

Decanter Centrifuge Handbook

**Alan Records and
Ken Sutherland**

First Edition



**ELSEVIER
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Preface and Acknowledgements

By virtue of its title, which involves the word “handbook”, this book is intended, above all else, to be useful. Its aims include the explanation of the nature and methods of operation of the decanter centrifuge, and a description of the kind of performance that might be expected from a decanter.

The decanter centrifuge is a device for continuously separating particulate solids from a suspending liquid or liquids by sedimentation and decanting. As such, it is part of the general range of sedimenting, filtering and other mechanical equipment used for separation processes. A distinguished range of books exists that describes this complete spectrum of equipment, and the processes by which they operate. A previous book covers the whole range of centrifuges, both sedimenting (like the decanter) and filtering, but this is the first book to deal solely with the solid-bowl, scroll-discharge centrifuge, which is the decanter.

The book is aimed at all those for whom the decanter may be part of their studies, of their research, or of their working life. It is intended to be of value in undergraduate courses on filtration and separation, but it will also offer the practising engineer in end-user companies much that is of direct value to the daily job of designing, specifying or operating this sophisticatedly engineered, but very useful, piece of processing equipment. This handbook will find use in research establishments and equipment manufacturers' engineering departments, as it gives guidance on basic design and operating features, some in regular use and some only recently introduced to the market.

This essentially practical text nevertheless covers the underlying theory of centrifugal sedimentation separations in some detail, which further extends its usefulness to the research or design engineer looking for new ideas.

The arrangement of the handbook follows a logical pattern: a general introduction, followed by technical descriptions of equipment features and the industrial uses of the decanter. Then comes the theory of the decanter's design, and detailed descriptions of operational and test procedures. The book finishes with some marketing data, and descriptions of the equipment ranges of the main manufacturers.

The authors (both Chartered Chemical Engineers) have a wealth of experience in the decanter business:

- Alan Records retired from a senior equipment application and development role with Alfa Laval, after almost a full lifetime's job involved with decanters, covering research, design, commissioning, operation and service, in a wide range of industrial applications; and
- Ken Sutherland, for a time Technical Manager for Sharples, has later been heavily involved with the marketing aspects of separation equipment, including centrifuges.

The putting together of a book of this nature requires the help and co-operation of many individuals and organisations. The contributions, help, advice, work and kind permissions of those mentioned below are most gratefully acknowledged.

Lenny Shapiro and Jan Cederqvist contributed to the mechanical information, while Bert Guille assisted with the electrical content. The process data were obtained as a result of painstaking work in the field, often in far less than a salubrious environment, by numerous field engineers, our former colleagues, and in particular John Joyce, Betina Pedersen, and Keith Smith. Apologies are extended to all those not mentioned.

Denis Locke contributed to the work on many of the illustrations, professionally executed by Mike Nicklinson.

Graham Dawson, with the help of some of his former colleagues, advised on the section on flocculant technology. Keith Kernahan advised on the details of the Viscotherm equipment.

The Triton Electronic Company co-operated in providing photographs and details of their CST equipment.

The decanter centrifuge market is a highly competitive one, and thus manufacturers are, understandably, reticent in providing specific data and information on their products. Without such data and information, however, this book would be reduced in value. The authors are therefore especially grateful for the data supplied by the companies Alfa Laval, Baker Process (Bird Machine and Bird Humboldt), Broadbent, Centriquip, Centrisys, Flottweg, Gennaretti, Guinard, Hiller, Hutchison-Hayes, Noxon, Pennwalt India, Pieralisi, Siebtechnik, and Westfalia/Niro. Permission to reproduce sketches and drawings has been obtained from Alfa Laval, Bird Machine, Bird Humboldt, Broadbent, Centriquip, Centrisys, Cyclo, Flottweg, Noxon, Siebtechnik, Tomal, Viscotherm and Westfalia Separator.

Finally, gratitude is expressed to Bent Madsen and his colleagues for checking the early manuscripts. The book owes its origin to Nick Corner-Walker, then Director of Engineering with Alfa Laval, to whom the authors are indebted for the inspiration, for his personal support, and for putting the resources of a major manufacturer of decanters behind the venture. The

authors are very happy to acknowledge that debt here, but also to acknowledge the input from the other companies whose ideas and illustrations have been used at the appropriate parts of the text.

To these, and all of the other workers involved with the decanter for the 60 years of its effective operating history, the authors express their thanks.

Alan Records
Ken Sutherland

CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgements	xiii
Chapter 1 Introduction	
1.1 The Decanter Centrifuge	2
1.1.1 The basic decanter	2
1.1.2 Separation principle	3
1.1.3 Decanter applications	5
1.2 The History of the Decanter	6
1.2.1 Origins	6
1.2.2 Machine and application development	8
1.3 Decanter Manufacturers	10
1.4 Present Trends	13
1.5 References	14
Chapter 2 Decanter Design	
2.1 Basic Construction	17
2.2 Basic Components	19
2.2.1 Orientation	19
2.2.2 Flow	19
2.2.3 Materials of construction	21
2.2.4 Bowl	21
2.2.4.1 Front hub	22
2.2.4.2 Centrate weirs	22
2.2.4.3 Liner	23
2.2.4.4 Front hub bearing	24
2.2.5 Beach	25
2.2.5.1 Rear hub and bearings	26
2.2.5.2 Cake discharge	28
2.2.5.3 Liner	28
2.2.6 Conveyor	29
2.2.6.1 Conveyor hub	29
2.2.6.2 Flights	31
2.2.6.3 Feed zone	31

	2.2.6.4	Floc/rinse zone	33
	2.2.6.5	Wear protection	33
	2.2.6.6	Conveyor bearings and seals	34
2.2.7		Gearbox	36
2.2.8		Frame	37
	2.2.8.1	Bearing supports	38
	2.2.8.2	Feed tube	38
	2.2.8.3	Vibration isolators	39
2.2.9		Casing	40
	2.2.9.1	Casing baffles	41
	2.2.9.2	Cake discharge	41
	2.2.9.3	Centrate discharge	42
	2.2.9.4	Casing seals	42
	2.2.9.5	Vents	42
2.2.10		Sub-frame	43
2.2.11		Main drive	43
2.2.12		Back-drive	45
2.3		Variations to Main Components	47
	2.3.1	Orientation	47
	2.3.1.1	Vertical vs. horizontal	47
	2.3.1.2	Vertical decanter seals and bearings	49
	2.3.1.3	Vertical decanter casing seal	51
2.3.2		Flow	51
2.3.3		Materials of construction	52
2.3.4		Bowl variants	54
	2.3.4.1	Front hub	54
	2.3.4.2	Centrate weirs	55
	2.3.4.3	Liner	56
	2.3.4.4	Main bearing	58
2.3.5		Beach	59
	2.3.5.1	Rear hub	61
	2.3.5.2	Cake discharge	61
	2.3.5.3	Beach liner	64
2.3.6		Conveyor	64
	2.3.6.1	Conveyor hub	66
	2.3.6.2	Flights	66
	2.3.6.3	Feed zone	67
	2.3.6.4	Floc/rinse zone	69
	2.3.6.5	Wear protection	71
	2.3.6.6	Bearings and seals	73
2.3.7		Gearbox	73
2.3.8		Frame	76
	2.3.8.1	Bearing supports	76
	2.3.8.2	Feed tube	76

	2.3.8.3	Vibration isolators	77
2.3.9		Casing	77
	2.3.9.1	Baffles	77
	2.3.9.2	Cake discharge	78
	2.3.9.3	Centrate discharge	79
	2.3.9.4	Casing seals	79
	2.3.9.5	Vents	80
2.3.10		Sub-frame	80
2.3.11		Main drive	80
2.3.12		Back-drive	82
2.4		Special Features	86
	2.4.1	Basic construction	86
	2.4.1.1	Screen-bowl decanter	86
	2.4.1.2	Three-phase decanter	86
	2.4.1.3	The countercurrent extractor decanter	89
	2.4.1.4	Decanters for temperature and pressure extremes	90
	2.4.1.5	The cantilevered bowl	90
	2.4.1.6	The "hubless" conveyor	90
	2.4.1.7	Thickening decanter	90
	2.4.1.8	The dual beach decanter	92
	2.4.2	Centripetal pump	93
	2.4.3	Skimmer pipe	95
	2.4.4	Centrate weir design	96
	2.4.4.1	Cup dam	96
	2.4.4.2	Notched dam	96
	2.4.4.3	Inflatable dam	97
	2.4.5	Noise suppression	97
	2.4.6	Bowl baffles	99
	2.4.6.1	Cake baffle disc	99
	2.4.6.2	Baffle cone	100
	2.4.6.3	Floater disc	101
	2.4.6.4	Conveying baffle	102
	2.4.6.5	Longitudinal baffle	103
	2.4.7	Clarification enhancement	104
	2.4.7.1	Quasi-axial flow	104
	2.4.7.2	Fully axial flow	105
	2.4.7.3	Vanes	105
	2.4.7.4	Discs	106
	2.4.8	Conveyor rake	107
	2.4.9	Conveyor tiles	108
	2.4.10	Conveyor pitch	109
	2.4.10.1	Variable pitch	109

	2.4.10.2 Reverse pitch	110
	2.4.11 Counterbalance and scraper flights	110
	2.4.12 Feed zone	112
	2.4.13 The reslurry collector	113
	2.4.14 CIP	114
	2.4.15 The Rotodiff	114
	2.4.16 Power regeneration	115
	2.4.17 Dual main drive motor	116
	2.4.18 Floating conveyor	116
	2.4.19 Decanter controls	116
2.5	References	118

Chapter 3 Applications

3.1	Application Classes	122
3.2	Application Analysis	125
3.3	Waste Sludge Processing	127
	3.3.1 Industrial wastes	127
	3.3.2 Water treatment sludges	129
	3.3.3 Municipal sewage treatment	129
3.4	Energy Materials Production	132
3.5	Processed Fuels	134
3.6	Minerals Extraction and Processing	135
3.7	Food and Food By-Products	136
	3.7.1 Meat and meat products processing	136
	3.7.2 Fish processing	137
	3.7.3 Fruit and vegetable products	138
	3.7.4 Other food processing	140
3.8	Beverages	141
3.9	The Chemicals Industry	142
	3.9.1 Bulk inorganic chemicals	143
	3.9.2 Bulk organic chemicals	143
	3.9.3 Fine and household chemicals	144
	3.9.4 Pharmaceutical and medicinal chemicals	144
3.10	Other Applications	146

Chapter 4 Decanter Theory

4.1	Basic Theories	149
	4.1.1 Acceleration force	149
	4.1.2 Differential	150
	4.1.3 Conveyor torque	151
	4.1.4 Process performance calculations	151
4.2	Particle Size Distribution	154
4.3	Clarification	159
	4.3.1 Sigma theory	159

	4.3.1.1	Using sigma	165
	4.3.2	Sigma enhancement	166
	4.3.3	Flocculant requirement	167
4.4		Classification	168
4.5		Three-Phase Separation	170
4.6		Thickening	173
4.7		Conveying	175
	4.7.1	The Beta theory	175
	4.7.2	Conveying on the beach	176
	4.7.3	Dry solids conveying	177
4.8		Conveyor Torque	179
4.9		Dewatering and Washing	180
	4.9.1	Solids dewatering	180
	4.9.2	Washing	181
	4.9.3	Solids compaction	185
4.10		Dry Solids Operation	186
4.11		Fluid Dynamics	192
	4.11.1	Reynolds number	192
	4.11.2	Moving layer	194
	4.11.3	Cresting	194
	4.11.4	Feed zone acceleration	195
4.12		Power Consumption	196
	4.12.1	Main motor sizing	197
	4.12.2	Main motor acceleration	198
4.13		Mechanical Design	200
	4.13.1	Maximum bowl speed	200
	4.13.2	Critical speeds	202
	4.13.3	Liquid instability problems	203
	4.13.4	Length/diameter ratio	204
	4.13.5	Bearing life	204
	4.13.6	Gearbox life	206
	4.13.7	Feed tube	206
4.14		Nomenclature	208
4.15		References	213

Chapter 5 Flocculation

5.1	The Principle of Flocculation	217
5.2	Polymer Solution Make-Up	220
	5.2.1	Dissolving solid polymers
	5.2.2	Diluting dispersions
	5.2.3	Final flocculant solution characteristics
5.3	Polymer Choice	225
5.4	Pretreatment	229
5.5	Admitting Flocculant to the Decanter	230

5.6	Flocculant Suppliers	233
5.7	Low-Toxicity Polymers	235
5.8	Applications	236
5.9	Performance	237
5.10	References	241

Chapter 6 Test Work and Data

6.1	Test Equipment	245
6.2	Test Procedures	248
6.3	Test Log	252
6.4	Some Test Data	255
6.4.1	Spent grain	255
6.4.2	Agricultural products	258
6.4.3	Lime sludge classification	259
6.4.4	Clay classification	261
6.4.5	Waste activated sludge thickening	263
6.4.6	Digested sludge thickening	265
6.4.7	Lactose washing	267
6.4.8	Coal tailings dewatering	269
6.4.9	Dry solids (DS) dewatering	269

Chapter 7 Calculations and Scaling

7.1	Basic Calculations	284
7.2	Three-Phase Calculations	288
7.3	Classification Calculations	291
7.4	Washing	294
7.5	The Probability Scale	298
7.6	Scale-Up of Centrate Clarity Limiting Applications	300
7.7	Simple Dewatering and Torque Scale-Up	302
7.8	Main Motor Sizing	306
7.9	DS Scaling	308

Chapter 8 Instrumentation and Control

8.1	Decanter Plant Modules	317
8.2	Instrumentation	319
8.2.1	Flow meters	319
8.2.2	Solids concentration meters	319
8.2.3	Level probes	320
8.2.4	Speed probes	321
8.2.5	Temperature probes	321
8.2.6	Torque measurement	321
8.2.7	Timers	321
8.2.8	Counters	322
8.2.9	Electrical meters	322

8.2.10	Bearing monitors	322
8.3	Controlled Equipment	323
8.3.1	On/off devices	323
8.3.2	Variable output devices	324
8.4	Controllers	325
8.5	Integrated Controller	328
8.6	CIP	330
8.7	References	331
Chapter 9	The Decanter Market	
9.1	Market Characteristics	334
9.2	Market Trends	335
9.3	Market Size Estimates	336
9.3.1	Overall decanter market size	336
9.3.2	Regional market estimates	337
9.3.3	Application market estimates	337
9.3.4	Suppliers' market shares	338
Chapter 10	Suppliers' Data	339
Chapter 11	Glossary of Terms	363
	Appendix	379
	Index	413

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The decanter centrifuge has become a major processing tool in a wide range of liquid/solid separation applications. This handbook aims to be a thorough introduction to the design, performance and application of the decanter. It aims also to be a useful guide for the centrifuge engineer, both in equipment manufacturing companies and in the end-user companies, and their associated contractors and consultancies.

The handbook's first chapter introduces the reader to the decanter, to its history and to the manufacturing sector within which it is made. The contents of this chapter are intentionally brief, with major expansion of the topics covered in later chapters of the book.

1.1 The Decanter Centrifuge

The solid-bowl scroll-discharge centrifuge — now almost universally known as the decanter centrifuge — has, indeed, become the workhorse of a wide range of liquid/solid separation activities. Its application to the dewatering of waste sludges has made it a most valuable tool in combating environmental pollution. This has made the decanter a well-known and widely appreciated piece of equipment.

1.1.1 The basic decanter

Although a complicated piece of machinery, the decanter centrifuge embodies a simple principle, that of the screw conveyor. In basic terms, the decanter comprises a solid cylindrical bowl, rotating at high speed. Inside the bowl is a scroll (screw conveyor) rotating at a slightly different speed. The differential speed between bowl and scroll provides the conveying motion to collect and remove the solids, which accumulate at the bowl wall.

A slurry of liquid and suspended solids is fed along the centre line, to some fixed position within the bowl, and is accelerated outwards to join the pond of liquid held on the bowl wall by the centrifugal force. This same force then causes the suspended solids to settle, and accumulate at the bowl wall. The clarified liquid then flows along the bowl, to leave at one end of it, over some kind of weir design, which sets the level of the liquid surface in the bowl.

The other end of the bowl is sloped inwards, towards the centre, thus providing a beach, up which the solids are conveyed, to be discharged from the bowl, at the top of the beach. Whilst the solids are conveyed up the beach, some, hopefully most, of the entrained liquid drains back into the pond, to join the liquid flow towards the far end.

The scroll usually is carried on a hollow axial hub, through which the slurry feed tube passes to the feed zone. The diameter, the number, and the pitch of the conveyor flights are chosen to match the needs of the slurry being treated — as are the depth of the pond, the length of the bowl, the conveyor differential speed, and the angle of slope of the beach.

Most decanters operate with their axis horizontal, in which case they usually are mounted in substantial bearings at each end of the bowl. Vertical

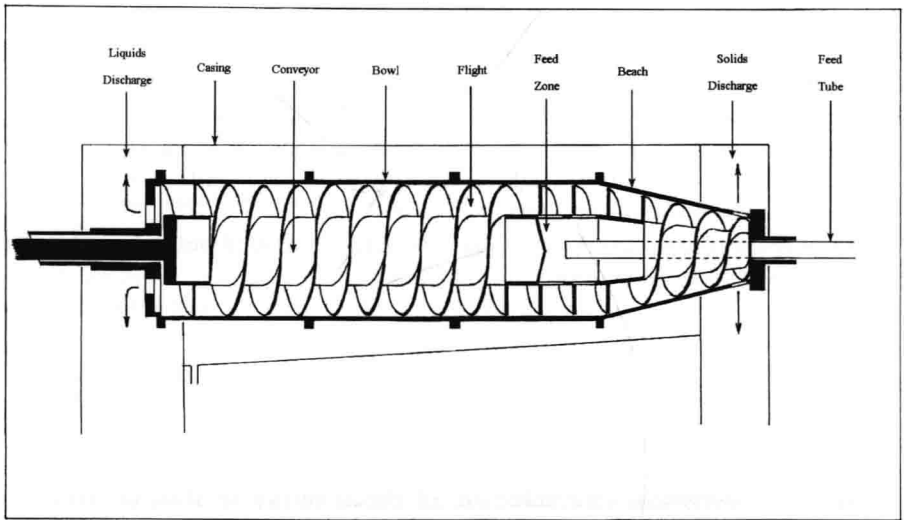


Figure 1.1. The main operating parts of a decanter centrifuge.

operation is possible, in which case the bowl is carried only on one set of bearings, at the top. If the decanter is short, then cantilevered horizontal operation is also possible, with bearings at one end only.

The rotating bowl is enclosed in a casing, which is divided to ensure that the discharged liquid (the "centrate") and solids cannot remix after separation.

The basic decanter is completed with a drive motor, usually electrical, and a gearbox, which controls the differential speed of the conveyor.

Aspects of the physical forms of the decanter in its different versions are described in Chapter 2.

1.1.2 Separation principle

The decanter operates mainly by sedimentation, a process causing the separation of suspended solids by virtue of their higher density than the liquid in which they are suspended. If the density difference is high, then gravity may provide sufficient driving force for the separation to occur in a reasonable time — as is the case with large-tank clarifiers and clarifloculators, or with lamella and inclined-plate separators. If the difference in density is small, or the particle size is very small, then gravity separation would take too long, and the separation force must be augmented by the imposition of centrifugal forces many times that of gravity alone.

The centrifugal force may be imposed by virtue of the flow of the slurry, as in a hydrocyclone, or by means of mechanically driven rotation, as in the sedimenting centrifuge.