

Editor

Matjaž Matošec
m.matossec@kci-world.com
Tel: +31 575 585 278

**Global Editorial Team
press.ssw@kci-world.com**

Candice Allison (Canada, USA)
c.allison@kci-world.com

John Butterfield (The Netherlands)
j.butterfield@kci-world.com

James Chater (France)
j.chater@kci-world.com

Philipp Isenbart (Germany)
p.isenbart@kci-world.com

Joanne McIntyre (The Netherlands)
j.mcintyre@kci-world.com

David Sear (The Netherlands)
d.sear@kci-world.com

Publishing Director

Robert-Jan à Campo
r.a.campo@kci-world.com
Tel: +31 575 585 275

Advertising Contact (Print & Online)

Elisa Hannan
e.hannan@kci-world.com
Tel: +31 575 585 291

Subscriptions (Print & Online)

Erica Riethorst
e.riethorst@kci-world.com
Tel: +31 575 585 271

Stainless Steel World News is published ten times per year. Subscriptions are renewed automatically in accordance with Dutch legislation.
ISSN: 1383-7184

Publishing Houses

KCI Publishing B.V.
Jacob Damsingel 17
NL-7201 AN Zutphen
The Netherlands

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 396, NL-7200 AJ Zutphen
The Netherlands
info.zutphen@kci-world.com
Tel: +31 575 585 270
Fax: +31 575 511 099
Bank account: ABNAMRO 56.64.05.164
BIC: ABNANL2A
IBAN: NL50ABNA0566405164

China Office

KCI Shanghai, Room 603
6F, #400 Zhejiang Mid. Road
200001, Shanghai, China
info.shanghai@kci-world.com
Tel: +86 21 6351 9609
Fax: +86 21 6351 9607

Germany Office

KCI GmbH, Tiergartenstr. 64
D-47533 Kleve, Germany
info.kleve@kci-world.com
Tel: +49 2821 71145 0
Fax: +49 2821 71145 69

Canada Office

KCI Corporation
36 King East, Suite 701
Toronto, ON M5C 1E5, Canada
info.toronto@kci-world.com
Tel: +1 416 361 7030
Fax: +1 416 361 6191



The publishers and the authors state that this magazine has been compiled meticulously and to the best of their knowledge, however, the publisher and the authors can in no way guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the information. The publisher and authors therefore do not accept any liability for any damage resulting from actions or decision based on the information in question. Users of this magazine are strongly advised not to use this information solely, but to rely on their professional knowledge and experience, and to check the information to be used. KCI Publishing cannot guarantee the accuracy of information provided by participating companies and authorities. The publisher reserves the right to combine, delete and change sections.

The publisher reserves the right to edit and re-use (parts of) the articles and to distribute the information by any means.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, photocopying recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

Stainless Steel World News is a trademark of Technical Business Publications B.V. – registered under number 08084150 and holding company of the KCI group of companies. TBP BV, Donald D.F. Wiedemeyer (CEO), PO Box 67, 6680 AB Lingewaard, the Netherlands.

Copyright © 2017 TBP BV. All rights reserved.



Hart b.v.: A global one-stop

Things are never at a standstill at Hart b.v. Since our last visit in 2015, the company has relocated to new, larger premises in the Dutch town of Nijkerk and expanded its stock of seamless and welded Nickel Alloy piping products to Alloy C276. Reason enough to visit them again and find out how these recent developments are helping the family-run business to strengthen its position in the global marketplace. We talked to the company's Sales Director Lizette Hartholt who last month celebrated her 20th anniversary of working for Hart b.v.

By Matjaž Matošec



Lizette Hartholt, Sales Director

Since its foundation in 1964, Hart b.v. has been a niche supplier of piping products. During its early history, the company had been focusing on stocking non-standard sizes in stainless grades, but when Henry Hart, the current Managing Director, took over the business from his father, he began looking for a new niche. In 2008, Hart b.v. started building up an inventory of Nickel Alloys, specialising solely in these materials and soon establishing itself as a trusted partner in the international supply chain.

New premises

Initially, the company's stock comprised four materials and a limited size range. However, by continuously adding new alloys and sizes to its product portfolio, Hart b.v. outgrew its old facilities, reaching the point where further physical growth was no longer possible. To be able to accommodate new additions to its stock, the company determined in 2015 that it was time to start searching for a new home. When a perfectly-suited facility became available only a two-minute drive away from their former headquarters, Hart b.v. grabbed the opportunity to relocate, completing the move in July 2016.

"Finding a larger warehouse was our main priority, but we

were also looking for additional office space, to allow further growth of our business," begins Lizette Hartholt. "Hart b.v. wants to supply materials quickly, and if you want to do that, you must be able to move the materials out of the racks fast. Clearly, this requires sufficient warehouse space. When we added Alloy C276 to our stock, the lack of space became problematic, which made relocation inevitable. The new facility offers everything that we were after: a warehouse three times the size of the old one and a larger office space which enables us to have all the sales people in one open-plan office, while providing us with more comfort at the same time. It took us about three months to adapt the building to our specific needs. Of course, the move itself put a certain strain on our team, but thanks to great organisation, the transition was relatively smooth and, most importantly,

"Our strategy has always been to invest when times are difficult."

business did not suffer. All in all, we are extremely pleased with our new facility and feel fully ready for the future."

Alloy C276

Over the years, Hart b.v. has built a sizeable stock of seamless pipe and fittings in Alloys 200/201, 400, 600, 625 and 825. By recently adding Alloy C276 to its portfolio, the company's inventory has become truly comprehensive. Their current stock of C276 piping comprises OD sizes ranging from 1/2 inch to 6 inch and wall thicknesses of Sch10s, 40s and 80s.

Alloy C276 has excellent resistance to corrosion and is used in a variety of process environments such as mixed acid chemicals, pulp and paper production,



New premises in Nijkerk, the Netherlands

waste treatment, pollution control, high-chloride environments and recovery of sour natural gas. It is also used in the pharmaceutical industry as well as, increasingly, in the oil and gas industry.

Lizette Hartholt explains the reasons for choosing this particular alloy: "2016 was a year of many challenges, not least

grow our business. By adding this material to our portfolio, Hart b.v. is the only supplier in Europe with a comprehensive stock of C276. In the past, European customers had to order this material from further afield, and as Hart b.v.'s philosophy is to bring products to its customer geographically, this ticks all the boxes."

The company stocks C276 pipe in both seamless and welded condition, thus holding virtually a double stock of the same material. The reason for this is simple, as Ms. Hartholt explains: "Both conditions are used for different applications and in different regions. This is why we carry both, which has proved to be the right decision since C276 has considerably added to our business results already last year. Also, we are constantly monitoring the requirements of our customers, and as soon as we detect a continuous demand for a particular size or a wall thickness, we consider adding that to our range."

Strong partnerships with mills

As a niche supplier, Hart b.v. occupies a very particular position within the complex supply chain, making strong relationships with manufacturers extremely important. Ms. Hartholt elaborates

because of the decline in oil prices. As a result, many projects were delayed or cancelled, while at the same time competition was becoming fiercer. However, our strategy has always been to invest when times are difficult. Adhering to this philosophy, we decided already in 2015 to add a new alloy to our range, so as to be ready for new opportunities when they arise."

"C276 is very high-end on the Nickel Alloy scale, so it really suits us. It is also an expensive material, meaning that it was a big investment. We pride ourselves in being a niche supplier of demanding Nickel Alloys, so C276 was an obvious choice. It fills a gap in the European market and it helps us developing ourselves and



The new warehouse is three times the size of the old one



Sales team at work

shop for Nickel Alloy piping products



on this: "While working with several manufacturers for specific materials and sizes, we literally have a handful of A-list suppliers. These are renowned mills from Western Europe, North America and Japan, which meet the highest quality standards and hold approvals of all major oil and gas companies. Hart b.v. has been building its reputation for high quality for more than 50 years and we have to work hard to preserve that. As a result, we are listed on many Approved Vendor Lists such as those of Shell, Aramco, Total, PDO, etc. We are always open to work with new mills, but also extremely careful in who we deal with. Maintaining good relationships with manu-

Positive outlook

While many businesses were downsizing in recent years, Hart b.v. continued to invest into all areas of its operations, adopting the anticyclical approach. Among other things, the company has invested heavily into new communications systems, digitising its operations and 'moving into the cloud'. The courage and ability to oppose the negative business climate are strongly related to the flexibility of Hart b.v. Ms. Hartholt explains their secret: "Being a flexible, family-run business is a great advantage for us. Big companies have to please their shareholders, and when profits



Hart b.v. in 1974

facturers is equally important as building up relationships with our clients."

"At the same time, Hart b.v. is not a company that gets directly involved in large-scale projects requiring tons of materials – this is mill business and we respect that. We see ourselves as a link between the mills and the customers for the top-ups, medium-size projects, repairs, etc. This is where the value of our stock resides. Instead of trying to compete with the mills or the large project traders, we accept our position within the supply chain and respect the boundaries."

suffer, cost reductions are inevitable. Our philosophy is different, Henry Hart, our Managing Director and company owner, has always been willing to invest in those difficult years, to ensure that once the market has picked up again, we are ready. If you start hiring, restocking and marketing only then, you may be too late, because by the time you are up and running, the market might be down again."

As the latest sales figures demonstrate, this philosophy is proving successful. "Last year was full of uncertainties, including the oil price crisis, Brexit

and the US presidential election," explains Ms. Hartholt. "Despite all this, the traditionally quiet month of December was very good for us, and the positive trend continues, with every month this year being more successful than the previous one. This makes us carefully optimistic about the short-term future."

Another good reason for optimism is the company's presence in the United Arab Emirates, where Hart b.v., locally known as Hart ME, employs six people serving customers across the Middle East and beyond. "To be present in the Middle East is incredibly important to us," states Ms. Hartholt. Having an office and warehouse in the United Arab Emirates brings access to a host of end users we can directly supply to, while having a local stock there is unique. We are the only company in the world with an extensive stock of Nickel Alloys in the Middle East. Many companies claim to hold a local stock of similar products, and while they may offer stainless, duplex or super duplex grades, nobody apart from us stocks Nickel Alloys in that region. In 2016 we also opened our Abu Dhabi office alongside our Sharjah company."

"When we opened an office in Sharjah, our first focus was the UAE. But of course there are many other countries in that region that are of interest to us. Increasing our sales in the whole Middle East region is the focus at the moment. The Far



Alloy C276 piping

Eastern market is still recovering, but recently we have been noticing an upturn in demand there too, especially for the chemical grades such as 200, 400, 600 and C276." "Also showing potential at the moment is Europe. The annual figures for 2016 indicate that many end users are making or increasing profits again, making new investments and projects more likely. This rings true for most of the countries with a substantial chemical industry. These positive developments have a direct effect on our business and infuse us with optimism."

"Hart b.v. is the only supplier in Europe with a comprehensive stock of C276."

Eastern market is still recovering, but recently we have been noticing an upturn in demand there too, especially for the chemical grades such as 200, 400, 600 and C276."

"Also showing potential at the moment is Europe. The annual figures for 2016 indicate that many end users are making or increasing profits again, making new investments and projects more likely. This rings true for most of the countries with a substantial chemical industry. These positive developments have a direct effect on our business and infuse us with optimism."

Quality management

Hart b.v. prides itself in its commitment to the highest quality standards and always strives to make further improvements in this field. Ms. Hartholt explains this in more detail: "In the past few years we have noticed a major increase in demand for additional testing, quality control and inspections. Partly, this is driven by the amount of export we are doing, because the export market is even more demanding in this respect, and often there is less knowledge

regarding special materials. Also, with new/less experienced mills and traders entering the arena of Nickel Alloy products it is very important to ensure the quality that the end users require for critical applications. As this trend is irreversible, it has become logical for us to do some of the testing in-house rather than subcontract it every single time, saving both time and money. So we decided to invest into our own PMI and ultrasound testing equipment, which not only makes us more competitive, but also enhances our customer service."

"Our commitment to quality is unquestionable, but customers sometimes specify additional testing only because they think it improves their chances of getting the required quality," continues Ms. Hartholt. We have accepted that occasionally we must perform



Nickel Alloy fittings

ness is there, from around the globe. Exhibiting at this event is therefore a must for us. There we meet our customers, suppliers as well as competitors. In addition, the Stainless Steel World conference attracts many end users, EPC contractors and fabricators who are all potential clients, but of course for us the main area of interest are suppliers and traders – most important customer group as Hart b.v. chooses to mainly operate as a Master Distributor.

"Another important industry event for us is the Tube show in Duesseldorf. This is a much larger exhibition, covering a wider range of materials and attracting more people, also from the carbon steel business. You would not necessarily find them at the Stainless Steel World Exhibition, but are of interest to us as they also have requirements for Nickel Alloys. We view these two exhibitions as complementary and as such almost compulsory for us to attend."

"Besides presenting ourselves at trade fairs, we also work hard to keep our promotional materials, such as website and brochures, up to date and visually appealing. Especially our export customers want to see that we are an actual supplier, with real premises and stock. Since most of our clients use Nickel Alloys only sporadically, we have to keep reminding them of our existence. The visualisation of what you do and who you are is incredibly important," concludes Ms. Hartholt.

Marketing and branding

At Hart b.v. they recognise the importance of marketing and promotional activities. To remain in direct contact with their existing and prospective new clients, the company regularly exhibits at major trade fairs. In the coming months two exhibitions are planned and possibly a few more. "For us, the Stainless Steel World Exhibition in Maastricht is an opportunity to meet just about everybody involved with stainless steels," explains Ms. Hartholt. "Anybody who is or wants to be a major player in this busi-