

Myson factory opened officially in Gateshead

October 12th saw the official opening of the new Gateshead factory. The new lines were officially started by Gerry Sutcliffe MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Competition, Consumers and Markets by smashing a bottle on a radiator; a symbolic gesture familiar in the north east of England because of its tradition of shipbuilding.

In total, nearly 150 guests from major customers, suppliers and contractors were treated to lunch and a guided tour around the new factory. The guests were welcomed to Gateshead by Neil MacPherson, Myson's Managing Director and then by Cyril von Rettig, the Chairman of the Rettig Board, who gave an insight into the £20 million investment in the Gateshead factory. He congratulated the Myson team on the successful completion of the project stating, *"This project surely underlines the importance our company places on the British radiator market and on British manufacturing skills. I say British manufacturing skills as this has been very much a Myson project and I should like to thank Kerr Warren, Myson's Operations Director and his team of engineers, technicians, operators and all Myson staff for getting us where we are today - on time and within budget"*.

The Gateshead factory is now a modern production facility for panel radiators and is capable of producing over three million round-top radiators. The facts and figures are astounding in themselves, particularly for the non-technical amongst us. A crane with the same wingspan as a Boeing 737, seven million metres of steel used in an average year, over 500 kilometres of control cable, enough to stretch from Gateshead to the south coast of England and over 1000 pneumatic actuators to control the movement and shaping of the panels as they move down the line.

The new lines have a total capacity of some two million radiators and incorporate innovation at every stage. For example, two new processes close the ends of the round top and new drill formers create the air vent. In the old process, closing the ends of the radiators was a slow and labour-intensive process but now robots weld the ends consistently and quickly. The round-top air vent was also a perennial weakness in the manufacturing process but now new drill formers create a replaceable air vent to a tolerance of 0.1 mm. This represents a major advance for Myson's customers in both quality and ease of installation and was developed following extensive market research into the installers' needs.

The visit around the factory was led by experienced members of Myson's manufacturing staff with the experience enhanced by a series of information boards strategically positioned to provide additional information on the processes witnessed by our visitors. In addition to providing information on the day, the display boards will be used for all factory visits adding to the experience for all visitors to Myson in Gateshead.

A specially shot DVD was also commissioned for the day. In it, Myson's manufacturing staff explained the history of the investment and the various

processes involved in producing Myson round-top radiators. Tom Pinkney, Section Leader Quality, commented, *“The DVD was great fun to do and gives everyone a real insight into the manufacturing process. Some people took a little persuading to appear in front of the camera but they all did a great job. I think we’ve just created a new generation of Brad Pitts!”* The DVD will be available on the new Myson website and copies on CD can be obtained from Gateshead on request.

Commenting on the £20 million investment, Gerry Sutcliffe commented, *“The new Myson factory signifies the most substantial investment in North East manufacturing for many years. Since 1981 manufacturing industry has declined significantly in the North East, with under 16% of the workforce now employed in the sector. This investment by foreign parents Rettig and the Department for Trade and Industry has not only significantly increased Myson’s market presence but has also safe-guarded over 300 jobs in the region.”*

Myson’s customers clearly enjoyed their day at the new factory as well. Keith Jones, Brand Development Director from Wolseley UK commented, *“It’s important for the heating trade as a whole but particularly for merchants to see this type of investment in the future of the industry. I’ve been very impressed with all I’ve seen today and would like to congratulate Myson on their vision for the future”*. As a way of remembering the visit to the new factory, all guests were given a bottle of champagne specially prepared for the day.