

KNUD E. HANSEN AT 80

TEXT: BRUCE PETER

On 10 November 2017, a wonderful party was held in the old 'Toldkammeret' (customs building) in Helsingør to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the now world-famous Danish naval architecture consultancy, KNUD E. HANSEN. Past and present employees and friends – including Shippax – enjoyed a hearty buffet dinner, followed by speeches and dancing to a band chosen by the current music-loving managing director, Finn Wollesen.

Back in 1937, the new company had only a few initial employees, led by the brilliant naval architect, Knud E. Hansen, who had already established a leading reputation as a designer of innovative and efficient short-sea ferries. Now, the firm has seven offices all over the world meaning that its naval architects can be close to their clients in these various markets and its design work is carried out mostly using advanced computer software, rather than the drawing boards, technical drawing instruments, slide-rules and drafting film Hansen would have recognised. It is highly likely that he would have been amazed and impressed that it not only continues to exist (the shipping industry being a volatile business) but even more so that it is presently enjoying some of its greatest successes.

In recent years, large and innovative con-ro (combined container- and ro-ro) vessels have been designed for owners in Italy, France and Saudi Arabia and built in China and in South Korea; large ro-ro ferries have been designed for DFDS; ferries have been built in China and at Damen's shipyard in Romania for Chinese and Canadian operators; wind turbine installation vessels built in China and South Korea for various operators; a polar icebreaking research vessel has been designed for use by the Australian Government and also will be built by Damen in Romania; private yachts have been designed for Danish owners and built in the Netherlands plus numerous conversions of cruise ships and a livestock carrier have been overseen. In addition, several large and complex HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) installations have been designed for cruise ships, naval vessels and other types of tonnage and a wide variety of concept ships have been

devised, ranging from expedition cruise vessels to ro-ro reefer ships. In other words, KNUD E. HANSEN has been exceptionally busy.

THE WANDORG ERA

In the early years, KNUD E. HANSEN specialised in designing ro-ro ferries, general cargo ships and fishing boats. By the 1960s, ferries had become a key type of output and a large majority of those introduced by Danish, Swedish and Norwegian owners as car ownership grew had been drawn up by the company. Hansen himself died in a yachting accident in 1960, after which the leading naval architects were Svend A. Bertelsen (who was Managing Director) and Tage Wandborg, who was responsible for the very beautiful and distinctive appearance of the company's design output. Later on, Wandborg also designed many of the 'first generation' of purpose-built cruise ships – including the world's first expedition cruise ship – the LINBLAD EXPLORER of 1969 – and he and colleagues oversaw the conversion of the SS FRANCE into the NORWAY – the world's first very large mass market cruise ship. Later still, Wandborg designed the 'Phoenix World City' – a very prescient project which was never built but correctly anticipated the design features of today's mega cruise ships.

In the period since, KNUD E. HANSEN has designed ships of almost every conceivable type; indeed, the current Managing Director, Finn Wollesen, likes to boast that only nuclear submarine designs have not so far been produced. The company has even been involved

in the HVAC design for the new British aircraft carrier, QUEEN ELIZABETH – so naval tonnage does indeed occasionally feature on the company's project list. KNUD E. HANSEN may be 80 years old, but their approaches and the software they use are thoroughly up-to-date – a recent development being the use of a virtual reality 3D design tool called 'Ship Space', which enables clients to 'experience' how new and converted ships will look and feel in advance of the work being undertaken. Visitors to their beautiful offices in Helsingør, Denmark quickly realise that they are also cosmopolitan with more than 20 nationalities employed – and therefore 'global' in every sense. In a fast-changing market, to have reached the age of 80 is a notable achievement and one worth recording for posterity. ■



Prof. Bruce Peter is the author of the recently-published 80-year anniversary book.