CYLINDRICAL STRUCTURE COMPOSED OF RECTANGULAR ELEMENTS

The present invention relates to a cylindrical structure whereof the vertical wall and the bottom wall comprise a plurality of adjacent rectangular elements, and in particular a tight and thermally insulated tank.

Document FR 1 457 617 describes a ground tank for the storage of liquefied natural gas. This tank comprises a sealing membrane made up of rippled metallic panels. In one embodiment, the circular bottom wall is covered by a plurality of rectangular panels distributed by symmetrical sections, and by connecting panels between sectors. This arrangement makes it possible to cover a large part of the surface of the bottom wall with rectangular panels. However, as the bottom wall is circular, it is necessary to provide for special non-rectangular panels between the straight edges of the rectangular panels and the circumference of the bottom wall. The number of different panels needed to cover the entire bottom wall is therefore high.

Document FR 2 739 675 describes a tank whereof the bottom wall is covered by a plurality of rippled panels. The rippled panels have radial edges. Cutting these panels is therefore more complicated than in the case of rectangular panels, and can lead to a significant discard quantity, which is particularly undesirable when the panels are made in an expensive material. Furthermore, different types of panels with radial edges are necessary to cover all of the bottom wall.

Document FR 2 398 961 describes a tank whereof the bottom wall is covered by a plurality of rectangular strakes all parallel to each other. This involves connection difficulties at the intersection of the bottom wall with the vertical wall of the tank. Moreover, cutting the strakes leads to a significant discard quantity.

The problem the present invention seeks to resolve is to propose a cylindrical structure or a tank which does not present at least some of

the aforementioned drawbacks of the prior art, and in particular which can be realized with a reduced number of shapes for the pieces.

The solution proposed by the invention is a cylindrical structure comprising a vertical wall and a bottom wall, said bottom wall having a plurality of sectors which are images of each other by rotation, each sector comprising a plurality of adjacent rectangular elements, characterized by the fact that said bottom wall has the shape of a regular polygon whereof each side corresponds to one of said sectors, the edges of the rectangular elements of one sector being perpendicular and parallel, respectively, to the side of the polygon corresponding to said sector.

Thanks to these characteristics, a large part of the bottom wall can be made up of rectangular elements. Moreover, the rectangular elements of the bottom wall can extend to the rectilinear sides of the bottom wall, and in this case no special element is necessary between the rectangular elements and the sides. The rectangular elements of the bottom wall can also extend up to a small distance from the rectilinear sides of the bottom wall, and have edges parallel to the sides. In this case, the bottom wall can easily be completed by rectilinear elements which extend along the sides of the bottom wall, for example corner beads. In both cases, only a limited number of different elements is needed to form all of the bottom wall.

Preferably, said bottom wall comprises a plurality of identical polygonal connecting elements connecting two adjacent sectors.

In this way, one limits the number of different elements necessary. The connecting elements can, for example, be quadrilaterals or octagons.

Advantageously, said vertical wall comprises a plurality of adjacent rectangular elements, said rectangular elements of the vertical wall being identical to the rectangular elements of the bottom wall.

In this case, the number of different elements necessary to form the bottom wall and the vertical wall is limited.

The invention also proposes a tight and thermally insulated tank, comprising a sealing barrier and a thermally insulating barrier, characterized by the fact that it comprises a cylindrical structure according to the invention above.

In this case, the rectangular elements can be elements of the sealing barrier and/or the thermally insulating barrier. For example, said rectangular elements comprise rippled panels forming the sealing barrier or metallic strakes with raised edges forming the sealing barrier. One can also provide that said rectangular elements comprise panels in a thermally insulating material forming the thermally insulating barrier.

Preferably, said bottom wall comprises a central piece to which the most central rectangular elements of each sector are connected.

According to one particular embodiment, the tank comprises a rectilinear corner bead arranged along one side of said bottom wall, said corner bead comprising a horizontal board to which the most off center rectangular elements of a sector are connected, and a vertical board to which the rectangular elements of the vertical wall are connected.

A bead of this type makes it possible to easily connect the bottom wall elements to those of the vertical wall.

The invention will be better understood, and other aims, details, characteristics and advantages thereof will appear more clearly during the following description of several particular embodiments of the invention, provided solely as non-limiting examples, in reference to the appended drawings. In these drawings:

- figure 1 is a top view of a sector and connecting elements of a tank according to one embodiment of the invention,
- figure 2 is a top view of a connecting element of the tank of figure 1,
- figure 3 is a top view of a rectangular element of the tank of figure 1,
- figure 4 is a perspective view of the connecting element of figure 2,

- figure 5 is a partial top view of the bottom wall of a tank according to another embodiment of the invention,
- figures 6 and 7 are partial perspective views of the tank of figure 1, with connecting elements according to a first variation of embodiment,
- figure 8 illustrates two connecting elements according to a second variation of the invention.

In figures 6 and 7, we have illustrated the tight membrane of a ground tank 1 for the storage of liquefied natural gas (LNG). The tank 1 also comprises a concrete support structure and a thermally insulating barrier located between the tight membrane and the support structure, which are not illustrated.

The tight membrane of the tank 1 is a cylindrical structure which comprises a bottom wall 2 and a vertical wall 3. The bottom wall 2 has the shape of a regular polygon, with twenty sides 6 in the example shown in figures 6 and 7. However, the invention concerns other types of polygons, in particular with five sides or more.

The bottom wall 2 has a plurality of sectors 4 each corresponding to a side 6. The sectors 4 are rotated images of each other. The vertical wall 2 is made up of a plurality of vertical faces 5 each corresponding to a side 6.

The bottom wall 2 and the vertical wall 3 are made up of a plurality of metallic panels connected to each other by welding, and which have ripples allowing the contraction of the panels during temperature variations. Fixing and welding of the panels as well as the formation of the ripples can be done according to techniques known in the field of LNG storage or transport tanks.

On the bottom wall 2, the metallic panels comprise rectangular panels 8 having a length L and width l, shown in figure 3, as well as connecting panels 9 in a symmetrical quadrilateral shape, having two sides with a length L and two sides with a length l/2, shown in figure 2.

Figure 1 shows how the rectangular panels 8 are arranged to cover a sector 4 of the bottom wall 2. A plurality of rectangular panels 8 are arranged according to three rows, with the width parallel to the side 6. From one row to the next, the rectangular panels 8 are arranged in staggered rows and each time there is one less panel 8 as one approaches the center. Of course, depending on the dimensions of the bottom wall 2 and the rectangular panels 8, there may be more or less than three rows. For example, in the embodiment shown in figure 7, there are ten rows.

Thanks to the arrangement of the rectangular panels 8 described above, the space left free between a panel 8 located at the end of a row of a first sector and the panel 8 located at the end of a corresponding row of a second adjacent center, always has an identical symmetrical quadrilateral shape. All these spaces with identical shapes can therefore be occupied by a plurality of connecting panels 9.

Thus, as in the example shown in figure 1, the width of the outermost rectangular panels 8 is mixed with the side 6, the bottom wall 2 can be entirely formed with a plurality of identical rectangular panels 8, a plurality of identical connecting panels 9, and a central piece 13, which can potentially be formed by connecting panels 9 as shown in figure 7. The bottom wall 2 is therefore made up of two or, at most, three different types of panels.

In one embodiment not illustrated, the small side of the outermost rectangular panels 8 is not mixed with the side 6, but is a small distance away from it, for example 10 cm. A rectilinear corner bead with an L-shaped section is arranged along the side 6. The corner bead comprises a horizontal board to which the most off center rectangular panels 8 are connected, by their width. The corner bead also comprises a vertical board to which the panels of the vertical wall are connected. The corner bead is only one example of connection between the bottom wall 2 and the vertical wall 3. This connection can be realized according to other techniques, for example similarly to the

connection rings used in the field of LNG transport tanks. Regardless of the technique chosen, as it involves making a connection between two perpendicular walls made up primarily of rectangular panels whereof the edges are parallel and perpendicular to the intersection edge, this connection is relatively simple and requires only a limited number of pieces.

The vertical wall 3 is made up of rectangular metallic panels. In one embodiment, these are the same rectangular panels 8 as those of the bottom wall 2, which makes it possible to limit the number of types of panels needed. At the sides 6, the longitudinal ripples 7 of the bottom wall 2 can be connected to the corresponding longitudinal ripples 7 of the vertical wall 3, which makes it possible to limit the constraints due to thermal contraction.

As previously stated, the panels have ripples allowing them to contract when temperature variations take place. More specifically, the rectangular panels 8 have two longitudinal ripples 7 and a plurality of transverse ripples 10. The longitudinal ripples 7 are located at a distance a from the long edges and at a distance b = 2a from each other. As can be seen in figure 1 in particular, the ripples 7 and 10 of the rectangular panels 8 are connected to each other. The connecting panels 9 also have ripples connected to the ripples of the adjacent rectangular panels 8. In the example of figure 4, the connecting panel 9 comprises terminal ripples 11 connected to longitudinal ripples 7, and connecting ripples 12 connected to the transverse ripples 10 of the adjacent rectangular panels 8. Other arrangements of the ripples on the connecting panels 9 are possible, and one example is illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 5 illustrates a different arrangement of the panels of the bottom wall 2. In this embodiment there are, at each connecting panel 9, two fewer rectangular panels 8' as one approaches the center. In this embodiment, instead of using rectangular panels 8 which all have the same length L corresponding to the length of one side of the connecting

panels 9, one can use rectangular panels 8' of different lengths, which for example extend from the side 6 of the bottom wall to a small edge of a connecting panel. These rectangular panels 8' can for example be strakes with raised edges, the production of which and fixing on welding media are known in the field of LNG storage or transport tanks. Such strakes can be produced in a material with a small coefficient of expansion, for example in Invar, and are not provided with ripples.

The thermally insulating barrier of the tank 1 was not illustrated. It can be made up of a plurality of insulating panels. In one embodiment, the panels of the bottom wall comprise rectangular panels and connecting panels arranged similarly to the rectangular panels 8 and the connecting panels 9, respectively.

We have described connecting panels 9 in a quadrilateral shape, two panels 9 touching only at their respective peaks, as one can see in figures 1 and 5. In another embodiment illustrated in figure 8, the connecting panels 9' have the shape of a quadrilateral with cut tops, thereby forming a hexagon, and two adjacent connecting panels 9' are in contact on two sides.

The present invention is not limited to tanks. On the contrary, it concerns any cylindrical structure comprising a polygonal bottom wall made up of rectangular elements distributed in sectors and connecting elements between sectors.

Although the invention was described in connection with several particular embodiments, it is clear that it is in no way limited to them and that it includes all technical equivalents of the means described as well as their combinations, if these are within the scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A tight and/or thermally insulated tank (1) comprising a sealing barrier and/or a thermally insulating barrier, said sealing barrier and/or said thermally insulating barrier having a cylindrical shape and comprising a vertical wall (3) and a bottom wall (2), said vertical wall being made up of a plurality of vertical faces (5), said bottom wall comprising a plurality of rectangular pieces (8) distributed in sectors (4) which are rotated images of each other, each sector comprising a plurality of said adjacent rectangular pieces (8), characterized by the fact that said bottom wall has the shape of a regular polygon whereof each side (6) corresponds to one of said sectors and one of said faces, the edges of the rectangular pieces of one sector being respectively perpendicular and parallel to the side of the polygon corresponding to said sector.

2. The tank according to claim 1, in which said bottom wall comprises a plurality of identical polygonal connecting pieces (9, 9') connecting the rectangular pieces of two adjacent sectors.

3. The tank according to one of claims 1 to 2, in which said vertical wall comprises a plurality of adjacent rectangular pieces, said rectangular pieces of the vertical wall being identical to the rectangular pieces (8) of the bottom wall.

4. The tank according to one of claims 1 to 3, in which said rectangular pieces comprise rippled panels (8, 9, 9', 13) forming the sealing barrier.

5. The tank according to one of claims 1 to 3, in which said rectangular pieces comprise metallic strakes (8') with raised edges forming the sealing barrier.

6. The tank according to one of claims 1 to 5, in which said rectangular pieces comprise panels in a thermally insulating material forming the thermally insulating barrier.

7. The tank according to one of claims 1 to 6, in which said bottom wall comprises a central piece (13) to which the most central rectangular pieces of each sector are connected.

8. The tank according to one of claims 1 to 7, comprising a rectilinear corner bead arranged along one side of said bottom wall, said corner bead comprising a horizontal board to which the most off center rectangular pieces are connected and a vertical board to which the rectangular pieces of the vertical wall are connected.