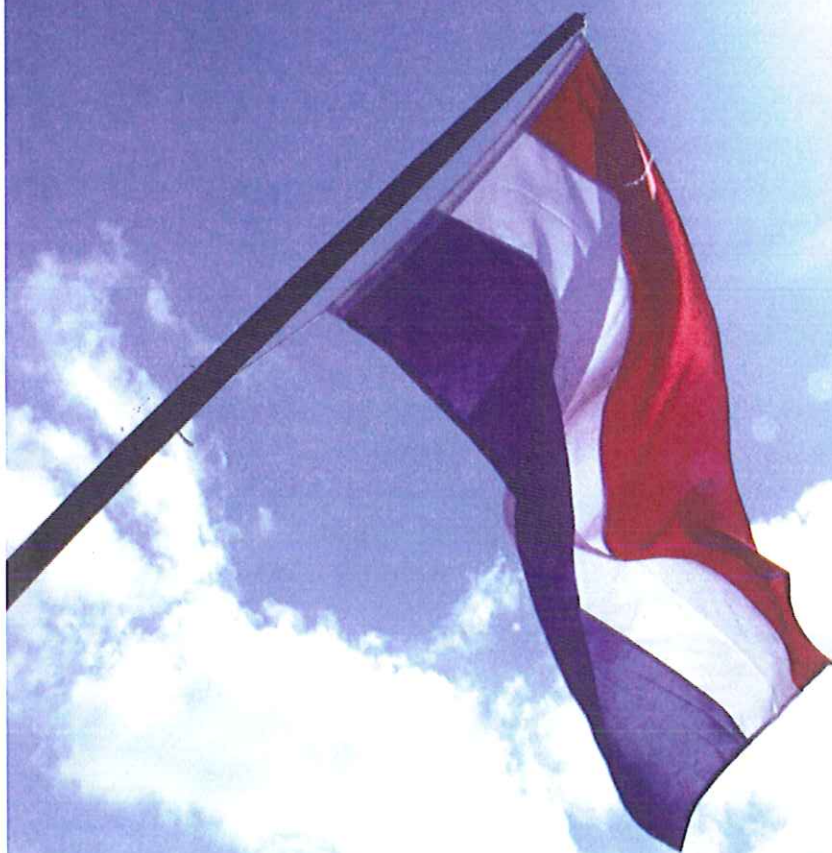


MODERN

METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION

# MMMC

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**'QUICK ON THE DOOR'...**  
**but not a cowboy in sight**

**Berkvens**

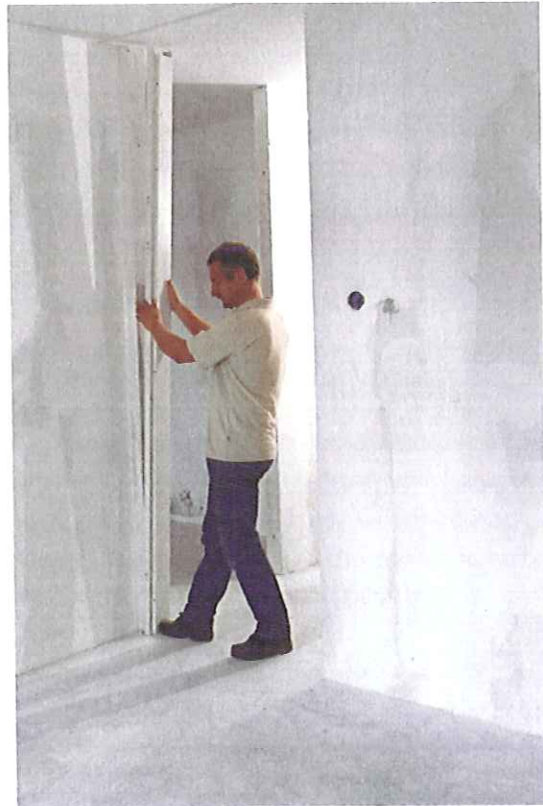
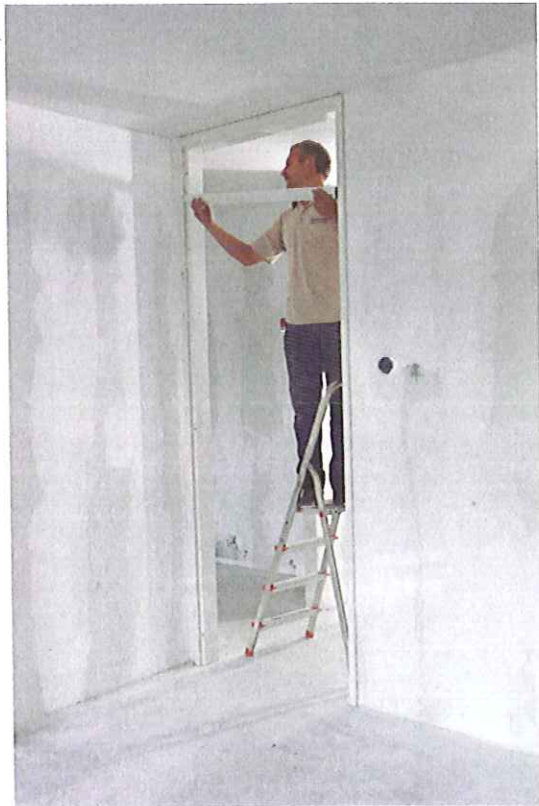
*see p26-27*

The Professional Perspective for Offsite Construction

# The Hole in the Wall Gang

Editor Bruce Meechan delves into a door system having real synergy with off-site construction.

Those familiar with Wild West folklore may recall Jesse James' outlaw gang who gained their nickname from having a hideaway in a cave. They may not have any modern day equivalent, but one Dutch outfit could well lay claim to the title, though there definitely isn't a cowboy in sight.



The offering from Berkvens to its customer base in the Benelux countries and beyond is simple. The contractor leaves an accurately formed aperture in the building's partition walls, and the interior door specialist takes over with what is in effect a turnkey supply and fix package. And although the firm's fitters carry electric screwdrivers rather than six-shooters in their holsters, they are definitely 'quick-on-the-door.'

Berkvens quotes a time of just 12 minutes to fit one of its steel frames and hang the rebated door with all its fittings, though I witnessed the training supervisor install four complete doorsets in under half an hour at a house on a new-build estate in central Holland.

The key is the inclusion of concealed clamps within the powder coated steel frame profiles. Once the dimensions of the opening have been checked the head section is pushed into place and the uprights slotted home. The application of a little weight on the head 'clicks' the three

pieces together, before a pair of magnetic spirit levels are used to align the frame. A temporary timber template across the bottom keeps the whole thing square, and within seconds the fitter is using his electric screwdriver to tighten the clamps onto the walls. Half a dozen screws and the door is hung in place also.

The International Business Manager for Berkvens, Rick Boeijen, recounts: **"What we say to the Dutch market is you leave a hole in the wall with the right tolerances and we will fix it for you. That is our business – 'filling the hole in the wall' – it is a total solution.**

"Even in the Netherlands, though, it took us years in the eighties to convince the contractors about our concept of doing everything for them. We supply the hardware and the glass - where there is a light above the door. In every country we have gone into we have come up against the local way of doing things which may not fit with the delivery of turnkey solutions. In

these cases we adapted our solutions to the local needs"

The reason Holland's market leader is looking to UK contractors already employing Modern Methods of Construction is that steel frame partitions and gypsum or aircrete block walls make the ideal openings into which the innovative doorsets will fit. Thin coat projection plaster is another bonus, though, for refurbishment situations, where the wall thickness may vary, the manufacturer offers a timber frame alternative which can accommodate tolerances of - 5mm up to + 15 mm.

at the Chiltern International laboratories. The motto of Berkvens is think European, act locally. One of the sophistications to the Berkvens fire doors is that the intumescent seals are concealed and protected by the edge lip-pings, rather than being planted on the extremities of the door where they can suffer damage. Other special performance doors in the range include X-ray shielded models for hospitals and ones with super tough and easily washable edge protection for extra-care facilities. Even ballistic resistant doors are available.



Berkvens has already found some significant success in the UK, becoming a regular supplier to social housing providers such as Synergy Housing Group and forming a strategic alliance with the building contractor, Bramall Construction.

Rick Boeijen observes: "What is important with a company like Bramall is that the site managers are the knowledge holders for the systems in use: which means they take very great care that the dimensions of the wall openings are precise. So they have integrated a crucial part of the process into their own organisation." Another less visible Anglo-Berkvens alliance involves the use of Intumescent strips from Lorient Polyproducts - based down in Devon - for the manufacturer's fire doors. These are available with either 30 or 60 minute specifications, depending on the type of core material employed, and Berkvens has just had one of its more complex double doors pass the most exhaustive German standards as well as BS testing

Summing Rick Boeijen says:

"Why do people do business with us? Because we are a single source supplier offering innovative solutions with which we have a proven track record. We can supply different colours and style of doorsets, with different hardware, for every house on an estate and do it all in a highly coordinated manner.

"At around 100 Euros it is roughly three times dearer than a standard internal door and frame from one of our UK rivals, but once you take into account the speed and quality of our system, together with the low maintenance lifespan, the customer is better off with our system; and then it is a done deal for us."

**Every once in a while you come across an invention which is so different and so effective from the accepted way of doing things, that you can only stand and shake your head in amazement.**