

## **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Great German Pork Butcher Descendants' Reunion in Germany Hohenlohe and the Tauber Valley, 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

Karl-Heinz Wüstner, once again, had organised an expertly-planned and guided tour of part of the Hohenlohe district of Baden-Württemberg, where most of the pork butchers who came to the UK originated. The tour was advertised through our Mitteilungsblatt and our website as well as to Karl-Heinz's other contacts.

We were based at the quaint old medieval town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber (i.e. above the River Tauber), just on the Bavarian side of the "border" with Baden-Württemberg. Some of us arrived a day earlier and had a very enjoyable evening in a very rural inn. We then had an extra day to get our bearings and wander around the town – if you have never been there it is well worth a visit. The architecture spans the periods from mediaeval to 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was not very badly damaged in the war. What had been damaged was seamlessly rebuilt.

The first evening was spent at the Hotel Rappen, where we were staying, dining and getting to know each other. Carol Woodhouse, who had edited (with Karl-Heinz) our latest book, the bi-lingual "Tastes of Hohenlohe (a collection of recipes from the descendants of the 19<sup>th</sup> century migrant Hohenlohe Pork Butchers and the families they served), was one of the group. The book had just been published and we were able to sell many copies to those on our tour. Half way through the evening, Karl-Heinz's Irish cousins, the Bauer brothers and their father Jim, turned up unexpectedly and, as usual, raised our spirits even higher.

The next day we visited two local churches holding original carved-wood altarpieces of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century by Tilman Riemenschneider – the holy blood altar in St Jacobs Church in Rothenburg, and the St Mary altar in the village of Creglingen. It is incredible that such masterpieces of the woodcarvers' art have survived so long and so well; especially as they are both in the original churches, both of which became Lutheran at the Reformation! One reason might be that Rothenburg was on "Jakobsweg", the pilgrimage route across Europe to St James of Compostela, and encouraged pilgrims to pass through the town.

After Creglingen, we went to a pig-fattening farm at Freudenbach, seeing how pigs are bred nowadays: very different from the cottage industry our ancestors would have known.

The next day we went to a typical local archive at Langenburg where an archivist, Andreas Volk, talked us through how research could be carried out for those lucky enough to come from that area. The records even included family letters back from pork butchers in England. It is even possible in many cases to identify the houses where our ancestors came from; and many of those houses are still standing. Indeed, Karl-Heinz had undertaken his own research into the families of those attending and was often able to point out, from the coach, the village and even the house where the family of one of those on the trip had lived!

From there we went to the former summer manor-cum-hunting-lodge of the Princes of Hohenlohe-Langenburg; the local royal family (closely related to Prince Phillip). After an excellent lunch in the manor we had a tour through the gardens and the newly-restored historical buildings. Then we left for a tour around the Franconian brewery at Riedbach including beer & pretzels – which are surprisingly good with some butter! This part of Hohenlohe and neighbouring Bavaria are part of the ancient area called Franken (Franconia). We also met up with the Bauers again which, with the beer and some excellent local whisky, livened us all up!

But we were not finished as the travel agents, ReiseService VOGT, who had organised this and previous trips, had invited us around for dinner at their brand-new offices at Windisch-Bockenfeld. Again we had a marvelous time.

On the Friday, the weather had cooled down to the 20s which made everything much fresher. We visited Niederstetten in the morning. This was one of the main starting points for pork butchers going to

UK, besides Künzelsau which we had visited in 2016. There had been a weekly market here for piglets which had only closed 8 years ago after 117 years. In the town centre is a statue showing how a deal was traditionally sealed there with a handshake. The local library also hosted an exhibition on Zeppelins; a local man, Albert Sammt, had been the commander of the last airship LZ130 "Graf Zeppelin". Then we were off to Weikersheim, another picturesque and beautiful little town housing another palace of the Princes of Hohenlohe. The architecture and the rooms of the palace were much like a National Trust house but the most eye-catching room was the Knight's Hall (Rittersaal) of about 1600. A vast space heavily decorated with stucco life-size animals projecting from the walls! Breath-taking when you first see it! There was also a very delightful formal garden.

The next stop was for cakes and coffee at a cattle farm followed by a tour of the farm and the milking parlour. Then on to the Hofäcker winery at Queckbronn where we had a guided tour and sampled many of the wines produced there. After that we went back to the hotel and some of us went to bed.

Saturday was our last day and we drove over to Bad Mergentheim where we had a guided tour of the Spa town and gardens and then the Castle of the Teutonic Knights there. The town was quiet and we found an excellent restaurant for a light lunch.

In the early afternoon, we returned to Rothenburg as many were heading off home. As we were not leaving until Sunday, Jenny & I had a pleasant afternoon wandering around the old town followed by dinner with all the remaining members of the party around a single table in the hotel biergarten. The weather was perfect! It was such a shame to have to leave.

I understand that Karl-Heinz is seriously considering organising another Reunion in 2020; this time probably more in south west Hohenlohe covering the home villages of pork butchers that he has not covered yet. If you are able to join us, I am sure that you will enjoy it!