



Klosterkammer Hannover



Klosterkammer Hannover

Preserving Values – Bestowing Identity

A Short Story of a Long History



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Hannover**

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Klosterkammer Hannover is more than two centuries old. In 2018, it celebrated the 200th anniversary of its statutory foundation. An exhibition in the Lower Saxony State Museum, research projects, publications and numerous events marked this festive occasion.

As a public foundation body, the *Klosterkammer* has distinguished itself for centuries by its faithful adherence to the original purpose of its foundation and its diligent administrative activities, thus gaining general recognition and respect. Having a state authority dedicated to the independent administration and organisation of former church assets in compliance with objectives defined in the Middle Ages is not a matter of course in times of social change. For that reason, the *Klosterkammer* deliberately and continually adjusts its work to the benefit of democratic society. The people of Lower Saxony are familiar with the *Klosterkammer* as a powerful preserver of cultural heritage and sponsor of church-related, social and educational activities.

This brochure aims to satisfy the ever increasing interest in this unique institution and its close links with the history not only of this region, but, through the connection to the British throne also of the United Kingdom.

It would give me great pleasure if this brochure were to find many interested readers.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hans-Christian Biallas".

Hans-Christian Biallas
President of the *Klosterkammer Hannover*



Klosterkammer Hannover

Preserving Values – Bestowing Identity

Klosterkammer Hannover is an institution with a long tradition. Its origins and development are closely linked to the history of this region. The administration of the former monastic assets in its present form by the *Klosterkammer Hannover* dates back to an edict passed in 1818 by the Guelph Prince Regent George, later to become King George IV of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and King of Hanover. The initial impulse for the establishment of the *Klosterkammer* was given during the Reformation by his ancestor, Princess Elisabeth of Calenberg-Göttingen, in 1542.

Established in 1818, it administers former monastic and church assets in four foundations under public law. The largest of these is the *Allgemeine Hannoversche Klosterfonds* [AHK – General Hanoverian Monastic Fund]. Its protection under the law is written into the Constitution of the state of Lower Saxony. The *Klosterkammer* manages and supports fifteen Lutheran convents and ladies' foundations that had continued after the Reformation. Their common feature is that all have been continuously filled with life; across the centuries, they have thus provided space for women living in Christian communities. These institutions comprise the five Calenberg and the six

Lüneburg Heath convents as well as four ladies' foundations.

The main focus of the *Klosterkammer Hannover* is the management of approximately 16,700 leaseholds, making it the largest leasehold provider in Germany. Apart from the real estate department, the *Klosterkammer's* forestry department contributes significantly to preserving its economic basis. This department manages the approximately 25,000 hectares (approximately 62,000 acres) of forests belonging to the AHK through eleven forestry offices. An additional 1,600 hectares (approximately 4,000 acres) of forest belonging to the former convent of Ilfeld in Thuringia are managed by the *Klosterkammer* subsidiary specialised in forest management (*Klosterforsten-Management GmbH*).

From its revenues, the *Klosterkammer* maintains more than 800 buildings that form part of the endowment fund. This includes 43 churches and 18 monastic estates.



Elisabeth of Calenberg-Göttingen, Duchess of Brunswick-Lüneburg



Hannover, Eichstrasse 4:
seat of the Klosterkammer administration since 1877

1510

Birth of Elisabeth to the Elector of Brandenburg Joachim I and his wife Elisabeth of Denmark in Cölln, now Berlin

1525

Marriage of Elisabeth to the 40 year older widowed Duke Erich I of Brunswick-Lüneburg (of the House of Guelph) in the Principality of Calenberg-Göttingen

1528

Birth of her son Erich II

1532

Elisabeth receives the Residence in Münden after a quarrel with her husband concerning his mistress Anna Rumschottel

1534

Elisabeth meets Martin Luther

1538

Elisabeth publicly takes communion in bread and wine, thus demonstrating her conversion to Lutheranism.

1540

Death of Duke Erich I
Elisabeth assumes the regency for 12-year old Erich II

1542

Elisabeth issues regulations for the Calenberg churches [*Kirchenordnung*] and monastic institutions [*Klosterordnung*], thus laying an important foundation for the future *Klosterfonds*

1545

End of her regency for Erich II

1546

Marriage to Count Poppo of Henneberg (Thuringia)

1553

After the victory of Duke Heinrich the Younger of Wolfenbüttel in the battle of Sievershausen, Elisabeth has to leave Münden.

1558

Death of Elisabeth in Ilmenau in Thuringia



Duchess Elisabeth in around 1530
Detail of an oil painting
in the National Swedish Art Museum –
Gripsholm Castle

Elisabeth the Politician



In 1525, at the age of 15, Elisabeth was married to Duke Erich I. In 1532, a quarrel ensued, arising from Erich's affair with Anna Rumschottel, whom Elisabeth blamed for her illness after the birth of her daughter Anna-Maria.

Over the course of this dispute, Elisabeth succeeded in having almost the entire Principality of Göttingen with the Residence of Münden transferred to her as her personal domain.

An important opponent of Elisabeth was Duke Heinrich the Younger, ruler of the Principality of Wolfenbüttel since 1514. His hopes of succeeding to Calenberg-Göttingen had been thwarted. In addition, he disapproved of all reformational developments and viewed with suspicion both Elisabeth's sympathy with Lutheranism and her husband's tolerance.

The latter died in 1540. In his last will and testament, he had appointed Elisabeth guardian of their as yet under-age son Erich II, together with Heinrich the Younger of Wolfenbüttel, Landgrave Philipp of Hesse and Elector Joachim II of Brandenburg. Despite many difficulties, Elisabeth successfully exercised her regency with skill and strategy. Heinrich's open claims to power resulted in a settlement with the estates, allowing Elisabeth

Map of the Principality of Calenberg-Göttingen in the mid-16th century. The Principality of Calenberg is marked in light blue; the Principality of Göttingen in dark blue.

to introduce fiscal measures to reduce the debts of the Principality and to usher in the Reformation in 1542.

When Erich II came to power in 1546, he allowed Elisabeth to keep her residence in Münden. He paid little attention to the affairs of his principality, spent much of his time abroad, eluded his mother's influence, reverted to Catholicism and recatholicized his territory. Despite her marriage in 1546 to Count Poppo of Henneberg, Elisabeth continued to reside in Münden. She disapproved of her son's

politics. After serious disputes, they arrived at a rapprochement in 1551.

To secure her political achievements once again, she entered into an armed conflict with Heinrich the Younger. However, her side lost the battle of Sievershausen in 1553, one of the bloodiest battles ever fought in Lower Saxony. As a result, Elisabeth lost all political influence, spent two years in impoverished conditions in Hannover and then moved to Thuringia, where she died in Ilmenau Castle on 25 May 1558.



View of the town of Münden with the Residence, Detail of a copperplate engraving by Merian (mid-17th cent.)

Elisabeth, Princess of the Reformation

Through her mother, Elisabeth had come into contact with Lutheranism at an early age. Her husband Erich I was tolerant in questions of religion and did not oppose the introduction of the Reformation in the major towns of his principality. In 1538, Elisabeth publicly proclaimed her conversion to Lutheranism by taking communion in bread and wine.

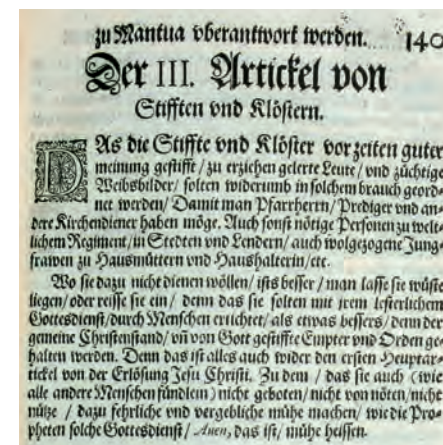
Through the mediation of Landgrave Philipp of Hesse, she contacted the theologian Antonius Corvinus (Anton Rabe) in Witzzenhausen. She summoned him to Münden and appointed him the first superintendent of her principality. In 1542, she established the introduction of the Reformation, and with the substantial contribution of Corvinus, published a Church Order for the Principality of Calenberg-Göttingen.

This was followed soon after by a Monastic Order handed to the convents on 4 November 1542. This edict did not envisage the dissolution of the convents, but in a range of articles ordered a change in monastic life in accordance with Luther's teachings. It dealt with questions such as the liturgy of the hours, the dress code for the inhabitants and the obedience



Duchess Elisabeth, wood cut from the Church Constitution of 1542

Elisabeth's policy on monastic institutions was guided by the Smalkald Articles formulated by Lutheran rulers and cities in 1537, where the objective for dealing with these is defined as follows: "Foundations and convents which were once established in good faith in order to educate scholars and chaste women should once again be ordered for such purpose."



Extract from the Smalkald Articles of 1537:
 Article 3 "Of Foundations and Convents"
 (original in the archive of Kloster Isenhagen)



Monastic Order for the Principality
 of Calenberg-Göttingen of 1543
 (Low German print edition, Hildesheim 1543)

Elisabeth the Author

“Wake up, pious Christendom standing under the word of God. Keepi that and always learni, and you will achieve great honours in life on earth and life eternal” (translated from a wedding hymn of 1555).

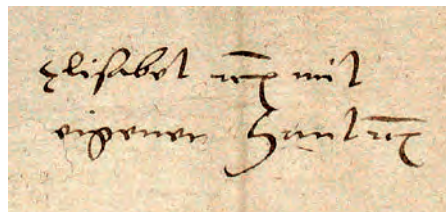
Her responsibility for her subjects, her piety shaped by education and the Reformation and her remarkable erudition formed the basis and the impetus for the many texts, instructions and wealth of letters passed on to us by Duchess Elisabeth.

As early as 1545, Elisabeth published an “epistle” admonishing all her subjects to strive for improvement in their Christian faith and a new life agreeable to God. 1546 saw the end of her regency for her son Erich II; she composed “Instructions and Orders” for him. Regarding the religious houses, she instructed him not to use their assets for his own benefit. For her daughter Anna-Maria, she wrote a “Maternal Instruction”.

Neither of these books was intended for publication, but they were not private matters, either.

Her “Book of Consolation for Widows” of 1556 was dedicated to “all dear widows” as well as her relatives. This book was very successful; it was reprinted five times by 1609.

Between 1553 and 1556, after she had almost completely lost all of her political influence, Elisabeth wrote new lyrics for popular hymns. They were never published. These days, though, they provide us with an insight into the mental disposition of a princess who may have failed politically, but in retrospect will always be seen as the driving force behind the Monastic Fund and the *Klosterkammer*.



Original signature of Duchess Elisabeth:
“Elisabeth in her own hand”
(Archive of Kloster Wennigsen)



Title page of the Book of Consolation For Widows of 1556 in an edition of 1558
(Bibliotheca Augusta Wolfenbüttel)



Cover of the Government Handbook of 1545
(formerly in the “Silver Library” of the
Königsberg State and University Library)

Duke Julius – Reformational Monastic Policies become State Practice

One piece of advice that Duchess Elisabeth had passed to her son Erich II was to use religious houses and their assets for "*piae causae*".

In the spirit of the Reformation, she defined pious causes as spending on education and bursaries, on the poor, widows and orphans, on infirmaries and hospitals.

Duke Erich II, who took over the rulership in 1545, did not heed his mother's advice. He reconverted the monasteries and convents to Catholicism, administered them as if they were his own estates and burdened them with heavy taxation. But – as requested by Elisabeth – he did not interfere with their independence and continued with the central control of their finances as introduced by Elisabeth.

The death of Erich II in 1584 also marks the end of the Calenberg-Göttingen line of the House of Guelph. The Principality of Calenberg-Göttingen passed to the neighbouring Guelph Principality of Brunswick-Lüneburg where Duke Julius, ruler since 1568, had introduced the Reformation in a manner similar to Elisabeth in Calenberg-Göttingen.

Julius transferred the ecclesiastic constitution of his own principality to the new territory. In 1585, he accepted the hereditary homage of the Calenberg convents and in 1588 subjected them to a general visitation. All monastic matters were placed in the hands of commissioners appointed by the Duke.

Billing and accounting for the religious houses was done by the clerks to the treasurer, for the convents from 1589 even in the presence of the Duke himself. Under the rule of Duke Julius, the assets of the religious houses were secured and their economic situation significantly improved.

Julius of Wolfenbüttel, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg (1528–1589)

Engraving/etching Frankfurt/Main 1634
Bibliotheca Augusta Wolfenbüttel A 2581



Duke Friedrich Ulrich – First Steps towards a Monastic Fund

From 1613 to 1634, the Principality of Brunswick-Lüneburg was ruled by Duke Friedrich Ulrich, grandson of the Reformation Duke Julius.

Duke Friedrich Ulrich did not act in a particularly responsible way in administering the monastic estates of the Principality of Calenberg-Göttingen, under Wolfenbüttel rule from 1584. Nevertheless, a first important steps towards the formation of the future monastic fund was taken under his rule.

Possibly in reaction to the Edict of Restitution by Emperor Ferdinand II of 6 March 1629, aimed at the recatholicization of church assets that had passed under Protestant control, Friedrich Ulrich assigned the three communities of Weende, Mariengarten and Hilwartshausen to the University of Helmstedt. The revenues

from these institutions were to be used to make a fixed contribution towards the stipends of the university's professors. Initially, they were fully administered by the university, but after 1633, the duke reserved the right to allocate their economic surpluses. All three were treated as a single asset and their surpluses collected centrally. The first step towards a monastic fund had thus been taken.

Friedrich Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel,
Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg (1591–1634)
Engraving/etching Amsterdam 1630
Bibliotheca Augusta Wolfenbüttel A 2483



The Monastic Fund takes Shape

In 1714, Georg Ludwig Elector of Hanover ascended the English throne as George I. In accordance with a regulation of 1680, his ancestral Hanoverian lands were administered largely independently by the members of his privy council, the central administrative authority. In one of its departments, all matters concerning the monasteries and convents including any revenues received by the monastic treasury [*Klosterkasse*] were handled by officials known as *Klostersekretär* or *Klosterrat*. This treasury received the revenues from the assets of the four former monasteries of Bursfelde, Northeim, Weende and Marienstein and the four convents of Hilwartshausen, Fredelsloh, Mariengarten and Wiebrechtshausen in the Principality of Göttingen, and the five former convents now foundations for ladies into ladies' convents in Calenberg, namely Barsinghausen, Mariensee, Marienwerder, Wennigsen and Wülflinghausen. Convent matters were kept strictly separate from other treasury concerns including seigniorial and financial matters, which were also administered by the privy council offices.

From 1718 onwards, the department dealing with monastic affairs took on its own distinct identity.

Administrative descriptions such as *Klosterkammer* [Monastic Chamber] or *Churfürstliche* [Electoral] or rather *Königliche* [Royal] *Klosterkammer* first appear.

The income of the central monastic treasury had become so stable that, to name but one example, the University of Göttingen, founded in 1737, could be paid an annual subsidy of 4000 Reichstaler, a sum that was to increase to more than 100,000 Reichstaler by 1851.



Kloster Wülflinghausen, courtyard with western wing (1730/40)



Kloster Wennigsen, cloisters (1707/1725)

The Assets of the Secularized Prince-Bishopric of Osnabrück pass to the Electorate of Hanover

The Imperial Recess of 1803 ordered the secularisation of the Prince-Bishopric of Osnabrück. The Electorate of Hanover acquired the assets of Kloster Gertrudenberg and the collegiate chapter of St. John (both Osnabrück) as well as those of the monasteries and convents of Malgarten, Oesede, Iburg, Rulle and Bersenbrück, and the Commandry of the Order of St. John in Lage. However, Hanover was only able to make use of this considerable former monastic wealth once it had finally been awarded control of the territory of the former prince-bishopric at the Congress of Vienna in 1814/15. In the intervening years, the territory had initially been under Prussian occupation in 1806, in 1807 assigned to the Kingdom of Westphalia and from 1810 under French control. In 1818, the former Osnabrück monastic assets were incorporated into the Monastic Fund and placed under the administrative remit of the newly founded *Klosterkammer*. The transfer of the Prince-Bishopric of Osnabrück to Hanover brought to an end the unique rule stipulated in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 that the office of prince-bishop would alternately be held by a Catholic cleric and a Protestant younger son from the House of Guelf, which thus ended in favour of the latter.



The Revenue Office in Osnabrück administers around 3,800 leaseholds. The territory of Osnabrück was integrated into the Monastic Fund in 1814/15.

After the secularisation of the Prince-Bishopric of Osnabrück, Stift Börstel continued as a secular foundation for aristocratic ladies. It is now within the remit of the Klosterkammer Hannover. To this day, the President of the Klosterkammer in his role as State Commissioner is responsible for the legal supervision of this foundation. In this picture: the church of Stift Börstel



The Assets of the Secularized Prince-Bishopric of Hildesheim pass to the Kingdom of Hanover

Following the defeat of Napoleon in 1813 and the peace negotiations in Vienna in 1814/15, the Electorate of Hanover was elevated to a kingdom. The territories assigned to Hanover by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 also included the Prince-Bishopric of Hildesheim, secularized by the Imperial Recess of 1803. In the first instance it had been given to Prussia by Napoleon, and from 1807 to 1813, it formed part of the Kingdom of Westphalia. The monasteries and convents of the former prince-bishopric were secularized, the extensive monastic estates transformed into domains and either sold or given away.

In 1814, the Hanoverian Prince Regent Georg, later King George IV of Great Britain, Ireland and Hanover, forbade further divestments of monastic assets. In a declaration of August 1815, he even reserved the right to buy back monastic estates. Indeed, in the years that followed, the new Hanoverian rulers managed to regain a considerable portion of the former monastic assets.

The assets of the following ten former monasteries and religious foundations within the Prince-Bishopric of Hildesheim passed into the possession of the Kingdom of Hanover: St. Godehard, Heilig



St. Godehard Basilica in Hildesheim

Kreuz, St. Magdalenen and St. Mauritius in Hildesheim as well as Grauhof, Gronau, Lamspringe, Marienrode, Riechenberg and Wöltingerode.

In 1818, the assets of these former monasteries together with other monastic assets in the Untereichsfeld region, in Eastern Frisia and the former Hesse enclave of Plesse near Northeim came within the remit of the newly established *Klosterkammer*.



The former monastery Kloster Grauhof near Goslar

Establishment of the Klosterkammer

On 8 May 1818, the Hanoverian Prince Regent Georg, later King George IV of Great Britain, Ireland and Hanover, signed an "Edict on the Establishment of a General Monastic Chamber of Hanover". The *Klosterkammer* was ceremonially opened on 26 June 1818 by Minister of State Baron von Arnswaldt, who had drawn up the plan for a central monastic administration.

As the result of secularisations in the wake of the Imperial Recess of 1803 and the territorial reorganisation by the Congress of Vienna in 1814/15, the former monastic assets in the Hanoverian territories had increased to at least four times of those that had originally fallen to the ruler at the time of the Reformation. This required an orderly administration of the assets by a dedicated authority, a move also to be seen within the context of a planned reorganisation of the entire Hanoverian political system.

An independent state authority was set up, initially within the remit of the State and Cabinet Ministry, from 1832 of the Culture Ministry; internally, it was divided into regional departments: Calenberg, Hildesheim and Osnabrück. Each department was headed by a councillor, one of whom was in charge of the directorate, in

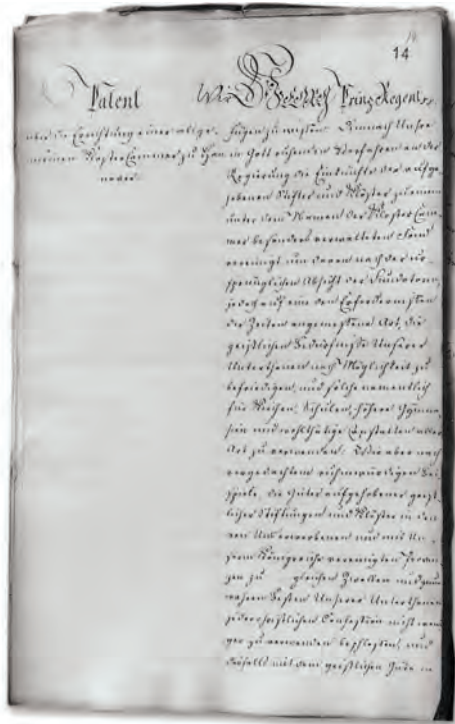
which decisions were made collectively. Compared to the 50,000 talers from the Calenberg-Göttingen monastic assets previously administered by the ministerial department of the Privy Council, the annual revenues of this new administration rose to 300,000 talers.

With the establishment of the *Klosterkammer*, Prince Regent George continued the tradition of his Guelph forebears of dealing with the former monastic assets responsibly and in the spirit of the Reformation. With express reference to this Guelph tradition, he refrained from incorporating the monastic assets into the state assets, as the Imperial Recess of 1803 would have allowed; instead, he ordered any surpluses to be used for church, educational and social purposes.

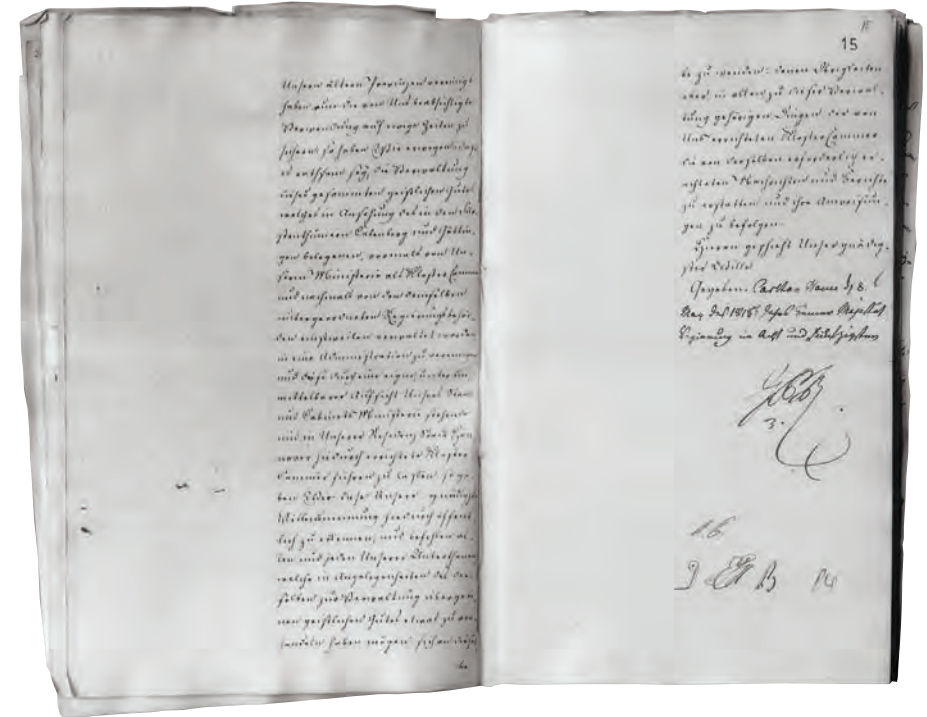
King George IV of Great Britain, Ireland and Hanover in the robes of the Grand Master of the Order of the Garter with the garter below his left knee, the Order of St. George on the chain above his belt and the star of the Order of the Garter on the left of his robe; other orders include the Royal Guelph Order established by George IV on the top chain; copy of an 1816 painting by the English portrait painter Thomas Lawrence in the offices of the Klosterkammer Hannover.



Foundation Charter of the Klosterkammer of 8 May 1818



Foundation Charter of the Klosterkammer of 8 May 1818



Stift Ilfeld under the Administration of the *Klosterkammer*

Ilfeld, located in the County of Hohnstein in Northern Thuringia, had originally been founded as a Premonstratensian monastery in 1190. During the Reformation, it became the Lutheran Ilfeld Foundation. By edict of the Hanoverian Cabinet Ministry of 13 May 1823, its assets were placed under the administration of the *Klosterkammer*, while the institution retained its status as a legal entity. The County of Hohnstein with the monastic district of Ilfeld had been under Guelph rule since the late 16th century.

The revenues of the foundation were used to maintain the school – *Ilfelder Klosterschule* – established after the Reformation in 1546 and also to support the University of Göttingen.

The school was accommodated in the former monastic buildings. From 1934 to its closure in 1944, the school was used as a National Political Institute of Education [Napola], a boarding school to train the future Nazi elite. From 1948, the former school buildings were used as a hospital.

The administration by the *Klosterkammer* was interrupted when the Hohnstein district became part of the Soviet occupied zone in 1945. In 1946, the *Klosterkammer Hannover* agreed to the foundation's assets being administered in trust by the state-controlled *Stiftungs- und Klosterkammer Weimar*, later the *Vereinigte Kirchen- und Klosterkammer Erfurt*, a foundation under public law. Soon after German reunification, the administrative responsibility was returned to the *Klosterkammer Hannover* in 1991.

Even though the traditional Ilfeld boarding school had closed at the end of World War II, the foundation's assets had remained. The revenue from its real estate is now used for the support of educational and church-related projects.



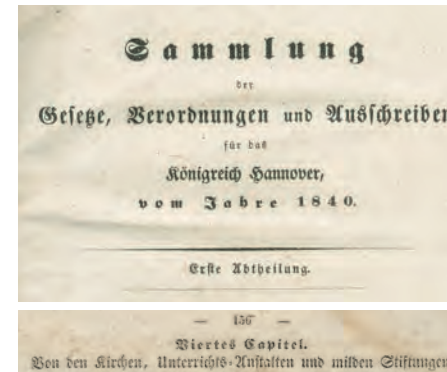
Only fragments of the original monastic buildings are still extant. These days, the site is used by the Neanderlinik hospital, next to the square of the same name. Both are named after the abbey school's first headmaster Michael Neander (1525–1595).

The State Constitutional Law of 1840 – still the Constitutional Basis of the *Klosterfonds* and the *Klosterkammer*

Until the personal union between Great Britain and Hanover ended with the death of William IV, King of Great Britain, Ireland and Hanover, the liberal Hanoverian constitution of 1833 governed the *Klosterfonds* and the *Klosterkammer*. On ascending the throne, King Ernst August rescinded the constitution and replaced it with a new one on 6 August 1840, the *Landesverfassungsgesetz für das Königreich Hannover*.

The new constitution adopted the regulations set out in 1833 concerning the *Klosterfonds* and the *Klosterkammer*, with minor alterations in paragraph 79.

“The assets originating from former religious houses and similar foundations in various parts of the kingdom and combined to a separate estate are to be kept entirely separate from all other public funds and to be used exclusively for the support of the state university, of churches and schools and also for all kinds of charitable purposes. The administration of these assets is the exclusive remit of the authority appointed by the king for this purpose. At the start of each session of the territorial diet, the general estates are to be provided with an overview of the payments thus made and of the changes to the assets compared to the previous notification. Disposal of individual parts of these monastic assets are as a rule not permissible and can occur only under the same conditions and prerequisites as specified in § 131 of this constitution for the disposal of domain and regalian rights.”



Section 4 of the Constitutional Law for the Kingdom of Hanover of 1840 specifies the regulations governing the *Klosterfonds* and the *Klosterkammer*.



Assets of Dissolved Collegiate Foundations fall to the *Klosterfonds*

With the law of 5 September 1848, five collegiate foundations (Bardowick, Einbeck, Hameln, Ramelsloh and Wunstorf), all existent in name only, were formally dissolved. The act passed on 24 January 1850 transferred their assets, only used to pay prebends to clerics and secular civil servants, to the *Klosterfonds*.

Real estate owned by these former foundations now forms an important part of the land owned by the *Allgemeiner Hannoverscher Klosterfonds*. With the exception of the now separate minster in Hameln, the former collegiate churches, famous far beyond Northern Germany, are now part of the *Klosterkammer's* valuable building stock.



Former Collegiate Church in Wunstorf



St. Peter and Paul, Bardowick

St. Michael's Monastery and the St. Benedikti Hospital Fund Lüneburg

By Act of 6 August 1850, St. Michael's Monastery in Lüneburg, once the richest abbey in the Principality of Lüneburg, was dissolved and its assets incorporated into the *Klosterfonds*. The revenues of the monastery, which had been Lutheran since 1532, were used to pay for the president of the Knights of Lüneburg and for the *Ritterakademie*, an academy for young aristocrats housed in the monastery. The academy was dissolved at the same time as the monastery.



Administrator's residence of St. Michael's Monastery (1712), now parsonage

By edict of the Royal Hanoverian Ministry for Spiritual and Educational Affairs of 21 August 1850, the St. Benedikti Hospital Fund was also placed under the administration of the *Klosterkammer*.

This fund originates from a hospital attached to the abbey, first mentioned in 1192. At the time of the Reformation, the right of abode in the hospital could be purchased with an annuity, on condition that any assets would be bequeathed to the institution.

The *Hospitalfonds St. Benedikti* is a public law foundation exclusively and directly for charitable purposes. Revenues from its real estate are used for social purposes within the area of the former Prussian province of Hanover.

St. Michael's Lüneburg



The Falk Memorandum – a Significant Step for *Klosterfonds* and *Klosterkammer*

On 14 November 1877, the Prussian Minister of Spiritual, Educational and Medical Affairs Dr Adalbert Falk presented a memorandum on the *Klosterfonds*' origins, legal foundations and the scope of its legal obligations.

This memorandum had been commissioned by the Prussian State Diet because Falk's Ministry, the Minister of Finance and Supreme Audit Office held different opinions on the independence of the *Klosterfonds*. The plan of the Minister of Finance, supported by the Supreme Audit Office, to bring the *Klosterfonds* under the control of the state's domain administration and thus within his own remit had given rise to protests by communities, parishes and assemblies of estates.

The memorandum emphasized that the *Klosterfonds* must not be treated as a state asset, but as a separate independent foundation. After the Prussian State Diet had approved the memorandum, Falk reported to Emperor Wilhelm I as King of Prussia that it had now been determined once and for all that the *Klosterfonds Hannover* was an independent foundation for spiritual, educational and charitable purposes within the Province of Hanover, with a separate administrative body under the supervision of the

Minister of Spiritual, Educational and Medical Affairs.

On 23 August 1878, the king confirmed the *Klosterkammer Hannover* as the appointed body for the legal representation and central administration of the *Klosterfonds*.

Allgemeiner Hannoverscher Klosterfonds [AHK] and *Königliche Klosterkammer Hannover* subsequently became the standard terms used by the administrative organisation of the Prussian State.

The first of the 55 pages of the Falk Memorandum in: Gesetze, Verordnungen und Ausschreiben in Kirchensachen für den Bezirk des Königlichen ProvinzialConsistoriums zu Hannover, dritte Folge der Ebhardt'schen Sammlung, den Zeitraum von 1869 bis Juni 1878 umfassend, zusammengestellt von K. F. W. Böckler, Hannover 1878

1877

2. Denkschrift

des Ministers der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinal-Angelegenheiten Dr. Falk vom 14. November 1877, betr. die Entstehung, den rechtlichen Charakter und den Umfang der Verbindlichkeiten des Hannoverschen Klosterfonds.

Berlin, den 14. November 1877.

Ew. Hochwohlgeboren beehre ich mich die zur Vorlage an das Haus der Abgeordneten bestimmte Denkschrift,

betreffend die Entstehung, den rechtlichen Charakter und den Umfang der Verbindlichkeiten des Hannoverschen Klosterfonds nebst dem Verzeichniß dieser Verbindlichkeiten hierbei ganz ergebenst zu übersenden.

Der Minister der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinal-Angelegenheiten.

Falk.

An den Präsidenten des Hauses der Abgeordneten Herrn von Bennigsen, Hochwohlgeboren. J. Nr. 8262 U. IV.

Denkschrift, betr. die Entstehung, den rechtlichen Charakter und den Umfang der Verbindlichkeiten des Hannoverschen Klosterfonds.

1. Entstehung des Klosterfonds.

In dem unter dem Namen des „Allgemeinen Klosterfonds“ in der Provinz Hannover bestehenden, von den vormaligen Klöstern und andern ähnlichen Stiftungen in den verschiedenen Theilen der Provinz herrührenden Vermögen sind nach dem Zeitpunkte der Vereinigung mit dem Fonds fünf verschiedene Massen zu unterscheiden, je nachdem das Vermögen

- 1) aus dem Reformationszeitalter herrührt,
- 2) in Folge des Reichsdeputations-Haupt-Recesses von 1803,
- 3) in Folge der Wiener Congress-Akte vom 9. Juni 1815 resp. eines Staatsvertrages mit Hessen vom 23. September 1815 erworben ist,
- 4) aus dem Vermögen der im Jahre 1850 aufgehobenen sechs Mannsstifter besteht, oder
- 5) auf Zuwendungen einzelner Objecte vermöge besonderer Ueberweisung beruht.

Den erheblichsten Theil bildet das aus dem Reformationszeitalter herrührende Gut.

Verden Cathedral Fund

In 1893, the Klosterkammer took over administration of the *Domstrukturfonds Verden* [Verden Cathedral Fund], the supervision of which had already been its remit since 10 October 1878 by order of the Prussian Ministry for Spiritual, Educational and Medical Affairs.

The Verden Cathedral Fund combines the assets of the medieval Verden *fabrica ecclesiae*, the funds for the construction and maintenance of the church, and the Verden School Fund established during the Reformation by the Swedish King Karl IX on 11 July 1685. The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 had assigned both the dioceses of Bremen and Verden to the Swedish crown as secular duchies. In 1715, both duchies fell to the Electorate of Hanover, but the original resolution by Karl IX remained valid.

It continues to govern the administration of the fund to this day. Accordingly, the Verden Cathedral Fund is a legally independent charitable foundation for church and school matters and the support of students from the former duchies of Bremen and Verden (the modern administrative districts of Verden, Rotenburg, Osterholz, Stade and Cuxhaven), but first and foremost for the cathedral congregation and cathedral school in Verden. These obligations are funded from the revenues of the foundation's real estate.

Verden Cathedral

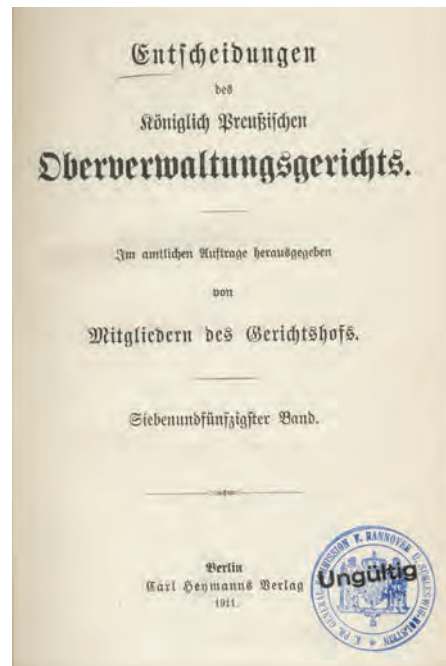


Legal Status of the *Klosterfonds* confirmed

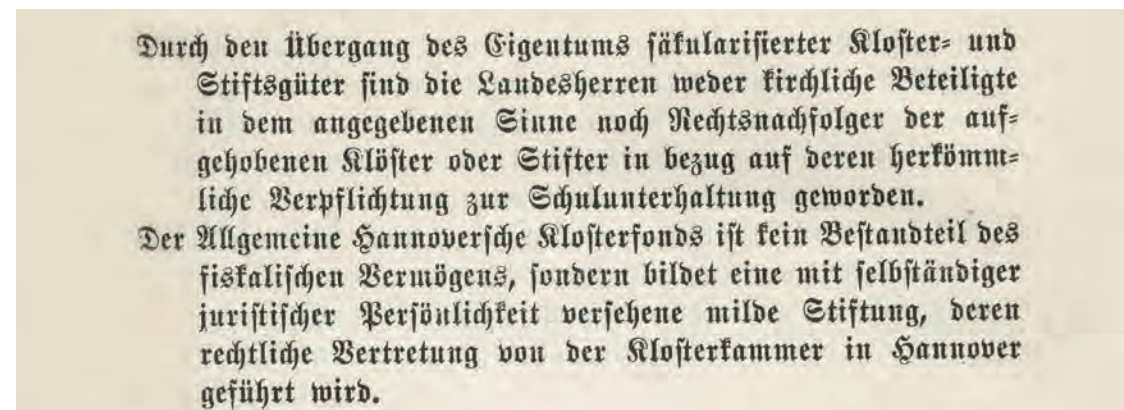
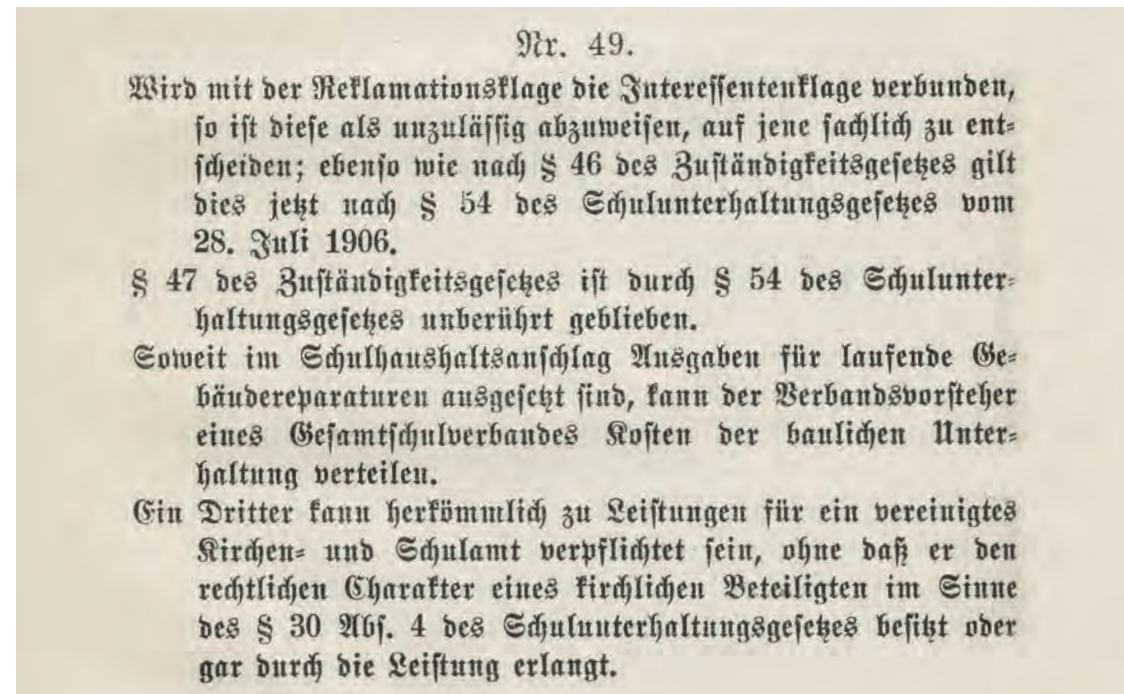
In its judgement of 25 July 1910, the Prussian Higher Administrative Court confirmed the legal status of the *Klosterfonds* as an independent legal entity.

Due to an action for school maintenance payments against the *AHK*, the court had to consider the legal status of both *Klosterkammer* and *Klosterfonds*. The court determined that the state had a general obligation to maintain schools, but that this obligation did not hold for third parties such as the *Klosterfonds*.

The court reasoned as follows: "The General Monastic Fund does not constitute part of the fiscal assets, but is an independent charitable foundation with a legal entity of its own, and legally represented by the *Klosterkammer Hannover*."



Excerpt from the judgement of the Prussian Higher Administrative Court of 25 July 1910: As the *Klosterfonds* is not part of the fiscal assets, it cannot be called upon to fulfill state obligations.



The President of the Klosterkammer becomes State Commissioner for the Lüneburg Convents

The President of the Klosterkammer became State Commissioner for the six Lüneburg Convents (Ebstorf, Isenhagen, Lüne, Medingen, Walsrode and Wienhausen). Until then, the *Regierungspräsident* [regional authority director] in Lüneburg exercised state supervision. The objective behind this transfer of legal supervision was to concentrate all matters regarding past and present convents in one authority and to put the *Klosterkammer* in charge as a specialist body with the relevant experience.



Convention of Kloster Medingen

In legal terms, the Lüneburg Convents are independent corporate bodies under public law. The state commissioner's legal supervision is mainly limited to approving legal transactions, budget and annual financial statements, and confirming conventual positions.

Abbesses are elected by their convents and confirmed in office by the Lower Saxony Minister for Science and Culture.

View of the main building of Kloster Medingen



1937

The President of the Klosterkammer becomes State Commissioner for the Ladies' Foundations



Stift Obernkirchen

The President of the Klosterkammer becomes State Commissioner for the Ladies Foundations of Bassum, Börstel, Fischbeck and Obernkirchen.

Until then, the supervision of Bassum and Börstel lay with the respective district president [*Regierungspräsident*], Fischbeck with the district administrator [*Landrat*], and Obernkirchen with an official appointed for this purpose.

In legal terms, the four Foundations are independent corporate bodies under public law with the right to issue their own statutes. These must be approved by the Lower Saxony Minister for Science and Culture.

On the basis of specific contractual arrangements, the *Klosterkammer* provides administrative assistance and support for building maintenance and repair. The Foundations cover their operational costs from the revenues of their own assets. For larger projects, they depend on financial support from the *AHK*.



Stift Fischbeck

The *Klosterfonds* takes over the Upkeep of the Lüneburg Convents

By the agreement with the State of Lower Saxony of 30 August/ 18 September 1963 and the supplementary agreement of 8 November/2 December 1983, the *AHK* assumed responsibility for the upkeep of the six Lüneburg Convents of Ebstorf, Isenhagen, Lüne, Medingen, Walsrode and Wienhausen. In turn, the state released the *AHK* from its obligations towards the University of Göttingen and also transferred woodlands and agricultural land to the *AHK* (valued at 24.5 million German marks at the time of concluding the contract). Until 1963, the district government in Lüneburg on behalf of the state had been responsible for the upkeep of the six convents.

The state's obligation to pay for the upkeep of the convents dates back to the time of the Reformation in the Principality of Lüneburg, when in 1529 Duke Ernst the Confessor claimed almost all of the convents' real estate as his own crown lands, thus removing the livelihoods of the convents' inhabitants. Putting up fierce opposition and with the help of their aristocratic and patrician family connections, the convents were able to force the ruler to assume responsibility for the future upkeep of these institutions.



Kloster Lüne



The Nuns' Choir in Kloster Wienhausen.

The Klosterfonds enjoys Constitutional Protection

In its judgement of 13 July 1972, the State Constitutional Court of Lower Saxony stated that the *Allgemeine Hannoversche Klosterfonds* as a traditional historical institution enjoyed the protection of the Lower Saxony Constitution. This was later incorporated into the Lower Saxony Constitution of 1993 as Article 72 (2).

The proceedings at the constitutional court had come about because of an action brought by the State of Lower Saxony; the State had intended to place the administration of the monastic woodlands under the remit of the Lower Saxony Ministry of Agriculture.

The court explained the protected legal status of the *AHK* as follows: "Due to the fact that the secularized assets of the former State of Hannover have been combined into one estate and made available for clearly defined purposes over the last 150 years, the *Allgemeine Hannoversche Klosterfonds* represents the provision of cultural and social welfare in a way that has become typical of this region."



The Lower Saxon ministerial gazette of 18 August 1972 containing the judgement by the Lower Saxon Constitutional Court.

The Lower Saxon Constitutional Court in Bückeburg



The *Klosterkammer* under New Supervision

On 30 August 1977, the Lower Saxony state government decided to transfer the supervision of the *Klosterkammer Hannover* from the Lower Saxony Ministry of Culture to the Lower Saxony Ministry for Science and Arts (from 1990: Ministry for Science and Culture).

From its establishment as a state authority in 1818, the *Klosterkammer* had initially been placed under the immediate supervision of the Hanoverian State and Cabinet Ministry. From 1832 to the annexation of Hanover by Prussia, supervision lay with the Hanoverian Ministry of Culture, from 1866 to 1918 with the Prussian Ministry for Spiritual, Educational and Medical Affairs (renamed Ministry of

Spiritual and Educational Affairs in 1910). From 1918 to 1934, it came under the remit of the Prussian Ministry for Science, Art and Education, which was restructured in 1934 as part of the enforced Nazi reorganisation to the Reich and Prussian Ministry for Science, Art and Education and from 1938 to the end of World War Two known only as the Reich Ministry for Science, Art and Education. With the establishment of the federal state of Lower Saxony, the supervisory responsibility passed to the Lower Saxony Ministry of Culture.

Interior of the *Klosterkammer*
central offices in Hannover



1977

Improving the Structure of the Forests

The State of Lower Saxony and the *AHK* exchanged forest land with the aim of improving the structure and optimising forestry operations for both parties.

This exchange of land agreed by the Lower Saxony parliament, resulted in a greater concentration of the Klosterkammer's forestry holdings that had previously been scattered across large parts of northern and southern Lower Saxony in areas of insufficient size to be managed economically.



Forestry logistics makes use of modern wood moving equipment



Klosterkammer forest
in the Lüneburg Heath



Reorganisation of the Monastic Forests

In accordance with Clauses 26 and 105 of the Landeshaushaltsordnung [state budget code], the monastic forests covering an area of around 25,000 hectares (approximately 62,000 acres) were transformed into a state agency beginning with the financial year 1999. Operations are run from the two sites in Soltau and Westerhof. The annual logging volume amounts to approximately 170,000 cubic metres of solid timber.

The aim of forming a state agency and dissolving the *Klosterkammer's* own forestry department was to improve the economic results of the *Klosterkammer's* forestry operation, generally referred to as *Klosterforsten* [monastic forests] delivers average annual profits of approximately 2.45 million euros to the *AHK*. Since 2013, the *Klosterkammer's* forestry operation centre has been located in Ilten near Hannover.

An additional 1,600 hectares (approximately 4,000 acres) of forest belonging to the former Monastery of Ilfeld in Thuringia are managed by the *Klosterkammer* subsidiary specialised in forest management (*Klosterforsten-Management GmbH*).

Forests managed by the Klosterkammer's forestry operation in Lower Saxony and Thuringia (as of 2018)



Updating the Objectives of the Foundation

In 2001, a committee consisting of representatives of the two major churches and the *Klosterkammer Hannover* under the chairmanship of the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture specified the framework for the use of the surpluses of the *AHK*: church, education and social care are the three areas in which projects will be funded.



Contributions to the preservation of secular monuments are permitted only for outstanding and publicly accessible buildings.



Projects in the cultural sector may be sponsored if they are linked to schooling or education in general.



Since 2001 the *Klosterkammer Hannover* has increasingly sponsored school projects alongside church and social ones



Restitution of Klostergut Poley

In appeal proceedings, the Federal Administrative Court decided in favour of the restitution of *Klostergut Poley* to the AHK. The monastic estate in the Bernburg district of Saxony-Anhalt had been expropriated in 1958 in accordance with the laws of the German Democratic Republic.

Alongside *Klostergut Mösslitz* in the Bitterfeld district of Saxony-Anhalt, *Klostergut Poley* is the second estate within the area of the former GDR to be successfully restored to the AHK.

Similar attempts to regain a further eight monastic estates in the former Prussian provinces of Brandenburg and Pomerania and the former State of Anhalt were unsuccessful. They had been expropriated after World War Two in the course of the restructuring of the agricultural system described as land reform in the Soviet occupied zone of Germany. Their combined area amounted to 5,565 hectares (approximately 13,750 acres).



The Pinnow Estate in Uckermark, purchased by the AHK in 1890, was one of the monastic estates expropriated under Soviet occupation. It has not been restituted.



Aerial view of Klostergut Mösslitz

Celebrating the *Klosterkammer's* Bicentenary

In 2018, the *Klosterkammer Hannover* celebrated its bicentenary. This was commemorated in a ceremonial act in the Marktkirche in Hannover on 8 May before an invited congregation. In the jubilee year, the "Keeper of Treasures" exhibition in the Lower Saxony State Museum in Hannover with more than 170 exhibits took visitors on a journey through life in the convents then and now. A festival for all leaseholders and the general public was held on 25 August in the grounds of the former Monastery of Wöltingerode.

On 22 November, Leibniz University of Hannover's Institute of Democracy Education presented its research into the history of the *Klosterkammer* and its associated institutions under Nazi rule. The event was open to the public and the findings were published. Sponsors of this research project were the Volkswagen Foundation and the *Klosterkammer* itself.

200
Jahre
1818–2018



At the festive commemoration (from the left): *Klosterkammer* President Hans-Christian Biallas; Ernst August of Hanover junior; Björn Tümler, Minister for Science and Culture; Dr. Kristin Püttmann, Abbess of Kloster Medingen, Valentin Schmidt, Chairman of the Advisory Board, Suffragan Bishop Johannes Wübbe and Karl-Hinrich Manzke, Regional Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe.

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Preserving Values – Bestowing Identity

