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Europe/EDI

Ceremonial commemoration of "60 years of Suderwick reunification"

Unveiling of a former border post with information board // Eyewitness talks // Cross-border neighbourhood festival

In the border town of Bocholt-Suderwick, celebrations now took place together with the Dutch neighbours from Dinxperlo, which belongs to the municipality of Aalten. On 1 August, citizens commemorated the relocation of the border after Suderwick-West was temporarily placed under Dutch administration after the end of the war in 1949.

14 years under Dutch administration

After the Second World War, in 1949 to be precise, Suderwick-West was placed under Dutch administration. This district was more or less returned in 1963. To commemorate this return, the Suderwick local history society, together with the support of various groups and institutions from the localities, including the Grenslandmuseum Dinxperlo, Historisch Dinxperlo, Dinxpers Belang, DinXperience, Bürgerinitiative Dinxperwick and "JuKids" Suderwick, put together a varied programme.

Unveiling of the former border post

The mayors of both municipalities, Bocholt's mayor Thomas Kerkhoff and Aalten's mayor Anton Stapelkamp, jointly unveiled the former border post and an information board at the Tenbenschel road where the border post used to stand. The fact that the border post now stands at this location is thanks to the recently deceased citizen Georg Klaassen. He had kept the boundary post safe so that no wooden hammers had been made from it - as is usually the case.

Mayor Kerkhoff thanked the Klaassen family for the border pole and the volunteer citizens for organising the event. The pole was "a sign of 'Dinxperwicks' living cross-border cooperation. But we should also not forget pain and injustice."

Aalten's mayor Anton Stapelkamp said, "It rained this morning; was it tears of joy or sadness?" He said he suspected that in the memory of the time overcome, both were true. Nowadays, the joy about the good cross-border relations between the two cities outweighs the sadness.

Conversation with contemporary witnesses

During the e-event in the Michaelstreff Suderwick, contemporary witnesses took an active part in the discussion. One citizen, for example, noted that the separation had also had advantages, as he had acquired pension rights in the Netherlands during the 14 years of Dutch contract administration. In addition, the local newspaper had been delivered free of charge to the seceded areas. Some marriages date back to the time of the separation of Suderwick-West. The border shift in 1949 would also not have had a great impact on daily life and people's relations with each other. People had imaginatively circumvented the legally imposed restrictions "by mutual agreement", it was said.

After the discussion with numerous anecdotes, moderator Stefan Prinz suggested writing down the stories so that "they will be preserved for posterity".

Organiser Johannes Hoven from the local history society suggested holding another contemporary witness talk next year, as a social evening on the topic of "smuggling in earlier times, when it was about coffee or bacon, for example".

"This event is an example of how people were able to cooperate excellently despite different mentalities, or precisely because of them, as is desirable everywhere in Europe," commented Sonja Wießmeier of EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt.

International neighbourhood festival

The discussion round was followed by a casual drink and the neighbourhood party, which was attended by German and Dutch citizens.

EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt

The EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt is part of the office of the mayor of the city of Bocholt and is the local contact point for questions and engagement around the European Union. Its task is to provide local citizens with information, advice, help and answers to questions about Europe, to promote involvement and to inform them about current events in European politics.



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Unveiled the symbolic border post in Suderwick (from left to right): Freek Diersen (organiser of the event), Bocholt's mayor Thomas Kerkhoff, Francis Klaasen (wife of Georg Klaasen, who donated the border post) and daughter Patrice Klaassen, Aalten's mayor Anton Stapelkamp and Johannes Hoven (organiser from the Suderwick local history association).