

Stefanie Maison and I, having heard of the successful German Augustinum Wohnstifts, searched in vain for an English equivalent. Had we found one, we would never have left England, where we had both been so hospitably received as refugees and where we had lived, and after naturalisation, worked so happily for over 60 years as British Citizens. We have remained British and re-acquired German nationality.

The idea of a return to Germany, the place of our births, was deeply overshadowed by our aversion to a country that had expelled us in 1933 under such terrible conditions. Stefanie's mother had died in a Concentration Camp, and my father had to flee penniless shortly before the outbreak of World War II. For the third time in his life, he had lost all his savings in Germany. The first was worthless bonds of World War I in 1918, the second time during the hyper-inflation in 1923, and in 1938 by confiscation from the Nazis.

Nevertheless, we decided to explore the Augustinum in Munich, Freiburg and Heidelberg and decided on Heidelberg, the ancient and pleasant University town in Southern Germany. A Wohnstift Augustinum had been built there in 1975 as a multi-unit apartment building, a condominium; located about 7 km south of the old city centre. Situated in a suburb, it is partly surrounded by the trees of the Odenwald and partly by vineyards. When we first visited it in February 1996, we were lucky and a superb three-room apartment on the 12th floor with magnificent views was offered to us.

Although we were not ready to move for several months, we decided there and then to take it. Apartments in an Augustinum are not cheap, and the first down—payments is for a Home Loan, repayable on giving up residence, almost always because of death.

In addition a monthly rent is payable, as Home Loans are the working capital of the Collegium Augustinum, a Protestant, non-profit making, registered Association which is required by law to use any profits for the maintenance and improvement of the buildings and their facilities. After several years of residence, I can confirm that the facilities provided at the Heidelberg Augustinum, such as indoor swimming pool, theatre, concert and cinema performances in a large hall, denominational chapel and a bowling alley, provide a very pleasant retirement.

For me it offered the ideal background and facilities for the writing of this book which was entirely undertaken here in Heidelberg, having brought with me all the essential historical documents. The cultural diversions on constant offer include lectures on a great diversity of subjects, exhibitions of contemporary art and organised excursions to far and near.