

hello again

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Dog gone

To coincide with the Village des associations (see pages 2 and 3), the ESC organises a picnic for members old, new and potential. This year's event almost turned to catastrophe, thanks to an eager pooch

by Kim Broers

Scene: Village des associations, Parc de la Citadelle. A mild, intermittently sunny September day. People stroll by the numerous booths, while in the leafy environs of the park a small table attracts the attention of passersby. Beneath the protective shade of a tall tree, a sumptuous spread awaits picnic-goers: cheese, hummus, bread, a selection of quality wines and beverages. Conversation and frequent laughter fill the air, and a handsome reddish-gold dog eagerly awaits any dropped crumbs.

Your scenarioist will pause here to explain that pseudonyms must be distributed at this point, to protect the anonymity of certain ESC picnickers. Because in the midst of this pleasant outing, a certain droll highlight rapidly approaches.

Guilty Party No. 1 beseeches Guilty Party No. 2 to tether the opportunistic canine rather than continue to hold her leash. The two Guilty Parties consider a tree

as the anchor point, but eventually decide on a heavy cart parked near the picnic table.

It works, albeit briefly (briefly because the Guilty Parties have failed to notice the significance of the wheels on said cart). Soon, a kerfuffle ensues, as the tethered dog spots a possible opponent. Or friend. TBD. The dog bolts across the path, pursued by a loud, heavy, clattering cart. Which is full of beer. The noise is considerable, as is the amusement of the picnickers, and Guilty Party No. 2 is unable for the moment to corral her canine, doubled over as she is with laughter. When she can speak, she quickly blames Guilty Party No. 1, who unaccountably refuses to shoulder all the blame.

No one is hurt, the beer is unscathed, and the only palpable regret is that no one was quick enough to video the action.

And so the ESC fall picnic passed with laughter and amiability and a lapse in judgment, and a good time was had by all.



The picnickers welcome some exotic visitors

New name, same aim

Sharp-eyed readers will have noticed the change in the title of this newsletter. Gone is What's Up?, replaced by Hello Again.

The ESC committee felt that the previous (and long-lived!) title no longer represented the current policy of the publication.

In the past, the newsletter was the main means of communication with the membership, and a way of spreading the word about the ESC's activities – in other words, what's up. But times change, and new technology means that there are more efficient ways of announcing what's on.

So it's goodbye to *What's Up?* and hello to *Hello Again*. Its editorial remit is the same as in previous issues: to present articles and photos about recent ESC happenings and activities. Up-to-date news about current and future events, on the other hand, is included in our regular e-mails to members.

Whether it revives memories of fun times spent with fellow ESC members, or whets your appetite for joining in the next time, we hope you enjoy the content.

And if you have something to contribute, such as a short report on a recent ESC outing, a regular activity, or a photo or two, we're always pleased to hear from you. Just write to newsletter@esc-alsace.org and get your name in print. Well, virtual print anyway!

Hello. Do you speak English?

The Village des associations – or Village des assos to its friends – is organised once a year by the Maison des associations. Over a weekend in September registered associations from Strasbourg and beyond can set up stalls to advertise their activities and attract new members, participants or spectators.

In the ESC's case it's an opportunity to make ourselves known to a broader public, not, for the most part native English-speakers. And "broader" means a lot of people! Estimates put the number of visitors at more than 5000 over the two days. Some 200 associations take part in this very special fair and their activities cover many different fields.

The Village gives the ESC a chance to chat with potential new members and explain the benefits of membership. Of course, we hope to meet those visitors who come from an English-speaking region overseas or just want to get back to a language they have practised for a long time. They are all welcome to come and chat with us at a next apéro or coffee morning to help them decide whether they would like to join our community.

Strolling along the alleys, you're never short of things to discover. For those who have just moved to Strasbourg, as was the case for Christine (see page 3), for those who are looking to start a regular activity within a group, who can offer time or a skill, take part in collective projects, or just wish to widen their horizons, the fair is a good starting point. It can



beat a simple request on the Internet!

For the volunteers who have generously given their time to serve on the stand over the many years the ESC has taken part, the experience is rich in discussions with curious strollers, individuals and families, as September back-to-school coincides with a frenzy of signing up for new activities. The atmosphere of a nice green park adds a note of fun, as singers and dancers showcase their talents on one of the two stages.

by Catherine Manini





Some personal thoughts on the Village



Christine Secouet arrived in Strasbourg over ten years ago. One of her first ports of call was the Village des associations. She tells us about her experience, and also about associations other than the ESC that she has discovered.

In 2015, having moved from Paris to Strasbourg, one of my goals was to find an organisation that would allow me to continue to speak English and hopefully make new friends in the process. When I strolled through my first Village des associations, I discovered the ESC; it was exactly what I was looking for! I enrolled the very next month and have been an enthusiastic member ever since. And I have never missed being on the stand to help convince visitors to join.

That same year I joined two more amazing associations, which are also present every year.

First, there is Troc savoirs which exists all over France in the national Réseau d'échanges réciproques des sa-

voirs. Its members share an absolutely dazzling variety of skills with other members, who in turn have to return the favour, not necessarily on a one-to-one basis. For instance: I show you how to use or upgrade your computer; you show me how to knit a sweater or cook a meal. The annual fee is really very very affordable. You can check it out at <https://rers-strasbourg.eu/>.

The other association I discovered and joined with enthusiasm is Lire et faire lire, also a national organisation. It was created by the writer Alexandre Jardin and Pascal Guénée, currently director of the Institut pratique du journalisme. They figured that if children are reluctant to read,

it's probably because they are not being read to. The answer? Find people to read to them! The volunteers are usually retired (you need to have time free in order to be available on a weekly basis). Read more about it at <https://www.lireetfairelire.org/>.

I personally have been reading to children aged 7 in three different schools so far and I hope I can continue for many more years.

The Village des associations never disappoints. These associations would of course not operate without the goodwill of all the generous volunteers. If you missed it this year, or have never been, I strongly encourage you to visit the next one.

Café Piérod – wo man gerne Deutsch spricht

Once a fortnight, the German conversation group gets together – in a foreign country!
Polly Stotz recently took over the co-ordination of the group.



The German conversation group meets every other Monday at 2 p.m. in Kehl. The meetings have always taken place over the border in Germany despite a few aborted attempts to find a venue in Strasbourg. Sitting and speaking German in a German café does seem to add an authentic touch to

our gatherings, making the event feel more purposeful. Café Piérod, in Hauptstrasse, is only a few minutes from the tram terminus and close to car parking areas. We sit at the biggest table at the back of the café where it is more roomy and quiet. However, any more than eight people becomes rather tight, unless we venture outside to sit on the terrace.

We are lucky to have our regular native speakers (Brigitte, Karla and Christine) in the group, who put us right on language when needed and also add their personal touch. For instance, Brigitte's pet hate is the excessive use of English in modern-day German.

Our reading matter topics have been varied this past year, including: excerpts from childhood memories of East Germany; a controversy concerning wind turbines in Baden-Württemberg; and the pros and cons of travelling solo. 'Alleinreisen ist ein Trend.'

This year we are inviting members to propose articles, stories, reviews, which they have found interesting and would like to share with the group. We kicked off on our first Monday with Doreen's article from *Der Spiegel* about an AI music therapy lab in Shanghai which aims to heal mental health disorders. In November we are looking to organise a cinema outing during the 'Augenblick' Festival and discuss a particular film afterwards with a drink. A guided visit of Offenburg has also been suggested.

Many thanks to our two previous co-ordinators for their long stints of devotion: Bernard eight years and Bronwyn five years. Both of them are still actively present in the group. I don't know if I will last as long but I will do my best, comforting myself in having a useful role while my level in German leaves much to be desired.

by Polly Stotz

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newsletter@esc-alsace.org.

As a guide, for half a page, count 1 500 characters (with spaces); one full page is 2 500 to 3 000 characters. When submitting pictures please attach them to your e-mail rather than including them in a document.

Let us know what you think of our publication

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