

How a small wire factory became a major company: thyssenkrupp Hohenlimburg GmbH celebrates its 400th anniversary this year

Judge Wessel Lappenberg would probably never have believed what would become of his wire factory in what is now Hagen-Hohenlimburg: Back in 1619 he operated a wire factory using water from the Wesselbach river. He and his successors did so well that the company has not only grown, but also achieved great things: now known as thyssenkrupp Hohenlimburg GmbH, it has around 1,000 employees. This year the company is celebrating its 400th anniversary with various activities and events for its customers and employees.

Historic foundation for modern technology

Numerous wire drawing plants and cold-rolling facilities for the production of steel strip and special wires were established in and around Hohenlimburg over the centuries. Today, up to 70 percent of German cold-rolled products are produced in the Lenne valley where the Ruhr and Sauerland regions meet, a unique technology and innovation cluster at the heart of the European value creation network. "Even after 400 years full of historic events and all the changes our company has experienced, one thing has always remained: our pursuit of technology leadership at Hohenlimburg and our aim to offer our customers premium quality and optimum service," says Dr. Heike Denecke-Arnold, CEO thyssenkrupp Hohenlimburg.

The path to the present day was long, but progress was steady: In 1803 Gottfried Böing was granted the right to operate the wire factory. "He converted the wire factory to the new process of wire rod rolling," says Norman Baltrusch, CFO thyssenkrupp Hohenlimburg. "This increased the company's technological edge."

Production was constantly expanded over the following decades and centuries. "Our

predecessors enjoyed particular success at the International Exhibition in London in 1862: they were awarded a medal for “excellent puddled steel” – as wrought iron was also known back then,” says Baltrusch, looking back over the history of the company. In 1906 the company moved to a bigger site in Neu-Oege and a new rolling mill was built. In 1925 the company acquired further sites in Hohenlimburg and modernized its manufacturing to increase cold-rolled strip production.

Technological advance in the 1950s

A key step forward in innovation was achieved in the 1950s. The establishment of “Hohenlimburger Walzwerkwerke AG, Hohenlimburg” in 1952 marked the start of a new era – with a major advance in 1955: The company’s first precision strip mill was built. “It was a highly innovative step that played a key part in the company’s technology leadership,” says Denecke-Arnold. The company, which was renamed “thyssenkrupp Hohenlimburg GmbH” in 2016, still produces premium-quality precision strip today.

Customer loyalty thanks to premium-quality precision strip

Since the end of 2018 precision strip has been marketed under the precidur brand. “The quality of the precision strip is outstanding,” says Denecke-Arnold. “precidur stands for hot-rolled strip with extremely close thickness tolerances, optimum surface finishes, uniform material properties and excellent forming behavior – combined with long-term, stable customer relationships and a high level of flexibility.”

All processes are fully automated and are controlled and monitored by digital systems. Precision strip is manufactured in widths up to 720 millimeters and thicknesses from 1.5 to 16 millimeters. Added to this is a forward-looking service and support package. “This enables us to meet the individual requirements of customers,” says Denecke-Arnold. thyssenkrupp Hohenlimburg sells more than 1 million tons of steel each year.

precidur[®] serves as a starting material in the cold-rolling industry and in direct processing, primarily in the automotive industry. As well as in car bodies, it can be found in virtually all vehicle parts, for example in shift forks for transmissions, clutch springs or brake pistons.

“We have achieved a great deal in Hohenlimburg,” says Markus Micken, CHRO thyssenkrupp Hohenlimburg. “And we are proud of our team spirit and sense of unity. But we are focused on the future: We are investing a lot of energy in our research and the development of our products and employees to ensure we continue to meet the needs of our customers to optimum effect and maintain an edge over competitors.”

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