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## SCSSSF NEWSLETTER

December 2002



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year  
Veselé Vánoce a Vše Nejlepší v Novém Róce  
Veselé Vianóce a Všetko Najlepšie v Novom Roku

We are now in the third year of the Funds existence and again we have had a wide ranging programme of events and activities: cultural, educational, fund-raising and social, thus fulfilling the Fund's various roles. As always our three major fund-raising and social events per annum include a Spring event/bash, AGM/Garden Party in September and annual lecture in November.

The fund-raising events involved a cookery demonstration, a beer tasting, the annual sales at the Meadows and Stockbridge festivals, an evening of Scottish Music, and two AGM/Garden parties among others. Some of these events are described in the second part of the newsletter.

And without the generous support of you, our members and friends, it would have been quite impossible to achieve so much. So we thank you all and trust that you will continue to help us in 2003.

## Your students

Last year eight students applied for summer courses and your committee made strenuous efforts to select candidates from different institutions across the two countries. As in the year 2000 the Fund was able to make four scholarships to one Slovak and three Czech students Peter Meluš, Lucie Johnová, Ema Jelínková and Jakub Hovorka. It was, therefore, rather disappointing that there was only one applicant and one scholarship awarded this

summer - to Lucie Formanková. We have thought about the reasons for this and can only assume that this is the result of reluctance to travel following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack. We strongly believe that demand will return to normal next year and are committed to renewing our links with Czech and Slovak Universities.

To do this your committee has attempted to improve publicity on scholarships by mailing all British Council offices in both countries and through the SUISS website. You may like to read from students' reports describing their experience in Edinburgh.

Lucie Johnová is a PhD student at Charles University in Prague. She attended the Summer School course on contemporary British literature. She wrote:

"The atmosphere of the course was great and I think this sort of multicultural feeling is perhaps as important as the academic part of the programme, especially since racism, nationalism, religious fanaticism and other dangerous -isms do not cease to be a threat in this world ... when I read some article or book about Scotland now, it will not be an abstract, fairy-tale country any more. It will be about a country where I have found friends, it will be reading about home."

Ema Jelínková, recently awarded a PhD, is now a lecturer at Palacký University in Olomouc in the Eastern part of the Czech Republic. She attended the same course and wrote:

"As the University granted SUISS students access to library resources, I was able to work on my research in

the afternoons and collect relevant materials. I benefited a great deal because I got hold of secondary literature which was essential for completing my PhD thesis."

Staying in Edinburgh was a marvellous experience for Ema:

"My experience of Edinburgh was further enhanced by a conducted bus tour, as well as several trips to the countryside. We were offered an opportunity to meet in person the renowned Scottish writers A. L. Kennedy, Edwin Morgan and Alasdair Gray."

Peter Meluš is studying at Nitra University, Slovakia. He attended the Summer School course on 20th century British Literature and wrote:

"... so my dreams came true: I stepped off the bus, after a 36 hour journey to the city of the East of Scotland, the city of Edinburgh. It was just before eight in the morning. I waited a little for Princess Street Gardens to open and changed my shorts for something warmer (I never used them again in Edinburgh)!"

Despite the cold welcome he was delighted to be in Scotland:

"... and I am so happy and proud that finally someone from Slovakia could come and contribute to (and don't forget benefit from) the Summer School: thanks to the people from SUISS and primarily from the SCSSS Fund; all the people who have never met me but who offered to help me, to support me – I have never experienced anything like that before. This is an experience I am not likely to forget – ever!"

Jakub Hovorka, an 18 year old now applying for a university place, attended the Summer School course on Modern Scotland and wrote:

"I enjoyed the whole course very much. I really appreciated the way lectures were taught – using slides and visiting galleries. I enjoyed the lectures by Michel Spiller, W. K. Ritchie and Bill Hare all of whose knowledge, good humour and friendly attitude I admired as these are not common features of teachers in my country. I was pleased to visit the Scottish Parliament, particularly because I have never been to the Czech Parliament."

Lucie Formankova wrote:

"I should confess that a reason for my desire to come to Edinburgh was the possibility of doing research in the Scottish libraries. Specializing in the literature, history and culture of the English renaissance, it is extremely difficult to get any suitable resources at home. During the course, I expanded my knowledge and found the discussions extremely fruitful and inspiring. I liked the wide approach to literature adopted ... though most of my afternoons were taken up with scurrying among library shelves, I still found time to do a little bit of exploration of the city and countryside. Edinburgh is a very beautiful city and I would like to come again because there is so much I have not seen. I especially enjoyed the organised trips to Linlithgow Palace and Loch Tay and I have fallen in love with the Scottish landscape."

## Fund Raising

The Fund's stall at the Meadows and Stockbridge Festivals raised over £1,000 in the past two years. In addition, publicity at the Fund's stall attracted several new members as well as a most generous personal donation of £850. Thank you all for your support in donating items for sale, helping out and braving the elements to come and see us on the Jawbone. We hope to see you there again next June.

On 21st June 2001 Ken Duncan of Inveralmond Brewery of Perth led us in a beer tasting adventure. The impressive Ossian beer label and Ken's masterful command of Czech terminology overwhelmed and enchanted his audience. And this event raised nearly £200.

In April 2002 we were fortunate to host a concert by Wally Allan who sang traditional Scottish songs and ballads. He entertained a capacity audience with typical Scottish humour as well a Czech song "Šly panenky silnici" which he had specially rehearsed for the occasion. The hospitality included a full meal of goulash, dumplings and salad during the interval.

This year's AGM/Garden Party was held in Edinburgh. It was opened by our President Prof. Peter France who gave the annual report while the Treasurer, Duncan Spiers, reported the Fund's healthy balance. We extend our warm gratitude to Miriam Spiers who stepped down from the committee by rotation and at the same

time we welcome Halla Beloff who was elected as a new committee member. These formal matters were followed by a feast of international delicacies and the ever popular raffle - with the predominance of bottled prizes - the smooth running once again masterminded by Duncan Spiers and his son Filip. This year's Garden Party raised a very impressive amount of £550. Bravo!

Two further social events are of note. On 30th November 2001 Ružena Wood delivered the second annual lecture exploring Czech myths and legends. The third annual lecture, sponsored by the Czech Foreign Ministry, was held on 1st November 2002 when Dr. Jan Čulík from the Institute of Slavonic Studies at Glasgow University presented a thoroughly researched lecture on Czech Film entitled "A Regeneration". The extracts shown entertained the audience and made them want to see more Czech film production.

## And now to 2003 ...

We wish you all the best for the festive season. In the New Year your committee will be hard at work on the programme for 2003. Some themes will likely recur, such as the fund-raising sales and summer bash, but new ideas are afloat. Perhaps you would let us have your views on the ideas of a quiz night and/or a dance with Czech and Slovak music.

We look forward to 2003 and to enjoying your company and continued support and goodwill.