

PRESS RELEASE

23 November 2009

Living history: Sylt's customs and traditions

The Söl'ring Foriining heritage society preserves the old traditions and shapes the future

For over a century, the Sylt heritage society Söl'ring Foriining has worked to preserve the island's unique customs and traditions, its natural scenery and monuments. "The aim of the society is to kindle and interest in and promote local history and patriotism on the island of Sylt". This objective was defined in 1906 in the society's founding statutes, and since then Söl'ring Foriining has worked ceaselessly to achieve its mission. With around 1700 members, including many visitors who have been coming to the island for years, Söl'ring Foriining is the largest culture preservation and environmental protection society in North Frisia. "Söl'ring Foriining not only preserves customs and traditions, the society also integrates them in the present and ensures that they continue to play a central role in life on the island", says Moritz Luft, managing director of Sylt Marketing.

One key element in preserving the island's heritage is keeping the island's local language, which is called Söl'ring, alive. This linguistic jewel is listed in the "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages". The future of the language looks promising once more, as Söl'ring is now taught to children in kindergartens and primary schools, and the demand for adult classes is increasing rapidly. The traditional costume groups of the heritage society are another key attraction, drawing large audiences: members display the popular red and white traditional costume of the island, which was worn regularly until the 18th century, as well as a slightly less well-known blue and white version.

Other key activities include the curatorship of the stone age burial mound Denghoog in Wenningstedt and the "Vogelkoje" bird sanctuary in Kampen, as well as running both the museums in Keitum. These are the original Old Frisian house which has a reconstruction of the original interior, showing how people lived on the island in the 18th century. Only a few steps away from the Old Frisian house is the Sylt Heritage Museum, which offers an incredible variety of exhibits, including the many maritime souvenirs brought back by the island's seafarers.

History is not only made and lived in Sylt's Frisian villages, it is also shaped: these villages are vibrant centres for local craftspeople and artists who transform the island's unique colours and shapes into beautiful artefacts and objects. In their small studios and workshops, Sylt's weavers and potters, goldsmiths and glassblowers create delicate treasures.