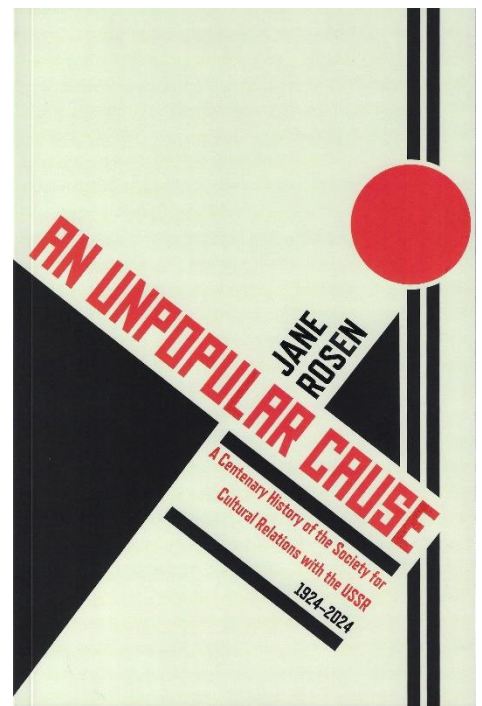


Society for Co-operation in
SCRSS
Russian and Soviet Studies

**100th Annual Report of the
Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies
January – December 2024**



See page 2 for captions to these images



Society for Co-operation in Russian & Soviet Studies

Registered Charity No. 1104012

320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB

Tel: 020 7274 2282 | Eml: ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk

Web: www.scrss.org.uk

Extract from the Rules of the Society:

The Object of the Society shall be the advancement of education, learning and knowledge of, and to promote studies in the languages, culture, history and life of Russia and the other countries and nationalities formerly constituting the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The SCRSS

The Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies (SCRSS) aims to promote knowledge of the culture, language and history of Russia and the former Soviet Union through its activities and unique library.

The SCRSS is a self-funding membership organisation with management vested in Annual General Meetings and regular meetings of its Council.

The SCRSS was founded in 1924 as the Society for Cultural Relations between the Peoples of the British Commonwealth and the USSR (referred to simply as “the SCR”), following the establishment of diplomatic relations between Britain and the new Soviet state.

It changed its name to the Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies in 1992 when Russia became the inheritor state of the dissolved USSR.

From 1924 it has continued its work uninterrupted until the present day, including working with, when possible, other states of the former Soviet Union.

The Society became a registered educational charity in May 2004.

The Society was a founder member of the Soviet Memorial Trust Fund in 1997, which changed its name on becoming a charity in 2018 to the Soviet War Memorial Trust (SWMT).

Front page images (clockwise from top left):

- Margarita Mudrak (IAIC Chair), Philip Matthews (SCRSS Chair), and Bill Bowring (SCRSS President) cut the centenary cake at the 6 July celebration (*photo Karl Weiss*)
- The cover of *An Unpopular Cause*, the centenary history of the Society
- View of the introductory section of the centenary exhibition (*photo William McKee*)
- Helen Sharman, the UK’s first person in space at the special event in December to round of the Society’s 100th year (*photo Karl Weiss*)

Annual Report of the Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies January 1 to December 31, 2024

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

At the Annual General Meeting of the SCRSS held on Saturday 18 May 2024 and the subsequent Council meeting, the following officers and Council were elected, or continued to serve:

Honorary Officers

President and EC Member: Professor William Bowring

Vice-Presidents: Dr Kate Hudson, Dr David Lane,
Dr Rachel O'Higgins, Professor Geoffrey Roberts

Executive Committee (EC) and Members of the SCRSS Council

Chair: Philip Matthews

Hon. Secretary: Ralph Gibson

Hon. Treasurer: Jane Rosen

SCRSS Council Members

Wendy Ansley, Bethany Aylward, Kate Clark, Michael Costello, Jeremy Hicks, Andrew Jameson, Meirian Jump (*Vice Chair*), Christine Lindey (*Exhibitions Officer*), Charles Stewart, Diana Turner (*Vice Chair*)

NB: The President and the members of the SCRSS Council are Charity Trustees of the SCRSS, registered with the Charity Commission.

Staff

None.

Auditors

No auditors were appointed for the Society's financial year Jan-Dec 2024. Instead an independent examiner approves the financial statement for forwarding to the Charity Commission, in line with its requirements.

Bank

The Society holds all of its accounts with the Co-operative Bank.

1. The Centenary of the SCRSS

It is entirely appropriate to begin this 100th annual report with a summary of the key projects and events which marked the Society's centenary year 2024.

The year began with the completion of the redecoration of the ground floor, including the front door, following an incredibly generous donation from a member. Visitors throughout the year noted the transformation.

In the first half of the year, work continued on the gathering of materials for the Centenary exhibition, highlighting the history of the Society and its enormous range of activity. Thanks to the heroic efforts of the small team involved, the Centenary celebration in July saw it completed, and much appreciated. The exhibition remained on show until the end of the year, and attracted further visitors on two open evenings, the monthly Library openings, and the final centenary event in December.

Jane Rosen completed work on *An Unpopular Cause* – the centenary history of the Society – and thanks to the copy editing and production scheduling by Diana Turner, copies of the book arrived in good time for sale at the July celebration. Significant donations from members, and sales of the book, mean that the costs of its production were met within the year, and a significant profit made.

On Saturday 6 July, just over 100 members attended the Centenary celebration. We also welcomed Margarita Mudrak and Tatiana Emelyanova from the Inter-regional (St Petersburg) Association for International Co-operation. Though the day started with rain, by the afternoon start the sun was shining (though it remained very windy!). Thanks to the volunteers involved, the food and drink flowed, the centenary cake was cut, a toast was raised, songs were sung, and members took the opportunity to meet and catch up, with many exploring the building and its collections either for the first time – or for the first time in many years.

Autumn saw the publication of the 36pp full-colour special edition of the SCRSS Digest which featured articles highlighting some of the individuals who contributed to the Society from its foundation in 1924.

The final centenary events took place in December. A fascinating audience with Helen Sharman CMG OBE, the UK's first astronaut, who travelled to the Mir space station in 1991, was followed by a party to celebrate the end of the centenary year.

2. Membership

Total membership (including affiliations), as of 31 December 2024, stood at **245 (257)** - including 22 joint memberships. There are five organisations affiliated to the Society (one "commercial" and four "community, voluntary or charity"). The Society received 21 (10) new individual memberships and 0 (0) new affiliations in 2024. (*The respective figures as of 31 Dec 2023 are in brackets.*)

3. Finance

A financial statement for the period 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2024 accompanies this report. There was a significant surplus by the year end (£6159) mainly accounted for by the generous bequest from Jean Turner and the receipt of a GiftAid refund from HMRC covering two years. The Centenary Club gained its final member, who made a single payment of £1000. From its inception in 2019, the 34 members of the Club have contributed more than £35,000 to the Society. Six members continued to make regular contributions totalling almost £300 each month.

Despite the significant year-end balances of £17869 the Society faces the urgent challenge of moving to a long-term, financially stable future. The financial challenge also applies to the building which the Society occupies. As indicated in the 2023 annual report, the building is in need of extensive renovation. Neither the Society, nor its landlord (SCR House Ltd), have the funds to undertake such work, and in the current circumstances neither is likely to secure sufficient outside funding to do so.

4. Library and Archive

Work continues on the online catalogue which is based on the Soutron library management system. This year saw volunteers concentrating on the history and theatre sections, (the main collections of these are now complete), the Second World War, and work began on bringing the art monographs up to the new standards of cataloguing, whilst identifying those as yet not catalogued.

Our library volunteers continued to work in the library regularly on Tuesdays – cataloguing, sorting, class-marking and labelling books and pamphlets. This is reflected in the significant increase in the number of records on the online catalogue which has led to an increase in requests to use the archive. Mel Bach continues to provide advice and support as Hon. Librarian. Due to work for the centenary celebrations, access had to be limited.

Due to the centenary celebrations and the launch of *An Unpopular Cause* work on the archive was also limited in 2024. However, many items from both the Library and the Archive were referenced in the book and appeared in the centenary exhibition.

5. Development

The main focus of the year was the marking of the Society's centenary (see *Item 1. above*). Despite the continuing challenges facing the Society, the SCRSS remains committed to exploring ways of furthering the aims of its **Strategy 100** which was adopted several years ago. The strategy aims to: **Stabilise** finances, including building a reserve fund; **Improve** security; **Open** the centre at least two days per week; **Complete** the cataloguing of the library; **Secure** grants/funding to renovate the building and improve building access and emergency egress; **Increase** income from room hire; **Complete** the digitisation of the photo archive, and increase income from this source; **Run** a more extensive programme of events (talks, film screenings, exhibitions, seminars, etc); **Improve** storage of all collections, especially for rare/old material; **Improve** governance, including training for Council members (who are all Trustees of the charity); **Develop** outreach to increase membership and use of the centre; **Improve** facilities for members, students and researchers; **Develop** plans to increase volunteer participation in all aspects of the work of the Society.

6. Use of the premises

There were no room hires in 2024. Volunteers and keyholders are needed to staff them, and until they are more readily available it seems unlikely that 2025 will see any improvement.

7. Volunteers

The Society is wholly dependent on volunteers.

Members of the SCRSS Council supported the work of the Society on a voluntary basis in many different ways: the day-to-day operation of the Society, including dealing with membership; supporting the work of SCR House Ltd and the Soviet War Memorial Trust; maintenance of the building; work on the archives and library collections; organisation of the events programme; production and distribution of the SCRSS Digest, maintenance of the website and social media; and devoting time to the meetings of the Council and engaging in its work.

Wendy Ansley, Assiya Issemberdiyeva and Christine Lindey provided support for the centenary exhibition. Tracey Gardiner organised, and Wendy, Ilona Gardiner-Gibson, and Andrea Taziker assisted, with the catering for the centenary event.

Len Weiss regularly supported the library openings and continued to work on various aspects of the maintenance of the building and framed/mounted the centenary exhibition. Len also continued to provide a photographic record of the Society's events.

Chris Barnard continued to run a weekly online Russian language class.

Claire Weiss and Gordon Harris continued their weekly sessions cataloguing, classifying, and sorting various collections.

Thanks go to William and Anne McKee for support on the Saturday library openings and to everyone else who has contributed during the year.

The Society is also very grateful to Noel Hannon for the independent examination of the Society's accounts.

8. SCRSS Digest

Trustee Diana Turner is Editor of the journal and two issues were published in 2024, rather than the normal three – to allow for a bumper centenary issue in the autumn. **Issue SD-31, Spring 2024**, included features 'Velimir Khlebnikov and "The Radio of the Future"' by Dr Caroline Wilkins; 'What Are They Up To? The Formation of the SCR, 1924' by Jane Rosen (an edited extract from An Unpopular Cause); and 'Why the USSR Needed "The Golden Ring" Cities' by Dr James C Pearce. The special centenary issue **SD-32, Autumn 2024**, with 36 pages in full colour, included a centenary welcome 'Marking 100 Years' by Honorary Secretary Ralph Gibson, and ten feature articles delving into the life and work of thirteen individuals who have contributed to the Society's work at different times in our history.

The journal is one of the benefits of membership, with printed copies posted to all members (online pdf versions are available one month after publication on the SCRSS website). Postal mailings of the journal are combined with membership renewal materials and other occasional materials. Postage costs have increased significantly over the past few years, although production costs with our long established printer are still competitive for the usual black / white issues. The Editor thanks all contributors in 2024 and welcomes suggestions for future articles or book reviews.

9. SCRSS Website and Social Media

Council member Diana Turner manages the SCRSS website. Usage statistics for 2024 were significantly improved on 2023 with total hits of 11,260 (14% up on 2023 and almost comparable with 2022) and 5,470 unique visitors (11% up on 2023 and almost comparable to 2022). This increase was likely due to the SCRSS centenary. The top five webpages were: Home, Events, Photo Library, Library and Archive, and About Us. Unfortunately, due to pressure of other work in the centenary year, the website has still not been set up with an SSL Certificate (to authenticate the website identity and enable an encrypted connection), and therefore is flagged as 'Not secure' by some web browsers, particularly for document downloads. This needs to be addressed in 2025.

The Society uses Eventbrite for booking functionality for all online events and some in-person events. Fees of approximately 25% are deducted by Eventbrite from income from paying events, but it is still much easier for us to handle the financials and automated emails to attendees using Eventbrite. Free events handled through Eventbrite do not incur any cost. Currently, we have 205 followers on Eventbrite.

Council member Charles Stewart remained responsible for the Society's Facebook page. In 2024, the SCRSS Council adopted a social media policy and plans to connect the page to the Society's email address and focus content on the Society's events. These changes have not yet been completed. In light of the new social media policy, the SCRSS Council has also considered the question of continuing with an account on X (formerly Twitter) or switching to other social media platforms.

10. Russian Language

Christine Barnard's weekly Zoom evening class for good intermediate level students continued in 2024 with five terms. The 2-hour conversation and reading sessions were run at a competitive fee for SCRSS members only, with free one-evening trials for potential new participants. The Society thanks Christine, a longstanding Trustee until May 2024, for continuing this enjoyable class which is a valuable source of income and supports our charitable purpose.

Trustee Diana Turner, responsible for the events programme in 2024, continued the programme of advanced-level Zoom talks in Russian for SCRSS members only in co-operation with the Society's long-term partner in Russia, the Inter-regional Association for International Co-operation (until autumn 2024, the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation), a non-governmental organisation. There were two talks in spring 2024 on aspects of contemporary Russian literature, given by Associate Professor Nataliya Semenova. See Events for further information.

11. SCRSS Council

The Council met online in January, March, May (in person following the AGM), June, September and November 2024. There was a special online meeting of the Council on 15 May to discuss motions to the AGM.

12. Soviet War Memorial Trust (SWMT)

The SCRSS continues to play a very significant role in the administration of the SWMT. The SCRSS Hon. Secretary fulfils the same role with the Trust. The current SCRSS Chair, Philip Matthews, has been SWMT Chair since 1997. Due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the SWMT did not organise formal Acts of Remembrance during the year, but flowers were laid on behalf of the Society on Holocaust Memorial Day in January, Victory Day in May and Remembrance Sunday in November. The Memorial is located in Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, which surrounds the Imperial War Museum in Southwark.

13. Obituaries

The Society was notified of the deaths of several long-standing members during the year: William Harnett (member since 1992); John Massey-Stewart [1932-2023] (member since 1961); Professor Stephen White [1945-2023] (member since 1976) and Roger Bunce.

14. Outreach

The reciprocal Zoom online talks programme between the SCRSS and Inter-regional Association for International Co-operation (formerly the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation), continued in 2024. All talks are on cultural topics, are for Association or SCRSS members only and free of charge. See **Events**. The Society maintained contacts with Cambridge Russian-Speaking Society (CamRuSS) and the Manchester St-Petersburg Friendship Society, exchanging event information, etc. All the Society's affiliates were represented at the Centenary celebration in July. In December, Jane Rosen delivered the 2024 Sam Johnson memorial lecture at Manchester Central Library organised by Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester Histories.

15. SCRSS Events in 2024

The regular first-Saturday-of-the-month library openings took place in February, March, April, May, June, August, September, October and November – with the exhibition *A Centenary History of the SCRSS in 100+ Objects* on view from August, following the SCRSS Centenary Celebration.

February:

Online Talk: Professor Bill Bowring on 'Lenin, Self-Determination of Nations and the 1924 Constitution of the USSR'. *1920s USSR series*.

March:

Online Talk in Russian for SCRSS Members: Associate Professor Nataliya Semenova on 'The Nostalgia Trend in Contemporary Russian Literature' (Nostal'gicheskaya tendentsiya v sovremennoi russkoi literature). In partnership with the Inter-regional (St Petersburg) Association for International Co-operation (IAIC).

Online Talk in English for Inter-regional (St Petersburg) Association Members: Helen Mercer on 'The British-Australian Writer James Aldridge'. In partnership with IAIC.

Online Talk: Andrew George on 'Andrei Platonov's "Chevengur" as a Marxist Novel'. *1920s USSR series*.

April:

Online Talk in English for Inter-regional (St Petersburg) Association Members: Vanessa Shone on 'A Literary Tour of London's Early 20th-Century Writers Connected to the SCRSS (Bloomsbury Group)'. In partnership with IAIC.

Online Talk in Russian for SCRSS Members: Associate Professor Nataliya Semenova on 'Moskovsky tekst v sovremennoi russkoi kul'ture' (Moscow Literature in Contemporary Russian Culture). In partnership with IAIC.

Online Talk: Professor Jeremy Hicks on 'Oedipal and Incendiary: Revisiting Pudovkin's Adaptation of Gorky's "Mother" (1926)'. *1920s USSR series*.

May:

SCRSS AGM

In-person Talk: Christine Lindey on 'Alexander Deineka (1899–1969), People's Artist of the USSR'. *1920s USSR series*.

July:

In-person Event: SCRSS Centenary Celebration 1924-2024 for Members (with launch of centenary exhibition 'A Centenary History of the SCRSS in 100+ Objects')

September:

Online Talk: Assiya Issemberdiyeva on 'Imagining Central Asia on Film: The Soviet Folklorisation of Cultural Identity'

October:

Talk in English for Inter-regional (St Petersburg) Association Members: Diana Turner on 'Three London Visitor Attractions: Current Issues and Controversies'. In partnership with IAIC.

Online Lecture in English for SCRSS Members: Dr Olga Arkhipova on 'The State Hermitage Museum'. In partnership with IAIC.

Evening Exhibition Viewing: 'A Centenary History of the SCRSS in 100+ Objects'

November:

In-Person Talk, Book Launch and Exhibition: Jane Rosen on 'An Unpopular Cause: A Centenary History of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR 1924-2024' (in association with Marx Memorial Library and Workers' School)

Evening Exhibition Viewing: 'A Centenary History of the SCRSS in 100+ Objects'

Online Talk in English for Inter-regional (St Petersburg) Association Members: Rosa Turner Wood on 'Newcastle upon Tyne: Urban Landscape and Architecture'. In partnership with IAIC.

December:

In-Person Exclusive Event for SCRSS Members: 'An Audience with Helen Sharman CMG OBE, Britain's First Astronaut in 1991'

In-Person Event for SCRSS Members: End-of-Centenary-Year Celebration

SOCIETY FOR CO-OPERATION IN RUSSIAN AND SOVIET STUDIES

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS

1 January to 31 December 2024

	2024	2023	2022	2021
	£	£	£	£
INCOME				
Membership	3,415	3,513	3,753	3,791
Events	625	662	595	999
Library Sales (inc. pottery) and information	0	663	132	80
Centenary Book (sales & donations)	5,450	630	n/a	n/a
Photolibrary	731	336	584	672
SCRSS Digest / sales / adverts	0	0	0	200
Room Hire	0	0	727	0
Russian Courses / Seminars / Evening Class	520	810	880	2,694
Sundries	0	0	0	0
Regular monthly donations	0	0	0	0
Centenary Club donations	4,241	5,567	6,608	6,555
Bequests	10,000	0	0	0
Agency fees / grants / bank interest / refunds	0	1,800	4,761	0
Donations	4,421	9,670	5,149	5,932
Gift Aid claim / HMRC refund	5,821	0	2,139	2,084
SMTF/SWMT donations made via SCRSS	0	0	0	50
TOTAL	35,224	23,650	25,328	23,055
EXPENDITURE	£	£	£	£
Staff wages / tax / national insurance	0	0	0	0
Electricity / Gas / Telephone / Broadband / Water	5,212	3,043	2,744	2,273
Insurance	1,145	1,067	996	1,049
Maintenance	3,846	14,041	2,483	1,312
Office supplies / equipment / stationery / petty cash / Soutron	5,733	4,752	4,710	6,755
Business Rates (Lambeth)	3,877	3,986	4,147	4,147
Russian Courses / Seminars	0	0	0	344
Postage	724	409	484	882
Events (inc Zoom fees)	156	179	535	408
Fees / debts	0	0	0	1,000
Rent (SCR House Ltd)	2,250	2,000	1,750	1,500
Promotion (Printing / Adverts / Mugs / Donations / Memberships)	2,014	866	1,129	1,202
Centenary Book	4,109	91	n/a	n/a
Transfers of donations to SMTF/SWMT	0	0	0	50
TOTAL	29,065	30,435	18,979	20,922
Deficit/Surplus	6,159	-6,785	6,349	2,133
Bank current and deposit accounts 1st January	11,162	18,339	12,002	9,324
Bank current and deposit accounts 31st December	17,869	11,162	18,339	12,002

SCRSS Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 December 2024

ASSETS

Cash Funds	£
Bank current account	1,792
Bank direct debit account	1,078
Bank reserve account	15,000
	17,869

Other Monetary Assets

Sundry Invoices due	0
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Fixed Assets

Library	45,000
Electronic Equipment	1,307
Fixtures and Fittings	3,402
	49,709

TOTAL ASSETS

67,578

TOTAL LIABILITIES

Creditors at 31 December	0
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Approved at Executive Committee meeting on
Date

Signed:

Chair
Philip Matthews

Hon. Secretary
Ralph Gibson

Independently examined by
Noel Hannon

Date



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name

Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies

On accounts for the year
ended

31 December 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1104012

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2024.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Noel Hannon

Date:

2.5.2025

Name:

Noel Hannon

Address:

14 Eastry House

Hartington Road

London
SW8 2HU