

BERLEBACH | THE WOODEN TRIPOD



Once the ore (or 'Erz' in German) deposits had been exhausted, the wood from

the forests in the Erz mountains became the raw material with which the region was most associated and which secured the livelihoods of the inhabitants. Traditional hand-carved wooden art, toys and sports equipment made the Erz mountains famous around the world – so that they were not only seen at the Christmas markets across the country. It is against this backdrop that the story of Berlebach Stativtechnik is also told.

In 1898, businessman Peter Otto Berlebach bought a plot with a water-powered sawmill on Frauensteiner Strasse in Mulda. By 1906, the staff had increased from 6 to around 30 and the premises were extended; steam power had replaced water power and the wooden goods were taken by a fleet of horses to the railway station for shipping. A glance at the "Hamburg Export Handbook" shows that Berlebach tripods went out onto the high seas and were exported as early as 1906.

Company founder Otto Berlebach entered well-earned retirement in 1918 and sold his factory. The new owners were all experienced specialists who succeeded in maintaining the company's success. Berlebach wooden tripods soon became synonymous with quality and famous throughout the world. The company's increasing sales figures were put towards new investments, and in 1928 the company bought its first lorry to take Berlebach tripods to important customers.

Production was maintained by the families of the shareholders under difficult conditions during the Second World War. The company was nationalised in 1972 and run as a VEB (state-owned company) in the GDR. Berlebach tripods covered the whole product range and supplied everything photographers needed, from lightweight travel tripods to heavy-weight studio tripods.

When the company was put into the administration of a trust in 1990, there was the opportunity

for a new beginning for Germany's "ancient" tripod factory. But before things got that far, there were three difficult years of negotiations before the trustees agreed to privatisation. Wolfgang Fleischer, who had been working at Berlebach since the early 1960s, bought the premises, the production equipment and the Berlebach name.

In August 1993, Fleischer risked a new start with seven new employees and made the established solid tripods from ash. In order to meet the exacting requirements of the market, he needed to make extensive investments in machinery for wood and metal processing. The wood processing department received a new environment-friendly heating system which transforms all the waste from the production process into heat energy.

The areas of application of Berlebach tripods are many and varied, ranging from photography and video engineering to ornithology, astronomy and geodesy. Continuous product development, production based on exacting quality requirements and regular participation in national and international specialist trade fairs have increased Berlebach's market share for its tripods not only in Germany but also in the 25 countries around the world to which it exports.

The excellent characteristics of the ash from the Erz mountains in terms of vibration resistance, stability and robustness were highly appreciated by photographers David and Meerwarth a good eighty years ago. So it is only logical that the two famous professional photographers recommend all ambitious photographers "a solid wooden Berlebach tripod" in their series of books of photography tips. And this recommendation has lost nothing of its validity today.



Company name Berlebach Stativtechnik	Classic product Ash tripod (since 1906)	Established 1898 in Mulda/Germany	Founder Otto Berlebach	Distribution worldwide	Main production site Mulda/Saxony
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