ANALYSIS OF TOTAL RESIDUAL STRAINS AROUND COLD-EXPANDED HOLES

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Abstract. Split-sleeve cold expansion was performed on a fastener hole in an Aluminium plate and the full-
field total residual strains were measured around the expanded hole using a digital image correlation stereo
vision system. The results show that the hole expansion is not axisymmetric and the residual strains are
highest in the region where sleeve split was positioned. An unexpected trend of decreasing minimum
principal strain gradient close to the hole edge was also observed which has not been reported elsewhere in
the published literature.

Introduction

Thousands of fastener holes are used in the assembly of aircraft structures. It is a routine practice in the
aerospace industry to cold-work such fastener holes to enhance the fatigue life of new and existing
aerospace structures. Cold-working or cold expansion is normally performed by passing a mandrel through a
fastener hole to expand it plastically. This creates a ring of residual compressive stresses around the cold-
expanded (CX) hole which is believed to inhibit the fatigue crack growth. Researchers in the past have
applied different experimental mechanics techniques such as moiré photography [1], moiré interferometry [2]
and the grid method [3] to measure total residual strains (elastic + plastic) around holes resulting from cold
expansion. More recently digital image correlation (DIC) [4] has been used to measure full-field total residual
strains around CX holes. This paper presents an experimental analysis of the total residual strain field which
develops around the CX hole, using a DIC stereo vision system.

Experimental Procedure

Cold Expansion Test setup. The most widely used cold expansion process called ‘split-sleeve cold
expansion’ (FTI, Seattle, USA) involves passing a hardened steel mandrel with an oversized head through an
initially undersized fastener hole. A schematic of this process is shown in Figure 1. There is an internally
lubricated sleeve, with a split in it, which resides on the mandrel shank. The purpose of this sleeve is to avoid
direct contact of the mandrel head with the internal hole edge in order to keep hole distortion to minimum
during the hole expansion. In this work, split-sleeve cold expansion was performed on a rectangular
specimen containing a centrally drilled hole of 6.35mm diameter. The specimen was cut from 1.6mm thick
ALCLAD 2024-T3 Aluminium sheet. The specimen dimensions are provided in Figure 2. During the
expansion process, the orientation of the sleeve split was along the 3 o’clock direction as shown in Figure 2.
The nominal diameter of the expanded hole was 6.58mm, providing the final hole expansion of about 3.6%.

Measurement of total residual strains. A DIC stereo vision system (Dantec Dynamics GmbH,
Germany) was used to measure total residual strains around the hole, on the mandrel entry face of the
specimen, resulting from split-sleeve cold expansion. The stereo vision setup comprised of two identical
digital video cameras (Guppy PRO F-125, Allied Vision Technologies, Germany) with resolutions of
1292×964 pixels. The two cameras were mounted with a matched pair of compact 50mm focal length lenses
(Schneider Kreuznach, Germany) which provided a common field of view (FOV) of about 26mm×19mm from
a working distance of approximately 300mm from the specimen surface. For the FOV used in this optical
setup, the spatial resolution of 0.02mm/pixel was achieved. A series of images, recorded by the two
cameras, at different loading steps during hole expansion, were processed using a DIC software, ISTRA
(Dantec Dynamics GmbH). This DIC software performs the evaluation by discretizing the undeformed
(reference) image into small square regions called facets. Each facet in the reference image is located in the deformed image using correlation algorithms to determine a displacement vector.

**Experiment Results**

Image correlation was performed using a facet size of 35 pixels and a grid spacing of 5 pixels, which is simply a distance between the centers of the adjacent facets in the reference image. The evaluated total residual maximum ($\varepsilon_1$) and minimum ($\varepsilon_2$) principal strain maps are shown in Figure 3a and 3b respectively. In order to analyse the deviation of split-sleeve hole expansion from the ideal (axisymmetric) hole expansion, a map of shear strain ($\varepsilon_{r\theta}$) in polar coordinates was evaluated using the strain transformation equations (Fig 3c). The line plots of principal strains were also produced along six radial directions, as shown in Figure 4.

![Fig 3. Total residual strain maps](image)

**Discussion and Conclusions**

In case of axisymmetric hole expansion, hoop and radial strains are equivalent to the maximum and minimum principal strains respectively which is not true for the split-sleeve cold expansion. As shown in Figure 3c, there is a component of polar shear strain ($\varepsilon_{r\theta}$) close to the hole edge and it is particularly significant in magnitude in the region around sleeve split position. The radial line plots of total residual principal strains in Figure 4 clearly indicate that the hole deformation is most severe near to the sleeve split position (see $\pm45^\circ$ plots) and the deformation decreases away from it ($\pm135^\circ$ plots). An interesting and unexpected trend of decreasing minimum principal strain gradient close to the hole edge can be observed for all six radial line plots. According to author's knowledge, this trend has not been reported so far in the published literature. Future work will focus on understanding and identifying the cause of this trend. This knowledge will be potentially very significant in making improvements in the analytical and/or computational modelling of the split-sleeve cold expansion process which will in turn lead to better predictive capability for the fatigue life of CX holes.

**References**