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Thermal Processes in Covered Electrodes

Melting rate is found to be controlled by electromagnetically induced fluid flow in the electrode tip

BY J. H. WASZINK AND M. J. PIENA

ABSTRACT. The decreasing length and the temperature of the covered electrode core were measured as a function of time during welding. Mild steel basic and rutile-type electrodes were used. The results yielded the rate of heat flow from the anode or cathode surface on the liquid tip, through the liquid metal, to the solid wire.

It was found that this process provides the major part of the heat which causes the metal to melt. The corresponding power was found to be proportional to the electric current, and to increase, in general, with increase in electrode diameter.

A physical model, which ascribes the heat transfer to electromagnetically induced fluid flow, accounts for the dependence on the electric current. Thermal processes in a typical electrode were determined experimentally.

Introduction

This paper reports on an investigation of the physical processes that control the

melting rate of covered electrodes used for shielded metal arc (SMA) welding. The major part of previous work concerned with this type of electrode dealt with the influence of the flux and operating conditions on the properties of the weld metal.

Previous work has been surveyed by Boniszewski (Ref. 1). Furthermore, the transfer of metal from the electrode tip has been investigated (Refs. 2-6). Examination of the effect of numerous parameters on the melting rate (Refs. 4,7,8) showed an influence exerted by electrode diameter, composition, covering thickness, and polarity. On the other hand, no treatment has yet been given, to the authors' knowledge, to the melting rate in terms of the heat generation and heat transfer processes occurring in an electrode. The work described here was done in order to identify these processes.

Joule Heating and Some Related Effects

The heat required to melt a consumable electrode is, in general, provided by cathode or anode processes occurring at the surface of the liquid tip, and by Joule heating (Ref. 9). Joule heating causes a gradual increase in the temperature of the metal core and the covering, because the latter is heated by conductive heat

flow from the core. The covering at the upper end of the electrode must not melt or decompose before the electrode has been melted back completely. Therefore, the electric current has to be chosen such that the temperature remains below a given maximum usually far below the melting point of the metal.

It follows that only a minor part of the thermal energy required to heat and melt the electrode is provided by Joule heating; the major part must be provided by processes occurring at the liquid tip where the electrode is in contact with the arc plasma. The power generated there is equal to IV_0 (Fig. 1), where I is the electric current and V_0 is a constant which, in general, depends on polarity, on the composition of the metal at the tip surface and on the properties of the plasma. A part of this power is lost by radiation and by evaporation of material from the surface. The remainder is absorbed by the liquid metal; this, in turn, gives off a thermal power Φ to the solid metal. This heat flow Φ leads to the heating and subsequent melting of the metal core.

The net power absorbed by the liquid metal is given by $\mu c_{pl}(\bar{T}_{dr} - T_m)$;^{*} the power balance equation for the liquid tip now reads:

$$IV_0 = \Phi + \mu c_{pl}(\bar{T}_{dr} - T_{mp}) + \Phi_L \quad (1)$$

where Φ_L is the power loss by radiation

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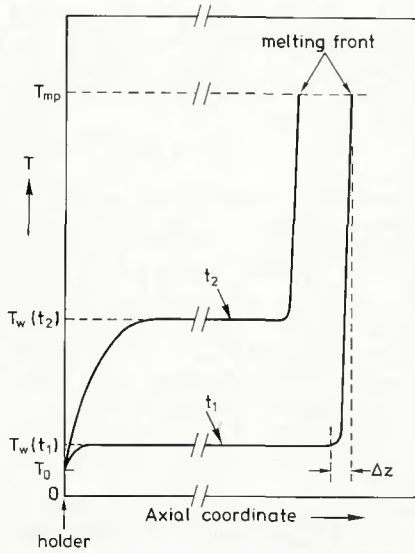


Fig. 2—Temperature distribution in core along axis of electrode at different times— $t_2 > t_1$

such that the arc length remained constant. This velocity was measured by a tachogenerator, and the data were integrated by a data processor. The curve of L_e vs. t was thus obtained with a single electrode. As a check, the length was measured before and after welding.

The temperature T_w (Fig. 2) was derived from the (strongly temperature-dependent) resistivity, ρ_R , of the steel, which was measured as a function of time. For this purpose, an electrode from the same batch was mounted between two contacts, and two probes were placed on the metal core through small holes in the covering. The same current used in the welding experiment was applied, and the voltage between the probes recorded as a function of time. The probes were always located in the flat part of the temperature profile (see Fig. 2).

The curve of resistivity vs. temperature was obtained in the following way. A thin bare electrode ($d_w = 1.6 \text{ mm} = 0.063 \text{ in.}$) was heated quickly by a current pulse (460 A, 0.2 s), while I and the voltage V , across it, were measured as a function of time. The energy supplied to the electrode in the interval between $t = 0$ and $t = \tau$ is given by:

$$E(\tau) = \int_0^\tau I(t)V(t)dt.$$

Heat losses to the surroundings are negligible in this short time. Consequently,

$$H(T(\tau)) = E(\tau)/(\rho_w S_w L_e)$$

where H is the heat content and:

$$H(T) = \int_{T_0}^T c_{pw}(T')dT'$$

Table 2—Covered Electrodes Investigated—Core Diameters Between 1¾ and 6 mm

Designation	d_f/d_w	AWS A5.1	ISO 2560
R1	1.7-1.8	E 6013	E51 3RR 32
R2	1.4-1.5	E 6013	E51 3R 15
R3	1.8-2.1	E 7024	E51 4RR 160 35
B1	1.6-1.9	E 7016	E51 4B 24 (H)
B2	1.5-1.7	E 7016	E51 5B 24 (H)

The curve of H vs. T for pure iron (Ref. 12) was used. This experiment yields $\rho_R(t)$ and $E(t)$ and, hence, the curve of ρ_R vs. T . The procedure described here is similar to that described by Halmøy (Ref. 30). Figure 3 shows a typical curve of T_w as a function of time.

The thermal conductivity of the flux material and the product $\rho_f c_{pf}$ were measured by a transient method. A thin electrode ($d_w = 2.5 \text{ mm} = 0.098 \text{ in.}$) was mounted between two contacts, a short (200 ms) high-current (1000 A) pulse was applied, and the temperature of the core wire was determined as a function of time in the manner described above. The use of probes is not necessary in this experiment because the transition regions at the ends remain short.

The wire heated quickly and cooled down by radial heat flow into the coating—Fig. 4. Axial heat flow was negligible. A plane boundary was assumed between core and covering. Furthermore, the core

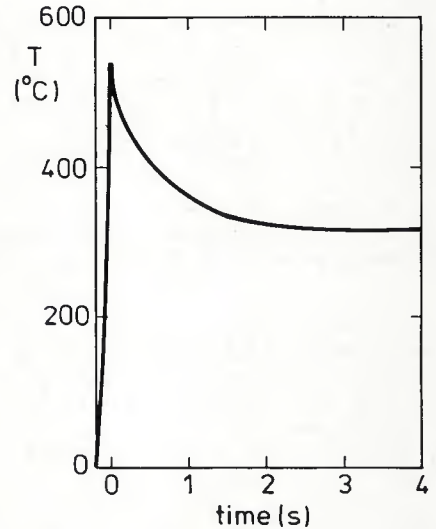


Fig. 4—Determination of thermal properties of flux material. T = temperature of core. Electrode R1; $d_w = 2.47 \text{ mm} (0.097 \text{ in.})$; $d_f = 4.3 \text{ mm} (0.17 \text{ in.})$; $t = 0$ at end of pulse; pulse duration—0.2 s; pulse current—945 A

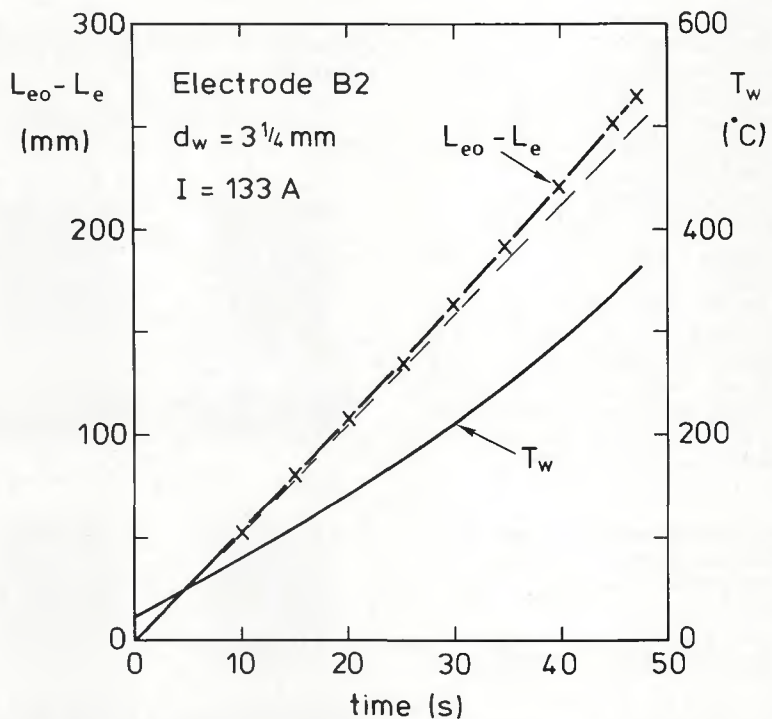


Fig. 3—Typical curves of molten length and electrode temperature; L_{e0} is the electrode length at $t = 0$. Melting rate increases from $0.34 \text{ g s}^{-1} (0.045 \text{ lb min}^{-1})$ at $t = 0$ to $0.39 \text{ g s}^{-1} (0.052 \text{ lb min}^{-1})$ at $t = 47 \text{ s}$ due to Joule heating. Dashes indicate hypothetical curve of $L_{e0} - L_e$ for zero ohmic power; the slope of this curve is proportional to Φ_w

any time). The slope of this curve is proportional to Φ_w ; it is, therefore, independent of time for the electrode concerned. On the other hand, the slope of the measured curve increases gradually with time as a result of Joule heating.

Since the slope of the latter curve is proportional to the melting rate, it follows from Fig. 3 that the melting rate increases as a result of Joule heating of the solid metal. The difference between the two curves of length vs. time in Fig. 3 is due to Joule heating. These curves are typical for manual electrodes under normal welding conditions. Consequently, it is seen that Joule heating provides a minor but not entirely negligible part of the total thermal power supplied to the electrode.

The power Φ_f was calculated, as a rule, from:

$$\Phi_f = \pi d_w \lambda_f (T_{mp} - T_o) (a_w/a_f)^{1/2} \quad (5)$$

Equation (5) is derived in Appendix B. It is applicable when the depth of penetration of the heat into the covering is small with respect to the thickness of the coating, as was usually the case. When this condition was not fulfilled, then a different relation was used. This relation is also discussed in Appendix B. The diffusivity a_w was taken to be:

$$7.3 \times 10^{-6} \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$$

which follows from:

$$\rho_w = 7870 \text{ kg m}^{-3}$$

and the temperature averages:

$$\bar{\lambda}_w = 40 \text{ W m}^{-1} (\text{°C})^{-1} \text{ and } \bar{c}_{pw} = 700 \text{ J kg}^{-1} (\text{°C})^{-1} \text{ (Refs. 12-14).}$$

The full set of experimental results is given in Tables 4-9. Positive polarity means electrode positive with respect to workpiece. Figures 7 and 8 show Φ as a function of I . It is seen that Φ varies approximately linearly with I . The slope of the curves for the R1 and B1 electrodes is not very different. This suggests that the physical processes that control the heat flow in the liquid tip are basically the same in the whole range of parameters investigated. Nevertheless, inspection of Tables 4-9 shows that the effects of composition, polarity and diameter on Φ are still large enough to be of practical interest.

The R1 electrode was investigated down to very low current densities. Figure 9 shows the ratio Φ/I . It was seen that Φ/I decreases with increase in I , and becomes constant at high currents. The measurements with the other electrodes were made in the range of higher currents where electrodes are normally used. The results in Tables 4-9 show a

Table 4—Experimental Results—Electrode R1

d_w , mm	Polarity	I , A	Φ_f , W	Φ , W	Φ/I , V
1 3/4	+	39	24	133	3.4
2 1/2	+	82	42	259	3.2
3 1/4	+	30	33	125	4.2
3 1/4	+	40	35	165	4.1
3 1/4	+	60	43	236	3.9
3 1/4	+	81	43	293	3.6
3 1/4	+	152	55	518	3.4
4	+	153	68	553	3.6
4	+	183	68	648	3.5
5	+	52	54	283	5.4
5	+	103	84	516	5.0
5	+	164	84	661	4.0
5	+	220	84	833	3.8
5	+	250	84	911	3.6
5	+	285	84	1055	3.7
5	+	345	84	1224	3.6
6	+	258	101	1050	4.1
6	+	334	101	1251	3.8
1 3/4	-	40	24	130	3.2
2 1/2	-	82	42	250	3.0
3 1/4	-	83	44	259	3.1
3 1/4	-	120	55	358	3.0
3 1/4	-	155	55	481	3.1
4	-	153	68	529	3.5
4	-	183	68	620	3.4
5	-	220	84	796	3.6
5	-	251	84	903	3.6
5	-	286	84	1002	3.5
6	-	258	101	874	3.4
6	-	335	101	1196	3.6

Table 5—Experimental Results—Electrode R2

d_w , mm	Polarity	I , A	Φ_f , W	Φ , W	Φ/I , V
2 1/2	+	71	34	286	4.0
2 1/2	+	87	34	327	3.8
3 1/4	+	88	44	355	4.0
3 1/4	+	123	55	470	3.8
3 1/4	+	153	55	561	3.7
5	+	205	66	804	3.9
5	+	246	84	963	3.9

Table 6—Experimental Results—Electrode R3

d_w , mm	Polarity	I , A	Φ_f , W	Φ , W	Φ/I , V
2 1/2	+	102	42	326	3.2
2 1/2	+	123	42	350	2.8
3 1/4	+	164	55	492	3.0
5	+	229	84	787	3.4
3 1/4	-	129	55	403	3.1
3 1/4	-	165	55	474	2.9
5	-	231	84	765	3.3
5	-	332	84	1056	3.2

tendency for Φ/I to decrease with increase in I .

Temperature of Surface of Pendent Drop

Particularly surprising is the small effect of polarity on Φ . The processes occurring at a cathode and those occurring at an anode are essentially different (Ref. 15),

so that one expects a strong dependence of V_0 and, consequently, of Φ , on polarity, contrary to the experimental results. Therefore, a discussion of the heating of the tip surface is required.

The temperature of the tip surface will adjust itself such that the incoming power is carried away by radiation, evaporation, and by convection and thermal conduction in the liquid metal. For the purpose

$$V_o = 3.2 k T_e / e + \phi$$

where ϕ is the work function (4.4V) for iron (Ref. 13). We thus obtain $V_o \approx 6$ V. Analysis of GMA experiments yielded 5.5 V (Refs. 19-20) and 6.0 ± 0.5 V (Ref. 9).

The radiation loss at temperatures close to the boiling point amounts to about 5 W/mm^2 ; this corresponds to 0.2 V with j_A as given above and is neglected here. The evaporation loss is controlled by the diffusion of metal vapor through the boundary layer in front of the drop surface.

An estimate of this term would require an analysis of the boundary layer, which is outside the scope of this paper. Neglecting this loss term for the moment, we can make an estimate of T_{dr} . Equation (6) with $\Phi_L = 0$, V_o as above, and $\Phi/I = 3.5$ V, a typical value obtained from the experiments, gives $T_{dr} \approx 2700^\circ\text{C}$ (4900°F), i.e., close to the boiling point, $T_b = 2862^\circ\text{C} = 5184^\circ\text{F}$ (Ref. 12).

The temperature of the anode surface is bound to be well above T_{dr} . Consequently, the hypothesis of zero evaporation loss must be incorrect. Although the value of this loss is not known, it is clear that it will increase with increase in surface temperature. We hypothesize that the temperature of the anode surface, which might still be close to T_b , is stabilized by the evaporation of metal (Ref. 21). Therefore, this temperature is insensitive to the exact value of V_o , as long as V_o is above a certain minimum value, i.e., about 5.5 V in the system discussed here.

The mechanism of heat generation at a cathode surface is extremely complicated (Ref. 15), and no data on V_o for this process have been found in the literature. On the other hand, the argument on the stabilization of the surface temperature, as given above, remains the same. Consequently, the assumption that V_o is above 5.5 V for positive and negative polarity explains the absence of a major influence of polarity on Φ .

As an approximation, the difference between the temperature of the anode (cathode) surface and the melting point will be taken as 1000°C (1800°F).

It must be noted that the effect of polarity on the melting rate in flux-shielded processes is not always as small as was observed in the experiments described here. Investigations of the submerged arc welding (SAW) process (Ref. 22) showed that polarity can have a distinct effect, depending on flux composition and current strength.

Mechanism of Heat Flow through Liquid Tip

The experiments show that a large part of the heat generated at the tip surface is

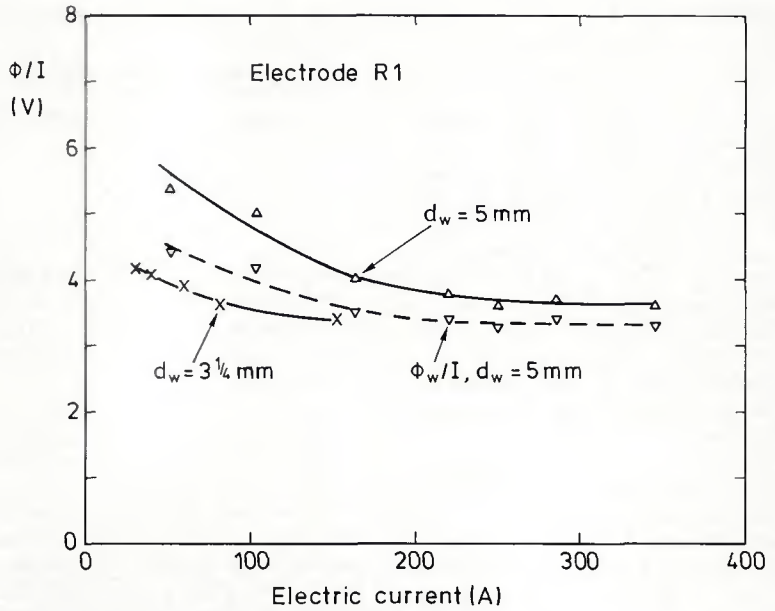


Fig. 9—Thermal power per ampere as a function of current. Also shown is a curve of $\Phi_w/I = (\Phi - \Phi_0)/I$ in order to show effect of heat flow into covering

transferred through the drop to the solid metal. This heat transfer is due to thermal conduction, or to fluid flow, or to both. These processes are now discussed in order to explain the experimental results, in particular the linear dependence of Φ on I .

Possible causes of fluid flow are electromagnetic forces, the buoyancy force, and the force due to a gradient in the surface tension, γ .

The electromagnetic (Lorentz) force is due to the interaction of the electric current with its own magnetic field. It will generate fluid flow if the electric current diverges or converges within the pendant drop (Refs. 9, 15, 23, 24). The order of magnitude of the force on the drop is given by $F_L \approx \mu_0 I^2 / 4\pi$, where μ_0 is the permeability of vacuum.

The buoyancy force, F_b , is due to heating of the metal at the bottom of the drop. Its order of magnitude is $F_b \sim L^3 \rho_l g \alpha \Delta T_s$ (Ref. 25), where L is a typical length, g the gravity constant, α the expansion coefficient, and ΔT_s the difference between the temperature of the anode (cathode) surface and the melting point.

A gradient in γ will be caused by the segregation of oxygen, which is strongly surface-active in iron, while the degree of segregation is temperature-dependent (Refs. 26, 27). The addition of 0.1% of oxygen to pure iron lowers γ from 1.9 to 1.3 Nm^{-1} at 1650°C (3000°F) (Ref. 26). Furthermore, the surface tension of any pure metal is temperature-dependent. The force on the surface per unit area is equal to $\text{grad } \gamma$ and the force on the drop as a whole

$$F_\gamma \approx L^2 \text{ grad } \gamma \approx L \Delta \gamma$$

where $\Delta \gamma$ is the difference in γ between top and bottom, estimated to be the order of 0.1 Nm^{-1} .

The relative importance of the three forces discussed was estimated with the average properties given in Table 10, with L and I in the ranges usual for manual electrodes. It was found that F_L will be the dominant force, but that F_γ and F_b can attain values of up to 30% of F_L .

Discussion of the model below considers heat transfer by conduction, and by convection due to the electromagnetic force. The treatment of this force is only approximate, so that it would be meaningless to include the other, smaller, forces as well.

The electromagnetically induced fluid flow will be in the direction of decreasing current density, i.e., in the direction of widening path of the electric current. The current density in the electrode is around 15 A mm^{-2} (10^4 A/in.^2). It is expected to have roughly the same value on the anode surface and to be higher in a

Table 10—Values Used for the Properties of Liquid Iron (Ref. 13)

Property	Value
ρ	6500 kg m^{-3}
c_p	$800 \text{ J kg}^{-1} (\text{°C})^{-1}$
λ	$40 \text{ W m}^{-1} (\text{°C})^{-1}$
α	$1.3 \times 10^{-4} (\text{°C})^{-1}$
ν	$0.6 \times 10^{-6} \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$
a	$8 \times 10^{-6} \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$
ρR	$1.4 \times 10^{-6} \Omega \text{ m}$

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ments (Ref. 9) with 1.2 mm (0.047 in.) diameter mild steel electrodes gave $u_l/l \approx 10^{-3} \text{ m s}^{-1} \text{ A}^{-1}$. This ratio is expected to decrease with increased d_w , so that these results compare favorably.

Since $Pe/Re = \nu_l/a_l = 0.075$, it follows that Pe lies between 1 and 10. Consequently, the exponential term in the denominator in equation (11) is not necessarily negligible. If it is not, then equation (11) gives an increase in Φ/l with decrease in Pe , *i.e.*, with decrease in l (Pe is proportional to $u_l - u_e$, and u_l and u_e are proportional to l). Figure 9 shows that this behavior is in fact observed.

Equation (11) thus accounts for the experimental result that Φ/l is constant at higher currents, and decreases as l is lowered—Fig. 9. It also follows from the model that $\Phi/l \rightarrow V_0 (\approx 6\text{V})$ as $l \rightarrow 0$. The assumption of constant ΔT_s has then to be dropped. This point further confirms the increase in Φ/l as l decreases.

The experimental results show that Φ/l tends to decrease slightly with increase in l in the range of current densities normal for SMA welding. Therefore, the exponential term in equation (11), which represents the effect of thermal conduction, is small but not completely negligible. Since this decrease in Φ/l is about 5 to 10%, the Péclet number must be close to 3, because $\exp(-3) = 0.05$. In other words, at normal current densities the conditions for convection-dominated heat transfer are fulfilled, but only just. A decrease in Pe from 3 to 2 would imply an essential change in the mechanism of heat transfer.

Figures 12 and 13 show Φ/l as a function of d_w . The results for the basic electrodes are not shown in Fig. 13. They lie between the curves for R2 and R3 in Fig. 13. The covered electrodes show, in general, an increase in Φ/l with increase in d_w . The model does not account for this result. Calculation of these curves

requires knowledge of the dependence of u_l on d_w . This, in turn, requires knowledge of the dependence of the current-carrying area on the tip surface on d_w and l . This information is, to the authors' knowledge, still lacking. Furthermore, the effect might be due to the buoyance force or to surface tension streaming.

Figure 12 contains points derived from results obtained by Wilson *et al.* in SAW experiments (Ref. 29). The closeness of these curves and those for the SMA process suggests that the same processes of heat transfer are operative in the two systems.

Figure 13 also shows points obtained with bare electrodes at positive polarity. Reproducible results could not be obtained with negative polarity. It is seen that Φ/l is distinctly higher than for covered electrodes, as was also observed by Lefring (Ref. 7). This suggests that the covering absorbs a sizable fraction of the heat supplied to the liquid metal. However, this hypothesis has to be rejected for the following reasons:

1. X-ray films show that, although the pendent drop is constantly in motion and occasionally touches the surrounding cup, there is certainly not a good thermal contact; similar results were obtained by Becken (Ref. 2) and Klimant (Ref. 3).

2. Experiments with R1 and B1 electrodes (Table 11) show that Φ is independent of the thickness of the coating for a given flux composition.

We have no explanation for the observed difference between covered and bare electrodes. However, there is a possibility that the difference is due to the fact that the anode area is more steady on a bare electrode in argon than on a covered electrode where it wanders due to the motion of slag. Film images (Ref. 2) show that slag prevents arc attachment. An unsteady anode implies an unsteady pattern of fluid flow.

Figure 13 also shows a point for mild steel wire in GMA welding. It is seen to lie within the range covered by the manual electrodes.

Heat Flow Into the Covering

The covering is heated by thermal conduction from the solid part of the wire, and cooled at its outer surface by radiation and natural convection. Joule heating by current flow through the covering is negligible, because the resistivity of the flux material is several orders of magnitude higher than the resistivity of iron (Ref. 31). Therefore, the electric current in the covering is negligible.

The temperature within the flux is given by:

$$\frac{\partial T}{\partial t} = a_f \nabla^2 T \quad (12)$$

together with appropriate boundary conditions. The expression $\nabla^2 T$ is of the order of magnitude $\Delta T/L^2$, where L is the thickness of the coating, and ΔT the temperature difference across it. Orders of magnitude are $L = 1 \text{ mm}$ (0.04 in.), $a_f = 0.4 \times 10^{-6} \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$, and $\partial T/\partial t \approx 10 \text{ }^\circ\text{C s}^{-1}$, which gives $\Delta T = 25 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (45 °F) as a typical value.

Equation (12) was also solved numerically for the region where the temperature profile (Fig. 2) is flat. The flux properties and $\rho_R(T)$ were taken as measured, and $c_{pw}(T)$ as in the literature (Ref. 12). Radiative and convective losses to the surroundings (see below) were accounted for. The difference ΔT was found to increase with time. Table 12 gives ΔT for two typical cases near the end of the welding time (also see Fig. 3).

The covering absorbs a part of the ohmic power, and its thickness influences the melting rate via T_w (Table 11). The effect is not, however, of major impor-

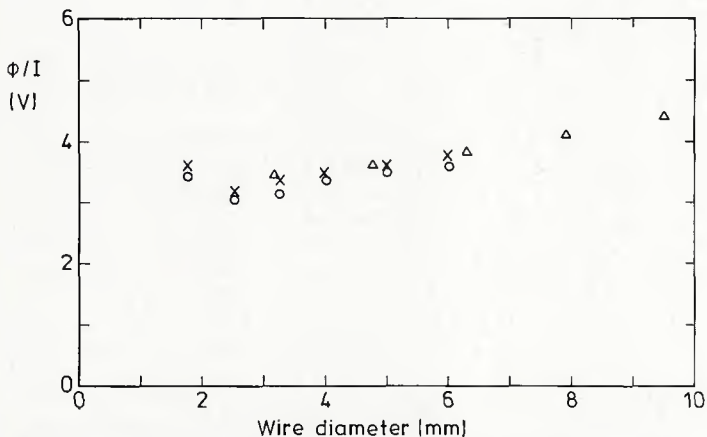


Fig. 12—Dependence of thermal power per ampere on electrode diameter. Values of Φ/l at the highest current used. X—Electrode R1, positive polarity; O—Electrode R1, negative polarity; Δ —derived from results of SAW experiments obtained by Wilson *et al.* (Ref. 29)

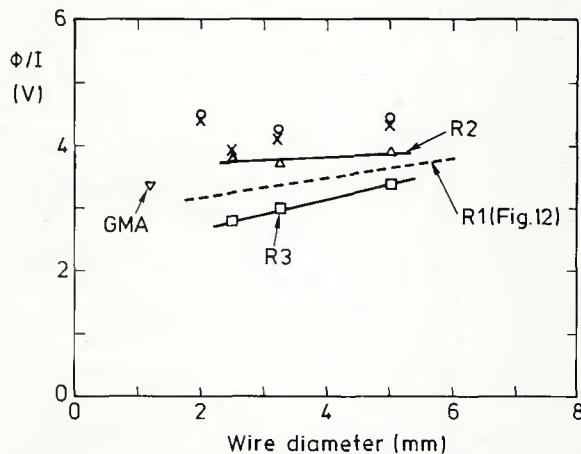


Fig. 13—Same as Fig. 11 but with positive polarity. X—bare electrodes in Ar; O—bare electrodes in Ar/CO₂; Δ —electrode R2; \square —electrode R3; ∇ —GMA, mild steel in Ar, $l \rightarrow 0$ (Ref. 9)

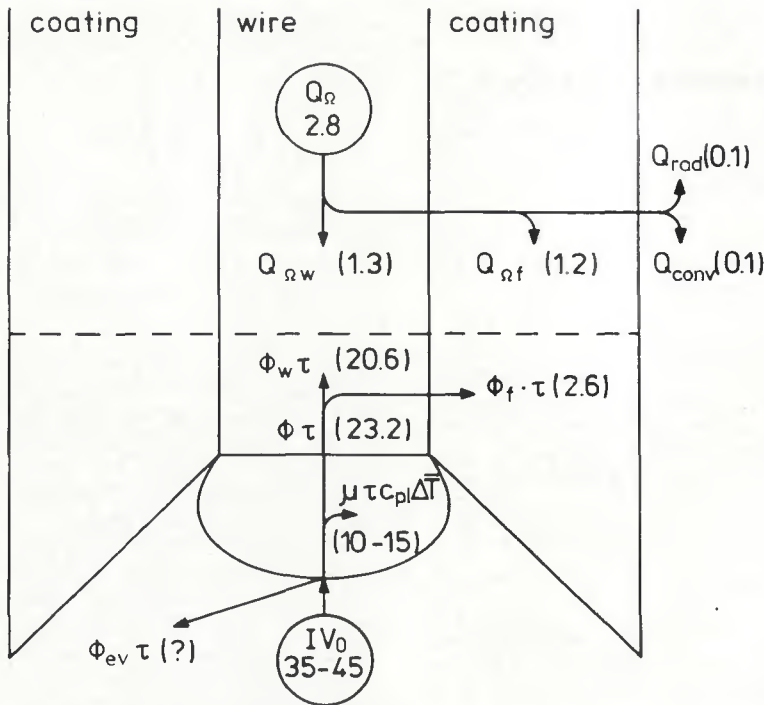


Fig. 15—Thermal energies transferred in electrode during welding. Electrode B2, $d_w = 3.21$ mm (0.126 in.), $d_f = 5.3$ mm (0.21 in.), $I = 133$ A, $\tau = 47.2$ s, length melted off—265 mm. Energies in kJ (1 kJ = 0.24 kilocalories), accuracy generally 0.1 kJ

Figure 15 surveys the various quantities of interest. It is to be noted that the values were derived from experimental results. Joule heating provides 6% of the energy supplied to the metal core in this case. Heat losses to the surroundings are small.

Conclusions

The dominant processes of heat generation in covered electrodes are cathode or anode processes occurring at the electrode tip. A part of the heat thus generated is lost by evaporation, the liquid metal absorbing the remainder. The liquid metal, in turn, transfers heat to the solid metal, which melts as a result.

The heat flow rate and, consequently, the melting rate, vary linearly with the electric current. Electromagnetically induced fluid flow broadly accounts for the transfer of heat through the liquid tip.

The requirement that the coating must not be overheated imposes a limit on the electric current. As a result, SMA welding is carried out in the current range where Joule heating provides only a minor part of the total heat supplied.

The temperature difference across a covering of normal thickness is small.

The melting rate per ampere of a covered electrode is comparable with that of a GMA welding wire in the limit of zero Joule heating, i.e., at low current and/or extension length.

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