

Chris Devereux MEdTech, BSc (Hons), PGCE, DASE, CASE, Member IATEFL

British Council Education and English Language Consultant

2025 Winter Study Day, (WSD): More Reflections on a Year of Russian Language and Culture Learning

Well, that's 2025 almost done and dusted. We spent another year reading Russian literature to help us with our pronunciation and also trying to 'situate' and fix our previously learned grammar knowledge. This year however, we did not delve into our usual classic Russian literature. Instead, Jean dug out a really great book of Short Stories in Russian, (Рассказы на русском языке) published by Penguin Books in 2017. These were really interesting stories about the trials of life in the modern Russia. A lot of the stories had a theme about the terrible memory pain of trauma caused by the Great Patriotic War, (WW2 for us in The West). Visits to the huge war cemeteries in Russia will really help us to understand the fear which the Russians have of tanks mounting up on their borders with Poland, The Ukraine and the Baltic States.

I remember well my first visit as an eighteen year-old in 1973 to the Siege of Leningrad Cemetery, (the Piskaryesky Memorial) located on the outskirts of that huge tragic city. Not one of the group of thirty Scouse six-form pupils spoke a single word during the one-hour visit. We all retreated to solitary spaces of our own to look at, and ponder, the ashes of the dead, buried in mounds with what was left of 20,000 people, the year of death marked on a tablet on each mound. What a total waste of everything war is.

On a lighter note, the photo below was taken on the study day itself in 'Penelope's' on Rotten Row. The place is quirkily decorated and the Christmas decorations were really lovely. I had a dried meat hash and it was very tasty. We begin our studies again in early January 2026 and the session foci for the Spring term will be a revision of our grammar book, 'Take off in Russian', and on all types of writing in Russian. This variety will allow for individual member language level to be expressed; ie, we can all write as much or as little as we want, using any genre we choose.

Why not join us?

Chris D

Facilitator

csdevereux@gmail.com

