



GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN



A GREAT HALL FOR THE
UNIVERSITY OF GÖTTINGEN

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On the occasion of its centenary celebrations in 1837, King William IV gave the University of Göttingen its ›Great Hall‹ assembly building, the »Aulagebäude«. Delivering the inaugural speech (in Latin) on 17 September, 1837, in the course of those festivities, Professor Karl Otfried Müller (1797–1840) described the building as a »spacious and finely decorated assembly hall« for use »in the service of science and scholarship«. The »splendour of this place«, he said, seemed to »lift people's hearts«, raising great expectations for the university's future endeavours.

And already in that jubilee year of 1837, the eminent scholar saw the need to consider this University in relation to other institutions in this country and across Europe. Even then, Göttingen University held close international ties and was seeking to develop its own profile in order to attract excellent academics and students. Müller was convinced that science needed scope for development and freedom in which to flourish, and

that »setting confines too tightly« would extinguish »the joyful eagerness and freedom of spirit« that are »especially necessary in the expansion of science«.

The celebratory event to mark the 275th jubilee of the University of Göttingen will likewise be taking place in the Aula. We are proud that the core values upon which our University was founded still apply today. They are expressed in our Institutional Strategy entitled ›Tradition – Innovation – Autonomy‹, through which the University has presented itself in the Excellence Initiative. You will find in these pages information and images relating to the building and to the paintings and busts it houses – I wish you pleasant reading.



Professor Dr. Ulrike Beisiegel
President of the University of Göttingen

THE AULA BUILDING ...

It was on the occasion of Göttingen University's centenary celebrations in 1837 that the newly erected »Aulagebäude«, the University's Great Hall assembly building, was inaugurated. In making this donation, King William IV of Great Britain and Hanover was responding to the University's urgent need of an appropriate building for academic events of formal character.

The Aula Building, designed by University Architect Otto Praël, is a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in neo-classical style incorporating influences from other epochs. Its floor plan takes the form of an inverted 'T'. Leading on from the vestibule, the entrance area, a central passage runs the entire depth of the building. Two side staircases ascend from the relatively dark foyer area up to the main floor, where they emerge into a hall with Doric columns. This gives on to the so-called »Kleine Aula«, the small assembly hall used today for meetings. Beyond this – and well lit by two rows of lateral windows – lies the »Große Aula«, the Great Hall that constitutes the architectural focal point of the building. Designed on two levels, the Great Hall is divided up into main and side aisle areas and galleries, with columns positioned one above another.





THE PEDIMENT RELIEF

The relief sculpture adorning the pediment to the front of the building was designed by the sculptor Ernst von Bandel. At the centre of the frieze hovers the winged genius of Scholarship. The four figures to each side symbolise the faculties of the University at this time: on the far left, Medicine, with dish, snake and the torch of life; alongside, Theology, with cross, chalice and the tablet of commandments; to the right of the genius, Jurisprudence, with scales, book of statutes and sword of judgment; to the far right, Philosophy, lyre in hand, rests against the globe. Completing the depiction are a sphinx with skull, representing the mystery of nature, and a griffin as a symbol of imagination.

Beneath the pediment relief, the founder's dedication, inscribed in Latin, reads »GUILIELMUS. IV. REX. ACADEMIÆ. SUÆ. GEORGIAE. AUGUSTÆ. ET. BONIS. ARTIBUS. MDCCCXXXVII« (King William IV to his Georg August Academy and the beneficial arts in the year 1837).

WILHELMSPLATZ



STATUE OF WILLIAM IV



The construction of the Aula Building completed the architectural planning of the »Neuer Markt«. Located on the site of the former Franciscan monastery, the latter became a formal square in the eighteen-twenties, a redesign that had a significant impact on the city's medieval character. Opposite the Aula Building stood adjoining one another the new building of the District Chancellery of Law in neo-classical style, the municipal *Gymnasium*, and a building with two wings housing a restaurant and a ball and concert hall; it was here that Göttingen's first theatre took up residence in 1834. Today, the entire ensemble of buildings is used by the University.

On the occasion of the centenary festivities, the city of Göttingen made the University the gift of a statue of William IV. Like the pediment relief, this was the work of Ernst von Bandel, who also designed the Hermann monument in the Teutoburg Forest. The statue on the Neuer Markt originally stood at 90 degrees to its present position, facing the city, and it gave the square the name it bears today. Wilhelm IV, portrayed as a benevolent ruler and bringer of peace, wears the king's robe. The position of his right hand is modelled on the gesture of the Marc Aurel statue in Rome.

THE UNIVERSITY IN 1837

The inaugural speech for the new Aula Building, opened as part of the centenary festivities of Göttingen University in 1837, was delivered by Karl Otfried Müller, Professor of Classical Philology and Ancient Studies. The scholar is considered to have been the driving force behind the building, due to his extensive involvement in the architecture and interior decoration of the Great Hall. In his speech, delivered in Latin, he described the development of the University thus far, placing particular emphasis on historical research and the empirical methods employed. Müller made this commitment to scientific historicism in the presence of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, scholar in the fields of medicine and the natural sciences, Carl Friedrich Gauß, mathematician and physicist, and the naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, guest of honour at the occasion. All 46 professors of the Georgia Augusta in 1837 pursued their research in the context of an overarching historical orientation, the subject borders between the natural sciences and the humanities in today's sense not yet having been drawn.



THE AKADEMIESAAL

An impressive room in the Aula Building was dedicated to the Akademie der Wissenschaften (Academy of Sciences and Humanities), an institution closely associated with the University from the time of its founding in 1751: the »Akademiesaal«, located in the left wing on the principal floor of the Aula Building, continues to be used for conferences and meetings.

The wall decorations were intended to convey the atmosphere of an interior in the days of classical Greece. The dividing up of the wall space into panels is inspired by ancient murals of Pompeii and Herculaneum, while the colours and ornaments follow those of Greek ceramics.

Apollo is depicted centrally, playing a cithara; he is surrounded by nine muses. Clio, goddess of historical writing, and Urania, goddess of astronomy and mathematics, are depicted on the wall at the far end of the chamber. The central ceiling panel contains a medallion featuring the two founding fathers of Greek historiography, Herodotus and Thucydides. By affording them such pride of place, the University sought to highlight the importance of historical-empirical scholarship (historicism), Göttingen having played a significant role in its development during the second half of the 18th century. Historicism manifested a claim to objectivity on the basis of which – it was thought at this time – the humanities and the natural sciences could be united.



THE WALL OF KINGS ...





Upon entering the Great Hall, the visitor's gaze is drawn to the so-called »Wall of Kings«, which is adorned with paintings and busts of the territorial rulers from the time of the founding of Göttingen University to the year 1888. All sovereigns of the territory took the title of »Rector magnificentissimus« of the University until Wilhelm I ended this tradition. It is not known precisely when planning for the »Wall of Kings« began, but the wish to hang a portrait of William IV, ruling sovereign and endower of the Aula Building, seems to have triggered the undertaking. Additions and re-hangings took place in the years 1851 and 1881. The current positioning of the paintings and busts dates from the year 1987, when the University celebrated the 250th anniversary of its founding.

THE WALL OF KINGS ...



George II August, reigned 1727-1760

George II August *10.11.1683, †25.10.1760. King of Great Britain and Ireland and Elector of Hanover from 1727 until 1760 in accordance with the union, in effect since 1714, of the reigning heads of the House of Hanover and of Great Britain. He endowed the University of Göttingen in 1734 (the University was inaugurated in 1737). In 1753 he instigated the building of the British Museum.

Gottfried Boy's painting of the King wearing an ermine cloak dates from 1741.



George III, reigned 1760-1820

George III (bust) *4.6.1738, †29.1.1820. King of Great Britain and Ireland from 1760 to 1820, Elector and subsequently King of Hanover from 1760 until 1814. He ended the Seven Years War in 1763 with the Peace of Paris. Domestically, he sought to curb the power of the British parliament. His foreign policies led to the loss of the united north American colonies.

The marble bust by John Bacon dates from 1775; it was received by the University one year later as a gift from Queen Sophie Charlotte.



George IV, reigned 1820-1830

George IV *12.8.1762, †25.6.1830. From 1820 to 1830 King of Great Britain and Ireland and King of Hanover, having already reigned as Prince Regent in place of his ailing father, George III, from 1811. A ›bon vivant‹, George IV stood at the centre of many a scandal and he fought an unsuccessful divorce case against his second wife, Princess Karoline of Brunswick. George IV gave Hanover a constitution in 1819.

This painting is an original by Sir Thomas Laurence.



William IV, reigned 1830-1837

William IV *21.8.1765, †20.6.1837. King of Great Britain and Ireland and King of Hanover. William IV came to the throne in succession to his brother, George IV. With his death, the Personal Union of Great Britain and Hanover came to an end. For the Kingdom of Hanover he enacted the State Constitutional Law, the revocation of which by his brother and successor Ernst August led to the protest action by the ›Göttingen Seven‹. Wilhelm endowed the Aula Building to mark the centenary of the University of Göttingen.

Carl Wilhelm Friedrich Oesterley designed this painting as a counterpart to the portrait of George II, the University's founder.

THE WALL OF KINGS ...



Ernst August, reigned 1837-1851

Ernst August *5.6.1771, †18.11.1851. Duke of Cumberland (since 1799) and King of Hanover from 1837 to 1851. He studied in Göttingen from 1786 until 1791. The son of King George III was the first to come to the Hanoverian throne following the ending of the Personal Union of Great Britain and Hanover, when due to differing laws of succession Queen Victoria was crowned Queen of England and Ernst August became King of Hanover. Incurring the protests of the ›Göttingen Seven‹ he revoked the State Constitutional Law of 1833.

The Göttingen portrait by Carl Wilhelm Friedrich Oesterley dates from 1851.



Georg V, reigned 1851-1866

Georg V of Hanover *27.5.1819, †12.6.1878 (bust). Last King of Hanover from 1851 until 1866. Georg, son of King Ernst August, went blind in 1833. His reign took a reactionary line. In the German war of 1866 he fought with Austria against Prussia, the latter's victory leading to the annexing of Hanover, which he never acknowledged, and to the seizing of his private assets.

This marble bust, a copy of a bust by the sculptress Elisabeth Ney dating from 1860, was presented to the University by Prince Ernst August of Hanover in 1979. The original, a gift from Georg V, is held by the University Art Collection.



Wilhelm I of Prussia, reigned 1871-1888

Wilhelm I of Prussia *22.3.1797, †9.3.1888, German Kaiser from 1871 until 1888, King of Prussia from 1861 to 1888, nephew of the Hanoverian King Ernst August. As prince, he spoke out in 1848 for the suppression of the March revolution and he put down the uprisings in the Palatinate and Baden, but he reigned as a moderate liberal. After Otto von Bismarck became Prussian Prime Minister in 1862, Wilhelm on the whole stepped back to allow the policies of his Chancellor to prevail. In 1867 he assumed the presidency of the North German Confederation; on 18th January 1871 he was declared German Kaiser in Versailles.

This portrait was painted by Adolf Jebens, based on a work by Paul Bülow. The numerous medals worn by Wilhelm include the »Order of the Black Eagle«, the »Iron Cross« in various forms, and the blue order »Pour le mérite«.

BUSTS ...

It was during the 1920s that busts of renowned scholars of Göttingen University first began to be set in prominent positions in the Aula Building. The current selection and positioning of works in the vestibule and the central corridor, the staircases, and in the Small Hall, took place for the most part in 1987, the busts concerned covering the period from approximately 1800 to 1928. The names of the scholars were in many cases engraved in the plinth by the sculptors; a small sign giving the full name, dates and brief information on the personage has been added.

On the left side of the vestibule stands a bust of Karl Otfried Müller (1797-1840), Professor of Classical Philology and Ancient Studies. Müller played a central role in the planning of the Aula Building, in particular the pediment relief and the Akademiesaal.

The busts in the Small Hall include, to the left, that of Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812), Professor of Classical Philology and founder of the modern concept of comprehensive *Altertums-wissenschaft*, as well as Director of the University Library for many years, and Johann Beckmann (1739-1811), Professor of Economics and founder of scientific technology as a university subject. Among the representations on the right are those of Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777), Professor of Anatomy, Surgery and Botany and a famous Enlightenment poet, and of David



Hilbert (1862-1943), one of the world's leading mathematicians of his time. The bust of Dorothea Schlözer stands in commemoration of the first woman in Germany to have been awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (1787).

Between the double doors leading through to the Great Hall stand the busts of Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) and Carl Friedrich Gauß (1777-1855). Jacob Grimm was Professor of Ancient German Literature and University Librarian; together with his brother, he established German studies as a university subject. A mathematician and astronomer of worldwide repute, Carl Friedrich Gauß directed the Göttingen Observatory for many years.

A plaque to the right of the dividing doors is a memorial to the »Göttinger Sieben«, the seven professors Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann, Georg Gottfried Gervinus, Heinrich Ewald, Wilhelm Albrecht and Wilhelm Eduard Weber who took a stand against the monarch, King Ernst August of Hanover, and were consequently dismissed.

Acting on his own, self-appointed authority, the King had rescinded the new, comparatively liberal constitution enacted

by his brother and predecessor, Wilhelm IV. As a result of the protest action, which found considerable support among the people, the academics became known in the public domain as representing a liberal middle class.

A memorial plaque in the equivalent position on the left of the Small Hall lists the names of the »professors and lecturers of the University of Göttingen dismissed and forced to leave between 1933 and 1945«. More than 50 lecturers and professors had to flee the University as a result of the racist purges carried out by the Nazi regime, among them outstanding scientists including Max Born, James Franck, Richard Courant and Emmy Noether. Reputed up to this point as the international hub for mathematics and physics, the University paid a heavy price for this academic exodus, particularly in terms of long-term loss in standing. But a yet heavier burden by far was the forfeit of Göttingen University's moral integrity, the institution having bowed all too readily before the will of the Nazi regime.



THE AULA BUILDING ...





The Great Hall continues to offer a fine and imposing setting for a wide range of university events. Degrees are conferred here in festive atmosphere. Newly appointed professors deliver their inaugural lectures. And in the public lecture series held by the University and the Academy of Sciences and Humanities, leading scientists and scholars from all disciplines enlighten their audiences. The Great Hall also constitutes an excellent venue for concerts and other performances.

But the building is not only a place for presentation and representation; it is also home to the Presidential Board and a number of administrative departments. In addition to the offices of the University President and her staff, the building houses the Vice Presidents and their assistants. The Press, Communications and Marketing department and the Universitätsbund e.V., a charitable organisation working to promote the University, also have their offices in the Aula Building. And in the Small Hall, the University Senate and Foundation Council assemble for their regular meetings.

THE AULA GARDEN

Behind the right wing of the Aula Building towards Burgstrasse, and bordered by a wrought iron fence, lies the Aula garden, with its historically inspired planting arrangement. The new layout, which was formally opened in 2002, takes up features that gave the garden its particular character in the 19th century. To achieve as authentic a style as possible, and in view of the fact that there was no record from earlier times, plants were selected that were cultivated in the early 19th century in the gardens of central Europe. The herbaceous border along the wall of the Aula Building incorporates some forty perennials providing a constantly changing array of blooms from spring to autumn. Few of the plants in this garden have their origins in domestic flora. Plant species from North America, on the other hand, are numerous and include helenium, New England aster, phlox and golden rod.





The University held sole jurisdiction »in Civilibus et Criminalibus« over its students, and hence it required a prison, the »Karzer«, in order to be able to enforce the punishments handed down. Among the offences most commonly committed by students, and leading to a period of detention, were gambling and duels, insults and public drunkenness, as well as all manner of student »nuisances« such as causing night-time disturbances, riding too fast in the city, bathing in the Leine river outside the appointed areas, and extinguishing street lights. Minor offences incurred a punishment of a day in the Karzer, while more serious »crimes« could lead to detention lasting up to two weeks.

The building of twelve detention cells in the new Aula Building made it possible for the old University prison in the Kollegienhaus north of the Paulinerkirche to be freed of this use. It was there that Otto von Bismarck had spent his legendary period in detention. Reduced to four rooms in 1900, the Karzer in the Aula Building fulfilled its function until 1933. Each room was furnished with a bed (mattress and bed linen were brought by the occupants themselves), a table and chair, a bench, a metal wash basin, a wooden chest with bucket, and an iron stove.

During the course of the 19th century, however, the Karzer punishment largely lost its deterrent effect. »There is no suggestion of the doors being locked« wrote one occupant in 1888. The right to receive visitors, a beadle as a servant, and delivery of food and drink from the city, rendered the stay distinctly bearable. Ultimately, it became a »matter of honour« to have been »jailed« in the Karzer. Many occupants took the opportunity to immortalise themselves by inscribing silhouettes and signatures, writing texts with lamp soot, or making carvings on the walls and ceilings, tables and floorboards. A favourite subject of the images and poems was the occupant's longing for the pleasures of life outside the Karzer. Another frequently mentioned subject was the cause of the detention. A student arrested for having stamped out a lamp wrote:

*The moment my gaze thereto it turned
I had but a single thought:
How gloriously this lamp it burned!
This one it must be, or nought!*

After the Karzer had ceased to serve its intended purpose, the rooms were for many years used as an archive and storage space. City-run guided tours now invite visitors to view the eight Karzer rooms complete with the original furniture.

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