

## Sterke Yerke

Build by Crazy Dutchmen!

In 1974 a group of Friesian young men started to build a raft. Just to seal the lakes in the Northern province of Friesland. They end up building 3 of them. The first two with old oil drums by the floating device. The last one used dredger pipes.

### Sterke Yerke I

Just for fun. Some played soccer. Some drank beer. Some started to work. The builders of this raft did it all together with on extra thing, building a raft. Old oil drums. On top of them a wooden frame work and two wooden masts. Together with 5 gigantic sails, they estimated, the raft would perform well. Nothing special just a very solid construction.



June 12th 1974± the maiden trip of the Sterke Yerke. Everything turns out perfect. The raft was built for less than a 1000 guilders. Buying 50 bottles of champagne to celebrate was a huge investment. But they made it into the Leeuwarder newspaper! One for their goals



### STERKE YERKE II

Champagne and beer. Soon they came up with a new plan. Sailing to England would be great. The first raft was oké but to cross the North Sea with it was a little too much. In the summer of 1976 the friends start building a second raft. They made it to England and back! In the years to follow they often sailed the sea between the Dutch island and the lakes in the North.

Was it enough.....



Number 2

Length 12 mtr.

Width 5 mtr.

Mast 1 10 mtr.

Mast 2 12 mtr.

Sail as much as possible

### **STERKE YERKE III**



Lakes. England. This could be improved! So the friends start building again. They soon find out the oil drum weren't an option in case they decided to sail the ocean. And that's what they intended to do. In 1978 they built number 3. Based on dredger pipes. It took them a year to finish. After completing the raft they sailed it immediately to The Dutch Antilles in 1979.

It turns out to be a great trip. The 145 days they need to go from the Netherlands to the Dutch Antilles turned out to be one long discovery trip of adventure. But also an eye opener towards environmental problems. The hard life living together with 4 men on a very small space surrounded by .... Nothing. Swimming in the ocean 300 meters deep together with dolphins and whales. Or sailing surrounded by sharks.

The journey ended in a tragedy. During the night of December 14 – 15 1979 the Serke Yerke was blown into the rocks of the coast of the Antilles. They had to send an SOS. The Italian motor ship Nai Silvane operated by captain Guus Schweigman also a Dutch man saved them. Number 3 couldn't be saved and was left behind on the rocks.



Small= ..... No very small!

Now you know why we are called Crazy Dutchmen

