



# Survival of the fittest

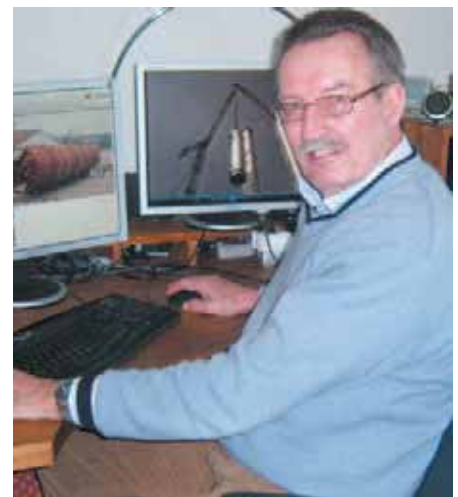
**The current turbulent economic times will bring the demise of some heavy lift operators. Quality is likely to be a distinguishing feature of the survivors, writes Janny Kok from Rotterdam**

**D**utch operators are gearing up to weather the financial storm, as the industry awaits the first impact of the global economic crisis. Many are predicting casualties in the inevitable rate versus quality war as the crisis begins to affect the heavy lift sector.

“The credit crunch will provide a shakeout of businesses that want too much of the cake at any price. Only the stronger and reliable ones will survive,” says Richard Krabbendam,

**The high salary levels in the Netherlands mean that Dutch trade and industry has to rely on clever ideas and nonconformity. Innovation has to form the basis of business. Jumbo Shipping has that.**

— Richard Krabbendam (right)





Attendees at a Krabbendam Advies Service seminar in Chennai, India, held with with Larsen & Toubro, the largest engineering and construction group in the country.

## Krabbendam takes mini seminars around the globe

Young engineers are set to benefit from a series of heavy lift mini-seminars delivered by industry veteran Richard Krabbendam.

The Rotterdam-based heavy lift specialist, who founded Krabbendam Advies Service, launched the successful training scheme last May.

The one-day courses cover the industry's basic 'dos and don'ts', including details on how to avoid accidents when moving large and heavy loads for the petrochemical and other industries.

"I see it as my mission to transfer my 35 years of experience, as much as possible, in a one-day mini-seminar to younger and less experienced engineers,

and motivated people in our business, who are eager to learn," says Krabbendam.

"The seminars are very well received and focus on everyone from engineers to sales people and operational staff, and are at a very practical level. They are also accessible for operators in the field, such as, but not limited to, crane operators, trailer operators, supervisors and rigging superintendents.

"I teach them, in a day, the tricks and tips of heavy lift transport and lifting and the dos and don'ts of our industry. I want to avoid accidents in our industry, and we can all contribute to a safer industry by learning from an 'old hand'."

The seminars have been held in-house at companies across Europe and in the US, with more planned for Asia. Public seminars open to any interested students have been held in the Netherlands.

The training package includes a hand-out of more than 200 reference slides, as well as a double DVD with three hours of video footage.

The next public mini-seminars are scheduled for 10 and 14 March this year in the Netherlands.

For more details, or to book an in-house seminar, contact Richard Krabbendam via his website at [www.heavyliftspecialist.com](http://www.heavyliftspecialist.com).

managing director of Krabbendam Advies Service and heavy lift specialist at Jumbo Shipping.

"At Jumbo Shipping, we have a boss who continuously tells us not to move too fast for the sake of reliability. It is true that all and sundry pursue each other like mad. The credit crunch tells us how foolish that is. Before the crisis it seemed that anything goes. As it is, several drilling rigs and FPSOs (floating production, storage and offloading vessels) ordered

prior to the credit crunch, have been cancelled."

According to Krabbendam, quality should come before profitability. Focus on customer satisfaction is the name of the game.

Krabbendam adds that the Dutch maritime businesses and those in the heavy lift and project forwarding sector owe their long-lasting successes to being innovative.

"These businesses focus on the out-of-the-ordinary projects and dare to be one-of-a-kind

when doing the job," he says.

"It goes without saying that they aim to be profitable, but quality and reliability come foremost."

"The high salary levels in the Netherlands mean that Dutch trade and industry have to rely on clever ideas and non conformity. Innovation has to form the basis of business. Jumbo Shipping has that."

He gives the example of the recently-deployed Fairplayer, the state-of-the-art ship with a lifting capacity of up to 1,800 tonnes, combined with a top speed of 17 knots, and significant deck space (see HLPFI, Issue five Nov/Dec 2008, page 31).

Mammoet's Heavy Lift Terminal at Schiedam, close to Huisman-Itrec, claims to be one of a kind in 'software' – high quality trained workers – and equipment. The terminal boasts a 250 tonne capacity crane, and specialises in handling heavy items of 50 tonnes and above.

The market recognises the terminal's potential and its accessibility, according to Ernst-Jan Bakker, manager of the Heavy Lift Terminal.

"The terminal's access via water and road is good, even for heavy and sometimes long cargoes. An example of this is the transshipment of autoclaves, about 50 m in length and 90 m in weight, which were loaded on a truck in Germany and transhipped on our terminal.



Marcel Schimmelpenninck, deputy general manager at Broekman Project Services, left, and corporate communications manager Perry Pieëte.

“Generally, the depth of berths at the terminal is sufficient for most coasters and heavy lift vessels. An additional advantage is that Mammoet has an open permit to have lift pontoons at the quayside when required.”

In the current economic environment, Bakker believes the terminal’s strength is being able to offer a good quality service at a competitive price, backed up by the Mammoet heavy lift know-how, plus a team of engineers based at the company’s headquarters, next to the terminal.

An outsider who knew nothing of the global financial meltdown, glancing at business throughput over the last 12 months, and forward bookings for the next two years, would have trouble spotting that there was a credit crunch issue at all, according to Bakker.

The company is cautiously optimistic about the future, while remaining aware that the crisis will eventually hit the heavy lift sector, which sits at the end of the chain.

Further down the Nieuwe Waterweg in Rotterdam, terminal operator RHB (Rotterdams Havenbedrijf) is proving its heavy lift credentials.

Peter van der Pluijm, manager at RHB Rotterdam, says that although RHB started as a general cargo stevedore, it has handled special and oversized cargo for a long time.

“We still handle ‘old fashioned general cargo’, but also ultra-modern heavy equipment with our new 208 tonne capacity crane,” he says.

“The market responded favourably to the new crane, but our competitors were less pleased when the crane became operational last October! It handles cargoes and generators of up to 165 tonnes, engines, parts of cranes of up to 180 tonnes, steel wire reels of 190 tonnes, and much more.”

RHB activities, and the new yellow crane in particular, can be seen from the office of Broekman Project Services. This division of Broekman Holding has ambitious plans for its Rotterdam Heavy Lift Centre at Heijplaat in the south of Rotterdam. Here it owns sheds with overhead cranes providing 750 tonne hoist capacity for storage and handling of over-dimensional or heavy cargoes and abnormal loads.

Marcel Schimmelpenningh, deputy general manager, and Perry Pieëte, corporate communications manager, tell HLPFI that plans to upgrade the facilities, and for expansion, are well on their way to completion.

“The Port of Rotterdam Authority plans to develop this area to become the heavy lift part of the port,” says Schimmelpenningh.

“We take every opportunity to talk to the authority about our plans and wishes for expansion and upgrading. Broekman Project



Services would like to have a small part of the dock where the sheds are reclaimed, the floors of the sheds levelled, and further refurbishments done. However, we need the port authority’s cooperation to do that.”

The Port of Rotterdam Authority has done just that for Broekman DistriPort at Britanniëhaven, close to its All Weather Terminal, for the steel and non-ferrous industry, where the deepsea quay has been lengthened.

Broekman, however, had to wait about two years before the authority sprang into action. At Heijplaat, those involved have to take into account existing users and their vessels when drawing up expansion plans. As it is, Broekman Project Services can handle out-of-the-ordinary cargoes at berths with 10.5 m depth. The crew of the Jumbo Javelin and other vessels know what Broekman is capable of at Heijplaat and elsewhere in the port area.

### Broekman Project Services has ambitious plans for its Rotterdam Heavy Lift Centre at Heijplaat in the south of Rotterdam

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Schimmelpenningh and Pieëte are confident that the company will not be seriously affected by the credit crunch, although they have observed some slowdown. “There are long-term contracts with shipments on call. We can store and handle anything over-sized from locomotives and yachts, to generators and ships’ engines,” says Pieëte.

### Cranes

To the west of the Rotterdam, Wagenborg Nedlift’s spokeswoman, Connie Lindhoud, extols RHB Rotterdam’s new yellow crane.

The division in which she works positions itself as a major player in the heavy lift industry. Recently it acquired a new all-terrain crane, which operates from Voorschoten, one of the eight locations in the Netherlands at which Wagenborg Nedlift is operational.

It has already invested in heavy mounted cranes and computer-controlled, self-propelled modular trailers to serve the European heavy market with transport equipment capable of lifts up to 1,500 tonnes. Managing director Ton Klijn of Wagenborg Nedlift says that, together



RHB Rotterdam's new yellow crane

**BigLift Shipping** is to bring five more heavy lift vessels into service in 2010.

The 17,500 dwt ships will each have two 400 tonne cranes and one 120 tonne crane, and will be delivered by the Ohua yard in China from mid-2010.

The ships will have high allowable deckloads to stow heavy cargoes. When visibility from the wheelhouse is hindered by large deck loads, the vessels can be manoeuvred from a second command station forward.



with parent company Royal Wagenborg, it has a strong background with which to serve the heavy lift market.

"The expansion is twofold: transport capacity and lift capacity. That means larger mounted cranes with very large lifting capabilities," he says.

Wagenborg Nedlift pulls its weight abroad and at its home base. The recent movement of a 38 m long, 138 tonne distillation unit for Bio MCN Delfzijl is just one example.

It is also involved in the construction of an onshore windmill farm at Eemshaven, which provides energy for 135,000 households.

Eastwards, heavy lift and transport businesses Van der Vlist Transportgroep, near Dordrecht, and Dordrecht-based NMT Projects International, have also established strong businesses.

NMT Projects International's overview of projects worldwide is impressive. According to project manager Eelco Boorsma, the secret is quality of service from winning the order to the final delivery. "Our customers appreciate our know-how," he says.

"In general, the Dutch are very well known for their technical know-how, and the technical capabilities of their equipment and heavy lift ves-

sels. It is a relatively small world, with leading market players. I know over 80 percent of them."

Among them is a 'new kid on the block', Flinter Group. Cor Romijn, managing director, says that this year will see the deployment of the first in a series of six vessels of 9,000 tonnes, equipped with two cranes of 80 tonnes each.

"As long as I have worked in the sector, shipping has always been cyclical. The only new things, other than the credit crunch, are the emerging markets of Central Europe, China and India," he says.

Even in these uncertain times, Van der Vlist Transportgroep has been daring enough to invest in new headquarters and an adjacent site, as well as a total 40,000 sq m of new facilities in Zeebrugge, St Petersburg and Dubai.


Arie Peterse, managing director of Amster-

**Flinter Group will this year deploy the first in a series of six vessels of 9,000 tonnes, equipped with two cranes of 80 tonnes each**

dam-based BigLift, knows where the confidence, shown in 2007 and early 2008, came from. "In the past few years, shortage of tonnage was the main issue for the heavy lift and transport market. BigLift and other players have been able to take advantage of that," he says.

"The sector has experienced rapid changes only recently. Generally speaking, projects in progress are finished, but investors are reassessing those that had been planned and often postpone them. I expect, for the period to come, that the emphasis will be on rates, rather than on availability and time of delivery."

Peterse adds that there is a call for the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to provide a level playing field worldwide. "EU legislation for vessels and inhabitants of EU member states is only valid in EU waters. Generally speaking, that is not useful and may lead to unfair competition and reflagging."

Krabbendam points out that enforcement of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code still varies from port to port. "Being easygoing in safety matters to get market share should be out the question," he says. 

# Netherlands by numbers

The Netherlands has a prosperous and open economy, which depends heavily on foreign trade. The economy is noted for stable industrial relations, moderate unemployment and inflation, a sizable current account surplus, and an important role as a European transportation hub.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Seaports:** 26,750 jobs directly and 10,950 indirectly  
**Shipping:** 19,850 jobs directly and 5,500 indirectly

## PORTS AND TERMINALS

Amsterdam, IJmuiden, Rotterdam, Terneuzen, Vlissingen

## MERCHANT MARINE

591 ships

In January 2008, Scheepsbouw Nederland (Netherlands Shipbuilding Association) was launched. VNSI (Netherlands' Shipbuilding Industry Association) and HME (Netherlands Marine Equipment Association) combined their representative activities into the new trade body. The new combination is headquartered at



FME in Zoetermeer, the Netherlands. The Netherlands Shipbuilding Association represents about 400 members with a total maritime turnover of EUR6 billion, an export volume of EUR3.5 billion, and a combined direct workforce of over 25,000 people.

**Population:** 16.6 million  
**GDP:** (2007 est) EUR488 billion

**Exports (2007):** EUR307 billion

**Export commodities (2007):** machinery and equipment, chemicals, fuels; foodstuffs

**Export destinations (2007):** Germany 24.4%, Belgium 13.6%, UK 9.1%, France 8.5%, Italy 5.1%, US 4.3% (2007)

**Imports (2007):** EUR345 billion

**Import commodities (2007):** Import machinery and transport equipment, chemicals, fuels, foodstuffs, clothing

**Import destinations (2007):** Germany 17.7%, China 10.5%, Belgium 9.3%, US 7.3%, UK 5.8%, Russia 5.1%, France 4.4%



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