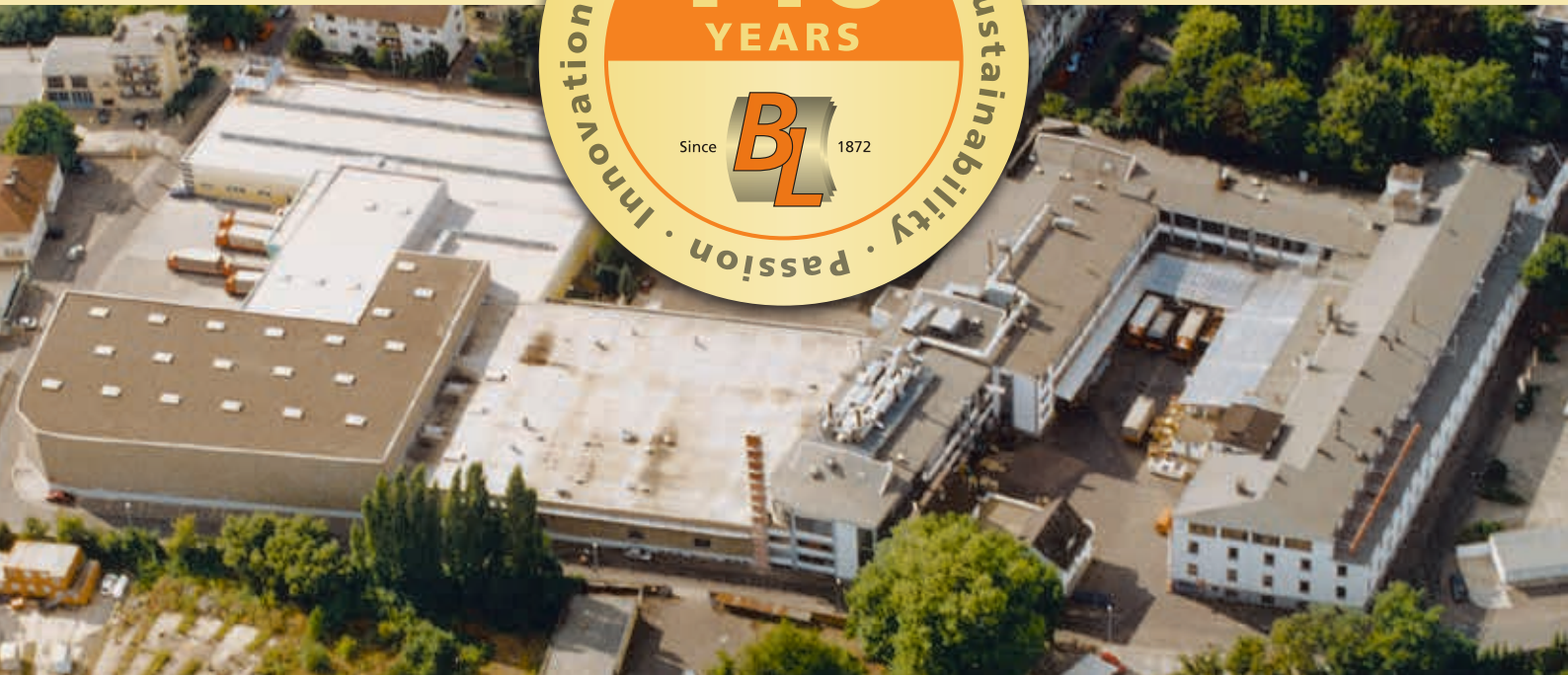


# Highlights from the History of **Blechwarenfabrik Limburg GmbH**

**1872 - 2012**



**LIMBURG**  
AN DER LAHN

SAINTE-FOY  
-LES-LYON  
RHONE



# Highlights from the History of Blechwarenfabrik Limburg GmbH 1872 - 2012

## **140 years of Blechwarenfabrik Limburg - 140 years of company history**

... is not really grounds for a big celebration, but a reason for reflection, an opportunity to collect, view, preserve and archive the memories of company traditions through speech, images and writing for posterity.

For this reason, in Autumn 2011 a small project team began inviting former staff members and directors to provide us with their recollections of their professional lives.

We found an expert partner in Limburg historian Dr Marie-Luise Crone who helped us research, sift through documents and reappraise company history. Information was also obtained from external sources, including the Limburg Town Archive, the Limburg Land Registry and the Limburg Residents' Registration Office. We would like to thank them for their rapid assistance with our queries. These thanks should also be extended to everyone who lent us items for the exhibition.

This publication "Highlights from the History of Blechwarenfabrik Limburg" also accompanies an exhibition at the Limburg branch of the Kreissparkasse bank from 24 August to 24 October.

It does not claim to be complete but is a little taste of what's to come in the chronology for the 150 year company jubilee in 2022.

The timeline "Blechwarenfabrik Limburg GmbH Through The Ages" can also be seen during the exhibition and then will be permanently shown at the meeting point at Blechwarenfabrik. It should connect the vestiges of the past with the course of the present day showing the way forward to the future.

We hope the visitors to the exhibition gain varied insights into the company and the readers of "Highlights from the History of Blechwarenfabrik Limburg" find it entertaining.

## **The Project Team**

Limburg, August 2012



Limburg, im Juli 1872

Königlich. Amt zu Limburg  
 beehrt die Huldigung sehr  
 gefasst, für die Erlaubnis  
 mich zur Errichtung einer  
 Werkstatt mit Schuppen  
 mit Obdach und Maschinen  
 bestehender Hofanlage in der  
 auf einem Grundstück am Hof,  
 front in der Frankfurter  
 Vorstadt, dahingegen offener  
 Genehmigung zu stellen  
 und geneigten Herrschaften  
 mich meine Luth. Schrift  
 ganz gefasst entgegen  
 Jos. Heppel

In July 1872 Joseph Heppel wrote to the Royal Office in Limburg:

"Respectfully requested by Jos. Heppel, a master tinsmith, in Limburg/Lahn, for permission to construct a workshop...

The undersigned respectfully requests the Royal Office in Limburg/Lahn to grant him permission to construct a workshop together with a shed with a lavatory in the courtyard behind the dwelling in the Frankfurter suburb in accordance with the drawing enclosed in duplicate.

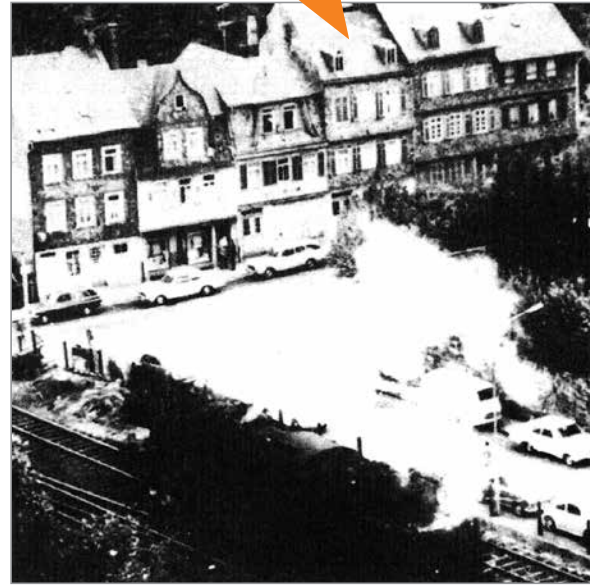
Respectfully requesting suitable permission be granted,

Jos. Heppel. "





Extract from Hessische Städteatlas, Limburg 1873/1874 (Hessian Town Atlas)



The building on Frankfurter Straße was demolished in 1974.

## The invention of the tin can

Napoleon Bonaparte offered a sum of money to anyone who came up with a way of preserving food in order to solve the problem of feeding his soldiers on campaign.

Experienced cook and confectioner, Nicolas Appert (1749-1841) developed a procedure to keep food for longer. Initially food was put in glass containers, later in tin cans which were hermetically sealed and heated to 100 degrees Celsius in accordance with the principle of sterilisation.

Many copied Appert's idea. Peter Durand (1766-1822) patented the preserving of food in tins on 25 August 1810. But they never went into production. Britons Bryan Donkin and John Hall, however, did and in 1813 delivered cans of food to the British army. Germany's first canning factory was founded in 1850 by Philipp Wilhelm Daubert (1799-1875) in Braunschweig making the town famous for its canning industry.

[illegible]

Rheingauer Conserven-Fabrik zu Erbach von  
Remy & Kohlhaas  
Erbach im Rheingau, 26 April 1873 Remy & Kohlhaas  
Mr Jos. Heppel, Limburg an der Lahn

*We accept your prices up to the half mixed cans  
which were agreed at 6/3.*

We therefore recalculate your invoice		Re 370.10
less returned crates	4.10	
less overcharged		
mixed cans 20/3	- 6.20	11
	<u>Remainder</u>	<u>RM 359.10</u>
less 2% cash payment discount		7.60
		<u>RM 352.40</u>

*Regarding the tin used and the lustre of the cans we do not have any objections and your welding is completely as requested. Therefore please carry out all of our remaining orders in exactly the same way.*

5

From 1877 Mr Heppel advertised his products in the local press - initially just with text but later they included pictures to catch the eye. The first advert appeared on 20 January 1877 in the Limburger Anzeiger.

*"Newest measuring apparatus (my own work) for petroleum, rapeseed oil, olive oil, vinegar etc. legally calibrated, recommended, Jos. Heppel, tinsmith. "*

**Für Wirthe!**  
**Bier-Zapf-Apparate** neuester patentirter Construction empfohlen: billigst:  
**Jos. Heppel, Spengler.**  
 Limburg, Frankfurter Vorstadt 37.

**Petroleum-Lampen**  
 in jeder Ausstattung und billigst bei  
 Frankfurter-Vorstadt. **A. Heppel.**

In 1876 Joseph Heppel used the name of his father, Anton in his adverts as he was better known in Limburg.

Mr Heppel was very clever. He placed targeted adverts depending on the time of year: measuring apparatus in the summer and lamps and burial wreaths in the autumn.

Enailirte Kochgeschirre, Eimer, Wasserkannen etc. etc., blank u. lackirt Blech- und Draht-Waaren, sowie alle übrigen Gegenstände für Küche und Haushalt bei  
**Jos. Heppel,**  
 Limburg. Fr. Str.

**Lampen**  
 in allen Ausstattungen, sowie einzelne Theile derselben als:  
 Brenner, Dochte, Cylinder, Glocken, Kugeln, Tulpen  
 empfiehlt  
**Jos. Heppel**  
 in Limburg, Frankfurter-Vorstadt 37.

**Grabkränze**  
 in latirtem Blech u. Perlen empfiehlt  
**Jos. Heppel,**  
 Limburg.

**Petroleum-Meß-Apparate**  
 gesetzlich geacht, empfiehlt  
**J. Hillebrand,**  
 Barfüßerstraße 3.  
 Herzliche Gratulation dem  
**Wilhelm Stahl**  
 zu seinem 20. Geburtstage von

**Arbeitsstiefel**  
 (bis an die Knie) mit Nägel zu Mt. 12,50 empfiehlt  
**Pet. Jos. Wiegelsburger jun.**  
 Limburg.  
 Verziehungshalber verkaufe sämtliche Kurzwaaren zu herabgesetzten Preisen.  
**Fr. Stülz,** Salzgasse 10.  
 Frisch eingetroffen: Ia.  
**Hoff. Vollhäringe**

**Mess-Apparate**  
 für Petroleum, Mäöl, Leinöl, Baum-Del etc. fertigt und empfiehlt  
**Josef Heppel,**  
 Limburg.

The graphic design of his adverts directed the eye to his products setting him apart from his competitor Hillebrand on Barfüßerstraße.



It can be seen from a later letter that Mr Heppel's efforts to get into manufacturing tin food cans was a success. It seems like Mr Heppel completely relied on how well his products made from tin plate were manufactured and the resulting recommendations which is made clear by a letter from Max Koch of Braunschweig dated 28 September 1897.



Delivery confirmation and new order from Max Koch, Braunschweig

*Conserven-Fabrik Max Koch Braunschweig  
Braunschweig, 28 Sept. 1897*

*Mr Joseph Heppel Limburg an der Lahn*

*I profess to have received your  
esteemed letters of 26th of this month  
and I will be shortly sending you the  
specifications of my order.*

*I would like to take his opportunity to  
hereby confirm that I am also completely  
satisfied with your last order.*

*I must commend you that in the twelve years of our  
pleasant cooperation I have not had even the slightest  
complaint about your supply of tin cans and it is  
a pleasure to always recommend you to my  
large circle of acquaintances.*

*Please continue to serve me as  
you always have done,*

*Respectfully, yours  
Jos. Max Koch*



After 25 years the premises on Frankfurter Straße were too small and Joseph Heppel decided to erect a new building of approx. 4,700 m<sup>2</sup> at 65 Diezer Straße; they moved in in 1898.

At the same time on the neighbouring piece of land there was a privately owned middle class villa which is still called Heppel Villa today.



Company buildings on Stiftstraße in 1898 - the garden area is today a car park.

Mr Heppel took part in the first International Exhibition of Culinary Art, an event collaboratively held by the International Cookery Association, the Frankfurt Association of Innkeepers and the Association for the Promotion of Tourism under the patronage of Princess Margarethe of Prussia which was held in Frankfurt from 12 to 22 October 1900. It is unknown what product he presented there for which he won a gold medal. This graced his company's letterhead from then on.



Letterhead from 1900



Advert from 17 March 1901



At the turn of the century machinery was belt driven.



Friedrich Obenauer  
Shareholder  
(\*1836 - †1917)



Albert Obenauer  
Executive Manager  
(\*1875 - †1972)



Carl Deidesheimer  
Executive Manager  
(\*1872 - †1930)

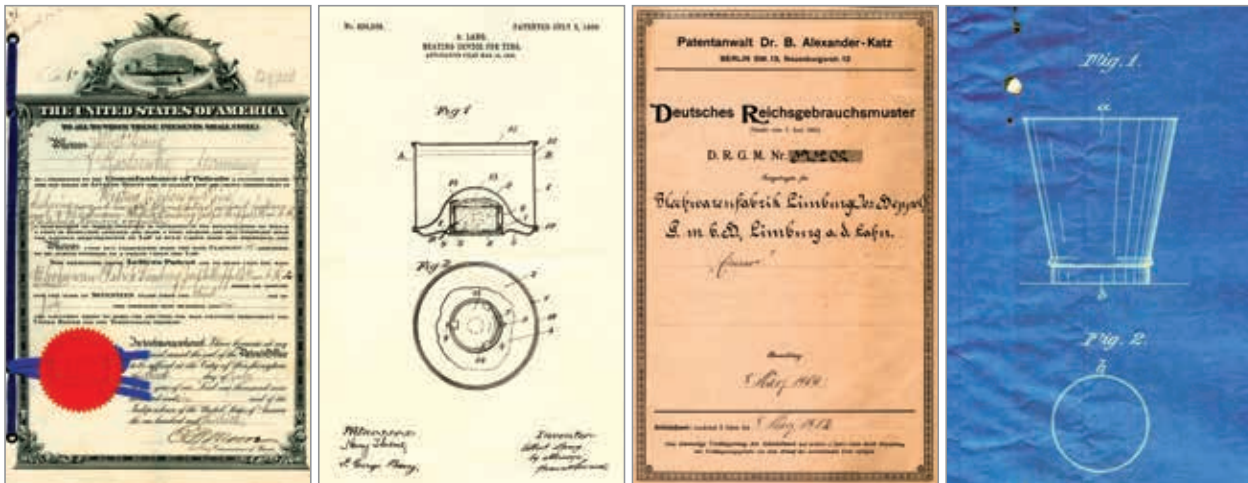
With effect from 1 January 1904 Joseph Heppel sold his factory to Friedrich Obenauer and his son Albert from Saarbrücken and Carl Deidesheimer from Neustadt an der Haardt. This was reported in the local press on 5 January 1904:

*"The largest local industrial company changed ownership as of today. Mr Joseph Heppel's tin container factory on Diezerstraße has been sold and is now owned by Mr Friedrich and Mr Albert Obenauer and Mr Carl Deidesheimer. From humble beginnings Mr Heppel worked with tireless industry to, in a relatively short time, develop his business into a powerful factory that today is viewed as such both domestically and abroad thanks to his excellent understanding of changing needs and his technical and commercial proficiencies. For many years the business has provided a secure income for over 100 workers and clerks and has also brought benefits to our town and businessmen. May the new owners be granted the same on-going success as enjoyed by Mr Heppel."*



Reference to Joseph Heppel, the company's founder, remained on Blechwarenfabrik's letterhead until 1914.

A remarkably large number of patents for products and machinery were filed in 1905 to 1909.

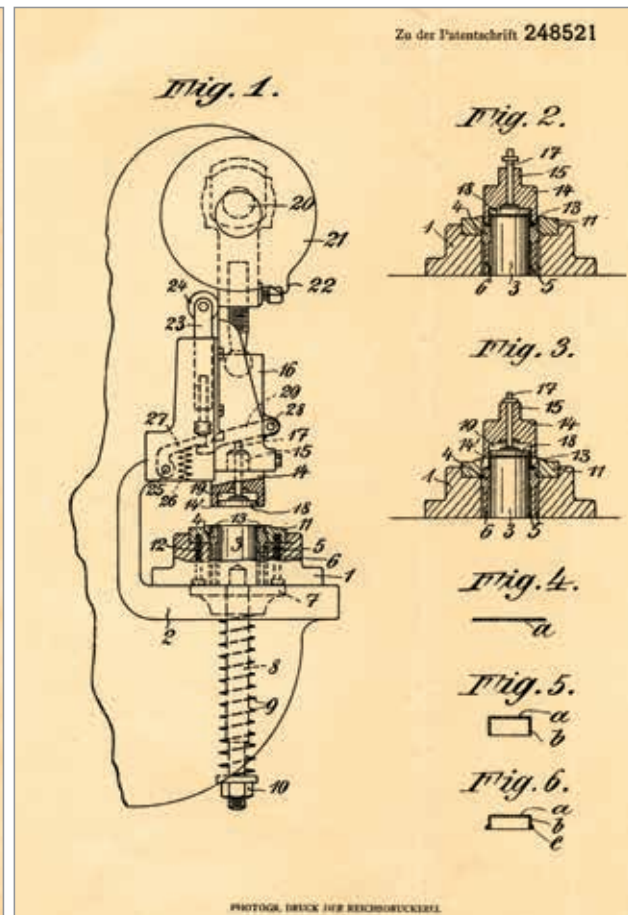


A patent for a "Preserving tin with heating cartridge" was granted by the Imperial Patent Office in Berlin, in France, in England and in the USA in 1906. This principle is still used today in the USA in Nescafe's disposable self-heating cans.

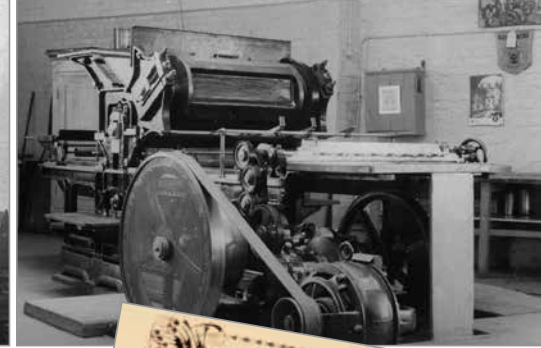
Patent no. 393202 dated 8 March 1909 for a conical bucket stated:

*"The object of this invention constitutes a bucket or similar which is distinguished from known designs by the fact that its stabilising base is designed without protruding parts such as rivets therefore, for example, is welded or bonded with solder. With previous designs the stabilising base was held together with rivets. The disadvantage of this was that the paint or enamel on the bucket was damaged by the protruding rivets when transported empty or when several are stacked one inside the other for storage which can spoil the contents of the bucket when it is later filled up. On the other hand it was not uncommon for the bevelled cut surface of the protruding ends of the previously riveted bands cut through the body of the closest adjacent bucket. Also the aforementioned bevelled cut surface could result in slight injury to those handling the bucket. All these circumstances would be avoided by the stabilising base being welded in accordance with this invention."*





The Imperial Patent Office granted patent no. 248521 on 14 October 1909 for a  
 "System to manufacture overlap lids with a rolled rim".



In 1906 the council approved the siding requested by Blechwarenfabrik which ran over council land. The first locomotive rolled into the factory courtyard in 1908. From now on customers could also receive deliveries by rail.

During the return flight from a military parade for Emperor Wilhelm II in Bad Homburg on 24 April 1910 the airship Zeppelin II had to make an emergency landing at Mensfelden Head. The moorings were undone by a strong gust of wind, the airship tore loose around midday on 25 April and crashed 20 minutes later at Webersberg in Weilburg.



In 1911 a print shop and a paint shop were set up to "produce posters or primarily metal sheets in the format 90 x 130 cm" with the largest flat printing high-speed press which had previously been built in Germany for metal sheet printing.

Handwritten Table 1						Handwritten Table 2			
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	1.	2.	3.	4.
Person im Bauwesen	Name und Ort	Bauart des Unternehmens	Art des Bauwerks	Werkstoff und Bauweise	Verfahren	Beschreibung des Bauwerks	Bauart des Bauwerks	Art des Bauwerks	Bauweise
8	Dr. Joseph Heppel a. d. Lahn								

With changes made to the Commercial Register on 16 April 1914 the words Joseph Heppel were removed from the company name.

In order to properly service the growing requirements of customers Dr Heinrich Peters' tin container factory in Grötzenberg near Waldbröl was purchased on 2 February 1913. It was planned that both factories would specialise and customers would be supplied from Limburg or Grötzenberg depending where they were located in the region.



Grötzenberg branch with company sign



Full view of the Grötzenberg branch

On 28 December 1922, together with some other canning factories, Blechwarenfabrik founded "Badische Blechpackungswerk GmbH" in Karlsruhe.

Shares were acquired in "Saarländischen Kartonage & Blechemballage AG Saarbrücken" in 1923.

The decommissioned factory of competitor Schillerwerk A.G. in Godesberg was leased by Limburg and recommissioned from 1 April 1927 and then purchased on 1 August 1927. Thus the name Blechwarenfabrik Limburg was also taken to Godesberg/Rhein.



The tin plate factory and its branches





Even before World War I the original factory buildings on Stiftstraße had been extended on both sides by lower outbuildings.

In 1920 Blechwarenfabrik acquired a patent for manufacturing artificial wood and founded "Nassauische Kunstmanufaktur GmbH" (NAKUM) as a subsidiary with the same shareholders on 20 March 1922.

Albert Obenauer was appointed director and Carl Deidesheimer his deputy. NAKUM was based on the premises of Blechwarenfabrik in a single storey, half-timbered building on Stiftstraße at the corner of Schaumburger Straße. Elaborate items imitating wood were made by pouring bioplastic into moulds, such as advertising signs, wall calendars and coats of arms, for example. NAKUM was far ahead of its time with this technique.

But this was abruptly ended by a fire in 1926. The carelessness of a young worker who wanted to refill his lighter at NAKUM's garage caused a major fire on 24 September. The fire was helped by the fact that firstly the fire alarm did not reach the town hall and someone had to run to the reporting station on the corner of Diezer Straße/Tilemannstraße, and secondly that the hydrants near the fire were not working. But the volunteer fire department together with the railway fire department finally got the fire under control within an hour. The roof of Blechwarenfabrik was extinguished which remained intact as well the nearby joinery factory. The fire attracted hundreds of onlookers and many workers were "out of bread" (i.e. unemployed) so ended the report by the Nassauer Bote dated 22 September 1926.



NAKUM products at a trade fair



Wood relief with thermometer



Burnt out NAKUM



As soon as 15 November 1926 an extraordinary shareholders' meeting passed a resolution agreeing construction plans for a new building which was however envisaged for the sole use of Blechwarenfabrik, "in order to remedy the cramped conditions in the print shop and the paint shop".

A later picture from the '30s showing the factory buildings with the bike stands, some of which are still there today.





By 1929 Blechwarenfabrik Limburg GmbH was back at various trade fairs with its products.



Sparkling wine coolers made from tin plate



Tea canisters





The three-dimensional initials "BL" of Blechwarenfabrik Limburg ornamented the trade fair stand.



Black Friday, (25 October 1929) with the collapse of the American stock exchange has become virtually synonymous with the global financial crisis which also affected the company.

In 1930 Blechwarenfabrik fell prey to the financial crisis. This was in particular reflected in that the number of number of workers in the Limburg factory fell from 189 in April to 117 in December. The Grötzenberg factory had to be sold. The factory in Godesberg was closed for many weeks and only still produced products in the bucket department with 15-18 people. The declining economy also lead to the stagnation of the poster business.

During this extremely difficult situation for Blechwarenfabrik Carl Deidesheimer fell seriously ill and died in June 1930. His son, Hermann Deidesheimer, who had up until now been a Prokurist (person with a general power of representation) in Godesberg, was appointed as director in 1932. He would remain until 1934.

In early 1932 Nassauische Landesbank applied stricter conditions to debt restructuring. The shares in Badische Blechpackungswerk were half sold to Gustav and half to Friedrich Obenauer. In August 1932 the voting rights of all shareholders were transferred to the sheet metal manufacturer Otto Wolff (co-shareholder of Rasselstein Eisenwerke from 1923) with whom commercial credit had been taken out since 1930. After that Albert Obenauer left the company on 17 September 1932 at his own request and Karl Wefelmeier a registered trader (Kaufmann) from Limburg was appointed as a new director. From this point on there was never anyone on the Management Board from the former shareholder families Obenauer and Deidesheimer.

On 14 December 1933 a contract was entered into between Otto Wolff and the shareholders of Blechwarenfabrik Limburg regarding the takeover for the purposes of restructuring. Mr Wefelmeier's shares, which he had held since October 1933, were pledged to Otto Wolff. Karl Wefelmeier died in January 1936. His successors were Anton Wilhelm Becker from Hamburg who was appointed by Wolff on 4 February 1936 and previous deputy director Otto Hässlein from Limburg.

They led Blechwarenfabrik Limburg back to a positive balance sheet. This also included the sale of the branches (1936 Godesberg, 1937 Grötzenberg) and the shares in Badische Blechpackungswerk (1932).



Hermann Deidesheimer



Anton Wilhelm Becker



Otto Hässlein



Blechwarenfabrik's fleet of vehicles in the '30s

At the beginning of the Second World War Blechwarenfabrik had to temporarily make lorries available in accordance with the guidelines of the Military Requisitions Act (Wehrleistungsgesetz).

Drafted workers were generously supported when on leave from the front. To look after the physically well-being of employees the staff canteen provided vegetables, potatoes and meat as shown in the following entries in the cash book.

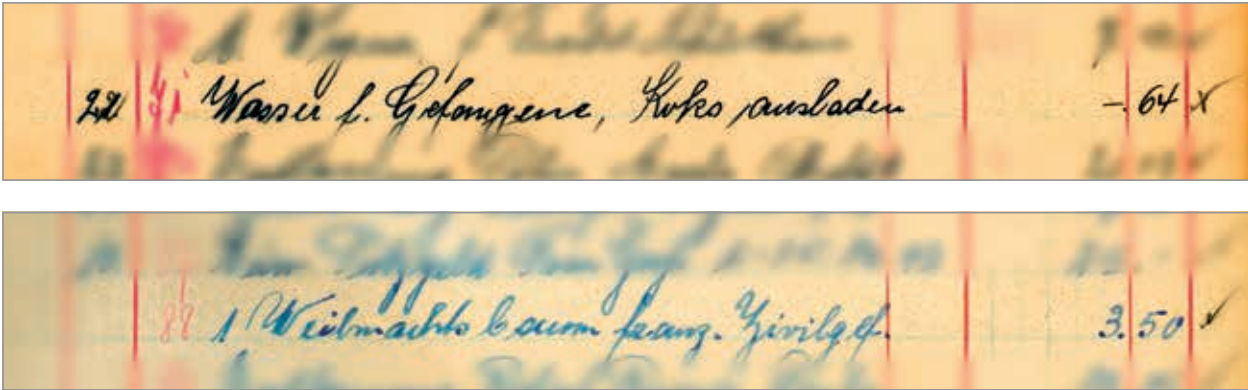
116	Umlaufvergl. Transportanker Schörsbach	20.-
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102	Werkküche: Gemüse 7 Weimar, Stappel	335.10
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34	Werkküche: Gemüse 7 Holzmann	94.-
38	dto.: Fleisch 7 Würstchen 7 Trücker	104.30
10. 39	Werkküche: Wirsing, Mören, Erbsen etc.	213.60
11. 40	dto. gel. Kartoffeln	582.96



The cash book shows expenses incurred for prisoners of war and forced labourers from November 1940. In addition to the general designation "prisoner of war" there are separate expenses listed for "STALAG XII A" (prisoner camp), Polish men, Polish women and French men. These entries testify the use of prisoners of war and forced labour but the numbers remain unknown. The Polish women were housed in the neighbouring Wilhelmshöhe guest house.



From September 1944 ongoing line closures and a lack of railway wagons meant that regular, adequate shipping options were impossible. The many air raid sirens also significantly affected production. In 1944 production was focused on food packaging made from tin and cardboard/paper.

During the entire war Blechwarenfabrik did not carry out any direct or indirect manufacturing for the war.

### Blechwarenfabrik in figures in the '30s and '40s

<b>Employees:</b>	1936	259 (including 13 apprentices)	<b>Turnover:</b>	1936	1.6 million RM
	1941	216		1941	2.5 million RM
	1945	124 (no apprentices due to the war)		1945	0.6 million RM

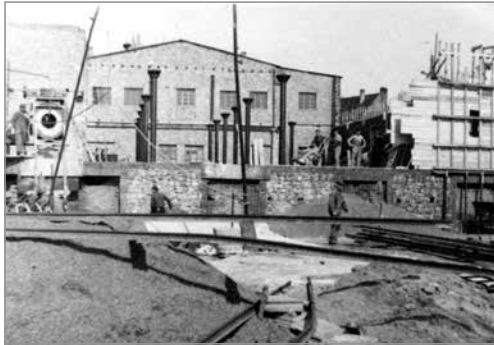


From 19 April 1944 Limburg suffered from more and more bombings until the last raid on 25 March 1945 by which time a total of 831 families had been made homeless. It is not possible to accurately state the number of victims. Blechwarenfabrik weathered the bombing on 23 December 1944 with minor damage. The attack had targeted the railway as a supply line but a strong easterly wind had made the "Christmas trees", as the targeting light bombs were called, drift off course and no longer showed the following planes carrying the explosive bombs their actual target. So the Royal Air Force bombed the western edge of the town with Diezer Straße, Schafsberg and the prisoner of war camp STALAG XII A. 160 lives were claimed by this bombing, 124 of these in the camp. It cannot be said whether this included men who were forced for work at Blechwarenfabrik.



On Palm Sunday, a sunny Spring day, Blechwarenfabrik's luck ran out. *"In the last large-scale air strike on Limburg, on Sunday 25.3.45, one day before Limburg was seized by the Americans, the factory was heavily bombed turning the majority of the factory into a pile of rubble. Only part of the bucket department with a part of the overlying can department endured; sheet metal storage and the small office extension also survived. There were no personal injuries, despite the fact that the air-raid shelter was occupied with some 60 people, mostly women and children."* 75% of the buildings were destroyed. *"The damage caused to the operational facilities and stock was estimated at around 1 million RM."*





Employees help with the rebuild in 1947



The rubble was not the only thing that needed to be dealt with after the end of the war, production had to be ramped up again. The procurement of raw materials played a decisive role in this. In 1947 the main business was tin food cans. The lids and the bottoms were manufactured from used American powdered milk cans which were sliced open and straightened out.

The currency reform did nothing to offset the everyday worries of the people. The bartering system continued to flourish regardless of the introduction of the Deutsche Mark. An employee remembers 1949: *"There were still ration coupons for food. Every employee received an allowance of tin food cans and lids for bartering as these were the hardest currency at the time. The company tried to get special allowances for its employees, such as cheese, for example, which was then divided amongst the employees. It partially eased the hunger."*

The economic upturn was again reflected in the exterior appearance of Blechwarenfabrik.

Reconstruction had already begun in 1947.

With the assistance of employees who lent a helping hand, all damage from the war was rectified by 1952/53.





Factory buildings on Schaumburger Straße / the corner of Stiftstraße in 1952 without the top floor which was built in 1959





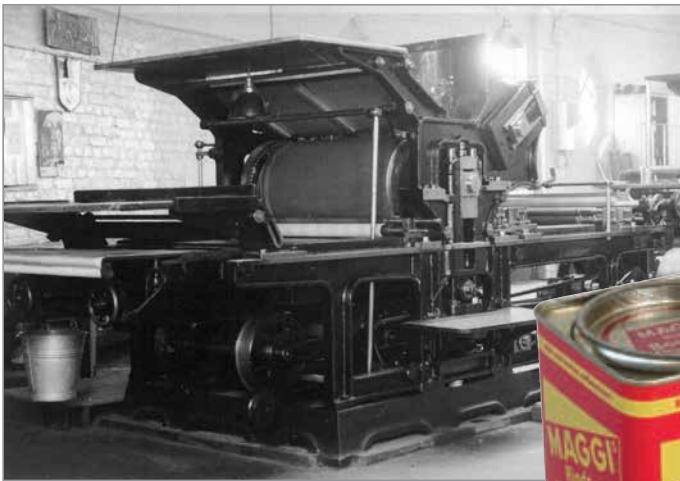




Blechwarenfabrik is a good example for all organisations who had to rebuild after the war with the assistance of the Americans. In contrast to France or England where they continued to work with outdated machinery, German companies were equipped with the newest technical developments at the end of the war thanks to the American reconstruction programme.

Lithography, the oldest flat printing process was used until the middle of the '50s. Limestone was the material used for the print plate. The plate is smoothed by careful sanding. Lithograph chalk or lithograph ink, a fatty material, is used to draw an image on the plate with brushes and pens. Then it is brushed with a solution of nitric acid and gum arabic so that the sections with no image repel the fat. Next the stone in the press is clamped and is wetted with water. The sections with an image repel the water and the sections without accept it. The fatty printing ink only remains on the sections with an image. The metal sheet is always fed individually between the stone and the crucible. From today's perspective this is a very elaborate form of printing which is only really still used for artistic purposes.

Offset printing was instead used from the mid '50s. This is a process where the impression cylinder, the rubber blanket and the blanket cylinder mutually rotate at the same speed. The print image is transferred from the exposed aluminium plate via a rubber blanket onto the pre-coated tin plate.

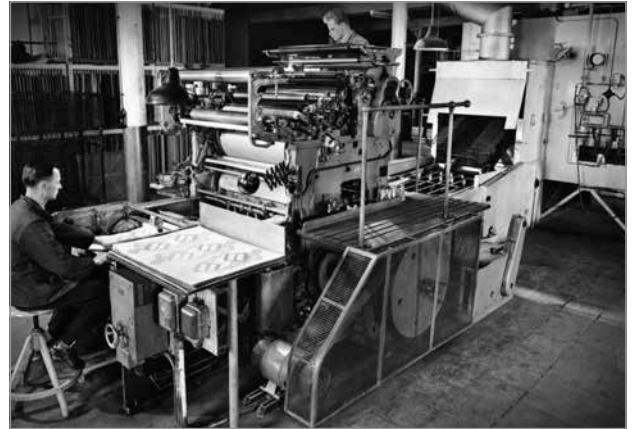
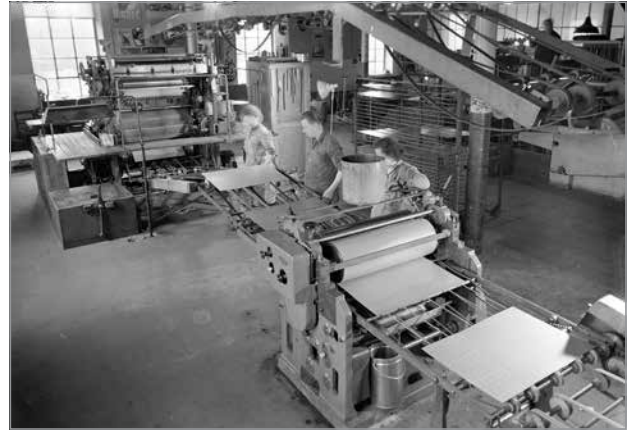


The second flat printing high-speed press from 1927 was in use up until 1954

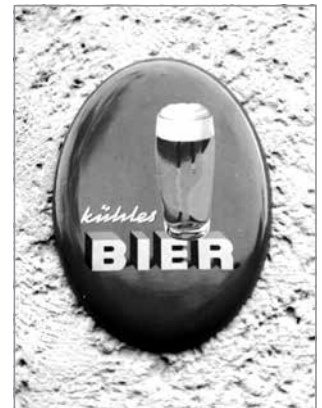
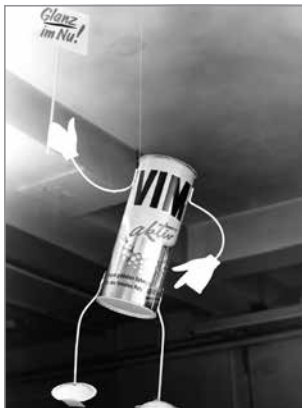


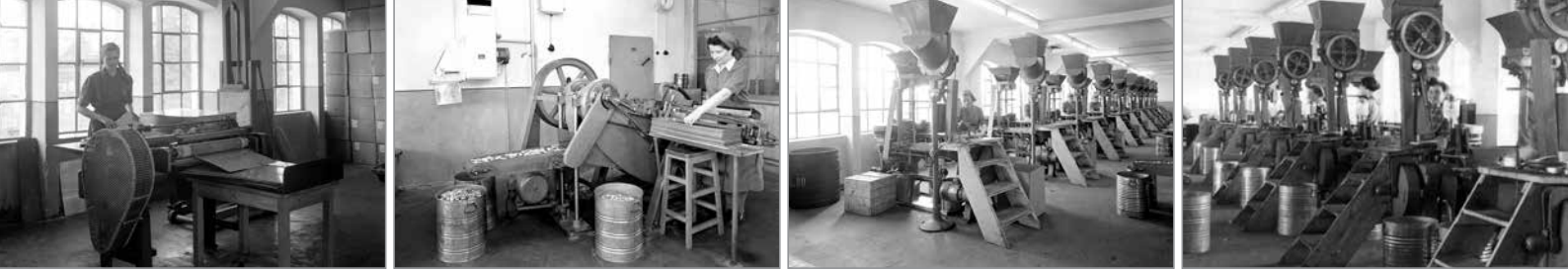
Lithostone





The paint shop and the print shop were located on the ground floor of the old building along Stiftstraße until 1961.



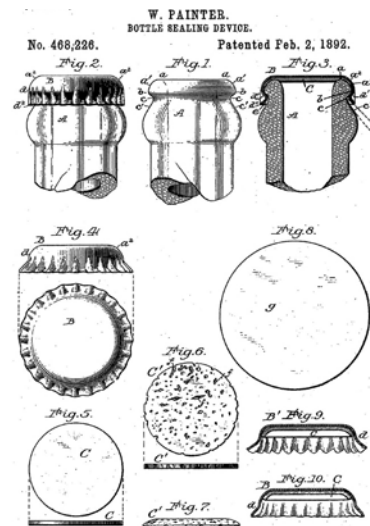


Crown cap manufacturing on the top floor. Uniform workwear appeared as early as the '50s

In the '50s Blechwarenfabrik began to manufacture crown caps in order to increase the product range. These became a synonym for Blechwarenfabrik Limburg. Local brewery Busch was already supplied by Blechwarenfabrik in 1951 and also the company Oberselters Heil- und Mineralquellen GmbH in Camberg by 1955.

## Invention of the crown cap

On 2 February 1892 William Painter from Baltimore, Maryland patented the invention of the crown cap. In contrast to its original appearance the number of teeth has been reduced from 24 to 21. They are produced from tin plate with a chromium-plated or tin-plated overlay. Around 1967 crown caps were widely replaced by flip-tops. For hygiene reasons a cork is no longer inserted today but rather a plastic seal is injected. Crown caps continue to be the most cost-effective bottle closer.



## Blechwarenfabrik in figures in the '50s

<b>Employees:</b>	1952	245	<b>Turnover:</b>	1952	5.6 million DM	<b>Hourly rate:</b>	
	1955	272		1955	7.1 million DM		1958 1.64 DM
	1959	384		1959	10.9 million DM		1959 1.76 DM

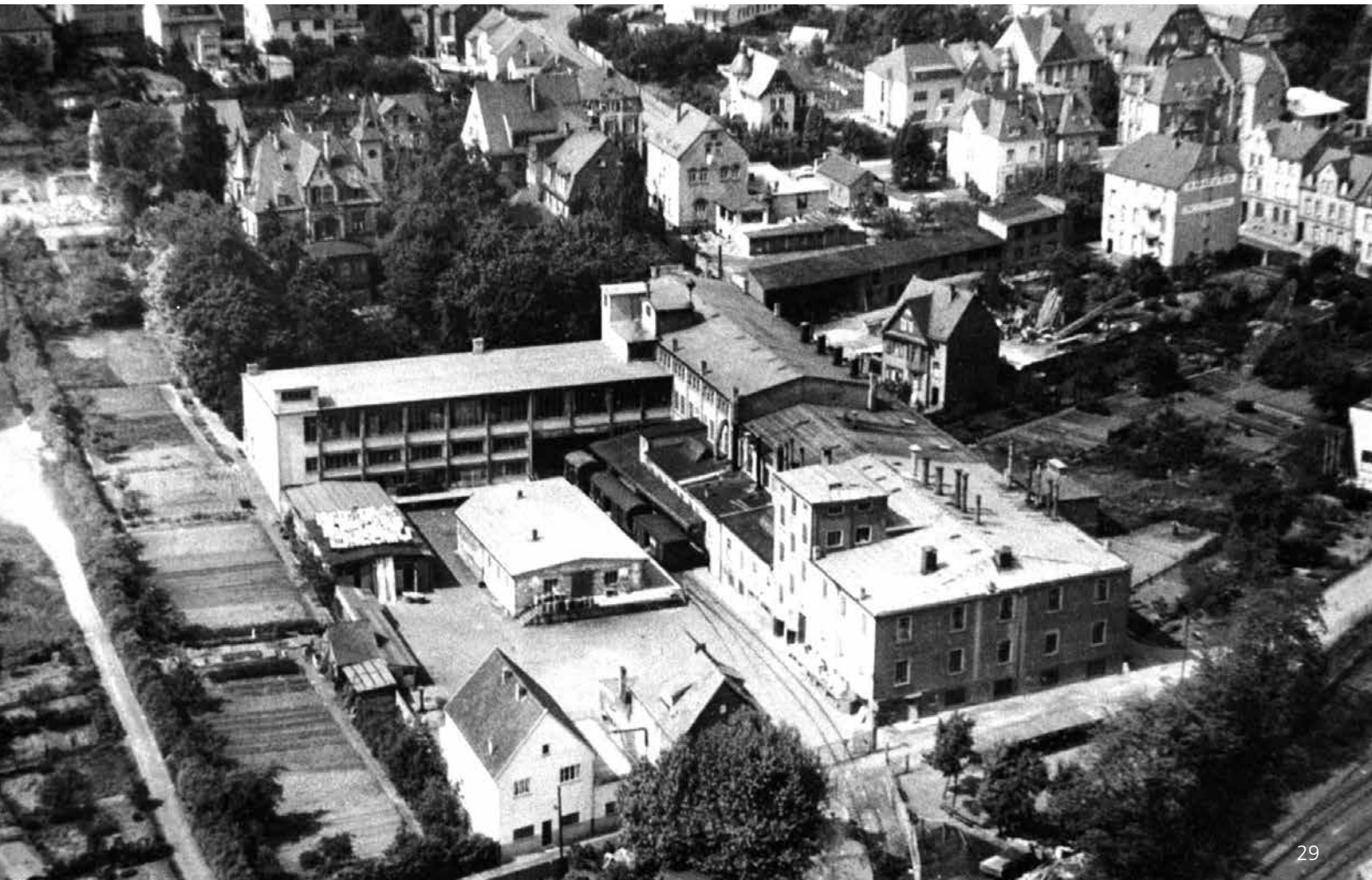
In 1955 the weekly working time was reduced from 48 hours to 46.75 hours and wages continued to be paid in cash until the '60s.



In October 1950 directors Mr Becker and Mr Hässlein presented plans for the first extension since the war at the shareholders' meeting. The storage shed would be replaced by a massive three storey factory building. The transept (north wing) was finished at the end of 1954 with an area of approx. 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Bucket production was relocated to the first floor.

The crown cap department moved from the top floor of the old building to the second floor in the new building.





Shell of the building construction phases



Topping out ceremony



Inauguration ceremony

On the right directors Anton Wilhelm Becker and Otto Hässlein – in the background the company choir

In the years following there were numerous small modifications:

- 1954 Conversion of the caretaker's house
- 1957 Expanding and adding another floor to the old building which freed up significant warehouse and production space
- 1959 Extending and roofing the loading dock, space for five goods wagons in the railway siding

Excavation work was commenced at the end of 1959 to erect the new building which connected to the old company buildings between Schlittstraße and Schaumburger Straße. The topping out ceremony was celebrated in July 1960. In the Annual Report for 1960 it said: *"In this reporting year the company erected a modern, three storey factory building from reinforced concrete with a fully usable cellar on the site acquired the previous year. The buildings have an exterior footprint of around 100/20 m and usable space of nearly 8,000 m². This makes for further reductions in the production process. Greater series production was enabled by the considerable usable space recently acquired the effect of which in reducing cost was already indicated in the previous year's report. The company has always strived to achieve greater series production and the progressive automatic acceleration of manufacturing.* The inauguration on 1 February was combined with the long service anniversaries of both directors, Otto Hässlein (40 years) and Wilhelm Becker (25 years).



U shaped building layout of Blechwarenfabrik in 1961



The sheds in the yard where the Degussa barrels were made from black plate had to be torn down to allow the lorries access to the loading dock.

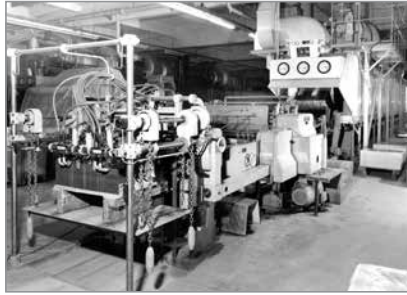
Up until then metal placards were mounted to the outside wall to test their long-term exposure to the weather.



A printing and painting machine, an automatic tunnel dryer and a drying unit were brought into operation on the 2nd floor of the new building commissioned in 1961.



2nd floor: Print shop



2nd floor: Paint shop



2nd floor: Sheet metal pile turner



1st floor: Can production in the area where today's Electrical Department is situated



Ground floor: Bulk packaging assembly of buckets in 328s and Degussa barrels



Cellar: Sheet metal storage



The employees had the opportunity to eat lunch in the company canteen, as they still do today.

Until 2003 there was a staff shop where drinks, sandwiches, cakes, chocolate, ice cream and newspapers could be bought. Many employees brought their lunch from home in a device called a "Henkelmann". This was a three tier flask type container which was warmed up in the canteen in a bain-marie.



Willy Stolte

The post-war era of the company's history was strongly influenced by Otto Hässlein (until 1961) and Anton Wilhelm Becker. After Mr Hässlein retired Mr Becker managed the company alone until he again received support in the form of Willy Stolte from 7 October 1965. Mr Stolte had been an authorised signatory of the company since 1932 and thus a member of the generation who belonged to Blechwarenfabrik before the war.



Hermann Tietz

Hermann Tietz joined Blechwarenfabrik on 1 January 1969. He succeeded Mr Becker as director and had years of international experience.

After the death of Mr Stolte Mr Edmund Lang was appointed director on 1 April 1969. He had worked for Blechwarenfabrik since 1958 and was made a Prokurist on 1 September 1968.

Mr Lang and Mr Tietz led the company in the tried and tested manner, collegially sharing an office until Mr Tietz left at the end of 1991.



Edmund Lang

Mr Lang managed the company on his own for two years until he died on 16 February 1994 just a few weeks before his 25th year as director.

## Blechwarenfabrik in figures in the '60s

<b>Employees:</b>	1960	403	<b>Turnover:</b>	1960	12.1 million DM	<b>Hourly rate:</b>	1960	2.01 DM
	1965	375		1965	14.7 million DM		1965	3.27 DM
	1969	386		1969	16.4 million DM		1969	4.33 DM

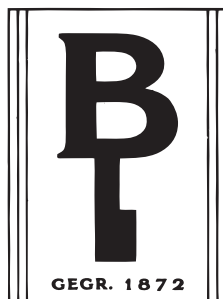


An additional production and storage building with a cellar and 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> usable space situated to the west along Schaumburger Straße was completed in time for the company's Jubilee.

In 1972 Blechwarenfabrik was 100 years old.

*"The company's strength has always lain in good cooperation between the Management Board and the 400 staff making up the work force",* commended director Hermann Tietz on the occasion of the 100 Jubilee celebration at a reception on 20 October 1972 at the Dom Hotel.

A day later Blechwarenfabrik's 400 staff and retired employees celebrated the company Jubilee at St. Georgshof. For the first time a Jubilee commemorative publication was also produced which acknowledged the history of Blechwarenfabrik and its production. The staff and the retired employees received a generous bonus, the voluntarily paid company pension was increased by 20 per cent.







In the mid '70s four Challahan stamping machines produced up to 1.4 billion crown caps per year.

The production of crown caps required special attention and provided the company with new spatial challenges again and again. When the department moved to the new building the production process could be modernised and capacity increased by investing in new machinery.

Up until the '70s most tin containers were either loaded loose or packed in in paper bags for delivery to the customer. Converting to Euro pallets took place little by little over time. The products were packaged on a pallet with a shrink wrapped cover to protect against dust. These pallets could be stacked on top of each other multiple times in the new warehouse. The transport route within the company became shorter and the top floor of the old building on Stiftstraße lost its significance.

Production of Degussa barrels made from black plate was discontinued over thirty years at the beginning of the '80s. The skull and crossbones symbol indicates the presence of poison. The filling contained potassium, amongst other things.



View of the warehouse (Degussa barrels)

## Blechwarenfabrik in figures in the '70s

<b>Employees:</b>	1970	402	<b>Turnover:</b>	1970	18.6 million DM	<b>Hourly rate:</b>	1970	4.70 DM
	1975	343		1975	24.8 million DM		1975	7.84 DM
	1979	385		1979	40.6 million DM		1979	10.08 DM



Blechwarenfabrik didn't just change with structurally, but also endeavoured to keep up with the advance of modern technology with regard to machinery and protecting the environment, and in doing so taking into account the ever increasing focus on environmental protection. In a news item for the 1st quarter of 1978 from Mr Tietz and Mr Lang it said: *"In 1975-1977 a total of 6.5 million DM was invested in new machinery and equipment. In the course of this investment a new English printing machine and one of the most modern drying systems ever seen in this area were put into operation in the last few days. Whilst the old drying oven is 30 m long and is heated with gas, the new drying system (likewise from an English manufacturer) is only 6 m long and the drying process is carried out using ultraviolet light. The advantages of this new system do not just include space-saving, but above all the fact that in terms of environmental protection there are none of any type of odour emissions as the special colours no longer contain solvents/volatile components which form dangerous smelling exhaust gases... two years ago a new painting facility was invested in costing over 1 million DM... which is on the same floor as the printing system. This painting facility is equipped with a thermal afterburner system which was specially developed by the manufacturer for environmental reasons."* This news item also states that *"since the beginning of last year in contract painting for Allgäuer Alpenmilch AG (Bärenmarke) alone up to 100,000 sheets of metal for manufacturing cans for condensed milk have been painted in a facility operating three shifts."* In 1997 an improved, more environmentally friendly exhaust gas purification system would follow (see photo top right).

At the end of February 1980 the new finished goods warehouse on Weserstraße was put into operation. This new build came with 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> of storage space. This corresponded to a loading capacity of nearly 800 lorries. Blechwarenfabrik's total manufacturing and storage area increased to around 27,000 m<sup>2</sup>. At its opening director Mr Lang said that the new building *"made an important contribution not just to an efficient production process, but also in terms of a better workspace layout. Furthermore it will allow the workforce to continue production in the winter months and the usual autumn staff reductions would not have to take place"*.



From the left: finished goods warehouse, today's stamping centre, with the old factory buildings; opposite is the car park built in 1978 with 100 spaces.

## Blechwarenfabrik in figures in the '80s

<b>Employees:</b>	1980	370	<b>Turnover:</b>	1980	41.0 million DM	<b>Hourly rate:</b>	1980	10.22 DM
	1985	339		1985	49.5 million DM		1985	12.58 DM
	1989	351		1989	55.2 million DM		1989	15.54 DM





Construction also continued in the following years.

1982: Limited space, particularly in the Sales and Procurement departments, meant it was necessary to expand the office buildings. A small garden where the staff liked to relax at lunch had to be sacrificed for this.



1984: The old garage between the residential buildings in the courtyard was turned into a lorry maintenance building so that maintenance and repair work for the ever-increasing fleet could be carried out in house.

1988: Blechwarenfabrik purchased the Heppel Villa and its neighbouring property on Diezer Straße from the great grandson of the company founder, Joseph Heppel. The brick building dating back to 1897 was restored. One of the first tenants was the Werksarztzentrum Limburg (Limburg Occupational Health Centre).



1992: With its inauguration on 12 November, factory 2 with 2,057 m<sup>2</sup> space was officially opened on the previous factory premises of the Lellmann building company on Oderstraße (today Rudolf-Schuy-Straße).



Factory 2 has been rented to Lebenshilfe Limburg since 2004.



The production of plastic seals for tin containers would become a second mainstay.

Upon the transfer of crown cap manufacture into factory 2, square container finishing could be moved out of the cramped first floor of the old building into the freed up production building and thus had space for new investment and technological improvements.

After the death of director Edmund Lang in February 1994 a quick staffing decision had to be made as the director position was vacant, something which had not happened at all in Blechwarenfabrik's long history.



Hans Lechner



Andreas Stedtfeld



Paul Trost

On 1 March 1994 Hans Lechner, Head of Sales, who had been made a Prokurist many years ago, was appointed director. When he left the company in January 2000 he had completed nearly 43 years of service.

Andreas Stedtfeld joined Blechwarenfabrik on 1 January 1992 and it would take many years for him to learn the ropes as Mr Lang's successor. He was made a Prokurist on 1 January 1993 and took office as a director on 1 March 1994, earlier than planned. In June 1996 he left the company.

After Mr Stedtfeld left Paul Trost was appointed director on 1 July 1996.

He had been a Prokurist for many years and was Head of Accounting. After working at Blechwarenfabrik for 41 years he retired on 31 December 2002.

In the '80s electronic data processing was introduced and the accounting department developed a modern accounting system including wages and salary accounting, as well as invoicing and all operating statistics.





On 27 January 1998 Blechwarenfabrik submitted a planning application for a further new build. This was preceded by many years of deliberations which included an exchange of land. The Heppel Villa was exchanged for the land of the independent Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Johannes-Gemeinde Limburg in Wiesletstraße.

After planning permission was received and the ground-breaking ceremony carried out on 24 June 1998 the new building was inaugurated in June 1999. It cost eight million Deutsch Marks. Machinery costing four million Deutsch Marks was placed in the new building.

Externally this production building stood out from the earlier factory buildings. In June 2000 it was selected amongst over 300 properties by the judging panel of the Hesse Chamber of Architects as an exemplary building for the "2000 Day of Architecture" on 24 and 25 July. The judging panel said:

*"The industrial character was accented during the planning, necessary skylights were designed to look similar to industrial ventilation ducts. The frontage adjacent residential buildings was broken up into individual segments and at the same time brought together by an attic. The building stepped outside of uniform tediousness without drowning the neighbouring buildings."*





Pallet shrink wrapping machine



Pallet transport belt with unmanned transport system

Blechwarenfabrik again equipped this new build with the newest technology. The first production line was operational three months after the building was opened. The era of logistics commenced for Blechwarenfabrik with automatic removal and onward transport of the finished pallets with subsequent plastic packaging and shrink wrapping as well as transfer to the storage and shipping area.

### Blechwarenfabrik in figures in the '90s

<b>Employees:</b>	1990	392	<b>Turnover:</b>	1990	64.9 million DM	<b>Hourly rate:</b>	1990	16.60 DM
	1995	393		1995	72.1 million DM		1995	23.30 DM
	1999	350		1999	75.9 million DM		1999	25.95 DM

The 35 hour week was introduced in 1995.









In the 21st century the company was led by a quartet.

Dr Hugo Trappmann, who joined the company in 1999, became a director on 1 January 2000. The shareholder structure then changed. After the monopolisation of shares by the Obenauers from Saarbrücken since the '80s, there again was a shareholder who was also a director.

In 2012 the main shareholder was the company Obenauer GmbH, Saarbrücken, which was owned by the Hempel family, descendants of Friedrich Obenauer.



Dr Hugo Trappmann



Hiltrud Weimar



Thorsten Hack



Thomas Fachinger

Hiltrud Weimar, Thomas Fachinger and Thorsten Hack were directors of Blechwarenfabrik alongside Dr Hugo Trappmann from 1 November 2008.

Hiltrud Weimar joined the company on 1 October 1981, was made a Prokurist (person with a general power of representation) on January 2003 and was the first woman on the Management Board.

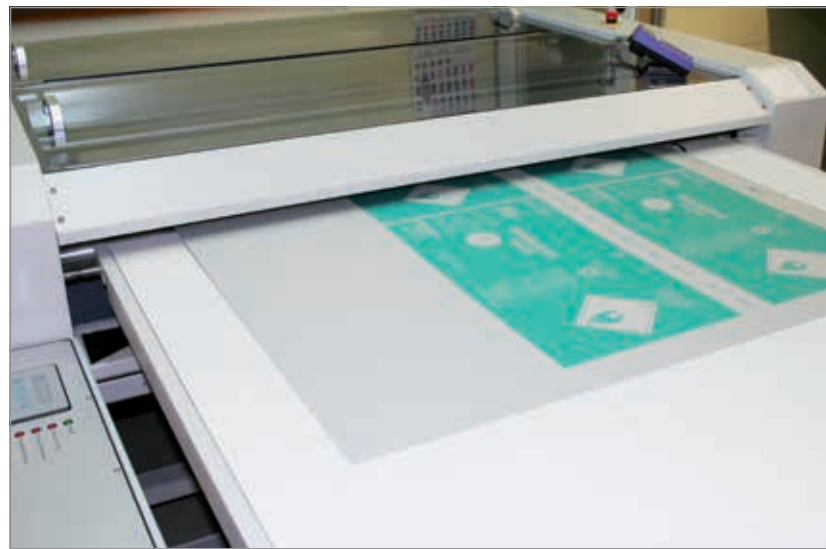
Thorsten Hack worked for Blechwarenfabrik since 1 July 1994 and was made a Prokurist on 1 January 2004.

Thomas Fachinger joined the company on 1 August 2002. He was also made a Prokurist on 1 January 2004.





In 2001 the first of four plastic injection moulding machines was purchased to produce plastic combi cans to extend the product range. The can is made in one piece from granular plastic. The ring and the lid are made from film-coated tin plate. This new development enabled Blechwarenfabrik to offer the right packaging for all filling products in 0.5, 1 and 3.5 litre sizes.



In 2011 Blechwarenfabrik gained a significant improvement in printing technology thanks to an additional forward-looking investment totalling 5 million Deutsch Marks. The 6 colour printing press can print 7,000 metal sheets in one hour. Depending on the subject up to six colours can be applied in one press pass and be dried with UV light in the same step. This meant that drying in gas ovens, as was required previously, was no longer needed, making another contribution to protecting the environment. This investment also included a computer-to-plate system, an imaging device for printing plates, which receives the data transmitted from a raster image processor computer and transfers it to the printing plates using UV lamps. After developing the printing plate in a special printing plate development machine they are ready for printing.





On 31 March 2003 the new, 5,400 m<sup>2</sup> logistics centre was moved into on Heinrich-Hertz-Straße in the industrial area of Diezer. After abolishing the fleet Blechwarenfabrik increased its emphasis on using transport companies. This allows faster, more cost-effective reactions to short-term fluctuations in demand so punctual delivery to customers can be guaranteed at all times. As a result this led to a new phase in the area of logistics for Blechwarenfabrik.





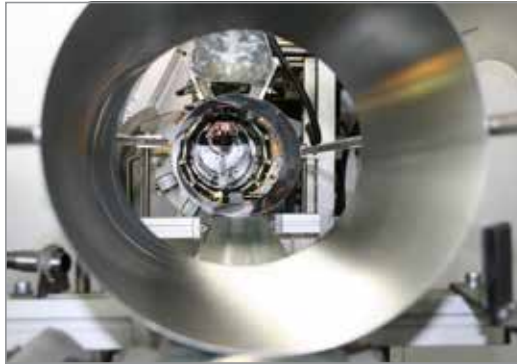
In 2006 Blechwarenfabrik installed a fully automatic production line, Lanico RCL, for manufacturing conical and cylindrical containers with a capacity of up to six litres. This new line is the first installation of its type worldwide. It is specifically designed for flexible production with frequent height and format changes and allows small batches to be made. The amount of time required for a complete format change is approx. 2 hours. This could take up to 14 hours on older production lines. The alignment of the weld joint is inspected by a camera. The maximum throughput is up to 100 containers per minute; the previous system managed 40 containers per minute. Two robot arms move the canisters onto pallets at the end of the production line.

## Production sequence for the completion of containers (square)



### Cut to size

At the beginning of production of any container the metal is cut into strips.



### Welding

The body blank is welded together at the ends in the welding machine.



### Stretching

In the stretching machine the container is given its square form.



### Flanging

In the flange machine the sharp edges are shaped so that the top and bottom of the container can fit perfectly when they are mounted.



### Creating a seam on the bottom

In the next step seams are first created on the bottom...



### Creating a seam on the top

and then on the top.





In 2006 Blechwarenfabrik invested in a new concept for interior coatings in the production process: LIFOKA, which comes from the German Limburger Folien Kaschierung - Limburg Film Lamination. Tin plate is laminated with PET film to protect against corrosion. The appropriate film, for example for stamped or deep draw parts is used depending on the type of order.







Innovative Canmakers Europe, I.C.E. <sup>SE</sup> for short was founded in 2007.

This is a cooperation between Blechwarenfabrik Limburg GmbH and Giorgio Fanti SpA, Bologna, Italy.

In order to be able to expand activity abroad, specifically in the Russian market, a subsidiary was formed in Tver, around 200 km north west of Moscow, in 2008 called I.C.E. Russia LLC.

56 employees produce packaging for the chemical-technical industry there.





In 2008, in Neustadt (Wied), a production building directly on the A3 having approx. 7,500 m<sup>2</sup> usable space was ready for occupancy.

The subsidiary RABA Verpackungen GmbH, which had been purchased in 2004, left its current location in Cologne and moved into this new building. Bucket production, which had been previously carried out in Cologne and Limburg, was consolidated.







In the logistics area fork lifts move over induction loops embedded in the floor as if by magic.

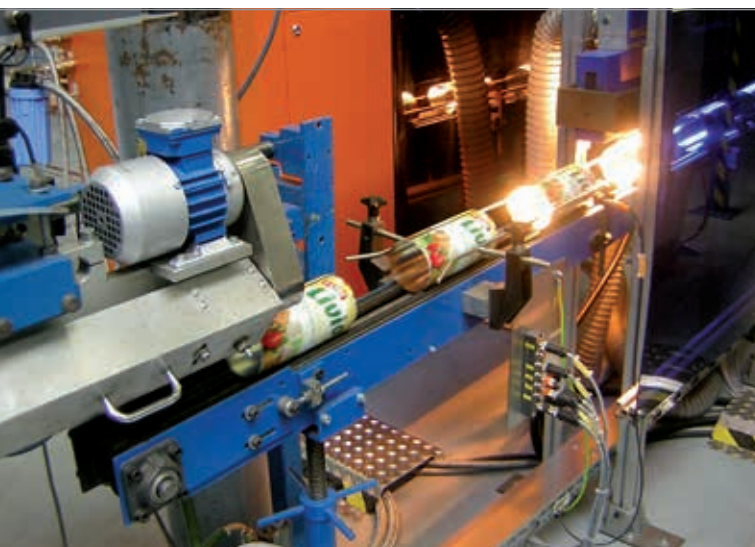




In 2008 apprentices installed a solar PV system on Blechwarenfabrik's roofs which came into operation in 2009 and generates 6,000 kWh per year.

## Blechwarenfabrik in figures in the 21st century

<b>Employees:</b>	2000	338	<b>Turnover:</b>	2000	36.3 million Euro	<b>Hourly rate:</b>	2000	13.27 Euro
	2005	283		2005	43.2 million Euro		2005	13.65 Euro
	2010	301		2010	58.4 million Euro		2010	16.18 Euro



2010 came about with the addition of another location, FPS Polska Sp. z o.o. in Skarbimierz Osiedle, Poland. Containers for cooking oil and 0.5 to 2.5 litre cans are produced there.



**Fabryka Puszek  
Skarbimierz  
Polska Sp. z o.o.**









## Photography and quotes credits

**All photos which are not expressly credited have been taken from Blechwarenfabrik Limburg's archives.**

p 4: Ursula Braasch-Schwersmann (editor), Hessischer Städteatlas Lieferung I, 6 Limburg. (Hesse Town Atlas, Instalment I, 6 Limburg) Marburg 2005, Ausschnitt aus Limburg 1873/74 (Excerpts from Limburg 1873/74)

p 12: Vereinsarchiv MGW Eintracht Limburg, Festschrift 50 Jahre (Archive of MGW Eintracht Limburg (a choir), 50 year Jubilee commemorative publication)

## Blechwarenfabrik Limburg Archive:

**Special thanks go to all colleagues and former employees who have supported us in our research.**

p 3, 5, 7: Photo Album 1 (1872-1953)

p 10, 11: Patent Collection

p 12: Shareholders' minutes book 1904-1952, p 29

p 19: Cash book (February 1942 - June 1948), p 75/ 1944; p 109/ 1944; p 115/ 1944

p 20: Cash book (February 1942 - June 1948), p 13/ 1943; p 67/1943

p 21: Minutes of shareholders' meetings from 1939 - 1947, 1944 Annual Report dated 05.06.1945

p 22: Interview with a former employee (1949)

p 30: Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements up to 31.12.1960 of Blechwarenfabrik Limburg GmbH

p 34: Newspaper cuttings folder, newspaper cutting dated 27.10.1972 "Erfolgreiche Aufbauarbeit" ("Successful Reconstruction")

p 36: Newspaper cuttings folder, news item

p 37: Newspaper cuttings folder, Nassauische Landeszeitung dated 25.2.1980

"Bessere Arbeitsplatzgestaltung und Abbau von Lieferengpässen" ("Improved Workplace Design and Reduction of Supply Bottlenecks") The inauguration took place at the weekend.

p 42: Newspaper cuttings folder, Nassauische Neue Presse dated 21.6.2000

"Blechwarenfabrik ausgewählt zum 'Tag der Architektur 2000'" ("Blechwarenfabrik selected for '2000 Day of Architecture' ")

## Limburg Town Archive

**A special thank you to Ms Monika Jung of the Limburg Town Archive**

**who was incredibly dedicated and accommodating when assisting us with our search of the archives.**

p 4: XIVc/ 228, Frankfurter Straße mit Eisenbahnschienen (Frankfurter Straße with railway tracks)

p 6: Text from: Limburger Anzeiger (Limburg Gazette) dated 20.1.1877; advert from: Kreisgerichtsblatt Limburg (Limburg District Court Bulletin) dated 28.2.1877, no. 17 (innkeepers);

Limburger Anzeiger (Limburg Gazette) dated 25.11.1876 (petroleum lamps), dated 3.4.1880 (dwarf), dated 3.9.1884 (lamps), dated 9.10.1880 (burial wreaths) and dated 14.8.1880 (competitor).

p 8: Limburger Anzeiger (Limburg Gazette) dated 17.3.1901 / Nassauer Bote dated 5.1.1901 (identical advert)

p 15: Limburger Anzeiger (Limburg Gazette) dated 2.11.1927

**In addition to the company history, information can be found about the present and future of the company in the Sustainability Report (CSR Report), first published in 2012.**

**Available in a print version or at: <http://www.blechwaren-limburg.de/62.html>**



**Publisher:** Blechwarenfabrik Limburg GmbH, Stiftstr. 2, 65549 Limburg, Germany

**Authors:** Dr Marie-Luise Crone; historian, Limburg

**Additional assistance,**

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„Highlights from the History of Blechwarenfabrik Limburg GmbH“  
was printed climate-neutral.