

Description

In some subsea applications, production from several subsea christmas trees flows through individual flowlines from each christmas tree to a central main gathering line on the ocean floor. As new wells are drilled and completed the flowlines from these wells are also connected into the main gathering line. Making a connection between the flowlines and the main gathering line is often accomplished by using an articulated piping system having flexible ball and socket joints as shown in US-A 3 727 954 and US-A 3 717 920 and remote collet type connectors as shown in US-A 3 096 999. In making such connections the length of the connecting pipes can be compensated to some extent by introducing swivel joints at each end of the section and in its middle as shown in US-A 4 696 494, filed on June 5, 1985. Such application disclosed an improved type of swivel joint which is adapted to be used to compensate for misalignment between the subsea lines which are to be connected.

Normally telescoping joints are provided with seals to contain the fluids within the interior of the joint from leaking to the exterior and to prevent entry of surrounding fluids into the joint. In making the subsea connections mentioned above, it is desired that the length of flowline used to make such connection be adjustable so that even with multiple swivel joints there is not any stress introduced into the flowline or into the lines to which it is connected by having the connecting flowline too short, too long, or not properly aligned.

Some of the prior subsea telescopic joints have been capable of extending and shortening the flowline or spool to be used in such connections but did not have a metal-to-metal seal between the two members of the joint. An example of this type of telescoping joint are shown in US-A 4 138 147, US-A 4 371 198 and US-A 4 109 945.

Also in the past it has been suggested to use fluid pressure to bring two surfaces into frictional engagement as disclosed in US-A 4 341 484. US-A 4 011 918 discloses the use of hydraulic fluid injected between a drill string stabilizer and its supporting tapered pin to release frictional engagement between the tapered pin to release frictional engagement between the stabilizer and the pin. A joint in accordance with the precharacterizing part of claim 1 is shown in US-A 4 371 198.

The present invention provides a subsea telescoping joint comprising inner and outer tubular members arranged so that the outer member surrounds a portion of the inner member and so that they can undergo relative longitudinal movement and means sealing between the members, said inner tubular member having an external cylindrical locking surface intermediate its ends, said outer tubular member having an internal cylindrical locking surface intermediate its ends, and the joint including means for sealing between said tubular members to provide a pressure chamber on at least one side of said locking surfaces, and at least one port extending through said outer tubular member communicating with said chamber, characterised in that the di-

ameter of said locking surfaces is such that there is a slight interference fit whereby relative movement of said locking surfaces is inhibited until fluid pressure is supplied to said port to separate said locking surfaces allowing relative movement of the surfaces to lengthen or shorten said joint.

The present invention provides a subsea joint which both locks and seals with a metal-to-metal seal.

A joint in accordance with the present invention can provide a very substantial length adjustment for a flowline spool to be inserted between a flowline leading from an individual christmas tree to a main gathering system.

The invention will be described now by way of example only with particular reference to the accompanying drawings. In the drawings:

Figure 1 is a schematic representation of a flowline spool with an improved telescoping joint of the present invention being lowered into position for connection in a subsea location.

Figure 2 is a similar schematic representation showing the flowline spool connected in the subsea location.

Figure 3 is a partial sectional view of one form of improved telescopic joint of the present invention with the joint in a partially retracted position.

Figure 4 is a partial sectional view of the joint in Figure 3 showing the joint in its extended position.

Figure 5 is a partial sectional view of another form of improved telescopic joint of the present invention in its extended position.

Figure 6 is another partial sectional view of the joint of Figure 5 in a partially retracted position.

As shown in Figure 1, flowline spool 10 having telescoping joint 12 in its midsection with flowline sections 11a and 11b extending outward from each end of joint 12, swivels 14 on each end and remote connectors 16 on each swivel 14 for connecting to subsea flowline 18 and riser 20. Spool 10 is connected to strongback 22 which is lowered to the subsea location by crane 24 from floating structure 26. Spool 10 is guided by connection to guidelines 28 which lead to the ends of flowline 18 and riser 20, both of which are provided with suitable ends 30 for connection by connectors 16 such as collet flanges when remote connectors are collet connectors.

Spool 10 is lowered into position and telescoping joint 12 is adjusted as thereafter described so that connectors 16 are in position to mate with ends 30. When connection has been made between connectors 16 and ends 30, then telescoping joint 12 is locked into position so that spool 10 is sealed and its length is fixed. Thereafter strongback 22 is disconnected from spool 10 and guidelines 28 are disconnected from flowline 18 and riser 20.

Telescoping joint 12, shown in FIGURES 3 and 4 is the preferred form of joint of the present invention and includes inner tubular member 32 and outer tubular member 34. Inner tubular member 32, which is secured to flowline section 11b of spool 10 as by welding, includes sleeve 35 which is generally tubular in shape having central bore 36, exterior cylindrical surface 38 on its inner end and recessed cylindrical surface 40 located axially exterior from

surface 38 and threaded reduced diameter 43. Hub 41 threadedly engages diameter 43 and is sealed thereto by seal 45. Hub 41 includes exterior diametrical surface 39, which is essentially the same radial extent as surface 38, so that recess 40 is located between surfaces 38 and 40. Hub 41 also includes spanner wrench holes 47, whereby a spanner wrench (not shown) may be used to threadedly engage hub 41 to diameter 43. The central portion of recess 40 includes sealing and locking surface 42 which has a surface finish to provide metal-to-metal sealing which is not a smooth finish but rather a lightly serrated finish. Grooves 44 and 46 in surfaces 38 and 39 include seal rings 48. Outer tubular member 34 includes hub 50 which is suitable connected to flowline section 11a of spool 10 as by welding, and sleeve 52 which is connected and sealed to hub 50. The interior of sleeve 52 includes bore 54 at one end and bore 56 at its other end and inward projection 58 therebetween. The end of sleeve 52 with bore 54 has threaded surface 51 located exterior of bore 54. Hub 50 also includes threaded surface 53 for engaging surface 51 of sleeve 52 and seal 55 for sealing therebetween. Hub 50 includes bore 57 which is essentially the same diameter as bore 54 of sleeve 52 and forms an extension thereof. Projection 58 has inner sealing and locking surface 60 which has a surface finish to provide metal-to-metal sealing. Such surface is not a smooth finish but rather a lightly serrated finish similar to the finish on surface 42. The diameters of surfaces 42 and 60 have a slight interference fit so that they are not movable with respect to each other. Ports 62 and 64 extend through sleeve 52 at each side of projection 58 as shown and are provided with suitable fittings 66 to which lines 68 are connected for supplying fluid under pressure to the interior of sleeve 52. Seal rings 48 seal against the surfaces of bores 54, 56 and 57. Since they seal against surfaces having the same diameter, the joint is effectively balanced, that is, it does not have any extending or retracting net forces developing as a result of pressure supplied to the interior of the sleeve 52.

As shown in FIGURE 3, joint 12 is locked and sealed. To release joint 12 from the locked position it is only necessary to supply fluid under pressure through hoses 68 to ports 62 and 64. When sufficient pressure is introduced into chambers 70 and 72 between members 32 and 34 and opposite sides of projection 58, the diameters thereof changes sufficiently so that there is no longer an interference fit but rather a slight clearance. With pressure in chambers 70 and 72 members 32 and 34 are movable with respect to each other so that joint 12 can be moved from a contracted position shown in FIGURE 3 to the extended position shown in FIGURE 4. Joint 12 is locked in position by relieving the fluid pressure from chambers 70 and 72. Further, because of the serrated finish of surfaces 42 and 60, the engagement between such surfaces provide a locking of joint 12 and also a metal-to-metal seal between inner and outer tubular members 32 and 34. Also, ports 62 and 64 may be used to test the effectiveness of the metal-to-metal seal between surfaces 42 and 60. This may be accomplished by

relieving pressure from one of ports 62 and 64 and thereafter supplying fluid pressure to the other of such ports with suitable means, such as a pressure gauge connected to the relieved port, to provide an indication of the pressure in the relieved port. Thus, any increase in the pressure indicates a leakage across the metal-to-metal seal which is intended to be provided by the engagement of surfaces 42 and 60. In pressure testing of the seal substantially less fluid pressure is utilized than the pressure level needed to release the locking and sealing engagement of surfaces 42 and 60.

Telescoping joint 80 is a modified form of the present invention and includes inner tubular member 82 which is secured to flowline section 11b of the flowline spool 10 and outer tubular member 84 which is secured to flowline section 11a of the spool 10. Inner tubular member 82 includes central bore 86, exterior surface 88, groove 90 at the end of surface 88, serrated sealing and locking surface 92 which has a smaller diameter than surface 88 and exterior end sealing surface 94 which has a smaller diameter than surface 92. Outer tubular member 84 includes hub portion 96 having central bore 98 on the end connecting to flowline section 11b and sleeve portion 97 with bore 100. Groove 102 is near the end of bore 100 as shown. Surface 104 has a larger diameter than bore 100. Serrated metal-to-metal sealing and locking surface 106 is on the interior of sleeve portion 97 and has a diameter slightly smaller than the diameter of surface 92 of inner tubular member 82 so that there is a slight interference fit between the two sealing and locking surfaces 92 and 106. Tubular member 84 has bore 108 which is on its end that is opposite to the hub portion 96 and is larger in diameter than the exterior surface 88 of member 82. Seal ring 110 is positioned in groove 90 and seals against the surface of bore 108. Sleeve portion 97 includes groove 102 with seal ring 112 positioned therein which seals against surface 94 of inner tubular member 82. Ports 114 and 116 extend through outer tubular member 84 to communicate with chamber 118, between surfaces 92 and 108, and chamber 120, between surfaces 94 and 106, at opposite sides of surface 106. Suitable fittings 122 are connected into bores 114 and 116 and lines 124 connect to fittings 122 to supply fluid under pressure to the interior of outer tubular member 84.

The operation of joint 80 is similar to the operation of joint 12 in that the introduction of fluid under pressure into chambers 118 and 120 between the inner and outer tubular members 82 and 84 causes an unlocking of the engagement of the surfaces 92 and 106 so that joint 80 may be extended to the position shown in FIGURE 5 or retracted to the position shown in FIGURE 6. Once joint 80 is positioned as desired, the pressure is relieved from chambers 118 and 120. The relief of pressure in chambers 118 and 120 causes surfaces 92 and 106 to engage in locking and metal-to-metal sealing contact. This not only locks joint 80 in the desired position but also provides a metal-to-metal seal between inner and outer tubular members 82 and 84.

Ports 114 and 116 can also be used to test the effectiveness of the metal-to-metal seal of surface

92 and 106 by supplying less than unlocking pressure to one port and sensing, at the other port, any pressure leakage into the other chamber.

Further, it should be noted that the effective diameters of seals 110 and 112 are such that there is an effective pressure force created when fluid pressure is supplied to chambers 118 and 120 which force tends to move joint members 82 and 84 to their extended position. This pressure assist in extension is expected to be helpful to divers attempting to make the final connection of flowline spool 10 in place between subsea flowline 18 and riser 20.

In the prior art articulated subsea piping system a length of 45,7 m (150) feet of piping would be used for a connection which can be made by 27,4 m (90 feet) of piping by use of the present invention.

Claims

1. A subsea telescoping joint comprising inner and outer tubular members (32, 82; 34, 84) arranged so that the outer member surrounds a portion of the inner member and so that they can undergo relative longitudinal movement and means sealing between the members said inner tubular member (32; 82) having an external cylindrical locking surface (42; 92) intermediate its ends, said outer tubular member (34; 84) having an internal cylindrical locking surface (60; 106) intermediate its ends, and the joint including means (44, 46; 110, 112) for sealing between said tubular members to provide a pressure chamber (70, 72; 118, 120) on at least one side of said locking surfaces, and at least one port (62, 64; 114, 116) extending through said outer tubular member communicating with said chamber, characterised in that the diameter of said locking surfaces (42, 60; 92, 106) is such that there is a slight interference fit whereby relative movement of said locking surfaces is inhibited until fluid pressure is supplied to said port to separate said locking surfaces allowing relative movement of the surfaces to lengthen or shorten said joint.

2. A subsea telescoping joint according to claim 1, characterised in that said locking surfaces (44, 60; 92, 106) are lightly serrated to ensure locking and a metal-to-metal sealing engagement when engaged without pressure in said chamber.

3. A subsea telescoping joint according either to claim 1 to claim 2, characterised in that said locking surface (60, 106) of said outer tubular member (34, 84) is an inner projection, and said locking surface (42, 92) in said inner tubular member (32, 82) is recessed.

4. A subsea telescoping joint according to any preceding claim, characterised in that said sealing means (44, 46) are positioned to seal at the same diameter to provide a pressure balancing of said joint.

5. A subsea telescoping joint according to claim 1, characterised in that said sealing means (110, 112) are positioned to seal at different diameters to provide an internal force responsive to pressure in said chamber tending to extend said joint.

6. A subsea telescoping joint according to claim 1, characterised by including a chamber (70, 72; 118, 124) on each side of said sealing surfaces, and a

pair of ports (62, 64; 114, 116) through said outer tubular member, one on each side of said internal locking surface, communicating with said chambers.

Patentansprüche

1. Untersee-Teleskopverbindung, umfassend einen inneren und einen äußeren Rohrkörper (32, 82; 34, 84), die derart angeordnet sind, daß der äußere Körper einen Abschnitt des inneren Körpers umgibt und daß sie eine Relativ-Längsbewegung auszuführen vermögen, und Dichtungsmittel zwischen den Körpern, wobei der innere Rohrkörper (32; 82) mit einer äußeren zylindrischen Verriegelungsfläche (42; 92) zwischen seinen Enden ausgestattet ist, während der äußere Rohrkörper (34; 84) zwischen seinen Enden mit einer inneren zylindrischen Verriegelungsfläche (60; 106) ausgestattet ist, und wobei die Verbindung Mittel (44, 46; 110, 112) zur Abdichtung zwischen den Rohrkörpern aufweist, um eine Druckkammer (70, 72; 118, 120) an zumindest einer Seite der Verriegelungsflächen vorzusehen, und zumindest einen Port (62, 64; 114, 116), der sich durch den äußeren Rohrkörper hindurch erstreckt und mit der Kammer in Verbindung steht, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Durchmesser der Verriegelungsflächen (42, 60; 92, 106) derart ist, daß ein geringfügiger Presssitz vorhanden ist, wodurch eine Relativbewegung der Verriegelungsflächen verhindert wird, bis dem Port Fluiddruck zugeführt wird, um die Verriegelungsflächen zu trennen und eine Relativbewegung der Flächen gestattet, um die Verbindung zu verlängern oder zu verkürzen.

2. Untersee-Teleskopverbindung nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Verriegelungsflächen (44, 60; 92, 106) etwas gezackt sind, um eine Verriegelung und einen dichtenden Metall-Eingriff zu gewährleisten, wenn die Verriegelungsflächen ohne Druck in der Kammer in Eingriff miteinander stehen.

3. Untersee-Teleskopverbindung nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Verriegelungsfläche (60, 106) an dem äußeren Rohrkörper (34, 84) ein Innenvorsprung ist, und daß die Verriegelungsfläche (42, 92) an dem inneren Rohrkörper (32, 82) vertieft ist.

4. Untersee-Teleskopverbindung nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Dichtungsmittel (44, 46) so positioniert sind, daß sie am selben Durchmesser abdichten, um einen Druckausgleich der Verbindung zu schaffen.

5. Untersee-Teleskopverbindung nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Dichtungsmittel (110, 112) so positioniert sind, daß sie an verschiedenen Durchmessern abdichten, um ansprechend auf Druck in der Kammer, der die Verbindung aufzuweiten trachtet, eine interne Kraft zu erhalten.

6. Untersee-Teleskopverbindung nach Anspruch 1, gekennzeichnet durch eine an jeder Seite der Dichtflächen vorgesehene Kammer (70, 72; 118, 124) und ein Paar Ports (62, 64; 114, 116), die an jeder Seite der inneren Verriegelungsfläche den äußeren Rohrkörper durchsetzen und mit den Kammern in Verbindung stehen.



92 and 106 by supplying less than unlocking pressure to one port and sensing, at the other port, any pressure leakage into the other chamber.

Further, it should be noted that the effective diameters of seals 110 and 112 are such that there is an effective pressure force created when fluid pressure is supplied to chambers 118 and 120 which force tends to move joint members 82 and 84 to their extended position. This pressure assist in extension is expected to be helpful to divers attempting to make the final connection of flowline spool 10 in place between subsea flowline 18 and riser 20.

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Revendications

1. Joint sous-marin télescopique, comportant des éléments tubulaires intérieur et extérieur (32, 82; 34, 84) disposés de façon que l'élément extérieur entoure une partie de l'élément intérieur et de façon que les deux éléments puissent supporter un déplacement longitudinal relatif de l'un par rapport à l'autre, et des moyens réalisant l'étanchéité entre les éléments, l'élément tubulaire intérieur (32; 82) présentant entre ses extrémités une surface cylindrique externe de verrouillage (42; 92), l'élément tubulaire extérieur (34; 84) présentant entre ses extrémités une surface cylindrique interne de verrouillage (60; 106), le joint comportant des moyens (44, 46; 110, 112) pour réaliser l'étanchéité entre les éléments tubulaires afin de ménager une chambre de pression (70, 72; 118, 120) sur au moins un côté desdites surfaces de verrouillage, et au moins un orifice (62, 64; 114, 116) traversant l'élément tubulaire extérieur et communiquant avec ladite chambre, caractérisé en ce que les diamètres respectifs des surfaces de verrouillage (42, 60; 92, 106) sont tels que ces surfaces constituent un joint à ajustement légèrement serré de sorte qu'un déplacement relatif de ces surfaces de verrouillage est interdit jusqu'à ce qu'on envoie une pression de fluide à cet orifice pour séparer les surfaces de verrouillage, ce qui permet un déplacement relatif des surfaces pour allonger ou raccourcir ledit joint. 5 10 15 20 25 30
2. Joint sous-marin télescopique conforme à la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que les surfaces de verrouillage (44, 60; 92, 106) sont légèrement striées pour assurer le verrouillage et un contact étanche métal-sur-métal quand elles sont en prise en l'absence de pression dans la chambre. 35
3. Joint sous-marin télescopique conforme à l'une quelconque des revendications 1 ou 2, caractérisé en ce que la surface de verrouillage (60, 106) de l'élément tubulaire extérieur (34, 84) est une saillie intérieure, et la surface de verrouillage (42, 92) de l'élément tubulaire intérieur (32, 82) est évidée. 40
4. Joint sous-marin télescopique conforme à l'une des revendications précédentes, caractérisé en ce que les moyens d'étanchéité (44, 46) sont placés de façon à réaliser l'étanchéité sur le même diamètre pour assurer un équilibrage en pression du joint. 45
5. Joint sous-marin télescopique conforme à la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que les moyens d'étanchéité (110, 112) sont placés de façon à réaliser l'étanchéité sur des diamètres différents pour assurer une force interne déterminée par la pression qui règne dans la chambre, tendant à allonger le joint. 50 55
6. Joint sous-marin télescopique conforme à la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce qu'il comporte une chambre (70, 72; 118, 124) de part et d'autre des surfaces d'étanchéité, et deux orifices (62, 64; 114, 116) traversant l'élément tubulaire extérieur, situés respectivement de part et d'autre de la surface interne de verrouillage et communiquant respectivement avec lesdites chambres. 60 65

