

# President's Report for the 2017 Annual General Meeting (15 March 2017)

## Introduction

2016 was a very busy and varied year for the Goethe Society Wellington. We continued with the monthly newsletter drawing together the Goethe Society's own activities, any German-related activities in the community, the Stammtisch, the Goethe-Institut and German Embassy's activities and any notices from members. The lecture series, film evenings and the German language competition continued to be organised by the Goethe Society in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut, New Zealand.



All events remained open to anyone interested in 'things German', refreshments are provided, and entry is free of charge. In 2016 we also varied the times and days of various events to ensure a wider or different audience could attend some events. For instance, the Film evenings were held on Thursdays at 5.30 pm so that tertiary students could come directly from their classes to the films.

The GSW website was updated and reworked in a format that will enable committee members to update and add content and images much more simply. There are still some images and more detail to be added, but it is a work in progress. Events and membership information as well as a section on the history of the Society can be found at: <http://www.welly-goethe.org.nz/>

We also undertook a stocktake of the Society's filing archives (both electronic and paper) to reduce the number of boxes of files that committee members have to store. Electronic files are stored in Dropbox.

## Calendar of GSW Events 2016

### February:

#### **"Strategic Challenges and opportunities – Chancellor Angela Merkel and the CDI at the beginning of the year 2016"**

I was invited by the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs in association with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Germany Embassy to a luncheon discussion about the political and strategic challenges that the German Chancellor Angela Merkel was facing in Germany and Europe. This discussion was held on 5 February 2016 with a visiting delegation including Dr Klaus Schüler, the Federal Director of the DCU and Chief Campaign Manager for the Chancellor.

### **Treffen Netzwerk Deutsch**

Margaret Sutherland and I attended the Netzwerk-Deutsch-Treffen on 27 February 2016 and reported on the previous year's activities and events of the Goethe Society Wellington. Margaret (as GANZ representative from Wellington) also reported on the 2015 Goethe Oral Competition. This was a great setting to hear from other regions in New Zealand of the variety of activities, events and issues – in schools, at universities and within communities – that are happening or being discussed, etc.

## March:

### Meet and Greet with Marc Brandenburg and Lucie Strecker

Several Committee members attended this event hosted by the Goethe-Institut on 3 March 2016 to meet these artists and find out about their projects. (See also *Additional Events* below re the exhibition “Linie Line Linea – Contemporary Drawing”.)

### Visit by the multi-party delegation of the German-New Zealand Parliamentary Group

I was invited to attend a Buffet dinner on 8 March 2016 at the German Ambassador’s Residence on the occasion of the visit of a 10-member multi-party delegation of the German-New Zealand Parliamentary Group to New Zealand.

### Goethe Society Wellington 2016 Annual General Meeting

The Goethe Society Wellington AGM was held on Wednesday, 16 March 2016. Once again we started the evening with a pot luck dinner at Helen Fawthorpe’s house (Ngaio) followed by the AGM.

The minutes of the 2015 AGM were accepted with no amendments required. Outstanding matters remaining on the Committee’s work plan included the matter of appointing an honorary auditor, the formation of a Goethe Society Wellington Award for those students within the Wellington region who are applying for the New Zealand/German Student Exchange, the clean-up of all records (hard copy and electronic) as well as the website development.

The Treasurer’s report was accepted. The President’s report was briefly discussed and that discussion led onto the outline of events for 2016 including the planned lecture series, the German Oral Competition, as well as forthcoming farewell events for Bettina Senff and Dr Anne-marie Schleich.

Key decisions included to keep the subscriptions at the 2015 rates (\$20 waged, \$10 unwaged, \$25 for a family and \$5 for a student), and the committee was elected as follows:

**President:** Dr Kristina McGuinness-King

**Secretary:** Helen Fawthorpe (interim)

**Treasurer:** *vacant*

**Committee members:** Dr Michael McBryde, Dr Margaret Sutherland, Jacqui Bisley and Mary Kane

**Student representatives:** Talei Campbell and Emily Healey (nominated by the German students).

The Society did not manage to fill the position of treasurer, and it would have been good to have a webmaster and someone to assist with the administration during the year. These responsibilities have been covered throughout 2016 by Kristina and Helen - with the approval of the Committee for any expenditures required.

## April:

### ‘Typesetting and printing party’/Farewell to Director, Goethe-Institut, Bettina Senff, at Wai-te-ata Press

The Goethe Society Wellington provided the refreshments for this event (on 22 April) that marked the farewell from the School of Languages and Cultures, the Wai-te-ata Press and the Society to Bettina. It was a celebration of her commitment to and work with the Press and the Literary Translation Centre during her tenure as Director of the Institut. Attendees were told to bring a small quote on the topic of

friendship, good cheer and safe travels, and from those we produced a farewell poem to Bettina using the Press – getting our hand dirty in the process!



### **Official farewell to Director, Goethe-Institut, Bettina Senff**

Members and I attended the farewell celebration to farewell Bettina, and met her successor, Christian Kahnt on 29 April at the Goethe-Institut.

### **May:**

#### **Filmabend #1 - Kaddisch für einen Freund (2010/11)**

The first of the two Filmabende held in 2016 on 25 May was well attended given the very topical themes of the film. Ali is new to Berlin's Kreuzberg district, and as a Lebanese refugee, his presence in Germany is hanging in the balance. The local tough boys put him to a test of courage: breaking into the apartment of an elderly neighbour, a Jewish-Russian immigrant. After doing this, Ali has to make amends with the old man to prevent his own deportation. A touching story of an unequal friendship. Directed by Leo Khasin with a running time of 94 minutes.



#### **"Sandal vs. Birkenstock": meet the producers of Lifeswap**

The Goethe Society Wellington was delighted to host Steffen Kreft and William Conner, the producers of the series Lifeswap at our May lecture (the first in the 2016 series). This event was very well attended and very entertaining!

Lifeswap is a series of short animated Skype conversations between two fictional young men: Jörg from Germany and Duncan from Wellington. The producers will share how this great venture came about, how they actually put one of these videos together, and are really interested in the audience's contributions about cultural differences in the business world. Find out more at: <https://www.goethe.de/ins/nz/en/kul/sup/lsw.html>



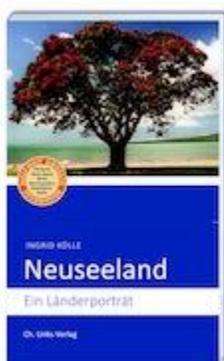
## June:

### Matariki Reception:

Helen Fawthorpe and Michael McBryde attended the Matariki Reception held by Governor-General, Lieutenant General the Right Honorable Sir Jerry Mateparae and Lady Janine Mateparae on 18 June. The theme this year was "Science and Innovation – looking to the future" – a topic that fitted well with our later event in September.

### Sonnenwendefeier with Ingrid Kölle – a reading from „Neuseeland - ein Länderporträt“

Glühwein and refreshments were provided to mark the annual Sonnenwendefeier on 21 June, and we officially farewelled the outgoing German Ambassador, Dr Anne-marie Schleich, at this event.



Then those attending listened to Ingrid Kölle read from her book "*Neuseeland - ein Länderporträt*" (German edition). This talk was both German and English, and

there was plenty of time for questions and discussion about how Ingrid came to write this book, etc. Copies of her book (in German) were available for purchase on the evening. For further information: [http://www.christoph-links-verlag.de/index.cfm?view=3&titel\\_nr=851](http://www.christoph-links-verlag.de/index.cfm?view=3&titel_nr=851)

## **August:**

### **Heike Papenthin discusses “The Current Refugee Situation in Germany & How Germans Handle it”**

Whenever talking about Germany these days, the topic comes up how this nation in the centre of Europe deals with the current refugee situation. As an active Couchsurfing host, Heike Papenthin has had many encounters with young Germans, who have shared their stories with her about their and their friends’ involvement – stories which should be told. Heike’s mother was a refugee in World War II which might explain her deep interest in the current refugee situation in Germany. Heike is the National Language Adviser for German supporting the development of German language education in New Zealand.

Heike delivered a very personal insight into the issues of both past and present refugee situations in Germany (and Europe). The evening was deeply moving to all who attended, and Heike’s presentation was requested by other members who could not attend on the night.



### **German Language Oral Competition**

The annual German Language Oral Competition was held on Saturday, 6 August 2016, with the prize giving held on Wednesday, 7 September. 70 students from 7 secondary schools participated in this year’s German Oral Competition across 5 levels, including separate categories for native speakers.

A very successful prize giving event was held, at which we were honoured to welcome Herr Gerhard Thiedemann (see photo below) as the new Ambassador for the Federal Republic of Germany to New Zealand, and his wife, Dr Marlies Thiedemann.



2016 Dr Jacoby Prize winners, Piyali Sharma and Anna Featherstone-Wright, from Samuel Marsden Collegiate and Wellington Girls' College respectively, read the excerpts they had read from in the competition. Then Inka Vogt and Alex Sinclair gave presentations about their experiences as exchange students on the New Zealand/German Student Exchange in December 2015/January 2016 (see photos below).



The GSW is very grateful to all the judges, ushers, GSW committee members and teachers for all their assistance in organising this competition. It is a great tradition here in Wellington and we are proud to be able to continue this very important way of promoting and enhancing the German language in New Zealand. Thanks must also go to the two embassies of German-speaking countries - Germany and Switzerland - as well as the Goethe-Institut for their massive support and generous donation of the prizes.

The GSW also acknowledges the huge efforts of Dr Margaret Sutherland and Philippa Watson who organised and facilitated the whole competition. It is a complex logistical task and both did an amazing job again to give the students this opportunity.

## September:

### Filmabend #2 – *Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland*

This film also addresses very topical questions and issues of migration and the question of belonging. Although fewer people attended this film evening on 14 September, it was a pleasant event – even for those of us who had already seen the film.

Directed by Yasemin Samdereli, *Almanya – Welcome to Germany* is an extraordinary contribution to the German debate on integration, played out by two young women who were able to weave their personal experiences into the story. Depicting identities that evolve slowly, the film reflects on the difficult question of what we call “home” – a question for which there are many different answers. “Are we Turkish or are we German,” asks little Cenk, unsettled by his classmates’ reactions – and confused, because there is no space for Anatolia on the large map of Europe in his classroom.

### Goethe-Institut German Film Festival 2016:

Many members attended the Reception and film screening of *Fukushima, mon amour* to mark the opening of this amazing film festival on 20 September.

### New Zealand/Germany Scientific Relationships, including Associate Professor Nancy Bertler’s work in Antarctica.

The fourth of the GSW lecture series held on 21 September addressed key aspects of the scientific relations between New Zealand and Germany in two parts:

**Part 1: Associate Professor Nancy Bertler, a New Zealand Rutherford Discovery Fellow, talked about the potential collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet – Implications for Global Sea Level Rapid deglaciation of West Antarctica** that remains a primary uncertainty in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Predictions for 21<sup>st</sup> Century sea level rise. The recent and unpredicted collapse of multiple ice shelves, rapid acceleration of Antarctic ice discharge, and large scale changes in atmospheric circulation and ocean currents suggest that dynamical responses to warming play a more significant role than is currently understood and captured in coupled climate-ice sheet models. New results from current research projects (i.e. RICE, ANDRILL, WAIS) indicate a higher climate sensitivity of the Antarctic ice sheets than previously thought.

**Part 2: New Zealand and Germany’s science relationship – recent history and future prospects.** Rick Petersen, Senior Advisor, International Science Partnerships Team, Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, discussed highlights from the past couple of years in the New Zealand/Germany bilateral science relationship, identified some of the events that are likely to take place in 2017 to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the bilateral Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement and gave those attending a flavour of where the relationship might develop over the next few years.

## October:

### Day of German Unity and the visit of Professor Dr Norbert Lammert, President of the German Bundestag

Invited members and I attended the Reception held by the Ambassador of the Federal Republic, Gerhard Thiedemann and Dr Marlies Thiedemann at The Boatshed on 11 October.

## December:

### Goethe Society Wellington 2016 Christmas Dinner

On 1 December members and Friends of the Society celebrated a very busy year of events and activities at the annual Christmas Dinner. We again had a delicious German/Austrian style dinner at the Brooklyn Deli. It also provided an opportunity to reflect on our 2016 events at which we touched on topical issues, such as climate change, New Zealand's scientific relationships with Germany, the current refugee situation in Germany, past refugee experiences in Germany, heard readings from Ingrid Koelle's book, *Neuseeland - ein Länderporträt*, and met Steffen Kreft and William Conner, the producers of the series *Lifeswap, The Dance Between The Jandal And The Birkenstock*.



### Additional Activities:

The Society also supports **the monthly Stammtisch**, that provides the opportunity to speak German in an informal setting. Anyone who would like to speak German is invited. The Stammtisch takes place **on the last Thursday of each month at 5.30pm**, at the Muenchen Food Hall and Bier Haus on Queens Wharf.

During 2016 we supported and advertised the **Victoria German Student Club events** as another example of the many 'German related' events and activities that are happening in Wellington. These included the German Brunch on 27 July where waffles were sold to fundraise for the club and for the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand (HCNZ), the Languages and Cultures Ball held on 6 August, and raffles.

We supported the **School of Languages and Cultures**, Victoria University of Wellington, event where the 2016 student ambassadors were recognised by the Swiss Embassy, by providing the refreshments.

In November the GSW committee (in consultation with Society membership) submitted a written **submission** and gave an oral submission to Victoria University of Wellington panel to register our concerns about the radical restructuring planned for the School of Languages and Cultures, in which the German programme was disproportionately (negatively) affected. Many individual submissions from Society members and friends of the Society were also submitted.

The Society also promoted (and members attended) many **Goethe-Institut New Zealand events and activities**, such as:

*Linie Line Linea - Contemporary Drawing*: An exhibition of the Institute for Cultural Relations in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut that ran from 26 February to 24 April 2016 at the Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi, Victoria University of Wellington. Artists in the exhibition are: Irina Baschlakow, Marc Brandenburg, Monika Brandmeier, Fernando Bryce, Marcel van Eeden, Gerhard Faulhaber, Katharina Hinsberg, Pauline Kraneis, Pia Linz, Christiane Löhr, Theresa Lükenwerk, Nanne Meyer, Thomas Müller, Christian Pilz, Alexander Roob, Malte Spohr, German Stegmaier, Markus Vater, Jorinde Voigt and Ralf Ziervogel.

*The Book Launch & Reading - "Seelenbinder: the Olympian who defied Hitler"* by James McNeish. James McNeish was born in Papakura, New Zealand and his first book was published in 1957. He is the author of twenty-five books, including *Fire under the Ashes*, a biography of Danilo Dolci, the anti-Mafia reformer with whom he worked in Sicily; and *Lovelock*, nominated for the 1986 Booker Prize. In 2010 he received the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Non-Fiction. He was knighted for services to literature in 2011.

The *German Film Festival 2016* will be held in Wellington from 21-24 September, and various musical events, such as the *Cusp of Oblivion* CD release tour with Hayden Chisholm, Paul Dyne and Norman Meehan.

We also promoted the *Lifewrap* series (<https://vimeo.com/channels/lifewrap>), and the „Mein Ort in Deutschland“ initiative ([goethe.de/meinort](http://goethe.de/meinort)).

Through the monthly Newsletter, our Facebook page and various emails to our distribution list, we have also promoted community events such as concerts and book readings organised by members or related organisations.

## **In Closing**

My deepest thanks goes to the Goethe Society Committee members for their many and varied contributions to organising and hosting events – and contributions in all the other ways that this extremely busy past year has called for! We are also very grateful for the continued financial support and assistance from the Goethe-Institut, New Zealand, and for the continued support of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. I am also very grateful for the attendance and continued association the Society membership provides.

**Dr Kristina McGuinness-King**  
**President**  
**Goethe Society Wellington**