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Researching a rarity on the Kil van Hurwenen, Netherlands

Peter Seinen and Joost van den Besselaar

Peter Seinen and Joost van den Besselaar are board members of Mergor in Mosam, a foundation supporting avocational underwater archaeologists in the Netherlands.

Here they show us the value of a barely legible number in shedding light on the identity and importance of a riverside hulk.

In 2011 a resident of the village of Rossum showed us the remains of a large steel wreck on a backwater of the river Waal called the Kil van Hurwenen, which was formed as a result of sand extraction for the construction of the local highway. The vessel measures about 21 m long and 4 m wide, and comprises an older hull made of riveted steel plates with a modern superstructure of welded steel added to it. It is clearly some kind of barge that had been converted into a houseboat.



Above: The beached barge in the “Kil of Hurwenen”.
Photograph: Peter Seinen

Fortunately, the original registration number of the barge, cut into its steel plate, was still present and sufficiently legible: this single feature revealed a wealth of information. The vessel turned out to be a type of ‘Rijnaak’, or Rhine barge — and, moreover, a so-called ‘heveaak’, which refers to the specific shape, or ‘heve’, of the stem. The nickname of this particular type of barge was a “Hagenaar”, because its 4.26 m width was specifically designed to access the sluices of The Hague. It was built at a Dutch shipyard, P en A Ruijtenberg in Waspik in 1898. It was equipped with a mast and davit for loading and unloading.

Propulsion was by a single-cylinder diesel engine delivering 12 horsepower. This is a particularly scarce type of barge, and we are looking for ways to rescue the ship for display.



Above: The partly readable registry number (160B NYM 1931).
Photograph: Peter Seinen

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