



Ariel

"I come to answer thy best pleasure." The Tempest Act 1 Sc.ii

The Journal of the Newport-Kutaisi Twinning Association Issue No 5 October 2002

GOLDEN JUBILEE



- Jubilee Visit
- Young Visitors
- Pirosmani—Georgia's Premier Artist
- Letters
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Celebrating the cultural links between Kutaisi and Newport

Ariel

"I come to answer thy best pleasure." The Tempest Act1 Sc.ii

What a summer this has been with Newport now finding itself elevated to city status and equal in standing to that of her sister city of Kutaisi.

On 13th June Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, as part of her Golden Jubilee celebrations, visited Newport. Our friends from Kutaisi-Newport International Association joined us. Both were memorable visits for us. It was a long-held ambition for many of us to be able to host such a Georgian delegation, to repay in some way the hospitality and generosity that has always been shown to us on our visits to Kutaisi. To meet old friends again is always a wonderful delight.

It has been a great time for 'hellos' and 'goodbyes'. We said goodbye to David after his year-long stay with us whilst he studied at UWCN; in turn we welcome Maka who has taken up her place on a post graduate course at the University, more later in the magazine. Nestan and Oliko who have been with us for short stays have now returned home, sadly missed by their host families.

We have been very pleased to receive articles and letters from Kutaisi and hope this will encourage even more next time. There is a contribution from Natia Sopramadze, a KSU student of English that I know you will find fascinating to read. Above all the pictures will tell the story this time – we all love to look at pictures in any publication and this issue has loads!!

Those of you with eagle eyes will spot the different font we have always associated with the name "Ariel". We have to come to terms with a super new computer that has a mind of its own and does not "do" our familiar font style!!!

Catherine Philpott

Mike Singleton

R: Sophiko Chkhobadze joined the crowd to greet the Queen

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With the support of Newport City Council



Front & back cover photographs: South Wales Argus

The Jubilee Visit to the City of Newport
by
KUTAI SI-NEWPORT INTERNATIONAL TWINNING ASSOCIATION



The sky lit up as I approached the University of Wales College Newport campus site in Caerleon – the explosion of fireworks and rockets hitting the clear night sky. In a single moment, lit for one second, I saw our Georgian visitors – Professor Madonna beaming, her eyes shining. They had attended the reception at the college and were enjoying a magnificent firework display. There was a sense that Prof. Madonna had truly landed in our midst.

I followed the party on up to Rosemary and Derek's house for the welcoming reception with all the warmth of a Georgian greeting.



Top: The crowds in Newport cheering the Queen
Above: L. Ila in Trafalgar Square. R. Catherine and Ila ride the London Eye
Below: L. On the Millennium Bridge R. Derek points out the sights from the London Eye





So started the week in Newport for our friends from Kutaisi. We planned many things for them to do: sights and people to see and places to go. The programme was intense, to such an extent that many of us hardly had time to catch our breath! It made our head spin, not a single wasted moment.

On Sunday morning there was a Mayoral Procession, a Civic Service and Reception to attend – in pouring rain, typical Welsh weather – but valiantly they coped in all the wet. Umbrellas and macs were found. After that the sky cleared and we made our way to the beautiful

Llanthony Valley, visiting the ancient church of Cwmyoy in all its oddness. Finally we relaxed, taking tea and something stronger with Russell in his country house further up the valley.

Later we had dinner with Vera, meeting more members of the Association.

The trip to London followed the next day – one I will not forget. We were joined by his Worship the Mayor and Mayoress of the City of Newport, Councillor & Mrs. Bob Pool and the party from Guangxi Province in China who were in Newport making a Jubilee visit.

The attempt to 'do' London was a gargantuan task; you need a week at least to do it justice and even then much would be missed. To fleetingly see the British Museum, the skyline of the City from the 'London Eye', the Thames Embankment and the streets steeped in history, famous for all the associations of the capital was a huge task but somehow Derek valiantly held in there and kept everyone on their toes throughout the day!!

It was in Trafalgar Square when I really thought I had lost everyone and wondered what excuse I could make over mislaying Madonna – would the Department in KSU believe me! Maggie will be pleased to know that I kept a sharp eye on Ilia, hence the number of photos of him with Admiral Nelson looking down on the scene below from his perch above the square.

We will not forget either the jolly meal at the OTT back in Newport where there was much singing & dancing till late. I never knew our Mayor had such a voice!! What an act to follow, he definitely has a future! Tom Jones needs to look over his shoulder.

Tuesday found us in our own capital city of Cardiff to meet with Rosemary and tour the



Above:
Waiting patiently

L. Professor
Madonna

Below:
Tea in the
Llanthony Valley





Above: Geoff Edge addressing the Tredegar House Dinner

Below: Table at Tredegar House Dinner

National Assembly building, meeting with assembly members. There followed a question & answer session on the role of the Assembly in the governing of Wales. Later we saw the ballet production of Madame Butterfly at Cardiff's New Theatre.

Visits to schools, NGO, dance workshop, print works and newspaper offices took place next day followed by an evening tour and grand reception at Tredegar House where we joined delegates from the other Newport twinning areas of Heidenheim in Germany and Guangxi in China.

The sun shone when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II came to Newport on Thursday 13th June. With great excitement and flags flying, the delegation joined the crowds on the pavement to see HM pass by. She shook hands and smiled as she walked through the main street in the shopping area of Newport. The moment passed and our friends' minds turned very quickly to shopping: M & S and all emporiums lying east and west of the King's Hotel!

It was with great sadness we made our farewells to our friends – had we said all we meant to say? Had we caught up with all the news of



Presentation to Sir Harry Jones, Leader of Newport City Council by the Mayor of Kutaisi, Ramaz Mkheidze
Seated: HE Ambassador for Georgia
Teimuraz Mamatsashvili and
His Worship the Mayor of Newport Cllr. Bob Poole

Kutaisi, probably not? The fever pitch set by the pace of this visit meant that much was left unsaid. The ladies of the Soroptomists very kindly gave a wonderful farewell meal for us all at Ffrwrwm in Caerleon. Many presents were exchanged and good wishes said.

Next day with Rod at the wheel of the minibus we waved them off wishing them a safe and comfortable journey home, wondering when we would all meet again – soon, we would like to think!

A great thank you goes out to everybody who gave their time, who cooked, who entertained, who drove cars and coaches, who guided and planned. It is always hard to select one person overall but in this case the constant presence throughout the week was Bernard. His tireless efforts each day contributed to the success of this visit. We all join in thanking him very much



indeed for the work he put in beforehand and throughout the week. Rumour has it that he returned to work the following Monday relieved and happy to find himself in a more predictable situation with fewer surprises.

CP

A letter and article from:

Baia Arsenidze

The Head of the Office of External Affairs and Development
Kutaisi State University

Dear Mrs. Philpott,

Let me greet you on behalf of the Office of External Affairs and Development and Alumni Association of Kutaisi State University and thank you for the pleasure we have received while reading the information published in your journal, issue No 3. The article of Mr. Paul Relf deals with the details of the dissemination conference, dedicated to the Tempus-Tacis Project and gives a real picture of the results of this project, which lasted for two years and gave us a brilliant opportunity to enlarge our knowledge and experience in the field of university management systems. The formation of the Alumni Association was also fulfilled by the help of this project.

I would like to use this opportunity once more and thank all the members of the Newport-Kutaisi Twinning Association. We will never forget the warmth and attention you demonstrated during our visit to Newport.

Though the project is over, our friendship and cooperation will last for ever.

With best regards,



Top:
Clock Tower
UWCN

L. Flower lined
walkways

Below:
The façade of
UWCN



THE THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE GAINED AT UWCN IS BEING PUT INTO PRACTICE

In 1998 UWCN was awarded the Tempus-Tacis Grant. Project one included the advancement and development of External Affairs Office. Two new posts were introduced within the Office - Projects Officer and Alumni Officer. Today I would like to tell you about one practical example of the theoretical knowledge gained at UWCN.

In March 2001, at the Tempus Tacis Dissemination Conference, with John Roberts and Paul Relf and other representatives from various universities of the world attending, KSU Alumni Association was finally launched. The President of Georgia Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze – politician of the world importance – was elected as the Honorary President of the Association. The president of the KSU Alumni Association is KSU Rector, Doctor Professor Avtandil Nikoleishvili. The first alumni meeting, turned out to be very interesting and pleasant for each participant. The Governor of Imereti Region, Mr. Teimuraz Shashiashvili opened the meeting. The Rector of KSU, the President of the Alumni Association Mr. Avtandil Nikoleishvili mentioned in his speech about the success achieved during these two years. In spite of the fact that the Association is making first steps on the way of its development, it is planning to publish a newspaper and journal in the future, which will provide the reader with fresh information about university life and graduates.

I would like to use this opportunity once more and from the pages of Newport-Kutaisi Twinning Association journal, on behalf of Kutaisi State University and especially External Affairs and Development Office express my gratitude towards the staff of UWCN, who were actively involved in the Tempus Tacis project, especially to the ex-Principal, Doctor Ken Overshott, Geoffrey Edge, Clive Day, Bernard Kutner, Viv Davies, Paul Relf, Kevin Dooley, Claire Warnes, Dyane Hyett, Catherine Mullin, Helen Beddow, Karen Turnbull and to all External Affairs and UWCN personnel who did their best to bring KSU closer to international standards. It is true some of them are no longer working for UWCN, but we will never forget the warmth and kindness that always accompanied our friendly relations. We are glad and proud that our partnership and friendship continues. Here I would like to thank all the members of Newport-Kutaisi Twinning Association for the hospitality they have demonstrated during our visits to UWCN.

Baia Arsenidze

Following Rod's article on the Georgian Alphabet (see *Ariel* 4), we received this letter from our very good friend
Professor Avtandil Nikoleishvili Rector KSU

Dear Catherine

We read your wonderful journal with great interest. It will certainly play a great role in strengthening the links of friendship between Kutaisi and Newport. Thank you very much for the warmth and love towards Georgia felt in every article.

In response to the request of Rod McLeod, the author of the article about the Georgian alphabet we would like to add some more information on this subject based on scientifically reliable sources.

We hope that our relations with the journal will continue in the future and are ready to contribute to its pages.

With deep respect . . .



SOME FACTS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE GEORGIAN ALPHABET

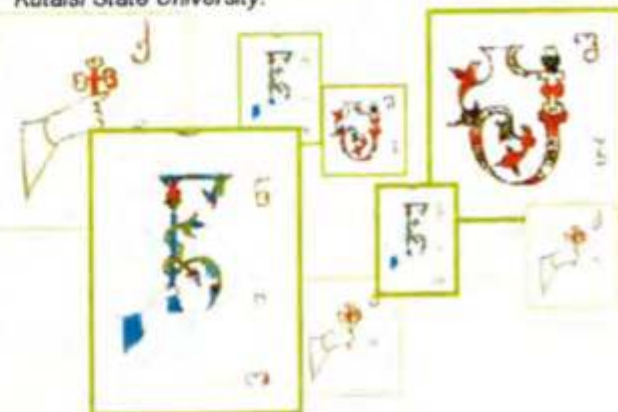


Scientists believe that there are more than 5600 languages in the world, but there are only 14 alphabets, one of which is Georgian. The great Georgian historian Ivane Javakhishvili thought that the Georgian alphabet belonged to the times of paganism. It must have been created not later than the 7thC BC. The Georgian alphabet was created before the Greek one. So far the exact time of creating the Georgian alphabet is not known, yet it was undoubtedly created not later than the 3rdC BC which has been proved by the archaeological discoveries in Nekresi, Bolnisi, Davati etc.

One of the distinctive features of the Georgian alphabetic system is its exact correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. As a rule, one graphic symbol expresses one sound. This rare fact has drawn great attention from many foreign scholars.

Professor Avtandil Nikoleishvili
Head of Georgian Literature Department
Kutaisi State University

Assistant Professor Marina Katsarava
Head of Georgian Language Department
Kutaisi State University.





L - R Nestan, Sian & Helen at a window in Caldicot Castle



Beauty Treatment: Helen tends to Nestan's hair with Alison

When Nestan came to stay!

We met Nestan Shashiashvili at Heathrow airport in early April. She was tall and slender and seemed very self-composed - especially for a fourteen year old girl on her own in a foreign country, meeting a family that she knew nothing about. She had come to spend the first half of the summer term in Year 9 at Caldicot Comprehensive School. She was very quiet and introspective at first, but gradually came out of her shell as she got to know us better.

We had decided to treat her as one of the family, not as a guest. She was to be with us for over two months and we could not keep up the necessary airs and graces for that long. She had plenty of homework to do every evening, but at weekends we tried to

do more than we normally would in term time, to give her experiences that she would not have at home. We were a bit surprised that one of these would be mowing the lawn, which she volunteered to do - in Kutaisi her family has a gardener to do that.

She enjoyed almost everything we did. We took her down a coal mine (Big Pit at Blaenavon). We took her ice-skating in Cardiff where Siân hovered with a camera until she finally obliged her by losing her balance and sitting down on the ice. She must have wondered why we would leave our comfortable home for the weekend to sleep in a rather draughty tent in the Forest of Dean, where the trees were our toilet.

We tried to teach her some local history, with trips to Caldicot Castle and St Fagan's Museum of Welsh Life. We showed her some of the old traditions - a summer village fête in the rain, May Day and Jubilee parties in the village square, (where she was very impressed by the copy cat band *Atomic Kitten*).

We also took her to some newer traditions, such as Newport speedway, where she still smiled through all the noise and dirt. Her favourite outings were her shopping trips, usually without the encumbrance of any adults.

She accompanied Helen, (my fifteen year old daughter) on some of her after school activities like ballet and trampolining, and she was in Cardiff



to see Helen win a gold medal in the Welsh Trampolining Championships. Although Helen was a year above her at school, she spent more time with Helen's friends than those in her own year, particularly after school. She got a first aid certificate after attending a course with Helen which was part of

Helen's Duke of Edinburgh award. I think she was surprised to find that she would be sitting exams - Year 9 is a SATs year, and more surprised to find that these exams would include Welsh and French, of neither of which she had any previous knowledge. However her results were exceptionally good and her teachers were full of praise for her.

I am sure that Nestan had a great time in Wales and that she has taken back to Georgia an understanding of our way of life, of our country and our friendship.

Top: Julie gives Nestan a hand on the ice

Bottom: Nestan lets go!

We miss her!

**The Macleod Family
Julie, Rod, Helen, Alison & Sian**

Summary of
Newport Kutaisi Twinning Association
AGM 20th June 2002



Chairman Bernard Tyson
reported on:

- Times, dates and frequency of meetings held throughout the year. He aimed to make it possible for maximum attendance.
- Appreciation of the *Ariel* publication, editions 3 and 4 had been produced during the year.
- NKTA membership of Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations.
- The display case set up in the Library/Museum/Art gallery promoting Georgia and the Association.
- Council contacts – meeting attended by Chris Freeguard, Newport's Managing Director.
- Website of NKTA.
- Visit to Newport by Jumbar Lezhava, cyclist.

UWCN

The retirement of Prof. K Overshott.
Welcome to the new principal,
Professor James Lusty.
Commencement of MBA studies by
David Mindiashvili.

- The Georgian Studies Day in London.
- The meeting and meal arranged by the Newport Soroptimists to hear of the work in Georgia done by Dr. Kay Richmond.
- The Jubilee 2002 – the long-awaited visit made by KNITA to the newly instated City of Newport coinciding with the visit made by the Queen.

ARE YOU A MEMBER?

The Newport Kutaisi Twinning Association is hoping to increase its existing membership base by encouraging friends and contacts of the Association to become members.

A leaflet about the Association is enclosed with this copy of *Ariel* and also a bankers order form, which is a relatively painless way of paying the annual subscription, a very modest £5. Our subscription year starts in January, so now is the time to sign up.

You will see from the leaflet that organisations can join. Are you a member of a group that might have an interest in twinning with Kutaisi? Perhaps the Association can provide a speaker?

For more details, please contact me on:
01633 854648 or tysonfamily2@ukgateway.net.

Bernard Tyson.



The Officers for 2002-2003:

Chair:	Bernard Tyson
Vice Chair:	Catherine Philpott
Secretary:	Vera Brown
Treasurer:	Rod McLeod
Journal editors:	Catherine Philpott Mike Singleton

CP



We Have Mail!

From: HE. Deborah Barnes-Jones
British Ambassador in Tbilisi
5.06.02

She expressed her congratulations to Newport on the granting of City status, wishing us all the best for our June festivities.

She said that they would be raising a toast to us at the Queen's Birthday Party on 12 June. She added that she had enjoyed the April edition of *Ariel*.

From Professor Madonna Megrelishvili KSU

Dear Catherine,

Have not heard from you for ages.

Hope you are fine and enjoy the advent of Spring. Ours is still cool, it has been raining for two weeks. The third issue of *Ariel* is very, very good. My words are not enough to describe how we all like it. Very well done and the articles are very interesting. Really very, very cool !!!

Tonight Governor Shashiashvili, in his weekly Friday interview, will introduce it and speak about it to the Imereti TV viewers.

At the moment we are preparing the second issue of our journal *THE LAND OF THE COLCHI*. You know what a difficult task we are facing after your such wonderful issue. We wouldn't like ours to be worse!

Much love

Madonna

Thank you very much for these words.
Catherine & Mike

Following a contact made from our website Mike received an e-mail from:
Tony Osbourne ARAM, LRAM Member of the British Academy of Composers & Songwriters.

He says he is anxious to find out more about the Georgian composer

Andria Balanchivadze.

He has managed to acquire some scores and bad recordings but would love to find out where more exist.

He would welcome any contacts through his e-mail: tony@ozzape.com and www.musiciansgallery.com (composer links)

Anyone able to help? Let us know.



Maka Melkadze

Our newest arrival came on the 21th September to join the Multi-media & Information Design Course at UWCN. Her MA course will take a year. A graduate of the Architecture Institute of Tbilisi Technical University and formerly of KSU and St Nino's School, she is looking forward to studying here and to meeting all the members of the Association. I know that you will join us in giving her a very warm welcome.

Already she has been of great help to us with this issue of *Ariel*.

GEORGIA'S PREMIER ARTIST

In 1991, while flying to Moscow on the first leg of our journey to Kutaisi, Rosemary and I met a young English employee of the British Council. It turned out that she was familiar with Georgia and happy to help us fill some of the many gaps in our knowledge of the nation and its heritage. By the time we arrived I had scribbled several pages of notes on the Rustaveli Theatre Company, Giya Kancheli, the Rustaveli Choir and other luminaries from Georgia's extraordinarily rich culture. But no painters? "Well", she said, "there's *Pirosmani*. He worked around the turn of the twentieth century. Naïve but rather good. Very Georgian. Almost unknown in the West". On arrival in Kutaisi we met many Georgians who were delighted to discuss their 'national painter' with us and take us to see examples of his work in the local museums and galleries.



Fete St. George in Bolnisi by Niko Pirosmianashvili

Niko Piroshmanashvili was born in eastern Georgia in 1862. His father was a vine grower to a wealthy landowner but soon after Niko's birth his elder brother died and then death took his father, and shortly after, his mother, leaving him an orphan. He was adopted by his father's employer and taken to Tiflis where he lived a comfortable and protected early life. However, it is said that when, in his twenties, he emerged from this hothouse he was gullible, innocent and utterly unprepared to fend for himself. His sole talent was drawing and as a result he opened a workshop, painting signboards, but lacking any business skills the venture soon ended in bankruptcy. In 1894, after working on the railways for a year, he opened a shop selling dairy products in the back streets of Tiflis and it is known that he painted pictures of cows to decorate the shop, the forerunners of his animal pictures. In time this business, too, ended in bankruptcy and from then on he became a drifter.

Pirosmani's works are instantly recognisable. Their dark tones result from the coats of black paint he gave to the cheap oilcloth he invariably used in place of canvas. He then built up the images with washes of coloured paint through which the black background is usually still seen. The effect is that each picture appears to be a nocturne. Warm sunshine rarely, if ever, enters one of Pirosmani's paintings, an unexpected characteristic given Georgia's genial climate.

Many of Pirosmani's paintings are portraits but rather than give us the sitters' names he entitled the works: *'Firewood Vendor'*, *'Organ Grinder'*, *'Wine Shop Keeper'*, *'Woman Inspector of Market Hygiene'*, *'Janitor'*, *'Railwayman'* or *'Beggar'*. Full length, the subjects' formal poses resemble the studio portraits of our own grandparents and it's thought that both memory and photographs were used as references for these likenesses. Each individual is given considerable dignity, suggesting that these were acquaintances of the artist, people whom he held in respect. They were the men and women from the streets of Tiflis with whom Pirosmani shared his daily life.

Pirosmani also painted a large number of animal pictures. Viewed invariably from the side, these subjects, too, were copied from photographs and book illustrations. Largely monochromatic with just a few touches of colour, the paintings have such titles as *'White Sow with Piglets'*, *'White Cow on Black'* and *'Black Water Buffalo on White'*. Little attempt is made to place the animals in a natural setting. They stand isolated against an expanse of unpainted oilcloth.

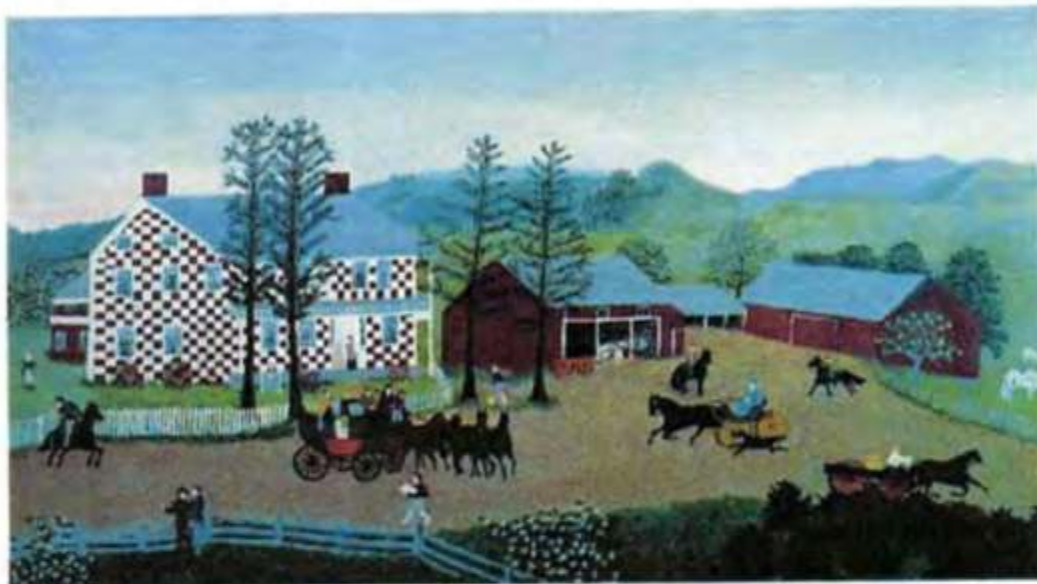
"I adore to paint animals as they are the friends of my heart", he said. Pirosmani saw the animals as metaphors.

"Everything in life has two sides, the good and the wicked....the white cow symbolises tenderness, tranquillity and love....white is the colour of love...the black bull fights and bellows, and that means war"



Water Buffalo on White
by Niko Pirosmanashvili

At first, I found it difficult to respond positively to Pirosmani's paintings. However, as I became more familiar with them and as I got to know Georgia better, I warmed to their very distinct qualities. Now they give me huge enjoyment. Take the still lifes, usually studies of food and wine. Forget those glorious still lifes from Spain or Holland. In Pirosmani's pictures we are presented with flatly painted but boldly patterned sausages, radishes, skewered meats, fish, peaches and roast chickens. As they float in a black void each item jostles and interacts with its neighbour as if partying. These pictures seem to convey both a delight in the local produce that contributes to Georgia's unique cuisine as well as the pleasures of friendship and good company.



Chequered House by Grandma Moses



L. *Cornish Fishing Boats* by Alfred Wallis
R. *Exotic Landscape 1908* by Henri Rousseau



Undeniably naïve, Pirosmani's art conveys all the charm and magic to be found in the finest work of this kind. Recall the great pictures by Le Douanier Rousseau whose jungle scenes were based on studies of house plants bought from the local florist, the haunting portraits that emerged from colonial America or the views of Cornish fishing boats by Alfred Wallis.

To be continued.....

DEREK BUTLER

Wanna Speak English?"

A Triumph For Kutaisi Student Sophia Gorgodze



A GLOBAL EMBRACE Zeinoun and Gorgodze, facing the camera, celebrate their victories

By **CHRIS REDMAN** LONDON

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE THE EUROVISION Song Contest having anything in common with the English-Speaking Union. Improbable as it may seem, these two institutions have found a common denominator. Last month Latvia won the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest with a song in English called "Wanna" ("want to"). People everywhere just *wanna* speak English.

The English boom has also brought the ESU back from the brink. Founded after World War I to "promote friendship between the English-speaking peoples", the London-based organization seemed destined to mirror Britain's fortunes. All that has now changed. Last month the finals of the organization's international public speaking competition in London brought together 50 young contestants from 32 countries. The winner, Sophia Gorgodze, came from Georgia, while runner-up Pia Zeinoun hailed from Lebanon. "For non-native speakers", says broadcaster Sir Jeremy Isaacs who helped judge the event, "the quality of English was sensational".

The coming of age of an Internet-savvy generation with more exposure to English and fewer cultural hang-ups about using it is one reason why the ESU is now expanding. Pragmatism is another. "We promote the effective use of the language through public speaking and debates." The Chairman of the ESU likes to see English as an asset for everyone: "English spans the divide between people and cultures. It isn't owned by Britain and America: it now belongs to everyone."



Sadly, a common language is no guarantee we can all get along.

But as Winston Churchill, a former ESU chairman, once observed, "To jaw-jaw is better than to war-war." The ESU is helping to make the jawing easier and more global.

Extracted from Time Magazine London June 2002

She has enjoyed visits to West Wales and London which was on 21st August, the anniversary of the death of Princess Diana and was moved by the memorial to her and Dodi al Fayed in Harrods. Mme. Tussaud's (a museum of wax-work figures) was a hit, especially a make-believe taxi ride taking the visitor through the historical ages of London.

She was disappointed to miss the Community Shield match between Liverpool and Arsenal at the Millennium Stadium. Michael Owen, David Beckham and Steve Macmannaman are favourites, especially Owen and not just because he is a good player!

Sue Turnbull is clearly devoted to Oliko. She admired her bravery in coming on her own to Bassaleg school.

She was impressed by her progress in English and the way she made friends so easily.

She says that Oliko has changed in many ways. Left alone she can stay in bed forever. She also notices that Oliko is more helpful around the house this time.

On her last visit she had been used to living with her grandmother who kept up the tradition in Georgian women of doing everything for their children and grandchildren. Between the two visits her grandmother has sadly died and Oliko now realises how much there is to do. Sue says Oliko can return whenever and how often she likes. She looks forward to a life-long relationship with her Georgian friend.

MS

Oliko with friend



Mike Singleton interviewed Sue Turnbull for this article

THE GOLDEN GIRL FROM THE WEST (GEORGIA)

(with apologies to Puccini)

One of the pleasures of twinning is meeting the people from one of our three twin cities. Oliko Murgulia comes from Kutaisi. The Georgians are amazingly warm people whose hospitality matches our own: it is a real delight to be able to welcome them to our own home. Oliko has been here three times, the latest during August and September of this year.



Shopping with Sue

On all three occasions Oliko has been hosted by the Turnbull family: they have become attached to Oliko. In 1996 she, her parents and her younger brother stayed at the Mansion House with Cllr. Lloyd and Mrs. Turnbull during his term as Mayor. Sadly, Lloyd died in November 1999 and Mrs. Sue Turnbull says he would have been really pleased and proud of the way Oliko has grown to be such a delightful symbol of the twinning between our cities.

Oliko's second visit was from December 1997 to April 1998. The main reason for her coming was to attend Bassaleg Comprehensive School for the spring term. British education is rated highly in Georgia;

there has been a succession of Georgian students at University of Wales College Newport. The Georgian education system demands exceptionally high standards from its pupils so it was no surprise when Oliko was a star student at Bassaleg. Remembering that Oliko's English is solely the product of her school studies it says a lot for her and her school that she won straight A's throughout her term. She was kitted out from day one as a Bassaleg pupil and loved her time at the school. Clearly foreign, some people thought she was French! She still maintains regular contact with friends she made there.

Her main memory of this time was her love affair with chips - she ate them three times a day. She was fascinated with nose-rings and had a fake one herself. She felt completely at home at the Turnbolls, regarding them as her second family, a common feeling among members of the NKTA who have visited Kutaisi - they also have a second Georgian family.



Tower Bridge London

On her latest visit she came solely for pleasure - no school this time. She loves shopping for clothes and the supermarket Tesco's, especially their bananas.

The Enigma of Cleopatra

When you think that you have already seen everything and there's nothing left to shock or surprise you, when you are sure that the voyage through time could be made possible only in beautiful movies, you may stumble upon Egypt, the cradle of one of the most ancient, powerful and puzzling civilisations. Nobody had ever been able to resist the greatness of this wonderful country. My objective is not to describe Egypt's centuries-long history and traditions. I'd like to recall one chapter of this history, to relate to you the story of Cleopatra VII, about whom you may know everything but still irresistibly desire to learn more about her life, her personality and her ambitions. I'd like to solve the enigma of Cleopatra, to find out the following: what was the mystery of her charisma? Who was Cleopatra twenty centuries ago and who is she now?

Cleopatra VII (51-30BC), the last reigning Queen of Egypt, is one of those legendary and romantic figures of history that have captured the imagination of every generation since her own time. She is considered to be one of the most intelligent and canny female rulers of all times. She was fluent in nine languages. (However, Latin was not one of them). She was the only pharaoh in the 300-year Ptolemaic dynasty that could actually speak Egyptian. Besides, she was a great mathematician, a very good businesswoman who had a sense of occasion and clever presentation skills.

Perhaps Cleopatra's legendary powers of seduction were due to her charisma, intelligence and very attractive, vibrant personality, rather than physical beauty. I'd like to draw a parallel between her and holy Queen Tamar of Georgia. I don't mean and perhaps I have no right to say that they have much in common, but as some facts in their lives coincide, I think it would be interesting to compare their behaviour and to show the difference between their personalities. Both women were strong-willed, brilliant queens who made extraordinary efforts to prevent their countries being taken over by various enemies. Both of them went to the throne at the age 18 and died young.

When Cleopatra became co-regent, her world was crumbling down around her. There was anarchy abroad and famine at home but by her wise rule she managed to maintain her throne for 21 years. Cleopatra had dreams of becoming world Empress and she almost achieved it. Her favourite oath was: *"As surely as I shall dispense justice on the Roman Capitol"*. Her way of getting it done was very cruel and selfish. In order to gain power, she killed her younger sister and two brothers. Her reign was stained with an ocean of blood.



As for Queen Tamar, she was tender, peaceful and soft-hearted. She abolished capital punishment and fought only for the welfare of her country. In her reign Georgia reached the highest level of political strength and economical and cultural development. This period is commonly known as the "Golden Age" in Georgian History.

In 48 BC Cleopatra was in exile in Syria and was to meet Julius Caesar. The Queen knew that if she entered Alexandria openly, her brother's henchmen would kill her so she had herself smuggled inside an oriental rug and when the rug was unrolled, Cleopatra tumbled out. It is said that the 52-year-old Caesar was bewitched by her charm and become her lover that very night. Caesar restored the dazzling Queen to her throne and she became the sole ruler of Egypt.

After the assassination of Caesar, Cleopatra needed another powerful protector in Rome. Her choice was Mark Anthony. When in 41 BC she was invited by him to Tarsus, she already knew how to get him. She used his limited strategic and tactical abilities, his blue blood, his drinking, his womanising, his vulgarity and his ambition. Cleopatra put on a show for Mark Anthony. She sailed with silver oars, purple sails with her Erotes fanning her and the Nereid handmaids steering. She was dressed as Aphrodite, the goddess of love. This was a very calculated entrance, a vulgar display to attract a vulgar man.



Let's return to Queen Tamar and year 1204. The governor of the Ruma Sultanate, Runk-endirin dispatched a demand to the Queen that she should renounce Christianity, accept Islam and become his lover. Unlike Cleopatra, the insulted Queen immediately gathered troops, blessed the army and in a historic battle near Basiani the Georgians defeated the coalition of Muslim rulers.

From this parallel we can conclude that Cleopatra considered honesty and faith to be second-rate. She had a gold statue of herself placed in the temple of Venus Genetrix, called herself god (the New Isis) and made people worship her, whereas Queen Tamar

prayed to God to bless and protect her country. She promoted the faith in Christ throughout Georgia by the construction of churches and monasteries; the Georgian Orthodox Church canonised her.

After Anthony's death, Cleopatra was taken prisoner by Octavian. She knew that she would be displayed as a slave. The Queen was too proud to live this way so she had an asp (an Egyptian cobra) brought to her hidden in a basket of figs, and she committed suicide on August 12th 30 BC at the age of 39. The Egyptians believed that death by snakebite would secure immortality. With this, she achieved her dying wish, never to be forgotten.

Both queens left long-lasting memories and went down in history. Cleopatra was the last pharaoh of Egypt. After her death, Egypt became a Roman province. Queen Tamar's death was to mark the end of the *Golden Age* in Georgian History. The Mongols invaded Georgia and the once great kingdom was totally devastated.

When speaking about Cleopatra, it is emphasised that she was always brilliant and devoted to her country. What was often not associated with the legendary queen was her selfishness and brutality. In comparison with Queen Tamar some other features of her mysterious character were revealed. It became clear how self-centred and power-hungry she was. In the service of her objectives Cleopatra could be cunning, deceitful, manipulative, two-faced, dissembling, underhanded, even ruthless. She enjoyed power, was a born leader and an ambitious monarch who, in preserving Egypt, scored many major successes and carved out a place in world history.

Now, when centuries separate us from her, when you see her amazing face in coins and paintings, a strange feeling of something not fully explained comes inside you. Although the story of Cleopatra is one that has been told many times, there is a lot of things left we don't know about her. She still remains an enigma to everyone.

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