

Towns celebrate 25 years of twinning relationship

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A delegation from Kronberg spent a few days in Aberystwyth last week

Aberystwyth celebrated its 25th anniversary of twinning with a German town last week, as the towns came together for the first time in over two years. Kronberg and Aberystwyth first became twinned in 1997, after nearly 30 years of school exchanges between Ardwyn Grammar School, and later Penglais School, and Altkönigschule, Kronberg. As part of the celebration, a delegation from Kronberg arrived in Aberystwyth last week, including the “father of twinning” Fritz Pratschke. In 1968, as a “young and enthusiastic teacher”, Fritz started the school exchanges, running them successfully until his retirement in 1999.

The Cambrian News attended a dinner, on Wednesday, 18 May, to find out more about the cross-continental relationship. Fritz said: “A town between Dover and London would have been easier for us, but we never regret twinning with Aberystwyth. Because it is so different – the culture, the landscape, the geography. “Here we have the sea, the hills, and the sheep. When you come to Kronberg, we have Frankfurt nearby. And Kronberg is a beautiful old town, with a castle built for Queen Victoria’s eldest daughter, Victoria, Princess Royal.” Aberystwyth Kronberg Twinning Committee (AKT) chair, Chris Hodgson, took over from former mayor Carol Kolczak three years ago. Chris said, while the twinning was built on the foundation of Fritz’s school exchanges, it has now extended to cover many local groups. Chris is part of the Ramblers, and they often visit the local Kronberg walking group. But the chair and president of the Kronberg committee, Barbara Reimer, who replaced Fritz in 2011, said she is struggling to get children to take part in the school exchange, due to Penglais School no longer teaching German: “But it’s not just about the language, it’s about getting to know another country, another culture. People don’t have to be afraid of not speaking German. Lots of people speak English.” Fritz added: “For every club and organization, it’s difficult to get young people involved. It’s the same for religion and sports, the young want to be independent. They can travel wherever they want to know. When I was young, for me, travelling to the UK was like travelling to Australia now.” To celebrate the 25th anniversary, AKT are planning a trip to Kronberg for an art and wine festival, on 5 to 7 August 2022. After that, AKT will be making their annual trip to Kronberg, for the Christmas market, on the second weekend of December.