



THE TRUMA SHOW

Gary Martin flies to Germany for a fascinating insight into one of the caravan industry's biggest equipment manufacturers



From humble beginnings... an original Truma lamp and today's hi-tech heater offering



OUT OF adversity comes triumph should perhaps be Truma's mantra, for one of the most instantly-recognisable names in the caravan equipment industry has its roots planted firmly in the rather bleak aftermath of the Second World War.

The company was founded in 1949 by Philipp Kreis who, after returning from the conflict and with work hard to come by, started an English language school in Munich. With power failures common in this post-war period, Kreis, an engineer by trade, hit upon the idea of designing and making gas lamps to provide light for his classes. Word soon got out about these incredibly effective lamps and, with demand increasing, the language school was turned into a manufacturing company. Initially designed for domestic use, it wasn't long before the lamps became popular with the caravanning fraternity.

An auxiliary benefit of the lamps was the amount of heat they naturally generated (some 85% of their energy was heat). With this in mind and with a well thought-out safety concept, Kreis launched the first

dedicated caravan heating system in 1961 (20,000 caravans were registered in Germany at this time).

Today, 61 years after it was founded in Kreis's living room, Truma is an international company boasting more than 450 employees in a state-of-the-art factory at Putzbrunn just outside Munich. Its product range includes heating and air-conditioning systems, water heaters, caravan movers and energy-supply management systems – nearly every caravan in the world is fitted with at least one of these.

A visit to Truma's base in October was a real eye-opener. Re-built and modernised on its existing site, Truma HQ is spacious, light, gloriously clean and welcoming. It is easy to see why this company is an industry-leader. It has had a dedicated in-house customer service department since 1972, while a sophisticated cold chamber and a computer-controlled high-rack warehouse place this company at the forefront of manufacturing technology.

Throughout all its immense growth, though, the company hasn't forgotten its

humble family roots. Indeed, current Chairman of the company's advisory board, Renate Schimmer-Wottrich, is Kreis's daughter. Renate replaced her father as Managing Director in 1988, but her connection with Truma goes back much further than that – she has had some form of involvement since she was six years old! Continuing this family theme, Renate has both a son and daughter working at Putzbrunn.

With subsidiaries in England (the first such subsidiary when it opened in 1997), Italy and much of Europe, plus New Zealand, Australia, Japan, China and Korea among others, Truma's success in its first 60 years is easy to measure. With a host of new developments (including the company's first dedicated retail product and the world's first LPG-powered fuel-cell system) for the caravan market in 2011, it looks like the company is set to be a leading light as an innovator for many years to come. ■

Lookout for details of Truma's new products for the caravanning market in our January issue



Immaculate – the factory is a model of efficiency

TRUMA FACTS

- The company owes its name to US President Harry S Truman. After the Second World War, Truman actively encouraged Germany to be an industrial giant again. Kreis admired the president, and wrote to ask if he could name his company after him.
- Renate Schimmer-Wottrich was recently awarded the Bavarian Order of Merit, the highest award of the Free State of Bavaria.
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