

# Wilco Stroet

Craftsmanship and innovation go hand in hand

Wilco Stroet, managing director of Lankhorst Ropes, explains that his company offers a wide range of ropes. "Our products are made for specific tasks and we try to make them better every day."

Rope. It was a human innovation invented before the wheel. Since prehistoric times mankind is twisting and braiding strands of material together to form ropes. You could say, after all these centuries, there

is not much research and development going on when it comes to ropes. "It is the opposite", says Wilco Stroet, managing director of Lankhorst Ropes. "There is a lot of development at the moment. We have a challenge to replace steel wire ropes with synthetic fiber ropes. This takes a lot of innovation."

## Phosphorescent

Wilco Stroet is standing in the booth of Lankhorst Ropes on the maritime exhibition SMM, last September. "A lot of people think that a rope is a rope. But that is not true, look at all the different types of rope we have on display here." He points at a wall of samples. "Each of these ropes has a specific quality and is used for different kind of jobs. In fact, we launched a new innovation in the maritime rope business during this exhibition." Lankhorst Ropes has created a phosphorescent mooring rope that increases the visibility of the rope during dusk. "That sounds easy to do, but the strength of the rope cannot be compromised."

The phosphorescent mooring rope is one the latest products of the company that was founded in the year 1803. Lankhorst Ropes is a leading supplier of synthetic fiber and steel wire ropes for maritime and offshore industries.

**'WE WANT TO REPLACE STEEL WIRE ROPES WITH SYNTHETIC FIBER ONES'**

*A cruise vessel moored with a Tipto Winchline. Lankhorst Ropes has a special focus on the cruise industry. Photos by Lankhorst Ropes*



**P a s s p o r t**

- Name:** Wilco Stroet
- Family:** Married with Tjallien de Vries, six daughters
- Leisure Time:** Biking, cooking, history
- Education:** Economy Erasmus University – Energy transaction Nyenrode University
- Professional experience:** Senior Vice President Global Maritime WireCo Worldgroup
- Additional task:** Running the American production facility for synthetics



Lankhorst Ropes supplies the heavy lift industry with their products

The company is part of the world's largest steel wire manufacturers, WireCo WorldGroup.

### Steel wire

Stroet observes that there is a trend towards replacing steel wire ropes with synthetic ones. "The problem with steel ropes is that they are very heavy. If the rope is too long, it can break under its own weight. With synthetic fiber ropes you do not have

this problem. But to guarantee the same strength and durability as steel wire ropes, a lot of high-tech innovations are needed."

The process does not stop when a synthetic rope as an alternative to steel wire is developed. "Perhaps the hardest part of the job is convincing the client that synthetic fibre can be as reliable as steel", says Stroet with a smile. "Luckily we earned a lot of trust over the years, so we are given the opportunity to prove that

the job can be done with a different kind of rope."

### Grounded bulk carrier

During a spring storm this year the bulk carrier Glory Amsterdam ran aground at Langeoog, a German island in the Lower Saxon Wadden Sea. Normally vessels of this size are recovered with heavy and lumber some steel wire ropes, where manual handling of the rope is required. But this time the maritime salvage specialist, SMIT Salvage, used the Lankhorst Lankoforce rope with Defender jacket to refloat the grounded bulk carrier.

It worked well and the Glory Amsterdam was towed to a dry dock in Bremerhaven. SMIT Salvage was very pleased with using Lankoforce. According to the company the salvage was a textbook operation. "It proved that synthetic rope can be an excellent towing rope, with the advantage that it is much easier to handle", says Stroet.

**'CRAFTSMANSHIP IS IN OUR DNA'**



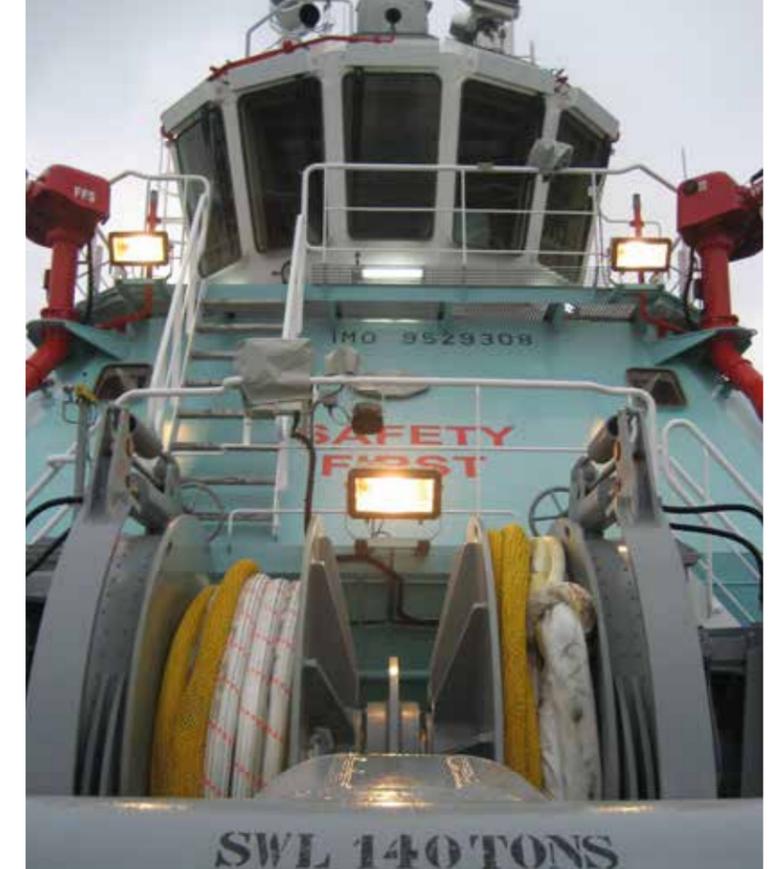
A Lankoforce with Dyneema jacket onboard a vessel

To be precise, Lankhorst Ropes also sells steel wire ropes. "In some cases, steel rope is the best option, especially when high temperatures are involved. But when strength is the only factor, we are trying to find a solution in which synthetic fiber can be an effective and more practical alternative."

### Maritime activities

Lankhorst Ropes is active in several areas. Their products are used for maritime activities like, dry and wet cargo, tugging and towing, inland shipping and dredging. Recently the company has a special focus on cruise. "This is a growing market. We all know how important safety is in the cruise industry. Mooring rope performance is critical to the safety of a vessel's passengers and crew. Lankhorst's ropes offer safe operation, ease of handling and outstanding service life performance resulting in a total cost of ownership with good value." Next to the maritime sector, Lankhorst Ropes provides its services in the offshore and heavy lift industry.

Because of these diverse activities, Lankhorst produces a lot of different ropes. They go by names such as Tipto winchline,



The company is also big in the tug and towing segment. Here a tug with Strongline ropes

Lankoforce, Strongline and Euroflex and are the result of many years' development. The company also sell jackets made of Dyneema, the world's strongest fiber. This groundbreaking fiber was developed by the Dutch chemical company DSM Dyneema after a long period of research.

### Nanotechnology

At the moment Lankhorst Ropes is looking how new technologies like nanotechnology can improve their ropes. "We are looking at

other features like ropes that change colour to indicate when they have to be replaced." Not every innovation has to be high-tech. Take for example the way an eye splice is made in a rope. Splicing a rope is done by hand and for decades the technique remained the same. But in 2010 Lankhorst Ropes presented a new rope splice technology. It was developed by an employee who thought he could do it better. "His name is Adrie Stout and at home he worked on his invention." He came with a method in which the size and weight of the eye is reduced significantly, making it easier to handle and requiring less crew. And all this has been achieved without loss in rope strength.

Adrie's name lives on in the brand name the splice is called: the A3 splice. It is easy to describe the new rope splice technology. Instead of the rope being spliced back into the body of the rope to form the eye, the new splice is made within the eye itself. "But it is much more complicated than that. Because we have a heritage that spans over 200 years, craftsmanship is in our DNA. We know the ropes", says Stroet.



The Spanish tug Ceballos pulling a Lankhorst rope