

A Concise Account of Bad Bramstedt's History



The Beginnings

A number of tumuli (grave mounds) dating from the second pre-Christian millennium as well as an extensive cinerarium dating from the Iron Age testify the fact that the Bramstedt region was populated in pre-historical times. The dry substratum of the Bleeck and at the Kirchenbleeck in the midst of meadow and moor land – these were ideal conditions for population settlement. It is to the credit of a ford of the Osterau that an essential north-south-connection route lead through the townlet in pre-Christian times already. Traders and warriors – and later missionaries and pilgrims, too – passed by. Surely, a good many people would also take such a nice opportunity to rest. Bram-stede, i.e. "Stätte des Ginsters" (approx. "The place where the broom grows"): this name represents the meadows gay with broom bushes in blossom of earlier times. The ending of the name indicates that the place was founded during the first post-Christian centuries. This early foundation also explains the fact that the church is not situated at the market place, the Bleeck, since the Bleeck was already fully built-up at the time, when the church was erected.

The Church Parish

The first time the church is mentioned in a document was in the year of 1316. At that time, Bramstedt already held the status of a parish town. The consequence of this fact was that Bramstedt served as a church town for a number of villages in the neighbourhood, and, secondly, that the parish clerk as the highest temporal administration officer of the parish had his seat here. He would be endowed with police authorities, collect taxes and register incoming complaints. These complaints were tried by the court of the free peasants (the Holstens) which was in session 4 times a year up into the 18th century.

The Cattle Trade

Times of commercial flowering started for the Bramstedt people during the 15th century with the cattle trade. Every spring, ten thousands of cattle herds, ox-herds for the most part, were driven from Jutland to the South on passage to the economic centres on the Rhine and in the Netherlands. Amongst other routes, these cattle processions followed the old trade route through Bramstedt (der "Ochsenweg" (approx. "The Ox-road"), today known as a long-distance bikeway).

In Bramstedt, travellers, however, not only found a resting place, but for a long time important cattle fairs were held here as well. In this connection the wooden Roland-statue was erected, presumably during the 15th century. The Roland symbolized justice in cattle trading. Below this statue the traders made up contracts. In case of disagreements legal decisions were made on the spot by a merchant's court.

The Path to Modern Times

During the 20th century Bramstedt developed into a recognized salt water and mud health resort with two supra-regionally well-known hospitals, the Rheumaklinik and the Medizinisch-Psychosomatische Klinik (approx.: The Medical-Psychosomatic Clinic). At the same time, the number of inhabitants has increased rapidly during the last ten years. In 1988, the town had 9,600 inhabitants, in 1999 it had more than 12,000. The heavy afflux of young families settling down in Bad Bramstedt has been good for the average inhabitant age. The economic structure is characterized by trade and middle-class industry as well as by the health tourism. At present, the two clinics, holding just about 600 beds, present themselves as the employers offering the most jobs. There are more than 1,000 people employed in the two of them. In Bad Bramstedt you'll find more than 700 tourist beds in hotels, boarding houses, and with private room letters as well as more than 20 restaurants.

Translated by Helle Jensen
 © **Tourismusbüro Bad Bramstedt**
 Bleeck 17-19
 24576 Bad Bramstedt
 Tel. 04192/50627 · Fax 04192/50680
 E-Mail: touristinfo@bad-bramstedt.de

Studio Sommerland
 Sommerland 5c
 24576 Bad Bramstedt
 Tel. 04192/9950 · Fax 04192/9951
 E-Mail: h.b@to-service.de



Points of interest

- 1 Town Hall
- 2 Friedrich's Bridge
- 3 Roland
- 4 Schloss („Castle“)
- 5 Wiebke-Kruse-Sculpture
- 6 Lower District Court
- 7 Old School
- 8 Roland Pharmacy
- 9 Im Winkel
- 10 Maria-Magdalena-Church
- 11 Railway Station
- 12 Station Hotel, Gym and School
- 13 Water Mill
- 14 Parish Hall
- 15 „Matthias Baths“
- 16 Gesundbrunnen („Fountain of Health“)
- 17 Oskar-Alexander-Street / Alexander House



Sightseeing tours for groups can be booked with:

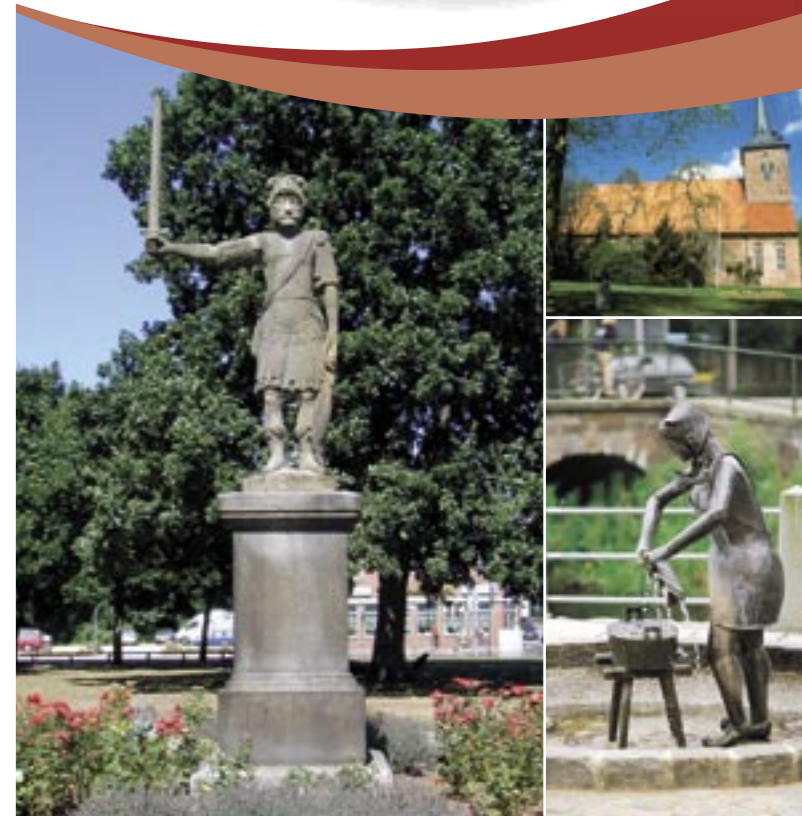
Tourismusbüro Bad Bramstedt
 Bleeck 17-19 · 24576 Bad Bramstedt
 Telefon 04192/50627 · Fax 04192/50680
 E-Mail: touristinfo@bad-bramstedt.de

Day trips in the surroundings

Bad Bramstedt is an ideal starting point for a lot of interesting undertakings in the county of Schleswig-Holstein.

For example:

- Freilichtmuseum Molfsee
- Karl-May-Spiele Bad Segeberg
- Hansestadt Lübeck
- Glückstadt an der Elbe
- Tierpark Neumünster
- Wildpark Eekholt



A Walk round the town

1. The Town Hall

The town hall of Bad Bramstedt is situated at the Bleeck, the "best room" of Bad Bramstedt. The word "Bleek" comes from Low German, and means "borough", i.e. "unfortified town", which Bad Bramstedt was up to the year of 1910.



The building, which is today the town hall, was built around 1820 as a customs post with living-quarters. In the year of 1867, the Prussian administration of justice converted the building into an "Amtsgericht" (a lower district court having jurisdiction over minor civil and criminal cases), and as from round about 1926, the town hall and the police station with official government living quarters were established here as well. In 1959, the building was extended by the town hall, the travel agency, and the labour exchange parts. The older part was renovated in 1988/89 and, at the same time, a new building with a stairway made of glass was added.

2. Friedrichsbrücke

(Friedrich's Bridge)

The Friedrichsbrücke spans the course of the river Hudau, and is the oldest bridge of Bad Bramstedt which is built of stone. It was constructed in 1833 as a coping stone of the Altonaer-Kieler Chaussee (the Altonaer-Kieler Avenue). This avenue which is still in a very good condition was the

first macadamized road of its kind north of the river Elbe. It was officially opened by the Danish King Friedrich VI (1808-39) who is told to have said during the inaugural ceremony that the bridge must have been built of silver. With this, he was hinting at the immense construction costs of the bridge.

3. The Roland

– the Landmark of the Town
The Roland symbolized justice in cattle trading. Below this statue the traders made up contracts. In case of disagreements, legal decisions were made under his sword. As can be proved, wooden Rolands have been standing here from approx. 1500 until 1693. The only existing Roland made of stone – sand stone from Oberkirchen – was created in the year of 1693. This statue was restored in 1748, 1827, 1895, and 1965.



4. Das "Schloss" (the "Castle")

– the Gatehouse of the Earlier Gut Bramstedt (the Bramstedt Estate)

During the first half of the 16th century, the landed property of Gut Bramstedt was given the status of a nobleman's estate. Thus it formed an administration and judicial district of its own, the Lord/Lady of the manor of the day being in charge. The first estate owner was Dirk Vaget (1500-1538). The building still existing was built between 1631 and 1647, approx., as a coach gatehouse

to the castle situated behind it. The original purpose of this building is still evidenced by the large and elaborate archways through which carriages and coaches formerly drove through. As from 1633, the estate was in the possession of Wiebke Kruse. Her lover, the Danish King Christian IV, made her a present of it, and the Gatehouse was then used for storage and handling of tools and agricultural implements and as an accommodation for the servants.

After the death of Wiebke Kruse, the estate stayed in the possession of her family. Her granddaughter married the Earl of Kielmannsegg who in the year of 1685 unsuccessfully tried to force the Bramstedt inhabitants into villeinage. Headed by the borough governor of that time, Jürgen Fuhlendorf, – whose direct descendants are today keeping the restaurant "Kaisersaal" at the Bleeck – the Bramstedt peasants struggled and gained their freedom.

In the year of 1751, the Earl Stolberg, the bailiff of the County of Segeberg, bought the estate. Due to the dilapidated state of the castle, this was pulled down. The Gatehouse at the Bleeck was converted into a stately residence. Through her correspondence with Goethe, one daughter of the Earl, her name was Auguste, who was born in 1753 at the "Castle" here, became famous as Goethe's "liebes Gustchen" ("dear little Auguste"). From 1966 till 1969, the Gatehouse was renovated and redecorated in the style of Earl Stolberg. Interested tourists may visit the building in the course of the official sightseeing tours (see calendar of events).

5. The Wiebke-Kruse-Sculpture

Wiebe Kruse – a farmer's daughter from Föhrden near Bramstedt of assumedly 15 years' age, was just laundering at the ford of the Osterau (the East Meadow) in the year of 1625, as the gaze of the travelling Danish King Christian IV fell on her. To begin with, Wiebke Kruse was engaged as a lady's maid of the queen; from 1629 until the king died in 1648, she was his mistress. Her son was born in 1630, her daughter in 1633. Wiebke Kruse died a few months after the king. Her direct descendants are still living in these parts. Christian IV made his mistress a present of the estate Gut Bramstedt, the "Schloss" (see item 4).

The sculpture was created in 1995 by the metal sculptor Alfred Schmidt, who lives in Trappenkamp. With this piece of art he wanted to capture the spectacle that greeted the eyes of King Christian on his visit in 1625. The sculpture is a present from the Bürger- und Verkehrsverein (Citizens' Society) of Bad Bramstedt to the town of Bad Bramstedt, and is supposed to keep awake the memory of the historic figure of Wiebke Kruse and the amazing ascent of a non-aristocratic woman at the time of the Thirty Years' War.

6. The Amtsgericht (the Lower District Court)

The former Amtsgericht was built in 1898 as a business and dwelling house of the merchant Wilhelm Bracker. In the year of 1929, it was converted into a Lower District Court-building with living quarters for the judicial officer and was used as such from 1930 until 1999.

7. The Old School

This building was erected round about 1840 as a school. About 1900, the school was extended by 4 class rooms, and in 1951 further extensions, i.e. entrances and stairways, were added. In 1984/1985 the building was renovated, and today it accommodates the public library and the adult evening classes.

8. The Roland Pharmacy

Appointed by Royal Charter Under the reign of the Danish King Friedrich VI (1808-1839) the pharmacist Mr. Koch from the town of Segeberg was granted the privilege by royal charter to establish a branch pharmacy in Bramstedt. Before he was able to fulfil this project, Mr. Koch died, and the privilege was thus granted to the pharmacist Martin Noodt from Tönning. During the years 1959 and 1972, a number of alterations were made to the building. The floor was lowered, so that the three steps in the pavement were no longer necessary. Unfortunately, the original house front was masked according to the zeitgeist of those years.

9. The Corner called "Im Winkel"

The three buildings were all erected before 1900. The exact date is unknown. The restaurant "Schmiede" (approx.: "At the Blacksmith's") to your left, which is serving Indian specialities, earlier accommodated a blacksmith's workshop and living quarters, the building in the middle accommodated a barber's shop and living quarters. Around 1850, as can be proved, the Dehn family kept a restaurant in the building to your right, which was known as "Zum Nordpol" (approx. "The Northpole"), and later as "Im Winkel" (approx. "In the Nook"). Today, this building accommodates the Chinese restaurant of the Ho family.



10. The Maria Magdalena Church

The church is open to the public every day from 8 a.m. till 16 p.m., if no services or other ceremonies are being held. In 1316, the parish Bramstedt was mentioned for the first time in a document in connection with land parcelling amongst the earls of Holstein. The cruciform solid brick church with a longitudinal rectangular nave is assumed to have been built during the first half of the 13th century. In 1635/36, the tower was reconstructed.

During the next two centuries, the external appearance of the church was altered several times, e.g. the southern portals were closed and the church was equipped with new-gothic windows and a projecting structure to the east. Inside, the church was furnished with galleries. During the last renovation in 1876 a flat plastered ceiling was put in. Until then, the ornamentally painted ceiling joists and the wooden ceiling boards showing paintings of saints in between had been uncovered, and from then on the joists as well as the saint paintings in between were hidden by this new ceiling.

During the preinvestigations in head of the general renovation in 1990/91, the restorer found fascinating panel paintings at the galleries as well as indications of the colouring of the ceilings and discoveries as to the original flooring. The oldest exhibition piece of the church is the baptismal font made of bronze and reposing on three carrying figures. The baptism bowl made of yellow brass, with its star and string of pearls, was made in 1663. The gothic three-wing wooden carved altar from the second half of the 14th century shows a painting of the Lord's supper at the predella as well as eight oil paintings of the Passion of Christ. The other panels contain Christ and Maria under tracery arches, flanked by two female saints and the Twelve. The altar is crowned by a painted topping border of fruit bundles, flowers and volutes, dating from the late renaissance period.



As the inscription "Caspar Faget" shows, the altar was originally donated by the parish governor Vaget in the year of 1625. The female name patron saint, Maria Magdalena, is shown as a standing figure, and in the sense of history of art this can be assigned to the 16th century. The paintings at the gallery show various biblical motives. They are rather impressing, and virtually call for contemplation. They can be assigned to the early Baroque period. For further details, please see the illustrated bible which is exhibited in the anteroom of the church.

11. The Railway Station

The railway station building is dating from the year 1898, as the Altona-Kaltenkirchen-railway line was extended to Bramstedt. The extension to Neumünster followed in 1915/1916. On the occasion of its 100th anniversary, the building was renovated and put back into its original state.

12. The Station Hotel, the Gym and the School

In 1905, a hotel was built at the station enclosure, and in the former hall of this hotel the third generation of one family is running a cinema. Next to the railway hotel the Bramstedter Turnerschaft (approx.: "The Bramstedt Gymnastic Club") built its first gymnasium. In 1912, an extension to this gymnasium was built, and thus it came to look, as it does today. During the same year, a private pupils' parents society erected a school building next to the gymnasium in order to establish a secondary school here. Today, this building accommodates a primary school, and the gymnasium belongs to this, too.

13. The Dwelling House of the Water Mill / The Turbine Wheel of the Former Water Mill

On the opposite side of the street you'll see the dwelling house of the former Bramstedt water mill. If you should want to have a look at the turbine wheel of the mill, please pass by the dwelling house, cross the mill bridge, and then you'll find it to your left.

The turbine wheel was produced in 1847, and in 1849 it was built into the newly erected Water Mill of Bramstedt. At that time, this mill was one of the most modern of its kind.

The origin of the water mill of Bad Bramstedt can be traced back to the year of 1546. From 1633 until 1698, the mill belonged to the noble estate Gut Bramstedt, and into the 20th century it was run on a self-supporting basis. In the year of 1968, the main building of the mill was pulled down. Today, the dwelling house is occupied by private people.

14. The Parish Hall at the Schlüskamp

This building was erected in 1912/13 by the protestant parishioners. From the very beginning, it was referred to as the „Haus fröhlicher Arbeit" (approx. „The House of Happy Activities"), and up to now it has always been offering room for any citizen group of the parish. The theatre fittings, containing a stage, scenery flats and wings, and other appropriate equipment were a special attraction. Nowadays, the building accommodates a kindergarten, rooms used for youth club activities and a „One-World-Shop".



In case you have got more time for Bad Bramstedt and would enjoy a nice walk along the meadows, we would like to recommend the following three sights in addition to above (total distance to walk 6,5 km)

15. The "Matthias Baths"

of the Rügerpark (in the Old Health Resort Area) It is due to the initiative of the Bramstedt citizen Matthias Heesch that the town of Bramstedt has developed into a health resort. In 1879 he instigated the drilling of a brine well with water strongly impregnated with salt, he built a bathhouse to begin with offered hot salt water baths. Salt water baths, thermotherapies and mild sulfur thermal baths are known to be successful remedies against rheumatic diseases.

The success was not long in coming, and was prompted even more through the opening of the Altona-Kaltenkirchen-railway line in 1898. The "Matthias Baths" were created, and the health resort gardens were extended to include the Rügerpark and kept in a well-groomed condition, a fact which still shows in the great number of rhododendrons. In 1911, a second salt water bathhouse was erected, because an ever increasing number of spa visitors – mainly wealthy people from Hamburg – came to Bramstedt.

In 1910, the title of "Bad" (approx.: "Spa" or "Health Resort") was conferred upon the town of Bad Bramstedt – by the imperial Post-Office Divisional Administration. After World War I, the combination of mud and brine, as existing in Bad Bramstedt, was bestowed with increased attention. A mud bath is an ideal medium to preserve warmth, and thus makes it an optimum remedy for the treatment of rheumatic patients. For this reason it was decided to admit and cure larger groups of patients as a rheumatism spa in cooperation with the social insurance funds.

As the rheumatism sanatorium was built in the "new health resort area" (see item 17), the Rügerpark was left to nature and has thus developed into a charming mixture of cultivated and wild plants. Until the new public open-air baths at the Badesteig were built, the baths in the woods served as public open-air baths.

A Walk to the "Gesundbrunnen": 20 minutes

16. The Gesundbrunnen (approx.: "Fountain of Health")

The Gesundbrunnen, the medicinal spring, is the fountainhead of all health resort matters in Bad Bramstedt. One day in the year of 1681, as a young boy from Bramstedt, who had been suffering from fever for more than a year, was herding the cattle of his father on the road from "Bramstede" to "Bymöhlen" he became terribly thirsty. He quenched his thirst at a natural water spring – and this water cured his fever.

The rumour spread quickly, and a lot of people came to drink from this medicinal spring. In 1688, however, the "Fountain of Health" fell into oblivion.

In 1761 it was "rediscovered". Now, such a huge number of people came to drink from the fountain that the department in charge had to issue "Regulations for Orderliness". After a number of quiet years, there was another boom in 1810, and after this another sequence of quiet years was then again to follow, until the master carpenter Matthias Heesch (see item 15) with his steady commitment finally caused Bramstedt's development into a health resort to begin with the "Fountain of Health".

During the last couple of years, this medicinal spring and its surroundings were rather overgrown. Thanks to the commitment of Bramstedt citizens and sponsors, the "Fountain of Health" has been reconstructed, and is now being maintained in a good state by private initiators.



A walk to the Oskar-Alexander Street: 30 minutes

17. The Oskar-Alexander-Street/The Alexander House

At first, Oskar Alexander, a merchant from Visselhövede, took the Bad Bramstedt health resort on lease. His commercial success and his commitment persuaded financiers, the town authorities and social insurances to found the Rheumaheilstätte Bad Bramstedt GmbH (approx.: the Bad Bramstedt Rheumatish Health Resort, a private limited liability company) in 1929 in order to cure larger groups of patients by means of the local rheumatism remedies mud and brine. The new building – at that time it was called the "Kurhaus" and today the "Haus Alexander" – was inaugurated in October 1930, and at the beginning of 1931 the first patients came. Oskar Alexander was to be the first director; he succeeded in keeping the wheels running at the rheumatism health resort despite of the world depression. His personal successful soliciting for private patients – abroad as well as back home – and his own inventions, like e.g. dispatchable dehydrated mud brine, contributed considerably to this fact.

In spite of his successful work, however, different groups began conspiring against him, the Jew, after the National Socialists had seized power in 1933. In spite of his services, he was arrested during the autumn of 1941 and died in 1942 in the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen.

The Rheumaklinik Bad Bramstedt endeavours to keep alive the memory of Oskar Alexander and his services to the Rheumatism Health Resort. Further literature, as well as a brochure, is available at the clinic and at the tourist information office.

