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**Association of Open University Graduates
Europe
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Hello to you all.

The AOUG Committee has been busy as usual and you can read some useful information about the AOUG web site, it is well worth a visit. Also, at the end of this Newsletter there is an important notice for the next AOUG Foundation for Education Research Awards.

As you will have seen, the website has recently undergone some subtle changes. The navigation has been redesigned, the home page has seen some updates to layout, including a new dynamic upcoming events section, the News and OMEGA pages have been redesigned and we have a new Google Custom Search. However the most significant changes have occurred 'under the bonnet' with the whole site being re-coded to behave responsively, making it more user-friendly for visitors on mobile devices of all shapes and sizes. At the same time we've also done a lot of housekeeping, removing outdated material and tidying up links. Why not take a look at www.aoug.org.uk – we'd appreciate your feedback.

I have had a wonderful response to my request for articles from our members in Germany and four are included in this Newsletter. It is always interesting to read other views on study, places, events etc. Rob Lindsley looks back to the past and how some things have changed. On the other hand Daniela Weiss writes about one of her OU studies, 'Understanding Cities', which reminded me of the course, 'Urban Change and Conflict', which I studied, many years ago. Birmingham was one of the cities being studied and we had just moved there from Kent, so I was living the subject. The Open University can be proud to read how its degree has enhanced the career of Karen Milka, which I am sure is true for many of The Open University graduates. And last but not least, Peter Adamczyk-Haswell, takes us on a tour of Berlin. Enjoy your read.

Patricia Cowling

Just a Comment or Two about Germany, Germans and Me

Germany is not the same as it was in the 1920s and the 1930s, and it's definitely not the same as it was in the 1940s when everything was very confused for me to understand during that time. Germany is only what it is now. It's very different from seventy years ago when The West told it to start again. It's done very well for itself in a new and different way from those old days.

As a little boy I was aware of why I had to wake up on most nights and go into the garden next door to sleep in a hole in the ground and share it with two other families. Sometimes I heard loud explosions which my father, who was an ARP warden, described as fireworks that lit up the sky like large stars and looked very beautiful. But I never saw them. When I was a little older, I asked my father what would happen if the Germans got into England. He said, "They mustn't."

My brother, eleven years older than I, returned home in 1945 from fighting the Germans and told me that the only good German was a dead one. I heard others say the same sort of thing. There were commentaries on radio and in films that gave good reasons for disliking the Germans. I met a boy in my classroom who had blue lines across his forehead which were caused by the Germans when his house was destroyed by a bomb. But I thought other things were more important, like going to school on the bus and walking back home with my friend Dougie.

There were a few students who were German in my first year at teacher training college. They were older than the rest of us. I heard they had the Nazi SS tattoo on their arms. Some of us said they should be thrown out of college. I never found out if they were Nazis, but not long after they were gone.

After leaving college, most of my holidays were in Austria starting with a skiing holiday in the Zugspitze area that Christmas. I became interested in the German people and, after a little time had passed, I actually visited their country.

It was a pamphlet concerning exchange visits that brought me to Germany. It spoke about teenagers exchanging their family's home during the school summer holiday for a home in a German family. This exchange visit proved to be very popular and it continued for several years. I met many German families. The British children and, I believe, The German children learned much from each other and from the country they visited.

I live in Germany now, still with concerns above my normal daily existence. I am the editor of a magazine that promotes international friendship in the world. It is the journal of an organisation founded in 1931 which promotes "a spirit of friendship among the people of the world with a view of peaceful co-operation in international affairs." This statement seems fair enough for me and I would like its sentiments to lead to a much more peaceful world. At least the members seem happy with it, especially our members in Africa where there are branches in seven different countries. I try to stay happy with it too.

Rob Lindsley

Life in Stuttgart

When I moved back to Germany eight years ago after staying in London for eight years it was quite a change. I was still studying with the OU and after two years in Germany I finished my Open Degree.

I wanted to keep up to date with what life is like in London or around the UK. So from time to time I check the online forum 'Deutsche in London' (<http://www.deutsche-in-london.net/forum/>) and read contributions about general life over in the UK, work, events and so forth. When I was still in London I also searched for jobs using the forum. Now I can keep following what is going on about what is not in the news and is more personal to people. Here in Germany I follow also Google News and log on to different UK newspapers. I also watch BBC World Service regularly and I am quite a fan of the international perspective.

During my studies for the Open degree I was studying the course 'Understanding Cities'. It was quite something for me because it brought together the social sides of living in cities, the dynamics and possible developments. I always was an admirer of London and it brought back things while I stayed in rural Germany of events and places that is typical for the city. It is not always easy in terms of accommodation, cost, stress and pollution. During the course the complexity of city developments and the differences in pathways cities take became apparent. I also compare nowadays what it was like in London to Stuttgart. Stuttgart feels totally different and recently I became a bit more fascinated. One event I went to recently for example was the radio orchestra of the local public broadcaster SWR. On this night the former conductor Sir Roger Norrington was conducting the orchestra. He was the chief conductor of the orchestra from 1998 to 2011. He originates from Oxford and was conducting a number of orchestras in the UK, including in the Kent Opera, the London Classical Players, Covent Garden Opera and English National Opera.

At this event the orchestra played Hector Berlioz, Ludwig van Beethoven, a concert for piano and orchestra, and a Franz Schubert symphony. The pianist was Robert Levin, who comes from America and gives concerts across the world. The enthusiasm from him, the orchestra and the conductor could be felt throughout the evening. It was a pleasure to listen to them.

It is of comfort to know that cultural events are so similar here to over in London. It makes me feel at home and creates great memories. When I think of the course 'Understanding cities' then this is one thing I have to conclude. Cities are invaluable to experience and to share cultural events. This is no different to here in Germany to cities in the UK. Europe becomes immediately closer when taking part in such an event where there are performers from different countries. And I really honour and like cities for all that.

Daniela Weiss

Visit <https://stuttgart.tourist.de> and www.orangesmile.com/travelguide/bonn



Bonn

I came to Bonn, Germany in March 1985 to work at the British Embassy as a member of HM Diplomatic Service and anticipated staying for 2.5 years before being given my next overseas posting. Over 31 years later, I am still here! I met my now husband in 1986 – a German national – and we decided to stay in Bonn, rather than go overseas together. I was able to stay on with the Embassy for a little longer, leaving in April 1988 to start a new position with the American Embassy here in Bonn. There I stayed until the big move of most of the Embassies to Berlin in the late 90's after the fall of the Berlin Wall. By then we had two small children and did not want to leave Bonn and so the Embassy left without me! Bonn has changed tremendously over the years. When I arrived in 1985 it was the capital “city”, really the “Small town in Germany” of the John Le Carré novel. Despite the diplomatic and German government presence decreasing, Bonn has grown in size, with Deutsche Telekom and Deutsche Post DHL having their bases here. Bonn also now prides itself on being a United Nations City, with 18, soon to be 19, United Nations agencies having offices in Bonn. I now work as an administrator at the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the largest UN agency in Bonn with around 500 employees of approximately 60 different nationalities. I started to study with The Open University in September 2005 and concluded my B.Sc. in Social Sciences in 2009. This was on top of my full-time job at the UN and having two children aged 11 & 14 by the time I finished. It wasn't easy but it was worth it. I saw that my career development opportunities in the UN system would be greatly enhanced by having a degree and so bit the bullet and got on with it. I wasn't always able to dedicate as much time to my studies as I would have liked but managed somehow. The sense of achievement – and relief – when I knew I had passed was amazing. My degree really did open the door for a new career path for me with the United Nations too.

Auf Wiedersehen from Bonn,

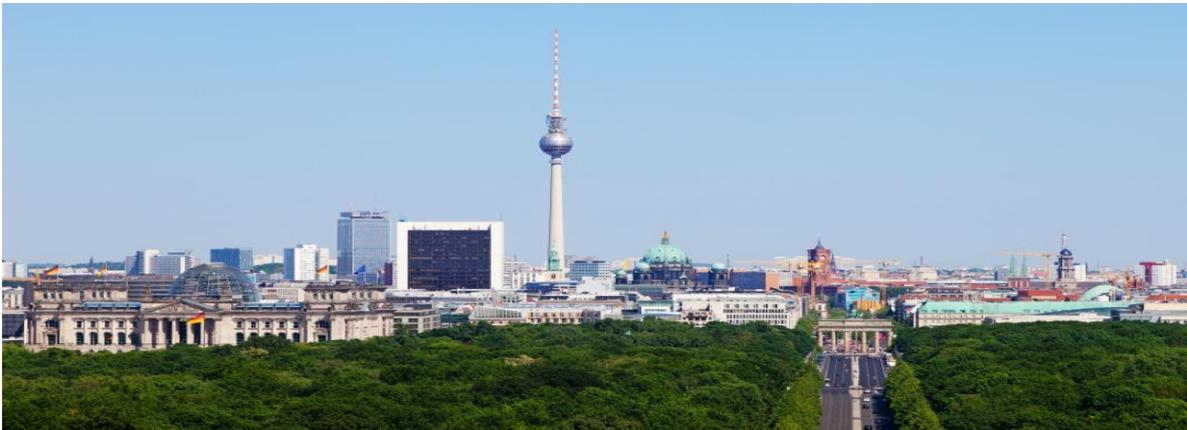
Karen Milka

Berlin, a City Tour

One can easily forget that, during the last two centuries, Berlin has experienced at first-hand the rise and fall of Napoleon, the revolutions of 1848, the founding of a united, Imperial Germany, with Berlin as its capital, in 1871, its fall, with the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II, in 1918, and the foundation (and demise) of the Weimarer Republik, Hitler's Third Reich, the post-war division of Germany, the foundation of two German republics in 1949, the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, its opening in 1989 and reunification (or was it just unification?) in 1990.

The political status of post-war Germany was decided by the four war time allies, the USA, the USSR, the UK and France; Germany was split into 4 occupation Zones, but Berlin was treated as a separate entity with four Sectors, with open borders until the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961; West Berlin (the US, UK and French Sectors) was not part of the German Federal Republic (founded in May 1949) and neither was East Berlin (the Soviet Sector) part of the German Democratic Republic, established in October 1949, even though in the Soviet Bloc it was referred to as the capital.

Berlin (www.berlin.de) may not be the holiday destination that Benidorm, Fuerteventura and Majorca are; Mallorca is known as Germany's 17th Regional State because of the preponderance of German tourists there! It may not have the endless hours of sunshine and sea breezes that they have. However, it is a fascinating city, all the same, especially for anyone interested in culture and history. It is set, to borrow Patrick Leigh Fermor's words, between the woods and the water, Berlin is a city of lakes and forests, rivers and canals.



It is a major cultural centre offering the opportunity of viewing some of the world's great art collections, visiting three opera houses of great distinction, hearing the renowned Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra playing in Scharoun's 1960s Philharmonie and seeing the work of famous, less famous, infamous and relatively obscure architects of the last three hundred years; from the baroque via East German modern to post-modern – from the sublime to the Cor Blimey, perhaps, depending on your political or aesthetic viewpoint! Where else can one see the works of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Peter Behrens, Paul Wallot, Ernst Sagebiel (who?) Ludwig Hoffmann, Hermann Muthesius, Bruno Taut, Joachim Dahl, Albert Speer (Speer-designed street lamps are still to be seen on the Kaiserdamm and Bismarckstraße), Langhans, Knobelsdorff and numerous others, including Daniel Liebeskind, Frank Gehry and those British favourites, Norman Foster, Nicholas Grimshaw and David Chipperfield, all in such a relatively small area (www.greatbuildings.com).

Unter den Linden, in the former East Berlin, and the Kurfürstendamm, in what was West Berlin, must rank as two of Europe's great boulevards alongside the Champs Elysées, Piccadilly and the Ramblas. When one compares Eduard Gaertner's nineteenth-century paintings of Unter den Linden with today's thoroughfare it looks remarkably unchanged except for macadamised road surface, but one must remember that it was destroyed during WW2 and has been painstakingly reconstructed – with additions, of course.

Other architectural sights include the Bauhaus Archive, the Siegesäule (the Victory Column first built in front of the Reichstag in 1873 and commemorating Prussia's victories over Austria, Denmark and France; it was moved to its present site in 1939), Schloß Bellevue (the official residence of the German President), the Reichstag (which now houses the Bundestag –the German Parliament) (www.reichstag.de), the Brandenburg Gate, the remains of the Berlin Wall (now a simple line of bricks in the road marks its dolorous way through the city) and Schloß Charlottenburg. In the Hansaviertel, there are the buildings erected for the 1956 architectural congress in West Berlin by architects from a variety of countries; the USA's contribution, a Congress Hall, currently the House of World Cultures (www.hkw.de), has the sobriquets Jimmy Carter's Smile and the Pregnant Oyster; its concave roof collapsed in 1980, but, luckily, only a parked VW beetle was 'injured'!

Berlin's galleries and museums (www.smb.museum) rival those of other great European cities. On the Museum Island, sitting between the River Spree and the Kupfergraben, one finds the Bode Museum, the Pergamon Museum (currently being renovated with additions) displaying the stunning Pergamon Altar from Babylon as well as an original Babylonian street, and the Nationalgalerie, designed to display German Art. Back on Unter den Linden one finds Guggenheim Berlin (www.deutsche-guggenheim-berlin.de) and the Museum of German History. In addition, of course, there are many other museums and galleries, such as the Jewish Museum (www.jmberlin.de), the Egyptian Museum, housing the bust of Queen Nefertiti (<http://egyptian-museumberlin.com/>) as well as museums of local life, post-war occupation, ethnology, etc. Haus am Checkpoint Charlie records the history of the divided Berlin, sometimes rather sensationally, but one must not forget that those were somewhat sensational times!

In 1987, two years before the Berlin Wall was opened, East Berlin ('the so called capital of the GDR') hosted the Berlin Garden Show to mark the 750th anniversary of the founding of the city of Berlin in 1287. The show was situated at the foot of the Kienberg, one of the post-war mountains of rubble, in the Soviet Sector of the city. Later, after unification, this became Gärten der Welt (Gardens of the World) the Chinese Garden being the first of many different national gardens which were to be designed and built on the site. This has now been expanded, with a cable car to the top of the Kienberg, in readiness for the International Garden Show to be opened in 2017.

It all sounds fine, but how does a tourist get around to see this vast assemblage? Berlin's public transport system, BVG, (www.bvg.de) must be second to none and certainly leaves London trailing. A standard BVG ticket for Zones A & B (Berlin as far as the boundary with Brandenburg) costs €2.70 about £2.20 (as at April 2016) and is valid for two hours on all forms of public transport – bus, tram, train, underground and ferries (across some of the lakes), and one can change from one means to another at any time. Season tickets are also transferable from one person to another and at weekends one can take family members on the same ticket; an annual ticket covering Zones A and B costs €761, about £620. Public transport

in Berlin is cheap and environmentally-friendly. Other forms of tourist transport are the sightseeing buses and the river and canal cruise ships. The latter offer relaxation as well as the opportunity to see Berlin's bridges (more than Venice!) or travel into Brandenburg (<http://www.visitberlin.de/en/see/city-tours/boat-tours?tid=4640>).

I have had connections with Berlin since the mid-sixties, and have enjoyed living here. For me it has that same dynamic provincialism so characteristic of my hometown, Leeds, and I do not use provincial at all pejoratively. My wife and I moved to the eastern part of the city, the former East Berlin some years ago and for me, with roots in Leeds, it was like returning to my childhood; the east is full of trams, but only single-deckers! The East German Government invested in trams rather than an underground transport system on economic and financial grounds. Berlin has at least one other connection with 'God's own country' of Yorkshire; the Noack foundry in Berlin was, reputedly, Henry Moore's, favourite foundry for casting his work.

Soon after I moved to Berlin I found part-time employment as an English teacher at Treuhand, the agency established by the East German Government, towards the end of its existence, to privatise companies and return formerly communal property to its previous (sometimes original) owners, among other things. The agency was based in the former Air Ministry building where Hermann Göring was the minister; this later housed the East German Council of Ministers. As a child of the Second World War it never ceased to amaze me, as I stood alone at the end of a two hundred metre long corridor at half-past six in the morning, that I was treading the same path as some of the twentieth century's most famous and infamous characters and could almost hear their footfalls! I must add that the building is now the German Finance Ministry.

Yes, Berlin is unique. Since its foundation as a city in 1237 it has seen the tides of European history wash over and around it and, to borrow the words of successive British Prime Ministers, admittedly in a different context, Berlin is 'at the heart of Europe'!

Berlin is surrounded by the Regional State of Brandenburg, which is also rich in history and culture. Its capital, Potsdam, with its baroque palaces, the most famous being Sanssouci, and World Heritage Site, also saw the signing in August 1945 of the Potsdam Agreement in the Cecilienhof palace. Perhaps the above has whetted your appetite. See you soon!

Below is a very short and highly selective bibliography

Architecture and history

Ribbe, Wolfgang & Schäche, Wolfgang, (eds), Baumeister, Architekten, Stadtplaner, Biographien zur baulichen Entwicklung Berlins, Historische Kommission zu Berlin, Stapp Verlag, Berlin ISBN 38 7776 2107

Ribbe, Wolfgang, (ed), Geschichte Berlins, Von der Frühgeschichte bis zur Gegenwart, Verlag C. H. Beck, München, ISBN 3 406 315925 (2 volume, paperback)

Unfortunately, there are no English translations of the above titles, so they are only accessible to German readers.

History/Fiction

Heym, Stefan, Five Days in June, Hodder & Stoughton, 1977. I do not think this is still in print, but may be available in a library. It is a fictional account, by an observer/participant, of the June 1953 uprising in East Berlin which was crushed as a result of Soviet intervention.

After unification Stefan Heym (1913-2001) became a member of the Bundestag, the German Parliament. Fallada, Hans *Alone in Berlin*, Penguin Modern Classic. *Alone in Berlin* is set in wartime Berlin and based on a real-life couple, whose exploits led to their ultimate execution in *Plötzensee* prison. It became a bestseller in the UK about seven years ago. Michael Hofmann's modern translation is first class.

Autobiography/History

Garton-Ash, Timothy *The File: a personal history*, Harper Collins. After studying in East Berlin in the early eighties, the author returned to a unified Berlin/Germany to uncover his Stasi (State Security Service) file and discover what motivated some friends and acquaintances during his student days to feed information on him to the Stasi.

Petersen, Jan *Our Street: A Chronicle Written in the Heart of Fascist Germany*, Faber & Faber is a diary of Jan Petersen's life in Berlin during the 1930s. The English is rather dated since it was translated when the (German) book was originally published.

Family history

Harding, Thomas *The House by the Lake*, William Heinemann (also Kindle), after German unification the author seeks out the house by the lake that his family had owned and which his grandmother had told him about. The house is in Brandenburg, just outside Berlin, and Thomas Harding tells the history of both the house and the family who lived there.

Peter Robert Adamczyk-Haswell

Friday 7th October 2016

AOUG Foundation for

Education Research Awards

Followed by

AOUG Foundation Lecture

“An Astronomer’s view of the Birth, the Life and the Death of the Stars”

to be given by Glenn White,

Professor of Astronomy £10 for full or part day including a buffet lunch - Admission by ticket or invitation only. Tickets available from AOUG Office

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