

Wenstrup – Wisendorphe 'First Documented Recording' 1000 - 1200 AD

As mentioned in the previous chapter there was at this time a Benedictine monastery including a cloister and abbey standing along the Weser river. This Cloister Corvey was founded by Charlemagne after his defeat of the Saxons in the 9th century. It became one of the most important and influential monasteries in Europe during the middle ages.

The index of tax collections recorded in the 11th century at the Cloister Corvey is extensive, consisting of 200 farms in 151 places. Many of the farms from the Damme mountain region are named. The farms noted were in the original Latin surnames and include Henninheim / Hinnenkamp, Osterep / Astrup, Hursten / Hörsten, and Grobberehuson / Grapperhausen. Additionally taxation of the Wisendorphe / Wenstrup farm is noted. A Latin original designation for the nearby farm of Westrup cannot be determined however.

It can be seen that Wisendorphe in this document is definitively the Wenstrup farm because of the sequence of farm listings. The farms are listed and itemized taxation lists given in an order which conveyed the route followed by a porter picking up the taxation goods. That is to say that in the index list, the Wisendorphe farm exists between the farms of Grapperhausen and Nellinghof, whereas the farm of Westrup would have existed between the farms Osterep and Hursten.

**Veinum – Henninheim (Hinnenkamp) – Osterep (Astrup) –
Hursten (Horsten) – Grobberehuson (Grapperhausen) –
Wisendorphe (Wenstrup) - Nellinghof**

9. Order of listing of the farms around the Damme Mountains in the Cloister Corvey Index.

It is from the records at the Cloister Corvey, that is seen for the first time that a family Wenstrup/Wisendorphe is living in the area just north of what is today known as Neuenkirchen-Vorden and operating a farm. It was also around this time (11th century) that the residents of the farming area around the Wenstrup farm would establish a Catholic parish. This parish was formed in the farming region southwest of Damme, to aid the residents from having to make the long trek over to Damme for Sunday services. It is the building of this church which gave the village that eventually grew up around it the name Neuenkirchen, which means 'new church'.

The founding of the parish of Neuenkirchen is dated at 1159. It was established from the separation of the parish in Damme. In 1391, Vörden would also split off as a separate parish. In the years after the German Reformation from 1651 to 1891 a so-called 'simultaneum' existed. That is to say the church was used by Protestants and Catholics simultaneously. This led to some friction but came to an end in 1891 after the construction of a new Evangelic church. Originally the parish in Neuenkirchen was a part of the diocese of Osnabruck. This lasted until 1828, when the parish became part of the diocese of Munster.

Many of the records of the family Wenstrup are found from these church records. The churchregisters of the Roman Catholic St. Bonifacius church in Neuenkirchen started in 1651. The church books consist of birth, marriage, and death books. Typed out copies of these books are available in four volumes. Baptise register Neuenkirchen (1787-1830) Death register Neuenkirchen (1651-1830) Death register Neuenkirchen 1830 - Marriage register R.C.Church Neuenkirchen (1651-1791). They can be reviewed at the Diözesan Archiv, Köpingstrasse 14 Vechta Germany.

Named St. Bonifacius the church was built as a mission church to the parish in Damme. St. Bonifacius or St. Boniface is known as the "Apostle of Germany" for his work in Christianizing that country." Born to a noble family in Wessex England, and known as Wynfrid, Boniface first became a Benedictine monk and then a priest. His first efforts to convert Frisian Saxons (Denmark region) to Christianity failed and he journeyed to Rome where he met with Pope Gregory II. Pope Gregory changed Wynfrid's name to Boniface and sent him back to the Saxon region of Germany to convert the pagans east of the Rhine river and to baptize them according to Roman formula (as opposed to the Celtic formula which had taken hold in his birth country). Boniface was so successful that he was made a missionary bishop and it was his destruction of the sacred oak tree of the German pagan god Thor at Geismar that made him famous across Europe. Boniface was martyred by a band of Frisians that attacked him while reading scripture to converts on Pentecost Sunday in the year 754.

The original St. Boniface church built in Neuenkirchen-Vorden, which would have been attended by the Wenstrup/Wisendorphe family, was a small wooden structure. This church burned to the ground during the 13th century, and was replaced by a similar sized stone structure. The second building of St. Bonifacius parish was torn down in the 19th century and replaced by a larger structure to contain the growing parish. The stone baptismal font at the entrance of St. Bonifacius was maintained from the second church built in the 13th century and may be from the original parish. Clearly many Wenstrup children would have been baptized here. Today it is also used to hold blessed water for the parishioners entering and exiting the church.



10. Baptismal font located in the front of St. Bonafacius Catholic church in Neuenkirchen Vorden Germany. Photo taken by David and Theresa Oct. 2004.

As previously stated, St. Bonifacius in Neuenkirchen-Vorden was a mission church from the old parish in Damme. As the town of Damme grew, many of the farming parishioners were attending mass from the growing village, later known as Neuenkirchen. It is thus likely that at some time prior to the 11th century, the Wenstrup/Wisendorphe family would have been attending church at the older parish in Damme.



11. Larger scale map showing the location of Neuenkirchen-Vorden just north of Osnabrück Germany.

The time between 1096 and 1291 was the age of the crusades. Knightly religious orders were established during this time including the Templars, the Knights of St. John, and the Teutonic Order. New towns were founded around Imperial strongholds. The towns began to establish municipal rights and liberties, while the rural population (which would have included the Wenstrup farms) remained in a state of serfdom.

The towns of northern Germany at this time joined together into a Hanseatic League. A league of trading cities that for a time maintained a trade monopoly over most of northern Europe and the Baltic. Hamburg to the north and east of Wenstrup became a major player in the control of fishing and other trades in the Hanseatic league. German colonists under strict Hanseatic supervision built numerous

Hanseatic towns during this period around the Baltic including Reval (Tallinn), Riga, and Dorpat (Tartu).

Hannover during this time was a Hanseatic city and the one closest to the Wenstrup farms. It may be surmised that for this reason the Cloister Corvey was given responsibility for maintaining the tax records over such a large area as that of Saxony of the time.