

# Rebekah Durston

## “Beer mats and beyond”

Bold Brit shares his extraordinary life as an honorary Hanoverian

We're sat in Bristol's architectural darling, the town hall, pens, and paper poised in equilibrium. Before me, there is regional royalty perched atop his crimson throne, in the form of a Bristolian, Hanoverian exchange student. An exceedingly British handshake and I'm transported into Hanoverian history.



At the trying age of seventeen, Ian David Turner escaped the surly bonds of Bristol; parental willpower urging him towards the lights of Hanover. Turner's family prioritised his cultural and linguistic education in preparation for subsequently attending university. Eagerly complying with their wishes, Turner explains, "more children studied German back then, so I went." Whilst the initial choice was made beyond his volition, Turner admits that it "defined my life."

Upon touching Germanic soil, Turner disclosed that his vehicular experiences were soon expanded. "It was the first time I rode in a Mercedes, and I'd taken a plane, I felt like a celebrity." During a post war era these were untold luxuries for those without a booming income. When inquiring about innate cultural differences, Turner explained that "everything was different, the food, the traditions, even the school hours were different." Despite culture shock, any enmity from wartime British inventions bypassed Turner's prejudices. When acquainting families Turner fondly recounts the fathers "getting on like a house on fire,"

despite “everyone’s dad being in the war.” The bond formed subsequently outlived graduation.

During a socially sobering era in which German and British relations were hostile at best, both young men became fast friends, consuming their daily mothers ruin, offshore from Ian’s actual mother. Both became unofficial experts in the opposite language, food, music, and of course inter-cultural intoxicants. “Even the drinking culture there surpasses ours, they have a tab system involving beer mats that the British should copy.”

When asked about his preferences regarding country values, Turner replied with a solemn expression, disclosing that “It’s easy to seem like the UK is falling behind.” He described the flourishing Germanic wealth of modern day as “an economic miracle” despite the gruelling effects of war. Turner depicts a vivid and thriving sense of community that despite his British status was always present during numerous visits. This subsequently rendered Turner’s time in Hanover to be respite from the dramatic decline of 1970-80s UK. “Living there made me realise what the UK was doing wrong. The miners’ strike and three-day weeks made me pleased to be abroad.”

With his linguistic liaisons separating him from the proverbial British crowd, Turner eventually took up residence in his adopted country. Now enthused by European etiquette, Turner describes feeling akin to a local legend stating, “it was unusual for someone of my time to be British and speak German, let alone build a life over there. I hope this generation can continue this tradition.”

As the interview drew to a close and I wobbled my way from the interminable hall chairs, emerging into the Bristolian smog, Turner’s words resound above the traffic.

“We were like them, and they were like us.”