

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

September 2020

Dear Franconians,

My wife and I returned from England just a few days ago, after a short trip to Cambridge to attend our daughter's wedding. As you know, this hasn't been a good year for festivities, but, somehow, we consider ourselves extremely fortunate. And why? With the spike in corona cases in Spain, the UK government hastily decreed that holiday makers returning from Spain to Britain would have to go into quarantine for two weeks. This ruling was then applied to Belgium. In these difficult times flexibility is required, so I decided not to take my usual route to Calais via the Belgian cities of Brussels, Ghent and Bruges, but to head due west and then to join the motorway that goes from Metz all the way north to Calais. And how wonderful it was driving along a relatively empty French autoroute (at a price of course – these are toll roads). This one takes you past many of the battlefields of the First World War – Verdun, the Somme, Vimy Ridge, and even Cambrai, where the first tank battle of the Great War took place, and where we decided to spend the night, before the final push to Calais, staying in the lovely little Château de la Motte Fénelon. It was built in 1850, so it might not be what you expect when you say "château", but it was full of antiques and charm. And it was inexpensive! And I'm not getting a backhander for mentioning it.

Here is a British tank that came a cropper in 1917 at the battle of Cambrai.



The next day we drove the relatively short distance from Cambrai to Calais and boarded our rather empty ferry. We had already filled out our on-line "UK Government Public Health Passenger Locator Form" and set off across the Channel to Dover, somewhat fearful that at some point we might encounter a stray virus. The death toll in Britain from Covid 19 has been extremely high (compared to Germany's figures, for example), but wherever we went we found people taking the pandemic seriously, wearing masks in shops and trying to follow social distancing measures. Outside Cambridge registry office,

where only seven people could enter, there were painted markings on the ground showing where you had to stand and wait.



Nonetheless, when we returned to Germany, we felt it would be wise to have ourselves tested, and now I have it, in black and white, we were – at least on 19.08.2020 – corona-free. The test was done with a throat swab, very efficiently on the south side of the railway station in Nuremberg, at no cost, and the results were emailed to us the following day.

While I was away at the beginning of August, our first gathering took place at the Turnerbund. I heard that it was very successful in that 23 members came along and had pleasant chats “under the Oak Tree”. I know that illness prevented Bridget and Ingeborg from attending, but Valerie kindly kept an eye on the event and reported back to me. Let’s hope that Germany is spared a second wave of Covid 19 infections and that there won’t be another lockdown, allowing for a second gathering of this sort at the beginning of September. It is so important for people to get out and to socialize again, even with a few restrictions still in place. After all, being cooped up at home is usually considered somewhat detrimental to a person’s mental wellbeing. At the same time, we must bear in mind the guidelines for our meetings and the necessity to register if you wish to come. If too many people appear, then those who have not registered might be turned away. That would be very regrettable, but the limits set by the Turnerbund have to be respected.

While in Britain I heard of the death of our honorary member Syd(ney) Bailey, who passed away peacefully on July 31st, 2020, aged 98. Older members will have known him and have fond memories of a much-loved character from Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent. Ingeborg has kindly written to his family.

To conclude, let me remind you of our Annual General Meeting. We have scheduled it for September 23rd, starting at 6pm at the Turnerbund. I do hope very many will attend, but in these uncertain times there is a possibility that the Turnerbund might restrict the number of members attending. You will, of course, be informed ahead of time, should this be the case.

And, of course, I do hope that you are all as covid-free as I am at the moment and looking forward to a true resumption of our activities.

God willing, it won’t be too long.

Frank Gillard