

Meet the supplier – Monocon

Monocon International Refractories was founded 40 years ago initially to supply the Sheffield and Rotherham area steel plants with gunning repair products for their electric arc furnaces. They have since developed into a global market leader.

In 2005 the Monocon Group was acquired by Indian based IFGL who are a globally recognised supplier of high quality ISO products (ladle shrouds, stoppers etc). The IFGL-Monocon Group have manufacturing plants in UK, India, China, Germany and North America but most of its products are produced in the UK at Doncaster.

The group employs hundreds of individuals worldwide and have two personnel permanently based on the Teesside site.

Monocon supply a number of refractory materials to the BOS and Concast plants. These materials include:

- ISO products to control steel flow and help reduce non-metallic materials in the steel
- Slag darts to reduce slag carryover at the vessel tapping stage
- Refractory lances for effective treatment of steel
- Tundish spray materials to safely contain the steel
- Casting powders to maintain clean steels and steel temperatures
- Specialised equipment such as dart machines and tundish spray machines

It also provides a site management service which includes the maintenance of various machinery; product performance monitoring; stock control and machine maintenance records.

Mark Payne, Marketing and Sales Director, said: "When the Teesside site was mothballed it had a huge impact

on our business as it contributed to 20% of our UK sales. So when SSI took over it was great news but greeted with some scepticism given the enormity of the task and the prevailing market conditions. Phil Dryden held roadshows with suppliers prior to restart and convinced us to get on board and I'm very impressed with what has been achieved technically on the plant so far."

As with every aspect of operations onsite, health and safety is a key issue for Monocon. Safety performance is monitored and measured, near miss reporting, incident reporting and complaint reports are part of Monocon's business management review meetings and all employees are challenged to identify and communicate health and safety issues.

Mark said: "The opportunity to work with SSI UK has led to a number of new ideas and suggestions which can help to innovate within the business and benefit the efficiency of processes."

Monocon have demonstrated its dedication to continuous improvement and have introduced a number of product changes. New material designs/specifications for lances and ladle shrouds have been trialled successfully and are lasting longer, subsequently reducing costs for SSI UK.

Paul Burke, Casting Manager SSI UK, said: "Monocon are one of many key players in the steelmaking department. We have been working closely with them in developing and trialling tundish insulation material; if we don't quite get the correct recipe they are keen to work with us to try and resolve it. We have also been trialling ladle shrouds which have been very successful in use and price. Monocon could be a major player with us going forward and what I do like, as of most firms, they have people on site daily in which we can keep in touch with."

Peter Leader, Procurement Director SSI UK, said: "The team at Monocon have so far been very supportive of our efforts and recognise there are stages to our development. Dialogue at all levels has been positive and there is clear proof that innovation will not be overlooked. Capitalising on these opportunities is a key part of the forward challenge."

