

02. March 2026

City history

## Photo of the month March 2026: Racing pigeon breeding in Bocholt

**The photo of the month for March from the city archive is dedicated to the traditional history of carrier pigeon breeding in Bocholt.**

What was once a privilege reserved for the aristocracy, became the pleasure of hundreds of thousands of people in the 20th century and is primarily associated with the working class in the Ruhr region, is now a hobby that has become rare, namely racing pigeon breeding. This month's photo of the month is intended to show that this also led to a lively club life in Bocholt.

Founded in 1900, the pigeon breeding club "Heimkehr" is the oldest of its kind in Bocholt. Over the years, other breeding clubs have emerged from it. Together with the Bocholt club "Kurier" and other clubs from Borken, Wesel, Rees, Emmerich and Schermbeck, the local umbrella organisation of racing pigeon clubs "Brieftauben-Reisevereinigung Bocholt" was founded in Bocholt in 1912.

Carrier pigeons became particularly important in Bocholt after the Second World War. On Sundays, it was a common sight for club members to bring their pigeons in baskets to the railway station, from where they were transported to races. The racing season usually lasted from May to September, while in winter only performance shows took place.

In the post-war period, racing pigeon breeding boomed in Bocholt: in 1952, there were 20 pigeon clubs in the city with such promising names as "Kehre wieder", "Reiselust" or "Grenzland-Bote". In 1964, around 20,000 racing pigeons - also known affectionately as "Rennpferde des kleinen Mannes" - were living in the Bocholt lofts. The "Bocholter-Borkener Volksblatt" joked at the time that Bocholt could be given the nickname "Pigeon City".

To facilitate the transport of the animals, a so-called cabin express (lorry trailer) was purchased in 1956, which was operated by a transport company. This was followed in 1961 by the Bocholt travelling association's own "pigeon express" - a railcar with a trailer offering space for up to 9,000 pigeons. The maiden voyage of this special vehicle was celebrated in style - the driver's cab was occupied by the then chairman of the travelling association Willi Spandern as well as Bernhard Terbeck and the driver Prinzen, festively dressed in tails and top hat, as this photo shows.



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*In 1961, Bocholt's own "Pigeon Express" went into operation.*