



# GYS

# Committed to Quality



## Who is GYS?

GYS is one of the largest manufacturers of welding equipment in Europe, one of the world's biggest makers of battery chargers and a world leader in car body repair welding equipment. Based in Laval in the north-west of France GYS has become a brand renowned for quality manufacturing standards and innovation and has continually expanded and invested since it was acquired in 1997 by Nicolas Bouygues. His son Bruno is now the CEO.

Right from the start GYS built its credibility on leading technology and is committed to offering quality products and great value. Unlike many companies who ceased investing at the start of the economic downturn in Europe, GYS has continued to make significant outlay in R&D, new buildings and manufacturing capability and has a healthy international business which is continually expanding. Its turnover last year was €60m.

There are three main product divisions - ARC welding, Bodyshop equipment (welding, dent pullers and plasma cutters) and Battery chargers. GYS growth has been exceptional. From

just 30 employees when the Bouygues bought GYS 15 years ago, it has grown to 500 people (with 40 in R&D) and is the biggest employer in the region. They export to around 110 countries including Russia, Australia, America, India and China. They have two or three importers in each country so that there is not only market intelligence but specialist knowledge for the different product segments, i.e. battery charger, collision repair, agricultural dealers, welding specialists, industrial. It enables products to be demonstrated locally so users can see the benefits and offers a full after sales service. Feedback from their distributor partners is very important and has helped make product changes to solve different countries problems and meet specific market requirements. For example, specific UK electrical characteristics such as 13A supply and 110V requirements for construction sites drove the R&D team to develop new products that can accept either power supply.

The sheer size of GYS is impressive, everything from CAD design to manufacturing components through to build is done on site. Year by year the factory has been extended on new land bought to meet the production demands of its growing customer

base, it now totals 21,500m<sup>2</sup>. A new R&D 1,000m<sup>2</sup> extension was completed this year and there is another extension currently underway to expand the electronics production which will also add 1,000m<sup>2</sup>. And they have just purchased the building next door which will give them more space. As Bruno says "the factory is never finished".

The name GYS is derived from the initials of the original owner's children Guy and Yvonne Stefany. An electronic technician by trade in the early sixties he owned a small dealers who repaired TVs and radios. When the French government decided to change the national electrical power supply from 110V to 230V they looked to local





entrepreneurs to manufacture transformers. He won the tender for the department of Mayenne and the company became successful overnight but once demand declined after a couple of years because people began to replace appliances with the new voltage he looked to new markets and began manufacturing battery chargers because the technology was similar to transformers. The business was sold several times before it was bought by Nicolas and Bruno who saved it from bankruptcy.

### Integrated manufacturing & quality control

With their engineering backgrounds and business acumen Nicolas and Bruno completely re-structured the business, recruited talented engineers to improve and develop new technologies and have steadily built it into an innovative manufacturing company with an international reputation for quality and integrity. They robotised the factory and in less than 10 years through investment in R&D and manufacturing GYS grew by a factor of 10 times. GYS engineers developed



Spot Lift 3T  
Ref. 052864

and optimised IMS technology now applied in welding inverters replacing the old transformer technology. This created massive demand and today GYS has developed a wide range of products to suit all users from occasional DIY to tradesmen, maintenance engineers and manufacturing across MMA, MIG/MAG and TIG welding processes providing excellent value and performance. Much of the more complex welder range incorporates GYS Advanced PFC (Power Factor Correction) and Flexible Voltage technology to overcome the problems of inconsistent or different power supplies.

GYS sell over 200,000 of the mainstream welding machines each year ready for same-day delivery in France, or next day delivery in Europe. "We currently process around 150 orders a day to our distributor clients from the factory in Laval," said Bruno.

### Product Innovation

The car body repair range of equipment includes water cooled and air cooled inverter spot welders, spot welders, dent pulling systems for steel and aluminium, MIG MAG welding with a choice of integrated or external wire feeders all with a choice of tools and accessories. "We believe that we are a world leader in the products that are in the car body repair catalogue," said Bruno. "Car makers have had to find lighter and stronger materials to meet legislative demands in safety and fuel efficiency. Consequently, there has been a change in repair protocol. Construction materials have changed from mild steel to more advanced types of steel that require more energy and more craft to repair them. It requires enormous investment to keep up with the technology race and many welding manufacturers cannot sustain the continual investment to keep up, so they just stop."

The GYS BPL offers advanced welding capability to deal with the requirements of high strength steels inclu



GYSPOT INVERTER BP-LX  
Ref. 019652

ding UHSS and boron, with 500 daN electrode arms force at 8 bars and 13,000 amp welding and is on the approved lists of many of the world's major car manufacturers.

Other features GYS has developed include the patented BODYPROTECT TECHNOLOGY which provides unique protection to the user from magnetic fields allowing the gun to be transformer-free and lightweight.

GYS is also continually broadening its product lines. For example, one new line recently designed for the bodys-hop and service garage is a lift. The company also recently introduced a range of technology packed welders for the industrial market. Instead of the corporate blue and yellow livery, this new range features black and grey to distinguish it from the mainstream welding lines.

What makes the TIG 250 AC/DC range different from other industrial welding machines is its unique cooling technology. Instead of using a fan to keep the machines cool to prevent them from overheating, GYS has designed it to be cooled in a more advantageous way. The unique water cooling, fan-less technology has a number of advantages as the duty cycle is optimized and there is no fan sucking iron filings that conduct electricity into the machine. It is 100% dust-free which makes it safer





and more reliable.

Every product range is constantly under review to offer customers additional benefits and keep it ahead of its competitors. "People think even something like car battery chargers are straightforward, but they can be quite complicated in design even though they are easy for the operator to use. We have a 32-page catalogue full of battery chargers for consumer use up to advanced micro-processor controlled chargers with multi-stage charging curves suitable for the latest technology automotive batteries and vehicles."

### European Quality - Chinese Prices!

Possibly because the company has grown so quickly under the current owners, few people realise the size of the organisation or extent of GYS product portfolio. They are different things to different people. "In France we are recognised as being a great battery charger supplier, yet that is just 15% of our turnover," said Bruno. "If you go to the UK we are known for quality welding and good battery chargers. However, they think our products are made in China because they believe that if something is in a reasonable cost bracket, it must come from Asia. It's an incredible paradox, high quality, low cost from Europe where there is a high labour rate, but by manufacturing the components we can keep costs low."

### Investment & Growth

As well as the factory in France, GYS has a large subsidiary in Germany, a small but growing subsidiary in the UK founded in 2009 to offer sales, technical and aftersales support and also a factory and sales company in China. In fact China was the first foreign subsidiary and was a vital step for this European manufacturer with global ambitions as it gave GYS a direct foothold in the world's largest buying



GYSFlash 70.24  
Ref. 029255

market for electronic components. The factory produces jump leads and battery chargers. A new GYS factory in Shanghai was purchased in 2010 which will enable further expansion of production. They have also recently set up a Joint Venture sales company in India.

When GYS entered the German market seven years ago they realised that the purchasing habit in Germany was different to France. "In France people want a reasonable product for a reasonable price," said Bruno. "In Germany they expect a perfect product that will last for a very long time and are prepared to pay an above average price for that." The higher spec demanded by Germany drove the company to improve the complete product range to match the Germans expectations. It took several years to get right. "What has been interesting is that in achieving this next generation technology the knowledge enabled us to also raise the specification of the products in France without raising the price because of our manufacturing efficiencies," said Bruno. "In Germany we have the performance but we are also cheaper so we found our market. So we started to grow and became a success. In seven years we grew from zero to 33% and we invested a further €5m last year for R&D, so between working capital, communication, building, R&D, we have invested around €8-9m in Germany."

GYS manufacture almost every component on site, including circuit boards, to reduce dependency on suppliers, maintain quality standards

and control cost. It also enables them to build new prototypes, respond to customer feedback and rapidly develop product improvements. Huge investment and re-investment continues to be made in tools and machinery and in automating some of the production processes, from cutting and folding steel to painting components. The new painting line, for example, is controlled by iPad or iPhone and enables colours to be quickly changed because of the autocleaning in the booth.

With up to 2,000 products leaving the production line each day quality control is paramount. Every single machine GYS make is rigorously tested and undergoes numerous quality checks throughout the manufacturing process. Each check is logged and tied to that machine's serial number so there is full traceability. Any problems can be quickly identified and rectified. New software also been developed to help track the history of any machine under warranty in any country, right down to transportation issues, and can be viewed by the sales teams worldwide. It also provides vital information when R&D are looking to see where they can make product improvement.

### What next for GYS?

GYS prides itself not only on product innovation but also after sales service and has deservedly become market leader in many product fields thanks to its investment in people, manufacture and technology. At a time when so many other factories have closed, GYS expertise is enabling it to grow and venture into new market segments.



By Heather Grant  
Freelance Journalist



# GYS At A Glance



## European Locations

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