

However, the weather was very much our friend at the September Garden Party in Haddington and the assembled company including an army of toddlers and young children had an exceptional time.

This was a real taste of Central Europe. The sun shone its utmost, many different languages were being spoken and refreshments included a most impressive spread of traditional Czech and Slovak delicacies which had been slavishly prepared by chef Josef Linhart and his team and set out under the gazebo to protect it from the sun. In addition Czech beer and wine was flowing.

Two further fund raising activities are of note. On 27th October Dr. Mary Heimann of Strathclyde University's Department of History gave a fascinating lecture Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, the first President of Czechoslovakia. This was to accompany the exhibition of photographs which had kindly been arranged by the Czech Embassy all to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Masaryk's birth. And on 15th December Mia Spiers gave a Christmas wine tasting.

2001

You may be wondering what will follow as a sequel to the success of 2000? These are early days yet but your committee is already hard at work on the programme for 2001. Applications from this year's students are shortly to be considered, fund raising events, sales and a summer bash are themes that will recur and that new ideas are being considered including a cookery demonstration on 2nd April and a recipe book. We look forward to 2001 and to enjoying your company and continued support and goodwill.

SCSSSF Newsletter

Spring 2001



Prague Spring - the Vltava and Charles Bridge

Many Happy Returns !

It is now a year since the Fund was officially launched and a lot has happened over that time.

Due to the subscriptions and fund raising work it has been possible to make three scholarships last summer to Czech students Hana Konvalinková, Hana Kosová and Zuzana Kasaková. They have each written a brief summary of their experience for this newsletter and tell how much they enjoyed coming to Scotland and how their studies have benefited from the experience. To have three students was more than your committee expected in our very first year and it is very gratifying to have been able to achieve so much so soon. This success portends well for the coming year.

But all of this could not possibly have been achieved had we not had your commitment and help. The work of fund raising involved not only the initial bash but also the sales at the Meadows and Stockbridge festivals, the garden party, wine tasting, Masaryk lecture and others. The second part of the newsletter contains some articles about these events.

With your help by way of subscriptions and fund raising events the Fund has been able to achieve more than the committee had thought possible - and that in only our first year. We trust that you will continue to give your generous support in the year to come and for now we say a big thank you to you all and Many Happy Returns!

Your students

Hana Konvalinková is a student at Palacky University in Olomouc in the Eastern part of the Czech Republic. She attended the Scottish Universities Summer School course on 20th Century British Literature with an emphasis on the cultural and political climate of the period and its influence. She writes:

“in my seminar group there were twelve students from Spain, Italy, USA, Serbia, Holland and Russia and it was very

interesting to see how everyone brought forth their own academic and cultural background. The afternoons were free, so that we could pursue our own studies. The chance to use the Edinburgh University library was a marvellous experience and I had access to materials I could never have got hold of in the Czech Republic. I was happy to find numerous books and articles on Katherine Mansfield. I learned more about her life and works than I could ever have hoped.”

But life was not all toil since the experience of being in Scotland is itself essential:

“We went on a bus tour of Edinburgh, visited the National Gallery of Modern Art and the Dean Gallery, and further afield visited Glasgow and Loch Lomond. At the end we had a wonderful party but were a wee bit sad because the three weeks were over and we were saying goodbye to our new friends. I found I benefited on the personal level just as much and in our endless talks gained an insight, though moderate, into other cultures than my own.”

Hana Kosová is studying at the Charles University in Prague. She also attended the Summer School course on 20th century British Literature. She writes:

“Another important aspect was the theoretical approach to the subject matter. Czech universities have a strong tradition of literary structuralism and not many new trends in literary theory have been accepted. So the mostly postmodern approach added even more attraction to the course for me personally.”

When Hana attended the Summer School the Edinburgh festival was in full swing.



Prague - Charles Bridge

Hana enjoyed the experience in Edinburgh saying:

“I come from Prague which is as well a centre of cultural life. I really appreciated being in the middle of things. It is always different to read about the Festival in a book or paper from the actual living in the city at the time. I can imagine that local people could feel it as something disturbing but for me it was another experience.”

Zuzana Kasaková also from Charles University attended the Summer School course on Modern Scotland and writes:

“I found the Summer School course very interesting and it widened and deepened my knowledge especially in the field of art and literature. During lectures we could discuss issues and problems and it was interesting to compare different points of view. I gained a lot of information concerning Scottish devolution and the way the Scottish Parliament works. Visits to different places in Edinburgh were important for comprehending Scottish life and thinking. Also I would like to express my gratitude for the books I received from your Fund. They are priceless for my studies.”

We also received very positive feedback from the course organisers who remarked that our students were very fluent in English and equally able and diligent achieving substantial amounts of private research. All in all we were very impressed by the students and look forward to renewing the experience this year.

The committee was pleased to be able to assist the Charles University in the provision of a number of books both new and second hand for the study of Scottish literature and culture.

Fund Raising

The 17th March 2000 was the day of the launch reception when we took over Edinburgh University's Talbot Rice Gallery. Our guest speakers were Professor Ian Campbell of Edinburgh University's department of Victorian and Scottish Literature and Counsellor Minister Milan Coupek of the Czech Embassy in London.

After the initial welcome and speeches there followed fund raising events (tombola and auction) to the accompaniment of light refreshments and the musical requests played by Victor Pechar and Jean Eggar including those with distinct national themes (both Czech and Scottish).

The evening was a great success, not only in terms of numbers attending, and raised over eight hundred pounds.

Throughout the year our secretary, Alena Linhartová, and her helpers, notably Olga Franks, have worked tirelessly fund raising in various ways and at various places running stalls and car boot sales. As a result the Fund has been able to raise many hundreds of pounds.



The Stockbridge festival

The most notable events were the presence of the Fund's stall at the Meadows and Stockbridge Festivals and that despite the cold and damp weather conditions that make life in Scotland so unique and unpredictable. Our thanks go out to all those who supported the Fund in fund raising whether by donations of items for sale, helping out at the stalls or buying merchandise. The Meadows festival stall raised around Three hundred and thirty pounds. Bravo!



The Garden Party