

And now to 2007...

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 2007. 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

Dr Halla Beloff - Chair
Dr Alena Linhartova - Secretary
Duncan Spiers - Treasurer
Olga Franks - Membership Secretary
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Lida Paterova -Honorary Vice President

The Book Group

Lida Paterova
Dr Halla Beloff
Nan Mulder

Webmaster

Lida Paterova

The Annual
SCSSSF
Garden Party,
June 2006.



SCOTTISH CZECH AND SLOVAK SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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Scottish Czech & Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund

SCSSSF Newsletter - December 2006



Welcome to the 2006 Newsletter of the SCSSSF Fund. Another successful year is behind us in which we not only raised enough funds to continue with our charity, but were also able to give large grants to three students of the Czech Republic to attend the Scottish Universities' International Summer School at Edinburgh University (www.llc.ac.uk/suiss). You will be able to read their reports in this newsletter.

On page two an article about some exciting new developments of the past year: our own website (address below) set up by Lida Paterova with help from the Resource Centre of the Edinburgh City Library, and the founding of the Bookgroup, which provides Czech and Slovak Universities with British and Irish literature books.

You'll also be able to read about some of the events that took place in the past year, and an update on the financial situation. The SCSSSF Fund Committee is very grateful for your continuing support and hope that in the coming year we will see many of you at our always enjoyable fundraising events. Enjoy this newsletter!

The SCSSSF Committee

<http://www.scsssfund.org.uk>

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

Exciting New Developments

This year saw some important new initiatives in our activities. One of them was the development and publication of a website [www.scsssfund.org.uk]. The other initiative concentrated on the provision of books to Czech and Slovak universities whose students experienced difficulties in obtaining some book titles required for the SUISS course they enrolled in.

A small Sub-Committee was formed, henceforth referred to as the Bookgroup, to oversee the project. An allocation of £170 has been spent largely on secondhand fiction, although a few books, such as theory background reading together with less commonly known authors, were purchased new. We just received the wonderful promise of a £250 donation, which will provide funding for this project for the coming two years. Approximately 100 books have already been distributed between the 5 universities [Brno, Nitra, Olomouc, Plzen, Presov] which expressed an interest in receiving such donations. Included in this total was also a collection of general literature from classic, modern and post-modern periods. In order to save on the cost of postage, friends and family traveling to Czech and Slovak Republics were requested to make deliveries.

The Bookgroup has had positive and appreciative response from all the contacts established. It has been a welcome addition to the library stock; these books are held in special sections in the universities' libraries and are accessible to all students.

This is what Dr Emma Jelinkova wrote to the SCSSS Fund after the Palacky University in Brno received books for the library:

Not only did the Fund provide the scholarship for my student Michaela Novakova, but the Fund even donated the books for her course that have been unavailable in the Czech Republic so far.

I would like to thank the SCSSSF for the continuing support the Department has been receiving from you. Your initiative has helped to promote Scottish culture at the Faculty of Arts; as many as three promising young scholars were given an opportunity to benefit from studying Scottish literature in Scotland.



Dr Halla Beloff, Nicolas Murray and Alena Linhartova enjoying a glass of wine after the lecture.

The Annual Lecture: Kafka and Women by Nicholas Murray - St Cecilia's Hall, Cowgate, Edinburgh

In choosing a theme that is both appealing to our public and has a clear relevance for our Czech and Slovak interest, we were bound to come to Franz Kafka sooner or later. And this year we clearly had a winner. With the sponsorship of the Czech Ministry of Culture, we were able to invite a London speaker and Nicholas Murray was a very good choice. A fellow of the Royal Literary Fund who lectures at Queen Mary College, he is a biographer, not only of Kafka but of Aldous Huxley and Bruce Chatwin, he had his subject at a wide command.

Covering the women in Kafka's life, from his mother and his fiancée Felice Bauer, to the married Melina Jesenka, he held his audience in a compelling narrative. The searching questions and discussion session could have gone on for a long time. However, we had to find time for the excellent buffet and wine arranged by Alena Hartova and Olga Franks, which was, as usual much appreciated.

The audience of some 50 people and the collection of £100 showed that this was indeed a successful venture. Many thanks to them and the helpers.

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Report from Stepanka Karlova

During the first three weeks of the Text and Context Course I attended 13 lectures and 12 tutorials focused on English, Scottish and Irish modernist writing. I must say that these lessons turned to be one of the most intensive, topic-focused and coherent literature courses I have gone through in my university career so far.

The lectures provided by SUISS offered me a rare opportunity, (actually the first one in my life) to witness the performance of leading British and Irish scholars specialized in Modernist literature. I most appreciated the lectures on Virginia Woolf and George Orwell, but as a result of an exquisitely high level of erudition, I got no less motivated to read texts by authors that were formerly unknown to me, namely Lewis Grassic Gibbon and John Millington Synge.

In addition to the lectures, there were the tutorials that became for me a real core of the SUISS programme. Their high quality was above all owing to the competence and dedication of our tutor, Rania Caroula. She showed a profound knowledge of all the topics covered in the tutorials as well as a high degree of teaching skills. She regularly succeeded in making these debates well-structured, heading for a specific goal or conclusion and at the same time safeguarded space for everyone to voice their opinion, even controversial one, if well-reasoned. I also enjoyed the other students' attitude towards the work in the tutorials.

Outside the lessons, I was offered an opportunity to get a notion of Scottish culture and lifestyle by means of the SUISS Social and Cultural Programme. Within

this programme, I took part in the lectures on Scottish history and art, the screening of a Scottish cult movie *The Wicker Man*, a guided bus tour of Edinburgh or a 'lesson' on Ceilidh. I also explored Edinburgh and its places of interest on my own, and I could not help spending some time chasing the second-hand bookshops, where I found a plenty of books unavailable in the Czech Republic, sold for prices more than reasonable.

Last but not least, I largely benefited from the opportunity to communicate in English on regular basis, which considerably helped me to activate my speaking skills. This went hand in hand with none the less enriching experience of talking to people from all around the world and thus learning many pieces of interesting information to which one would hardly have any approach otherwise, such as issues concerning the life conditions and careers of people of similar social standing in various countries. For all these reasons I would like to once more express my thanks to all the people involved in SCSSS Fund, as it were you who make this new, enriching, deeply motivating and at the same time pleasant experience happen to me ☺!



SUISS students on the steps of the Playfair Library. Stepanka is on the front row at the right.

Report from Michela Markova

My diploma thesis deals with contemporary Irish literature and it is rather difficult for me to obtain appropriate materials and background to write a thesis that could later be basis for a PhD studies' project. The course offered by SUISS was titled Text and Context: British and Irish Literature from 1900 to the Present and it seemed to be a great idea of applying for it. I was lucky enough to be accepted to the programme and I was also awarded the SCSSS scholarship. I could not believe it at first and I will never be able to thank all those nice people who enabled me to take part in thoroughly. Without their generous help, I definitely would not be able to participate in the course.

*A list of compulsory reading was sent to the participants. Those were the books they were supposed to read prior to the course so that they were able to profit from it as much as possible. It proved to be a sensible recommendation, as the programme was highly interesting and fairly demanding (some of the books themselves were challenging, e.g. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's children* or Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*). Meeting the authors (e.g. Bernard McLaverty) about whom you only read and listening to them reading their own works made us feel special.*

Students usually do not tend to be rushing into the lecture rooms but we did. We were so curious about the lectures and looking forward to hearing the absorbing theories and approaches. Though it may appear unbelievable, all of us could not wait till we divided into tutorial groups to discuss the books we read.

I cannot imagine a better way in which I could have spent this summer. I have met so many interesting people, many of whom became my good friends. The scholars provided me with new aspects of postmodern literature. I gathered plenty of materials, which I am going to use to write the thesis. I would like to thank all the people who made it possible for me to come to Edinburgh to experience the SUISS programme.



Misha gives her presentation at SUISS on John McGrath's 'The Teviot, the Stag and the black, black oil.'

Report by Michaela Nováková

SCSSF 2006, Term 2

I took part in the second part of the course - Postmodernism. I definitely enjoyed most of the lectures, and I was very positively surprised about the tutorials. I have to admit that the approach to literary analysis was something new for me. The tutorials had totally different quality compared to the seminars I am used to from my republic. The number of students involved in every group was 14, which was just all right - every one had the opportunity to talk about their views and share their opinions. My tutor (Emma Lister) always came very precisely prepared; we usually got very informative handouts involving important quotations from the work itself, but also useful notes on the context, philosophy of postmodernism and relative works.

The lectures that preceded the tutorials served as a useful basis and an inspiration for the following discussions. The lecturers usually came with a totally unexpected approach to the work, or gave us information about the broad context that helped me to understand the work or to see it from a new perspective. Because of these characteristic I liked the thought provoking lecture on Samuel Beckett by Dr. John Coyle, very informative lecture on Postcolonial London and Sam Selvon by Gail Low and I definitely enjoyed the lecture on J. Winterson by Dr Alex Goody.



I was also very happy about the other parts of my stay in Edinburgh. There was an interesting social and cultural programme prepared for us - I will never forget the Ceilidh night, when we had the chance to learn the traditional Scottish dance. The three weeks there enabled me to discover at least some of the beauties of Scotland. In my free time I visited some galleries and museums, walked through

the city and enjoyed the views from the lovely hills. People were very nice, it seemed that everyone was ready to give you an advice if you needed. I took part in a bus tour to Loch Lomond and Stirling castle, which was really amazing.

I also came to Edinburgh to do a research on the contemporary British novelist Martin Amis, whose fiction is the subject of my thesis. I highly benefited from the access to University and National Library, where I found the articles and reviews I would never get in my republic. I am sure that I will cherish this Scottish experience all my life - academically as well as personally.

Our eighth year = Fundraising events 2006

Thanks to the generosity of our members and friends £2100 to our modest reserves in 2006. This meant that three students could receive bursaries totalling £2350. In 2006 the number of fundraising and social events increased to seven, up from four last year and these are briefly outlined below.

In February 2006 Miriam Spiers of Alliance Wine took us on a wine tasting adventure. Her informative presentation and fine Spanish wines did much to lift the winter gloom. Over £200 was raised on the night. In March we held our Ceilidh in the Teviot Row Union - the second in six months - which was well attended, proving especially popular with the growing numbers of young Czechs and Slovaks working or studying in and around Edinburgh. In April, the Fund's 7th Annual Lecture was given by the writer and critic Nicholas Murray on "Kafka and Women" (see article page 3). The lecture was supported by a grant from the Czech Embassy, which we gratefully acknowledge.

The annual AGM & Garden Party was held in June sunshine and we are most thankful to Tony and Olga Franks for letting member, visitors and friends invade their garden and home once again (see photos) . Over £700 was raised, partly due to our famous tombola. The Committee would like to thank all who contributed prizes with a special word of thanks to Ken Duncan of the Inverlmond Brewery who added to the convivial atmosphere by donating a barrel of his magnificent ale.

It was disappointing that the Meadows Festival was not held this summer, as it not only provides one of our major sources of income, but also provide the SCSSF with publicity and several new members. It is expected that the Festival will be resurrected in 2007 and we would welcome donations of books, bric-a-brac and plants for our stall next June. This year two car boot sales, one in Edinburgh in June and one in Bathgate in September, were attended instead but despite a great deal of energy and early rising these only resulted in a £100 profit.

Three further social events which took place this autumn: in October Lenka Whyles - herself a Czech - of The Scotch Whisky Heritage Centre hosted and presented an enjoyable evening of Whisky Tasting, which resulted in £230 being raised.

On Friday 17 November 2006 Dr Michael Schouten, a Czech-American currently working at The Roslin Institute, delivered a most entertaining lecture to commemorate the birth 180 years ago of his illustrious ancestor, Vojta Naprstek, the Czech philanthropist and explorer. The following day The Filmhouse in Lothian Road gave a free screening of Czech and Slovak cartoons from the last four decades. There were a considerable number of young children in the audience, many of whose parents were either Czech or Slovak by birth. Following our discussions with the Filmhouse we hope that one contemporary Czech film will be shown monthly from early 2007. Please check our website for further details.

SCSSF Fund Garden Party 2006 - a most enjoyable afternoon with Tony and Olga Franks

