

Personal records from 'Nominal Lists'

Vitebsk archive workers are first to introduce electronic database to research family trees

Researchers and citizens interested in finding out the history of their family will find the database useful. In recent years, people's interest in genealogy has grown, so Vitebsk's archive workers have decided to significantly simplify search methods, accelerating performance and raising efficiency. Over the last five years, the State Archives of the Vitebsk Region has been logging documents relating to biographical information onto its 'Nominal Lists' electronic database, recording regional archives. "Now, archive employees receiving inquiries on a person can enter the surname into the database, immediately receiving the information on where the documents related to this person is kept," explains Tatiana Svistunova, Director of the State Archives of the Vitebsk Region.

In creating these catalogues of personal records, some unique documents were found: relating to Ivan Alferov — the father of Nobel Prize winner Zhores Alferov; Belarusian composer Mikhail Antsev; famous entomologist Vladimir Plyushchik-Plyushchevsky; and fairy-tale writer Grigory Shakulov. They are to be used to conduct further research.

Holiday fair of masters

Guests from Lithuania and Poland join folk masters and craftsmen from all over Belarus in Grodno, to celebrate day honouring their patron: Saint Kazimir

By Piotr Iosifov

Grodno recently hosted its traditional *Kazyuki* fair for the tenth time: a true spring holiday. Already, it is an important event in the culture of our three neighbouring nations.

The fair dates from four centuries ago, when it began as a public holiday, explains the Deputy Chair of the Grodno City Executive Committee, Irina Senchenkova. "Every year, the popularity of our fair grows, as does the number of participants. Initially, only a few dozen masters attended. Three years ago, over a hundred came to demonstrate their works and, this year, we welcomed about 200 masters from Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk, Gomel, Slonim, Lida, Smorgon, Ostrovets and other cities. We even had Ukrainian guests. Our festival included a concert programme, with songs performed in three languages: Belarusian, Polish and Lithuanian. For the first time, the Kruszewo folk music and dance ensemble took part, from Poland's Podlaskie Voivodeship."

The fair usually begins in the afternoon, in Grodno's major square, accompanied by the stroke of ancient chimes from Farny Roman Catholic Church. People flock to the stalls, searching for presents among the multitude of wonderful crafts. It's rare to see so many handmade items in one



Kazyuki exhibition-fair is a bright spring event in Grodno

place: straw hats and caskets, wooden barrels and whistles, pictures, embroidered fabrics, costume jewellery and so much more. A blacksmith beats hot metal with a hammer, watched intently by an audience; his creations can then be bought as souvenirs. Among the most amazing are his forged roses.

Galina Buzun, from the Grodno Region's Slonim, aroused much interest with

her carving and wood painting. She brought many interesting pieces to the fair. "Eight people are employed at our workshop," she tells us. "All are passionate about art and can hardly live without it. They are always delighted to take part in *Kazyuki*."

Sergey Bondarenko, from Smorgon, also brought wonderful wooden pieces; he has his own workshop and worked hard all winter.

"It's vital to find a good idea for later implementation in wood," he explains. "Anything I make with passion is so much more beloved, so tends not to be sold. I just showcase these pieces, taking pleasure in sharing their beauty."

Minsk craftsman Vladimir Kudritsky always attends the Grodno fair and has been working with ceramics since childhood. He even has his own workshop.

"I make various pieces from baked clay and will certainly come again next year, with pleasure," Vladimir stresses.

Valentina Chichkova, from Grodno, brought her unusual collection of dolls, which she speaks of with a smile. "I've mustn't have played with enough dolls in childhood, so I sew them now. It gives me pleasure and I hope that those who buy my dolls are also delighted."

Graffiti from the past

Nine century old inscriptions preserved on church walls of Convent of the Saviour and St. Yevfrosiniya in Polotsk

Polotsk is a unique city, as proven by its 12th-17th century graffiti. Researchers knew about the inscriptions on the walls of the Saviour

and graffiti in the 1990s and, since 2006, a team of artists and restorers have been involved, headed by Vladimir Sarabiyanov.

The triangular altar and cell of St. Yevfrosiniya have been completely cleared, with around a hundred graffiti inscriptions disclosed;

scriptions is thought to be a nun by the name of Silyavina, a widow from the famous boyar Silyav family. In medieval times, widows from noble families would often retire to a convent upon the death of the head of their family, after their children had fully grown.

Two chronicle inscriptions, founded on the altar, tell us that the church kept records from year to year. The first inscription notes the death of the Polish King and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Casimir, in 1492; it goes on to tell of the accession to the throne of his son, Alexander, and his visit to Polotsk in 1497. The second inscription, recently uncovered, describes the death of three members of the Vasilievich boyar family in 1492 — one of the oldest branches of Polotsk's ancient Korsak family.

Polotsk's graffiti is a true revelation for historians, allowing them to make up for the lack of written sources on the history of Belarus.

they are now being analysed and a book on them is to be released this autumn. Alongside the usual forms of graffiti, there are some scrawlings of a household nature, while others chronicle events. The author of at least three in-



Inscriptions discovered during restoration work

Transfiguration Church back in the 19th century. However, these were covered by paintings. It was only on clearing them that the graffiti reappeared. Restorer Vladimir Rakitsky began revealing the ancient frescoes

Abundance of cultural events



Anna Balash's dolls stand out for their individuality
Author's dolls and photos on show at Spring Trip exhibition in Gomel

This exhibition is one of many cultural events being

held in Gomel this year, since the town has been named Cultural Capital of Belarus 2011 and Cultural Capital of the Commonwealth 2011.

The event will show dolls created by Anna Balash, and photos by Irena Gudievskaya.

Ms. Balash is an acknowledged master in creating dolls, giving each one its own individuality, name and heart (made from fabric or cardboard). Her dolls are made from ceramic and fabric and wear original costumes and dresses. These are supplemented by amazing shots by photographer Irena Gudievskaya, depicting spring flowers and nature, as well as famous Belarusian women: sport and pop stars, prominent TV celebrities and cultural figures of Belarus.

Nastya to sing in Düsseldorf

By Oleg Klimov

As promised, by March 1st, a focus group comprising representatives from the First TV Channel, ONT, STV and Lad determined the Belarusian participant for the International Eurovision-2011 Song Contest.

From 22 entrants, our country is to be presented by 20 year old Minsk State Linguistic University student Anastasia Vinnikova. The authors of the winning *Born in Bielorrussia* are composer Yevgeny Oleinik, producer of the *Aura* band, and *Dali's* leader, Victor Rudenko.

From May 10th-14th, Düsseldorf

will be welcoming participants of the 56th pop music tournament. Our Nastya will face last year's triumphant Lena Meyer-Landrut of Germany and Moldovan *Zdob si Zdub*, trying to win the competition's major award for the second time. Mika Newton is to represent Ukraine.