necessary to disconnect some of the ancillary equipment. When the drilling module is in the desired position the ancillary equipment then has to be reconnected and the integrity of the remade connections tested. This is time consuming and expensive because it is not possible to use the drilling module until the testing is complete and the appropriate paperwork completed and logged.

The present invention is based on the realisation that if a skid assembly is provided with a high level skid rail and a low level skid rail then a structure can be provided on which ancillary equipment can be mounted and which will remain in juxtaposition (ie in a fixed position) with respect to the drilling tower. This means that those items of ancillary equipment which are mounted on the structure do not have to be disconnected and reconnect when the drilling tower is moved. In turn this means that it is not necessary to retest the integrity of the connections and consequently non-productive time can be reduced.

According to the present invention there is provided a skid assembly for supporting a drilling tower, said skid assembly comprising:

(i) a first member for slidably supporting a drilling tower; and

(ii) a second member for slidably supporting said drilling tower ;

said first member and said second member being spaced apart in a horizontal direction;

characterized in that;

said second member is located at a higher level than said first member.

Preferably, said first member is spaced between 9m and 14m from said second member in a substantially horizontal plane.

Advantageously, the top of said second member lies in a plane which is between 9m and 14m above the plane in which the top of said first member lies.

Preferably, the top of said second member lies in a plane which is between 10m and 12m above the plane in which the top of said first member lies.

Advantageously, said second member comprises a cross beam mounted on legs and the distance from the ground to the bottom of said cross beam is at least 8m.

Preferably, said first member comprises a cross beam and said skid assembly further comprises at least one cross beam slidably mounted on said second member and a substructure which extends downwardly from said at least one cross beam and is slidably mounted on said first member.

Advantageously, said substructure comprises at least one platform for supporting ancillary equipment.

The present invention also provides a drilling module comprising a drilling tower mounted on a skid assembly in accordance with the present invention.

Preferably, said drilling module includes a skid assembly in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention and ancillary equipment mounted on said platform.

Advantageously, said ancillary equipment includes one or more of the following, a scalping screen, a shale shaker, a mud mixer and a generator.

The present invention also provides an offshore drilling platform having a drilling module in accordance with the present invention mounted thereon.

Preferably, said drilling platform is provided with a first skid rail for slidably supporting said drilling module and a second skid rail disposed alongside said first skid rail for slidably supporting said drilling module, and wherein said first skid rail and said second skid rail lie in a substantially common horizontal plane.

necessary to disconnect some of the ancillary equipment. When the drilling module is in the desired position the ancillary equipment then has to be reconnected and the integrity of the remade connections tested. This is time consuming and expensive because it is not possible to use the drilling module until the testing is complete and the appropriate paperwork completed and logged.

The present invention is based on the realisation that if a skid assembly is provided with a high level skid rail and a low level skid rail then a structure can be provided on which ancillary equipment can be mounted and which will remain in juxtaposition (ie in a fixed position) with respect to the drilling tower. This means that those items of ancillary equipment which are mounted on the structure do not have to be disconnected and reconnect when the drilling tower is moved. In turn this means that it is not necessary to retest the integrity of the connections and consequently non-productive time can be reduced.

According to the present invention there is provided a skid assembly for supporting a drilling tower said skid assembly comprising:

(i) a first member for slidably supporting a drilling tower; and

(ii) a second member for slidably supporting said drilling tower;

said first member and said second member being spaced apart in a horizontal direction;

wherein said first member comprises a cross beam;

wherein said second member is located at a higher level than said first member; and

wherein said skid assembly further comprises at least one cross beam slidably mounted on said second member and a substructure which extends downwardly from said at least one cross beam and is slidably mounted on said first member.

Preferably, said substructure comprises at least one platform for supporting ancillary equipment.

Preferably, said first member is spaced between 9m and 14m from said second member in a substantially horizontal plane.

Advantageously, the top of said second member lies in a plane which is between 9m and 14m above the plane in which the top of said first member lies.

Preferably, the top of said second member lies in a plane which is between 10m and 12m above the plane in which the top of said first member lies.

Advantageously, said second member comprises a cross beam mounted on legs and the distance from the ground to the bottom of said cross beam is at least 8m.

The present invention also provides a drilling module comprising a drilling tower mounted on a skid assembly in accordance with the present invention.

Preferably, said drilling module includes a skid assembly in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention and ancillary equipment mounted on said platform.

Advantageously, said ancillary equipment includes one or more of the following, a scalping screen, a shale shaker, a mud mixer and a generator.

The present invention also provides an offshore drilling platform having a drilling module in accordance with the present invention mounted thereon.

Preferably, said drilling platform is provided with a first skid rail for slidably supporting said drilling module and a second skid rail disposed alongside said first skid rail for slidably supporting said drilling module, and wherein said first skid rail and said second skid rail lie in a substantially common horizontal plane.

Claims:

1. A skid assembly ~~(300)~~ for supporting a drilling tower ~~(308)~~, said skid assembly ~~(300)~~ comprising:

(i) a first member ~~(312)~~ for slidably supporting a drilling tower ~~(308)~~; and

(ii) a second member ~~(314)~~ for slidably supporting said drilling tower (308);

said first member ~~(312)~~ and said second member ~~(314)~~ being spaced apart in a horizontal direction;

wherein said first member comprises a cross beam;~~characterized in that;~~ wherein said second member ~~(314)~~ is located at a higher level than said first member ~~(312)~~; and

wherein said skid assembly further comprises at least one cross beam (336a, 336b) slidably mounted on said second member and a substructure which extends downwardly from said at least one cross beam (336a, 336b) and is slidably mounted on said first member.

2. A skid assembly as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said substructure comprises at least one platform for supporting ancillary equipment.

~~2~~3. A skid assembly as claimed in Claim 1 or 2, wherein said first member ~~(312)~~ is spaced between 9m and 14m from said second member ~~(314)~~ in a substantially horizontal plane.

~~3~~4. A skid assembly as claimed in Claim 1 ~~or~~, 2 or 3, wherein said the top of said second member ~~(314)~~ lies in a plane which is between 9m and 14m above the plane in which the top of said first member ~~(312)~~ lies.

~~4~~5. A skid assembly as claimed in Claim 1 ~~or~~, 2, 3 or 4, wherein the top of said second member ~~(314)~~ lies in a plane which is between 10m and 12m above the plane in which the top of said first member ~~(312)~~ lies.

~~5~~6. A skid assembly as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 4~~5~~, wherein said second member ~~(314)~~ comprises a cross beam ~~(321)~~ mounted on legs ~~(323,325)~~ and the distance from the ground to the bottom of said cross beam ~~(321)~~ is at least 8m.

~~6. A skid assembly as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said first member (312) comprises a cross beam (320) and wherein said skid assembly further comprises at least one cross beam (336a, 336b) slidably mounted on said second member (314) and a substructure (334) which extends downwardly from said at least one cross beam (336a,336b) and is slidably mounted on said first member (312).~~

~~7. A skid assembly as claimed in Claim 6, wherein said substructure (334) comprises at least one platform (339) for supporting ancillary equipment.~~

~~8~~7. A drilling module ~~(306)~~ comprising a drilling tower ~~(308)~~ mounted on a skid assembly ~~(300)~~ as claimed in any preceding claim.

~~9~~8. A drilling module ~~(308)~~ as claimed in Claim ~~8~~ 7 including a skid assembly as claimed in Claim ~~7~~2 or any of Claims 3 to 7 when dependent directly or indirectly on Claim 2, and further including ancillary equipment mounted on said platform ~~(339)~~.

~~10~~9. A drilling module ~~(308)~~ as claimed in Claim ~~9~~8, wherein said ancillary equipment includes one or more of the following, a scalping screen, a shale shaker, a mud mixer and a generator.

~~11~~10. An offshore drilling platform ~~(300)~~ having a drilling module ~~(308)~~ as ~~Claimed~~ claimed in Claim ~~8~~7, ~~9~~ 8 or ~~10~~ 9, mounted thereon.

~~12~~11. An offshore drilling platform ~~(300)~~ as claimed in Claim ~~11~~10, wherein said drilling platform ~~(300)~~ is provided with a first skid rail ~~(302)~~ for slidably supporting said drilling module ~~(308)~~ and a second skid rail ~~(304)~~ disposed alongside said first skid rail for slidably supporting said drilling module, and wherein said first skid rail ~~(302)~~ and said second skid rail ~~(304)~~ lie in substantially common horizontal plane.