

Another milestone reached for independent UK supplier

This month Electroglass celebrates 30 years of business as an independent supplier of electric glass melting technologies.

Glass met the supplier's managing director **Richard Stormont*** to find out what fuels the company.

Electroglass was founded in October 1976 and to this day remains a completely independent supplier of electric glass melting technologies. This is clearly one of the defining characteristics of the company and one that is held dear by its managing director Richard Stormont "So many companies approach their business with the aim of diversifying. However, we think it is a positive strength to retain our specialisation and for 30 years we have not deviated from that policy of remaining totally focused on electric melting and conditioning."

Foundations

Richard first entered the field of electric melting in 1970, joining Electroglass some years later in 1989. Fred Scarfe originally founded the company in 1976 after beginning his career at UK glassmaker Beatson Clark. The company, which started with five people, has now grown into a team of 26 and in the 11 years that Richard has been managing director, turnover has quadrupled to approximately £4-£5 million a year. Richard describes the company's development as "slowly progressive" and "steadily developing" despite the fact that it now has customers in 40 countries around the world. The company conducts its business from 2500 square metre premises in Essex in the UK, a site that houses offices, warehouse space, research and development facilities and workshops.

The majority of the company's business is centred on all-electric furnaces and electric boosting systems. More than 140 of its boosting systems have been installed in 30 countries worldwide, while Electroglass' largest all-electric installation to date is a 180 tonnes/day furnace. This was installed for a customer in Zimbabwe 12 years ago. Since

then Electroglass has repaired and updated the furnace. "All-electric furnaces sales are continuing to grow and it's a very important part of our market, particularly for the volatile glasses such as fluoride opal," says Richard.

Bubbling Expertise

One area in which the company cites expertise is in bubbling systems. Ten years ago the company's research and development department set to work on developing its precision control bubbling system. The system was born out of a need to minimise refractory wear, blockage and glass defects associated with conventional bubbling systems. Research involving the use of viscous fluids in a tank of full scale depth showed that effective homogenisation of the glass could be achieved with slow bubbling speeds (one bubble per minute or less), provided bubble size was maintained. The precision control system uses slow and precisely timed bubbling speeds to homogenise the glass without the associated problems. Electroglass has now supplied more than 80 of

bubbling systems. In fact, installations of the system have steadily increased year-on-year, with most installations occurring in the container and TV glass sectors.

Research and Development

The company's focus is now on technological development, particularly in the areas of energy efficiency, glass quality and furnace output. While Richard points out energy efficiency is becoming even more important, research is also underway into large capacity all-electric melters and high capacity all-electric forehearth technology. "The largest melter we have done so far is 180 tonnes/day and we are now looking at melters substantially bigger than that, which is very large in electric furnace terms," says Richard.

The company currently designs and supplies all-electric forehearths for every glass type. Its Electroflex all-electric forehearths are designed for soda-lime and other non-volatile glasses with pulls of between one and 120 tonnes/day. Electroflex-W forehearths can handle pulls of up to 150 tonnes/day, while the company's Electroseal systems are designed for use with volatile glasses. Research into such systems now focuses on capacity increases. Another area of development within the company is continuous controlled drains for conventional container production as well as the special glasses.

The company also carries out modelling of electric



**The majority of Electroglass' business is focused on all-electric furnaces and electric*



× *Electroglass, which started with five people, has now grown into a team of 26. Its managing director, Richard Stormont, is pictured fourth from the left.*

past few years has been Samsung corning, which electroglass supplied with major boosting and bubbling systems for TV glass production.

Traditionally Electroglass has been particularly active in East and South East Asia, although it now does business in 40 countries worldwide with approximately 95% of its business conducted outside the UK. Russia is one market that the company plans to explore, with countries such as China, Korea and Americas still presenting good business opportunities. Current European projects include a fourth boosting installation for Santos Barosa in Portugal.

When asked where the company might be by 2020, two points come to the fore: specialisation and independence. “We think that the way to build the business is to get better and better at what we do, backed by research and development,” says Richard. This is clearly the company’s philosophy and one that has stood it in

research into electrode configuration and convection currents. Richard also points out that Electroglass manufactures its own electrodes and holders—approximately 500 holders are produced per year.

Orders

repeats, while 2/3 of is present generation of convection Current control boosting systems are repeat orders from existing customers or their associates. Among its longest standing customers are glass container manufacturer Thai Glass Industries and German glassmaker Heye Glas. The company has undertaken 18 new projects this year, excluding small spare

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