

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

January 2019

Dear Franconians,

Irrespective of your own personal philosophies, I do hope that you all had a wonderful Christmas, custom-made to your innermost yearnings. Equally, I do hope that the coming year will look upon us all kindly; but that is a hope, not a demand. I know that some of you have burdens to bear that are not easy, that are “challenging” as we tend to say in modern English. By being a member of this society you will surely experience empathy from others, understanding and support. That is always something rather special.

In my Christmas post I receive many thank-you letters from people and organizations that we have supported throughout the year. One letter from the Shanti Leprahilfe Dortmund e.V. began with the well-known quote from Margaret Mead, the American social anthropologist:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

My “January President’s Letter” is a very special one. It’s an opportunity to thank you all for being such committed members, some more than others, of course, but that is in the nature of things. I had Christmas Greetings from a new member who hasn’t been once since she joined, so busy has she been with other commitments, but she promised to “do something about it!” That promise cheered me up no end. Just as I felt so pleased that more and more of you got down to crafting and creating brilliant objects for our various bazaars, the proceeds of which go into our charity work. A number of names come to mind immediately, but allow me to mention just two, Hanne Schmidt and Uschi Stamminger, who, apart from “making things”, have also done so much of the organizational work and have certainly been an inspiration to others.

And what about all the effort so many of you put into ensuring that our “Christmas Potluck” was such a success, and not just in culinary terms. I’m thinking especially of the organizers and the “doers”, the performers, of everyone who played a role, no matter how modest.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our committee members for all their excellent work. They are essential for the good management of our society, for all the planning decisions, great and small. Without certain members there would be no Newsletter, without others no Sunshine Committee. Others do wonderful work organizing excursions, others work tirelessly organizing bazaars. One worthy member looks after the Dinner Club gatherings, another is excellent at pub quizzes. And there’s the treasurer - a vital person in any society. And there’s our ever helpful secretary, Valerie. And, of course, there’s Bridget and Ingeborg, to whom we owe so much. Some of those mentioned are also members of the sub-committee working on the anniversary dinner scheduled for 18th May. I have every reason to be grateful for such a magnificent team – as in fact we all do.

And the January Letter also allows me to mention again all those we have lost in the past year: Paul, our first President, former committee members, as well as other active and much missed members. In a quiet moment, think of them all and be thankful for having known them.

In Newsletters I always look back over recent events to keep people who couldn’t come informed about how they went. Our Christmas Potluck with 51 people attending was a notable success, not just my opinion but one corroborated by others. The food was exceptional, the singing with Eileen, Sheila and George (and Becky on the ivories) wonderful, and the games and quiz (Yvonne and Valerie) mind-boggling (in the nicest possible way). And hats off to Teresa, who managed the whole event with such great skill.

Teresa, as you probably know, is the one behind the Dinner Club events and she has told me that 11 members came to the Carpaccio restaurant in November, a very good number for this time of year. Well done, again, to her.

The November Stammtisch reflected a long-standing request that we have the occasional evening of relaxed singing, what some might describe as a “sing-along”. Since I lack the necessary vocal chords, I tend to creep into the corner and leave the actual singing to others (that way everyone benefits). This year George volunteered to lead us in song. As, incidentally, he did for the Sunday gathering to remember Eli Altman, our

long-standing member who passed away on 5th September. So many thanks must therefore go to George for his contribution on both occasions.

The December Stammtisch earned a great deal of praise. It featured Irish literature (texts and poetry) and was choreographed very professionally by our two Northern Irish ladies, Sheila and Valerie. I would love to see a repeat of this type of evening. What about an "English" evening of poetry and the like?

My walk through the Johannes cemetery was a bitterly cold affair and, sadly, relatively few people could come along. A warm spring day would have been better, obviously, but my thanks to all of you who did join me.

The months ahead will see a number of events you shouldn't miss, for example the talk on Donald Trump given by Professor Gossel of the Institut für Fremdsprachen und Auslandskunde in Erlangen. He talked so clearly on Brexit a while ago and we are looking forward to hearing him again.

Before I sign off, may I mention the Deutsch-Indische Gesellschaft in Nuremberg, who so kindly invited me and Bridget to their colourful and enchanting Diwali festival of lights in early November. If you would like to know more about their Society, you'll find a link on our website. As you know, we have a number of Indian members in our Society, which is a very pleasing state of affairs for any outward-looking organization.

So, to finish, let me say once again that we are so pleased to have you as Franconian Society members and I wish you all a good and healthy New Year.

Frank Gillard