

CONTENTS	Page
DECLARATION	1
ABSTRACT	2
DEDICATION	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
LIST OF FIGURES	8
LIST OF SYMBOLS	12
1. INTRODUCTION	13
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	15
2.1 FUNDAMENTALS OF NUCLEATION	15
2.1.1 Homogeneous nucleation	15
2.1.2 Heterogeneous nucleation	15
2.1.3 Properties of the interface in heterogeneous nucleation	16
2.1.4 Nucleation on a coherent and a semi-coherent interface	17
2.1.5 Nucleating agents or inoculants	18
2.2 THE MECHANISM OF GRAIN REFINEMENT OF ALUMINIUM ALLOYS	20
2.3 NEW UNDERSTANDING OF NUCLEATION OF ALUMINIUM BY INOCULATION	23
2.4 METHODS OF PREPARATION OF GRAIN REFINERS	24
2.4.1 Al-Ti and Al-Ti-B grain refiners	25
2.4.2 Al-Ti -C grain refiner	26
2.5 CHARACTERIZATION OF GRAIN REFINERS	27
2.5.1 Methods of characterization	27
2.5.2 Microstructural characterisation	28
2.5.3 Chemical composition	29
2.5.4 Grain refining performance	31
2.5.5 Important factors in the use of grain refiners in aluminium alloys	32
2.5.6 Influence of mechanical and thermal treatments on the microstructure of grain refiners	37
2.6 THEORETICAL MODELS OF HETEROGENEOUS NUCLEATION	38

2.7 CORROSION MECHANISMS OF ALUMINIUM ALLOYS AND PARTICLE EXTRACTION	39
2.8 FOUNDRY PRACTICE	40
2.8.1 General considerations	40
2.8.2 Grain refiner addition	41
2.8.3 Recycled materials	42
3 EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES	43
3.1 PREPARATION OF GRAIN REFINERS' '	43
3.2 DETERMINATION OF CHEMICAL COMPOSITION	44
3.3 MICROSTRUCTURAL EXAMINATION	44
3.4 X-RAY DIFFRACTION AND EDS ANALYSES	44
3.4 THERMAL AND MECHANICAL TREATMENTS OF GRAIN REFINERS	45
3.5 HARDNESS TESTS	45
3.6 MEASUREMENTS OF PRECIPITATE PARTICLE SIZES IN GRAIN REFINERS	45
3.7 MEASUREMENTS OF GRAIN SIZE IN INOCULATED ALUMINIUM : TP-1 TEST	45
3.8 MELTING AND CASTING PROCEDURES	46
4 RESULTS.....	52
4.1 CHEMICAL COMPOSITION.....	52
4.2 MICROSTRUCTURAL EXAMINATION.....	52
4.3 SIZE OF PRECIPITATE PARTICLES IN GRAIN REFINERS.....	60
4.4 THERMAL AND MECHANICAL TREATMENTS	63
4.4.1 Microstructure after cold rolling	63
4.4.3 Microstructure after cold rolling and annealing	72
4.5 HARDNESS TESTS	72
4.6 GRAIN SIZE MEASUREMENTS	73
4.7 INFLUENCE OF Ti:B RATIO AND SILICON CONTENT ON GRAIN SIZE	81
4.8 COMPARISON OF THE SALT ROUTE AND THE ALUMINOTHERMIC REDUCTION	82
5 DISCUSSION	83
5.1 PHASE IDENTIFICATION	83
5.2 ORIGIN OF $TiAl_3$ AND TiB_2 PARTICLES	83
5.3 ORIGIN OF TITANIUM CARBIDE AND SILICON	83
5.4 MORPHOLOGY AND SIZE OF $TiAl_3$ PARTICLES.....	84
5.5 MORPHOLOGY, SIZE AND SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF TiB_2 PARTICLES	84

5.6 INFLUENCE OF MECHANICAL AND THERMAL TREATMENTS ON MICROSTRUCTURE.....	85
5.7 GRAIN SIZE OF INOCULATED ALUMINIUM CASTINGS	86
5.8 INFLUENCE OF MECHANICAL AND THERMAL TREATMENTS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE GRAIN REFINERS	88
6 CONCLUSIONS.....	90
7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK	91
APPENDIX A: VARIATION OF $TiAl_3$ THICKNESS WITH TITANIUM CONTENT	92
APPENDIX B: PHASES IN THE GRAIN REFINERS.....	94
APPENDIX C: EXPERIMENTAL DATA FOR TiB_2 SIZE MEASUREMENT CURVES	97
REFERENCES:	104

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
<i>Figure 2.1:</i> Variation of free energy for a pure liquid (G_l) and a pure solid (G_s) as a function of $1/T$; T_m is the equilibrium melting temperature ¹⁸	16
<i>Figure 2.2:</i> Contact angle between substrate and solid metal in heterogeneous nucleation.....	17
<i>Figure 2.3:</i> Model of coherent and semi-coherent interfaces between two phases ¹⁸	18
<i>Figure 2.4:</i> Detail of Al-Ti phase diagram showing the minimum Ti content for the peritectic reaction at 0.15% and 665°C.....	22
<i>Figure 2.5:</i> Optimum contact time and fade characteristics according to titanium-to-boron ratio (London & Scandinavian Co Ltd).....	32
<i>Figure 2.6:</i> Grain refining efficiency of different inoculants at equivalent addition rate.....	33
<i>Figure 2.7:</i> Effect of alloying elements on the grain-refining efficiency of a master alloy ³²	36
<i>Figure 3.1:</i> Electric resistance furnace	47
<i>Figure 3.2:</i> Schematic representation of ladle for TP-1 Test.....	48
<i>Figure 3.3:</i> Mould quench	48
<i>Figure 3.4:</i> Schematic figure of a mould tank	49
<i>Figure 3.5:</i> Details of the cast samples.....	50
<i>Figure 3.6:</i> Equipment for electropolishing.....	50
<i>Figure 3.7:</i> Specimen holder for electrolytic etching	51
<i>Figure 4.1</i> Typical microstructure of alloy Elec1A.....	53
<i>Figure 4.2:</i> Typical microstructure of alloy Ind1A	53
<i>Figure 4.3:</i> Typical microstructure of alloy Ind1B.....	54
<i>Figure 4.4:</i> Typical microstructure of alloy Arc2B	54
<i>Figure 4.5:</i> $TiAl_3$ in star-like formation and TiB_2 particles in alloy Elec1B.....	55
<i>Figure 4.6:</i> Large $TiAl_3$ particles and TiB_2 particles in alloy Ind1B.....	56
<i>Figure 4.7:</i> $TiAl_3$ and TiB_2 particles in alloy Ind1B.....	56
<i>Figure 4.8:</i> Idiomorphic TiB_2 particles in alloy Arc2B.....	57
<i>Figure 4.9:</i> TiC particles in alloy Arc2B.....	58
<i>Figure 4.10:</i> TiC particles in alloy Ind2B.....	58
<i>Figure 4.11:</i> TiB_2 , $TiAl_3$ and silicon particles in alloy Ind2B.....	59
<i>Figure 4.12:</i> TiB_2 and $TiAl_3$ particles released after dissolution of the aluminium matrix.....	59
<i>Figure 4.13</i> TiB_2 particle associated with TiC particles in alloy Arc2B	60

<i>Figure 4.14:</i> Typical XRD pattern for powder grains obtained from alloy Arc2B	61
<i>Figure 4.15:</i> Size distribution of TiB ₂ particles in different alloys	62
<i>Figure 4.16:</i> Optical micrograph of alloy Ind1B at 20 % reduction.....	64
<i>Figure 4.17:</i> Optical micrograph of alloy Arc2B at 40 % reduction	64
<i>Figure 4.18:</i> Optical micrograph of alloy Arc2B at 60 % reduction	65
<i>Figure 4.19:</i> Optical micrograph of alloy Elec1B at 60 % reduction	65
<i>Figure 4.20:</i> Optical micrograph of alloy Elec1B at 80 % reduction	66
<i>Figure 4.21:</i> Optical micrograph of alloy Ind1B at 80% reduction	66
<i>Figure 4.22:</i> Optical micrograph of alloy Ind1B at 80% reduction.....	67
<i>Figure 4.23:</i> SEM micrograph of alloy Ind1B at 80% reduction	68
<i>Figure 4.24:</i> SEM micrograph of alloy Elec1B at 80% reduction	68
<i>Figure 4.25:</i> SEM micrograph of alloy Arc2B at 80% reduction.....	69
<i>Figure 4.26:</i> SEM micrograph of commercial Al-5Ti-1B (KBM) grain refiner	69
<i>Figure 4.27:</i> Size distribution curves of TiB ₂ particles before and after rolling for alloy Ind1B ...	70
<i>Figure 4.28:</i> Size distribution curves of TiB ₂ particles before and after rolling for alloy Arc2B ..	70
<i>Figure 4.29:</i> Size distribution curves of TiB ₂ particles before and after rolling for alloy Ind2B ...	71
<i>Figure 4.30:</i> SEM micrograph showing TiAl ₃ and TiB ₂ with smooth edges in alloy Elec1B.....	72
<i>Figure 4.31:</i> Plot of grain size against holding time for grain refiner Elec1B	77
<i>Figure 4.32:</i> Plot of grain size against holding time for grain refiner Ind2A	77
<i>Figure 4.33:</i> Plot of grain size against holding time for grain refiner Ind1B	78
<i>Figure 4.34:</i> Plot of grain size against holding time for grain refiner Ind2B	78
<i>Figure 4.35:</i> Plot of grain size against holding time for grain refiner Arc2B	79
<i>Figure 4.36:</i> Evolution of grain size with the holding time for commercial grain refine (Al-5%Ti-1%B KBM)	79
<i>Figure 4.37:</i> grain size achieved using an experimental grain refiner (Ind1B).....	80
<i>Figure 4.38:</i> Grain size achieved using a commercial grain refiner	80
<i>Figure A.1:</i> Alloy Ind1A with 2.64 wt%Ti.....	92
<i>Figure A.2:</i> Alloy Elec1B with 1.98wt% Ti	92
<i>Figure A.3:</i> Alloy Ind1B with 6.40wt%Ti.....	93
<i>Figure A.4:</i> Alloy Arc2B with 6.98 wt%Ti	93
<i>Figure B1:</i> Spectrum of aluminium matrix (Gold coated sample)	94
<i>Figure B2:</i> Spectrum of aluminium matrix showing the presence of silicon (Gold coated sample).....	94
<i>Figure B3:</i> Spectrum of TiAl ₃ needle-like particles	95

<i>Figure B4: Spectrum of TiB₂ particles</i>	95
<i>Figure B5: Spectrum of TiC particles</i>	96

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
<i>Table 2.1:</i> Compounds used to study the heterogeneous nucleation of aluminium from its melt	19
<i>Table 2.2:</i> Al-Ti-B master alloys of different titanium-to-boron ratios.....	30
<i>Table 2.3:</i> Al-Ti-C master alloys of different titanium-to-carbon ratios.....	31
<i>Table 2.4:</i> Addition levels for specific aluminium alloys.....	41
<i>Table 3.1:</i> Composition of feed materials used for the preparation of grain refiners.....	43
<i>Table 3.2:</i> Conditions for the preparation of the aluminium-based alloys.....	44
<i>Table 3.3:</i> Composition of aluminium used as feed material in the TP-1 test.....	46
<i>Table 4.1:</i> Chemical compositions of experimental and commercial grain refiners.....	52
<i>Table 4.2:</i> Calculated titanium-to-boron ratio.....	52
<i>Table 4.3:</i> Size limit of TiAl_3 particles.....	61
<i>Table 4.4:</i> Statistical data of TiB_2 size measurement.....	62
<i>Table 4.5:</i> Relative amount of TiB_2 particles in different alloys.....	63
<i>Table 4.6:</i> Relative amount of TiB_2 particles in alloys after cold rolling.....	71
<i>Table 4.7:</i> Amounts of TiB_2 particles in different alloys before and after cold rolling.....	71
<i>Table 4.8:</i> Vickers hardness of the grain refiners as cast, cold rolled by 80% and cold rolled and annealed	73
<i>Table 4.9:</i> Grain size of aluminium as a function grain refiner and holding time	75
<i>Table 4.10:</i> Grain size reduction as a function of grain refiners and holding time	76
<i>Table 4.11:</i> Grain size as a function of titanium-to-boron ratio for the optimum contact time.....	81
<i>Table 4.12:</i> Silicon content in the melt after addition of grain refiners.....	81
<i>Table 4.13:</i> Comparison of salt route and aluminothermic reduction	82

LIST OF SYMBOLS

Angle of contact between solid metal and substrate.....	θ
Interface strain.....	ε
Lattice constant.....	a
Interface.....	I
Phases	α, β
Lattice mismatch.....	δ
Interface energy due to the matching in the coherent region.....	ε_E
Interface energy due to the matching in the dislocation.....	ε_S
Growth restricting factor.....	GRF
Micron.....	μm
Grain refiners prepared in electric resistance furnace.....	Elec
Grain refiners prepared in induction furnace.....	Ind
Grain refiners prepared in arc button furnace.....	Arc