

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

March 2017

Dear Franconians,

As you probably know, the astronomical spring begins on March 20th, the date of the equinox. By the meteorological calendar, however, it starts on March 1st, so, by the time you get to read this, something called spring will have arrived. I can't, but perhaps you can remember March 1st, 2005, when the temperature near Ulm plunged to minus 28 degrees. And it was also pretty chilly a year ago on March 1st, 2007. Temperatures dipped to minus figures and it snowed on the snowdrops, or were they daffodils by then? The truth is that early March can be extremely unpredictable. It can snow, hail and sleet, be absolutely brass monkeys, but also wonderfully warm, with temperatures over 20 degrees, the beer gardens open, the street cafes serving ice-cream and the grass of the Schlossgarten covered in sun-worshippers. March, the first month of spring, can indeed be a bit of everything. But that's nothing new. Even Charles Dickens in his novel "Great Expectations" said so: *"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade."*

Now on the subject of Great Expectations, by which I don't mean Brexit or Donald Trump as both are fairly inscrutable, you and the Franconian Society have plenty of them. And it's safe to say that the last couple of months have seen a good number realized. A small but enthusiastic group took a regional train to Schweinfurt to enjoy the "lure" of the exotic in some late 19th century painting, we learnt even more about Charles IV at the GNM in Nuremberg, and at our February Stammtisch we resolved not to come into conflict with the law. Karen Christenson enlightened us comprehensively on the Nuremberg Law Courts, the War Trials, and the joys and occasional tribulations of being a modern interpreter. The winter month of January is always good for a Card and Games evening, which was enjoyed by a dedicated following, but, sadly, our Dinner with a Difference let us down. The good news, it's been rescheduled for a warmer month later this year. We also had a very good Dinner Club Evening in a famous fish restaurant in Kosbach.

But what are the Great Expectations for the rest of the year? Well, as I said at the beginning, by March 1st we will have reached the spring and will be looking forward to a walk or two. The first is scheduled for April 23rd through the Aischgrund, where we should see all manner of waterfowl and the odd heron. Dinner club events abound, once a month featuring different cuisines. On March 28th, we will be the guests of the Fraunhofer Institut in Tennenlohe to hear about staying fitter longer, and on April 9th we have a tour of the famous Nuremberg Zoo to look forward to. On the 27th May we'll take a trip to Ingolstadt to visit the fascinating Medical History Museum and enjoy the scent of lavender. We have been invited by the museum's director, a very special privilege, who will show us the medicinal herb garden and some of the museum's most interesting exhibits. As for excursions, on July 29th we'll be heading for Coburg for a one-day visit, while our two-day excursion this year will take us to Luther country, to Eisenach and the beautiful Schmalkalden, on the weekend of the 14th and 15th October. It's Luther Year, remember. The First Fridays of the month (our Stammtisch Evenings) also deserve mention, with talks on Tanzania (March) and St. Petersburg (May) as well as the much appreciated Pub Quiz evening in April. And every now and again we have special events such as the Erlanger Frühling, for example on April 2nd, or the Rädli (May 1st) at the Turnerbund where your help will be much appreciated.

I hope this listing of upcoming events will cheer you up through the uncertainties of spring, and perhaps you could lend your Newsletter to a friend in the hope of inspiring a new face to come and join us. If all goes well, we will be redesigning our Facebook page as well as our website in the near future, other tools to attract and keep new members.

Spring, whether too cool or too warm, or just as it should be, is that time of year we really look forward to, simply because it is the season of new life, fresh colours, renewed energy. A season of hope and great expectations.

Frank Gillard