

Friends of Alzey Chair report for 2019 (Presented at AGM 20th February 2020)

My theme this evening is change. Change is very much in the air in the UK , but how much change have we seen in the Friends of Alzey in recent times, and how much has stayed the same?

A change that many of us feel as we gather this evening is that Esther Duras and Ned Nash are no longer with us. We must treasure the many happy memories we have of them and be glad that the friends they made in Alzey, the Brunners in Esther's case, and Ursel Becker in Ned's , are all coming to Harpenden this summer with the group from Alzey. I wrote on our behalf to Ned's and Esther's relatives and we were represented at their funerals.

On a happier note, we are welcoming new members, and forging closer links between members here in Harpenden with our new initiatives of the Tuesday evening socials in English and the German Stammtisch on the last Saturday morning of each month. Thank you for your support of these changes and do keep coming. We also invited the Friends of Cosne to form a table at our quiz, which they did with great flair.

Did you spot the change to the signage on the Common, which pleased us and the Friends of Cosne greatly? We were delighted that the Town Council had the twinning coats of arms remade and hung them back in pride of place.

Another change is in the timing of the Spring event. It worked so well last year to wait until late April for our main annual event. 60 people joined what was a most successful celebration of 40 years of the Friends of Alzey. Rosemary Ross was awarded a paperweight showing the Alzey Rossmarkt – a highly appropriate tribute to her dedication to the group. She is unable to attend this AGM but sends her best wishes to everyone and her thanks to the marvellous committee for all their work. Now would be a very appropriate time for me to thank Hayley, Andy, Steve, Jo, Harriet, John, Sheila and Rosemary Farmer for their hard work and for embracing the changes to the committee formalised last year when John and Harriet were formally elected.

So what hasn't changed? Well, we thought that we might have seen the last occasion at which Yvonne would cater for us, but thankfully that was not the case and she produced a splendid tea in April, and together with John hosted another German Christmas carol evening which was enjoyed by many of you here.

The welcome afforded to us in Alzey in September was as warm as ever. We had glorious weather, we attended the wine festival opening and visited a beautiful garden in the attractive nearby town of Weinheim. We went back to the wine festival, and on the last evening were treated to a lovely meal overlooking – you've guessed it, vineyards as far as the eye could see. We were a party of 25 people from Harpenden and I'm delighted to say that of these, 7 were first time visitors.

Another regular fixture in our calendar which looks set to stay forever is our annual quiz. There was no change in the enthusiasm you showed for the event, or in your generosity in the raffle.

Your enthusiasm for the organisation, and your generosity, support everything we do as we evolve. This spring, you have the perfect opportunity to bring other people into the Friends of Alzey by encouraging your friends and neighbours and family members to come to our celebration of Alzey event in April and get to know more about this lovely place for themselves, so that they might go there one day, or at the very least, say the name correctly! ALTS – EYE

Susan Vinther February 2020