

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

February 2020

Dear Franconians

My last letter took us up to the New Year, with lots of hectic pre-Christmas activity to report on. This one is about the quietest two months of the year. The first Stammtisch on January 10th – the now traditional card and games evening – found a smallish number of aficionados determined to outdo each other at whist. It certainly wasn't poker. I was sat at a safe distance engaged in a civilized scrabble-like game perfect for those who want to quietly expand their English vocabulary. And, at the end of it all, prizes were handed out by our marvellous organizer-in-chief Becky. With many others I found myself the proud recipient of a modest little amaryllis that is now, or should I say, still blooming on a window shelf. So, my thanks go to Becky and those others involved in bringing along games to play (like Renate Newman) and purchasing appreciated presents.

The second Stammtisch, a literary evening, was on 7th February. Unfortunately, I couldn't attend, but word quickly got back to me that it was a huge success. Bridget and Yvonne, ably supported by George's powerful vocal cords, entertained a very good turnout of some 40 members. Yvonne presented the lives and a taste of the work of the Bronte sisters, those three stalwarts of 19th-century literature, while Bridget focussed on the theme of love from the 16th to the 20th century. And, because it was her birthday, all present joined in a stirring rendition of Happy Birthday. It does seem to be the case that literature evenings are well received by our members so I am sure that committee members will bear this in mind as soon as they put their minds to planning the rest of the year, and indeed 2021. We could have an evening devoted to "modern" poetry, which tends to baffle or even irritate a good many people - a bit like minimalist art or abstract painting might do. In turn, the poetry of the USA might be another appealing follow-up.

Visits to museums, houses and gardens aren't always the best idea in the colder and often wet winter months. Nonetheless, a group of twelve Franconians did visit Erlangen's municipal museum to view the exhibition *Barrieresprung (AccessAllAreas)* on 31st January and came away with a much better understanding of what it means to be a handicapped person in a society that has so many, sometimes quite unintended, barriers to integration and accessibility. The visit was initiated and organized by our secretary, Valerie, who teaches English at the Erlangen Zentrum für Selbstbestimmtes Leben Behinderter e.V., a local initiative that does so much useful work for the handicapped. If you are curious about the centre, please approach Valerie as I'm sure she'd love to tell you more about its objectives and achievements.

The winter days aren't particularly suitable for those of us who enjoy visiting restaurants yet feel hesitant about the long dark evenings. To counter this, Teresa our chief organizer of Dinner Club events, has come up with an excellent idea, the "Dinner Club at Midday". On Thursday, 23rd January, a large group of us met for lunch at "Wabane" in the Henkestrasse. If you recall, we visited the technical workshops of "wabe e.V.", close to Eltersdorf, aimed at assisting people who have certain medical issues. Another aspect of their work is running a very reasonably priced restaurant near the centre of town, where anyone can drop in for lunch and see for themselves what sensible, practical work they do.

On Sunday, 16th February, another event of this type took place. Almost twenty of us went to the Erlanger Teehaus for a very filling brunch. We had a room to ourselves and had a thoroughly good meal and chat, and everyone seemed very pleased. Well done Theresa!

So, the year has begun, and winter has probably had enough of tormenting us with rain and low temperatures. Of course, I am still hoping for a good covering of snow, which, as I write this, still hasn't occurred, but it will

soon be the time for daffodils and tulips. The sap will soon be rising, as they say, in the parks and woods, in our gardens, even in us. Bring it on, is all I can say, let's all be reinvigorated and full of renewed joie-de-vivre. Much of our current year has already been planned but there remain occasional spaces for excursions, outings and visits, so if you have any interesting ideas, let your committee members know. Don't forget, of course, that our next Stammtisch will be on 3rd April and will feature two of our relatively new members, Friedrich Graef and Karin Berger-Graef telling us about their colourful experiences on Hawaii. Something to look forward to!

And, last but not least, spring is also the time when we hold our Annual General Meeting, a very important one this year as it is election time again. I shall be writing to you shortly with all the information you require should you be interested in playing a more active role in our society. Please come along, even if there is no programme as such. It's a great opportunity to tell the committee what it is doing wrong, or even getting right.

And one final thought. Tonight, I went along to the city hall for the opening of the exhibition „...plötzlich gestorben – NS-Rassenhygiene 1933-1945“. It complements – in a very disturbing way – the exhibition in the municipal museum that I described at the beginning of this letter and the long article I wrote some months ago about the HuPfla in Erlangen. Dinah Radtke spoke at the beginning of the necessity never to forget the atrocities of the past carried out in our own city against the defenceless handicapped. The exhibition is thought-provoking. It continues until March 13th and you'll find it in the foyer of the city hall.

Wishing you all some spring sunshine and not too many “winds and showers”.

Frank