

Dorian active at both ends of the LPG spectrum

Following completion of its recent newbuildings, the Dorian (Hellas) fleet encompasses both very large gas carriers and small pressurised ships

The LPG carrier fleet of Dorian (Hellas) SA comprises two distinct elements that serve two distinct markets. On the one hand are three recently built fully refrigerated (FR) very large gas carriers (VLGCs) and, on the other, three small fully pressurised (FP) LPG vessels.

The VLGCs have represented a major commitment by the Greek shipowner in recent years. Originally, the company ordered four 82,000m³ ships at Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) but one was sold on following delivery in April 2008. The first of the quartet was ordered in early 2004 and it was not long afterward that Dorian (Hellas) established a site supervision team at HHI's yard in Ulsan to monitor construction work. The same site team remained at the yard for all the newbuildings, liaising closely with Dorian head office staff in Piraeus on a full range of technical issues.

The newbuilding programme was completed in July 2008 when Dorian took delivery of *Captain Nicholas ML*, the third and final 82,000m³ vessel to enter its fleet. All three are able to carry traditional LPG cargoes such as propane and butane as well as ammonia. Dorian has been protected from the recent freight rate volatility in the VLGC sector as all three of the large ships are fixed on time charters.

The Dorian (Hellas) involvement in the small FP LPG carrier sector commenced in 2002 when it purchased the 3,200m³ *Cotswold* and *Snowdon*. The company, which now owns and operates three vessels of this type, reports that throughout most of 2008 time charter rates for



Grendon at the Blohm + Voss yard in Hamburg in July 2008 for a regular drydocking

small FP ships held stable but declined toward the end of the year.

One of the reasons for the reduction in rates was that in the second half of 2008 the demand for petrochemicals fell as a result of the global economic recession. Because of the declining volumes of petrochemical gases moving by sea, the semi-pressurised/fully refrigerated (semi-ref) gas carriers switched into the LPG trades, creating more competition for the FP ships. The relatively high price of LPG also had a negative effect on the FP segment as end-users switched to alternative, more competitively priced products.

Although Dorian reports that these market factors have served to increase the waiting time between voyages for its FP ships, in overall terms the sector remains robust and the company is happy with the steady performance of its small LPG vessels. A pick-up in the demand for petrochemical gas transport in early 2009 has also helped.

Dorian (Hellas) continues to focus on customer service and the development of its core manpower expertise, while remaining prepared to take advantage of any gas shipping opportunities that may arise. *LPG*

Dorian (Hellas) LPG carrier fleet			
Ship name	Year built	Capacity (m ³)	Ship type
<i>Captain Nicholas ML</i>	2008	82,000	FR
<i>Captain John NP</i>	2007	82,000	FR
<i>Captain Markos NL</i>	2006	82,000	FR
<i>Grendon</i>	1996	5,000	FP
<i>Cotswold</i>	1989	3,200	FP
<i>Snowdon</i>	1989	3,200	FP