

We wish to extend our sincere appreciation to all who have supported the Fund throughout the past year and would encourage you to attend our programme of events for 2012. The Committee welcomes any fresh suggestions or novel fundraising ideas and, as ever, we look forward to you joining us for yet another year of enjoyable social and cultural events in order to promote our charitable aims. It only remains to wish each and everyone a Joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**The Committee**

**Prof. Peter France - Honorary President**  
Lida Paterova -Honorary Vice President  
Dr Halla Beloff - Chair  
Dr Alena Linhartova - Secretary  
Olga Franks - Treasurer  
Gabriela Smith - Children Club's Co-ordinator  
Duncan MacGruer - Webmaster  
Nan Mulder

**The Book Group**

Lida Paterova  
Dr Halla Beloff  
Busa Cochrane-Muir



# Scottish Czech & Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund

## SCSSSF Newsletter - December 2011



*Another year has passed and, despite growing financial constraints for all and current tensions with our European neighbours, it is heartening to note that our Charity has continued to raise income and maintain strong links with Eastern Europe. Once more four Czech and Slovak students have been generously supported with scholarships – totalling £2592 - which have allowed them to attend SUISS in Edinburgh and develop their academic aspirations and participate in the cultural and social life of Scotland. They record their gratitude and experiences elsewhere in this Newsletter.*

*Although the Autumn Lecture had to be unfortunately postponed until February 2012, significant revenue was gained from such hardy annuals as The Meadows Festival stall and the Garden Party & AGM, while an April Wine Tasting event was greatly enjoyed by loyal members and friends. The Book Club and Children's Club have both prospered and continue to carry out valuable "missionary work" on behalf of the Fund. These events and activities do require much time and hard work from Committee members and others to organise and sustain. Continued generosity and commitment from a number of dedicated supporters helps to defray costs and promote such events. Renewed subscriptions or preferably life memberships would be of great benefit to the Fund in 2012!*

cont. p.2

*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year - Veselé Vánoce a Štastný Nový Rok  
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- Veselé Vánoce a Štastný Nový Rok - Veselé Vánoce a Štastný Nový Rok*

**SCOTTISH CZECH AND SLOVAK SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

**Scottish Charity No: SC 029812**

68 Comely Bank Avenue, Edinburgh EH4 1HE Telephone/Fax 0131 343 1292

E-mail: SCSSSFund@aol.com Website: www.scsssfund.org.uk

*http://www.scsssfund.org.uk*

*The SCSSS Fund lent its support and presence in 2011 to a national campaign to oppose the closure of The School of Slavic Studies at Glasgow University and a reduction in the number of European language courses on offer at other Scottish Universities and Colleges. This was directed at the Petitions Committee of the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood in September and was successful in convincing MSPs of the need to reconsider the Glasgow University Court decision and other proposals. A large crowd of language students, their tutors and concerned members of the public rallied outside the Parliament and the official delegation was headed by Tom Stoppard, Czech born playwright and author, who spoke most persuasively against the intended cuts inside the chamber.*

*The Committee hope that more members and friends will turn out to support our social and cultural programme in the coming year. As ever, they would welcome any further suggestions for fund-raising and would like to record their heartfelt thanks to all of you who supported the work of the Charity, through your donations, gifts or attendance over the last year. We wish you and your loved ones sincere best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a successful New Year in 2012.*



Former SCSSS Fund scholar Magda Ptocnacova came back to SUISS to study Scottish Literature. Here she (second from right) and other Scot.Lit. students speak to Prof. Riach during coffee time after the lecture.

### Report Bozena Velebna

I decided to apply for the Text and Context course in Scottish literature at the 2011 Scottish Universities' International Summer School. Even though my research is not in the field of literature, as a PhD student currently working on a thesis focusing on the presentation of Scottish history and identity in the media I felt that this course might add another perspective to my research.

The time I spent in Edinburgh certainly exceeded my expectations. The academic programme of our course met the highest standards and we actually found ourselves looking forward to each morning lecture. The seminars that followed were always conducted in lively and friendly atmosphere. I would like to thank our tutors for their enthusiasm and engaging discussions. I also appreciated the chance to use the University Library for my research.

cont. Report Bozena Velebna:

The social and cultural programme that was prepared for us was very interesting and varied, including guided tours, theatre performance, a visit to a gallery and chances to meet Scottish writers, particularly Liz Lochhead, whose reading, organised for us in our common room, which we at first could hardly believe, was a wonderful experience for me.

Looking back on those two weeks, there is so much that could be mentioned, much that I would like to thank for and many people to whom the thanks is due. SUISS organisers did a wonderful job preparing the course and paid attention to every detail. At the same time, they were always helpful, friendly and available. I enjoyed the feeling of close community I had from the very beginning of the course which was also thanks to my Scottish literature colleagues. Despite our different nationalities, backgrounds and ages we enjoyed the time we spent together, the debates on issues related and also completely unrelated to the topic of our course and the shared excitement at exploring the beautiful city of Edinburgh. Finally, I want to thank Scottish Czech and Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund for giving me this opportunity to take part in a very interesting and intellectually stimulating course at the University of Edinburgh.

### *The Bookgroup - Which Books to Send?*

*Readers will know that the Book Group sends Scottish Literature BOOKS to the various University Departments whose interest in the Czech Republic and Slovakia we know about. The question then is which books are likely to be useful for their courses and of attraction to the students. No question that Muriel Spark is the Queen of them all.*

*The first priority after her is clearly the titles on the Reading Lists for the three modules offered by the Scottish Universities Summer School in the current year. But we don't stop there. There are the other works by the listed authors and there are further contemporary books, to say nothing of the classics of past times. One would be ignorant indeed not to have them under one's belt.*

*The students who come are an obvious source of ideas. They tell us about their dissertation projects and which writers they find particularly intriguing. Some of these I find, shall we say, 'difficult'. Scottish Gothic writing, Iain Banks (and his alter ego Iain M Banks) and indeed Irving Welsh, but we try to please the customers. Occasionally include an Ian Rankin, although it is perhaps not necessary to submit him to detailed literary analysis, he does give a fine picture of the less salubrious side of Edinburgh life.*

*Sometimes kind donors give us books. And as I've said before, because we want to get the best value for money we try to buy nearly everything in charity shops, which fortunately here are not only cheap in their prices but are sometimes helpful in keeping our lists and putting things by. Without them we would be very limited. Indeed haunting the local charity shops has become a hobby of mine and I sometimes think that friends who happen to see me going in and out of them must think I have really fallen on hard times, "Poor soul that's where she buys her Clothes." No indeed, I'm just keen on a good on a clean copy of Sunset Song...*

*Halla Beloff of the The Books Group*



My name is Pavlina Lysakova and I spent nice two weeks in Edinburgh, Scotland, where I studied Scottish Literature Course provided by SUISS. At first, I would like to thank for support provided by Czech-Slovak Fund, I am very grateful for this kind offer. I appreciate a variety of students that were my colleagues in a group – many nationalities, different age and experience too. I learnt a lot every day from them. Lectures were very sufficient and the fact that lecturer was different every day was very good idea. I enjoyed presenters' various accents and also their different ways of presenting.

My tutor Linda was a great guide because she was able to conduct our discussions and kindly gave us explanation or background if necessary. I admire her enormous knowledge of Scottish Literature and her nice nature too, it was just pure pleasure for me to have her as tutor. And directors Konstantina and Julia definitely worked very hard to arrange all the things in our course because everything was working unbelievably well during the whole stay. I was very nicely surprised by a rich programme prepared for us so that I left Edinburgh with better knowledge not only of Scottish Literature but also culture, accent, history, and nature of Scottish people. Finally I have to add that Nan's help before coming to Edinburgh and during my stay was enormous and I was very happy to see Nan joining us when being on some occasions. I liked our last night - Ceilidh - we learnt how to dance traditional Scottish dances and it was fun. I cannot forget to highlight an access to University Library because then I was able to find many sources I will need when working on my diploma thesis so it was very useful that such books very available for all of us. This stay has been one of the best times of mine ever and I am happy that I can spread such information among students at my university because this course is truly worth attending and I am ready to recommend it to everybody.

Let me thank you very much for such chance again.

Yours faithfully,  
Pavlina Lysakova



I would like to express my gratitude for the scholarship for the Scottish Universities Summer School, which was provided by the SCSS Fund. The stay at summer school was such a delightful and refreshing experience, that it is my great pleasure to sum up its professional and personal benefits of this great experience. In short, the accommodation was decent, food delicious, program was flawlessly planned and organized by the careful directors, and yet the students were provided with lot of freedom. Both directors and administrator were so reliable and helpful, that they actually built up an atmosphere of carefulness and human touch.

The programme consisted of lectures, which were given by different lectures, so we could have witnessed various ways of presentation and points of views. The lectures were discussed by students and tutors. Thus, we were challenged to appreciate the lecture, but also to look deep into the matter and develop our sense of critical judgment. The lectures were followed by tutorials. As all the necessary information were provided by the lecturers, the tutor turned out to be the most careful and attentive listener you can experience at literature lessons. As most students were active and ready to talk, the lecturer carefully summarized our discussion and added few questions and more accurate expressions to help us develop our remarks and opinions into more academic statements.

Besides providing the academic knowledge, our tutor was also very good in developing community feelings among the students of different ages and origins. He used lot of jokes and witty remarks to help us build up a team that, at the end, was so hard to leave. And though we naturally had to learn on our own mistakes, we could do so in most pleasant, friendly atmosphere. Criticism was provided in the most sensitive way, frequently by the means of instructive, but liberating and funny jokes. But the greatest advantage of the stay was the contact with people from all over the world. We had different sexes, origins, aims, opinions and tastes, but of very similar interests that brought us together. Indeed, we discussed books when going to school, enjoying the lunch or dinner, or even evening jogging and walks. Of course we also talked about life, or just had a chat.. We had such a great fun, while also gaining insight into other cultures and ways of living and thinking, that every day was immensely refreshing and enriching.

Evening programme consisted of bus tour and two authorial readings. All the three events were great experiences. Both bus guide and two writers were very extremely funny, and at the same time insightful and occasionally grin. Experiencing Great Britain probably also means experiencing lot of types and functions of humour. I recommend the stay without reservation.

## Report from Katarina Korenova - SUISS Creative Writing

*At the beginning, there was just a wee hope that I would ever be able to attend a creative writing course in an English speaking country. In the end, it not only was made possible, but it far surpassed my expectations. After I returned home a friend asked me, "What was so special about SUISS?" Without hesitation, I responded, "Everything."*

*Upon arrival I received a neat package of all necessary information, instructions and a few little gifts from the SUISS directors, Julia Boll and Konstantina Georganta, two strong and determined young women, who worked hard to prepare the most exciting and fruitful experience for us. I entered a cozy room with everything I consider necessary for comfortable accommodation, and was later that day pleasantly surprised again at the choice of meals at the refectory. The program was perfectly timed, organized and had the best academic value. Lectures and seminars took place in the morning; readings, masterclasses and diverse social program in the afternoons and evenings. Nothing amiss.*

*What was so special about the SUISS? First of all, there was Claire Askew, our creative writing tutor, a poet without whom I would have missed the most vivid and creative part of the whole program. Not only we had a seminar with her every day, but we also could spend a few one-to-one tutorials with her, which proved to be most useful and encouraging. When I asked her to give me some hints at where to try and publish my poems in the UK, she surprised me by bringing long descriptions of the magazines she had carefully considered to be the best options for me. To every lesson she brought her love for writing and an interesting topic for discussion which she always concluded with thematically related exercise prompts. She gave everyone the feeling that we can do it, that we are writers and that there is a promise in each one of us. No wonder that I had the courage to take part in the student prose and poetry reading afterwards.*

*I also enjoyed the readings given by various authors, for instance, Liz Lohead and Kei Miller, and events at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. We received valuable pieces of advice at the masterclasses, enjoyed varied social activities, and became involved in the creative process of writing in every possible way; through the act of writing itself, through reading, listening, discussing and absorbing all we could from those who were willing to give. Last but not least, I have received credits for this wonderful course, which is a very useful "added value" for my university studies in Bratislava. Therefore, I would like to say "thank you" to the SCSSS Fund, a unique organization of wonderful people who cared enough to provide me with a great part of the necessary financial resources. I am also grateful that I have met you personally. You have enabled me to taste my dream; that of becoming a writer.*

## SHALOM

*He said connect  
Don't cut  
And all clenching  
Gnashing of teeth  
Ceased*

*Once  
The anorexic muscle  
Reached out  
And touching people's  
Hearts with gentleness*

*And ease and yes  
Was like naming  
Constellations  
Like crawling into safety  
Like myrrh*

*We marveled  
We shy animals*

*Poem by Katerina Korenova - Read at the  
SCSSS Fund reception at the house of Halla  
Beloff, August 2011*

## C H I L D R E N ' S C L U B

The Czech and Slovak Children's Club have moved premises and we are now meeting in St. Stephen's Church Hall in Comely Bank. The end of 2011 marks a whole year in this venue which gives our children lots more space to run about with many different rooms and is conveniently situated close to the city centre for people to reach. We have been meeting twice a month towards the end of this year and also tried to meet at different times of the day to find the most suitable time for everybody. It has become apparent that the afternoon suits most parents and so from New Year the meetings will shift to this time slot.

The structure of the gatherings remains free, but there are plenty of toys and Milada Stehlíková has been preparing and running art workshops aimed at children of different ages and their parents to work together. These are very popular and Milada has been informing parents of upcoming exciting happenings. Our St. Nicholas Party, or Mikuláš, which was organised by Olga Kennedy, was very successful this year with over 50 children and their parents attending. There was lots of lovely home baking, carol singing and even a small shadow theatre performance by Milada Stehlíková. The children were encouraged by the good Mikuláš and his saintly looking helper, Anděl (the angel), while they were not so sure about the scary looking Čert (the devil), who make up the trio that you will traditionally encounter in Czech and Slovak streets on the eve of the 5<sup>th</sup> December. All the children managed to get up to speak to Mikuláš and even recite a poem or sing a song and collect a little bag of treats.

In the New Year we are hoping to raise some money to employ teachers who could provide some structure to part of the meeting to give more opportunity, especially to the older children, to practise their Czech and Slovak language in a setting that is separate from the family home. As the environment in which our children are living is predominantly English speaking, even though some families have Czech and Slovak as their main home language, these meetings could become a useful alternative source of Czech and Slovak cultural and language learning for our children.