

Tug Newsletter

all about tugs

“Maassluis” and Loods M...

The tug MAASSLUIS seen here 18 October, 2025, towing the museum tug HUDSON from her regular berth in the Maassluis Inner Port to a berth in the Outer Port on the occasion of an open day at Loods M (Shed M), the proposed new site of the Maassluis museums connected to Maassluis and its place in maritime history. MAASSLUIS today is an operational museum tug and as such part of the Maassluis Sleep-boothaven Foundation in which a number of historic tugs participate. photo: Job van Eijk

“Maassluis” – the tug

Maassluis herself gained fame as the only harbour tug in the fleet of L. Smit & Co's International Towage Company to have the funnel mark of the ocean towage department: a blue band on a black funnel – all other harbour tugs were displaying a red band on the funnel that originated from the Internationale

Sleepdienst Maatschappij which is one of the two tug operators companies that made up L. Smit & Co's International Towage Co. since 1 May, 1923.

The tug was delivered 10-2-1949 by the Shipyard Zorg en Vlijt (H. De Haas) at Maassluis. Dimensions are 15,04/ 13,30 x 4,00 x 1,80 m. Draft 1,56 m. Main engine was a 4-st 6-cyl A.E.G. diesel, output 150 bhp. The tug was listed as owned by Internationale Sleepdienst Maatschappij, Rotterdam. The may seem a bit odd but it was customary for vessels to be owned by either L. Smit & Co. or Internationale Sleepdienst. This method of separate formal registry and bookkeeping was maintained up to the 1970s.

In 1969 the tug was transferred to Smit subsidiary NV Sleepdienst en Transportonderneming G.J. Eerland

L.C.Mzn, Rotterdam. Eerland was specialised in general harbour towing and inland waters operations.

In April, 1972, she was transferred to Smit International Harbour Services, Rotterdam, following the reorganisation of the Smit Group.

In 1978 sold to A.J. Wemmenhove (registered with Mrs W.H. van Wemmenhove-Beuke), Lith. Here she was renamed *Libra*. She was re-engined with a Scania diesel type DS-14-AO1 dating from 1974.(output of 300 bhp).

In 1988 she was sold to BV IJzer- en Metaalhandel Walburg, Zwijndrecht but re-sold the same day to Van Hasselt Baggermaatschappij, Stevensweert – a dredging company – that changed her name from *Libra* to *V.H. 76*.

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In 1995 she again changed hands when she went to Dragrasa NV in Kesenich, Belgium, where she was renamed *D 16*.

In 2011 she was acquired by mr Luuk Vroombout, Maassluis, who had her restored to her original form as she was when operated at *Maassluis* assisting the Smit ocean tugs. The tug is part of Maassluis Sleepboothaven, registered with Stichting Maritiem Erfgoed (Maritime Heritage Foundation), Maassluis.

Earlier tugs named “Maassluis”

This *Maassluis* is the fourth tug of that name. The first one dates from 1863 when she was delivered by the J. Robson yard at Gateshead. The 23-metre paddle tug was fitted with a single-cylinder low-pressure steam engine. Owner of *Union I* was the Administratie van de Vlissingse Sleepdienst (Spoors & Sprengers), Middelburg, The Netherlands. In 1873 she was acquired by L. Smit & Co. The 80 nhp tug was sold in 1892 to G.B. Pas & Zn, Bolnes, She was registered at Vlaardingen as the fishing vessel *VL 93*. The next year she was scrapped by the owners.

Maassluis number two dated from 1889 when she was completed by the A.A. Wilton van Reede shipyard at Papendrecht. The 21,50-metre tug was completed for account of the Schiedam-based Gebr. L. & J. Bitter. As *Mentor 7* she was sold to L. Smit & Co. in 1895. The tug was fitted with a 2-cylinder Compound steam engine with an output of 275 ihp. Smit sold her again in 1906 to P.E. Hell, Rotterdam who had her registered as *Gerard* with the NV



MAASSLUIS in Eerland colours

photo: coll. Job van Eijk

Schroefstoomsleepboot Gerard. In 1908 she was sold abroad. No further details.

The third *Maassluis* dated from 1907. She was built for account of L. Smit & Co. by the J. & K. Smit yard at Kinderdijk. The 21,50 m steam tug was fitted with a 2-cyl. Compound steam engine with an output of 250 ihp. She was sold somewhere in the 1930s, fate unknown.

Loods M

The project ‘Loods M’ (‘Shed M’) is part of redevelopment of the area around the Outer Harbour. The Outer Harbour is the area where the history and development of Maassluis came together. First it was a large fishery port. Next came the tugs operated by Smit and the salvage vessels of Van den Tak. Both Smit and Van den Tak developed into the biggest worldwide operating companies in this specialist trade. Also (Royal) Dirkzwager – today a maritime communication specialist – started out as a reporting service and facilitator connecting shipping and trade for the

area from Rotterdam to the North Sea. It was also a headquarters for the pilotage service. And post WW2 the Geest Line short sea traders left the Outer Port bound for the UK with loads of fruit and other products. Both Smit and Van den Tak have left but in its place came the National Towage Museum, the only one of its kind in the world. It were the maritime operations that created the identity of Maassluis.

At the entrance to the Outer Port the former pilotage headquarters and the Smit offices have been turned into the Hotel Maassluis, which itself is decorated with memento’s of the towage and salvage industry.

Loods M sits next to the hotel. The project aims at developing it into a museum annex schooling area showing the maritime heritage of Maassluis combined with facilities for the creation / stimulation of new developments. A space for experiments and learning, creating, presenting and meeting. Activities and programming will always connect past to present to future. As the saying goes: “he who knows not about the past will not understand the future . . .” A ‘workshop for the future’ will stimulate and develop recycle and re-use of materials and equipment: “Refuse, Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Refurbish, Remanufacture, Repurpose and Recycle”.

Loods M will become the home of National Towage Museum, the Museum Maassluis, the Historic Maassluis Society, The Foundation Historic Shipyard ‘Zorg en Vlijt’, Museumship *Hudson* and the historic ships that are part of the Foundation Towage Port Maassluis.



MAASSLUIS assisting the Smit ocean tug TYNE – a slightly larger version of the pre-war HUDSON – berthing at Maassluis

photo: coll. Job van Eijk

Museum tug “Hudson”

This tug is the only pre-war Smit ocean





Ambitious plans for Loods M

photo: Job van Eijk

tug remaining. Currently moored in the Inner Port behind the National Towage Museum the tug is preserved in more or less its original state apart from the engine room as she no longer has propulsion. Part of the tug has been turned into a maritime museum for Dutch towage and shipping in and shortly prior to World War 2.

Hudson plays an important role in the plans for Loods M. The intention is to relocate her to the Outer Port. Four possible options have been examined: to permanently moor her in front of Loods M with an adaption to make her suitable as a boarding place for visitors of the historic tugs and salvage vessels during events, to put her ashore on the bank of the river as a landmark for Maassluis, or remain at its present location. The fourth and most spectacular option is to put the tug ashore alongside and (under cover) integrated in Loods M. Initial calculations showed a high initial cost for the latter option but the cheapest option for running costs over 25 years.

Tugboat Port Maassluis

The foundation was set up in 2004 as Stichting Historische

Sleepvaart, In 2007 the name was changed to Stichting Sleepboothaven Maassluis. This is a cooperation of the National Towage Museum, Hollands Glorie Foundation (steam tug *Furie*), Help de *Hudson* Foundation, Maritime Collection Rijnmond Foundation (Elbe) and the foundation for the preservation of the salvage vessel *Bruinvisch*. Its goal is to support the mutual interests of the and future foundations, to handle publicity, to make special berths available, to facilitate exchange of knowledge and to organise events.

Today the steam tug *Furie*, salvage tug *Elbe*, salvage vessel *Bruinvisch*, harbour / coastal tug *Steenbank*, inland waters salvage tug *Tonijn*, harbour tug *Maassluis* and the Museum tug *Hudson* are associated with the Foundation.

Sources: files Job van Eijk, Smit 150 – Anderhalve eeuw vlootgeschiedenis – G.J., de Boer, various related websites Nationaal Sleepvaart Museum, Maassluis Sleepboothaven, Vereniging De Binnenvaart and the Bidbook Loods M.

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