
PRESS RELEASE

225 years of pioneering spirit at MEYER WERFT

Family-owned shipyard celebrates anniversary and delivers 50th cruise ship

Papenburg, January 24, 2020 – MEYER WERFT celebrates its anniversary: on 28 January 2020, it will be 225 years since the shipyard in Papenburg an der Ems first opened, originally established by Willm Rolf Meyer in 1795 as 'Thurm Werft' on the main Papenburg canal. Today MEYER WERFT is family-owned in the seventh generation.

“It is an extraordinary achievement to look on 225 years of ship building. We developed our family company further with pioneering spirit and courage and permanently adapted to changing markets to assert ourselves over state-owned and partly state-owned competitors”, says Bernard Meyer.

The team in Papenburg, completing three ships per year, has grown to 3,625 employees now. MEYER WERFT also secures employment for thousands of specialists working for hundreds of suppliers and partner companies.

In its anniversary year MEYER WERFT is still growing and will deliver ships with more than 400,000 GT for the first time. Iona (P&O Cruises), Spirit of Adventure (Saga Cruises) and Odyssey of the Seas (Royal Caribbean International) will be handed over to international customers. Iona will be the 50th cruise ship built in Papenburg.

“We have always been investing profits into our employees and our modern facilities in Papenburg to secure local employment. The continuity as a family company, as well as our ship building know-how, make us unique”, says Tim Meyer.

Today's scale of MEYER WERFT was unconceivable when Willm Rolf Meyer founded the company as Thurm Werft in 1795. In its early days, the shipyard built sailing ships from wood. It quickly went on to display a pioneering spirit when it became the first shipyard in the region to build ships from iron and equip them with steam engines. The Triton paddle steamer in 1872 was the first ship of this kind. By this time, the company was in its third generation of family management, under Joseph Lambert Meyer and 90% of a ship was built by the yard itself.

In 1913, the company performed yet another pioneering act, with the construction of the Graf Goetzen. After its completion, this combined ship for both passengers and freight was dismantled into its component parts, packed into crates, transported to Lake Tanganyika in what is now Tanzania, and reassembled. It remains in use there to this day, where it has become the stuff of legends in many books and films.

The economic crash and two world wars plunged the world into difficult times. But the decision taken at an early stage not to construct naval vessels meant that the shipyard was soon able to rebuild its operations. A new ship was delivered in 1948, in the form of the light vessel Elbe 1 (Bürgermeister Oswald), which, due to numerous interruptions, took a total of nine years to build. The completion of Elbe 1 became important for the whole Ems region, when bridges and railroad lines were made renovated for the ship's conveyance down the River Ems.

In the post-war period, Joseph-Franz Meyer was soon concentrating his attention on the international markets. The Mauritius was an important order by the British Commonwealth. The ship was built in accordance with the regulations of the British Lloyd's and Ministry of Transport for deployment in the former British colony Mauritius.

In the late 1950s the long term partnership to Indonesia began. The partnership resulted in many passenger vessels being built for the South Asian archipelago state. In total 34 ships were built for Indonesia. Joseph-Franz and Godfried Meyer were also responsible for the construction of many ferries for Scandinavian shipping companies, but also for entering the gas tanker market. Yet another unusual and courageous move, and one which was to have a considerable effect on the company's development, came about in 1974. In the middle of the Cold War, the shipyard got a contract to build six gas tankers for the former Soviet Union – and at the same time the company began building a new shipyard on the edge of Papenburg, directly on the River Ems.

“Due to the peripheral location of Papenburg the shipyard focused on international markets early to export complex vessels like cruise ships. With MEYER WERFT, NEPTUN WERFT and MEYER TURKU we have an international network of shipyards, which further increase our competitiveness”, says Dr. Jan Meyer.

The new compact shipyard at the company's present location coupled with its successful entry into the cruise ship market marked the start of its now famed development into one of Europe's leading shipbuilding businesses. By conducting several stages of investment, the medium-sized company was able to continually develop both the shipyard's facilities and the know-how of its employees. The shipyard established its market position with the construction of two covered shipbuilding docks, an innovative laser and pipe centre, and a large and highly specialised supplier family. Currently a new modern logistics centre is under construction.

The Homeric in 1986 was the first large-scale complex project in the cruise ship market to be completed by MEYER WERFT from Papenburg. This ship ushered in a major course change in its recent development, for which the ongoing boom in the cruise ship market was also partly responsible. The location on the Ems was clearly the right place to produce cruise ships and other special-purpose vessels.

In 2018 MEYER WERFT again was a pioneer when AIDAnova, the world's first completely low-emission LNG-fuelled cruise ship, was handed over to AIDA Cruises. Seven more cruise ships with this environmental friendly technology will be completed by MEYER WERFT in Papenburg until 2023.

Today, the family-owned company maintains its success with its three shipyards in Papenburg, Rostock-Warnemünde and Turku. Further companies of the MEYER Group are specialists in the development and construction of ships and/or ship components at all three shipyards.

Further details of the company's extensive history and anniversary are available online, if you click www.meyerwerft.com. The website of the company was just now re-launched early 2020 to present information in a new design.

The new book "A Passion For Shipbuilding" has just been published from Hamburg based publishing house Planet C. The book is available for 24,80 Euro in all book stores as well as in the store of Meyer Werft's Visitor Centre with its 250,000 guests per year.

However, there will be no birthday celebration on January 28th, but the workforce will gather for a short company information session on this day.