



*The new UK headquarters in Rugby.*

# GYS expands in the UK

**Last year French manufacturer GYS celebrated its 50th anniversary which coincided with the UK subsidiary taking back distribution of the car body equipment range. This year GYS UK moved to new headquarters in Rugby. ABP were first to be invited to see the new premises, hear about their expanding product range and discuss their plans for continued growth.**

GYS has invested in a 21,000 sq ft new headquarters in Rugby for the UK subsidiary which has ample parking and is ideally situated close to the motorway network. Around £170,000 has been spent to re-design and renovate the former Midlands saw factory to transform it into an impressive, light and airy head office, with open plan office space, a training Academy, boardroom, aftersales servicing facility and warehouse.

"We could have rented new premises but GYS is committed to the UK and this is a freehold investment," said Neil Pulsford, Commercial Director, GYS UK. "GYS is growing all the time in Europe and wants to make sure it is effective in the UK as well. GYS is investing in infrastructure in the UK because we are here to stay. We can provide customers with an extremely

high service level in terms of equipment, stock level from our warehouse and aftersales support."

GYS based in Laval, France, is one of the largest manufacturers of welding, battery chargers and car body equipment in Europe. It employs over 500 people, with over 40 in R&D, and exports to around 110 countries including Russia, Australia, America, India and China. "If you were on the other side of the Channel you would see that GYS is a clear market leader in the Car Body sector," said Neil. "In the UK that is not the case. We have not grown in the UK at the rate that we have in France and Germany in the last four or five years and so we have a communication job to do to help our marketplace understand the quality and expertise of GYS."

From the development and progression in car body equipment, GYS has become the market leader across Europe, but in the UK the brand is not quite so well known. Even when people are familiar with GYS spot welders and dent pullers, they don't realise the extent of the range which now includes riveting, induction heating and vehicle lifts. "A big contribution to the success in Europe came from GYS in Germany which was the first subsidiary that GYS opened outside of France in 2006," said Neil.

The success of GYS Germany also coincided with the car body range



*The size and scale of GYS in France is impressive.*

becoming complete in terms of technology advancement. "We were successful in Germany winning market share from the domestic German manufacturers."

GYS operate in three distinct markets, car battery, industrial welding and car body and it is usual for the sales company to sell all three ranges. However in the UK, GYS reached an agreement whereby Stanners Equipment would become the exclusive distributor for car body and the UK subsidiary would focus on car battery and industrial welding. Now GYS distribute this range themselves but Stanners continue to support their customers they sold GYS equipment to and have access to spare parts.

"GYS UK opened towards the end of 2008 in a very modest 2,000 sq ft leased site in Warwick with four full time staff," said Neil. "After two years we moved to a 5,000 sq ft unit in Warwick and now four years later we have moved here. In January 2014 we took back the distribution of car body and now we operate exactly as GYS does in France and Germany, looking after all three product categories."

Within the large warehouse is a well equipped, meticulously clean aftersales/repair workshop. "Aftersales and servicing is extremely important to us," said Neil. "Our new premises also have a GYS Academy where we can bring customers in to train them and demonstrate equipment." Next to the Academy is a welding room for practical training and demonstrations.

"The impact of GYS coming into the UK is quite significant for the car body industry," said Neil. "We operate differently from how the historic or current distributors of this kind of equipment work. Also the strength of the GYS product range and price competitiveness is having quite an impact on this sector. Unlike ourselves car body equipment sold in the UK is not sold by a manufacturer, with one exception.

GYS work with many of the bodyshop's suppliers, such as a paint or parts distributor. "We provide the technical support on GYS products but the commercial partnership remains with the distribution company. It enables the bodyshop to work with their trusted existing supplier with whom they have daily contact with the benefit of technical support direct from the manufacturer." GYS technical sales engineers are all bodyshop trained and don't just demonstrate equipment but will carry out a repair on a vehicle using GYS equipment in front of bodyshop staff.

"Our spot welders contain extremely advanced, technology with high



*The warehouse has major stockholding of GYS equipment and accessories for next day delivery.*

performance, safety, recordability and automatic mode features," said Neil. "We are now in a situation where 12,000 amps is a minimum standard for vehicle manufacturer requirements. Our machines are either 13,000 or 14,500 amps and have numerous approvals because of their capability.

"The technology and complexity of this equipment benefits from having the manufacturer talk directly to the bodyshop," said Neil. "It's a strategy that works well in Europe and it has been successful in the first year of the UK and as a result we will be recruiting more technical sales engineers."

GYS UK exceeded their sales expectations for car body last year and is on track to increase their sales target this year. "Our price position in the UK is quite interesting," said Neil. "In determining the UK price, we've simply carried over our European price. Historically the UK has been a high price marketplace for this type of equipment. Now there is a real cost saving opportunity for bodyshops. I believe bodyshops can now buy at around 20-30% less than they would have paid a few years ago."

From the start GYS has made continual investment in manufacturing facilities and infrastructure and their impressive R&D is the backbone for the car body range. In 2013 the first spot welder with automatic mode was first approved by GM Europe and last year it gained approval from VAG. At Automechanika last October GYS launched the GYSPress universal riveter to meet the growing needs of riveting and bonding in repair. Another new product for GYS launched at the beginning of last year is the GYS mobile lift. Designed to make good use of space in a cramped bodyshop it lifts up a corner of the vehicle to bring it up to a comfortable, efficient working height. Two of these together can lift up a complete vehicle.


GYS are continually expanding and improving their impressive factory in France. Recently they have built a metrology centre so that they can create an artificial environment around moisture and temperature to test equipment. "Basically, we can simulate tough working



*The GYS Academy for training and demonstrations.*

conditions and ensure that equipment is designed to perform in demanding environments," said Neil.

Another new development for R&D is the ability to measure the welding arc in great detail. "To get the best welding result, you need to have absolute control of the arc," said Neil. "We have just completed a €100,000 investment to have a robot with laser guidance that can film the arc at a rate of 20,000 frames per second to optimize metal transfer during MIG welding processes."

While GYS may not be a brand that is universally known in the UK, it no doubt will be. With their investment in R&D, customer service, expertise in car body equipment, plus a long list of vehicle manufacturer approvals, not forgetting price advantage to bodyshops, GYS is on track to dominate the UK industry. 

#### Milestones

- 2001 – GYS entered the global car body equipment market
- 2004 – First Inverter Liquid Cooled Spot Welder launched
- 2005 – First Vehicle Manufacturer Approvals obtained
- 2006 – GYS Open Sales Subsidiary in Germany
- 2010 – European market leadership achieved
- 2013 – New R&D centre in France opened
- 2013 – GM Europe first to approve the new Spot Welder with Automatic mode
- 2014 – GYS UK launch car body range in the UK
- 2014 – VAG approval added to an already long list
- 2014 – GYSPress riveting system launched
- 2015 – GYS export Spot Welders to Japan
- 2015 – GYS invest in new UK headquarters