

Salzwedel



The name Salzwedel originates from the Ford that was needed to cross the marshes of the River Jeeze on the old salt route between Lüneburg and Magdeburg. Archaeological findings confirm that there was a castle complex built there, which was first mentioned in documents dating back to 1112.

The town of Salzwedel in the Altmark was first established in 1233 with a new town bearing the same name developed in 1247. The two towns were united in 1713. In modern terms it lies about halfway on a line between Berlin and Hamburg in Saxon Anhalt and has a population very similar to Felixstowe of 24,000.

Much of the town's earlier wealth can be attributed to the salt trade, hence the name, and long distance trading, the production of linen and weaving. Salzwedel benefited from its convenient location on the then navigable waters of the River Jeeze.

When Germany was divided after the war, Salzwedel found itself just inside the Soviet controlled East Germany. Since reunification, thanks to its diligent citizens, it has succeeded in getting back on its feet. It has concentrated its town planning efforts on maintaining its very varied Gothic brick and half-timbered buildings, which constitutes its most precious architectural assets.

Felixstowe became involved with Salzwedel some 24 years ago because of its already existing relationship with Wesel through the Hanseatic league.

When we first visited, we found dilapidated buildings and a very high unemployment rate. In the 1960's natural gas fields were discovered and they had become the principle source of employment. On the reunification of Germany, the gas fields were bought by a foreign company and closed. Notwithstanding all of this, the town exuded immense charm and frankly we were captivated by it and its people.

There is still evidence of the Soviet occupation, the border and barrack blocks, communications centre and bunker.

There are 3 principal Churches all of which are very old. In the town is the birthplace of Jenny Marx, wife of Karl, an abundance of quaint cobbled streets with half timbered houses which have now been sympathetically restored. The local delicacy is Baumkuchen, literally meaning tree cake. There are many small traditional shops in the interesting town centre.

The Salzwedel Partnership Association was formed to foster close cultural, sporting and friendships between our two towns. There have been visits in both directions of choirs, musicians, Rotary members, youth clubs, sea scouts, the rifle club and many individuals.

The generous grant from Felixstowe Town Council was utilised to help support our aims and objectives.