

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

January 2017

Dear Franconians,

Let me, in the name of the Franconian Committee, wish you all a happy, healthy and successful 2017. We keep being told that it's going to be a politically crucial year in many parts of the world – we're stepping into the unknown as it were – so let's hope and pray that common sense prevails in Germany and in those countries that we hold dear and that, come December 2017, we can all say that progress, however modest, has been made to bring together an increasingly polarized world.

One of the main New Year's resolutions for the Franconian Society is pretty straightforward. It is to offer an attractive and wide-ranging programme for everyone, above all a range of activities that will also catch the eye of new and younger members. They, after all, will form the Franconian Society in the decades to come.

To achieve this we need to launch an advertising campaign in those places where English plays a key role - multinational companies, schools and colleges - and to seek out those families with an English-speaking background newly settled in this area. All our present members can help in this, of course, because we all have potential members amongst our friends and acquaintances, even within our own families. It's all a matter of wanting-to, of doing-one's-bit. And it's a resolution that is just as "do-able" as losing a few superfluous kilos or learning to tango!

Most people seem to agree that, on the whole, 2016 went pretty well for the society. Leading up to Christmas we had a well-frequented Dinner Club evening at the highly-recommended new Persian restaurant in Erlangen. Well done, Teresa! The Stammtisch evenings featured an excellent talk (Professor Gossel of IFA fame) on Brexit and the current state of play (in November, but I can assure you that little has changed since then.), while in December we enjoyed a brilliant Irish music evening, prompting several people to say that we need more evenings of that ilk (I think the "singalong" element went down very well). In all events many thanks go to Sheila and Horst Gutknecht for organizing the musical side of things and Valerie and Karen for providing nutritious food. I don't want to forget Bridget and her loyal helpers, of course, who raised a considerable amount of money at their two Franconian Society bazaars, all of the money raised going to charitable causes. And then there was the traditional Potluck Supper with its culinary delights, seasonal singing and games with several unwitting participants being dressed up as Christmas trees.

So now it's time to contemplate 2017, ever hopeful that it will match or even outdo what we achieved last year. Currently I'm thinking about our two-day trip to Thuringia in the early autumn. This year we'll be hearing a great deal about Martin Luther and the Reformation (the 95 theses were "posted" in Wittenberg in 1517) and it seems appropriate to head eastward, into Thuringia, to visit some of the famous towns and cities associated with Luther – like the just-mentioned Wittenberg, or Erfurt where he took his vows to be an Augustinian monk, or Eisenach where, "disguised" as "Junker Jörg", he translated the New Testament into German (that, of course, is a gross simplification as at that time there was no standard German. Wouldn't a talk on how modern German came about be a good idea?).

Another outing we are planning is down to Ingolstadt to see its very interesting Medical Museum. And I am sure we can fit in another all-day trip before the end of July. Separate walks are planned for those with or without dicky knees, there will be many more dinner club events, and Stammtisch talks and our charity work will continue unabated. You see, despite all the political uncertainty around the world, the Franconian Society shines on as a beacon of good sense!

Enjoy your year and recruit a new member (or two)! I'll ask the committee to think up an appropriate award.

Best wishes again to you all,

Frank