

(12) STANDARD PATENT
(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE

(11) Application No. **AU 2017256057 B2**

(54) Title
Aluminothermic welding mold and repair method

(51) International Patent Classification(s)
E01B 31/18 (2006.01) **B23K 37/06** (2006.01)
B23K 23/00 (2006.01)

(21) Application No: **2017256057** (22) Date of Filing: **2017.05.02**

(87) WIPO No: **WO17/187110**

(30) Priority Data

(31) Number	(32) Date	(33) Country
1653859	2016.04.29	FR

(43) Publication Date: **2017.11.02**

(44) Accepted Journal Date: **2022.03.17**

(71) Applicant(s)
Pandrol

(72) Inventor(s)
Bordery, Pierre;Delcroix, Frédéric

(74) Agent / Attorney
Davies Collison Cave Pty Ltd, Level 15 1 Nicholson Street, MELBOURNE, VIC, 3000, AU

(56) Related Art
US 2007/0272114 A1
FR 1561465 A
FR 2890668 A1

(12) DEMANDE INTERNATIONALE PUBLIÉE EN VERTU DU TRAITÉ DE COOPÉRATION EN MATIÈRE DE BREVETS (PCT)

(19) Organisation Mondiale de la
Propriété Intellectuelle
Bureau international



(10) Numéro de publication internationale

WO 2017/187110 A1

(43) Date de la publication internationale
02 novembre 2017 (02.11.2017)

WIPO | PCT

- (51) Classification internationale des brevets :
E01B 31/18 (2006.01) B23K 23/00 (2006.01)
B23K 37/06 (2006.01)
- (21) Numéro de la demande internationale :
PCT/FR2017/051038
- (22) Date de dépôt international :
02 mai 2017 (02.05.2017)
- (25) Langue de dépôt : français
- (26) Langue de publication : français
- (30) Données relatives à la priorité :
1653859 29 avril 2016 (29.04.2016) FR
- (71) Déposant : RAILTECH INTERNATIONAL [FR/FR] ;
Zone Industrielle Rue du Bas Pré, 59590 RAISMES (FR).
- (72) Inventeurs : BORDERY, Pierre ; 796 rue Emile Tabary,
59690 VIEUX CONDE (FR). DELCROIX, Frédéric ; 9
bis rue de Douai, 59171 HELESMES (FR).
- (74) Mandataire : REGIMBEAU ; 139 Rue Vendôme, 69477
LYON CEDEX 06 (FR).

(81) États désignés (sauf indication contraire, pour tout titre de protection nationale disponible) : AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DJ, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IR, IS, JP, KE, KG, KH, KN, KP, KR, KW, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SA, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) États désignés (sauf indication contraire, pour tout titre de protection régionale disponible) : ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, ST, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), eurasien (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM), européen (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

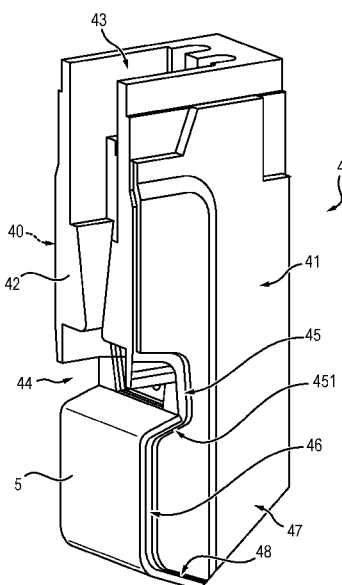
Déclarations en vertu de la règle 4.17 :

— relative à la qualité d'inventeur (règle 4.17(iv))

(54) Title: ALUMINOTHERMIC WELDING MOLD AND REPAIR METHOD

(54) Titre : MOULE DE SOUDURE ALUMINOTHERMIQUE ET PROCÉDÉ DE RÉPARATION

FIG. 6



(57) Abstract: The present invention relates in particular to a mold (M) for aluminothermic welding of a metal rail (1), which comprises at least two essentially identical parts or shells (4) that are configured so as to be temporarily assembled opposite one another and on either side of said rail (1) in order to enclose the head (10), the web (11) and the foot (12) of this rail (1), each part or shell (4) having an upper opening (43) which opens onto an internal cavity (44) bounded by walls (45, 46, 48) configured to enclose the head (10), the web (11) and the foot (12) of said rail (1), characterized in that said internal cavity (44) comprises a compressible sealing coating (5) only against the walls (45, 46, 48) that are configured to enclose said web (11), foot (12) and the underside of the head (10), with the exception of the rest of the head (10) and the underside of the foot (12).

(57) Abrégé : La présente invention se rapporte notamment à un moule (M) de soudure aluminothermique d'un rail métallique (1), qui comporte au moins deux pièces ou coquilles (4) sensiblement identiques, configurées pour être montées temporairement en regard l'une de l'autre et de part et d'autre dudit rail (1) pour enserrer les champignon (10), âme (11) et patin (12) de ce rail (1), chaque pièce ou coquille (4) présentant une ouverture supérieure (43), qui débouche sur une cavité interne (44) délimitée par des parois configurées (45, 46, 48) pour enserrer le champignon (10), l'âme (11) et le patin (12) dudit rail (1), caractérisé par le fait que ladite cavité interne (44) comporte un revêtement compressible d'étanchéification (5) uniquement contre les parois (45, 46, 48) configurées pour enserrer lesdits âme (11), patin (12) et dessous du champignon (10), et à l'exception du reste du champignon (10) et du dessous du patin (12).

WO 2017/187110 A1

Publiée:

- avec rapport de recherche internationale (Art. 21(3))
- la date du dépôt de la demande internationale s'inscrit dans un délai de deux mois à compter de la date d'expiration du délai de priorité (règle 26bis.3)

**MOLD FOR ALUMINOTHERMIC WELDING OF A METAL RAIL AND REPAIR
METHOD MAKING USE THEREOF**

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention pertains to a mold for repairing metal rails, notably railroad rails.

It also relates to a method for repairing a rail
5 that makes use of such a mold.

TECHNOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Throughout the present application, the term "foot" will be used to designate the bottom part of the rail that
10 rests on a tie, whereas the terms "head" and "web" will respectively designate the running track and the stem of vertical orientation that connects the foot to the head. This definition applies for all types of feet, whether they are of "Vignole" profile or other.

15 Here the concern is more specifically rails of which the upper part of the head is degraded.

This degradation usually results from wear of the rail or from running incidents, such that the running surface is no longer uniform but rather has surface irregularities
20 which can compromise safety.

In such situations, it is known to intervene on site, to cut out the portion of rail affected by the degradation, to replace it by a "replacement rail section", that is to say a section of new rail, and to weld this section
25 to the pre-existing rail.

It is easily understood that such an operation is expensive, tedious and time consuming. Even if it could be justified when the degradation is very considerable, it does

not have real reason to be justified when the defect has a limited extent in terms of depth and length.

However, from the moment that it is proposed to repair the rail directly by aluminothermic welding, the following difficulties could be faced.

An on-site intervention procedure is known that makes use of a mold wholly constituted of sand. The mold is placed on either side of a region of the rail from which the defect has been removed, and molten steel obtained by aluminothermic reaction is poured into the mold so as to fill the hollowing out created by the removal of the defect.

It is generally necessary to carry out bedding in of the sand mold against the mold to adjust as best as possible the contact surfaces with a view to ensuring leak tightness vis-à-vis the molten metal that will be poured into the mold, which is a condition for the success of the repair. This operation is tedious and does not always make it possible to obtain perfect leak tightness.

Furthermore, it cannot be excluded that the defect to be repaired is located in a zone in which, at the moment of laying the railway line, two rail sections have been welded together by electric welding (or "flash butt welding") which generates excessive thicknesses that can reach up to three millimeters. Obviously, the seams and other welding traces present on the head have been carefully eliminated, notably by grinding. This is not on the other hand the case on the other parts of the rail that do not constitute running surfaces.

Seams resulting from electric welds present elsewhere than on the head could be ground before repairing the rail. But this is in practice difficult to envisage because the operators have limited time available for carrying out the repair, the track having to be closed to traffic for a duration that is as short as possible. Yet, such a grinding would have to be carried out in a meticulous manner in order to ensure a perfectly leak tight contact surface between the rail and the mold.

In these conditions, it is easily understood that these surface irregularities pose problems of leak tightness from the moment that it is proposed to repair a damaged rail by aluminothermic welding in a mold which encloses on either
5 side the whole of the rail in the damaged zone.

Embodiments of the present invention specifically aim to correct this shortcoming.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 Thus, in a first aspect, the present invention pertains to a mold for aluminothermic welding of a metal rail, which comprises at least two substantially identical pieces or shells, configured to be temporarily assembled opposite one another and on either side of said rail to enclose the head,
15 web and foot of this rail, each piece or shell having an upper opening which opens onto an internal cavity bounded by walls configured to enclose the head, the web and the foot of said rail, characterized by the fact that said internal cavity comprises a compressible sealing coating only against the wall
20 configured to enclose said web, foot and underside of the head, the rest of the head and the underside of the foot being devoid of any compressible sealing coating.

According to one embodiment, said coating is refractory felt.

25 According to one embodiment, the thickness of said coating is comprised between 2 and 10 mm.

In a particularly advantageous manner, the lower part of the piece opposite to the cavity has an inclined cut configured to avoid contact with a system for attaching the
30 rail on a tie.

A second aspect of the invention relates to a method for repairing a rail that has a surface defect at the level of its head, characterized by the fact that it comprises the following steps which consist in:

35 - removing said defect so as to create a hollowing out on the head of said rail;

-positioning the two pieces or shells of a mold as described above on either side of this rail;

-filling said hollowing out by pouring into said mold, via said upper opening, an aluminothermic welding material.

According to one embodiment, the web has, substantially in line with the defect to be repaired, a weld seam resulting from electric welding and the compressible coating of the mold is intimately applied on said seam.

10

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other characteristics and advantages of the invention will become clear on reading the following description of a preferred embodiment of the invention. This description is made with reference to the appended drawings in which:

- figure 1 is a very simplified side view of a rail section having a surface defect at the level of its running part (head), as well as a superficial trace of welding at the level of its web;

- figure 2 is a perspective view of the part of the rail of figure 1 having a surface defect, after removal of a portion of material that encompasses this defect;

- figure 3 is a view analogous to figure 2, the portion of removed material having however a different shape;

- figure 4 is a figure analogous to figure 1 showing the rail after repair;

- figures 5 and 6 are perspective views, along two different directions, of a part of a mold according to an embodiment of the present invention;

- figures 7 and 8 are perspective views of a rail section to be repaired, represented relative to a part of mold according to an embodiment of the invention, said section being visible in figure 7 by transparency.

35

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In figure 1 a metal railroad rail section is schematically represented.

In a manner well known per se, this rail comprises a head 10, a web 11 and a foot 12. A surface defect that the head 10 has at the level of its upper running surface is referenced 2. This defect occupies for example a surface area of several cm².

Substantially in line with the defect 2 extends, at the level of the web 11, a welding seam 110 resulting from electric welding. This seam forms an irregularity on the surface of the web 11.

It is typically this type of rail that it is proposed to repair by means of the mold according to the invention.

Figures 2 and 3 show a smaller part of this same rail, represented while the surface defect 2 has been removed beforehand, such that the presence of a hollowing out 3 on the surface of the head 10 is noted.

The shape of the hollowing out 3 is a function of the technique that has been used for the removal operation. Thus, in figure 2, the removed zone has two straight edges perpendicular to each other, obtained by grinding of the rail whereas, in figure 3, the hollowing out has a curved bottom obtained by oxygen cutting. This shape has no influence on the characteristics of the mold and the method according to the present invention. Naturally, those skilled in the art could choose any other appropriate surface defect removal technique without however going beyond the scope of the present invention.

In figure 4 is represented what constitutes, as it were, the objective of embodiments of the present invention, in this instance a repaired rail 1 which has a filling material 30, in place of the hollowing out 3 of figures 2 and 3.

Reference will now be made more specifically to figures 5 and 6 to describe the mold according to an embodiment of the invention.

This mold is constituted of two substantially identical pieces (or shells) 4, preferentially and exclusively formed of sand. No more details will be given on the manner of manufacturing such a mold, because it is known *per se* and does not constitute the core of the invention.

For greater clarity, a single piece 4 has been represented here. It is laterally bounded by two parallel faces 40 and 41. It has in its lower part a frontal face 42 which is divided into two parts arranged on either side of an opening 43 that connects the upper part of the mold with the lower molding cavity 44 that it has.

The lower part of the mold is organized into two regions: the molding cavity 44 intended to be arranged around the head of the rail, which is bounded by a wall 45, and a bearing surface against the web and the foot of the rail, formed by walls 46, 48.

The wall 45 is configured to enclose the head 10 of the rail 1, whereas the wall 46 is intended to enclose the web 11 and the wall 48 is intended to enclose the foot 12 of the rail. The wall 45 notably includes a part 451 that is intended to be in contact with the underside of the head.

According to the invention, the lower part of the mold comprises a compressible sealing coating 5 only against the walls 451, 46 and 48 configured to enclose said web, foot and underside of the head, with the exception of the rest of the head and the underside of the foot.

According to an advantageous embodiment, this coating is constituted of refractory felt. It is made integral with the walls by means of an adhesive. The thickness of the coating is typically comprised between 2 and 10 mm.

According to an advantageous embodiment, the lower part of the piece 4 opposite to the cavity 44 has a more pronounced inclined cut 47 than on conventional molds for aluminothermic welding, in order to make it possible to place the mold at any emplacement of the rail. Indeed, if the repair has to be carried out in line with an electric welding

positioned on a tie, attachment systems (bolts, lag screws, etc.) extend above the foot of the rail. In order to avoid the pieces of the mold entering into contact with these systems (which would make the putting in place of the mold impossible),
5 said inclined cut 47 is designed to make it possible to place this mold on any attachment system.

Referring to figures 7 and 8, it is easily understood how the two parts 4 of the mold M are positioned, on either side of the rail 1, in such a way that the opening
10 43 is located vertically to the hollowing out 3.

When this positioning is carried out and when all the operations preparatory to this type of operation have been implemented, the pouring of an aluminothermic material to fill the hollowing out 3 is carried out.

15 Due to the fact that the compressible coating is situated facing regions likely to have surface irregularities such as electric welding seams, this material deforms and is intimately applied against these irregularities. In doing so, there is no risk that the molten material flows elsewhere than
20 in the region concerned, that is to say that of the hollowing out.

CLAIMS

1. Mold (M) for aluminothermic welding of a metal rail (1), which comprises at least two substantially identical pieces or shells (4), configured to be temporarily assembled opposite one another and on either side of said rail (1) to
5 enclose the head (10), web (11) and foot (12) of this rail (1), each piece or shell (4) having an upper opening (43), which opens onto an internal cavity (44) bounded by walls (45, 46, 48) configured to enclose the head (10), the web (11) and the foot (12) of said rail (1), characterized by the fact that said
10 internal cavity (44) comprises a compressible sealing coating (5) only against the walls (45, 46, 48) configured to enclose said web (11), foot (12) and underside of the head (10), the rest of the head (10) and the underside of the foot (12) being devoid of any compressible sealing coating.

15

2. Mold (M) according to claim 1, characterized in that said coating (5) is refractory felt.

3. Mold (M) according to one of claims 1 or 2,
20 characterized in that the thickness of said coating (5) is comprised between 2 and 10 mm.

4. Mold (M) according to one of claims 1 to 3,
25 characterized in that the lower part of the piece (4) opposite to the cavity (44) has an inclined cut (47) configured to avoid contact with a system for attaching the rail on a tie.

5. Method for repairing a rail (1) that has a surface defect (2) at the level of its head (10), characterized by the
30 fact that it comprises the following steps which consist in:

-removing said defect (2) so as to create a hollowing out (3) on the head (10) of said rail (1);

-positioning the two pieces or shells (4) of a mold (M) according to one of claims 1 to 4 on either side of this rail (1);

5 -filling said hollowing out (3) by pouring into said mold (M), via said upper opening (43), an aluminothermic welding material.

6. Method according to claim 5, characterized in that the web (11) has, substantially in line with the defect 10 (2) to be repaired, a weld seam (110) resulting from electric welding and that the compressible coating (5) is intimately applied on said seam.

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FIG. 1

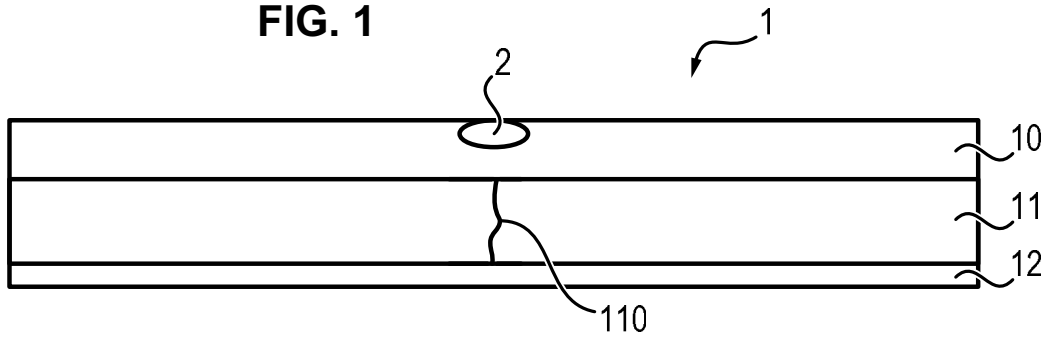


FIG. 2

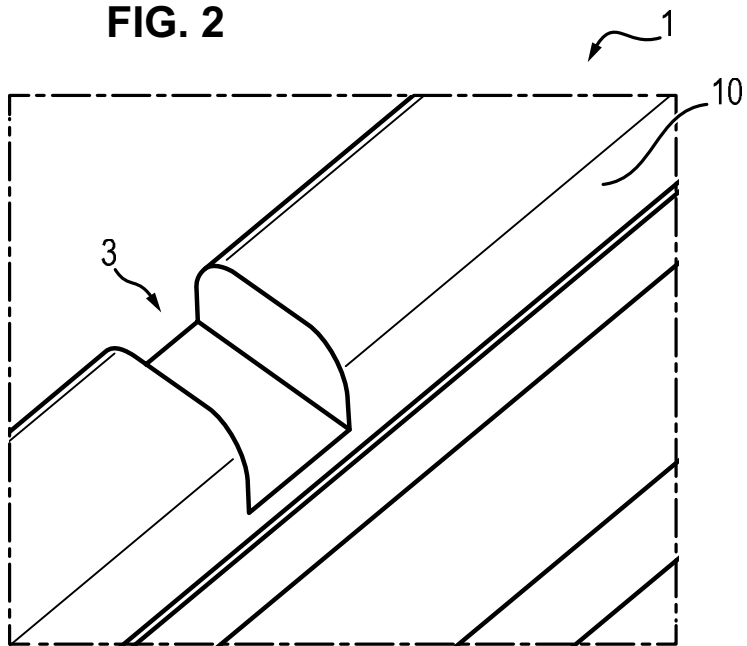


FIG. 3

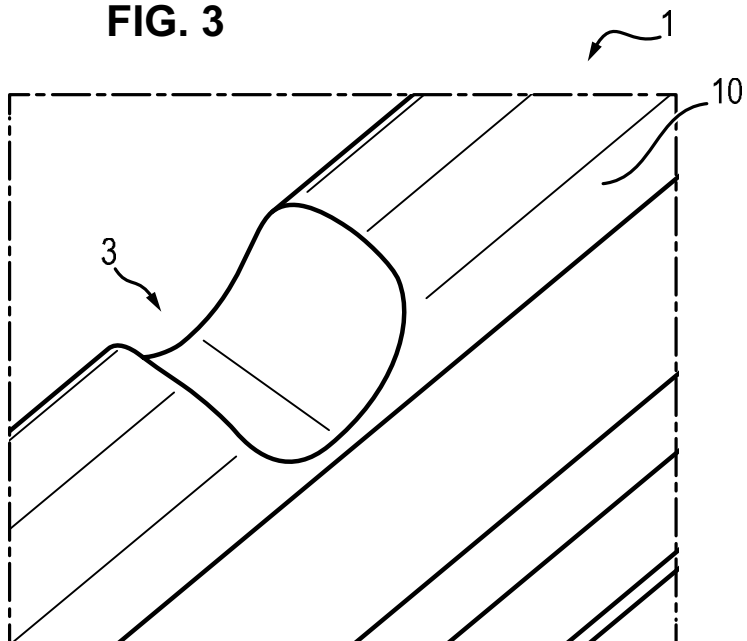


FIG. 4

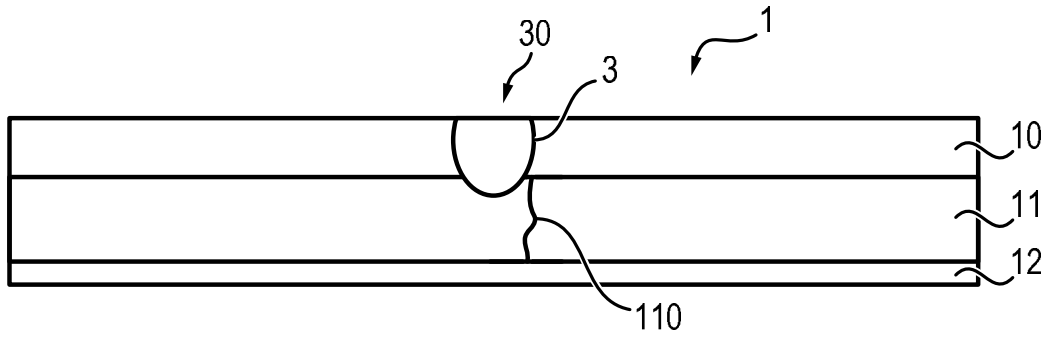


FIG. 5

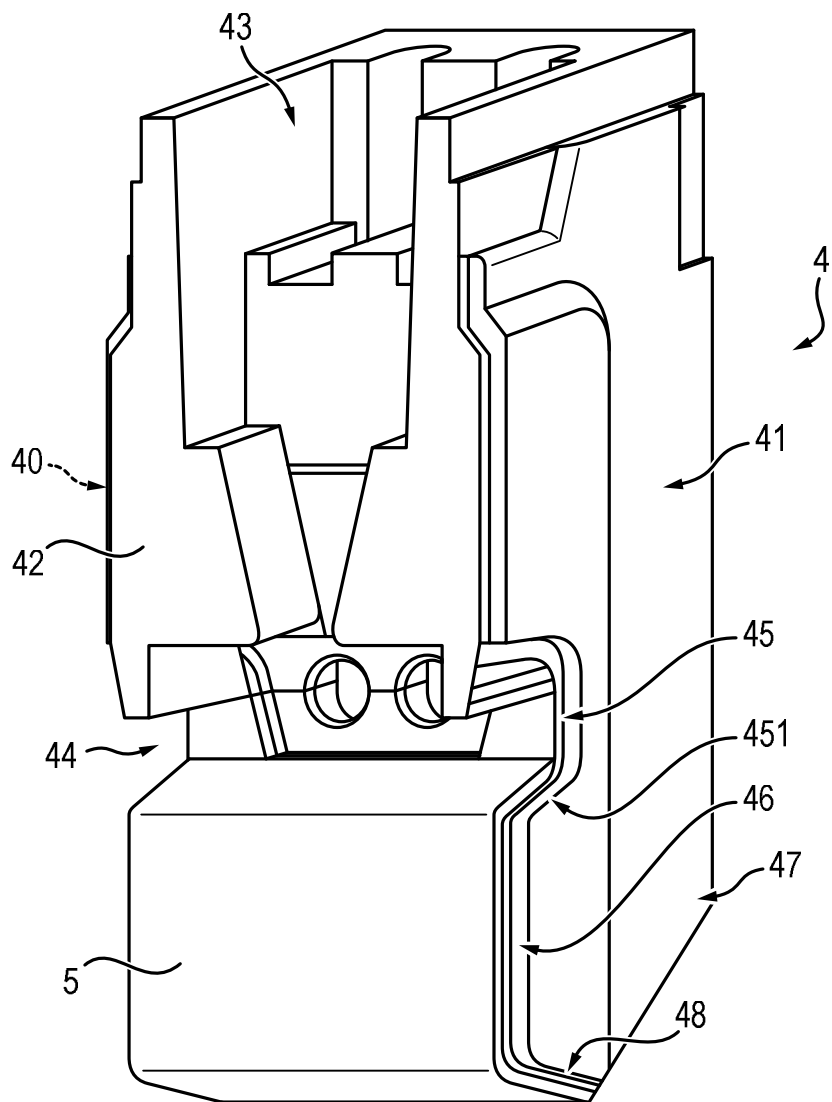


FIG. 6

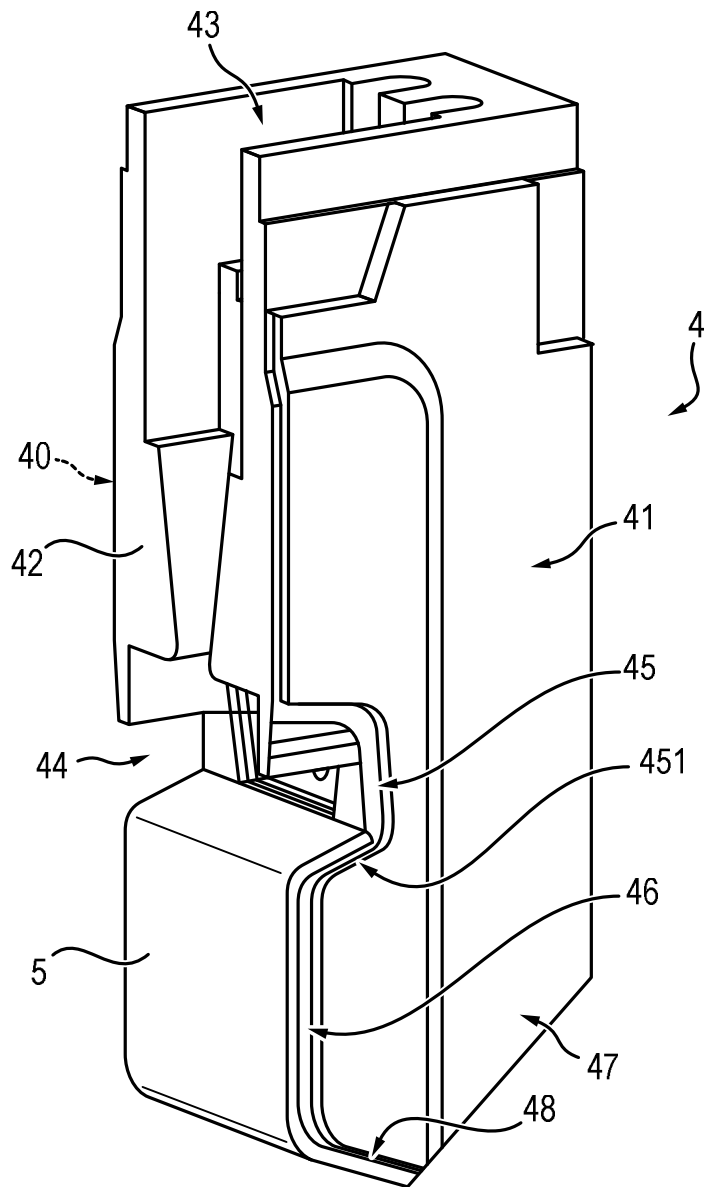


FIG. 7

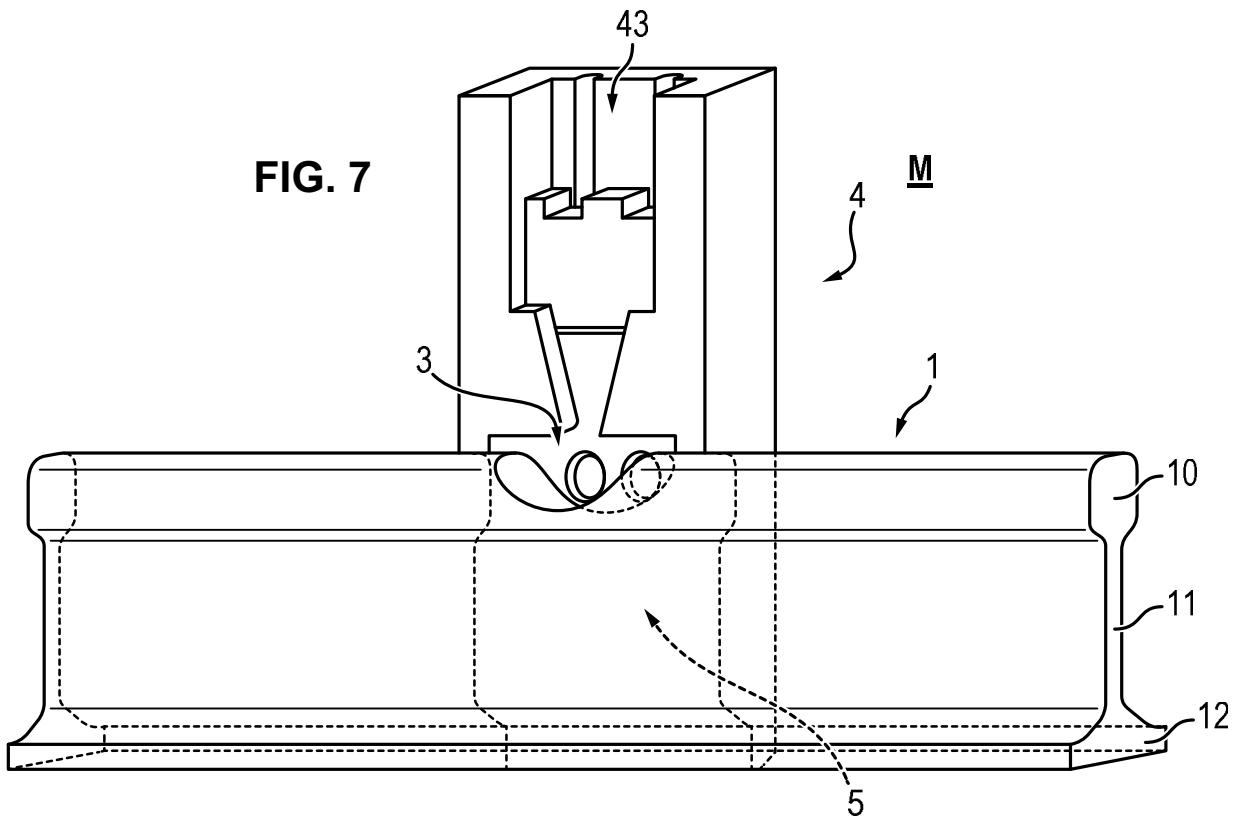


FIG. 8

