

## **Keeping the light on: Our shared future as British-German friends**

Hello, I am Rike from Wedemark and I am visiting the IGS Wedemark, currently in the class 9. My journey begins in Hannover. During my childhood, my family and I used to visit the Royal Gardens of Herrenhausen very often. My interest was piqued. I learned, that the Royal Gardens consist of the Great Garden, the Berggarten, the Georgengarten and the Welfengarten. The name of Electress Sophie of Hannover, the heir of the British throne appears again and again. But slowly. During my visits of the Welfengarten and Georgengarten, I found out, that they are laid out in the style of English landscape gardens. I find these really impressive. Electress Sophie was very passionate about expanding the Great Garden. She also converted the Berggarten from a garden for vegetables into one for exotic plants. The Mausoleum of the Royal House of Hannover is also located here. Electress Sophie and more members of her family have been buried here, including King George 1<sup>st</sup>. But what is the reason for the close relationship between Hannover and Great Britain and what does this have to do with the succession of the British throne?

So, let's go to the museum, which is housed in the newly rebuilt Herrenhausen Palace (finished in 2013) in Hannover. Here I learned more about the Welfen family, the oldest Princely House in Europe and the connection to Great Britain. In 1701 the English parliament passed the Act of Settlement. This law determined the protestant granddaughter of the first Stuart King Jacob 1<sup>st</sup>, Electress Sophie as heir to the British throne, in case that William of Orange and Anne Stuart will not have children. When Anne died in fact without children, who could follow her on the throne, the reign of the house of Stuart ended in Great Britain.

But it was not Electress Sophie, who followed Anne Stuart, because she died two months before Anne in her beloved Great Garden. The legacy of the British throne was passed to Sophie's oldest son Georg Ludwig. The coronation took place in 1714 in London in Westminster Abbey. For the following 123 years, the House of Hannover ruled the Kingdoms of Hannover and Britain by so-called personal union. Hence the close relationship between Great Britain and Hannover.

Due to my interest in history and Great Britain, my family spent the vacation with me in London and the South of England (Cornwall) a few years ago before the Brexit (Great Britain's exit from the European Union) happened. The gardens in Cornwall are just as

impressive as those in Hannover. London is just great. I had the chance to visit London Tower, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey and much more. It was a great experience to get in contact with the locals, especially when we were in Cornwall. I had the chance to do some rides on horseback with the landlord of our vacation home there enjoying the beautiful landscape. People were also talking about their hopes and fears after the UK Brexit referendum took place. I also enjoyed the atmosphere in the English pubs, we usually visited for dinner. After this vacation, I thought about taking part in a school exchange with a school in the UK or an au-pair kind exchange during holidays. Unfortunately, this was not possible yet due to Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. But postponed is not cancelled. During this summer, I visited the Marienburg castle. This was a Royal experience and a journey back into history. These were my moments of "light on" regarding the German – British relationship. I hope, I will have another chance to make friends in the UK despite the difficulties of the Brexit.

My interest in the Hannover – British relationship remains high and I hope, I was able to show how it grew and developed over the time.

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Age: 16 years