



Global Cement staff



In the right mould: 20 years of HARDTOP

Around 150 guests converged on Magdeburg for bi-metallic casting specialist HARDTOP Giessereitechnologie GmbH's 20th anniversary celebrations on 14 September 2017. *Global Cement* was in attendance to hear the company's success story...

1: The Millennium Tower offered the perfect environment for international guests to listen to Irina Ißleib-Lubojanski's presentation.

2: State Secretary Dr. Jürgen Ude flanked by the hosts, managing director, Irina Ißleib-Lubojanski and founder, Armin Ißleib.

3: A warm welcome accompanied by a flying buffet: Guests arrive from HARDTOP Centrum Odlewnictwa, Poland.

4: A prelude of classical music ranging from Bach to Mozart: The charming string quartet 'quartetto tonale' from Berlin.

HARDTOP celebrated its 20th company anniversary at the Millennium Tower in the 100 hectare Elbuenpark, Magdeburg, Germany. In the company of almost 150 guests from 13 countries encompassing four continents, company founder Prof. Dr. Armin Ißleib and managing director Irina Ißleib-Lubojanski cast a glance back at HARDTOP's impressive history spanning two decades.

Two keynote speakers – both former colleagues through Magdeburg's Otto-Guericke-University – former Senior Mayor of Magdeburg, Dr. Wilhelm Polte and Saxony-Anhalt State Secretary Dr. Jürgen Ude, gave insights into Magdeburg's strong industrial engineering history and HARDTOP's very early days respectively. They expressed their pride in having a company such as HARDTOP in their region – and, stressed Dr. Polte, the city would be pleased to welcome more!

Irina Ißleib-Lubojanski explained that the company had modest beginnings, securing a start-up capital loan following a challenging multi-interview process in Berlin. A young, highly motivated and interdisciplinary team of ten scientists from Otto-Guericke-University was thus formed. They saw themselves as providers of research and development services for the foundry sector. Product prototypes employing bi-metallic castings were manufactured in cooperation with companies and scientific institutes, for example brake discs in the automotive industry and roll segments in the steel industry. To earn an income, the focus was on the sale of sub-licences. Top



of the agenda in 1997 was to secure the HARDTOP registered trademark for its innovative bi-metallic casting technology.

The first major investment for the company was a software product from the USA, the ProCAST casting process simulation software. This evolved into the acquisition of exclusive sales rights for ProCAST in Germany until 2001 when ProCAST sold its software programme to a large German group which subsequently sold the software through its own network, HARDTOP thus losing its sales rights.

In 2001 the company had to change its business concept as the idea of wishing to sell sub-licences was



5: Guests on a discovery tour in the Millennium Tower: A vivid illustration of vacuum power.



6: Dr. Wilhelm Polte, former Senior Mayor of Magdeburg, right, poses for the camera with Irina Ißleib-Lubojanski.



7: Irina Ißleib-Lubojanski and Armin Ißleib savouring the celebrations.



8: Pankaj Jain, Hardtop's agent in India, director of Wearresist Technologies, being welcomed.

not achievable. This led to the company commencing development of its own sales for bi-metallic casting technologies and thus use its own know-how for its own products. So the search was on to locate suitable foundries which could manufacture their bi-metallic castings for them, to develop sales references and approach the market.



9: HARDTOP's managing director, Irina Ißleib-Lubojanski giving her impressive presentation on HARDTOP's company achievements.



industry representing a large part of this. Hammers are cast employing two different materials, the shaft being cast from impact-resistant steel, the head being from a hard-chromium cast iron, cast together employing specialist know-how so that a compound layer of just a few micrometres specifically holds it together.

10: A fitting adornment for HARDTOP's 20th anniversary celebrations.

Companies beyond Germany's borders became aware of HARDTOP's offerings and larger capacities were required, since a partner foundry in Poland which cast on HARDTOP's behalf could no longer meet customer needs. So during the period 2006-

Dr. Jürgen Ude, today State Secretary, once ran the competence centre, CCC Harzgerode, specialising in powder metallurgy technology which, in turn, gave HARDTOP composite material manufacturing capabilities through using its own forging press installation on site to produce composites comprising for example chrome, copper, aluminium and titanium.

Based on market analysis it was decided to focus on wear technologies in the extractive industries where materials need to be crushed, the cement



11: The spectacular Millennium Tower in Magdeburg's Elbauenpark - a fitting venue for the celebrations.



12: An impressive overview of guests enjoying the atmospheric festive banquet.



13: Samba dancers added colourful, lively entertainment to the special celebrations, and a managing director received special permission to join in!



14: Guests from Aquarius Germany presenting Irina Ißleib-Lubojanski and Armin Ißleib with a maritime wheel as the evening drew to a close.



2008 a new foundry was established, HARDTOP Centrum Odlewnictwa near Krakow. The partnership in a joint venture foundry in China which the company established in 2007 ended in 2012. As a result a joint venture, HARDTOP HUAHENG wear-resisting castings, was established in 2015. In connection with the Chinese operation, a separate company HARDTOP Engineering GmbH was founded in Germany. HARDTOP also has a most successful strategic partner foundry in Turkey. HARDTOP lists 21 representatives worldwide, some of whom travelled considerable distances to attend, e.g. USA, India, Egypt and Russia. A laboratory was also built near Magdeburg in 2012.

HARDTOP can look back on several years of steady growth, only knocked a little in 2009 by the global financial crisis. 2016 was an excellent year for the company, over 56,000 castings were sold, small and large, of which 80% were bi-metallic castings. Cement, energy and construction machinery make up the three largest end-user sectors.

15: The Frank Sinatra Big Band from Berlin in full swing.



16: International guests from China and Russia enjoying the convivial festive banquet.



After the official programme guests enjoyed a festive banquet accompanied by a Frank Sinatra-style big band, lively samba dancers and an impressive firework display in the night sky of Magdeburg. 🌍



17: A stunning firework display lit up the night sky of Magdeburg.

18: Dennis and Cindy Todd from Wear-Concepts, Inc., Liberty, Missouri, USA enjoying the firework display.



19: A wide choice of whisky was on offer to round off the evening.