

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

September 2021

Dear Franconians,

It's summer holiday time again, if that concept is still valid. Time to hanker for a foreign clime, a distant shore. But hang on. Who needs an anxiety-laden holiday in a country where infection rates are still high or even rising, where a new and nasty variant might be lurking on the beach front (at least we are learning the Greek alphabet with new vigour)? Perhaps a "staycation" is the wiser choice in these nasty times? Bring on the capacious wicker beach chairs we know from Sylt or the Baltic.



Nonetheless, there are some of us who feel that a summer holiday is less about sun, sand and stately homes and more to do with visiting relatives and friends. However, the challenge of reaching one's destination in a sane state and without too many additional expenses remains considerable. It seems that the EU and the UK have fallen in love with traffic lights, green, amber and red. For a short while Boris Johnson's government even came up with an "amber plus" label for France. Was this part of the tit-for-tat battle with Monsieur Macron, "Jupiter", or L'Empereur, as the French occasionally call him?



The fear of a lengthy quarantine explains why I opted for a ferry crossing from the Hook of Holland to Harwich (East Anglia), only to learn a day after booking my sailing that France had suddenly been elevated to "green" status. Ah well, a Covid test is necessary whatever. And by the beginning of September, I should be back in Franconia, looking forward to celebrating Ingeborg's long-awaited 100th birthday on the 10th. Details will be emerging as soon as there is clarity about Covid regulations. Remember she turns 100 on the 8th of that month.

I have been amazed at the number of people who have recently gathered at our “Under the Oak Tree” sessions (26 in July, 39 in August). It must mean that many of you are really missing the company of others. I hope, of course, that we can soon resume our other activities, as we did on the 18th July, when 14 of us met in Kraftshof for a pleasant walk through the woods outside of the village. We passed by the famous “Irrhain”, the home of the “Pegnesischer Blumenorden e.V.”, now Germany’s oldest literary society. Dating back to the Baroque period, it was founded in 1644 and addressed the overzealous use of French vocabulary in German. Now, of course, we need a society to warn against the overuse of the English language in modern German. Our modest hike, though, was devoted more to keeping our feet dry as we negotiated the various puddles left by the heavy rains of mid-July. I think a healthy day was enjoyed by one and all, so perhaps a late summer walk would be in order.

In case you are curious about our programme in the coming months, I can reveal that we have a number of highlights in the starting blocks. Dr Haberkamm has promised to present his latest book ('Smallest Franconian villages'), Rakhee Mukerjee is looking forward to introducing the Bahnhofsmision in Erlangen, while Karin Berger-Graef, together with her husband Friedrich Graef, have long prepared their talk on Hawaii. And then there is Yvonne’s Pub Quiz and a resumption of Dinner Club gatherings, Covid permitting.

I wonder whether you noticed that one of our members, Dieter Castelhun, recently received the Bundesverdienstkreuz am Band.



Dieter Castelhun standing with the Regierungspräsidentin (District President) of Upper Franconia, Heidrun Piwernetz

Dieter Castelhun from Langensendelbach was awarded this honour for his many years of work, together with his late wife, for disadvantaged children in India. It all began over 40 years ago when the Lutheran congregation in Baiersdorf became partners of the Protestant Church of South India, which was running orphanages for up to 400 slum children, many of them “Dalits” (Dalits, also known as "Untouchables", are members of the lowest social group in the Hindu caste system). This worthy cause became known as the Hemalata project. If you are interested in learning more about this work, please contact us and I’m sure we can put you into contact with Dieter Castelhun.

Well, that's all from me for the time being. Please enjoy your summer, stay safe and may the early autumn prove to be the blessing we richly deserve.

Frank Gillard