

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SAWBRIDGEWORTH'S TWINNING LINKS WITH MOOSBURG AN DER ISAR AND OF MOOSBURG ITSELF

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TWINNING



Pictured above is the new town twinning sign in Moosburg for the link between Sawbridgeworth and Moosburg formally established in 2018. Note that we have lost our EU stars! At the time of writing (August 2020) we are still awaiting our updated twinning signs, as you drive into the town, which will include Moosburg!

In Europe, pairs of towns are called twin towns, but other languages refer to friendship towns or partner towns; in North America and Australasia, the towns are called sister cities. Brother cities was the name of twinned cities in the old Soviet bloc. Twin towns often (but not always) have similar populations, industries and other characteristics. The French word is 'jumelage' (twinning) but the Germans prefer 'Partnerschaft' (partnership).

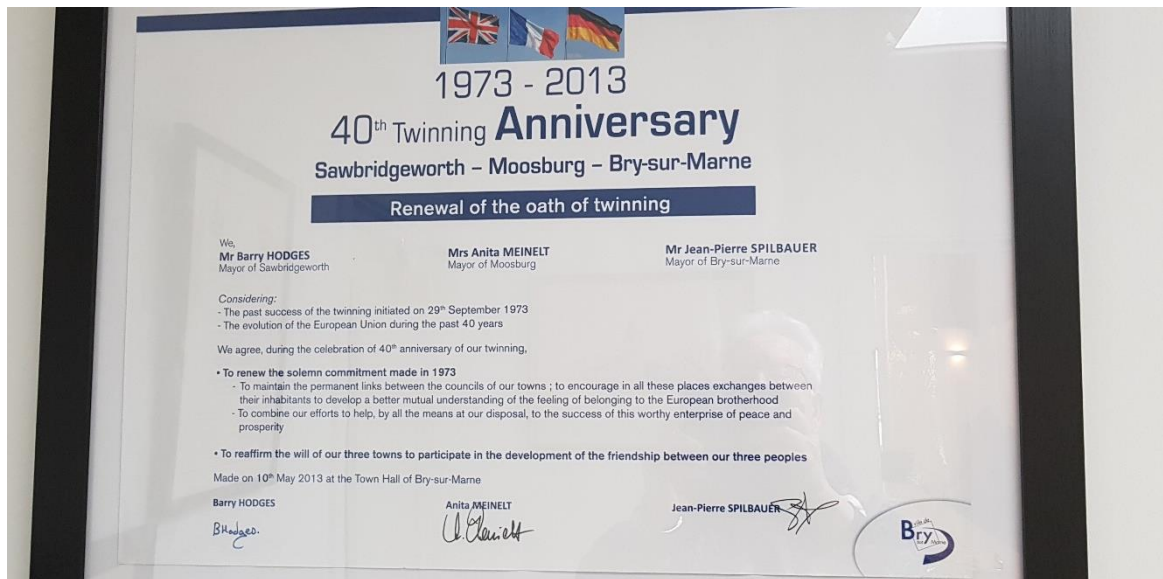
Although both Bry-sur-Marne and Moosburg were included in the original tripartite oath signed on 29 September 1973 in Bry-sur-Marne (see separate article on www.sbwhistory.com), Sawbridgeworth and Moosburg did not develop twinning exchanges until 2017 and signed a joint declaration in Sawbridgeworth in March 2018. This hangs in the Town Council antechamber (see photograph below). Initially a separate committee for the Moosburg link was formed, before amalgamation in February 2019.

Moosburg an der Isar is a town in the Landkreis Freising in Bavaria, close to Munich. It has a population of around 19,500.



Initial contacts with the Moosburg Town Council twinning contact Erwin Weber were made by (Cllr.) Eric Buckmaster on a visit to Bry to mark the 40th anniversary of their relationships with Moosburg in May 2013. A renewal of the town twinning oath was signed (see below) by the three town mayors, including Cllr. Barry Hodges for Sawbridgeworth. Bürgermeisterin Frau Anita Meinelt signed on behalf of Moosburg

and M. Jean-Pierre Spilbauer on behalf of Bry-sur-Marne. Both of the latter retired as mayors in 2020.

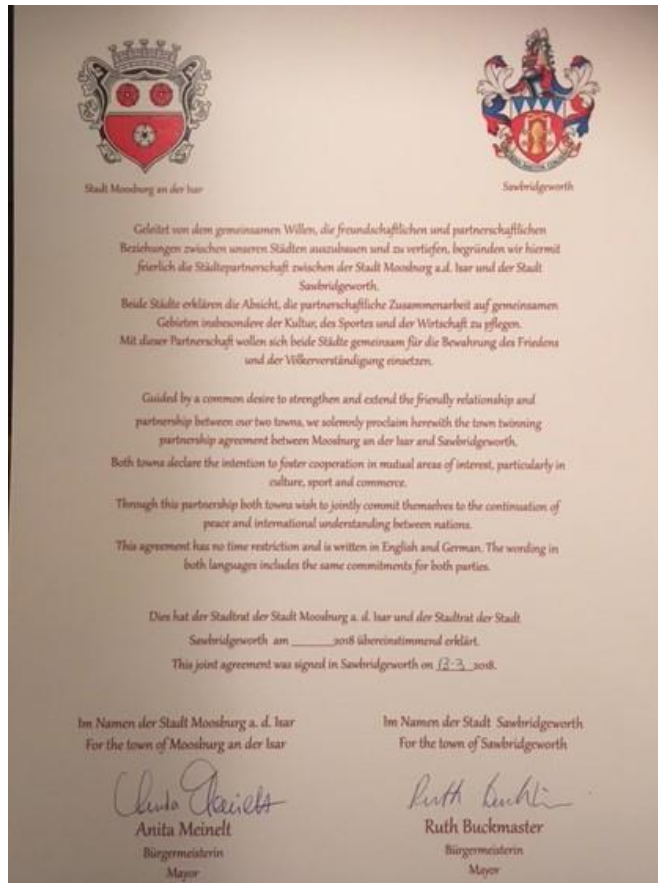


A small group of six (the Buckmasters, Dicksons and Royles) then went to Moosburg in May 2014 to coincide with the visit to Moosburg by a group from Bry to move the conversation on.

The inaugural town twinning visit to Moosburg took place in October 2015, when a party of 18 people from Sawbridgeworth, including town mayor Eric Buckmaster, visited Moosburg. This started the annual exchange visits, alternating between Sawbridgeworth and Moosburg. A party from Moosburg visited Sawbridgeworth and Cambridge in October 2016 and we visited Moosburg in October 2017. At an informal dinner, the Town Mayor, Cllr. Ruth Buckmaster handed a declaration on behalf of the Town Council committing us to the strengthening of links between our two towns to Herr Erwin Weber, a member of the Moosburg Town Council with responsibility for twinning. We also presented our hosts with a wooden plate made by Sawbridgeworth resident, the late Nick Bright, with the names and crests of both towns on it.

On Tuesday 13 March 2018 March, Moosburg Mayor, Bürgermeisterin Frau Anita Meinelt and Sawbridgeworth Mayor Ruth Buckmaster signed a town twinning declaration in the Council Chamber, formalising the relationship between our two towns. Frau Meinelt was accompanied by two town councillors from Moosburg: Erwin Weber and Stefan John (the youngest councillor at 22).

The text in both languages reads: 'Guided by a common desire to strengthen and extend the friendly relationship and partnership between our two towns, we solemnly proclaim herewith the town twinning partnership agreement between Moosburg an der Isar and Sawbridgeworth. Both towns declare the intention to foster cooperation in mutual areas of interest, particularly in culture, sport and commerce. Through this partnership both towns wish to jointly commit themselves to the continuation of peace and international understanding between nations. This agreement has no time restriction and is written in English and German. The wording in both languages includes the same commitments for both parties.'

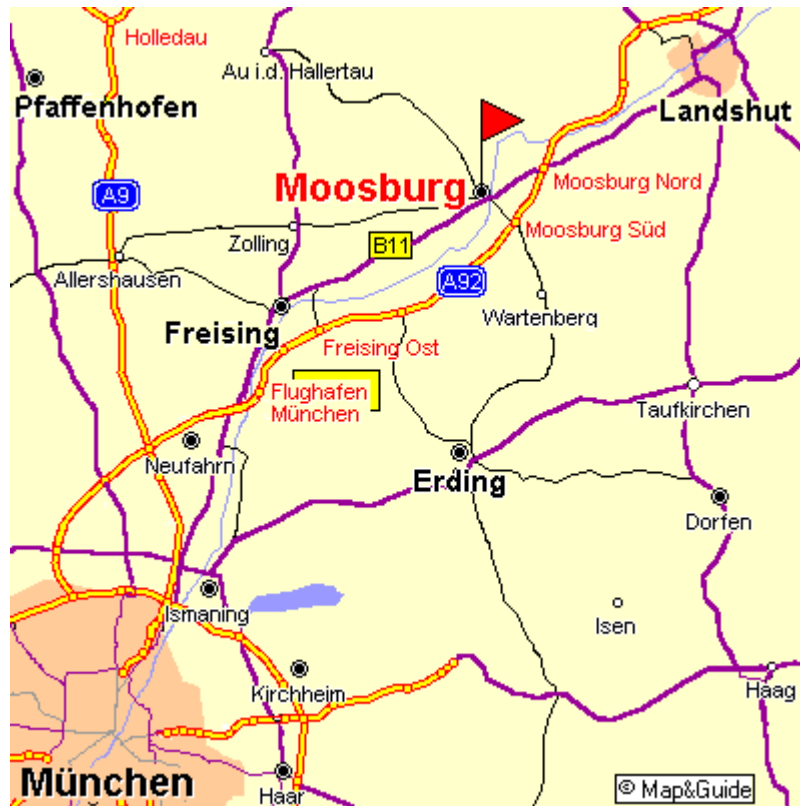


Twinning declaration, March 2018

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that we have had to cancel the incoming visit planned for October 2020, including a concert to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. We expect to reorganise this for 2021, and also to participate in Moosburg's 1250th anniversary celebrations.

Sawbridgeworth Town Council has been generous in its support, hitherto, especially for incoming visits, but it is likely to reduce and the Sawbridgeworth Town Twinning Association (STTA) has to raise its own funds by organising quizzes, wine tasting etc. It has also participated in the May Fayre each year, dispensing wine, cheese and information. There is a big difference between the three twin towns in terms of population and also funding: both Bry and Moosburg have specific people responsible for twinning and visit costs are met from local taxation. We cannot, unfortunately always match the level of hospitality we receive. Nevertheless, what we do provide is always appreciated and we continue to explore closer links through music and our shared European history. Neither twin has the equivalent of our Local History Society, but we have made contact with local historians in both towns.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MOOSBURG



Like Bry-sur-Marne, Moosburg has a lot of information on the town and its history on its websites (see References), which I have drawn on, with a little help from Google Translate. There is separate coverage, too, of Stalag VII-A, the large prisoner-of-war camp, of which only fragments remain. This housed mainly French and Russian, but also British, as well as Canadian prisoners.

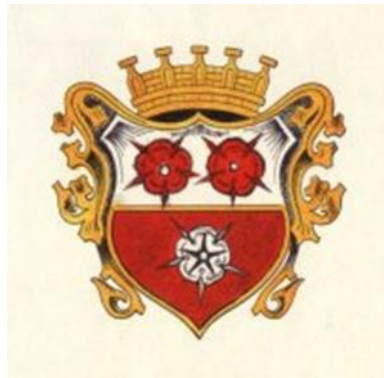
Moosburg's history starts as a Benedictine abbey in 769 (illustrated below). Previously independent, the royal imperial abbey became the legal property of the Freising diocese in 895 through the Emperor Arnulf. The monastery fell into disrepair but was partly rebuilt. As part of a general reform, Bishop Egilbert von Freising initially handed over clerical structures to a community of friars after 1027, until they were then transferred to a canonical foundation between 1140 and 1146.



The important Isar crossing, as well as the needs of the monastery and the local nobility, led to the fact that from 1147 very diverse kinds of employment were documented, and a customs station was built before 1155. This probably led to the awarding of market rights and, thus, initiated urban development.

The abbey was a place of pilgrimage and the remains of St. Kastulus came to Moosburg before 809, and the increasing population finally required the construction of today's Kastulus church, for which Duke Henry the Lion was certainly the cornerstone as part of the great state parliament held at the end of January 1171. This historical monument testifies to the great importance of Moosburg in the 12th century.

The Kastulusstiftskirche was consecrated in 1212, after it was restored. The Moosburg dynasty ceased to exist in 1281 with Konrad IV. Moosburg was soon granted the right to use the symbol of its noblemen, the three roses, in the municipal coat of arms.



Moosburg's coat of arms

Moosburg was listed as a fortified township as early as 1311 and specifically identified as a city two years later. However, the construction of the outer wall, with its three city gates (demolished between 1867 and 1899), did not begin until 1403, because the route of the city moat was only decided in that year. In 1468, Duke Ludwig the Rich of Landshut laid the foundation stone for the new Gothic choir in the Kastuluskirche, in which, half a century later, the most important work by the Landshut sculptor, Hans Leinberger, the 14 metre-high main altar, was installed. This was the peak of church and cultural life in Moosburg. It was particularly hard for Moosburg that the monastery was moved to Landshut in 1599, as the canons made a significant contribution to the development of its economy.

The 30 Years' War brought economic and social impoverishment after repeated occupation and arson (1632). As soon as the citizens recovered from this horror, the city was hit by another major fire in 1702, during which more than half of the houses were destroyed. The city suffered further during the War of the Spanish and Austrian Succession (1701-14) and the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802). In 1865, another devastating city fire hit Moosburg. The city centre has therefore been shaped by the architectural style of the 19th century.



Moosburg town centre today

The development of Moosburg into an industrial city began after the turn of the twentieth century, when well-known companies started up, such as Süd-Chemie (1906), which processed clay, Steinbock (1922), machinery factory, later forklift manufacturer, dairy and cheese factory (1936). Driescher (1938) started production as an electrical engineering company and Peschler (1939) as a vehicle manufacturer.



Moosburg 'Altstadt', old town (above), town hall (above, left), 'Maibaum' (above, right)



Detail from the Moosburg 'Maibaum' (maypole) in the main car park; part of this whole tradition is that one village tries to steal the maypole from the neighbours. If they succeed the safe return of the maypole is up for negotiation with ransoms involving copious quantities of beer and food. Maypole stealing is governed by a pretty strict code of conduct.

The prisoner-of-war camp STALAG-VII A (1939 to 1945)

Shortly after the beginning of the Second World War, in September 1939, a prisoner-of-war (POW) camp called Kriegsgefangenen-Mannschafts-Stammlager (Stalag) VII A was established north of Moosburg. Originally it was planned for 10,000 prisoners, but at the end of the war more than 70,000 Allied soldiers were detained in the main camp, housed in tents and barracks on an area of around 35 hectares. A total of 150,000 POWs passed through Stalag VII A. Most of the prisoners were French (around 38,000 as at 1 January 1945), followed by prisoners from the Soviet Union (around 14,300 as at 1 January 1945). Dr Dominik Reither (see References) has written a full account of this Stalag, in German, with archive photographs.

In 1945 US troops occupied Moosburg and liberated the POWs. Until 1948 the camp served as Civilian Internment Camp No. 6 with up to 12,000 German prisoners who were accused of having supported the Nazi regime. German refugees settled in the

former Stalag area from 1948 on. It developed into Moosburg's Neustadt (new town) with its craftsmen's workshops and commercial enterprises.

REFERENCES

Moosburg town website (in German): <https://www.moosburg.de/Startseite-Aktuelles.n1.html>

Moosburg a.d. Isar im Bild, Heimatverein Moosburg e.V. 2008 [a copy was presented to me/STTA during a twinning visit]

Town sights: <https://www.moosburg.de/sehenswuerdigkeiten>

Town history (in German): <https://www.moosburg.de/Geschichte.html>

Twinning (in German): <https://www.moosburg.de/staedtepartnerschaften>

Official town film: <https://www.moosburg.de/imagefilm-2018>

Stalag VII A (film in English): <http://www.moosburg.org/info/stalag/indeng.html>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0gAAhY7Re8>

Stalag VII association; information and photographs (in German): <https://stalag-moosburg.tumblr.com/>

Reither, Dominik, *Stalag VII A Moosburg*, BoD – Books on Demand, Norderstedt, October 2019; ISBN 9783750408340. [I have a copy of this.]

Coat of arms (in German): <https://www.moosburg.de/Wappen.html>

Climate change action planning: <https://www.moosburg.de/klimaschutz>

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