



The Reeperbahn and Waren rope

Ropes of all kinds are some of the most important tools humans have invented. Used by people daily for centuries, they are still in use today in all sorts of different areas. If you're working in agriculture, constructing, fishing or ship-building, you need stable ropes. These ropes were twisted on long ropewalks (known in Northern Germany as a Reeperbahn) by rope-makers. Thick cordage was less important this far from the coast, and instead the focus was on shorter rope-work, netting and wicker-work.

Later, lines known as „Reeps“ that were used for mooring ships were in less demand than simple rope, cord and string of differing strengths. After the town was rebuilt following the devastating fire of 1699, many of Waren's rope-makers also returned to their craft, a trend that continued into the 1920s.

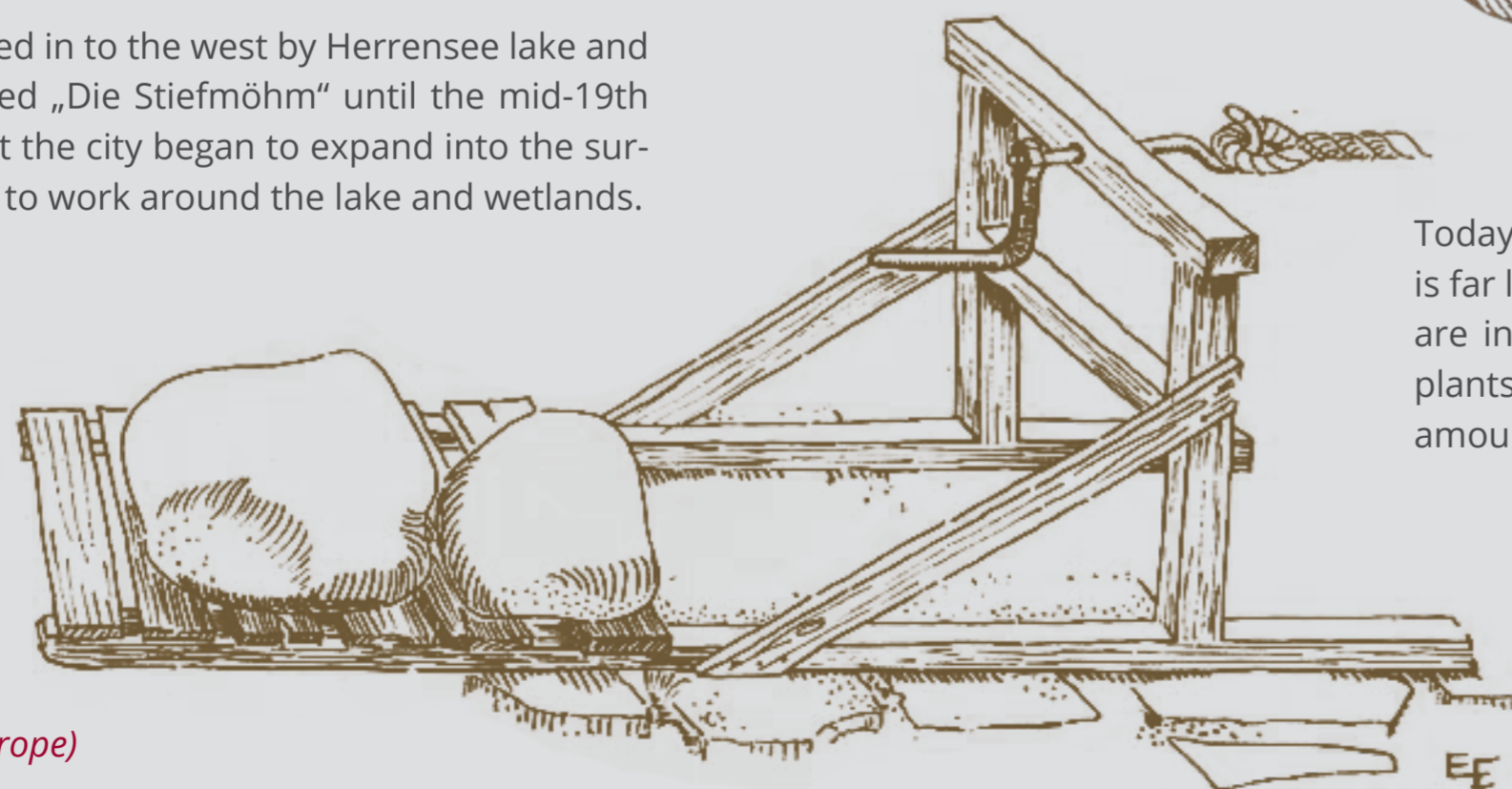


Flax breaks and hatchels (also known as heckling combs) were used to prepare the hemp and flax before the rope-makers could begin weaving threads or ropes. Because of how long a rope-walk needed to be, they were generally set up at the edge of or even outside the town.

The Rope-Maker, 1568, Jost Amman

The Town of Waren was hemmed in to the west by Herrensee lake and a sizeable marshy lowland called „Die Stiefmöh“ until the mid-19th century. It wasn't until later that the city began to expand into the surrounding areas and was forced to work around the lake and wetlands.

Rope-making device – runner (holds the winder and can be adjusted to the desired length of rope)



Rope-walk with wood chips in Gießen – around 1915

This led to a curious situation, whereby the geographical centre of the town was now situated on an area of land that was „unfit for construction“. While it is easy to make out traces of the original ropewalk, the site was relatively undeveloped until a playing field and fairground area were created, followed in recent years by parking spaces and surrounding developments. Clearly, therefore, Waren had its own „Reeperbahn“ too, much like the one in Hamburg.



The Low German word for rope is „Reepe“

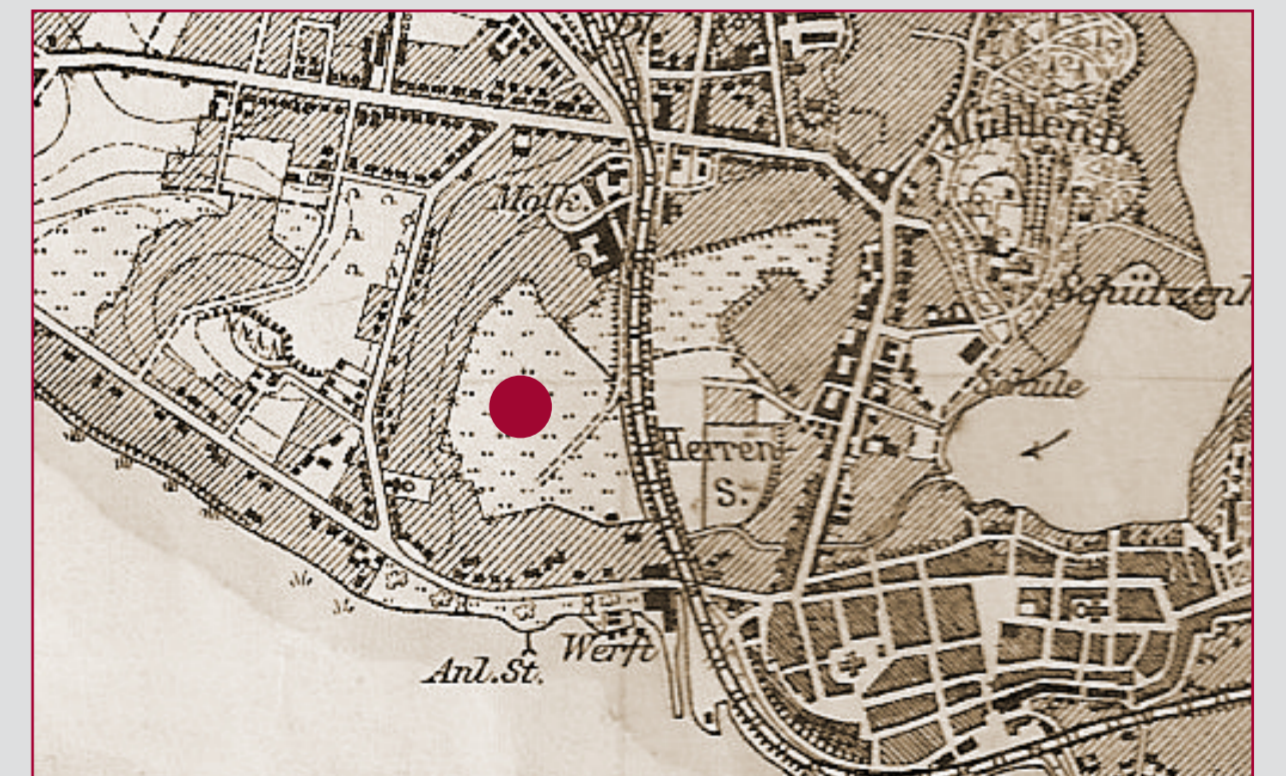
Today, the craft of „rope-making“ is far less widespread and ropes are instead woven at industrial plants that produce an endless amount of ropes and cords.

The railway first crossed the lowlands in 1879. Construction on Kietzstraße, heading west from the bridge crossing the canal between Herrensee and Müritz, began in 1889, followed a year later by the laying of Goethestraße – or Bismarck-Straße as it was known at the time.



View from Stiefmöh towards Georgenkirche

The soggy fields in between were not filled in with sand, ash and rubble until 1929, before being dried out in the 50s with the depositing of land-fill and specially dug drainage ditches.



Stiefmöh – 1932

Plans to build a walkway for pedestrians connecting Kietzstraße to Goethestraße and Turnplatz (the road known today as „Am Turnplatz“) in 1928 ran up against a problem in the form of rope-maker Wilhelm Streckler who had set up his 150 metre-long rope-walk out in the „fields in the Stiefmöh“. The road was never built, however, and Wilhelm was able to keep his rope-walk until he finally gave up the craft for good in the 30s.