

History of Aluminium in the UK – from Schloemann to the SMS group – full circle...

With constant changes of ownership, mergers and takeovers, there is one particular story in the metals industry which describes how the brilliance and determination of two brothers has influenced the world of aluminium rolling and extrusion, the effects of which are still seen today as the SMS group in 2016, finds itself resident in a building in the UK, constructed for a company originally formed by one of its partners who had joined Schloemann in Germany over 100 years earlier.

The two brothers; Ludwig and Erwin Loewy were born in Czechoslovakia, and in 1914, Ludwig joined the firm of Eduard Schloemann in Dusseldorf where he demonstrated his skill as a designer of machine tools, rolling mills and hydraulic presses. Ludwig became a partner and Chief Engineer in the company in 1921 and Erwin, his brother, joined the firm as general sales manager in 1925. Schloemann of course went on to become the leading, multi-national engineering firm known today as the SMS group.

In 1933, with the threat of war looming, Ludwig Loewy left Schloemann and emigrated to the United Kingdom where he founded the Loewy Engineering Company on the Kingsway in London. His brother Erwin followed him some years later and established the Hydropress company, but in 1939, left London and settled in Paris where he established SPIDEM (Societe pour l'installation d'Etablissements Metalligues). It's interesting to note that both Loewy Engineering and SPIDEM would be owned by the same multinational group many years later. Erwin didn't stay that long in France though, and in 1940 he incorporated Hydropress in the U.S. and later emigrated there.

Ludwig Loewy stayed in the UK but moved the offices to Branksome Grange in Bournemouth which he considered safer as war broke out, but died in 1942, in Bath Road Bournemouth where he lived. His brother, Erwin, continued to build on Ludwig's legacy. Erwin's crowning achievement was the design and completion of a mammoth 50,000 ton forging press erected in 1955, the largest machine of its kind in the world. The 50,000 ton press continues to operate today (in Massachusetts, USA).

By the early 1950s, a few years after Ludwig's death, the company, Loewy Engineering Ltd, moved to Wallisdown Road, the same site and building (now the old wing) as SMS group Technical Services Poole office occupies today. The company went through numerous changes of ownership through Davy, Trafalgar House and Kvaerner and remained on this site until 1996 when the site was closed, VAI was established in Poole and at the same time, Parkegate Engineering was formed by many of the Wallisdown Road employees.

The rest, as they say, is history. Parkegate continued to thrive and grow and was acquired by the SMS group in 2012, but in an even stranger quirk of fate, as part of a consolidation of all SMS group businesses in the UK in 2016, Parkegate moved from its offices in Poole, back to the original building on Wallisdown Road, the very site where, almost 70 years before, one of the founder members and partners of Schloemann of Dusseldorf, had based one of the great British heavy industrial engineering companies.

And that's why there is an aluminium flat products office in Poole. Poole is actually the home of several companies providing equipment and technology to the aluminium industry – all because of one man; Ludwig Loewy, a former partner and Chief Engineer of Schloemann, Dusseldorf.

SMS group Technical Services (UK) Ltd – The history of Aluminium Flat Products in the UK



Ludwig Loewy

Erwin Loewy

1913 Ludwig Loewy joined Schloemann company, Dusseldorf

1914 Eduard Schloemann dies

1916 Schloemann company incorporated, 50% Ludwig Loewy and 50% Mr. Mulhaupt

1925 Erwin Loewy joined Schloemann as sales manager

1933 Ludwig Loewy left Germany for London

1933 Established Loewy Engineering based in London, Aldwych.

1933 Erwin Loewy heads Schloemann after his brother's departure

1935 Erwin leaves Germany in 1935 and follows Loewy to London

1935 Hydropress company incorporated in UK

1938 Loewy Engineering moves from London to Bournemouth

1942 Ludwig Loewy died in Bournemouth, UK

1950 Loewy Engineering moved to Wallisdown Road

1966 Loewy Robertson Engineering was formed by the amalgamation of 2 heavy engineering subsidiaries: Loewy Engineering Co and W. H. A. Robertson and Co

1967 Loewy Robertson acquired by the Davy Group, remained based in Poole at the Wallisdown Road site.

1939 Erwin leaves London for Paris, establishes SPIDEM (later to become part of Spie Batignoles, then CLECIM, then DAVY etc)

1940 Erwin leaves Paris and moves to the US, incorporates Hydropress in the US

Erwin Loewy died July 13, 1959



1992 Trafalgar House acquires Davy

1996 Kvaerner acquires Trafalgar Group

1990 Davy acquires Clecim from Spie Batignole (includes SPIDEM)

1996 - VAI of Austria opens office in Poole

1996 - Kvaerner closes Poole office

1996 - Parkegate Engineering founded by former employees of Davy/Kvaerner

2009 - SMS Meer UK formed

2012 - Parkegate acquired by SMS group

1999 - VAI buys Kvaerner

VAI later acquired by Siemens, then a JV with Mitsubishi.....Primetals

2016 - SMS group Technical Services (UK) Ltd (Parkegate) move to Wallisdown Road (original site of Loewy Engineering)