

(19) **DANMARK**

(10) **DK/EP 3543585 T3**



(12)

Oversættelse af europæisk patentskrift

Patent- og
Varemærkestyrelsen

-
- (51) Int.Cl.: **F 16 L 55/46 (2006.01)** **F 16 L 55/28 (2006.01)** **F 16 L 101/30 (2006.01)**
G 03 B 37/00 (2021.01)
- (45) Oversættelsen bekendtgjort den: **2024-01-02**
- (80) Dato for Den Europæiske Patentmyndigheds
bekendtgørelse om meddelelse af patentet: **2023-10-25**
- (86) Europæisk ansøgning nr.: **18175574.5**
- (86) Europæisk indleveringsdag: **2018-06-01**
- (87) Den europæiske ansøgnings publiceringsdag: **2019-09-25**
- (30) Prioritet: **2018-03-20 GB 201804435**
- (84) Designerede stater: **AL AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR HR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV
MC MK MT NL NO PL PT RO RS SE SI SK SM TR**
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- (54) Benævnelse: **ANORDNING OG FREMGANGSMÅDE TIL TILGÅELSE AF EN RØRLEDNING, SOM FORGRENER
SIG I EN VINKEL FRA EN RØRLEDNING MED EN STØRRE DIAMETER**
- (56) Fremdragne publikationer:
WO-A1-94/13998
US-A- 6 085 794
US-B2- 8 733 187

DESCRIPTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a device for accessing and/or inspecting and/or delivering a fluid to a conduit and a method using the same. More particularly, the present invention relates to a device and method for accessing and/or inspecting and/or delivering a fluid to a pipe that branches from a larger diameter pipe at an angle.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Many industries are reliant on moving gases and fluids through pipework systems some of which due to process parameters are difficult to clean, test, inspect and/or repair. One approach to solve this problem has been to cut into the pipe to perform the necessary cleaning, testing, or repair. This practice, however, is expensive to perform and takes a facility offline for a relatively long time.

[0003] WO 94/13998 A1 discloses a means of providing a lateral connection pipe, which intersects a main pipe at an angle, with a lining tube, the means comprising an elongated sealing collar.

[0004] US 8 733 187 B2 discloses a pipe inspection tool having a number of cameras mounted on a head piece having a tubular body defining a central axis and having a proximal opening at a first end and a distal opening perpendicular to the central axis.

[0005] Known tools are unable to operate under high pressure and thus unable to deliver, for example, cleaning fluids or the like.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] In accordance with a first aspect of the present invention there is provided a device as claimed in claim 1.

[0007] The device may be used for access to a header pipe having a feeder tube extending from the header pipe. The second opening may be configured to engage the feeder tube at an interior surface of the header pipe.

[0008] The plate of the seal member comprises a convex exterior surface that is shaped to conform to the inner surface of a header pipe to ensure a fluid seal and mechanical coupling and to assist in maintaining a fluid seal even when fluid is delivered under high pressure.

[0009] The device of the present invention is capable of delivering fluid at pressures up to 85

bar (8.5 MPa).

[0010] The device may comprise a seal member having a dimension that is at least a quarter of the length of the device.

[0011] The device may include one or more displacement members that comprise a telescopically extending leg.

[0012] The device may also include a camera and/or another sensing device.

[0013] In accordance with a further aspect, not in accordance with the present invention, there is provided a device for a header pipe having a feeder tube extending from the header pipe, the device comprising:

a head piece having a tubular body defining a central axis and having a proximal opening at a first end and a distal opening at an angle to the central axis;

the distal opening being configured to engage the feeder tube at an interior surface of the header pipe; and

a camera mounted to the head piece and configured to provide a field of view from a position from within the head piece looking outward through the distal opening, the field of view further being centered within the distal opening to facilitate alignment of the feeder tube coupler with the feeder tube; and

a jack coupled to the head piece and configured to press the head piece against the interior surface of the header tube to create a pressure seal and mechanically couple the head piece with the feeder tube.

[0014] The device may also include a camera and/or another sensing device mounted to the head piece and configured to provide a field of view from a position from within the head piece looking outward through the distal opening. The field of view is centered within the distal opening to facilitate alignment of the feeder tube coupler with the feeder tube.

[0015] The device may also have one or more jacks and configured to press the seal member against the interior surface of the header tube thus making a seal at the couple of the second opening with the feeder tube.

[0016] In accordance with a further aspect, not in accordance with the present invention, there is provided a method of delivering fluid to a pipe using the device as described hereinabove.

[0017] Preferred and alternative examples of the present invention are described in detail below with reference to the following drawings:

FIG. 1 Depicts a device in accordance with the present invention in position relative to a header pipe and feeder tubes to be accessed by the access device according to embodiments of the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 Illustrates a device in accordance with the present invention having a head piece, a delivery tube, and an adapter pipe, according to embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 Is an exploded view of the device head piece of FIGS. 1 and 2 according to embodiments of the present disclosure; and

FIG. 4 Is a top plan view of the head piece of a device according to embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0018] FIG. 1 illustrates a device 100 according to embodiments of the present disclosure. The device 100 includes a head piece 110 and a delivery tube 120. The access system 100 is used to access the interior of a header pipe 10 having feeder tubes 12 extending from the header pipe 10 at an angle. In general, the feeder tubes 12 have a smaller diameter than the header pipe 10. The systems and methods of the present disclosure can be used in a variety of environments involving pipes of different diameter, some of which are commonly referred to as header pipes and feeder tubes, and some of which are not necessarily referred to as such. For purposes of clarity and brevity, the terms "header pipe" and "feeder tube" are used to refer to a large diameter pipe and a small diameter pipe, respectively without loss of generality. The feeder tubes 12 can extend from the header pipe 10 at virtually any angle; in the embodiment, the angle is approximately 90°. The pipe access system 100 can be introduced to the header pipe 10 and aligned with the feeder tube 12. The head piece 110 is then pressed against the interior surface of the header pipe 10 with a hydraulic or mechanical jack to form a seal with the feeder tube 12. Cleaning and testing equipment and processes can be delivered through the delivery tube 120, through the head piece 110, and into the feeder tube 12. Cleaning and testing equipment may be, but are not restricted to Water Blasting lances and hoses, mechanical cleaning pigs, and hydrostatic or vacuum pressure testing.

[0019] FIG. 2 illustrates a device 100 according to embodiments of the present disclosure, including a head piece 110 and a delivery tube 120. The head piece 110 includes a tube coupler 130 on a side of the head piece 110. The head piece 110 can have a longitudinal axis parallel with the delivery tube 120, and the tube coupler 130 can be oriented at an angle relative to the longitudinal axis of the head piece 110, such as a 90° angle. The tube coupler 130 is shaped to conform to an interior surface of the header pipe 10 shown in FIG. 1. The tube coupler 130 has a curved surface configured to conform to a curved surface such as the inner surface of the header pipe 10. In other embodiments the tube coupler 130 can have a curved shape of a different radius, depending on the shape of the surface to which the tube coupler 130 is to engage.

[0020] The tube coupler 130 is made of a resilient member to facilitate forming a seal.

[0021] The tube coupler 130 is a resilient gasket configured to form a seal between the head piece 110 and an opening of a feeder tube 12 within the header pipe 10.

[0022] The head piece 110 can also include a jack 140 configured to press the tube coupler 130 against the interior surface of the header pipe 10. The jack 140 can include bumpers 142 shaped to engage the interior surface of the header pipe 10 opposite the tube coupler 130. In embodiments in which the access system 100 is for use within a cylindrical header pipe 10, the radius of the bumper 142 and the tube coupler 130 can be the same. In other embodiments the bumpers 142 and the tube coupler 130 can be designed to engage with structures having disparate shapes and surface characteristics and can therefore be modified accordingly.

[0023] The feeder tubes 12 may be located at any distance from an access point in the larger header pipe 10. Accordingly, the delivery tube 120 may be made to be variable in length, accommodating a number of segments coupled together to form the delivery tube. In addition, the delivery tube 120 may attach to the head piece 110 in a location that leaves the delivery tube positioned centrally within the header pipe 10.

[0024] FIG. 3 is an exploded view of the head piece 110 of the device 100 according to embodiments of the present disclosure. The head piece 110 can be made of a first pipe section 111 that is oriented generally parallel with the central longitudinal axis of the head piece 110. As shown, the first pipe section 111 is cylindrical in shape and therefore the longitudinal axis extends through the center of the cylinder. The first pipe section 111 can be coupled to a second pipe section 112. The first and second pipe sections may be integrally formed as one continuous tube, or may be formed as separate sections joined together. In either case, the first pipe section includes a first, proximal opening at one end that is sized and configured to deliver cleaning, testing, or inspection equipment and services, as discussed below. Within the head piece 110, the internal channel forms an angle, preferably curved, to direct cleaning, inspection equipment or fluids from a first path of travel aligned with the longitudinal axis to a second path of travel angularly offset by the orientation of the second pipe section. The second pipe section forms a second, distal opening through which the equipment or fluids may travel, ultimately allowing it to enter a feeder tube.

[0025] The shape of the second pipe section 112 is chosen based on the angle at which the feeder tube 12 extends from the header pipe 10. In the embodiment shown, the angle is 90°, but virtually any other angle is possible. The second pipe section 112 can be an elbow junction. The head piece 110 also includes a third pipe section 113 that extends from the second pipe section 112 to accommodate the specific header pipe and feeder tube configuration. The third pipe section 113 is formed to integrate with the tube coupler 130. The third pipe section 113 has an elongate body. The third pipe section 113 and tube coupler 130 together form a seal member.

[0026] The feeder tube coupler 130 is shown coupled to the third pipe section 113. The feeder tube coupler 130 and the third pipe section 113 can be bolted, welded, or otherwise attached to the second pipe section 112. The fluid circuit for delivering equipment or fluids to the feeder

tube 12 includes the first pipe section 111, the second pipe section 112, and the feeder tube coupler 130. If necessary, the circuit can also include a delivery tube 120, and a third pipe section 113. The third pipe section has a sealing member convex sealing face 114 shaped to conform to the inner face of a header pipe 10 and extending around the opening of a feeder tube 12 such that a pressure seal and mechanical couple is created to maintain fluids at high pressures. In the present embodiment the convex sealing face 114 of the third pipe section provides necessary stability for the forces produced by the jack elements to create and maintain a high pressure fluid seal that is otherwise not possible.

[0027] The head piece 110 can include a sensing device, such as a camera 116. In other embodiments the sensing device can be an ultrasound device or a mechanical sensing device, or any other suitable sensing device. The camera 116 can be oriented in any suitable direction to allow the operator to observe the interior of the header pipe 10 in order to align the feeder tube coupler 130 to the feeder tube 12. In some embodiments, the camera 116 can be placed at a center of the angled tube and oriented to look outwardly from the feeder tube coupler 130 to more easily align the feeder tube coupler 130 with the feeder tube 12. As best seen in FIG. 3, a camera 116 can be mounted through a channel 117 passing through a portion of the second pipe section 112. In this configuration, the camera 116 is mounted substantially flush with or recessed slightly below the interior sidewall of the first pipe section 111, oriented to view the image diametrically opposite and through the opening of the second pipe section 112 without significantly obstructing the path through the head piece 110.

[0028] The head piece can also contain a light 118 to provide illumination of the interior surface of the header pipe 10. The light 118 can be configured and oriented in any suitable direction, provided it illuminates the interior surface of the header pipe 10 sufficiently for the camera to return useable images. In this embodiment the light 118 is placed to provide illumination outwardly from inside the second pipe section 112. As seen in FIG. 3, a light 118 can be mounted through a channel 119 passing through a portion of the second pipe section 112. In this configuration, the light 118 is mounted substantially flush with or recessed slightly below the interior sidewall of the second pipe section 112, oriented to provide illumination through the opening of the second pipe section 112 without significantly obstructing the path through the head piece 110.

[0029] The head piece 110 includes one or more jacks 140 having bumpers 142 that engage the header pipe 10 opposite to the feeder tube coupler 130 to press the feeder tube coupler 130 and the sealing face 114 of the sealing plate to the interior surface of the header pipe 10 to create a pressure seal and mechanically couple the head piece 110 to the feeder tube 12. The head piece 110 can include hydraulic conduit 144 to supply hydraulic pressure to the jacks 140. In other embodiments hydraulic conduit may be configured as internal channels formed integral to the structure of the head piece 110. Hydraulic jacks are one example mechanism that can be used to achieve the necessary pressure to seal the feeder tube coupler 130 to the feeder tube 12. In other embodiments any fluid actuator which translates a fluid pressure into a linear motion can be used. In still other embodiments mechanical actuators which translate an electrical power signal into linear motion, or even hybrid actuators using both mechanical

linkages in conjunction with fluid pressure to create linear motion, can be used.

[0030] There are many factors that determine how much force is necessary to create a proper seal to the feeder tube 12. In some embodiments, such as header/feeder pipes used by oil refineries, the fluid circuit pressure in the pipe access system can exceed 70 bar (7 MPa). In order to create an adequate seal to the feeder tube 12, the feeder tube coupler 130 must withstand the required fluid circuit pressure with an appropriate safety margin to create a seal adequate to provide safe reliable delivery of the cleaning equipment or service designated fluids and processes.

[0031] FIG. 4 is a top plan view of the head piece 110 according to embodiments of the present disclosure. In this embodiment, a camera 116 is positioned at the center of the second pipe section 112 and feeder tube coupler 130. Other camera positions are possible, and any suitable number of cameras can be used based on the particular needs of a given installation. FIG. 4 also shows the hydraulic conduit 144 for the jacks 140. The conduit can be connected to a manifold 143 to distribute the hydraulic pressure to the jacks 140. The hydraulic conduit and the manifold can be external and discrete or be internal channels formed into the structure of the head piece. The head piece 110 can have two jacks 140 positioned on either side of the feeder tube coupler 130 for a total of four jacks. In other embodiments, the head piece 110 can include a single jack 140 aligned with the feeder tube coupler 130 or offset therefrom. In still further embodiments, the head piece 110 can include five or more jacks 140.

[0032] While the preferred embodiment of the invention has been illustrated and described, as noted above, many changes can be made without departing from the scope of the invention, as defined by the appended claims.

[0033] For example, in place of cameras to position the head piece other telemetry equipment can be used, including sonar or a mechanical sensor. Also, the angle at which the feeder tube extends from the header pipe can be virtually any angle. The environment in which the access system of the present disclosure is used can be any environment having a pipe or other component that is difficult to access and where service and testing equipment and fluids cannot be delivered. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is not limited by the disclosure of the preferred embodiment. Instead, the invention should be determined entirely by reference to the claims that follow.

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

Cited references

This list of references cited by the applicant is for the reader's convenience only. It does not

form part of the European patent document. Even though great care has been taken in compiling the references, errors or omissions cannot be excluded and the EPO disclaims all liability in this regard.

Patent documents cited in the description

- WO9413998A1 [0003]
- US8733187B2 [0004]

PATENTKRAV

1. Anordning (100) til tilførsel af en væske og/eller inspektion og/eller tilgængelse af en første ledning (12) med en åbning, der står i forbindelse med en større anden ledning (10), hvilken anordning har en rørformet hoveddel (111, 112), der
5 definerer en midterakse og har en første åbning i en første ende og en anden åbning i en anden ende, hvor den anden ende er i en vinkel til midteraksen, hvor den anden åbning er forbundet med et forseglingselement (113, 130), der er i stand til at frembringe en væskeforsegling på en sådan måde, at væske kan tilføres den første ledning (12), **kendetegnet ved, at** forseglingselementet (113, 130)
10 har en aflang hoveddel (113) og en pakning (130), der hver især har en konveks øvre overflade, der kan gå i indgreb med en indvendig overflade på den anden ledning.
2. Anordning (100) ifølge krav 1, hvor forseglingselementets (113, 130) (130) aflange hoveddel (113) omfatter et polygonalt formet legeme med en konveks øvre overflade (114) til at komme i kontakt med den anden lednings indvendige
15 overflade, og som i det væsentlige er i overensstemmelse med formen på den anden lednings indvendige overflade.
3. Anordning (100) ifølge krav 1 eller 2, hvor forseglingselementets (113, 130) aflange hoveddel (113) har en dimension, der er mindst det kvarte af anordningens længde.
- 20 4. Anordning (100) ifølge krav 1, 2 eller 3, hvor forseglingselementets (113, 130) aflange hoveddel (113) har et tværsnit, der er et cirkulært segment eller semielliptisk.
5. Anordning (100) ifølge krav 1, 2, 3 eller 4, hvor anordningen har udstyr til at presse forseglingselementet (113, 130) mod den anden lednings indvendige
25 overflade.
6. Anordning (100) ifølge krav 5, hvor udstyret til at presse forseglingselementet mod den anden lednings indvendige overflade omfatter ét eller flere forskydningselementer (140).

7. Anordning (100) ifølge krav 6, hvor det ene eller flere forskydningsselementer omfatter et ben (140), der strækker sig teleskopisk; og/eller hvor det ene eller flere forskydningsselementer omfatter en bøsning (140).
8. Anordning (100) ifølge et hvilket som helst af krav 6 eller 7, hvor det ene eller flere forskydningsselementer har en fod, der er udformet i overensstemmelse med den anden lednings (10) indvendige overflade.
9. Anordning (100) ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor den første og den anden ledning (12, 10) er rørledninger; og/eller har mindst ét kamera (116); og/eller
- 10 kan forbindes til en væsketilførsel; og/eller hvor den første og den anden åbning muliggør indførelse og/eller udtagelse af en indretning til inspektion, rensning og test (PIG); og/eller hvor den anden åbning i den anden ende forløber parallelt med midteraksen og den første åbning i den første ende.
- 15 10. Fremgangsmåde til tilgængelse af et føderør (12), der strækker sig i en vinkel fra hovedrørledningen (10), hvilken fremgangsmåde omfatter: tilvejebringelse af en anordning (100) ifølge ét eller flere af de foregående krav; indførelse af anordningen i hovedrørledningen; frembringelse af en tryktæt forsegling og mekanisk kobling af anordningen
- 20 (100) til føderøret (12); og indførelse eller udnyttelse af servicemetoder som f.eks., men ikke begrænset til: højtryksjetblæselanser, vakuumtryk, positivt væsketryk, væskerensemidler, mekaniske afkoksings-PIGS, inspektions-PIGS, eller optiske boreskoper til føderøret via anordningen.
- 25 11. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 10, hvilken fremgangsmåde yderligere omfatter aktivering af en bøsning (140) til at presse mod en indvendig overflade af

hovedrørledningen for at frembringe en tryktæt forsegling og mekanisk koble anordningen (100) til føderøret (12).

12. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 10 eller 11, hvilken fremgangsmåde yderligere omfatter optisk scanning af hovedrørledningens (10) indvendige overflade med et
- 5 kamera (116) for at tilpasse føderørskoblingen (130) til føderøret (12).

DRAWINGS

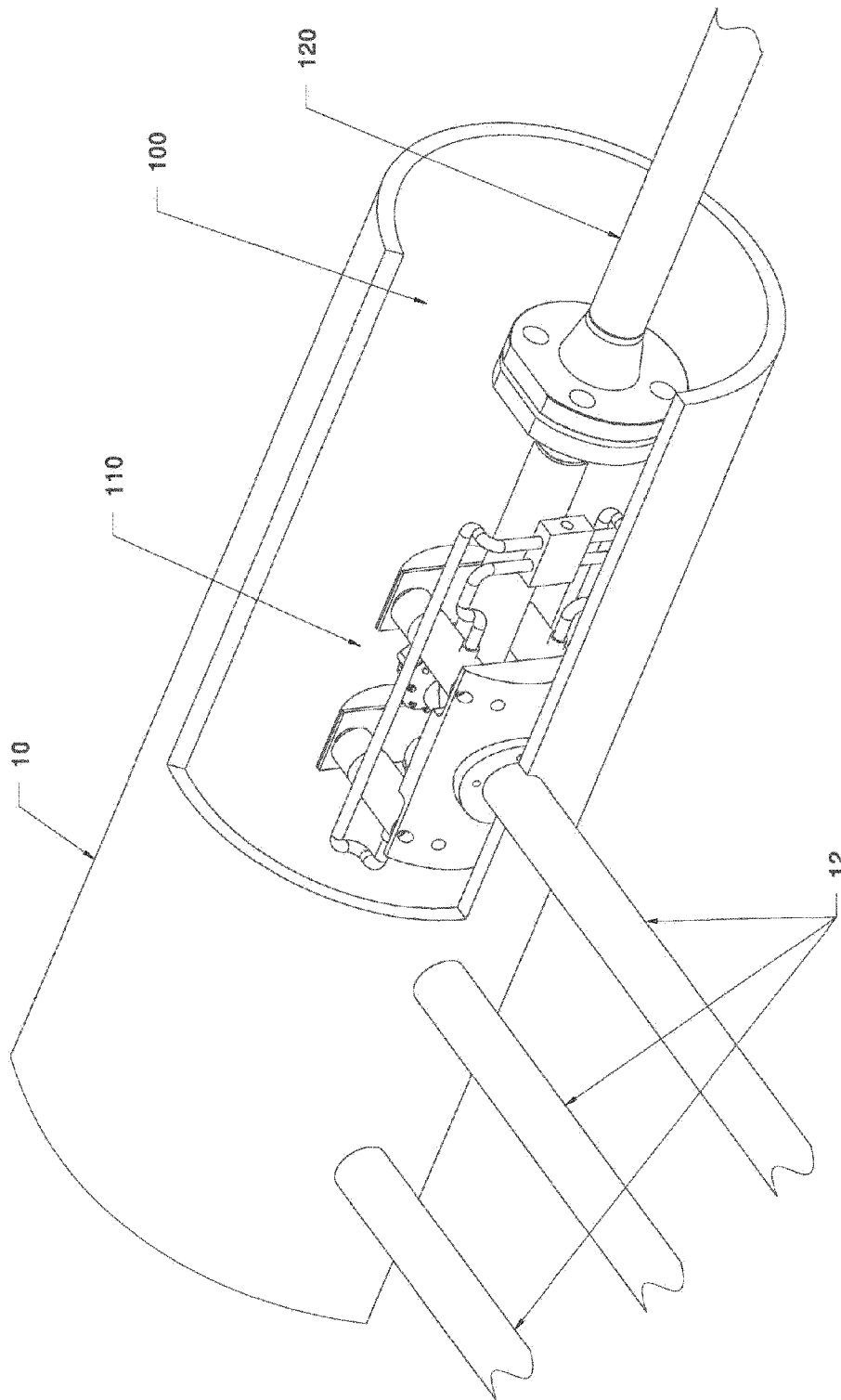


FIG 1.

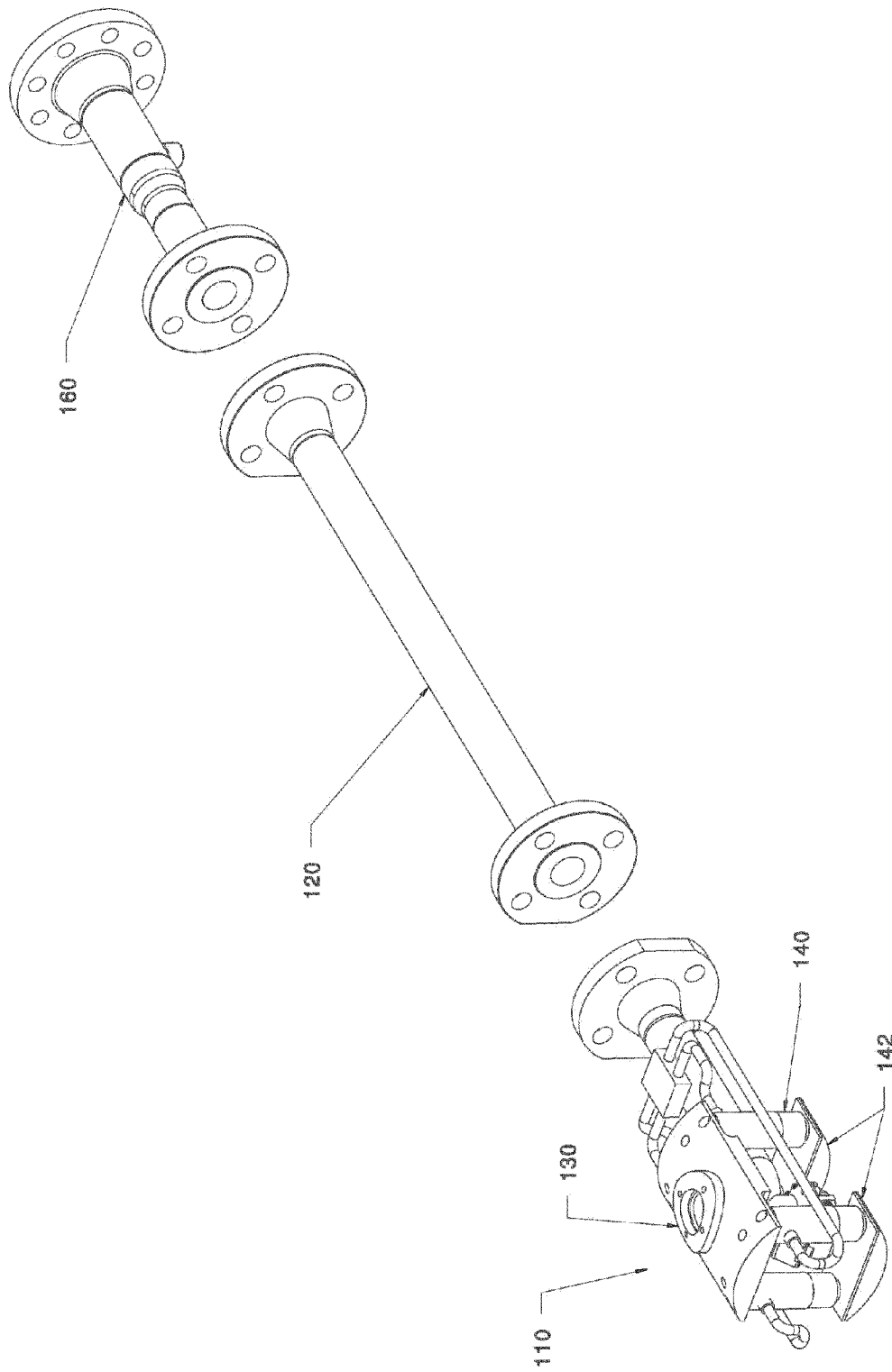


FIG. 2

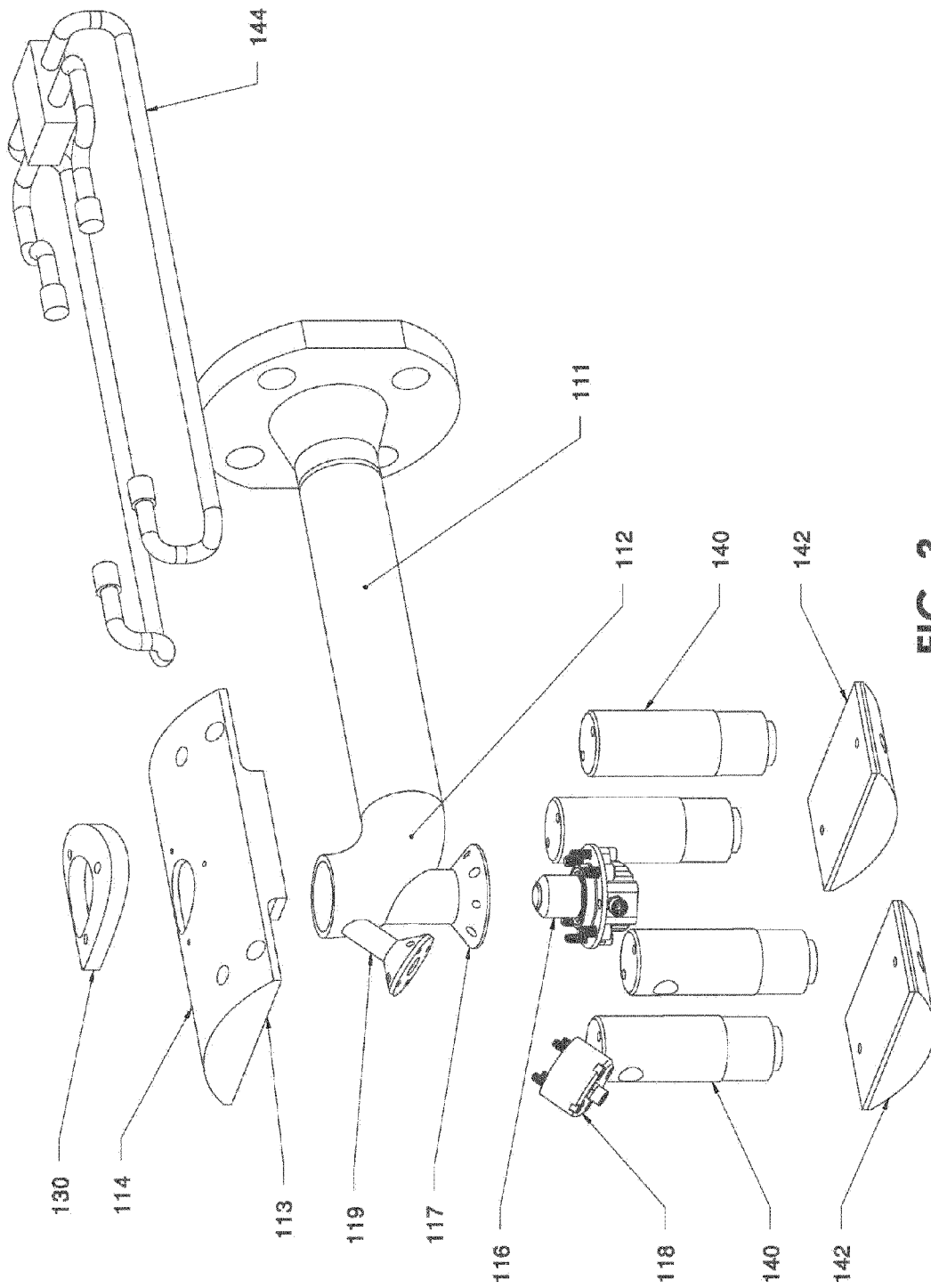


FIG. 3

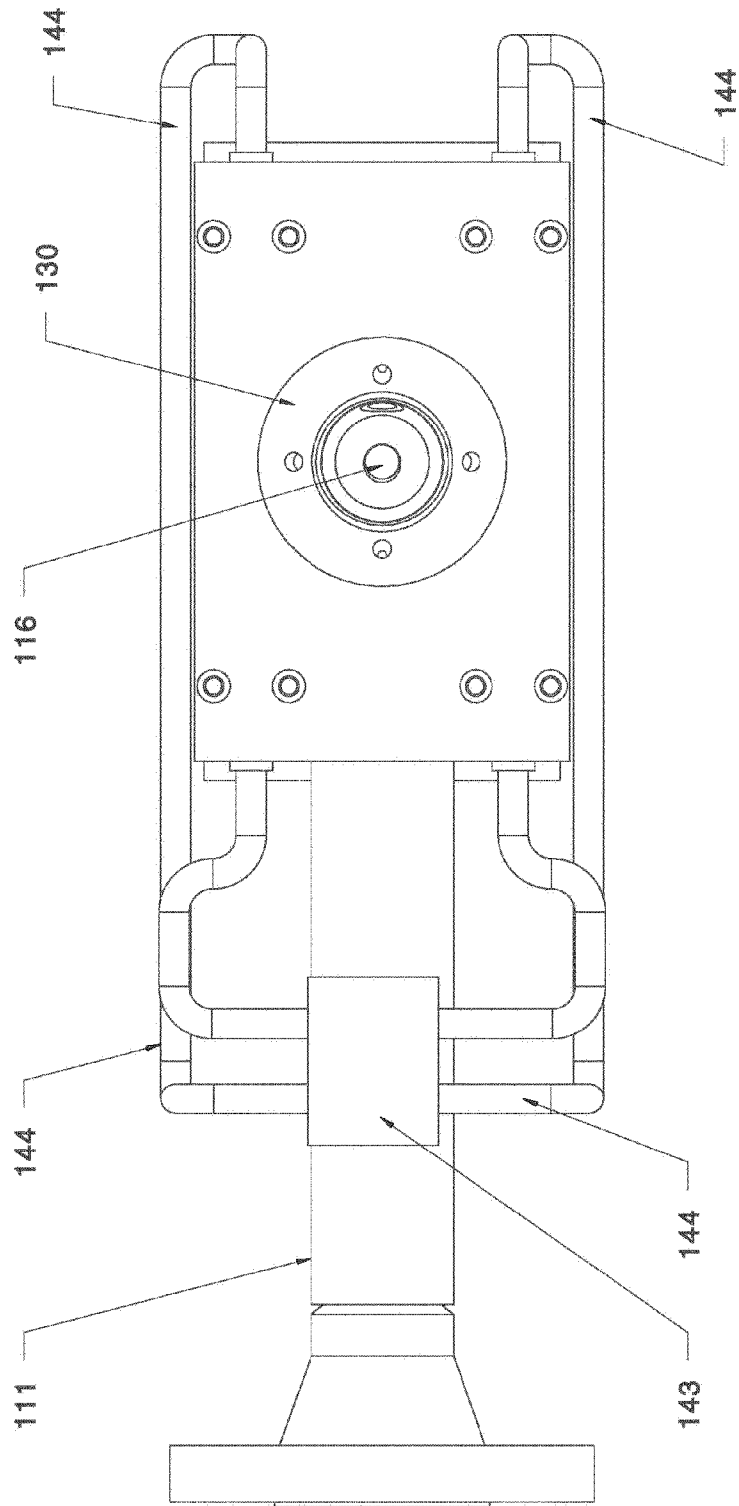


FIG. 4.