

Steeling the limelight

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SfarSteel quickly re-established itself in the nuclear and petrochemical markets, taking advantage of surging demand in these two sectors to fill the order books. However, as Stephen Smith, SfarSteel's business development manager explains, the decision to focus on the cement market was only made after careful consideration.

"Everyone who comes to our factory is astonished at what we have to offer. We have machine tools here that can handle 300t castings. Our forge has an 11,500t press. This facility has long supplied various parts to the cement industry, but until last year, there was never really any emphasis on the cement market.

However, we realised very quickly that our combination of forging, foundry, machining and fabrication shops offered the perfect facility for big and heavy products such as kiln tyres, shells, support rollers and vertical grinding mill components.

We have one unrivalled advantage in our access to the large steel foundry of Creusot Metal, located on a rail link one

The town of Le Creusot, located in the heart of the Burgundy wine region, is famous for the Schneider family and for the huge steel and armaments works which the family once owned. The 1980's saw the disappearance in demand for large forgings and castings and led to the break up of this great industrial entity. But three years ago saw a remarkable transformation of fortunes for heavy industry in this district with the birth of the privately-owned company called SfarSteel. SfarSteel is the inheritor of some of the priceless industrial assets of the Creusot-Loire empire, and for the first time a range of key products manufactured on this one site is being actively offered to the cement industry.



mile from our factory. With a maximum single piece cast weight of almost 200t, we can offer the very largest kiln tyres. SfarSteel has launched a marketing and sales campaign focused on cement and

cement plant companies, and we are now receiving an increasing number of guests from the best-known cement enterprises. SfarSteel has a turnover of around €10m from the cement industry. Most of our orders are from the well-known plant engineering companies such as FLSmidth, Polysius and Loesche, but SfarSteel is also starting to receive more interest directly from the big conglomerates such as Lafarge, HeidelbergCement, Holcim, Italcimenti etc."

Future development

SfarSteel offers a range of cement plant products. The emphasis is usually on the largest sizes in any product range. In fact SfarSteel has had problems from customers who are seeking smaller, more normal-sized components, who are reluctant to accept that ownership of such capital intensive plant requires 100 per cent concentration on 'big pieces'.



SfarSteel's offices in Le Creusot



SfarSteel offers finished forged rollers for roller presses, incorporating three layers of niobium carbide, deposited by submerged arc techniques. Sizes range up to 3m in diameter and weigh up to 60t



SfarSteel is a regular provider of kiln support rollers. All machining and assembly is carried out in the Le Creusot factory

However, in the future SfarSteel will start to develop a range of manufactured products which will incorporate SfarSteel's own product knowledge.

"We know that our customers come to us for kiln tyres, support rollers etc, which are not always easily available elsewhere at the sizes which we can readily handle," explains Stephen Smith. "However, we are not content to remain merely as a supplier of super-large pieces. Our long-term aim is build on our strengths by developing in-house high-value products which will

attract a following from those cement plant engineers who want performance and reliability over-and-above the average."

Product trends

Roller presses

One problem for operators is the unpredictability and cost of the hard-faced rolls themselves. SfarSteel is now engaged in work with a specialist development company to offer its own solution to the marketplace.



With its large fabrication shop, SfarSteel offers a full range of fabrications for cement plants including ball mill shells, ball mill heads and mill bases. Maximum shell plate sizes are 80mm x 3000mm and the maximum single piece made weighs 400t

Fabricated girth gears

In past decades, fabricated girth gears have had a very mixed reception by cement plant operators. However, SfarSteel believes it is now the time to re-introduce this girth gear with the teeth cut on a blank assembled and welded from plate. The reasons? Lower cost, faster delivery, higher reliability.

Kiln tyre/kiln shell assemblies

SfarSteel's foundry has in the past supplied large and very large kiln tyres to a client base around the world. With its plate forming and welding capacity, it now offers full kiln tyre/kiln shell assemblies to customers.

A favourable beginning

SfarSteel is confident that the cement industry will welcome the company's increasing role in the marketplace. Good progress has already been made, with the news that the company had been awarded a prestigious order from FLSmidth in the USA for the supply of steel support rollers for use in Holcim's new St Genevieve project in Missouri.

SfarSteel has, in the last 18 months, been building its presence as a manufacturer of roller grinders, pressure levers and other large-size machined castings and forgings. However, most of these products have been supplied to European customers. This is the first time that an order for supporting rollers has been received directly from the USA.

Construction started in March 2006 at this US\$600m facility, located near the Mississippi river south of St Louis. The owners Holcim have awarded the contract to FLSmidth for what will be the largest single clinker production line in the world, with a capacity of 12,000tpd.