

Boston Hanse Group at the 42nd International Hansetag in Neuss (Germany) 26th – 29th May 2022

Report of Mike Peberdy, Boston Hanse Group

Summary

- Boston represented in Germany
- Working with the other English Hanse towns to strengthen links and boost tourism
- New contacts with European Hanse towns yielding new Boston heritage information
- New European contacts producing new tourism possibilities.

Each year representatives from approximately 120 Hanseatic towns and cities from 16 different European countries meet for the Annual Hansetag. This is held in a previously nominated Hanseatic town / city. This year, the 42nd International Hansetag was held in the German city of Neuss, near Dortmund, on May 26-29th May 2022.

The Hanse developed from about 1150 with the north German Baltic towns of Lubeck, Rostock, Wismar, Stralsund and Visby loosely forming a trading group, which grew from strength to strength increasing their ideas and practices of working/trading together, achieving business monopolies and using their strength in numbers to gain superior trading terms and concessions. Initially, from 1180 to 1230 they honed their Baltic trade with Russia, the Baltic states and Poland. After Peace Treaties were signed with Denmark, allowing their ships, Kogges, to trade beyond the Kattegat, they arrived in London and the towns on the East coast of England. Towns such as Boston, King's Lynn, Hull, Yarmouth, Ipswich were the initial centres to trade their goods and buy wool.



After a gap of 300 years, the modern Hanse was restarted in 1980 in the Dutch town of Zwolle and its membership has now increased to nearly 200 towns and cities. Boston was represented! Lynn and Beverley were also represented.

During the Hansetag, a variety of meetings are held, including Business, Tourism, Arts, Hanse Projects, Youth Hanse, a Hanse Market and the General Meeting of all delegates. At the beginning and end of the Hansetag, there is normally a colourful procession of all the 'cities' parading through the host city with their flags and music. Very large crowds gather to watch, wave, cheer and applaud the visiting Hanse 'cities. At the Rostock Hansetag (2018), it was estimated that 400,000 people enthusiastically attended, waving, clapping and cheering us and waving flags. What a warm reception we had!



(The Hanse Market surrounds St Quirinus in Neuss)

In the Hanse Market, each town/ city may have a 'marquee'/tent to display their merchandise/ attractions/ advertising/ information leaflets and posters and these may be shared. eg The Dutch Hanse of 9 towns have one large marquee display together, showing their strength in numbers.

This year, I was invited to share the Beverley Tent in the Hanse Market and work with the delegates from Beverley, including the English Commissioner, Hamish Stewart and King's Lynn, represented by their Ex Mayor, Nick Daubney.

We all helped as a team, answering visitors' questions about our Hanse heritage and tourism of the English towns, handing out leaflets from Boston, Beverley, King's Lynn and Yarmouth. It is all great fun but tiring speaking each day, to hundreds of people from different nationalities and some with little English. I understand that all our visitors had questions and information needs answered by the England team and happily went on their ways.

The Hanse Market is where you 'sell' your city/town's heritage and place in the world and make new contacts. With the impact of the Boston Hanse Group, **Boston is now a better-known town in Europe and not as frequently confused with Boston USA, which was/is a frequently asked but another story/history!



(Hamish Stewart, Hanse Commissioner of the six English towns, with Executive Officer of the International Hanse, Stephanie Bischof, of Lubeck)

We received a lot of interest from visitors from other Hanse towns and the wider German public. Many could speak English, but a few words and smiles help communication. It is exciting to re-meet previous Hanse acquaintances and people from other towns and countries, such as Bruges, Bergen, Kampen (Holland), La Rochelle (France), Lubeck (Germany).

New contacts were made with Munster (Germany) and following my discussion and exchanging leaflets, a reply from the Munster Tourism Office followed with an attached copy of a German history reference to the Medieval History of Munster including links to Wisselus Smalenburg and Boston St Botolphs Church. This is now being translated with the help of Dr Paul Richards, Historian from King's Lynn. Further contact with Munster is ongoing.

A further talk given by a Dutch Elderman from Kampen, described the discovery of their second medieval kogge in the IJssel river near Kampen. This has been recovered and is now in the stages of preservation, which may be completed in 2024. Kampen now receives several hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Kampen is the home of the replica Kogge, which we are hoping will visit the English east coast ports of Ipswich, Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Boston and Hull, to duplicate those voyages of the 13th – 15th Centuries. Further contact with Kampen is ongoing.

(At the Annual Delegates Meeting, due to the Russian attacks and invasion of Ukraine on February 24th 2022, the suspension of all Russian cities from taking part or being funded by the International Hanse was confirmed unanimously)

The Boston Hanse is working with the other English Hanse towns and this will continue to strengthen their cultural routes and links, encouraging more tourists from Europe and the UK. This can clearly be seen in Holland, where tourism has increased ten-fold over the last seven years, all brought about by the nine Dutch towns working together.

In 2023, The International Hansetag is in Poland, in Torun, a UNESCO city, approximately 100 miles south of Gdansk. This is scheduled for 22nd – 25th June 2023. The Boston Hanse Group is planning to represent Boston in Torun 2023.