

Message from the Chairman

Let me begin by offering you my best wishes for 2021. I'm sure that you are also hoping that this year will provide us with the opportunity gradually to return to enjoy many of the things that we have been missing in recent months. As Spring approaches, it is sobering to realise that we are nearing the anniversary of the first lockdown, still with a worrying situation in terms of the spread of Corona Virus nationally, and beyond.

As many of you will know from family, friends and colleagues, the situation in Austria is also regarded as serious, although the incidence of the virus is not as high as in the United Kingdom. Austria has been in lockdown throughout January, and requirements for the wearing of high-grade masks are now in place in shops and on public transport. Although some ski resorts have stayed open, hotels and restaurants remain closed at least until the beginning of March. Since 22 December flights from the UK have not been allowed to land in Austria. It does feel strange to be cut off from Austria in this way: one can only hope that by the summer, the current restrictions will be behind us.

For those who have good internet access, and enjoy taking part in activities online, a number of organisations have been providing programmes to keep us entertained and informed. Among these, the Austrian Cultural Forum in London has been a leading light. In this issue of our Newsletter you will find an article by the Director of the Cultural Forum, Waltraud Dennhardt-Herzog who, with her team, has continued to offer a stimulating programme of films, concerts and talks – food for the soul for those of us seeking ways of remaining connected with the Austria we love. The Forum's four-part series, Postcards from Vienna (<https://www.acflondon.org/events/postcards-from-vienna/>), which begins in February, is something that many Anglo-Austrian Society members should enjoy. Do check it out!

It has been good to know that some members of the established Stammtische, which normally gather in person for a sociable get-together, have managed to chat online during the past months. So the Society is now planning to expand this kind of contact on a regular basis – particularly for those members who are not able to take part in one of the regional Stammtische but open to any member who would like to join in. In February we are launching our Virtual Stammtisch, which I will be hosting on Zoom (the video conferencing platform) once a month. Members from across the UK – and beyond - have indicated that they are interested in taking part. If you have given the Society your email address, you should already have received a letter, inviting you to do so. If you did not receive a letter, and would like to know more, please send me an e-mail message (chairman@angloaustrian.org.uk)

The Zoom sessions will be short, but they should be fun. We want them to have a definite Austrian flavour. I'm sure that you can help with this, so I look forward to seeing some of you then.

Best wishes Dame Janet Ritterman - Chairman

Spring Edition 2021

Some of our Stammtische have written to the Editor and here are their contributions.

Ann and Roger Blishen, organisers of the Southern Stammtisch, have sent in the poem below and a photo of knitted dolls, shown on the front page

It is many months now since our “Southern Stammtisch” was able to meet. Last year we joined in a virtual Anglo Austrian A.G.M. on Zoom. It went well but it is just not the same as meeting everyone in person. We manage to keep in touch with our members by e-mail and telephone, but will wait until we can meet again to catch up with all their news. Two of our Members have property in Spain and are still there, and another couple are living in Austria at the moment. Roger being a Farnham Town Councillor and A Waverley Borough Councillor has hours of work every day. He has many Council Zoom Meetings that require him to be formally attired, but only on the top half. We are really looking forward to restarting our Stammtisch Meetings, which are always very well attended and great fun.

Christmas 2020

Another Christmas comes around
But very different we have found,
No friends and family to be near
With glasses full of Christmas Cheer.

No happy sound of Children playing
But we'll listen to what the Queen is saying.
We will of course enjoy our day
Spent with each other, as is our way.

We're fortunate that we're still here
And to Covid rules we will adhere .
A Virus jab is on its way
And we look forward to the day
When family's can meet again
And normal life will once more reign.

But as for now we must agree
That safety is priority.
And we look forward to next year
When Friends and Family can be near.

Helga Stelzhammer of the London Stammtidch writes:

Zoom Meetings the new Norm

Since the onset of the pandemic in 2020 and the continued lockdown restrictions I have been attending and hosting a range of Zoom meetings giving me the chance to stay in social contact with family & friends around the world. Following some technical training from the University of the Third Age, my U3A Beginners German Group went on line in March 2020 allowing the majority of the participants to complete the course before Christmas. London Stammtisch Zoom meetings & my Rotary Club meetings started in July 2020, and U3A Geology & Bridge meetings followed in December 2020. More recently, even my golf club has turned to Zoom during lockdown to enable award ceremonies and our AGM to take place online. But of course we're all itching for restrictions to be lifted so we can get back on the course and to regular meetings in Spring - fingers crossed!

Christine Gadsby of the Oxford Stammtisch is also planning a Zoom Stammtisch with the members in the Oxford area and details will follow shortly.

Das Brauchtum im Frühling

Bräuche sind Teil der österreichischen Kultur – sie werden gebraucht – und bringen Rituale in den Alltag und einen wiederkehrenden Ablauf von Zeremonien. Die Industrialisierung des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts brachte uns den Übergang von einer vorwiegend durch die Landwirtschaft geprägten Gemeinschaft zu einer individuellen städtischen Gesellschaft.

Das Brauchtumsjahr beginnt mit Feuerwerk und Neujahrskonzert, die Pummerin läutet und Orakel und Glücksbringer begleiten den Jahreswechsel.

Wie die Monatsnamen so stammen viele Neujahrbräuche aus der Antike und in jedem Bundesland werden die Bräuche anders gefeiert.

Sigmund Freud schrieb in einer seiner Analysen ‘Totem und Tabu’: “Ein Fest ist ein gestatteteter, vielmehr ein gebotener Exzess, ein feierlicher Durchbruch eines Gebotes.”

Der 2. Februar galt früher als Ende der Weihnachtszeit und wird als Lichtmess (Candlemas) gefeiert. Es ist der Beginn des Bauernjahres und war der wichtigste Tag für Knechte und Mägde. Maria Lichtmess war für die Dienstboten ein Feiertag, sie bekamen ihren Lohn und es wurde vom Bauern entschieden, ob sie weiterhin auf dem Hof arbeiten dürfen oder sich eine neue Stelle suchen müssen.

Es gab viele Bauern- und Wetterregeln zu Lichtmess und in den USA ist es der Murmeltiertag (groundhog day).

Im Jänner und Februar sind wir mitten im Fasching und wie lange diese Zeit dauert hängt vom Osterdatum ab. Der Höhepunkt der närrischen drei Tage ist der Faschingsdienstag. Fasching wird auch Karneval genannt und das Wort kommt von “carne levale” und wurde im Vulgärlatein mit “Fleisch wegnehmen” übersetzt. Dem Fasching folgt die Fastenzeit, die Vorbereitungszeit der Christen auf das höchste Fest im Jahr – Ostern.

Traditionelle Bräuche im März haben mit dem Wechsel der Jahreszeiten zu tun und das Kirchenjahr prägt den Festzyklus. Das Osterfest charakterisiert das Frühjahr und im April beginnen die Frühlingsfeste. Das erste Wiener Stadtfest besteht seit 29. April 1978, als Bekenntnis zur Lebensfreude und Einladung an alle Wiener und Besucher.



Der Wonnemonat Mai steht im Zeichen des Maibaums und des Arbeiterfestes. Pfingsten und Fronleichnam erfreuen die Bevölkerung auch durch verlängerte Wochenende.

“Man soll die Feste feiern, wie sie fallen” ist ein Spruch den wir alle beherzigen sollen. Viele Details über die regionalen Brauchtumskalender findet man auf den jeweiligen Internetseiten der Bundesländer und bei www.austria.info

Springtime in Britain

This great and unique British Institution, the National Trust, has been a blessing for so many of us in these difficult times. In England the gardens, parks and countryside of the Trust have remained open for local people to exercise. In Spring, we hope, its wonderful houses, parks and gardens will be open to all visitors and will come to life again and provide us with many places to visit and enjoy. It will depend when the lockdown rules will be reviewed by the government and visiting these places will be possible again.

One of the most beautiful parts of Britain is Dorset, the county of the novelist Thomas Hardy. Even though you may not have read a line of the books he wrote, the “Wessex“ described in his novels and poems is worth visiting, especially that part of it where he lived for most of his life.

It is here in ‘Hardy Country’, far from the madding crowd, where you can find a piece of England relatively untouched by passing time and often ignored by motorists heading for the West Country, which they inevitably identify with Devon and Cornwall.

Dorchester is a good starting point for exploring Dorset. Look inside the Dorset County Museum in the High Street and enjoy the wonderful collection of fossils from the Jurassic Coast. This bustling county town is within easy reach of such hidden treasure as Kingston Lacy, with its 8500 acres of estate or just south of the town the Maumbury Rings, the remains of the largest Roman amphitheatre in Britain. A 1000 years of history is found in Corfe Castle, another great site of the National Trust. Built by William the Conqueror its ruins tower over the village of Corfe.



Hardy's Cottage in Higher Bockhampton is a very busy place for visitors most of the year. Hardy wrote some of his early works there. It was built by his great-grandfather from cob (a mixture of sandy sub-soil and clay) and thatch.

Please check the website of the National Trust for visiting information in the coming Spring.

Dear members of the Anglo-Austrian Society,

Although 2021 might not have started the way we were hoping for, the ACF London is optimistically looking ahead to a year full of cultural activity with new collaborations, insightful discussions and entertaining events - be it online or face-to-face.

I am particularly pleased to announce that this year we are celebrating our sixty-fifth anniversary. On 26 February 1956 the Austrian Cultural Forum (formerly Austrian Institute) first opened its doors to the public and from then has continued to grow and evolve through fast-paced cultural change. Throughout our history, the Anglo-Austrian Society has been an important partner in many different aspects, most importantly sharing the mutual aim of strengthening Austro-British relations in public and cultural life.

By promoting social and cultural exchange between the UK and Austria, many audiences have been able to envelop and enjoy the eclectic variety of Austrian culture through both our combined work.

Whilst due to the current circumstances, it is still not possible for us to reconnect in person, the ACF London takes this as an opportunity to find new ways of engaging and producing cultural work to share. Now is a unique moment for the creative community to develop and explore new forms, something we actively encourage.

This year the ACF London will engage with the theme of Catharsis and Kairos. We can regard the current Covid-19 pandemic as a time to reflect on, and question our relationship with the environment, society, economy and culture (Catharsis), and an opportune moment for action (Kairos). The idea that artists should seize this moment/Kairos and use it to adapt to, and create new perspectives and opportunities.

As a topic also commonly found throughout the entirety of music history, we believe that the arts can shed light on finding harmony and resolution in times of dissonance and fracture.

In 2021 we invite you to join us and explore a diverse cultural programme, where we aspire to connect, inform and inspire whilst offering comfort and distraction in these turbulent times.

Together with the Anglo-Austrian Society, we look forward to supporting and embracing the works of creative, innovative and thought-provoking projects.

I look forward to the moment we can meet in person again, but until that time, please stay safe and healthy!

Yours sincerely,

Waltraud Dennhardt-Herzog – Director



News from Austria:

At the moment lockdown is in effect in Austria. Tourism and leisure travel are not possible. For up-to-date visitors information and entry regulations, please contact the Austrian Embassy. You find the website address on the back page.

Here is a brief summary of the measures that are currently in effect:

- Hotels are closed to leisure travellers/tourists. Only essential travel for business that cannot be delayed is permitted
- Restaurants and bars can only offer takeout/delivery services. Dining is not permitted and FFP2 masks (enhanced surgical masks) are required when picking up food or on public transport
- A landing ban for flights from the UK, South Africa and Brazil is in effect
- Only essential shops are open
- Events such as concerts, plays, exhibitions etc are cancelled
- Theatres, museums, cinemas, gyms, swimming pools, zoos, amusements parks and most other culture and leisure facilities are closed
- Cable car and ski areas have been reopend, BUT SKIING IS ONLY POSSIBLE FOR LOCALS
- You are required to stay at home and only leave the house for essential reasons
- A minimum of 2 m social distancing applies to people from other households

* News Roundup *

The Gustav Mahler Society UK was involved in a joint project with the pianist Dr Carson Becke, who has released a video recital featuring Caitlin Hulcup and our former Trustee Florian Thomas under the title: “A socially distanced Knaben Wunderhorn”.

The link is: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxD3nrXTZ-jz-sJijxaR4-IiTjvPngis>

Books recommended by the Editor to our members:

“**A Whole Life**” by Robert Seethaler. The international bestseller “Ein Ganzes Leben” was originally published in German in 2014 and has been superbly translated by Charlotte Collins.

“**The World of Yesterday**” – ‘Die Welt von Gestern’ by Stefan Zweig
The story of his life and of his generation

“**Die Dämonen**” and “**The Strudelhofstiege**”

by Heimito von Doderer. Both books are recommended for German speakers, who like to read about Vienna in the 20’s

Local Stammtisch Meetings

Please contact the various Stammtisch organisers for further details.

Photo credits: Front page: Ann and Roger Blishen

Page 5: National Trust

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Useful websites:

News: www.news.ORF.at

Holidays: www.austria.info/uk

Culture: www.acflondon.org

Embassy: www.bmeia.gv.at/oeb-london/

Weltweit Freunde: www.austrians.org

For Christmas recipes/Weihnachtsbäckerei visit: www.ichkoche.at

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