



The Hanseatic City of Braunschweig

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Situated in the south-east of Lower Saxony, the metropolis of Braunschweig has a long hanseatic history which is still alive today in the historical memory and urban landscape.

In the Middle Ages and early modern era, Braunschweig, which was located at the intersection of important long-distance trade routes and had around 20,000 inhabitants, was one of the largest cities in Northern Germany alongside Lübeck, Hamburg and Bremen. At this time, it had already become an important trade and industrial centre. Braunschweig's development into a city of supra-regional importance was expedited in the 12th and 13th centuries by, in particular, Duke Henry the Lion and Kaiser Otto IV. From the middle of the 13th century, the citizens of Braunschweig were successful in acquiring numerous rights for their city, which was therefore able to refer to itself as a free city as early as the middle of the 14th century.

Intensive relationships with numerous other Hanseatic cities are verifiable from the 13th century onwards. At this time, Braunschweig merchants were already active in Denmark, England, Russia, Flanders and on the island of Gotland. Braunschweig was not, however, a pure trading city like the majority of the coastal towns; it was simultaneously a major commercial location in which cloths, metal goods and weapons were of particular importance. One esteemed product was the Braunschweiger Mumme, a particularly durable beer whose sale is documented for the first time in 1390.

For centuries, the City of Braunschweig was actively involved in Hanseatic politics. Emissaries of the City have participated in numerous Hanseatic Days since 1356. In 1427, Hanseatic Day was held in Braunschweig and was visited by a great number of cities. At that time, one of the main topics was support for the City of Lübeck in its conflict with the Danish King Erich of Pomerania. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Braunschweiger citizens attempted to secure their commercial interests through numerous alliances within the framework of the Saxon League of Towns and the Hanseatic Le-

ague. As a result of its particular significance, in 1494, Braunschweig became a suburb of the Saxon district of the Hanseatic League. Representatives from the City of Braunschweig also participated at the final Hanseatic Day, which took place in Lübeck in 1669.

From the late 15th century onwards, there were increasing numbers of conflicts with the Braunschweig dukes, who made several attempts to subdue the independent city. The Braunschweig citizens, however, were able to successfully fend off these attacks on the autonomy of their city into the 17th century. In this context, the financial, diplomatic and military support from other Hanseatic League cities played an important role on a number of occasions. In the end, however, the City was no longer able to defend itself against the superior strength of the princes; in 1671, it lost its independence. The Hanseatic City of Braunschweig was history. What remains are the stone testimonies to this era of the City's history in the form of the Altstadtrathaus (Old Town Hall), the Gewandhaus (Cloth Hall), the (reconstructed) Alte Waage (weighing station), the municipal parish churches and various town houses.

For the City of Braunschweig, the maintenance of its Hanseatic tradition is a matter which is still close to its heart today. The City of Braunschweig is therefore engaged in the international Hanseatic League of modern times and supports the objective of keeping the Hanseatic League alive as a symbiotic and cultural community within the towns. In 2027, Braunschweig will host the international Hanseatic Day.

www.braunschweig.de/hanse



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