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Europe/International

Memorial bench at Bocholt's Aasee inaugurated

In memory of the Englishman Norman Driver, who founded the "Friends of Bocholt" 40 years ago and thus strengthened the town twinning.

Norman Driver from Rossendal founded the Friends of Bocholt, the equivalent of the German-British Society of Bocholt, in Bocholt's English twin town in 1983. Since his first visit in 1973, he has come to Bocholt well over 50 times. Three years ago, Driver died as a result of Corona. A bench has now been dedicated in his honour at Bocholt's Aa Lake.

The ceremony was attended by Mayor Thomas Kerkhoff and members of the KAB Ss. Ewaldi and the German-British Society Bocholt took part in the ceremony. In his greeting, Kerkhoff regretted not having met Norman Driver personally. He paid tribute to him as a Rossendaler citizen who "has dedicated his whole life to the German-British twinning".

With Heart and Soul for the German-British Town Twinning

Norman Driver's widow, Rosalie Driver, came to Bocholt with her family for this special occasion. Norman Driver had put his heart and soul into the twinning of Bocholt and Rossendale for around five decades, she reported. He came to Bocholt on many occasions to attend weddings, births, carnivals and football. On these occasions, he stayed with a German host family, as is still customary today when Bocholt and Rossendale meet.

Because of the connections to Bocholt, the Driver family had the idea of donating a bench to the town to commemorate the deceased and his work. The costs, including the erection, were borne by the Driver family. The inscription was provided by the KAB Ss. Ewaldi. The location and design of the bench were agreed with the city of Bocholt. Willi Frieg from the KAB Ss. Ewaldi mediated and coordinated the project between England and the city of Bocholt.

Friendship began with football

"It all began in the "White Horse", a pub where at that time there was still a 'last order' at 10 p.m.," said Klaus Kock, chairman of the KAB Ss. Ewaldi. The first football match between the Bocholt team and the Rossendalers ended in a 1-1 draw. "The result was celebrated with 40 litres of apple schnapps, which the Bocholders had brought with them. Football was still played in many other encounters, with Norman Driver always guarding the goal," says Kock. Norman Driver would have liked the bench to rest on, he is sure. "I thank the city of Bocholt and am proud of them for honouring such a man in this way."

The chairman of the Anglo-German Society of Bocholt, Andreas Becker, reported that he had just returned from Rossendale with 22 people. "We stand here as English and German friends some three years after Norman Driver's death. What a great thought to remember Norman in this way. The bench is a monument to Anglo-German friendship."





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Inauguration of the memorial bench for the late Norman Driver from Rossendal at the Bocholt Aa Lake (from left to right): Mayor Thomas Kerkhoff, initiator Willi Frieg, Klaus Kock (Chairman of the KAB Ss Ewaldi), Andreas Becker (Chairman of the German-British Society Bocholt) and Rosalie Driver.