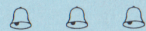


And Ester Žantovská: The course deepened my knowledge of the authors I love. And I got to know new authors too. For example, Alexander McColl Smith gave a wonderful presentation of his work and life in Africa-filled with wit and humour. It was also great to meet and mix with people from all corners of the world who share your love of literature. I will treasure this experience.

I think you can see just how much these students have enjoyed and benefited from the opportunities that you, our members, have given them. And we, the trustees thank each and every one of you for your continuing support.

2005

2004 was a momentous year for both the Czech Republic and Slovakia since these two nations joined the European Union during the year. And we celebrated this in a number of ways – not least because the two republics are instantly more accessible to visitors. But now the time has come to think to the future and here you will find that the trustees are already working on a programme, which will be just as full and varied as in the previous years - both as to the fund raising and the cultural sides.



And finally we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Without you, our members, none of this work could be carried out. We thank you for all your help and look forward to your continued support in 2005.

SCSSSF Newsletter

December 2004

Veselé Vánoce a Vše Nejlepší v Novém Roco
Veselé Vianoce a Všetko Najlepšie v Novom Roku
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all



Prague - Rooftops In Winter

Our fifth year !

2004 has galloped by and here we are at the festive season again! And what a year it has been. Once more we have tried to prepare for you, our members, an interesting and varied programme of events and fund-raising activities.

But all of this activity is directed towards the aim of assisting Czech and Slovak students in their studies at the Scottish Universities Summer School. This year we supported five students: Lucia Hornaková, Markéta Irová and Ester Žantovská from the Czech Republic and Maria Kissová and Luba Kuzmová from Slovakia. Later in this newsletter we shall tell you what they wrote about their experiences in Scotland. In addition to this, we gave assistance to a group of Scottish students when they visited Prague.

Programme

Our annual programme was once again very broad in its range. In April we had our Ceilidh – which was a great success and very well attended, then came the Meadows Festival, the annual Garden Party which this year was celebrated in Haddington – once again we were very lucky with the weather and thankful for the beer and food so kindly donated and prepared for the occasion, and our programme culminated in the Annual Lecture (supported with a grant from the Czech Embassy) at which Dr. Elaine Kelly from the University of Edinburgh gave a fascinating talk on Dvořák and Czech Nationalism. I think you will agree that there was something

for everybody. These events gave you, our members, an opportunity to meet and to celebrate things Czecho- Slovak. But they also helped to provide us with funds. And as with all our previous years, you were generous and our coffers swelled to the extent that we were able to give much more help to our students than we have ever been able to do before. For this we, the trustees, would like to thank you.



Haggling at our stall at the Meadows Festival

Our Scottish students

You will remember that Dr. Mark Cornwall of Dundee University gave our Annual Lecture in 2003? Well, in February 2004 he took

34 students and 10 staff members to Prague braving the winter climate.



Winter in Prague

This trip was the first of its kind for the University of Dundee. They thoroughly enjoyed their weekend filling the time with lectures, walking tours of the Old Town, Castle and Jewish Quarter culminating the visit with a classical music concert. We made sure they enjoyed their visit and that they enjoyed Czech entertainment and tasted traditional Czech fare – pork and dumplings. The trip

was so successful that the University is hoping to conduct a similar trip in 2006. One student described Prague as a “beautiful and mesmerising place” while Dr. Cornwall described the importance of the trip as “opening up the students’ horizons” and “bringing them face to face with the history and culture which they are reading about in Dundee.” The trip, thanks in great measure to you, was a great success.

In another place

On 19th October President Václav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic, came to Edinburgh to receive an honorary doctorate from Napier University in recognition of his involvement in the economic transition from communism to democracy. Thereafter he gave a lecture on ‘Unifications (Monetary and Other) and Current European Problems’ at the new Craiglockhart campus. He also took the opportunity of meeting members of the Czech community in Edinburgh.

Your students

This year we gave assistance to five Czech and Slovak students who attended the Scottish Universities International Summer School. As with previous years, they wrote to us to say how they enjoyed the experience. This is what they had to say:

Lucia Hornakova: The lectures and seminars helped to familiarise me with most important Scottish postmodernist authors. I love reading and interpreting literature and my stay in Edinburgh has greatly contributed to my decision to study British and American literature at postgraduate level and reinforced the idea of teaching literature in the future. I also loved the social and cultural events which included trips around Edinburgh and to Culzean and the sampling of Scottish beers and their production. I would also like to thank a number of your members who personally made welcome while in Scotland. I have such good memories and hope to return to Scotland.

Marketa Irová: I found Edinburgh charming and inspirational. Here I wrote my first English language poems. I had never tried before, but there was something about the city, I was falling in love with its corners, day by day, the people, the shapes and colours, the history, the buildings, castle, sea ... as if I were a part of it. This has never happened to me before. In the seminars, I was anxious to hear more from the lecturers, to rethink the topic and to understand the authors and the text.

Maria Kissová: Listening to the various lectures, I came to understand different ways to present ideas. The lectures were well prepared, and the discussions open-minded and friendly. Each student was expected to prepare a presentation on the book being discussed. The social activity I enjoyed most was the ceilidh. I had decided just to observe the dancing and enjoy the music, but it took me only a few moments before I started to dance. Even when I could not follow the steps properly it was great fun.

Luba Kuzmová: The summer school course involves a lecture and two hours of seminar work every day. The programme focuses on Scottish culture and I enjoyed being able to expand my knowledge of the literature – it helped me organise my thoughts and develop my thinking. I was also able to study Scottish literature in context and experience the Scottish culture and mentality, and nature too.



President Klaus meets our treasurer
and the Czech Consul