



Twinned with Vinstra, Nord Fron
Kommune, Gudbrandsdalen, Norway

Norwegian Twinning Association Richmond, North Yorkshire HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION

Richmond, North Yorkshire is twinned with Vinstra, Nord Fron Kommune, Gudbrandsdalen, Norway.

VINSTRA IN NORD FRON

Vinstra is the main town and administrative centre of Nord-Fron district. The area has many similarities to Richmond and the Dales, being mainly composed of deep river valleys cutting through beautiful mountain and moorland scenery.

Much of the area is a National Park and offers many opportunities for hiking and canoeing, white water rafting, horse riding and skiing, both downhill and cross country, the Norwegian national sport. Lillehammer, south of Vinstra, hosted the 1994 Winter Olympics. The area is renowned for its dairy produce, especially its unique brown cheese, Brunost!

Per Gynt, the legendary adventurer and storyteller, immortalised by Ibsen and music by Grieg, was a native of the area. Every year Vinstra has held a Per Gynt Festival of Music and Folk Arts, culminating in an open-air production of the Ibsen play.

Twinning activities include civic and informal visits; cultural, recreational and educational exchanges and sporting links, leading to personal friendships, as well as events to increase the awareness of the public about another country, the place and its people.

WHAT IS TWINNING?

Twinning has become a common word to describe a special relationship between two modern communities. The modern movement has largely grown up since World War 2. The main purpose of twinning is to widen horizons and promote international friendship. To achieve this, local twinning associations exist to provide a means whereby local authorities, schools, organisations, businesses and individuals can communicate with people of similar interests in the twinned town.

WHY A TWINNING WITH NORWAY?

The twinning between Vinstra and Richmond began in 1987 with a request from Norway. This was stimulated by Norwegian memories of Richmond's local regiment, the Green Howards, and their brave defense of Nord-Fron during World War 2.

In 1940 German forces invaded Norway. The Gudbrandsdalen Valley, the heart of the Nord-Fron commune, saw fierce fighting between Germans and Norwegians, assisted by the Green Howards. Visible reminders of the conflict still exist in the village of Kvam where bullet scored gravestones surround the memorial to the English and Norwegians who lost their lives. The twinning was, therefore inspired by relatively recent events.



However, much older links can be found in the Norwegian Viking settlements of the Yorkshire Dales in the 10th and 11th centuries resulting in such place names as Thwaite, Keld, Muker, Arkengarthdale and Askrigg. Today the two areas are similar in their rural setting where agriculture and light service industries provide employment.

TWINNING EVENTS

The first exploratory visit by a Richmond delegation was in 1987. The official twinning took place the following year when the Norwegian civic party visited Richmond.

The Mayor of Richmond visited Kvam in 1990 to mark the 50th anniversary of the battle between the German army and the combined British/Norwegian forces. The king of Norway was also present.

An exchange takes place every two years with the Richmond guests being invited to Vinstra sometimes to coincide with the Per Gynt Festival while our Norwegian friends are invited back to visit places of local interest.

As well as going on visits and providing hospitality for the Norwegians, the twinning association also annually marks Norwegian Constitution Day on 17th May. Celebrations may include an exhibition, music evening, Taste of Norway night and receptions at the Town Hall and Green Howards museum.



Norway's Constitution Day commemorates the signing of Norway's constitution at Eidsvoll on May 17, 1814. It's usually referred to as "syttende mai (May 17)" or "Nasjonaldagen (The National Day)" in Norwegian.



In 2014 the Mayor of Richmond and the Twinning Association experienced the special national day in Vinstra to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the signing.

Richmond Twinning Association holds its annual general meeting usually in November, which is open to all who are interested in twinning and there are regular committee meetings throughout the year.

The Association is always keen to welcome new members and individuals, families or groups and organisations. Ideas for twinning activities are also welcome.