

Scottish Czech & Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund

Newsletter - 2012



The primary aim of our Charity is to advance the education of the public in the Czech, Slovak and English languages. As a result, we have over the years enjoyed a most fruitful and mutually advantageous relationship with the Scottish Universities Summer School held annually in Edinburgh. Indeed, the liaison provided by the administrator of SUISS, Nan Mulder, has proved invaluable. She has been a staunch Committee member of our Fund and amongst many other tasks she has prepared and edited copy for our annual Newsletter for years. As she will retire from her current post in early 2013, she has also resigned from our Committee to spend more time with her family overseas. We wish to extend our sincere gratitude and best wishes for her retirement. Thank you, Nan!

As we approach the turn of the year, this Newsletter reports, albeit in the now familiar format and in content, on yet another successful year's fund-raising. Despite the national mood of austerity and prevailing national recession our members and friends have continued to contribute their time and money most generously.

This year, as one successful candidate could not attend for family reasons, the Fund granted only two scholarships totalling £1161.00. They allowed Barbora Jirosova to attend the Summer School in Edinburgh while Petra Poncarova opted to attend a two week course at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic College on Skye. Detailed accounts of their experience and impressions, with their sincere appreciation for financial support offered by the Fund, are carried elsewhere in the Newsletter. The Fund also granted £100.00 to the Children's Club towards their annual St Nicholas Party. The continued support of the Book Group for individuals and departments in Czech and Slovak Universities has been welcomed by the recipients of numerous literary texts which are regularly despatched abroad. Long may their work flourish!

The Children's Club has increased in numbers and has extended its scope of activities. It offers support, friendship and a cultural base for youngsters and parents of Czech and Slovak origins and through this encourages bilingualism. This successful venture is described in greater detail overleaf.

For our Annual Lecture in May we invited Dr Mary Heimann, the University of Glasgow, to share her thoughts on the publication of her highly controversial book *Czechoslovakia, The State that Failed*. This event provided us with a fascinating insight into the world of modern historical research and the fate and fame awaiting a historian who challenges accepted wisdoms. She largely focused her lecture on the negative reviews received on publication. The event was held in the small Lecture Theatre of the David Hume Tower and an attentive audience thoroughly enjoyed the lecture and the refreshments which inevitably followed.

The Committee can only thank once again all those who have supported our efforts over the past year with donations, gifts and their attendance at our events. Can we appeal once more for fresh ideas for fundraising and as the Committee we would encourage more individuals to become more involved wherever and however they can. We extend our gratitude to you all and sincere best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year in 2013.

Book Group by Halla Beloff

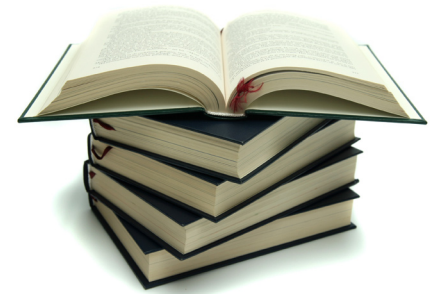
If books are a door to the past, they surely are also a door between cultures. And that is how I see our work in sending books to the Departments of our visiting students – present past and in the future. I take books seriously as a link between people.

So again I'm happy to report that books have gone to some 6 Departments.

The Reading Lists of the three courses, Modern, Contemporary and Scottish Literature, which are on offer, change a bit each year. For 2012 they include the old favourites like Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and of course, the hardy perennial *The Prime of Miss Brodie* but have added James Robertson's *The Testament of Gideon Mack*, which will be harder to track down second-hand.

It is the nucleus of the List which guides also the choice of other works by those authors which stimulates us in our haunting of the charity shops. The searching and finding provide a constant pleasure. And even in these hard times, the prices are really reasonable. So two good causes are covered.

One innovation this year was the foundation course in English and Scottish Literature taught by Ondrej Koscik, an ex-student of the student of the Summer School whom I had met here, now at the Comenius University in Bratislava, who was trying to establish a library for these mature students preparing for the degree course. It was a pleasure to send him some 50 volumes ranging from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to *Trainspotting*. He was most appreciative and we had cordial interchanges. So acorns continue to grow.



Czech and Slovak Children's Club by Marianna Richtarikova

Czech and Slovak Children's Club is a playgroup for children of any age that come from families of Czech, Slovak or a mixed nationality (where one of the parents speaks Czech or Slovak). It regularly meets once in 3 weeks, on Saturdays, at St. Stephen's Comely Bank Church.

We try to create a warm and welcoming place where everybody, especially our little ones, feel good and spend happy time with their peers. The event provides a valuable opportunity for children to play along with others who speak the same first language.



For many of them the club is a place where they discover that there are also other people out there besides their Mummy or Daddy who can speak Czech or Slovak. The activities the children take part in during the meetings naturally reinforce their learning of the language and encourage them to use it for communication with their relatives.

It is not to be underestimated how important it is for parents to have the chance to meet and interact with other parents from the Czech and Slovak communities. The majority of the parents are Mums who bring their children to the club, get the opportunity to share experience from their lives and make new friendships.

During the meetings we provide an assortment of toys for children of various ages to play with. Cars and trains, dollies and playdough, push cars, balls, crayons and board games – all of these and more are being heavily used. We sing Czech and Slovak traditional children's songs and rhymes and play games which have the goal to get the children to know each other and have fun together. Art activities are greatly appreciated especially by the older children. Through a combination of guided and independent hands-on experience, they learn to work with various materials, applying creative techniques of gluing, cutting, assembling, painting and decorating.

Art activities and songs follow the seasons of the year and often are related to various traditional festivities native to Czech and Slovak culture. The children learn about traditions through play.

In January 2012 we celebrated the arrival of the Three Kings and in February the end of the Winter by dressing up "Morena" - the symbol of the winter. In March we learned about Easter traditions by decorating paper eggs and planting grass.

For the first time, we organized International Children's day this year, which is a holiday of long tradition in the Czech and Slovak Republics, always celebrated on the 1st of June. Our children participated in various activities and games in which they were collecting points and finally were rewarded with treats. It was a very successful and well attended event.

At the end of the year, on the 8th of December, over 60 children came to celebrate St. Nicholas day. We welcomed St Nicholas and his helpers – the Angel and the Devil with a little performance – children sang songs and danced. Every child got a special treat from St. Nicholas. After this, as per tradition in the days leading to Christmas, children were decorating gingerbread. The atmosphere at the event was great and at dusk one of the Mums and organizers performed a "shadow theatre" Nativity play. It was a fabulous evening and a spectacular end of the year 2012 for the Czech and Slovak Children's Club.

Merry Christmas and happy New Year!



Thanks to the generous support provided by the SCSSSS Fund, I was allowed to continue with my studies of Scottish Gaelic by two weeks of intensive short courses at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college on the Isle of Skye. Since there are no possibilities to learn Scottish Gaelic in Prague (although there are classes in Irish Gaelic) and I do not know of any other Czech students of Gaelic, participating in courses lead by native speakers, meeting other learners from all over the world and spending time in the original environment of the language is of great importance and help to me, and it is also an invaluable source of motivation.

I participated in the short courses at the college last year, so I knew how helpful they were, but unfortunately, I am not able to afford them without the support of a scholarship or a research grant. As my future plan is to take up a two-term intensive programme at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in order to achieve a sufficient degree of fluency in Gaelic to be able to teach the language and to translate, and intermediate knowledge of Gaelic is required for admission, missing one summer of courses would be very difficult for me. My department (Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague) supports my Gaelic studies, for the research of Gaelic Scotland has been absent from the curriculum of our institution so far.

*In August, I attended Gaelic Level 4 with Ms Muriel Fisher and Gaelic Level 5 with Ms Etta MacDonald, both native speakers of Gaelic from the Western Isles and excellent teachers, and the courses greatly improved my conversation skills and pronunciation, as well as they helped to clarify some issues I had been struggling with when studying on my own. My stay at the college, apart from being a most enjoyable and pleasant experience, also helped me in terms of my own research – as I had to finish the proposal for my MA diploma in the middle of September, being at the institution endowed one of the best libraries on the subject in the world significantly facilitated the creation of the research project. My MA thesis is going to be concerned with Scottish Gaelic poetry of place in the 20th century, focusing on the works of Sorley MacLean, Derick Thomson and Iain Crichton Smith. During the two weeks at the college, I finally gained confidence to begin with translations from Gaelic into Czech – I am now translating poems by the late Professor Thomson into Czech and hopefully, the translations will appear in the revue for poetry *Psí vino* and they will also accompany my study on Derick Thomson I am preparing for the online literary magazine www.iliteratura.cz.*

I would like to thank the SCSSSS Fund for its generous help, I was immensely happy that I could continue with my Gaelic studies and the courses were very important in terms of my future research and academic activities.

With best regards,

Petra Johana Poncarova

The aim of this report is to inform you about the great time I had at the 65th Scottish Universities' International Summer School in Edinburgh which I could take part in thanks to your most kind help. I had never been to a summer school before so I had no idea what to expect. It surpassed all of my academic experience I had had so far and it proved to be one of the most inspiring and fruitful time of my university studies.

First of all, I have to mention the great organization of the course. Both lectures and seminars were very well balanced between theory and practice. The lecturers were always very enthusiastic about their topic and had a deep insight into the intricacies they presented. Moreover, as the programme was available in advance everyone could prepare questions or ideas connected with the discussed authors. There was always space for questions at the end of the lectures and in case we did not manage to discuss everything, the coffee break was a great opportunity to talk about the ideas in a more informal environment. The following seminars were quite demanding as they were always very intensive. All of the students tried to enjoy the given time of two hours to the maximum to talk about opinions and ideas which were very diverse thanks to the international assemblage. Every day the discussions turned my point of view upside down and I had to rethink a lot of my own opinions on literature in general.

*I cannot forget to mention the great social programme that must have taken a lot of time to organize. The bus tour provided a new perspective on the beautiful city of Edinburgh and the guide talked not only about the general history but also about not so known but the more interesting facts of the visited places. The organizers also managed to choose film adaptations of the discussed books, namely *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *Black Watch*. What enchanted me the most, were the public readings of James Robertson and Alasdair Gray which was a wholly new experience for me. I never imagined that a personal encounter with authors I admire could be so astonishing. The very last evening was a great fun as I experienced the well-known Scottish *ceilidh*. On the other hand, it was also very sad that all of us realized it was our last time together and the end of a wonderful time in our lives.*

Last but not least, the access to the brilliant university library enabled me to find essential materials for my MA thesis and I feel more than ready to start writing it. Six months ago I felt lost because I could not decide which way I should go in my research but thanks to the wonderful guidance of Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D. who introduced me to the Scottish literature and to the summer school I have finally found what interests me the most. I cannot express in words how much I appreciate the help I was given by the SCSSSS Fund. The course was a remarkable and unforgettable experience that I will always treasure.

Yours sincerely

Barbora Jirosova



Events 2012

Thank you all for another wonderful year of SCSSS Fund's events and for your attendance and assistance in 2012.

Last year our events included

- Annual Lecture on Czechoslovakia, The State that Failed, Dr. Mary Heimann, DHT, 25 May 2012, which raised £140.00
- A stall at the Meadows Festival, 2 & 3 June 2012, which raised £280.00
- Annual AGM & Garden Party, 66 St.Alban's Road, 24 June, which raised £723.00
- Garden Party for visiting students, July 2012, 6 Blackett Place
- Children's Club St. Nicholas Party, 8 December 2012

Special thanks to Halla Beloff, Andrew Boyd, Ken Duncan, Peter France, Olga and Tony Franks, Alena Linhartova, Ken MacAskill, Busa Cochrane Muir, Nan Mulder, Marianna Richtarikova, Milada Stehlikova and Gabriela Smith.

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Secretary – Dr. Alena Linhartova
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Lida Paterova
Dr Halla Beloff
Busa Cochrane Muir

Children's Club

Marianna Richtarikova
Milada Stehlikova
Maria Hupkova



SCOTTISH CZECH AND SLOVAK SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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