Nikolai Klyuev, 1884-1937
Life, Death, Afterlife

Photographs of Nikolai Klyuev (1884-1937)
Klyuev with his father;
Klyuev in 1919;
Klyuev giving a reading;
Klyuev in 1929;
Klyuev in the 1930s;
Klyuev in 1931.

Note the decoration of his rooms, his dress, and, in the later photographs, his evident premature aging.
Klyuev Country

Vytnega on the map of northwestern Russia.
The Vytnega administrative region, including Makachevo and Koshtugi.

Vytnega is the only town in its titular administrative region. Klyuev’s native village of Koshtugi is to the south of Vytnega, on the River Megra. Zhelvachevo, where Klyuev grew up, is a part of Makachevo on the River Andoma, to the north of Vytnega.

Vytnega is near the south-eastern end of Lake Onega — an overnight and uncomfortable bus ride from Petersburg or Vologda. The nearest railway station is some 200 km away, and is served largely by local trains.
Klyuev country, October, 1994
Vytelea region, Vologda oblast’

The house where Klyuev lived in the 1900s, formerly in the village of Zhelvachevo, subsequently moved to the village of Makachevo, where it served as a school. It bears a commemorative plaque, which designates Klyuev as a “Russian Soviet poet”.

Michael Makin beside the plaque; Klyuev scholar Sergei Subbotin beside the plaque; Klyuev scholar Aleksandr Mikhailov and Petrozavodsk author Vasilii Firsov beside the plaque.

Original site of Klyuev’s Zhelvachevo house, the village of Zhelvachevo is in background; members of the *Klyuevskie chteniya*, on original site of house. Prominent Klyuev scholars in second photograph include Aleksandr Mikhailov, Lyudmila Kiseleva, and Sergei Subbotin.

Remains of Makachevo churches (destroyed in early 1960s during Khrushchev anti-religion campaign); newly-erected cross in churchyard, commemorating burial of Klyuev’s parents somewhere in that churchyard; and view from churchyard towards the villages of Makachevo and Zhelvachevo.
The cross still stands, but even less is left of the two village churches. The remains of the wooden church have burned down, while the walls of the “stone” church have collapsed. The director of the Vytegra museum, Tamara Makarova, walks among the remains (above, right).

Klyuev’s Zhelvachevo house still stands empty, in Makachevo. Rubstovo (right) is the last village in the area where the poet lived.

Zhelvachevo contains a number of relatively old houses (above), most of which serve as dachi. A memorial now stands beside the foundations of Klyuev’s
Only three people (an elderly woman who lives alone, and a retired couple) now live full time in Zhelvachevo. Gennadii Monin (right) is known as the “last resident of Zhelvachevo”, because he was born in the village, whereas his wife and the other resident both came from other villages. Ol’ga Shchukin’ (she and the interior of her house are pictured above) “only” moved to Zhelvachevo in the 1940s.

Koshtugi, October, 1994

October, 1994. Village of Koshtugi, where Klyuev was baptized, and where he probably lived his early years; and the village church, recently re-consecrated.