

Scottish Czech & Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund

Newsletter - 2013



Glancing through back numbers of previous Newsletters there is indeed a pattern of events and fund raising activities which is clearly seasonal in its predictability and occurrence.

An autumn or spring lecture or event; a winter St Nicholas Party for the Children's Club; the despatch of parcels by the Book Group, often by personal couriers, while the summer Meadows Festival, AGM and Garden Party are preludes to the yearly arrival of Czech and Slovak students to attend the SUISS in July.

This past year has been no exception as will be evident from the familiar format of this 2013 bulletin. However, it is rather disappointing to note that only one Czech student had taken up the offer of the SCSSS Fund's financial assistance to attend this year's Summer School in Edinburgh.

Perhaps this is a reflection of the fiscal austerity experienced throughout Europe at present, as intending Czech and Slovak students still have to raise a considerable amount of money in order to finance their time in Scotland. We hope to restore a greater number of these 'scholarships' in the future through increased co-operation with SUISS and other Course co-ordinators in Scotland.

We wish to acknowledge here the invaluable contribution made over the last decade by Nan Mulder, the former SUISS Co-ordinator and active Fund Committee member for providing advice, encouragement and liaison between our two organisations. On behalf of the SCSSS Fund we wish Nan a long and well deserved retirement in her native Holland. Many thanks.

Despite our own domestic recession and mood of austerity our Fund has continued successful and significant fund raising which is detailed elsewhere in this Newsletter. The SCSSS Fund is humbly grateful, once more, to all who have supported us through their interest and willingness to donate of their time and money to our various activities.

We greatly appreciate 'renewed' life membership donations and would appeal to existing members and friends if they could inform us of any change of address or email address - in order to reduce postal charges. We hope that we can rely on your continued commitment in the coming year and we wish you all a heartfelt Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Book Group by Halla Beloff

IDEAS, WORDS, BOOKS

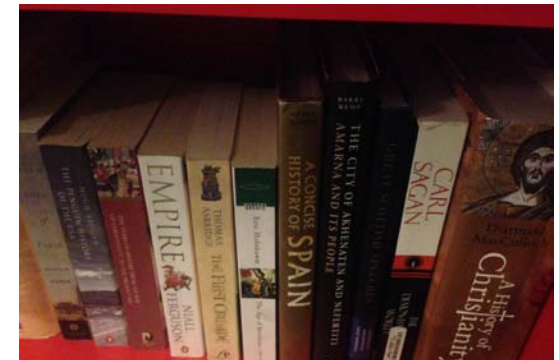
That's what we're about.

The Summer School focuses on three sorts of literature, Modern, Scottish and Contemporary and we help in the preparation of our students in each section as they choose them. English language books are expensive and scarce for them at home and we can find them here more easily.

The outcome of their visits in terms of wider perspectives and careers are significant for them and a pleasure for us. The contact, for some of us continuing for years, shows the benefits. For example, Maria Kissova is now a Lecturer in Bratislava. She has returned to Edinburgh many times to collect more spoils to collect second-hand books. Charities here benefit from her coming with an empty suitcase returning with a full one. It is rewarding to have her as a guest.

With the support of the new Summer School Administrator, Lauren, we start on supplies for the courses. Specific books vary a bit from year to year. There are the firm favourites like the Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, of course, but there is innovation with Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* and Colm Toibin's *The Blackwater Lightship*. The Edinburgh charity bookshops continue to provide great supplies and it is good to know that two good causes are served at the same time.

We are grateful to generous support from several donors.



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year - Veselé Vánoce a Štastný Nový Rok
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Czech and Slovak Children's Club *by Veronika Jones*

Edinburgh is one of the great mixing pots. The UK attracts people from all around the world and Edinburgh is no exception. As an ex-pat (or partly ex-pat) family separated from the culture that provides their own background, it can be intimidating and concerning to feel, not only that you are losing your own cultural identity, but also that your children may grow up never understanding the cultural elements that help define at least one of their parents.



The Czech and Slovak Children's Club exists to address this problem. By providing a safe, warm and welcoming environment for our little ones (and their proud parents) to come and meet other adults and children in similar situations, the world can feel that little bit less intimidating.

It is here, at St. Stephen's Comely Bank Church on every third Saturday, that children

can learn that the Czech or Slovak language is not necessarily something that exists only in their homes, isolated from the outside world. While a child living in Edinburgh will inevitably be exposed to English in much of their life, by attending this club they will begin to realise that there are other children, and their parents in turn, who speak Czech or Slovak as either a first or second language. This discovery may well be the most important catalyst a child has in their learning of the language of their family.

In addition to addressing a child's need to interact with their peers with art sessions, toys, board games and playdough, the club makes a special effort to ensure that activities remain culturally relevant wherever possible. Heavy focus on traditional Czech and Slovak games, songs and rhymes, as well as the timely observation of seasonal festivities, allow children (and parents) to soak up an atmosphere of these countries' respective cultures. There are few things more pleasing for parents than to see their children participating in festivities that had once formed part of their own childhood. This year has seen quite a few such festivities. In January we celebrated the festival of the Three Kings, and in Easter the children participated in one of the most significant of Czech and Slovak traditions: egg-painting!

Shortly before the summer break, we celebrated International Children's Day. International Children's Day is an important day in the Czech and Slovak calendar, celebrated on June 1st. In our case, we celebrated it the weekend before and had many outdoor events for children to participate in and win prizes. It was a great day out for all.

After the summer break, the main event of the year was upon us: St Nicholas Day! Over 80 children helped us welcome St Nicholas and his companions – the Angel and the Devil – as they arrived to reward all good children. To prove how good they were, all the children sang beautiful renditions of a couple of seasonal Czech and Slovak songs. We are happy to report that there were no bad children at all this year and everyone came away with their reward and a smiling face!

It has been a great year at the Czech and Slovak Children's Club, and we are proud to continue to provide the foundation for such a great community of children and their parents. We look forward to sharing 2014 with you all!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Between 22nd July and 3rd August I had the great pleasure to attend the Text and Context course focused on Scottish Literature with the Scottish Universities' International Summer School, set within the bounds of the beautiful city of Edinburgh at the time of the very peak of her cultural life—the festivals. This remarkable opportunity and a dream come true has been granted to me thanks to the financial help I have received from the SCSSS and the academic and moral support of the lecturers of the Palacký University, my home institution.

First of all, I feel the need to point out just how accommodating the staff of the Summer School was. The directors, the administrator, as well as the student hosts, were friendly and willing to help with anything the students might need, answering all the inquiries readily even when the questions were not related to the course itself—they did not hesitate to recommend the students sights to see and places to visit, from museums and galleries, to shops and bars.

The lectures, just like the reading list itself, were varied in approach and performance. Some of the lecturers preferred to keep the contact with the audience to a minimum and invested as much time as they could into sharing the knowledge with us, others liked to base their talk chiefly on interacting with students, sometimes going as far as implementing the audience into the lecture itself—whether by raising questions or simply making a chosen student read a poem. Some chose to give a lecture without using any written or electronic support, some relied on notes and PowerPoint presentations to keep their talk fluent and prevent going off the track. Furthermore, even the approach to the works themselves differed. Some of the lecturers chose to speak not just about the work itself, but also give us historic background of the events portrayed or touched in many of those works, as well as the lives of the authors; others focused on retelling the story of the book and allowed us to look on the texts through the author's own eyes. The most popular approach, however, was to focus on a particular theme or a motif that was interwoven through the entire book and explain the symbolic values of the text that even the authors themselves may have not anticipated. As I have said, there was so much more to the lectures than just the much anticipated influx of information, which I found very stimulating, it also offered an opportune insight into different teaching styles.

The students were also offered an opportunity to ask questions, not only in the time space given right after the lecture, but also in a pleasant and far less intimidating environment of a library café, which I have greatly enjoyed. All the lecturers were very approachable and in the informal atmosphere of the café over a cup of hot drink, not only strictly academic questions were asked.

The tutorials were then the place to discuss the selected text in greater detail and interact with the other students. Both tutorial groups were international, forming an interesting spectrum of different nationalities, cultures and mentalities. It was thrilling to be able to hear out the thoughts of so many brilliant people and see the texts come alive.

The afternoons following the tutorials were filled with various group activities to cut down the hours of spare time. From excursion into the magnificent Scottish Parliament Building and Scottish Poetry Library which stocks volumes of poetry and literary journals not all of which are necessarily Scottish; through the more formal entertainment as the traditional SUISS annual reception to activities as informal and relaxed as film-watching, going to a bar or a ceilidh.

But academic experience is by far not all that Edinburgh has given me. In spite of not attending the creative writing course, the city of Edinburgh has been a great source of inspiration for me and I have written several drafts of poems both there and after my return home. In fact, I have fallen in love with Edinburgh so deeply, I long to come back as soon as I am able.

Nikola Petrusová

About the Scottish Universities' International Summer School (SUISS)

SUISS was founded as a non-profit organisation by Professor David Daiches in 1947. In the spirit of the Edinburgh International Festival, SUISS brings together students and academics who, irrespective of their national, religious, cultural or gender differences, share a love of literature. SUISS is affiliated with seven prestigious universities: The University of Aberdeen, The University of Dundee, The University of Edinburgh, The University of Glasgow, The Open University in Scotland, The University of St Andrews, and The University of Strathclyde.

Each summer we offer three courses in Text and Context: British and Irish Literature from 1900 to the Present and one course in Creative Writing. Our literature courses offer extensive examination of theoretical approaches to Modernism, Scottish Literature, and Contemporary Literature, while our Creative Writing course allows students to develop their personal writing portfolios. SUISS welcomes undergraduates, postgraduates, teachers, and lecturers from around the world and, in 2013, hosted students from 30 different countries.

In addition to the academic programme, SUISS offers an extensive programme of cultural and social activities. Students have the opportunity to attend events, which include talks on art, film screenings, festival shows, and ceilidh dances. A prominent feature of the programme is a series of readings from Scotland's leading contemporary writers.

Thanks to the generous support of the Scottish Czech Slovak Scholarship (SCSSS) Fund, SUISS is able to offer scholarships to students from the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The summer school will run from 7th July – 16th August 2014. Applications are invited from Czech and Slovak undergraduates and postgraduates with a good command of English, proven academic achievement, and a genuine interest in Scottish culture. For further information, please visit our website at:

<http://www.summer-school.hss.ed.ac.uk/suiss/index.html>

Lauren Pope



Events 2013

Thank you for your continued generosity, attendance and assistance throughout the year.

The Fund had an income of £1623 for the year.

Annual Lecture

David Hume Tower –Wed. 3rd April 2013 - “Between Ornament and Asceticism”
Czechoslovak Architecture in the Early 20th century.
Professor Iain Boyd White, University of Edinburgh.
£122 plus a donation of £100 from an anonymous donor.

Meadows Festival - 1/2 June 2013

Our stall raised £530 - with plants selling particularly well.

Annual AGM & Garden Party - St Alban's Road - 9th June 2013

Grateful thanks to Tony and Olga Franks for once more hosting this event and all who helped with catering, drinks and for donating tombola prizes.
£733 raised on a wonderful sunny Sunday afternoon!

Annual Children's Club St Nicholas Party - St Stephen's Church Hall, Comely Bank Saturday 30 November 2013

Over 70 children and parents attended. The Fund contributed £150 to provide Christmas gifts and refreshments for Czech and Slovak youngsters.

The Committee

Prof. Peter France - Honorary President
Lida Paterova – Honorary Vice President
Dr Halla Belloff- Chair
Dr Alena Linhartova - Secretary
Marianna Richtarikova –
Children's Club Co-ordinator
Duncan MacGruer - Webmaster
Nan Mulder (until June) -SUISS
Lauren Pope (from June) – SUISS

The Book Group

Lida Paterova
Dr Halla Beloff
Busa Cochrane – Muir



SCOTTISH CZECH AND SLOVAK SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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