

## Aspects of Franconia

The name “Franconian Switzerland” is well known to all our members. After all, it’s part of the reason why we so much enjoy living in this part of Germany with its wooded limestone hills, craggy rock faces, half-timbered buildings, caves and castles, and beer gardens aplenty. It is one of the most beautiful areas of Germany and got its name, I suppose, because visitors from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards considered it to be a “Switzerland” in miniature. The same reasoning presumably lies behind the 100 other places in Germany that make reference to Switzerland, such as the “Holstein Switzerland”, or the “Saxon Switzerland”, or the nearby “Hersbruck Switzerland”.

I must confess that decades ago, when I studied German literature in Britain, little did I suspect that one rather arcane book we had to read, Wackenroder’s “Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders” (“Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar”), would be set in the area of Germany I am presently writing about. This collection of essays written in 1797 by Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and his good friend Ludwig Tieck is, as I have just read in Wikipedia, a *tribute to Renaissance and medieval literature and art, attributing to them a sense of emotion the two authors felt was missing in German Enlightenment thought...The Outpourings have been accorded a status in Germany akin to that of Lyrical Ballads (Wordsworth and Coleridge) in England, i.e. as the first work of the Romantic movement.*

Today, much older and wiser, I feel ashamed that when I first saw the title, “Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar”, I was so dismissive. It is thanks to these writings that this area we fondly call “Die Fränkische Schweiz” became known as one of the most charming and beautiful tourist areas in the whole of Germany. And with the expansion of the rail network in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it became possible to travel by train from Forchheim to Behringersmühle deep in the Fränkische Schweiz.



Many “local” tourists (for example, from Erlangen and Nürnberg) are particularly drawn to the area by the 70 or so family-run breweries still found here. The Fränkische Schweiz has more private breweries than anywhere else in the world, it would seem. Other tourists come, of course, to walk and enjoy the magnificent scenery, to indulge in some healthy rock-climbing or to explore the many caves of this karst landscape.



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