



Ariel

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

The Journal of the Newport-Kutaisi Twinning Association Issue No 6 April 2003



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- The Knight in the Panther's Skin
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Celebrating the cultural links between Kutaisi and Newport

Ariel 6

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Editors

Catherine Philpott

Mike Singleton

April 2003

It is hard to imagine that this is our sixth issue of Ariel. When we started out, three years ago, we were warned that we would have to be most persuasive if we were to keep any of our friends and still manage to get contributions each time Ariel went to press. Everyone has been wonderful. The articles continue to come.

We are very pleased indeed to have Kate Hunter our conservator from Newport Museum and Art Gallery outline the very thrilling work she is undertaking in the world of local marine archaeology. An amazing discovery was made in the River Usk of a very large 15th century sailing ship in an extraordinarily good condition. It is a find that stands as significant both nationally and internationally and has drawn attention from experts and enthusiasts from across the world. Although she is a very busy person she has not forgotten her visit to Kutaisi and the friends she made there. We are very grateful for her willingness to contribute to this issue.

We are indebted to Mel and Derek for having pieces that flow from one issue to the next, thereby guaranteeing continuity.

In a time of conflict we continue to celebrate the cultural links between our two cities. Now with the onset of spring and the thought of the summer months ahead we send our very best wishes to all our friends in Kutaisi Newport International Twinning Association for Easter 2003.

Catherine Philpott

catherine@philpott9828.fsworld.co.uk

Tel: 01633 421103

Mike Singleton

mike@singletonn.freeworld.co.uk

Tel: 01633 853224



Excavating the Newport Ship

In June 2002, a nearly complete C15th ship was discovered on the banks of the River Usk in Newport near to the Museum & Art Gallery.

Kate Howell, from the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust, was carrying out a watching brief on the site of a new Theatre & Arts Centre when she noticed archaeological timbers. Excavations commenced and an exploratory pit revealed what were subsequently identified as disarticulated ship's timbers, part of the dismantling process of a large clinker-built vessel.

Excavation was contained within a rectangular cofferdam and the ship, by great good fortune, lay diagonally from corner to corner across the dam so that the greatest possible part had survived. The starboard (right-hand) side had collapsed whilst the port side remained upright. At some date after the deposition port-side timbers had been chopped away, but the greatest part of the starboard side had survived. The surviving visible remains, however, were substantial, with a length of 23 metres and a maximum width of



Above: The gaming piece

8 metres. The timber was oak, apart from the keel, which was beech. Unfortunately, the cofferdam had cut both bow and stern. Possible excavation within these areas is now being investigated.

In total 63 framing timbers (*ribs*) survive, together with 32 strakes (*hull timbers*) on the starboard side and 16 strakes on the port



Above: Brass Strip engraved in latin with the words: 'Iesus autem passens per medium illorum gratiam maria amen'

'Jesus however passed through the middle of them through the grace of Our Lady.'

From St. John's Gospel

PASSING THROUGH STRANGERS SAFELY

side. Stringers (*longitudinal timbers*), ceiling-planking and small filler boards - attached to the frames by wooden treenails - made up the inner hull planking. There was evidence of a footing for a single deck. Central to the keel was a 10m maststep (*mast socket*), complete with pumphole.



Above: Pump basket in maststep

Iron nails held the clinker planking of the hold together. The quality of the workmanship, particularly of the long scarf joints on the framing timbers, some of which comprise seven separate pieces of wood, was clear, as were the tool marks.

As the excavation progressed so did the quantity of associated finds. On July 8th 2002 I lifted the first of several leather shoes, together with other, as yet, unidentified leather



Above: L. Kate with a find from the ship R. A visit on site from the Press

objects. Finds since have included textiles, both sailcloth and woollen clothing, rope, cork, Portuguese coins and pottery, stone cannon balls, functional wooden artefacts related to rigging, barrel staves and personal artefacts such as two combs and a gaming-piece.

Until late July 2002 dating of the ship was based on the artefacts found within her and upon structural details, until Nigel Nayling, a ship consultant and dendrochronologist, obtained a date of 1465 from one of the upper timbers. Subsequent work has suggested that this timber may be a repair and the ship could be older still.

In the meantime the levels of interest and enthusiasm for the ship within Newport and South Wales were building. 3,000 and 7,000 people attended two open evenings, on August 7th and 14th 2002, respectively.

By August 14th people were willing to queue for over an hour to see the ship and the viewing time had to be extended to sunset. Throughout, the archaeologists had been working to a very tight deadline. At this point there was no intention to lift or preserve the ship.

After the open evening on August 14th local people organized a large public meeting, attended by Paul Flynn MP and Rosemary Butler AM.



Above: Wooden Comb



R: Gaming piece



Above: Lifting the keel

The SOS (Save Our Ship) campaign was launched and began political lobbying. From August 16th people of Newport mounted a 24-hour vigil outside the site. On August 21st a flotilla of small craft sailed up the River Usk to the site and hundreds of people turned out to cheer. Aided by this popular support, Newport City Council put together a proposal to save the Ship. On 23rd August, when the next deadline was reached, the Welsh Assembly announced a grant of £3.5 million to lift, conserve and display the Newport ship.

With the decision to save the ship came the necessity of finding somewhere to store the excavated timbers. The former Corus steelworks in Llanwern, offered a unit and we moved in on September 3rd. With a great deal of enthusiastic help from Corus staff, the unit has been converted into a waterlogged wood-recording and storage area.

The ship and the site dictated the lifting process. Essentially she was taken apart in the reverse order to which she was built. There were a number of reasons for choosing this option. Firstly, she was sitting at the bottom of the cofferdam. Any attempt to take her out in a cradle would have meant digging underneath the ship and thereby undermining the cofferdam itself. Additionally a large number of concrete piles had been driven into the site before the ship was discovered and these would have had to be removed. Secondly, by dismantling the Ship piece by piece we have ensured that all waterlogged wood-conservation options are open to us.

The lifting process itself was not made easy. Each piece had to be wedged apart and the treenails or iron nails sawn to free it. So hard were the treenails that the site life of a saw was less than two days. Once free, each timber was slung or palletted out of the site by crane. The crane crew grew as enthusiastic about the ship as the archaeologists and were invaluable in the successful lift. Both HTV and BBC television companies filmed much of the process.

Overall the lifting process took just thirteen weeks with the last piece of keel coming out on November 9th 2002. Until that date the public were able to view the process from a platform provided at the request of Newport

City Council. This remained constantly staffed by members of the SOS campaign group. Beneath the ship was a wooden cradle, which in turn lay upon the earlier remains of a human skeleton. The cradle has given a dendrochronological (*dating by the rings in the timber*) date of 1467. The skeleton has yet to be dated.

I feel enormously privileged to have been part of a team, which I believe has lifted the largest medieval vessel ever to be recovered from a terrestrial site. A large volume of work now awaits. This is the start of a very long recording, conservation, publication and display process.



Above: Newport Ship and crane crew



Above: Kate (R) working on site

Kate Hunter
Keeper of Conservation
Newport Museum and Art Gallery

For further information log on to
www.thenewportship.com

Building Bridges and Exchanging Cultures

15th Annual Georgian Studies Day Conference

City of Bristol

Saturday 9th November 2002

On Saturday November 9th 2002 members of Newport Kutaisi Twinning Association attended the 15th Annual Georgian Studies Day held, for the first time, in the western city of Bristol. Unlike previous years, this meant that the Newport delegation had less distance to travel. The day has usually been held in the famous Lloyds Building or, as last year, in the Guildhall, both situated in the City of London.

This year the attendance was very good. Over 80 delegates representing local authorities, universities, business interests, government, twinning associations, arts etc. were present. It was very pleasing also to see many young Georgians.

His Worship the Lord Mayor of Bristol welcomed everyone to his city and outlined the aims and objectives of his council in applying for the prestigious status of European Capital of Culture. They had recently been short-listed and he said how valuable and important it was to them to have such strong links with Georgia and with Tbilisi in particular.



Above: His Worship the Lord Mayor of Bristol with delegates attending the November 2002 Georgian Studies Day



Above: Mrs Sesili Gogiberidze, Georgian Minister of Culture

Mrs Sesili Gogiberidze, Georgian Minister of Culture gave an overview of the changes being made in:

Art
Education
Theatre
Fine Art
Cinema
Architecture
Literature
Folklore - song & dance

There were links being forged with other countries – close co-operation with business and UNESCO for sponsorship.

Andrew Kelly, bid consultant, outlined the work being done by Bristol to gain the nomination for the status of European City of Culture for 2008. The partnership between the two cities of Bristol and Tbilisi prompted the title, 'Building Bridges' for the Georgian Studies Day Conference. It provided a platform to promote the bid.

Marina Tokhadze, Gaia, the spokesperson for the Environment and Georgia outlined the diversity and richness of Georgia's mineral wealth but gave a graphic description of the problems besetting her country today with:

- **Water** The contamination of mineral springs by the proximity of sewage systems.
- **Air** Exhaust emissions from old cars.
- **Deforestation** Habitat of endangered species both flora and fauna.
- **Sea** High pollution of the Black Sea with oil spillage, industrial effluent etc.

She went on to outline the work of the NGO, National Association for the Recovery of

Endangered Species which together with the World Bank, is helping to improve the situation in this area.



Above:
Deputy Head of Mission,
Stuart McLaren

Deputy Head of Mission, Stuart McLaren, representing Mrs Barnes Jones, British Ambassador in Tbilisi expressed the relief felt at the welcome news of the release of Peter Shaw. This incident had had a bad effect on Georgia's already fragile reputation but it was

now a case of making up and moving on. Georgia has very strong links with the UK through the British Council and future strategies are being put into place to help Georgia on the long road leading to EU inclusion.

There were problems in:

Education –

- Very tiny salaries for teachers.
- Wealthy parents funding students who were not sufficiently motivated.
- Strength of Georgian education slipping away unless there was real reform.

Exports –

- Scrap metal— The source of which will eventually run out.
- Aircraft skills— Georgia has an excellent reputation in this engineering field.



The Georgian Minister for Culture Mrs Sesill Gogiberidze

Agriculture

- Georgia's future economy will be based on agriculture but this year, due to a poor spring, both the wheat and grape harvest is down by 40%.

Sir Gary Johnson – Security Consultant

Dr David Robson CanArgo MD

Each outlined business as conducted in Georgia. There is a need for guidelines to be laid down that would have international banking recognition leading to a free, sound market based economy. Georgia, (with a view to eventually entering the EU), should be seen as the back door of Europe and not the front door of Asia.



Above: The Minister with Conference's Chairperson Dr. Tamara Dragadze.

There followed a Questions & Answers session and workshops were held in the afternoon.

Closing remarks were made by Cllr Helen Holland of Bristol City Council and His Excellency Teimuraz Mamatsashvili. They each expressed their appreciation of the speakers and the overall success of the day. On our behalf His Excellency thanked both the Bristol Tbilisi Twinning Association and the Bristol City Council for their hospitality.

Catherine Philpott

Photographs by:
Derek Pickup
Bristol Tbilisi Association

GEORGIA ON MY MIND

by Chris Heath,

"There is no reason why Georgia should not become as popular a resort as Norway or Switzerland", the travel writer Oliver Wardrop once wrote. "It is not so far away as people imagine. It is at least as beautiful as either of the two countries just named; it has the great advantage of being almost unknown to tourists; there is none of the impudent extortion which ruffles our feathers nearer home, and it is, after all, a cheaper place to travel in than Scotland. All these circumstances ought to have an influence on the holiday-maker in search of health and recreation."

Every word he says is true and wise. The fact that he wrote this in September 1888- and that travelling around Georgia for a week just over 114 years later I will not meet a single British tourist who does not make it any less true now. It is only a combination of shifting history and circumstance that has kept people away. In the soviet years there were the same limitations for western visitors as in the rest of the Soviet Union but when the Cold War ended Georgia was exactly the kind of place where tourism was expected to explode. It has yet to happen. There were some turbulent years in the early nineties and though most of Georgia is said to be pretty safe these days, and its people are famously hospitable and welcoming, it still struggles to overcome an aura of uncertainty, due to the occasional kidnapping and its proximity to Chechnya.

In the 12th century there were 65 bath-houses in Tbilisi and a handful remain. Tbilisi's very name is taken from *tbili*, the Georgian word for "warm", because of the 30 hot springs in the valley that produce 3 million litres of water a day. The two legends of how the city was founded in the 5th. century involve hot water; in one a wounded deer or pheasant was miraculously cured on falling into it; in the other the king's falcon, while catching a pheasant, accidentally fell into the waters, where both were boiled to taste.

I undressed and stepped into the bath which was exhaustingly and painfully hot. Hot water was constantly added to the bath from a pipe by the wall. The masseur strode in about 10 minutes into my bath. He was carrying a bucket and wearing a pair of boxer shorts. When I moved to dress myself just a little in the English way he snorted derisively, shook his head and impatiently pointed at the massive slab. At this point I realised that I had no idea of what kind of massage is favoured in these parts, and my first clue that there may be something masochistic in the Georgian temperament came when the masseur thumped me a few times in the back, hard enough for me to yell out loud, then stretched and twisted my limbs in unsympathetic ways to which I would have been unlikely to grant my consent had it been requested. Then, without warning, he began grazing my back and rubbing me raw with an extremely abrasive glove and then turned me over and repeated the procedure, intermittently dousing me with bucketfuls of hot sulphur water from the bath. Only later did I find a 19th. century description of these baths, describing "...what the Persian shampooer puts you through" in Tbilisi: "He goes through a whole course of gymnastics with you, during which he jumps on your chest, on the small of your back, doubles you up as if you were a fowl ready for cooking, and, besides removing every particle of your epidermis, performs sundry other experiments at which the novice stares aghast."



There are a number of monasteries scattered in the mountains above Tbilisi, but the two supposedly most impressive and most visited are called Lavra and Udabno, (see left).

Their heyday was between the 10th. and 13th. centuries, but they never recovered from Easter 1615 when invaders killed 6,000 and ransacked the monasteries. More recently, Russian soldiers used this area for target practice and then, astonishingly, in the nineties the Georgian army did the same until stopped by protests and legal action. To get to **Udabno** it's a long hike up the mountain, but reaching the brow is one of those wonderful moments. The world falls away beneath you and your eyes float over the rippled geography of the desert stretching away into haze, its huge silence sucking you in. Most of what you can see below you is no longer Georgia but Azerbaijan. By one measure you are standing on the last lip of European civilisation; here is where Asia begins.

About 30 feet below the ridge, hollowed out of the steep mountainside and stretching out for several hundred yards, are a series of caves where the monks used to live, cook, make wine, pray and contemplate. The cliff face has eroded over the centuries but it is remarkable what has survived. There are several beautiful frescos on crumbling pillars open to the elements, and the deep blue paintings which cover the walls of one cave, the Church of the Ascension, have survived almost entirely.



At lunchtime I ate one of Georgia's most famous culinary specialties, *khinkale*.

These are a kind of giant boiled dumpling with a highly spiced

blend of pork and beef within them which, it is claimed, every woman in Georgia worth marrying can make. You eat *khinkale* in a particular way, holding the knotted dough and biting them open at the top so that the juice doesn't escape as you eat away until only the knot remains, which you leave on your plate.

Driving back down the Georgian Military Highway we made a detour down a side valley where giant stone heads of celebrated Georgian writers sit on a hillside. These heads are a metaphor and a warning as to what all writers can expect: to be beheaded

and abandoned on the side of a distant mountain, forever condemned to look over a bleak landscape with no means of speaking or putting down on paper the great poetic thoughts they now have all eternity to refine in their heads.



VARDZIA

Vardzia, several hours drive southwest of Tblisi and only a few miles from the Turkish border, was at its peak in the 12th. century when there were said to have been 3,000 interconnected rooms dug into the cliff face over 19 separate levels. Much of the cliff face has broken off in earthquakes over the years, taking some rooms with it and burying others under the rubble, but here are still several hundred dotted across the cliff. In the Soviet era **Vardzia** was a big tourist attraction within the Eastern bloc.



POETS' HEADS

from the Telegraph Magazine 2003

The Knight in the Panther's Skin

Anyone who visits Georgia will soon be acquainted with the name of the poet Shota Rustaveli and his epic poem "The Knight in the Panther's Skin". Written in the twelfth century this poem (1587 lines in translation) has enjoyed cult stature in feudal, Tsarist, soviet and modern Georgia. Through many centuries of alien oppression it has been seen as an expression of the spirit and heart of the Georgian people.

Essentially it is a love story – but of the elevated love celebrated by the troubadours of Europe and the knights of Arthur and others who undertook daring deeds for their liege ladies. Interwoven with this theme are tales of great heroes bound by friendship in which loyalty and good faith are seen as essential features of the knightly code of honour. Not that the characters lack the feelings and passions of physical love in the rich, sometimes cruel luxurious lifestyle of the courts.

As with all translations much of the power of the original poem must be lost even in the high quality of that produced by Veneva Urushadze. Even in translation, however, this poem is the supreme feature of the poetic heritage of Georgia.

The story, as outlined in prose, can give only a limited glimpse of what has influenced Georgians for over a thousand years. However, even such an outline of the story may help us to feel and understand the nature of the spirit of the Georgian people.



ROSTEVAN, the warrior King of Arabia had a beautiful daughter **TINATIN**. As "the footsteps of death" were drawing near the king decided to make his daughter sovereign of Arabia.

At a great feast he presented **TINATIN** to the people who hailed her as their new ruler. In the midst of the feast however the King was greatly troubled. **SOGAT**, his chief advisor and **AVTANDIL**, commander of his army asked him what troubled him. He replied that he grieved that he had no son to follow him as king.



ROSTEVAN, who was proud of his prowess as a hunter, said AVTANDIL was the nearest to him in ability with sword and bow. At this, the army commander, who was secretly enamoured of TINATIN, challenged the king to a contest. The winner was to be decided by who was the more successful competitor in a hunt. Beaters drove goats, wild asses, stags and chamois whilst each competitor had twelve archers to provide arrows for the hunters. For hours they hunted after which the king called for the verdict. With trepidation the chief archer said, "AVTANDIL stands alone" – and so it was agreed that AVTANDIL was the winner and the two men embraced. As they rested by a stream they saw in the distance a knight in bejewelled armour wearing the skin and head of a panther. The knight was distraught, crying tears of water and blood. The king sent a messenger who was ignored. Then twelve archers were sent to bring the knight to the king. At their approach the knight beat them with his whip killing some and scattering the rest, after which he fled at great speed.

When back at the palace TINATIN called AVTANDIL to her and asked him to seek the panther knight. If he was successful she promised she would marry him. He set off and for three years he scoured the world for the mysterious knight but not until he was returning to court did he encounter his quarry. He followed him until he saw him come to a cave where a serving maiden greeted him with great lamentation.

When the knight departed the following morning AVTANDIL captured the maiden who was called ASMAT who told him the knight was named TARIEL. AVTANDIL awaited the knight's return and told him why he was seeking him and in return TARIEL told him his story.

He was the son of a king of a part of India and was also the Amhira or commander of the fleets and armies of PARSADAN the ruler of all India.

At the court of PARSADAN he had fallen in love with the beautiful NESTAN-DAREJAN the king's daughter who secretly declared her love for him. To prove his love she sent

him to conquer the rebellious *Khatvians*. This he did at a great battle and returned to court.

On his return he learnt to his despair that NESTAN was to be betrothed to the son of the neighbouring king. NESTAN too was distraught and told TARIEL to kill her intended husband.

This he did, thereby invoking the anger of PARSADAN. Soon afterwards ASMAT, the personal maid of NESTAN came to tell TARIEL that her enemies had taken prisoner her mistress. At once, together, they set off in pursuit but after a year on the high seas without success they started to search for her on land.

During his travels TARIEL met another knight NURADIN PRIDON to whom he swore eternal friendship. NURADIN told TARIEL of a beautiful lady who, in a boat with two slaves, came ashore on his land but sailed away when he approached. Convinced this was NESTAN, TARIEL continued his search in the wild, forested wasteland. In his eyes he saw her as a beautiful black panther and so, in her honour, he wore this skin and head of a panther.

AVTANDIL, overcome by the power of his story and grief swore to help TARIEL in his search. First however he had to return to Arabia to tell TINATIN what he had discovered.

After he had returned home and recounted the story of the black knight it was agreed that AVTANDIL's promise to search with him had to be honoured. So, in sorrow at leaving his beloved TINATIN, TARIEL set off to continue the dangerous search for the beautiful NESTAN –DAREJAN.

to be continued

MEL HARRIS

Illustrated by Catherine Philpott



GEORGIA'S PREMIER ARTIST

Perhaps the most memorable works by Pirosmeni are the panoramic scenes that, for Georgians, encapsulate all that is best in their nation's heritage, temperament and spirit. Here the viewer is presented with an idealised Caucasian world as may be imagined in a post-prandial reverie. The pictures are crammed with detail. In the backgrounds we find hunters, fishermen and farmers at work amongst mountains, rivers, and lush pastures, wolf and bear inhabited forests. Outside the many churches, priests preach to their congregations. Plump animals graze in flowery meadows and the vineyards are laden with giant bunches of grapes. Yet in several of the pictures we notice that, not far from the children at play and the old carters with their loaded ox-wagons, some unfortunate individual is being held up and robbed by armed bandits or, perhaps, invading soldiers.



The Hold Up
by Niko Pirosmeni

In many of these large-scale paintings the foreground is devoted to a Georgian feast or, as Pirosmeni called them, a 'carousel'. The 'carousers' have solemn expressions and sit facing us like actors on a stage. Detached from all the activity behind them as well as the bustle of the occasion, they appear steeped in ceremonial. They raise their drinking horns filled with wine and seem to be addressing us, the picture's viewers. Not being a Georgian, I can only guess what is being said. Is it a toast to their nation? The response can only be a silent, respectful 'Gourmajos'.



Margareta
by Niko Pirosmeni

It is little wonder that the Georgians love these images. Yes, Pirosmeni was lacking in conventional painting skills but he was unsurpassed at conveying the pride of being a Georgian.

There is a legend that his financial ruin resulted from a passion for a visiting French music hall singer named Margareta. True or false, its origins lie in Pirosmeni's generous nature and lack of judgement. It seems that he fell in love with the beautiful chanteuse and in order to impress her he spent all his money on roses with which he filled the street outside her theatre. She remained totally indifferent, we are told. If the story is apocryphal, it no doubt derives from a later portrait of the actress dressed in white, 'the colour of love', one of the best works of Pirosmeni's mature period.



A CONTINUING TRADITION.....

The people of Georgia have a strong bond with wine and believe, with some historical justification, that they invented the drink around 8000 years ago. A national legend tells of the conquest of Tbilisi by an ancient king who wanted the finest vineyards in the Caucasus for his own use.



Above: A miniature sized wine jar. The real ones are very large and often kept buried in the ground.

Joseph Stalin adored his native wines. Though Stalin's purges sent many thousands into Siberian exile for 'capitalist profiteering' he made an exception for Georgian wine growers, creating a flourishing market for their goods across the Soviet Union.

That happy state of Georgian affairs ended in the 1980's when war was declared on alcoholism

and thousands of hectares of vines, some dating back to the Crusades, were destroyed in the name of public sobriety.

However, it was the collapse of the Soviet Union which did most damage, cutting off Georgian wine-growers from the fertilisers and chemicals they needed and depriving Russians and Ukrainians of their favourite tipple.

According to its Ministry of Agriculture, Georgia had only 60,500 hectares of vineyards in 2000 compared to 112,600 hectares in 1990.

"But though we make less wine, our traditions will always be with us", Director of the Sameba vineyard, Tamaz Kulivadze, argued. Some 60 people once worked at his vineyard but the staff now numbers 18. Salaries are dependent on sales and as business is now poor the Sameba staff raise turkeys in the factory courtyard to make ends meet.

The continuing high demand for Georgian wine throughout the former Soviet Union is proof of its popularity.

The Ministry of Agriculture announced last year that imitation Georgian wine is the most popular and profitable counterfeit food product sold in urban areas such as Moscow and Kiev.

To some extent Georgia's present weak economy works to its advantage as some companies have succeeded in selling their wines by the simple tactic of undercutting the price of the locally produced counterfeits.

"Wine is to Georgia as rice is to China," said Mr Kulivadze, "and we, as winemakers, must make sure that we keep our traditional skills alive".

Precis by **Derek Butler** of an article in the Brussels based newspaper 'New Europe'
Dec 29 2002 – Jan 4 2003.





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Letter from Sophia Gorgodze

Dear Catherine

Delighted to get your letter and nice wishes.



As for the competition, a national public speaking competition was announced in Georgia on Ecology and Economy. Although I was an English major, I still took part as I was told that you didn't have to be an expert in economy. It took an ordinary citizen's approach on the subject. There were 40 competitors in a national competition and to my great joy I was one of the two girls who were sent to London to represent Georgia. In London the competition was held in two stages. First, 8 finalists were chosen from 50 competitors from 32 different countries. I was one of the finalists and it was a great honour, since it was the first time Georgia was a finalist in this competition. Then the competition was held again for the finalists. When I got to that stage I was stunned at the thought that I had never carried such a huge responsibility in my entire life. I was representing my country Georgia!!! I remembered how often I longed to contribute something to my country and now I had a chance. I guess, all these emotions made my speech really passionate as it was described by one of the judges later.

After the speech I had to handle questions from the judges and when I stepped down from the stage I was happy that I didn't disgrace my country. However, the other finalists had also very powerful speeches and I hardly expected to be the winner. When I was announced the winner I had my 'moment of being' as Virginia Wolf put it.

When the BBC reporter asked me how I felt, I said that maybe I was the best public speaker, but even the best public speaker couldn't articulate what I felt at that moment. I was terribly happy for my country.

As the winner of the competition I am invited to Buckingham Palace on December 5 2003 where the Duke of Edinburgh will award me the certificate. I am very excited about that.

As for the future plans, I am very much interested in news reporting in English. I wish to see a channel in my country, which will provide Georgian news in English and would love to work for it. Unfortunately, so far, we don't have such a channel. Thank you very much for congratulating me and taking interest in this competition.

I wish you all the best Sophia Gorgodze

Sophiko, Maka and I met in London the day before the Award ceremony, the account of which is in the latest copy of 'Land of Colchi'. CP

LAND of COLCHI

We have just received the latest edition of the Land of Colchi which confirms that we have a serious rival on our hands. It celebrates the strength of our twinning and impresses us with the consistent quality of expression in the English language established in Kutaisi.

BIRTH

Congratulations to Rosemary & Derek on the arrival of their latest grandchild

JASMINE HONEY BUTLER-BRIGHT

to

Alice & Paul

Born 22nd December 2002

Weighing 7lbs 3oz

Notice of

YOUNG WRITERS AWARD

The Newport Kutaisi Twinning Association wants to encourage all you young writers studying in Kutaisi.

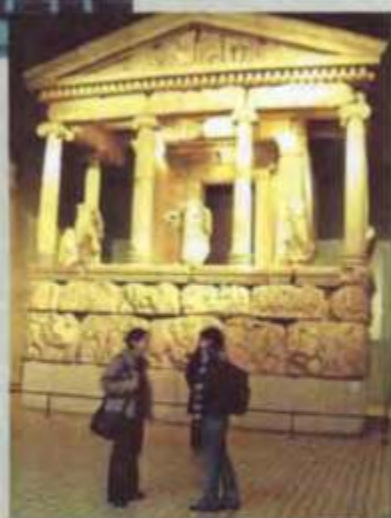
To encourage you to express yourself in exciting and original ways through the medium of English we will be offering three prizes each year.

We will also publish the winning item in Ariel. More details soon, so start thinking and writing.

WANTED

Your articles and original ideas make Ariel.

Keep them coming in — please!!!



Day in London The British Museum
Harrods
Student Demonstration