

Rossendale – Bocholt town twinning

Rossendale Borough Council are pleased to be twinned with Bocholt in Germany.

In May 1952 a group of young people from Bocholt arrived in the towns of Bacup, Haslingden and Rawtenstall as part of a visit arranged by George Tomlinson, at that time Superintendent of Alder Grange Youth Club. This is seen as the date when the official link between Bocholt and the Valley towns was formed.

In 1952 Britain still had some wartime rationing regulations in place and Bocholt was in the midst of a rebuilding programme following damage to the town at the end of the war. It took the Bocholt party two days to get here by train, cross-Channel ferry and coach. Despite all these problems the visit was a success, a return visit arranged, and the link which is still strong fifty years later was forged.

The oldest Anglo-German twinning arrangement, between Bristol and Hanover, is only five years older than ours. There are now more than 300 Anglo-German links. That first visit to Rossendale included a young Bernhard Demming who later became Mayor of Bocholt and has been a firm friend of Rossendale ever since. Another notable event from that first visit was the first Rossendale-Bocholt wedding.

The first exchange visits by Mayors and officials of the Valley towns and Bocholt were in 1958. Official contacts between the town Councils fostered the connection, but over the years, as more and more people visited each other's towns, it has been the ordinary people of Rossendale and Bocholt who have made the link as strong as it is.

In the past five decades there have been over fifty Rossendale groups making contacts with similar organisations in Bocholt, and countless individuals. In 1973 the football team at the White Horse pub in Waterfoot twinned with a pub in Bocholt and this link survives through the Friends of KAB Ewaldi. 1982 saw the first contact between Haslingden High School and Marien Gymnasium. Friends of Bocholt was formed in 1983 as a result of the celebration of 30 years of twinning. In 1987 Shawforth Majorettes made their first contact, and many more organisations in the Valley, from the Fire Service to swimming clubs, Scouts, Rossendale Male Voice and Ladies Choirs and all the Valley Brass Bands and Britannia Coconutters have travelled to Bocholt or entertained groups from our twin town.

Contact with Bocholt can be made through the Friends of Bocholt: Mr John Davey
Tel: 01706 215203 or email: johnmdavey@btinternet.com