



PRESS RELEASE: remarkable back-story to a new book on *Russian folk tales in English with illustrations by 19th-century artist Elena Polenova*

WHY THE BEAR HAS NO TAIL AND OTHER RUSSIAN FOLK TALES

Collected and illustrated for children of all ages by Elena Polenova
Original translation by Netta Peacock
Edited by Louise Hardiman

Towards the end of the 19th century, the English writer Netta Peacock travelled to Russia where she met Elena Polenova, the artist and sister of the famous artist Vasily Polenov. Elena had been collecting the traditional fairy tales she heard from peasants in local villages, which she was also illustrating.

The two women became great friends and Netta asked if she could translate the tales and publish them in England. Elena gave her twelve watercolour paintings, as well as a cover design painted on an exercise book. In 1916 Netta had finally prepared everything for publication, calling the book 'Folk Tales of Great Russia', but although original book proofs have been found, for reasons unknown it was never published.

However, thanks to the research of Louise Hardiman, the original illustrations and stories were recently rediscovered in the Oxfordshire home of Netta Peacock's descendants, and almost 100 years later they are finally being published in a beautifully designed children's book.

Also 'closing the family circle' is the fact that the book is generously supported by Natalya Polenova, the great-granddaughter of Elena, who is custodian of the Polenovo estate in Russia.

Exhibition

The book is published to coincide with an exhibition opening at the Watts Gallery in Guildford: *A Russian Fairytale: The Art and Craft of Elena Polenova* (18 November 2014 – 8 February 2015).

Details

Published by Fontanka

ISBN: 978-1-906257-14-9

Hardcover; 88 pages; 12 illustrations; 250 x 190mm

Published: 15 November 2014; RRP £12.00

Distributed by Thames and Hudson (www.thameshudson.co.uk)

Further information is available through the publishers and editor, including more detail on the rediscovery of the book, as well as further images, including portraits of Elena Polenova and Netta Peacock. Press copies available from 1 November.

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