

# On the

Mention Russia and three things probably come to mind: vodka, the mafia and Roman Abramovich. But, as **PETER STEBBINGS** finds out, a little piece of the east is taking root here in Barnet

The walls are adorned with Soviet pictures showing Lenin in various fist-clenching poses.

'Victory to the Revolution of Workers' labour' and 'Victory to the Soviet Revolution' are among the exclamations that seem to shout down the ages. Then, playing on a Sony stereo, is a Russian rendition of Whitney Houston's I Will Always Love You. It's hard not to wonder what the great revolutionary would make of that.

This is Dacha in East Finchley, a Ukrainian and Russian delicatessen beside the A1 road. Dacha (taking its name from the Russian for 'house') stocks all the Russian favourites: pelmeni (Russian ravioli), bliny (pancakes) and various other stodge delights. There are also rows of large jars containing borsch (a thick soup) and other foods that would warm the cockles on a cold Siberian night.

The shop doesn't just sell food either: Russian language books, videos and newspapers are also in stock.

Dacha's owner, Alexander Andreyev, 49, is, in fact, a Ukrainian. He came to London 12 years ago and runs the shop with his wife and sister. Although his English is far from fluent, it is clear he loves life in London.

"It's great here," he says, rolling his 'R's in typical eastern European fashion. "I like this country, these people. Life here is gentle. My heart, my life is here. I was happy to return to the

coming to the area is the presence of the former Soviet Trade Delegation, now the Russian Trade Delegation, in Highgate. Russian embassy officials have also settled locally.

So, does Alexander not miss anything about his homeland? "No. Why should I? Life in Ukraine is horrible. There is hard pressure. Back in Ukraine I

**'When I was small, I thought of Sherlock Holmes as quintessentially English: polite, wise and well-educated'**

worked in a military factory. There were 16,000 people working there. Now there are only 3,000.

"My wife's parents worked on a collective farm [under a communist scheme to nationalise farming]. Now there are no cows, no animals, nothing."

It is difficult to gauge just how many Russian speakers there are in Barnet, with some undoubtedly being here illegally. The total number in London is said to be around 200,000. I put the question to Natasha Chouvaeva, editor of the London Courier, a twice-monthly Russian newspaper based in Station Road, Edware



Writing for Russians: Natasha Chouvaeva, editor of the London Courier, says many from her native country have settled in north London

K6818-16

**NORTH  
MIDDLESEX  
GOLF CLUB**

