



Good morning ladies and gentlemen!

It's my task today to present to you a German voluntary organisation called the **Rundlingsverein**. This is an organisation entirely made up of volunteers. It has never had any paid staff and its only income is the modest annual subscription paid by its 200 members. Nevertheless it can look back on 46 years of successful activity. The Rundlingsverein exists to protect not a castle or a cathedral, not even houses or gardens. It is there to protect the shape of a particular village settlement.



A Rundling is a tiny village, originally between a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 farmsteads, arranged in a circle around a village green held in common. Each farmstead is the shape of a slice of cake. Churches were never built in the circle, as they are elsewhere.

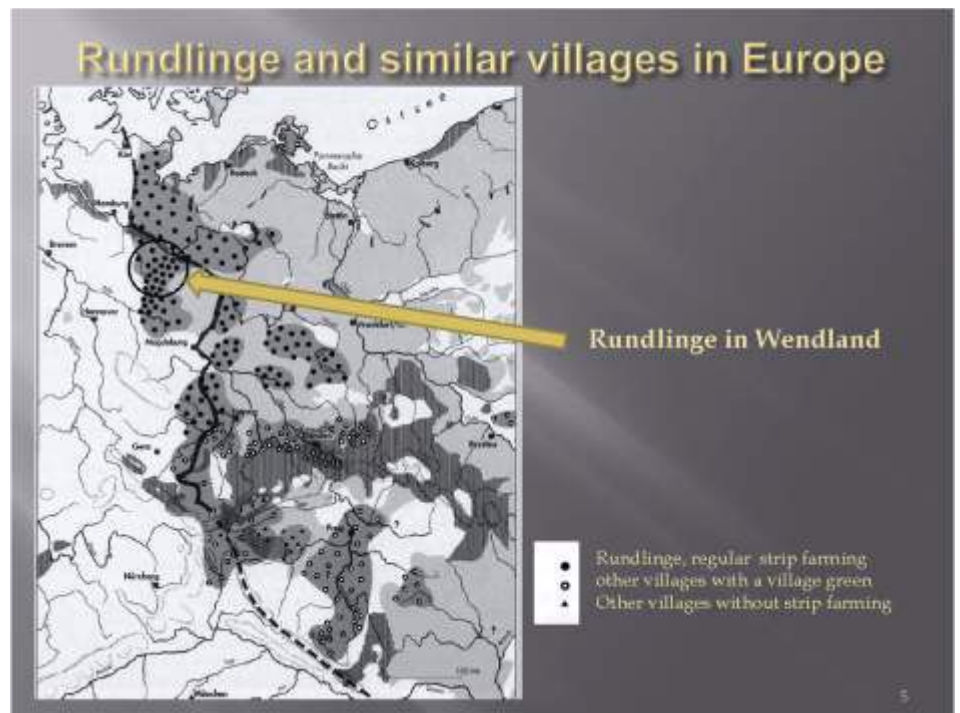
There were no churches, there were no pubs, there were no schools, there were no corner-shops. These were villages made up entirely of farmsteads.



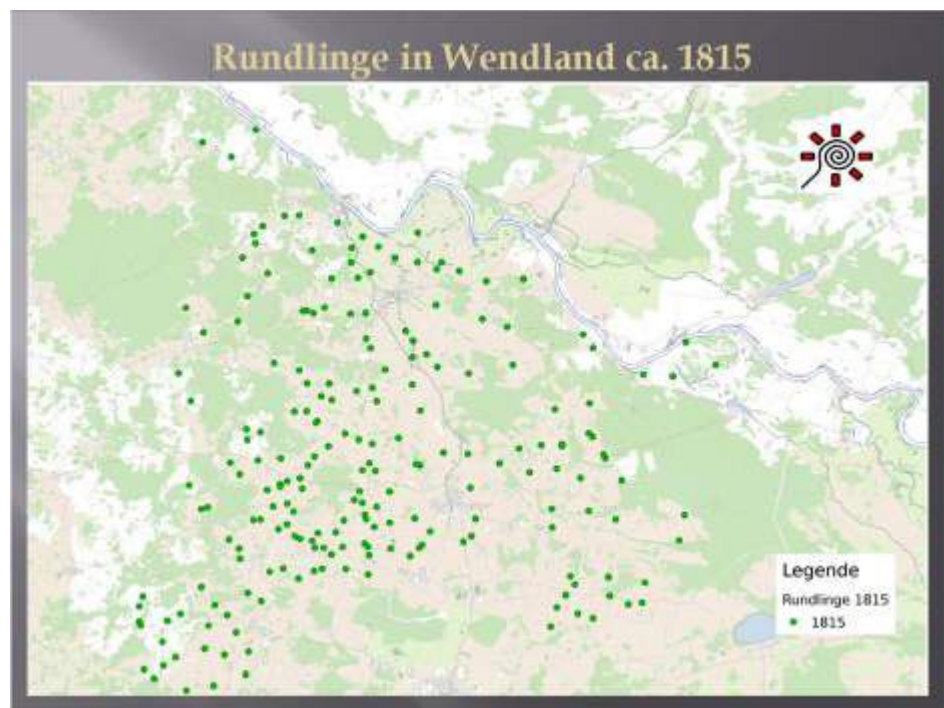
The dominant architecture in these villages today is the North German Hall-house where the farmer lived with his animals, his farm implements and his harvest.



These nowadays are often converted into ordinary family houses.
In the 12th and 13th century there were many hundreds of Rundling villages in a swathe of Central Europe from the Baltic to the Czech Republic.



They were planned settlements in the contact zone between the Germanic tribes of the West and the Slavic tribes of the East. In the 12th century, when the Rundling villages were created, the border was on the River Elbe south of Hamburg.



Over the centuries these villages have disappeared from all other areas, and even in Wendland they have continued to disappear at an alarming rate. This is 1815. Each dot is a Rundling village.

Rundlinge in Wendland today



The Bundling Association



Rundlingsverein, undertook research, published papers and sought publicity, and we should thank them for doing this.

That generation has now largely died, but they handed over the association to a second generation, this time of more local people who wanted to create tourist infrastructure and create jobs.



They developed an earlier idea of an open air museum in a Rundling village, and persuaded the Local Authority to purchase a suitable farmstead in the village of Lübeln.



For the next twenty years the Rundlingsverein renovated the rural hall-houses, translocated outbuildings from other villages, and recreated smithies, bakehouses,

wheelwright's workshops and barns. Finally the completed open air museum was handed over to a tourist organisation to run . They receive 20,000 visitors a year. And we, we are the third generation of volunteers, again local people living in Rundling villages and the surrounding towns. We see our main focus now on helping our local authorities achieve their goal – recognition of 19 of these villages as an area worthy of UNESCO World Heritage status. In German this is called “eine Siedlungslandschaft”.



All these 19 villages have discussed the issues in great detail, and all have voted for inclusion in the UNESCO bidding process. This is a many-year project, and we are only halfway there.

Wendland is a poor rural area in a rich Germany. It has no natural resources, virtually no industry, no motorways, hardly any train lines, but it does have these special villages - the Rundlinge.



We have leaflets and booklets in English for you to read about us. But better still come and visit us in Germany and see for yourselves!

Thank you!

Adrian Greenwood