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# Valve World

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# EBRO ARMATUREN :

Think “EBRO ARMATUREN” and you probably think of butterfly valves, made by a family business in Germany. Yet this picture hardly does justice to the many corporate successes the company has enjoyed. Today EBRO ARMATUREN manufactures a vast range of butterfly valves, boasts a global manufacturing and distribution presence and has a solid footing in a diverse range of markets. It also stands for more than “just” butterfly valves: output has long included pneumatic and electric actuators, whilst the acquisition of specialist manufacturer Stafsjö has added knife-gate valves to the portfolio. To understand more about the history and future of EBRO ARMATUREN, Valve World visited the company in Hagen, Germany, where we met co-founder and President/CEO Mr Peter Bröer.



Today, he is recognised for having built up a flourishing valve business, but as a young man Peter Bröer was known as a dedicated sportsman. A keen handball player, he contributed greatly to the team; always present for training sessions, never complaining about minor injuries and always encouraging his team-mates, both on and off the pitch.

It is this positive spirit that has undoubtedly contributed to Mr Bröer’s successes in the valve industry. Taking over the family’s foundry business in the early 1970s, he soon launched valve production in 1972 with his brother Jochen Bröer.

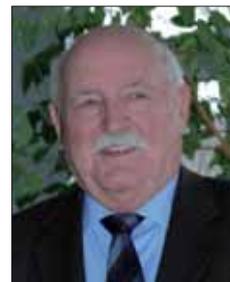
Those first valves were commodity items, destined for use in non-challenging environments. Mr Bröer, however, quickly identified more opportunities, and so EBRO ARMATUREN soon started to produce increasingly complex valves able to control the most arduous of fluids. Today, the EBRO ARMATUREN range encompasses a very wide spectrum of valves, from rubber-lined through to high performance, as well as own-design pneumatic and electric actuators. In addition to its standard valves, EBRO ARMATUREN also has an enviable track-record in the en-

gineering and manufacture of customer specials, providing valve solutions for unique applications.

The talent of EBRO ARMATUREN for innovation and success in producing customized solutions is underpinned by its location. Situated in the Ruhr area, one of the world’s foremost engineering centres, EBRO ARMATUREN benefits from ready access to skilled employees and modern production equipment. Says Mr Bröer: “We have no fewer than fourteen full-time design engineers, who of course work with the latest design software. In addition, we have four technical documentation specialists, who concentrate on ensuring all the paperwork is as it should be. Our engineering strengths and flexible manufacturing processes means we can readily manufacture both series and speciality valves. For example, last year output at the Hagen plant ran to more than 200,000 valves, yet we actually shipped out a staggering 15,000 different product configurations.”

### Market segments

Ever since the first valve deliveries, EBRO’s policy has been to penetrate new



Peter Bröer, CEO

sales markets, using both existing products and by tailor-making new ones. It is this market diversity that gives the company such stability should a particular segment experi-

ence a downturn. Today the company continues to serve long-standing clients in areas such as shipbuilding, power plants, food & beverage, automotive, water & wastewater and powder & bulk solids handling. More recently, EBRO ARMATUREN has developed a range of valves which target the needs of users in the chemical process industry. Mr Bröer: “We launched this new product line in November 2004 during the Valve World Exhibition. That represented a major step forwards for EBRO ARMATUREN. As you know, chemical industry customers place very stringent regulations on suppliers, not just regarding product quality but also in terms of documentation and service, etc. I am pleased to report that we have been quick to secure orders from blue-

# commitment is our game



The EBRO ARMATUREN production facilities in Germany are highly flexible, enabling urgent orders to be fast-tracked for quick delivery.

chip chemical companies in Germany and elsewhere, which really vindicates our overall quality and approach.”

Following the Bröer Group's recent acquisition of Swedish knife-gate valve and pulp & paper specialist Stafsjö, EBRO ARMATUREN has been able to enhance the presence of its products in Stafsjö's principal market, i.e. the pulp and paper industry, as well as strengthening its position in the waste-water market with knife-gate valves from Stafsjö.

Says Mr Bröer: “Stafsjö has been integrated within Bröer Holding GmbH together with EBRO ARMATUREN. Both companies will continue to operate independently, reflecting the reputation each enjoys for its fast availability, reliability and cost efficiency. However, we see a lot of potential for the two companies to share technology and to develop new market segments together.”

## Package provider

Whilst discussing the Stafsjö acquisition, Mr Bröer adds that it will also strengthen the growing reputation of EBRO ARMATUREN as a package provider. Mr Bröer: “Many clients are interested in so-called

one-stop-shopping, looking for a single supplier to meet more and more of their flow control needs. We can go a long way in that respect with our wide range of butterfly valves, and have long been able to include complementary valve types as well thanks to close ties with other valve manufacturers. Now the addition of the Stafsjö range of knife-gate valves into the EBRO product portfolio gives us even more options to serve clients.”

As indicated previously, the package abilities of EBRO ARMATUREN do not stop at valves but also encompass pneumatic and electric actuators. Indicating that clients appreciate being able to purchase turn-key equipment such as fully automated valves, Mr Bröer points out some major advantages to procuring an EBRO valve and actuator combination. “As we make both products we are ideally placed to determine the optimum valve and actuator combination, making sure the actuator is properly sized. Moreover, the customer has a single partner to turn to should any problem occur. I believe EBRO is the only company that can rightly claim that.”

In fact, the history behind the electric

EBRO-actuators clearly demonstrates the company's commitment to clients. Hearing that a customer was unable to find an electric actuator for a specific application, EBRO researched the market and developed one for him! Initially designed as on/off units, the electric EBRO-actuators are now also available with modulating capabilities and can be integrated into Fieldbus systems. In addition to the electric range, own-brand pneumatic actuators are also available with modulating capabilities made at an EBRO ARMATUREN plant in Italy. Mr Bröer: “Almost all our actuator output is fitted to our own valves. Without doubt, automation is an important issue for our clients in these cost-conscious times so we will continue to develop products to support them.”

## Global sales

Although Germany remains a strong sales market for EBRO ARMATUREN, the company benefits from having a well-established global presence. Its network of subsidiaries in eighteen strategic locations plus carefully selected distributors means EBRO ARMATUREN can readily serve both MRO as well as project needs world- ▶

EBRO ARMATUREN benefits from comprehensive R&D and testing facilities, according to Mr Bröer. "We test just about everything and especially key components such as the material of the disc and liners used in lined butterfly valves."

Clients appreciate EBRO ARMATUREN accurate documentation and complete



The FTIR-Spectrometer with ATR unit allows a quick and efficient quality monitoring of the elastomer and guarantees a constant high quality.



A helium leak detector is used to ensure full compliance with the TA-Luft requirements.



During incoming goods inspection, the chemical composition of the iron alloys can be precisely defined with a portable spectrometry unit.



Peter Eckhoff,  
Marketing Direktor

wide. Says Marketing Manager Mr Peter Eckhoff: "It will come as no surprise when I tell you that Asia is an important project market for us.

We have the production capacity and logistical services

in place to easily fulfil orders which run into the millions of euros."

Mr Eckhoff notes that EBRO's decision to invest in subsidiaries was a very conscious one. "Having subsidiaries close to our customers, and especially our all-important end users, facilitates knowledge transfer. So we learn more about customers' valve applications whilst we can properly explain our technology to them. That makes it easier to match the right valve to each particular job. In addition, our local people properly understand the prevailing regulations and sales conditions, etc. It is thanks to these subsidiaries that EBRO ARMATUREN can properly steer the entire chain of activities, right from valve manufacture through to application."

In addition to its overseas subsidiaries, EBRO ARMATUREN has also set up manufacturing centres in China and Thailand. Mr Eckhoff: "Our first plant, in Bangkok, was set up in 1991 to manufacture standard valves at cost-effective prices. Today it also turns out valves in large sizes up to DN 1200. With our newer plant in China we are ideally placed to serve industry in the region, a fact that is greatly appreciated by many of our European clients who are also investing in Asia."

The production plant in China is a highly flexible manufacturing and assembly unit that complies with the latest ISO Standards. Here, EBRO ARMATUREN has invested in state-of-the-art CNC machining centres for high-precision processing of valve components. According to Mr Bröer this plant is run according to the same quality assurance programme as found in all of EBRO's locations. Mr Bröer: "We are committed to delivering superior quality and developing customer-oriented innovations, the aim being to capture additional market share. Whether a client buys a valve in Germany or in China, he will receive a product with consistent in-

tegrity. In fact, I am very pleased at just how quickly personnel at our China operation have taken the message about international quality requirements on board. However, to be clear, the production facility in Germany is and will remain central to EBRO ARMATUREN. I see Hagen as the ideal location for the engineering and manufacture of our important high-end products."

### Family strengths

Having been a key motivator at EBRO ARMATUREN for over three decades, Mr Bröer continues to encourage his co-workers and identify opportunities for growth. Asked what developments could be expected in the future, he replies that he has his eye on markets in countries such as India and Brazil. "I believe there is good potential to serve the chemical industries and water & wastewater sectors in India, whilst of course Brazil is a promising market for both EBRO's and Stafsjö's pulp & paper valves. We are currently analysing how we can best serve clients in these areas, and I certainly wouldn't rule out setting up an additional production facility."

its high quality-products, accurate services.



Making special valves for specific applications is a major strength of EBRO ARMATUREN.



The combination of the PTFE-liner and a triple shaft bearing ensures operational safety even with high corrosive media. These series provides both wafer and lug type body designs.



Double and single acting pneumatic actuators according to "rack and pinion" principle. Scotch yoke design is also available.



High Performance butterfly valve series in wafer or lug type design used in high pressure and temperature applications.



The series of electric quarter turn actuators provides a constant torque for the complete rotation.



Stafsjö Knife Gate Valve for the Pulp and Paper Industry.



Lydia Bröer

One project which is already well underway is the development of a range of ANSI valves, essential for the company to realise its plan of further serving clients in the petrochemical industry. As Mr Bröer rightly notes, making an ANSI valve is not simply a question of redesigning the flange bolts, as issues such as materials and documentation all have to be taken into consideration. Even so, he is confident that EBRO ARMATUREN will be marketing a full ANSI valve range – from soft seated through to high performance - by the time of the next Achema trade show, in the Spring of 2009.

Although he plans to remain active for many years to come, Mr Bröer is slowly handing over the reins at EBRO ARMATUREN to his daughter, Ms Lydia Bröer. Both father and daughter are convinced that a medium-sized, family-owned group of companies like the Bröer Group has some key advantages for clients. Ms

Lydia Bröer: "We can respond very quickly to the changing valve needs of our clients, without having to first obtain the approval of shareholders. That is ideal when you are operating in a market where customer specials are commonplace. Further, our staff is empowered to take decisions and accept responsibility, so that clients are assured a rapid response to all

their enquiries. Finally, being a family business, I honestly believe that people here feel they are part of a team. As my father has indicated, teamwork is the key to success. His enduring legacy will therefore be the mutual trust engendered amongst and between our staff and our clients. In our business, service and commitment are everything!"

## FACTS & FIGURES

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Name:           | EBRO ARMATUREN  |
| Headquarters:   | Hagen, Germany  |
| Production:     | Germany, Thailand, China, Italy   |
| Sales channels: | 18 subsidiaries, more than 50 agents world-wide   |
| Key products:   | - High Performance, PTFE and rubber lined butterfly valves (lug & wafer type),<br>- Stafsjö knife gate valves, electric and pneumatic actuators, automatic control (AS-I) |
| Key markets:    | Chemicals, shipbuilding, power plants, food & beverage, automotive, water & wastewater, powder & bulk solids handling   |
| Annual output:  | Over 400,000 valves, 75,000 pneumatic actuators and 18,000 electric actuators, modular accessories (switchboxes, bus system interfaces, etc).                             |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Name:           | Stafsjö (sister company to EBRO ARMATUREN within the Bröer Group)     |
| Headquarters:   | Stavsjö, Sweden   |
| Production:     | Sweden  |
| Sales channels: | 2 subsidiaries in Germany and Austria, more than 35 agents world-wide |
| Key products:   | Knife gate valves, pneumatic actuators, EBRO products                 |
| Key markets:    | Pulp & Paper  |