

# GYS: Transformers & The Story So Far

The GYS story started in 1964 when France updated French domestic voltage from 110 to 230 volts. A certain Guy Yves Stephany started a company working with EDF to take advantage of the fact and he built a transformer factory in Laval, France. From transformers came battery chargers, then Arc welding machines and the GYS journey was underway. Moving forward to 1997 the company had changed hands and had just 30 staff. It was then acquired by Nicolas Bouygués and now twenty years later, he remains as Chairman of the Board and his son, Bruno, is President and CEO of GYS – it is a company with a strong family identity.

## The Transformer Transformed

The time of the Bouygués acquisition coincided with a technology shift in the industry as welders transitioned from traditional transformer construction to electronic inverter technology. Immediately GYS commenced the investment in R&D to join this electronic revolution and it was this commitment, and one that continues to this day, which has been the driver of the growth that has resulted in

in tandem with ever stronger and lighter bodies utilising evolving types of steel. This puts GYS in close contact with the world's car manufacturers and the equipment lists show compatibility and approvals with over 30 different carmakers the latest being Tesla.

## Where and How

GYS is still based in the west of France at the town of Laval not too far from Le Mans. Here, the original factory has been transformed and enlarged continually over the last 20 years, and, as I write, is expanding even further and is today the largest inverter welding factory in Europe.

This manufacturing base is where 95% of all of the company's products are made. There is a smaller factory in China where some small items are made. But what is more impressive for the business gurus amongst the readers is that since the humble beginnings in 1997 and 30 staff, in 2017 GYS has some 650 employees, turnover of 80m€, products sold in 123 countries, 50+ staff employed in R and D and five commercial subsidiaries.



Car Body Equipment Showroom

the GYS of today. From this point to 2018, now with 650 employees GYS now manufactures more inverter welding machines in Europe than any other company.

With inverter technology came portability and improved functionality to assist the operator, making the welding process easier and delivering a superior result.

These developments helped GYS win new markets and an early breakthrough was achieved as they soon convinced the French DIY stores to stock welding. This quickly gave the GYS factory volume which drove manufacturing efficiency, more investment and continuous improvement. Features such as hot start, anti-stick and arc force are now established within MMA welding but the principal of software within the product to enhance the welding experience extends throughout through MIG and TIG. GYS now manufactures over 60 welding machines synergic, multi-process, pulse, single phase, 3 phase and a wide range of flexible voltage across MMA, MIG/MAG, and TIG.

## Welding and more...

Along with welding, GYS is also a major manufacturer of battery charging equipment a market that is evolving quickly in tandem with the development of vehicle electronics. The proliferation of battery types in use in our everyday cars has already transformed the products required by the Automotive industry and with Lithium batteries finding new applications in new industries this is a vibrant and fast moving product sector. GYS are now at the forefront of battery support technology and are working with a number of the leading car manufacturers in this area.

GYS also have a large Car Body repair catalogue with a product range covering Spot Welding, MIG Brazing, Dent Pulling, Induction heating and riveting. Car Body design is driven by safety and efficiency with welding technology developing

In order to compete with lower cost manufacturing in other parts of the world, the investment has to be highly efficient as well as technologically advanced. I observed the unhurried pace, but highly efficient manufacture of everything from circuit boards to welder bodies on my visit to the factory.

## The Future According to GYS

Talking with Neil Pulsford, GYS UK Commercial Director, GYS see their strategy for welding development in 2 distinct ways. Firstly, through continued investment in Research & Development to stay at the forefront of product development to meet the changing requirements of customers. Secondly and critically as technology develops GYS will invest in the necessary customer support infrastructure. They recognise that dealers and users of the equipment must be supported as technology changes and that this can only come from the manufacturer. This support can be in the form of logistics, as dealers stocking patterns may change, aftersales support, and importantly sales support in order that the dealer has access to the latest information. At the time of writing GYS is part way through an 11m€ investment programme at the factory in France increasing customer service facilities as well as building an additional 12,000 square metres of manufacturing and logistics capacity including the acquisition of a second facility close to the main factory in Laval.

This investment will enable to GYS to meet its next sales milestone of €100 million in 2019. This will also require the recruitment of over 100 more staff – pushing staff numbers up from 650 to 750.

It is clear from the above that GYS has been a major manufacturer that has made a firm commitment to production in Europe without losing sight of the global picture.

# and Transformation



Extended GYS Factory in France

With its balanced investment in R & D, people, premises and customer services, it is ensuring that the machines that it makes will be cutting edge and easily available in a wide range of stockists. Add to that effective repair capability,

plus a knowledgeable sales teams, the ingredients are all in place for an excellent customer experience and, of course, long term business success.



New Welding academy in France