

Scottish Czech and Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund Newsletter 2010-1

With a decade of fund-raising behind us, it is perhaps time to reflect on how successful our Charity has been in achieving its original aims and intentions. The SCSSS Fund was established in 2000 to provide additional financial support and assistance to Czech, Slovak and Scottish students attending summers schools – most notably the SUISS here in Edinburgh. Nearly fifty undergraduates and postgraduates have subsequently received grants to pursue their academic studies and widen their cultural and social horizons. These recipients have frequently acknowledged how the Fund's assistance encouraged and influenced their future careers. Indeed, many are now members of academic staff in Czech and Slovak universities where they actively promote and teach Scottish culture and literature. It is most gratifying that many recipients of our grants retain close links and friendships with the Fund's trustees and members.



The past year has resulted in a continuing valuable contribution by the Book Group which arranges for literature and critical texts to be forwarded to Czech and Slovak universities and a significant expansion of the Children's Club, which seeks to promote bilingualism. A more detailed account of both is given elsewhere in this Newsletter. It is to be hoped that more ordinary and life members can be recruited from parents and others involved with the Children's Club in order to prolong and develop the Fund's work in the future.

Despite the current recession it is essential that fresh ideas be sought and fund-raising be maintained to further the work of our Charity. The growth and continued success of the SCSSS Fund depends entirely on the generosity and commitment of members in supporting and attending the annual cultural and social events organized by the Committee.

Finally, can we offer our sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed their time, energy and financial support to the SCSSS Fund in 2010. It is greatly appreciated and does make a difference to many young lives.

Events 2010

Thank you all for another wonderful year of SCSSS events, and for your attendance and assistance in 2010.

Last year, our events included

- a stall at the Meadow's Festival, 5-6th June, which raised £448.00
- the Annual Garden Party, 27th June 2010, which raised £793
- the Annual Lecture on Hasek, 23rd September 2010, which raised £100



Jaroslav Hašek

Alongside our normal schedule of events, the fund aim to organise a wine-tasting for the fund in March. In order to best organise this event, the Fund would like to request anyone interested in our events please provide their e-mail address to any member of the fund, or to:

scsssfund@aol.com

Ondrej Koscik

Student Reports 2010

Ester Szilagyiova

When I have noticed a small advertisement at our noticeboard at the Prešov University in the Spring of 2010, I would not realize at first that it would stir an eye-opening experience. I have always been interested in English Literature and academic environment in the UK. Therefore I have looked up the SCSSS Fund website, where I have found out about the Scottish Universities International Summer School (SUISS or “The School” as it is nicknamed) based at Edinburgh University.

There was little time left on both applications but I have decided to ask for my letters of reference and give it a good chance. I am grateful to both the SCSSS Fund and SUISS for accepting my last moment application and guiding me through the process of administration.

I should also voice my gratitude to Ms Linhartova who forwarded me a contact on a Czech IT student with an accommodation offer I could not refuse. It was a modestly priced room in a flat located in perfect midpoint between the School and the Pollock Halls where the rest of students and cultural part of the programme resided. Another advantage was that I could get to Edinburgh few days earlier, meet the Administrators for guidance, register at the University Library and IT system and pick up few books I have ordered before my arrival on Aug 6.

Equipped with books and several days dedicated to study and exploring the surrounding area (magnificent Arthur’s Seat) I have entered my first lecture. The schedule at the Contemporary Literature course was intensive. Lectures were closely followed by seminars. It was all I could wish for, with heated and fruitful discussions. Renowned lecturers, tutors and fellow students gave insights and truly international perspective on most subjects. Even during the coffee breaks, afternoons and evenings everyone was eager for conversation. This was intensified by the atmosphere of the festivals and cultural events we took part in. With our student host Goran we have even managed to spend a sunny day at the seaside in North Berwick. I will also remember the deeply moving conversation we had on charity and support with Ms. Beloff from SCSSS Fund.

By the second week of the School I have decided to explore my interest in JG Ballard in presentation and essay in pursuit of credits. During the writing of the essay I used help of the extraordinary National Library of Scotland collection, my tutor Karin Sellberg and especially the inspiration of three of Shakespeare’s plays I saw at the Globe in London midway home during the week following the course. I am proud to say I have managed to successfully complete the course, and transfer the credits for the essay, books and experience safely to my home University.

First of all I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to attend this year’s SUISS in Edinburgh. It was a life changing experience and I dare say I owe my MA degree to it. I passed my final exams in late September. My thesis contained a chapter on A. Gray’s Poor Things which was one of the books discussed at the lectures

during the summer university. The lecture given by Dr. Emma Lister presented the book from a completely different perspective which helped me to get a better understanding of the book. I very much enjoyed the author readings - a copy of Poor Things signed by Mr. Gray is the ultimate treasure!



The summer school was very well organized I got all the information I needed well before the summer school started. The student hosts were ready to welcome the students at Pollock Halls all afternoon on the day of our arrival and they were very helpful during the entire time which made me feel safe and comfortable. Food and accommodation provided by the Pollock Halls was first-class. I would like to compliment on the careful and very fortunate selection of literary works and topics for the Text and Context course. The directors of the summer school made a wonderful job, as the literary works discussed helped the students to understand the notion of Scottish identity not only in terms of history a culture. I believe a number of these texts are taught at universities, nevertheless their Scottish “connection” gets lost unless they are discussed in specialized courses. I would like to think of this course as of a ‘guided tour’ through the most important ‘sights’ of Scottish literature, however one must undertake several ‘private expeditions’ to really know the place.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Hala and the rest of the Fund members for finding time to meet us and welcome us at their home one afternoon. I would like to thank you all again for the priceless experience, for the opportunity to meet new people and learn new things, without your financial support I would have not been able to be there.

These testimonials have been edited for reasons of space; full versions are available on our website.

Dear SCSSS Members,

I decided to submit my report on the SUISS experience in form of a letter because I find it more personal. I would like to express my gratitude for the generous scholarship you provided me with. It was your financial support that enabled me to attend a lot of interesting lectures, see the beauty of Edinburgh and its surroundings and enjoy the rich social and cultural programme that SUISS directors had prepared for us.

I am a PhD student at Palacký University in Olomouc. As we are currently working on a book that should cover contemporary Scottish literature in a form of an outline, it was of an immense help that I was able to access the vast information source in the university library. I was able to find a lot of background reading for my dissertation, too.

I was very glad to meet some of you at Edinburgh University reception and at Halla's. It was very nice to have a chance to talk to you in person and to find out how the fund actually works. I admire the way in which you help Czech students to go abroad and study in Scotland. It's great.

Apart from the research possibilities, I found the lectures to be the most fruitful and interesting part of the course. I would even suggest that there was more time reserved for the lectures. All of them were helpful and the speakers would definitely be able to give more information on the subject given some extra time.

There was not many PhD students like myself in my tutorial so it was sometimes not that interesting from my point of view because some of the students were undergraduates and the level of discourse and knowledge was very different among the participants. But Linda Tym, our tutor, is a very intelligent and skillful teacher who is well read in the topics we were discussing. I enjoyed the seminars as well but they were a bit long.

From the social and cultural programme I missed just the Edwin Morgan event and so I had a chance to enjoy all the benefits that SUISS prepared for us – the bus tour, the theatre performance and many others. It was amazing to be able to attend readings of the two of my favourite contemporary Scottish authors – Alasdair Gray and A. L. Kennedy. And I even learned to dance a Ceilidh song (I'm really not much of a dancer)...

To sum it up, I'd like to thank you so much for the scholarship. I think I took advantage of the Scottish experience to the fullest and it will be very helpful in my research of Scottish literature of the 1990's and also of the Scottish Gothic (which is the topic of my dissertation). Thank you.

Best regards,

Vojtěch Novák

Firstly, I would like to thank SCSSSF and all other people for an opportunity to spend amazing six weeks at EU Summer University at University of the West of Scotland. It was great experience in my life during which I was growing as a student and also as a personality. I had a chance to learn a lot at the University and in everyday life in new environment between students from many states of EU and Scottish people.

I attended two courses: Business English and Human side of Technology. Both courses were given in high level of teaching. I have to say that the way of teaching was really different compared to courses in my home country. Our teachers and also other staff from University were always ready to help us, give advice and encourage us in our work.

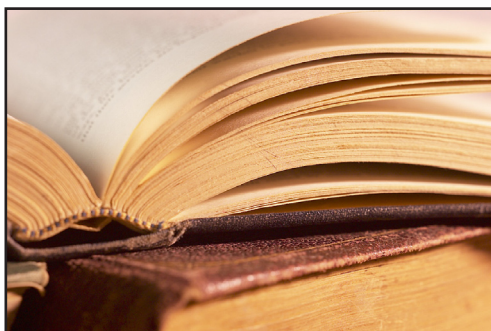
The Human side of Technology gave as wide range of information about science and technology and their impact to society, what was for me personally very interesting, as we are missing this kind of course at my home University. Each lesson was divided into two parts: the first one was a theoretical lesson about particular topic and in the second part we were dealing with different problems in groups. Part of course was review about history and development of science and technology, management of work ... We were working on group and individual presentation and final debate between groups. I really appreciated the group work, I have learned so much about working with other people and also now, I can see better my strong and weak sides and know what I should avoid in the future. This course really built our ability to work as an individual and as part of the team, encouraged our communication skills and critical thinking.

Dynamic lessons of Business English were full of situations from real life. We were working in pairs or bigger groups, building vocabulary, practise grammar and gave as a lot of valuable information, which we can use every day. I have learned much more English than ever before and also a lot of about marketing, management and customer service, which were for me as a biologist completely new things. Because of mix of nationalities in our class, we had great opportunity to discuss wide range of economical problems in each country, learn about cultural differences and think about new ideas and possibilities in business.

As I have mentioned above this Summer University gave me not just a big academic experience, but also great social and personal development. It was great to meet so many interesting people from all EU, make new friends, learn so much about their view of life, cultures, traditions and habits. I had an opportunity to see how rich Europe is. Part of course was also program made by the University. Everybody got free ticket for 2 days sightseeing in Glasgow, we were on The Abbey Tour in Paisley Abby and also, there was unforgettable Ceilidh party, where we were learning traditional Scottish dances all evening. In my free I had a chance to see beautiful places like Edinburgh with its amazing architecture, West coast of Scotland, National Park Loch Lomond and many galleries and museums. I can say That Scotland is beautiful place on the Earth, full of history, breathtaking nature and nice people. This Scottish experience was the best option how to spend my last summer holiday. It came in right time, gave me new ideas and courage to achieve my targets and help me to understand, how important is to know different cultures.

The Book Group

The Book Group continues its work with the usual enthusiasm and with regular feed-back from our client Departments in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The students whom we sponsored last summer for the Summer School were pleased to meet some of us at the University Summer School Reception and at our own informal party. We were able to tell them about the various efforts we make to raise funds both for the fees and travel, and for the books. Some of these are certainly arduous, one might think of the Meadows Festival where the weather is rarely kind.



As before we have had generous donations from our Group both in kind and in cash. We try to buy the books specified on the Summer School lists, but also other works from those authors and indeed other contemporary Scots writers, to enlarge the students' horizons. Appropriate contemporary fiction is not so hard to find. It is the literary theory books, which are so important and usually have to be bought new and so are precious.

What a boon email is. We are able to get acknowledgements in good time and so a dialogue is established. The recipients of our parcels have included the universities in Prague, Bruno, Pilsen, Nitra, Olomouc, Bratislava and Presov.

We look forward to continuing our work.

Lida Paterova
Nan Mulder
Busa Cochrane Muir
Halla Beloff

The SCSSS Fund committee once again would like to thank everyone who has helped with our work in the last year. We would like to extend a warm invitation to all our events in 2011. Hopefully 2011 will be as successful as 2010, and that we can once again spend time with all our friends, old and new.

A Prosperous Year to All.

The Committee

Honorary President - Prof. Peter France
Chair - Dr. Halla Beloff
Secretary - Dr. Alena Linhartova
Treasurer - Olga Franks
Nan Mulder
Duncan MacGruer

The Book Group

Lida Paterova
Nan Mulder
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SCOTTISH CZECH AND SLOVAK SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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