Keeping in touch

Text: Richard Summan

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asometers, otherwise known as gasholders, have been an iconic feature of the urban landscape since the latter part of the 19th century. Originally storing coal gas for street lighting and household use, these huge telescoping containers, guided by intricate iron frameworks, were inescapable features of many city skylines. Some are listed as historic structures, and London’s distinctive Kings Cross gasholder no 8 framework is being restored as an event space and play area.

The four main current types of gasholder are: Wiggins dry-seal, waterless M.A.N., Monne grease seal, column spiral guided water-sealed. One company in particular stands out in this market sector – Clayton Walker Gasholders, a division of the Motherwell Bridge Engineering Group Ltd., a world leader in the design and maintenance of storage tanks, heat exchangers and gasholders. Clayton Walker Gasholders has been involved in gasholder construction since 1837.

“We deal with most well-known steel companies,” says Ian Ford, Motherwell Bridge’s Chief Operating Officer. “India is our biggest market, but we operate in many countries throughout the world, including Brazil, Taiwan, the UK, South Africa and Australia. Most of our work involves the collection and safe storage of recovered gases from coke ovens, blast furnaces and steel-making processes. There’s a double benefit: The gases can be reused for power and heat within the steel plant, and you avoid the need to flare off these highly toxic gases into the atmosphere, giving a significant reduction in carbon emissions. The seal is a critical component of our storage solutions. We use the Wiggins type dry-seal, supplied by Trelleborg Coated Systems, engineered fabrics operation, in both brand new installations and in the conversion of older gasholders to fully functioning Wiggins type dry-seal gasholders.”

Trelleborg and Clayton Walker have been working in partnership for more than 30 years, designing and manufacturing high-quality seals mainly for use in high-volume gas storage for the iron and steel industries. “It’s a remarkable relationship, one that depends on communication, flexibility and innovation,” says Ian Ford.

Steve Ridgway, Managing Director at the part of Trelleborg based in Manchester, England, that manufactures the gasholder seals, takes up the story. “The Wiggins type dry-seal is a highly specialized product, ideally suited for collection and containment of waste gases. Sten vary, but the largest gasholder seal we have supplied is for a gasholder with a capacity of 150,000 cubic meters. Some of these seals are so large that the rigid structures they go into are built around them. The seals have other applications, too, for storage of methane, nitrogen, hydrogen and butane, but the new generation of materials that we have developed for the seal is ideally suited for containing waste gases produced by iron and steel making.”

He continues: “The success of our partnership with Motherwell Bridge is that we provide a whole service, following our seals through their lifetime – 10 to 15 years and more, with some in excess of 20 years – closely monitoring installation processes as well as performance. An honest and open relationship with our customers brings benefits to them and to us as well. Some of Clayton Walker Gasholders’ customers request specific technicians from us during installation of our seals.”

Comments Ian Ford: “Trelleborg supplies a tried and tested product, supported by a good warranty. They’re flexible and open to suggestions and ideas that will help meet our customers’ demands. We both understand the importance of improving our respective products and services; it’s vital in maintaining a position as the supplier of choice to steel companies.”

Steve Ridgway adds: “We’ve learned a great deal about the gas-holding process. This has only been possible through our relationship with Motherwell Bridge, and in turn we have developed new materials that have increased the quality of the components that Motherwell Bridge offers to its customers.”

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A NEW GENERATION OF MATERIALS

Clayton Walker Gasholders, a part of the Motherwell Bridge Engineering Group, is renowned worldwide for its expertise in the field of gasholder dry-seal gasholder seals. Markets include India, Brazil, Taiwan, the UK, South Africa and Australia.

Trelleborg has worked for more than 30 years in partnership with Clayton Walker Gasholders, producing and promoting high-quality sealant Wiggins type dry-seal gasholder seals. Latest developments include a new generation of materials for high-temperature steel-making gases and aggressive environmental gases.