

Ship Building industry

Friend or Foe?

SHIPBUILDING – ASIA

Pioneer

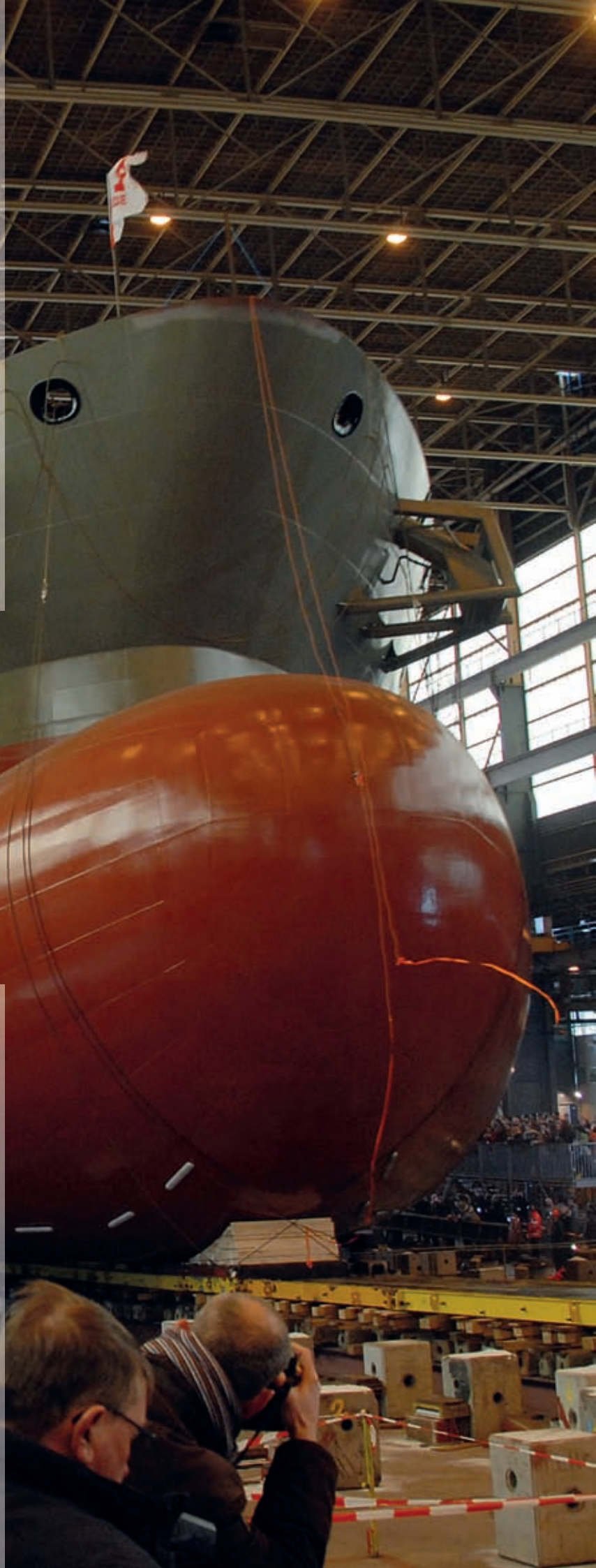
FRONTIER VESSEL

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CENTURY LAUNCH

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BURGEONING DAWN



Only The Future



Barkmeijer Builds

The Frisian Barkmeijer Shipyards has already been building ships for almost 160 years in the village of Stroobos. The company still does not seem very affected by the crisis. The order book is filled to the brim. Acquisition-wise, the company focuses chiefly on the construction of special vessels. By Karin de Mik.

Large steel, rust-coloured sheets fill the big hall of shipbuilder Barkmeijer in Stroobos. Employees in blue overalls are busy working on the various parts of the future dry cargo vessel. One of them is welding a rear part. The smaller computer-cut parts are lying on a workbench. These parts are coded. "A ship is basically put together like a building kit", explains Technical Director Gerrit Barkmeijer. "It really is precision work to get them into the right position." Two tower cranes stand on the wharf outside. On the slipway lies a dredger that is being constructed for a new English contractor. Work is also being executed on the middle deck of a 126m dry cargo vessel. The eleven-metre high sides are certainly impressive.

"We are building three ships at the same time", says Barkmeijer (51), dressed casually in a shirt and jeans. The recession does not seem to be affecting the Frisian shipbuilder much. "We luckily already had a lot of orders before the crisis started." Whether the company with approximately one hundred employees can bridge the crisis with this work, only the future can tell. Barkmeijer adds: "There is presently not much demand at all for dry cargo vessels. It is a good thing that we operate in various markets. We not only develop and build serial vessels, but 'specials' too, such as dredgers, tankers, fishing boats and towboats. These are custom made, in accordance with the contractors' wishes."

True Concept

Barkmeijer is a true concept. The enterprise has been around for nearly 160 years and has always been situated in Stroobos. Six generations built vessels on this spot, with the large hall being a true landmark in the area. It is an 'impossible place' according to current standards, admits Barkmeijer. With regard to height, a completely finished ship cannot pass through the six bridges (maximum width of sixteen metres) that it will come across on the way to open water. "We make everything to measure here. The ship is made flat so they can be transported to our completion pier in Lemmer with towboats. Big parts, like the deck house and pilothouses, are taken off. These are placed on a pontoon and sail along too, as well as a floating sheerlegs crane

with a great lifting capacity. We call it one big circus here. It is all about fitting and measuring work. We put the ship back together in Lemmer. Towboats then sail the vessel to Amsterdam and IJmuiden, where the ship will sail on her own on the North Sea Canal for the first time. During the subsequent trial run on the North Sea, in the presence of the customer, all kinds of tests take place."

Rooted

Barkmeijer has in the past considered to move the shipyard to a place next to open water. In the Eighties and Nineties of the last century, the yard participated in the Harlinger wharf Frisian Shipyards. There were plans to move the company to the new Industriehaven (industrial harbour) of Harlingen. "But because of the long procedures, it never mounted to anything." Moving is not an option now, he adds. "It does not only require a huge investment, but we are rooted in Stroobos", states Barkmeijer. "Our people live and work locally. We work from seven o'clock in the morning to a quarter to four in the afternoon. We do not really work overtime, so



Barkmeijer and Linde Gas

Barkmeijer used to buy the welding gasses from AGA Gas. After the division of AGA Gas into 'bulk gasses' and 'cylinder gasses', the company bought gas from Air Products. After a three year period and former contracts, Barkmeijer once again approached Linde Gas. The gas contract was finally given to Linde Gas, based on a combination of price, service, quality and technical support.

Linde Gas could then start working for Barkmeijer. The location of the bulk tanks was changed and enlarged, so that working within the fence has become safer (for both Linde Gas and Barkmeijer). The location for the mixer has been extended, so that a ladder is no longer needed for maintenance activities or adjustment of the mixer. The mixer itself has been enlarged after the extension of the mains system and the increase of the number of welders.

The use of gas per welding machine has substantially decreased due to the better adjustment of the machines, and also by incorporating this into Barkmeijer's maintenance plan. This matter was also discussed in a tool box meeting with the welders. The fact that Linde Gas has at her disposal a nearby supporting office (in Hoogezeand) is also an advantage. This enables Barkmeijer to keep only a minimum supply, and people always have access to gas, even in the case of an emergency that requires an additional need for gas.





everyone gets home quite early. All of this would no longer be possible if we move to a different location." This is a fact that Barkmeijer and his employees, that shape the commonsensical and flexible corporate culture, cannot deny.

Reputation

Barkmeijer works with dozens of subcontractors, including electricians, technical installers, painters and carpenters, as well as with suppliers from the whole of Europe and sometimes outside of the continent, that for instance supply engines, screws, pumps and rudders. The Dutch shipbuilding firm is, relatively seen, a small market player, but it is a company with a good reputation. "Our ships sell themselves", ensures Barkmeijer. The Irish contractor Arklow more or less blindly

trusts the company. "They no longer inspect things during construction, but are only present during the trial run. This is quite remarkable." The trademark of Barkmeijer is reliability, emphasises the technical director. "Quality is the number one issue for us. We do not deliver fleeced vessels for low prices. Our customers often tell potential customers about their experiences with our vessels and our company. This is the best PR we could asked for."

Strength

He sees the fact that customers are really listened to, as the great strength of the company. "We are not stubborn, our customers decide what they want. We bring in our expertise, but also learn from them." Another trait of the operational

management is the great flexibility. Barkmeijer: "In quite a late stage of the construction process, changes can still be made by contractors." These contractors are located both domestically as well as overseas. "We have a good mix of existing and new customers. Shipping companies and captain owners order new ships from us." Many a customer comes back for more. Barkmeijer shows a model of a special type of fishing boat, that is now sailing the Danish waters. "For the grandfather of this contractor, we have in the past built a seashell suction dredger, and we built a fishing boat for his father too."

i. www.barkmeijer.com

i. www.lindegasbenelux.com

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Technical director Gerrit Barkmeijer:
"Our ships sell themselves."