

Frisian Islands Germany-Netherlands

Europe

Teaching the Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'í Geography – Frisian Islands

Frisian Islands

The Frisian Islands are part of the Wadden Sea Archipelago off the coasts of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. The eastern and northern islands in Germany have an ethnically Frisian population speaking their own language. Their area is 450 km² and population now about 50,000 on the 14 inhabited islands, including Föhr and Sylt, described by Shoghi Effendi as 'inhospitable and windswept'.

FRISIAN ISLANDS



Frisian Islands

- Netherlands
- Germany
- Denmark



North Frisian Islands



North Frisian Islands, Germany
Natural colors

Landsat 8 data courtesy of U.S. Geological Survey
Processed by Pierre Markuse



Frisian Islands



Frisian Islands

Frisian Islands



Frisian Islands





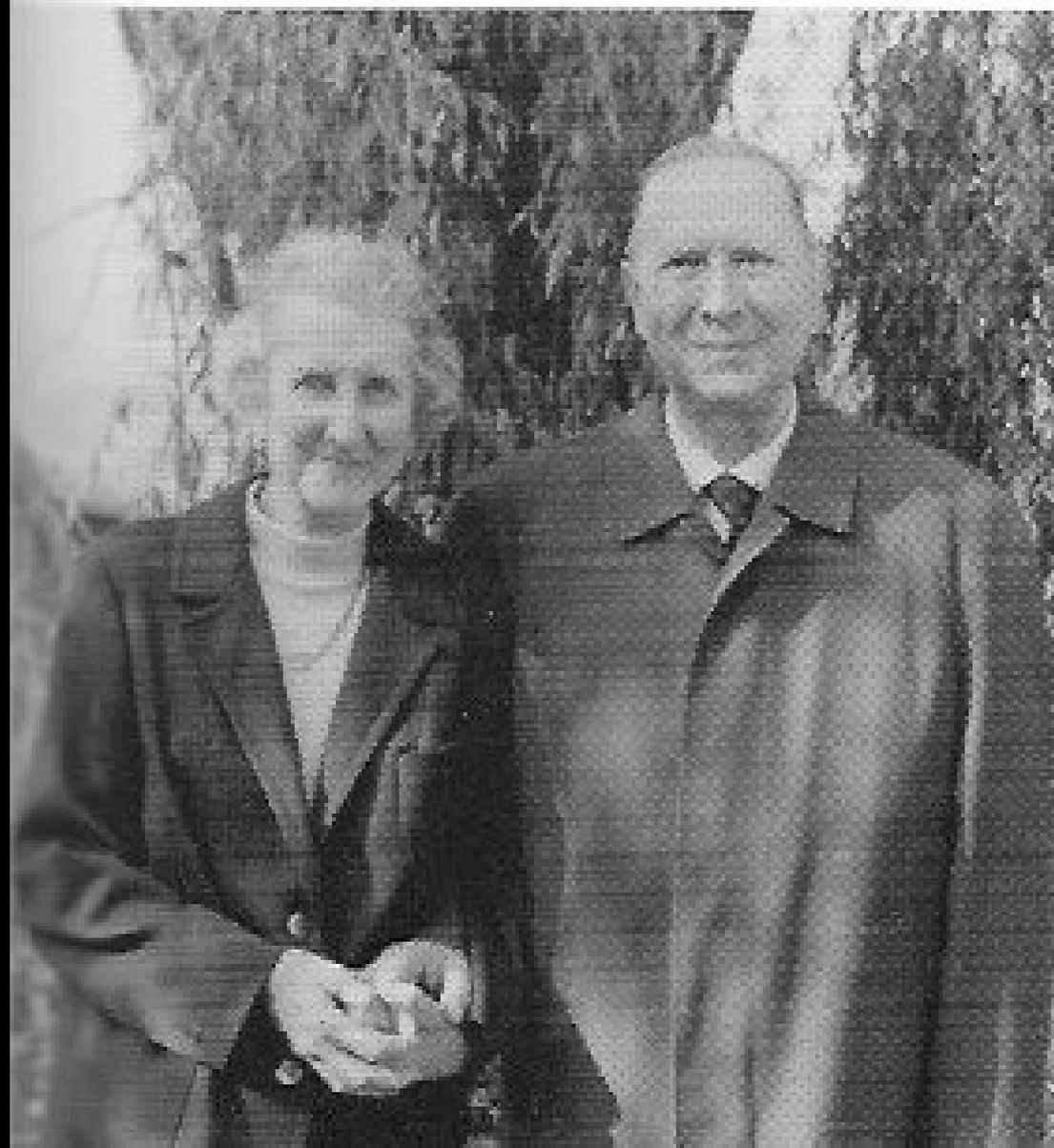
Frisian Islanders in traditional dress



Elsa Maria Grossmann

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Elsa Maria Grossmann (1896-1977) was born in Argentina but moved to Germany in 1909, where she encountered the Bahá'í Faith about 1919 through her brother, Hermann Grossmann, later a Hand of the Cause, and accepted it immediately. She was imprisoned for her beliefs by the Nazi regime in the 1930s. At the Stockholm International Teaching Conference in July 1953, she volunteered to go Westerland on the island of Sylt, arriving on 24 September 1953, and remaining despite poor health for 11 years until 1964. She passed away in 1977.

Elsa Maria Grossmann
and her brother
Hand of the Cause
Hermann Grossmann





Sylt Island, Frisian Islands



Sylt
Island

Frisian
Islands



Sylt Island, Frisian Islands

Elsa Maria Grossmann

"The story of the opening of the Frisian Islands to the Cause of God is, as yet experienced, not a very crimson-coloured one when compared with many others from more radiant pioneer places. This was for a long time a heavy load on us here, but only the fact that our beloved Guardian was fully aware of the situation, and often transmitted to us his inspiration and loving comfort, lightened its weight."

(Elsa Maria Grossmann, quoted in Earl Redman, *The Knights of Bahá'ulláh*, p.329)

Elsa Maria Grossmann

“We think of the little white lighthouses everywhere on these islands, looking over the sea calmly and firmly, and fully indifferent to the storms and tempests around them, just showing the seeking sailor the right route. This is exactly our way: to be like lighthouses of His Cause for whomsoever seeks His Path. And this finally, God willing, may lead to His Spiritual victory.”

(Elsa Maria Grossmann, quoted in Earl Redman, *The Knights of Bahá'ulláh*, p.329)

Frisian Islands



Ursula von Brunn

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Ursula von Brunn (1917-2002?) was a war widow with a nine-year-old daughter, Gisela, and limited finances. She had only been a Bahá'í for a year when she attended the Stockholm International Teaching Conference and volunteered to go to Wyk on the Frisian Island of Föhr, arriving on 7 October 1953, where she found the islanders very closed to outsiders.

Ursula
and
Gisela
von Brunn

Frisian Islands



Föhr
Island

Frisian
Islands





Föhr Island, Frisian Islands

Föhr Island
Frisian Islands





Föhr Island, Frisian Islands

Gisela von Brunn

"In summer, everybody would move into garages etc., in order to rent every available space to the tourists; in winter, they would shut themselves up in their homes. There is a saying that one has to share the contents of a full bag of salt, before becoming friends with them - which hints to almost a lifetime of knowing each other!"

(Earl Redman, *The Knights of Bahá'ulláh*, p.329)

Ursula von Brunn

The only people open to teaching were outsiders. Ursula visited a local shopkeeper every two weeks and repeatedly invited her and her sister over for tea. Many months later they finally accepted and enjoyed the visit, but a week later Ursula and Gisela could not afford to stay longer and were forced to leave in the spring of 1955.

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh

Maybe your whole life only was
A preparation for this Day.

On Ridván ev'ning it was achieved:
"I am Baha'i. Now come what may".

The storm arose. You did accept,
To be alone and scolded, ridiculed.
Your faith gave meaning to your life;
Family strife seemed small to you.

Then came the call. The Guardian's plan,
A crusade for the entire world,
Called everyone, woman and man -
So short the time and wide the field.

You were all set to do your part,
All that was in your power to do.
Back from Stockholm, you, without rest,
Sought a new home in Frisian lands.

Your bags already almost packed –
Your back wouldn't stand it anymore.
Moreover, now you got the news
That the travel fund did not exist.

In a couchette coach, without money,
You were setting out on your conquest.
You felt quite small, not a hero at all,
With hunger, pain, and deep despair.

The sun is sinking, wind and sea
Are glorious - you forget the pain.
No matter how tough conditions are –
God helps, and we are not alone.

Two winters long you stayed on Föhr,
Too short to eat the sack of salt.
Hardly a soul listened to you –
Frisians don't like disturbances.

And yet the seed was planted now,
Bahá's fragrance brought all the way here.
The tree will sprout, though be it late,
The light will shine in the dark night.

It started 40 years ago,
When you began to be a Baha'i,
And those who know you even a little
Are sure: your contribution was not small.

*For "Mutterle" from Gisela
El Alba, December 1991*

Poem by Gisela von Brunn for her mother

Ursula von Brunn

While Ursula swore that she never would pioneer again, in 1967 she visited Gisela and her husband pioneering in Bolivia, was welcomed by the Universal House of Justice as a new pioneer there, and stayed teaching and serving for the rest of her life until 2003.

West Frisian Islands

The West Frisian Islands (Waddeneilanden) on the Wadden Sea are in the Netherlands.

Noorderhaaks and Texel are part of North Holland, while Vlieland, Terschelling, Ameland, and Schiermonnikoog are part of the province of Friesland, and smaller islands are further east.

They are the remains of a glacially formed sand bank, possibly the ancient coastline of Holland.

WEST FRISIAN ISLANDS

©GraphicMaps.com



West Frisian Islands



West Frisian Islands

Geertrui Ankersmit

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Geertrui Ankersmit (1926-) from Nijmegen, the Netherlands, became a Bahá'í in Brighton, England, in October 1951. At the International Teaching Conference in Stockholm, she decided to pioneer to the Frisian Islands, arriving in DenBurg on Texel Island on 6 October 1953.



Geertrui Ankersmit



Texel Island, Frisian Islands



Texel Island, Frisian Islands

Den Burg

Texel Island,
Frisian Islands



Geertrui Ankersmit

She was a professional dress designer, and with her hand-operated sewing machine on the back of her bicycle she rode around the island to get sewing work. As she peddled along, she 'would sing out Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá and Alláh-u-Abhá because Shoghi Effendi told us that it was very important that the Greatest Name should be sounded around the world.'

(quoted in Earl Redman, *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 331)

Texel Island, Frisian Islands



Geertrui Ankersmit

Geertrui found several jobs sewing curtains, as cook in a children's home, and at a home for the aged, but she became ill from overwork and needed rest, so she left Texel for The Hague and then Luxembourg in January 1956 to help reform the Local Spiritual Assembly.

Geertrui Ankersmit

In 1960, Geertrui went on Pilgrimage, staying at the Western Pilgrim House at 10 Haparsim, where she was greeted by Jessie Revell. Living conditions were simple there, sharing a single shower room with John and Dorothy Ferraby, Paul and Marjorie Haney, Leroy and Sylvia Ioas, and Horace and Doris Holley. A single kerosene heater in the dining room provided warmth. Milly Collins lived in the House of the Master, bathing herself with a bowl of warm water in her bed-sitting room.



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 1960



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 1960
Panorama of Haifa; Hand of the Cause Ferraby at House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 1960
Jessie Revell; Hand of the Cause Mr. Kazeh at House of Abbud



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 1960
Gatherings at Western Pilgrim House

Geertrui Ankersmit

Hand of the Cause Jalal Khazeh took her to Bahji, where she met the custodians Dr. Forsyth and Janet Ward, as well as to Akka, the Temple land and the new Archives Building not yet ready.

Lotfullah Hakim showed them the artefacts in the back room of the Shrine of the Báb including the blood-stained clothing of Mirza Mihdi and the sword of Mullá Husayn.



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 1960
Jalal Khazeh, Forsyth Ward; Hands of the Cause Ferraby, Furutan, Haney, Holley, Khazeh



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 1960
Dr. Lotfullah Hakim

Geertrui Ankersmit

After she married Ronald Bates in Luxembourg, he became Deputy-Secretary-General of the Bahá'í International Community in Haifa in 1970, where she served as a pilgrim guide. They moved to Jerusalem in 1988 and to New Zealand in 1991, where Ronald passed away in 2006.

Prayer

He is God.

O Thou forgiving Lord! These servants were noble souls, and these radiant hearts were made illumined and resplendent through the light of Thy guidance. They drank a brimming cup of the wine of Thy love, and gave ear to eternal mysteries imparted by the melodies of Thy knowledge. They bound their hearts to Thee, broke free from the snare of estrangement, and laid hold of Thy unity. Make these precious souls companions of the inmates of Heaven, and admit them into the circle of Thy chosen ones. Make them intimates of Thy mysteries in the retreats of the realm above, and immerse them in the sea of lights. Thou art the Bestower, the Luminous, and the Kind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá)