore more than a members' society – though not ignoring our members' interests I hope we rely on them for ideas and support in implementation of our main aim.
- Activities over the last year
 - you have brief details in the Trustee's report for 2017-18. Since then we've had one talk (Moneyland), one presentation to schools, a mega-Book Sale (sad as it marked the final closure of our library – but good to see so many of the books go to appreciative new owners) and lots of handover admin.
 - Plus (personally) a trip on the trans-Siberian
 - Summary: variety of events (talks, theatre, schools, Chai n Chat); talks all full to bursting but not with SRF members; theatre screenings have struggled to get enough participants; work has started on the website to be funded by the FoR grant
- The future
 - Delighted that we have such excellent candidates to take the SRF into the immediate future, a good basis for the longer term. Especially our new chair-designate, Margaret Tejerizo. Others include the treasurer, PH, who stepped into the breach when Jim Patterson was forced to resign through ill health in November. Apart from me all other existing members of the Board will stay in post – Sheila Sim, David Brew, Alexandra Smith, Margarita Vaysman – and two long term members of SRF are candidates, in one case (David Caldwell) after an earlier term as treasurer. We are very glad to welcome him back.
 - Unfortunately our new chair-designate, Margaret Tejerizo, was unexpectedly unable to be present this evening. She has asked me to apologise on her behalf. She will take over the email bulletins so you will learn directly from her of any plans for events and other activities.
 - Sheila Sim will take over as magazine editor (as well as continuing to be SRF Secretary)
 - Joe Wake will carry on his work recruiting candidates for English language tutor posts in Russian universities
 - Chai n Chat will carry on their monthly social meetings, now back in Summerhall Café.
 - You have already heard that the magazine, the email bulletins, Chai n Chat and the English language assistants programme will continue. Our language classes will also continue and we are very grateful to our two excellent tutors, Natasha Samoilova and Irina Safronova.
 - I will just outline the main immediate changes to our work:
 - The library has closed
 - The "New Russian Writing" page on our website might close unless new contributors come forward. We are very grateful to Natasha Perova for her interesting, inspiring and insightful contributions to date but she is unfortunately unable to continue to work with us on this.
 - And finally – you might have noticed that the "Learn Russian" section of our website – apart from the "SRF Russian Classes" page – has gone from our website.
 - Which brings me on to my personal plans. I aim to carry on with my attempts to interest schools (and anyone else) in learning Russian. I have moved "Learn Russian" to what will be an independent site www.russianinScotland.com and will also take personal responsibility for the development of our children's site www.findoutaboutRussia.co.uk. Finally, I will continue to work on the "Russian language and culture" project for the British Council SchoolsOnline site which is funded by the Future of Russia grant the SRF received last year, designated a "restricted fund" in the SRF accounts. As chair of the SRF I had little time for this work and hope to be much more active, both in developing all the online materials and in visiting schools and promoting Russian at various educational meetings.
- Finally thanks:
 - to all those members of SRF who have stepped up and offered their services to the committee; and to other members for their advice and comments, or for just sticking with us
 - a particular thank you to Jim Patterson who was our Treasurer for 2 years, stepping in at very short notice. Jim was very good to work with, punctilious and conscientious as well as very supportive of other aspects of our work, attending many events

- thanks too to our Hon. President, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, and Hon. Vice-Presidents Dairmid Gunn and Baroness Smith for their support and interest. Particular thanks to Dairmid for his close interest and unstinting support over the years.
- to organisations and individuals we have worked with this year, many of them several times over the years. Particular thanks this year to Glasgow University for support for our workshop in 2017, to Edinburgh University Business School for the event in December, to the Amnesty Bookshop for our joint event in August, to the NLS and the sadly defunct Cable magazine for Angus Roxburgh's book event in 2017, to Natasha Perova for "New Russian Writing" and to Eddie Aronoff of StageRussia in Moscow for working with us on Moscow theatre screenings in 2018.