

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

January 2020

Dear Franconians,

A couple of days ago Valerie, our secretary, sent out her January email. It started with a New Year's Resolution, which I thought was so inspiring to be worth repeating. Here it is:

Each New Year, we have before us a brand-new book containing 365 blank pages. Let us fill them with the forgotten things from last year - the words we forgot to say, the love we forgot to show, and the charity we forgot to offer. (Peggy Toney Horton)

And with these words in mind you can forget all the other resolutions you might have made (and have probably already broken) about eating less red meat, eating less altogether, wearing your Fitbit watch to encourage those ten thousand paces a day, leaving the car in the garage and walking into town. Of course, some resolutions can be much shorter and just as effective – like Snoopy's here:



Yes, look up and be optimistic. If your nose is glued to the ground, you won't see all the good things in life. You won't even see where you're going and all the nice people around you.

Having said all that, I do hope you all had a relatively relaxing Christmas and managed to slide into 2020 without too many bumps or bruises. And I trust you are looking forward to another Franconian Society year, with some new faces in our midst to join the wise ones already there. Remember that our Annual General Meeting takes place on 22nd April and that, as ever, we would be interested in hearing from anyone who wants to sit on our committee. If it transpires that a couple of present committee members step down for whatever reason, then my general enquiry assumes a certain urgency! We meet every two months at the Turnerbund and aim to provide an attractive programme for our Society. That is a very rewarding task.

And what was on offer in our programme of the last two months? On 8th November, Mairi and Valerie presented an appealing retrospective on the society's trip to St. Petersburg (expertly organized by Sieghard). It was a very well attended evening and many were probably regretting that they hadn't gone along themselves.

Well attended, too, was the Dinner Club gathering in Römning, a traditional Erlangen restaurant which specializes in Bohemian dishes. In fact, I have to say that the Dinner Club gatherings (the vast majority organized by Teresa) have been going from strength to strength this year. I hope this continues.

The end of last year also found a few of us visiting the Ludwig Erhard Museum in Fürth – those who came seemed to enjoy this lively introduction to the life of Ludwig Erhard and to Germany's famous post-war "Economic Miracle". And a sizeable number also came along a few days later to Cadolzburg castle, which has become a new "must-place-to-visit" in central Franconia. After the city of Nuremberg managed to rid itself of the hated "Burggrafen" (the Burgraves) who controlled part of the city's castle until the early 15th century, the Zollern (later Hohenzollern dynasty) withdrew to their stronghold in Cadolzburg, a fortress that in 1945 was destroyed by the American troops sweeping through Germany. Now rebuilt and re-invented as a visually appealing museum, it has become a popular destination for visitors from near and far.

The highlight of December was, of course, our extremely enjoyable and successful "Christmas Potluck Dinner". The Turnerbund was full to almost bursting, the international cuisine was fantastic, and the backdrop – Yvonne's quiz, Sieghard's Christmas tale, and all the singing – superb. Becky tinkled the ivories in her usual competent way and the performers (Laura Baxter, George Mills and Andrew Stockmann) were given much applause. And I don't want to forget the table with all the Christmas gifts provided by our handicrafts' group. Here I should mention Uschi, Hanne, Marie-Luise, Mairi and Jeanette, who meet regularly throughout the year and display so much creativity and technical skill creating objects for their two bazaars. I'm sure everyone realizes that the considerable amount of money they make goes into the Franconian Society charity pot. Well done to every one of you. And, once again, thank you to everyone involved in the Potluck dinner generally – organizers, performers, table decorators etc. etc. – who made it such a great evening.

At the beginning of the evening I suggested that Bridget give us a summary of the Christmas bazaars that she has been organizing at the Hugenottenplatz in Erlangen to raise money for the Kinderklinik. This year, would you believe it, the sum of 5,034 euros was taken in! These bazaars are, of course, quite separate from the official Christmas market next to the Schloss and have now been running for a staggering 21 years. She and her helpers, very many of them members of the Franconian Society, not only produced the many items on sale but also excelled themselves as market vendors. Well done!

The end of the year is also the time to remember those no longer with us, missing faces at our Potluck Dinner, for example. Alan Hay, who was always such an active and cheerful figure in our society, Dr Elisabeth Motschmann, who came for as long as she could despite her growing illness, and Irmgard Castelhun who was so instrumental in developing the Hemalata orphanages and the adjacent workshops.

Older age and growing infirmity are a feature of many societies like ours and I sometimes wonder whether we should be doing more to help those who can't always attend our meetings. Several of you, I know, go out of your way to do this, but perhaps there are more people than I realize who need this kind of assistance (and companionship). We should discuss this more. After all, our programme has more than enough variety to whet people's appetites.

Yes, perhaps this should also be one of our Resolutions for the New Year, one that we can keep up for the next twelve months and beyond. So, let me close by wishing you all every happiness, oodles of good health, and many memorable, enjoyable encounters at our society throughout the coming decade. Are the “Twenties” going to roar again? Let’s hope so in the most positive sense possible.

Frank Gillard