

SA Calcium Carbide

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Abstract – The manufacture of calcium carbide in Newcastle, South Africa, was started in the late 1950s by a company called South African Carbide, at the Ballengeich site. In 1978, this operation was bought by the forerunner to the present AECI Ltd, a large producer of commodity chemicals at the time. Production continued at this site until 1992.

In the meantime, Karbochem, an operating division of Sentrachem Ltd, was also manufacturing carbide in Newcastle, as a building block for the manufacture of synthetic rubber. In 1990, the Karbochem calcium carbide operation was closed down.

In 1992, the AECI carbide business and the Karbochem production facility were amalgamated, and production continued under the Karbochem name. In 1997, the Dow Chemical Company bought the holding company of Karbochem, and the carbide business continued operations until 2003. In June 2003, the business was sold to a management consortium as SA Calcium Carbide (Pty) Ltd. Later, in October 2004, 100% of the shares were acquired by the Andina Group.

Today, the Andina Group, consisting of SACC from South Africa, CIL from UK, and ANDINA from Argentina, has become a global leader in the manufacture and supply of calcium carbide and calcium silicon, ferro silicon 75% and derivatives, recarburizers with low nitrogen content, acetylene, carbon black, micro-silica, and silicon metal.

The production facilities at Newcastle comprise a 52 MVA submerged arc furnace of a closed design, carbon monoxide gas recovery, recovery of fine raw materials via a hollow electrode system, and an extensive computer-controlled process. These all enable an efficient state-of-the-art operation. The downstream processing facilities consist of screening and drumming facilities, milling facilities, an acetylene generation plant, and an acetylene carbon black plant.

Clearly, SA Calcium Carbide (Pty) Ltd has a long history of supplying quality calcium carbide to the industries that it proudly serves.

