The Cambridge Russian-Speaking Society's Board of Trustees Report for 2025

Dear Members of the Cambridge Russian-Speaking Society,

2025 was another busy and rewarding year for CamRuSS, with many engaging talks, memorable events, and social gatherings organised for both members and the wider community. Alongside this programme of activities, we continued to support displaced Ukrainians in our area through the delivery of **ESOL classes** and additional practical support.

Thanks to the guidance of our Patrons, the dedication of our Trustees and volunteers, and the continued support of our members and partner organisations, we were able to sustain our charitable work and deliver impactful results of which we can be proud.

During 2025, we organised **20 cultural and social** events in a range of formats — in person, hybrid, and online — attracting **over 1,000 attendees**. We also continued to support and collaborate with local Russian-speaking groups and their initiatives.

Talks: We started the year with a talk by **Dr Merrilyn Thomas** in conversation with Tony Cross about her new historical novel, *Know You Her Secret*, set during the Russian Revolution, based on a true story.

Another fascinating step into history was a talk by **Sir Tony Brenton** about a little-known episode in 18th-century diplomacy: the secret correspondence between the future Catherine the Great and the British ambassador to Russia, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams.

Dr Natalia Budanova delivered a captivating talk "*In Search of True Beauty and Genuine Knowledge*" about Nicolas Roerich and his multifaceted prolific career and life.

Many thanks to Ksenia Afonina for initiating and organising these talks with the help of Alla Viktorova and other Trustees.

Highlights of the **literary and poetry talks and events** were: meeting in person with **Robert Chandler**, a renowned translator of the Russian literature, who delivered a talk about Vasiliy Grossman and his short stories; an **Evening of Poetry with Julia Nemirovskaya** "Magic Mirror" (in person), **Anti-War Poetry reading from the *Dislocation*** - The Second Volume of Anti-War Poetry Anthology (on Zoom) and a talk by **Kseniia Gondyreva about Alexander Blok**, followed by poetry readings. Many thanks to Yelena Karl and Sayara Thoompson for organising these events.

A very popular talk (in Russian) was **about the Nobel Prize Laureates** and their discoveries was by **Ilya Kolmanovski,** a biologist and a stand-up science populist. Many thanks to **Olga Tutubalina** for organising this talk and **Tanya Yurasova** for doing a tour of Cambridge for Ilya.

To mark the **80th anniversary of VE Day,** we invited family members of Arctic Convoy Veterans to an Informal Online Gathering with a historical introduction by Dr Olga Kucherenko, followed by personal stories of veterans, illustrated with photographs from family archives. We are very grateful to Ksenia

Afonina and Yelena Karl for their continues work on this project throughout many years, and for keeping in touch with WW2 veterans whilst they were alive, and later with their families.

Music events: There were two sold-out performances: **Russian Romances with Jessica Lawrence-Hares accompanied by Olga Elbourn** and a **fundraising concert for ESOL classes by Vitaliy Pisarenko**, each drawing almost 100 attendees. Many thanks to Ekaterina Onatskaia and Ksenia Afonina for organising these wonderful concerts, and Andrei Bejan for his help with the promotion.

Social events: Our social gatherings such as the ***May Day BBQ*** **in Wandlebury Park**, open-air singing ***White Nights*** *and* ***BBQ/Mushroom Walk*** *in Thetford Forest* were very popular, each of them attended by 50-60 people and brought together members of our community of diverse nationalities. We were especially pleased to see many Ukrainians joining us at these events. We are very grateful to our volunteers Dima Mevzos, Alexey Komarov and Valentin Rusinov for their help in organising them.

Projects: 'Adopt John Barber's Book'. We liaised with Clare Hall about donating books to them from John Barber's and Richard McKane's library, and we have started preparing for this event by cataloguing all books. The late Dr John Barber was a long-standing supporter and the first Honorary Adviser to CamRuSS and he kindly bequeathed his personal library to CamRuSS. Richard McKane was an outstanding poet, translator and connoisseur of Russian poetry and a good friend of CamRuSS and a personal friend of Ksenia Afonina to whom he left his books collection. Many thanks to Libby Howie, Yelena Karl, Sayara Thompson, Ksenia Afonina and Katerina Turner for their contribution to this project.

Projects: 'WW2- Arctic Convoy Veterans'. CamRuSS has undertaken over the past decade to record memories and nurture lasting relationships with veterans and their families. We continued keeping in touch with WW2 veterans and their families in the UK and Russia; sending them cards on important occasions. Many thanks to Yelena Karl and Ksenia Afonina for leading this project. Sadly, by the end of 2025 our two last living veterans, Rolfe Monteith and John Wass, had crossed the bar. We will continue to treasure their memory together with their families and friends.

Residential Language School: We are grateful to **Tanya Yurasova** and all the teachers who continued to deliver the Residential Russian and Ukrainian Language Summer School in August 2025. This year it brought together seventy participants of all ages—from school leavers to retired learners—coming from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, France, the US, and Japan. We warmly congratulate all the teachers and students who took part, and we wish them every success as they continue their learning journey.

Supporting diverse groups of the Russian-speaking community: CamRuSS worked collaboratively with various groups of interest that have been active in Cambridge (Georgian Choir, Poetry Club, Russian Choir, Pearl's Club) by promoting their events in Newsletters and supporting these events by participation and attendance.

<u>CamRuSS for the Ukrainians 2025</u>

The team successfully secured two grants from Cambridge City Council enabling us to continue running ESOL classes for displaced Ukrainians residing in Cambridge until **July 2026**, while also organising fundraising activities in support of the learning provision for the Ukrainians residing outside the Cambridge City boundaries. Overall, **we delivered English classes to 122 learners.**

This was possible thanks to the continued support from St Andrew's Street Baptist Church and Cambridge City Council, as well as volunteers and members of our community.

Our trustees and volunteers organised information and social events for displaced Ukrainians in Cambridgeshire, including online meeting with an Immigration Lawer in February, and a special festive graduation ceremony for the ESOL classes in December 2025.

The year concluded with the **End-of-Year Thank-you event** at **Jesus College, Cambridge**, for CamRuSS trustees, teachers and volunteers supporting the *CamRuSS for Ukrainians* project. Many thanks to the Master of Jesus College **Sonita Alleyne** for her warm reception, **Prof Natalia Berloff** for facilitation and **Ksenia Afonina** for organising this event.

We raised **£43,810** (£79,880 in 2024) in external grants/dedicated funding and students' contribution. In addition, we fundraised **£939** from the concert by V. Pisarenko for the Hardship Fund.

The project was delivered by a multidisciplinary team and CamRuSS is most grateful to a group of **ten teachers, two conversation group leaders, two course administrators** Alla Viktorova and Tanya Yurasova**, and six support volunteers**, as well as the Board of Trustees Olga Tutubalina, Olga Starobinskaya, Alexandra Argunova, Sayara Thompson for making this happen, and, in particular, Ksenia Afonina who was instrumental in this project.

Governance

Our Board of Trustees was represented by *Sayara Thompson (Chair and GDPR), Ksenia Afonina (Vice-Chair and Development /Support for the Ukrainians projects), Olga Starobinskaya (Treasurer), Ekaterina Onatskaia (Events and Membership Officer), Olga Tutubalina (Events and Technical Support), Alla Viktorova (Events, Communications and ESOL classes), help Alexandra Argunova (Safeguarding Lead and Secretary), Katerina Antipina-Turner (Design & Projects) and Andrei Bejan (Events and IT support).*

Honorary Advisers: *Janar Davletov (stepped down in Sep 2025), Yelena Karl, Tanya Yurasova, Alona Gunko.*

Distinguished Patrons: *Sir Tony Brenton, Libby Howie, Prof Anthony Cross, Dr Rachel Polonsky and Prof Emma Widdis and Prof Simon Franklin. We are most grateful for their continued support and guidance.*

There were monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees and a mid-year strategy overview meeting with the group of our charity's distinguished Patrons.

We used the Trustees' WhatsApp group for ad-hoc communication and consultation, alongside other WhatsApp sub-groups for specific activities, such as finance, concerts and events, administration, etc.

Finance and Membership

For accounting and reporting, CamRuSS used a professional accounting system **Xero**, which has made the bookkeeping more efficient and transparent.

Due to the high level of turnover linked to grant income, our accounts were required to be reviewed by an Independent Examiner prior to submission to the Charity Commission. We are pleased to report that this process was completed successfully with a positive outcome. Many thanks to Katerina

Antipina-Turner for facilitating the engagement of a professional Independent Examiner, and to Olga Starobinskaya (Treasurer), Ksenia Afonina, and Sayara Thompson for their work in preparing the documentation.

Income
Our main sources of income were from **membership fees**, **event ticket sales**, **donations and grants**. **Membership fees generated £1,799 (**2024: £1,930). The number of members has slightly declined compared to the previous year from 135 in 2024 **to 128 in 2025 with 9 new members joining**. We are grateful to all members who continued their support and delighted to welcome those who joined us in 2025.

Income from event ticket sales totalled **£4,730** (2024: £5,671**)**. After deducting event-related expenses and agreed honoraria for performers, the net **surplus from events was £3,063** (2024: £2,788).

We are very grateful for **donations of £277 to CamRuSS** (raised through the sale of books from John Barber's library and personal donations at events). In addition, £939 was raised specifically for the Ukrainian Project through a fundraising concert by Vitaliy Pisarenko. We are very grateful to Vitaliy for his generosity.

The savings account where we placed accumulated reserves earned us **£785** (2024: £560) in interest.

Turnover and expenditure
Our turnover for the year was **£51,401,** comprising **£7,591** from non-grant activities and **43,810** from Grants (2024: ££93,799). The decrease reflects a lower level of grant funding received during the year.

The corporate costs, governance and overheads - including Administrator, IT, Web hosting, Zoom Licence, Insurance, Fees and Subscription and other running costs - totalled approximately **£3,962**.

The financial position for the year ending 31 December 2025 shows **a loss of £20,797. This was primarily due to timing differences in bank payments for grant income and expenditure**. For example, a £15,000 (part of grant for ESOL classes in Jan-Apr 2025) was received in December 2024. Although it was ringfenced for 2025, the income was recorded in 2024 accounts.

However, this hasn't affected negatively our final balance sheet which shows the overall stability of our capital reserves.

<u>Operations and Communications</u>

Communications were delivered via our website, regular newsletters (predominantly fortnightly), Facebook and Instagram. Our website showed an average of over a thousand unique visits monthly and our Newsletter has **2,469 subscribers**. By the end of 2025, the CamRuSS social media accounts grew the number of followers as below: Facebook – **1,940** (1,900 in 2024) and Instagram **475** (421 in 2024).

Our operational and communication activities were supported by the valuable help of the part-time Administrative Assistant: Elvira Churyumova and Comms Trustees group (Ksenia Afonina, Sayara Thompson, Alla Viktorova and Honorary Adviser Yelena Karl). We are very grateful to all of them for their hard work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Members, Patrons, Trustees, Honorary Advisers, team of administrators and volunteers for their amazing work this year. We are also grateful to our partners and collaborators for their support.

We are looking forward to working together in 2026!

Sayara Thompson
Chair to The Board of Trustees
The Cambridge Russian-Speaking Society (CamRuSS)

Website: www.camruss.com
Follow us: Facebook and Instagram

Approved by Trustees on 5 February 2026

Ksenia Afonina (Vice-Chair)

Olga Starobinskaya (Treasurer)

Ekaterina Onatskaia (Trustee/Membership)

Olga Tutubalina (Trustee)

Alla Victorova (Trustee)

Andrey Bejan (Trustee)

Alexandra Argunova (Trustee)

Katerina Antipina-Turner

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

The Cambridge Russian-Speaking Society			Charity No	1183636
Annual accounts for the period				
Period start date	01/01/2025	To	Period end date	31/12/2025

Recommended categories by activity	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted income funds £	Endowment funds £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	2,076			2,076	7,122
Charitable activities	4,730	43,810		48,540	5,947
Other trading activities				-	79,880
Investments				-	560
Separate material item of income				-	-
Other	785			785	290
Total	7,591	43,810	-	51,401	93,799
Resources expended					
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds				-	-
Charitable activities	2,991	66,570		69,561	8,431
Separate material item of expense				-	-
Other	2,638			2,638	73,961
Total	5,629	66,570	-	72,199	82,392
Net income/(expenditure) before investment gains/(losses)	1,962	- 22,760	-	- 20,798	11,407
Net gains/(losses) on investments	-	-	-	-	-
Net income/(expenditure)	1,962	- 22,760	-	- 20,798	11,407
Extraordinary items	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
Other recognised gains/(losses):					
Gains and losses on revaluation of fixed assets for the charity's own use	-	-	-	-	-
Other gains/(losses)	-	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds	1,962	- 22,760	-	- 20,798	11,407
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward	53,626	15,280	-	68,906	57,499
Total funds carried forward	55,588	- 7,480	-	48,108	68,906

Section B Balance sheet as at 31/12/2025

The Cambridge Russian-Speaking Society

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Endowment funds	Total this year	Total last year
	£	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets					
Intangible assets	-	-	-	-	-
Tangible assets	-	-	-	-	-
Heritage assets	-	-	-	-	-
Investments	-	-	-	-	-
Total fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-
Current assets					
Stocks	-	-	-	-	-
Debtors	-	-	-	-	-
Investments	-	-	-	-	-
Cash at bank and in hand	44,577	3,532	-	48,109	68,906
Total current assets	44,577	3,532	-	48,109	68,906
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	-	-	-	-	-
Net current assets/(liabilities)	44,577	3,532	-	48,109	68,906
Total assets less current liabilities	44,577	3,532	-	48,109	68,906
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	-	-	-	-	-
Provisions for liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Total net assets or liabilities	44,577	3,532	-	48,109	68,906
Funds of the Charity					
Endowment funds	-	-	-	-	-
Restricted income funds	-	3,532	-	3,532	15,280
Unrestricted funds	-	44,577	-	44,577	53,626
Revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	
Total funds	-	48,109	-	48,109	68,906

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Name	Position	Date of approval dd/mm/yyyy
O Starobinskaya	Trustee & Treasurer	28/04/2026
K Afonina	Trustee	28/04/2026

Notes to the accounts

Note 1 **Analysis of income**

For the year ending 31 December 2025

	Analysis	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Endowment funds	Total funds £	for the ye 31/12/2024 Total funds £
Donations and legacies:	Donations and gifts	277	-	-	277	5,192
	Gift Aid	-	-	-	-	-
	Legacies	-	-	-	-	-
	Membership subscriptions and sponsorships which are in substance donations	1,799		-	1,799	1,930
	Other	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	2,076	-	-	2,076	7,122
Charitable activities:		-	-	-	-	-
	Entrance fee	4,730	-	-	4,730	5,947
	General grants provided by government/other charities		30,000	-	30,000	79,880
	Raffle tickets	-	-	-	-	-
	Other - ESOL registration fee (restricted)	-	13,810	-	13,810	290
	Total	4,730	43,810	-	48,540	86,117
Other trading activities:		-	-	-	-	-
	Merchandise sale	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	-	-	-	-	-
Income from investments:	Interest income	785	-	-	785	560
	Dividend income	-	-	-	-	-
	Rental and leasing income	-	-	-	-	-
	Other	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	785	-	-	785	560
Separate material item of income:		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
	Total	-	-	-	-	-
Other:	Conversion of endowment funds into income	-	-	-	-	-
	Gain on disposal of a tangible fixed asset held for charity's own use	-	-	-	-	-
	Gain on disposal of a programme related investment	-	-	-	-	-
	Royalties from the exploitation of intellectual property rights	-	-	-	-	-
	Other	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL INCOME		7,591	43,810	-	51,401	93,799

Note to Charitable Activities Income:

General grants provided by government/other charities	**Unrestricted funds**	**Restricted income funds**	**Endowment funds**	**Total Funds**
		2025		
Grants:				
Cambridge City Council - Resettlement Community Grants Fund Tier 2		30,000		30,000

Notes to the accounts

Note 2 **Analysis of expenditure**

	Analysis	For the year ending 31 December 2025 Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Endowment funds	Total funds £	for the ye 31/12/2024 Total funds £
Expenditure on raising funds:	Incurred seeking donations				-	-
	Incurred seeking legacies				-	-
	Incurred seeking grants					
	Operating membership schemes and social lotteries					
	Staging fundraising events					
	Fudraising agents					
	Merchandise cost				-	-
	Operating a trading company undertaking non-charitable				-	-
	Advertising, marketing, direct mail and publicity				-	-
	Start up costs incurred in generating new source of future				-	-
	Database development costs				-	-
	Other trading activities					
	Investment management costs:				-	-
	Portfolio management costs				-	-
	Cost of obtaining investment				-	-
	Investment administration costs				-	-
	Intellectual property licencing				-	-
	Rent collection, property repairs and maintenance charges				-	-
	Total expenditure on raising funds	-	-	-	-	-
Expenditure on charitable activities	Rent for the events				-	-
	Grant Expenses		66,570		66,570	71,361
	Refreshments for the events				-	80
	Flowers and souvenirs				-	-
	Travel Direct cost				-	-
	Guest/performance/event fee	1,667			1,667	2,883
	Stationery & Postage				-	35
	Web and IT expenses	875			875	1,352
	Fees & Subscriptions	303			303	257
	Other direct cost	146			146	3,389
	Total expenditure on charitable activities	2,991	66,570	-	69,561	79,357
Separate material item of expense		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
	Total	-	-	-	-	-
Other						
	Governance cost	421			421	450
	Corporate Cost	2,217			2,217	2,585
					-	-
					-	-
					-	-
	Total other expenditure	2,638	-	-	2,638	3,035
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		5,629	66,570	-	72,199	82,392

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of

the Cambridge Russian-Speaking Society (CamRuSS)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Cambridge Russian-Speaking Society (CamRuSS) for the year ended 31 December 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Charity, 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 giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or

2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

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:

Name: Arina Norkina

ACMA, CGMA

Address: The Croft, Stortford Road, Hatfield Heath, Bishop's Stortford, Essex, CM22 7DL

Date: 14 August 2026