



Thomas Josef Heimbach

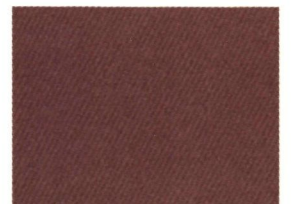
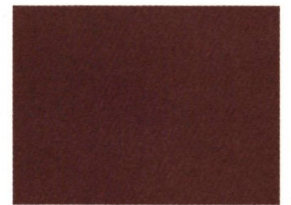
A company profile

July 1996

Irene Schipper

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**stichting onderzoek multinationale ondernemingen**  
centre for research on multinational corporations



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SOMO/Irene Schipper

On behalf of the ETUC-TCL in Brussels

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## Introduction

The Thomas Josef Heimbach Group is a leading paper industry supplier. In the beginning the company operated the largest single manufacturing plant for paper machine clothing in Europe. Through expansion by acquisitions and investments in plant and research, they are now able to offer the full range of machine clothing from headbox to reel-up.

The parent company Thomas Josef Heimbach is based in Düren, near Cologne, Germany. The producing company in Düren goes under the full name of: Thomas Josef Heimbach GmbH & Co.

This company produces felted materials, filtering media and technical textiles, in particular for the pulp and paper industry, the fibrated concrete industry and industrial filtration. Their main product is paper machine clothing. About 80% of the turnover of the plant in Düren is realised with deliveries to the paper machine industry.

Having long been the largest felt manufacturer in Germany, Heimbach's greatest expansion phase began in the 1960s with the introduction of synthetics and needled felts. Between 1960 and 1990 a substantial restructuring took place, during which time exports increased from 25% to a current 75% of total production.

The Heimbach Group exports worldwide, with North America being supplied by Atlanta Felt, a company formed jointly with the Canadian JWI Group. South America is mainly supplied by a Spanish subsidiary, Heimbach Ibérica SA.

The Heimbach Group is located in the following countries: Germany, Spain, Belgium, Ireland, England and in the USA.

Since the changes of the early 1960s, Heimbach has remained at the forefront of technological change with products such as Atrovit, Cascade, Meridian, Catamaran, Mistral and Planet being used worldwide.

Heimbach has always maintained a policy of high investment in plant and research. Current investment is being concentrated on quality optimisation rather than further capacity increase.<sup>1</sup>

Note from the author: It was very hard to find reliable data on the company, because there was no annual report available. In addition there were hardly any articles found in the German press or the international press, and only a few articles in specialist literature sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper, March 1992

## History

The Thomas Josef Heimbach Company was established in 1811.

The expansion phase began in the 1960s. The Spanish subsidiary, Heimbach Iberica S.A., was established in 1969.

Heimbach and the Canadian JWI Group Ltd. jointly formed Atlanta Felt Company Inc., a North American wet felt maker (it is not known by the author in which year this company was established). The cooperation between both companies turned out to be a success because there was a continuation of activities together.

In september 1991 the JWI Group and Thomas Josef Heimbach signed a cooperation agreement to share R&D and production technologies. The JWI Group had at that time 10 divisions worldwide and designed and produced forming, press and dryer fabrics and auxiliary equipment. On the other hand Heimbach was the leading supplier of press and dryer fabrics in Europe and was selling its product worldwide<sup>2</sup>. The companies shared their know how on paper machine clothing and drainage equipment. The 1991 agreement saved 200 jobs in the Manchester area. The JWI subsidiary in Manchester, C.H. Johnson, became a Heimbach subsidiary, although JWI kept a significant percentage of the shares<sup>3</sup>.

The involvement of C.H. Johnson in Manchester in the Heimbach Group meant that Heimbach was now able to offer the full range of machine clothing from headbox to reel-up.

In addition to this cooperation, both groups decided to formalise a share exchange<sup>4</sup>

Other subsidiaries of Heimbach are the Belgian companies R. Bruch & Cie SA and Formabel SA, both based in Neu-Moresnet at the same address, Swiss Wire Ireland Ltd, based in Tralee, Ireland and Interfelt SA, based in Burgos, Spain, at the same address as Heimbach Ibérica.

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<sup>2</sup> PaperAge, September 1991, p.5

<sup>3</sup> Manchester Evening News, 24 Sept. 1994

<sup>4</sup> Manchester Evening News, 24 Sept. 1991

## Structure

The status of the company is a Limited Partnership.

The parent company Thomas Josef Heimbach GmbH has managerial control over its subsidiary Thomas Josef Heimbach GmbH & Co. and is owner of its fixed assets.

Thomas Josef Heimbach GmbH & Co., as a producing company, is owner of the current assets<sup>5</sup>.

The JWI Group and Heimbach jointly own Atlanta Felt Company.

In 1991, the JWI subsidiary C.H. Johnson became a Heimbach subsidiary but JWI kept a significant percentage of the shares. The two leading paper industry suppliers have formalised a share exchange.

The following scheme is a summary of the parent company followed by the subsidiaries.

### Thomas Josef Heimbach GmbH (Germany)

- .Thomas Josef Heimbach GmbH & Co.(Germany)
- .Atlanta Felt Company (%) (USA)
- .R. Bruch & Cie SA (Belgium)
- .Formabel SA (Belgium)
- .Heimbach Ibérica SA <sup>6</sup> (Spain)
- ..Interfelt SA<sup>7</sup>
- .Swiss Wire Ireland Ltd. (Rep. of Ireland)
- .C.H. Johnson Ltd. (UK)

### JWI Group Ltd (Canada)<sup>8</sup>

- .JWI Group Inc. (USA)
- ..Atlanta Felt Company (%)<sup>9</sup>
- ..Johnson Filaments Inc. (USA)
- ..Johnson Foils Inc. (USA)
- .Johnson Wires (Pty) Ltd. (Australia)
- .William Morrison & Sons (UK)
- .Drytex (USA)

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<sup>5</sup> Hoppenstedt report 1996

<sup>6</sup> According to the Who owns Whom 1996, Heimbach Ibérica is an associated company

<sup>7</sup> Interfelt SA is the subsidiary of Heimbach Ibérica SA, source: Profound Database

<sup>8</sup> This is not a complete list, according to PaperAge, January 1993, page 43, JWI has 12 divisions in North America.

<sup>9</sup> Atlanta Felt is a subsidiary of the JWI Group Inc. in the US

## **Management**

The members of the general management of Thomas Josef Heimbach GmbH are:

Eckart von Eyern  
Otto G.I. Merckens  
Wolfgang Schmidl

## **Activities**

**Thomas Josef Heimbach & Co** in Düren, Germany produces all kinds of different felts:

- felt filters, filter cloths;
- felt cloths for wood pulp-, paper- and cardboard manufacture;
- roller jackets;
- woven felt;
- synthetic felt;
- needle felts;
- filter fabrics (textile);
- man-made fibres, industrial for rollers;
- and filtering hoses of synthetic fabrics.<sup>10</sup>

Of the production 75% is exported.

**Heimbach Iberica SA**, in Burgos, Spain, produces bolting and filter cloth, industrial fabrics, felts and felted fabric as well as felt for paper machine clothing.<sup>11</sup>

**Interfelt SA**, in Burgos, Spain, a subsidiary of Heimbach Ibérica, is a felt producer. Of the production 95% is exported<sup>12</sup>.

**Swiss Wire Ireland Ltd**, in Tralee, is involved in polyester processing services, making plastic products for the paper and pulp industries, wire fabrics, mesh braids and netting, sieves, wire and screens<sup>13</sup>.

**R. Bruch & Cie SA** produces felts and felted fabrics (i.e. woolen felt for paper machines).

And **Formabel SA** is a producer of man-made fibre fabrics and sythetic fibre cloth<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Kompass information 1996

<sup>11</sup> ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Profound Database

<sup>13</sup> Kompass Database

<sup>14</sup> ibid.

R. Bruch & Cie SA and Formabel SA are located on the same address in Neu-Moresnet, Belgium.

**C.H. Johnson** in Manchester, UK, produces pulp and paper machine forming fabrics, wire part drainage devices and ancillary equipment<sup>15</sup>.

**Atlanta Felt**, produces nylon wet felt, a blanket like material, used to reduce the water content in paper as it moves through the manufacturing process. A new pre-needling line there gives a 33% capacity increase and improved product uniformity for its MERIDIAN press felt, the only felt with a prefabricated, endless machine direction oriented batt.<sup>16</sup>

### **Environment**

In December 1993 Atlanta Felt started to recycle nylon wet press felt waste. Prior to December, Atlanta Felt threw away waste cuttings because it knew no market for the material. Recycall Consulting Services in Marietta set up a system to collect and sell the trimmings, which eventually are reprocessed. Atlanta Felt now recycles 97% of the waste felt it produces, contributing to an 50% cut in the facility's disposal costs<sup>17</sup>

As research and development continues, trends include the combination of the established Heimbach technique of MD batt orientation with a variety of new multi-layer base weave combinations based both on the Catamaran principle and on new techniques which are still closely guarded secrets.

The aims of this investment include greater stability, increases in dewatering capacity by increased fibre support and the elimination of vibration.

Drier fabric developments have been based on the success of flat yarns and the increasing contact area they provide, combined with improved stability. Heimbach was early to develop fabrics for slalom positions and says it remains a leader in this field. Developments continue, to optimise fabric design and produce constructions to withstand the most severe conditions of hydrolysis.

Heimbach is a major supplier to the 9m wide machines operating at speeds in excess of 1,100-1,200 m/min, and has been involved in the supply of first-clothings of machines of this type in Sweden, Finland, Italy, France, Germany, UK, Austria and Portugal<sup>18</sup>.

Trademarks of the company are ATROVIT, SLALOM, CATAMARAN, MEDIRA, PLANET, MISTRAL, POROCLEAN, HEIMBACH IBERICA and SOLITAIR.

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<sup>15</sup> Kompass Database

<sup>16</sup> PaperAge, January 1993, page 34

<sup>17</sup> Plastic News, 17 May 1993, page 23

<sup>18</sup> Paper March 1992, page 43



## Financial Data

Turnover figures	currency land of origin	turnover in DM
Thomas Josef Heimbach & Co	DM 155 million	
Heimbach Iberica SA	2 Billion pesetas (1993)	21,980,607
Interfelt SA	150 million pesetas (1994)	1,782,211
R. Bruch & Cie SA	340,339 000 BEF	16,536,050
Formabel SA	48,054 000 BEF	2,334,800
C.H. Johnson	8,072 000 GBP	19,112,881
Atlanta Felt	(not known)	

These turnover figures added up gives turnover of 214,961,000 DM (exclusive Atlanta Felt).

An other source gives the group turnover of 250 Million DM in 1995<sup>19</sup>

Turnover figures of the production at Heimbach in Düren of the last three years:

1993	Ca. 160 000 000 DM
1994	Ca. 160 000 000 DM
1995	Ca. 155 000 000 DM <sup>20</sup>

## Employment

The employment level at the Heimbach production facility in Düren has varied from 800 to 850 in the last 5 years.

The total number in Europe is 1421 (incl. UK)

800	Düren, Germany
200	Manchester, UK
100	Tralee, Ireland
10	Formabel, Neu-Moresnet, Belgium
111	R. Bruch & Cie, Neu-Moresnet, Belgium
200	Burgos, Spain <sup>21</sup>
-	Burgos, Spain (employee number unknown)
60	USA (1993)

These employment figures point out that the Heimbach Group is required to apply to the directive of European Works Councils. The total amount of employees within the EU is more than 1000, namely 1221 (exclusive the UK), and there are two companies of the group with more than 150 employees (in Germany and in Spain).

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<sup>19</sup> FITT-Wirtschaftspresse, May 1996

<sup>20</sup> Database Creditreform-MARKUS

<sup>21</sup> Employment figures of Kompass 1996

ANNEX I List of addresses of production facilities

**Thomas Josef Heimbach & Co**

An Gut Nazareth  
D-5160 Düren-Mariaweiler  
Germany

Postfach 100808, D-52308 Düren  
Tel: 02421-8020  
Fax: 02421-82091

Number of employees: 800  
Management:  
Otto Merckens  
Von Eyern Eckart  
Wolfgang Ruediger Schmidl

**Heimbach Iberica SA**

Bureba, 35  
Pol. Ind. Gamonal  
09007 Burgos (Burgos)  
Spain

Tel: 974-224150  
Fax: 974-218951

Number of employees: 200  
Management: Martin Bravo

**Interfelt SA**

Bureba, 35  
Pol. Ind. Gamonal  
09007 Burgos (Burgos)  
Spain

**Swiss Wire Ireland Ltd.**

Clash Industrial Estate  
Tralee, Co Kerry  
Ireland

Tel: 066-26707  
Fax: 066-25488

Number of employees: 100

**R. Bruch & Cie SA, Fabrique de Feutres**  
Tulje 65  
4721 Neu-Moresnet  
Belgium

Tel: 087-659705  
Fax: 087-657559

Number of employees: 111  
Management:  
Otto Merckens  
Paul Mullender

**Formabel SA**  
Tulje 65  
4721 Neu-Moresnet  
Belgium

Tel: 087-658808  
Fax: 087-657559

Number of employees: 10  
Management:  
Otto Merckens  
Paul Mullender

**C.G. Johnson Ltd**  
Bradnor Rd, Wythenshaw  
Manchester  
M22 4TS, United Kingdom

Tel: 061-9986811  
Fax: 061-9988095

Number of employees: 200 (1993)

**Atlanta Felt Company**  
1157 Battlecreek Road  
Jonesboro, GA30236  
USA

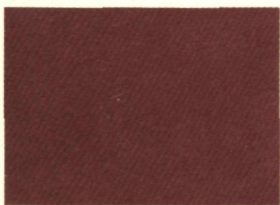
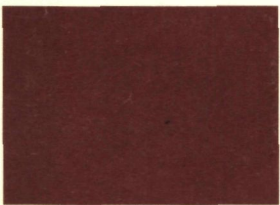
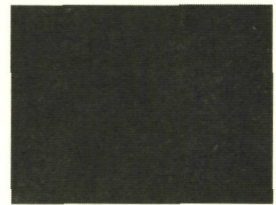
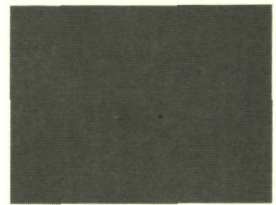
Tel: 770-419100

Number of employees: 60 (1993)

**Parent Company:**

Thomas Josef Heimbach GmbH  
An Gut Nazareth 73  
Mariaweiler  
D-5160, Düren, Germany

Tel: 02421-8020  
Fax: 02421-82091



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