

# Yannedis at 100

Founded in 1911, Yannedis is the oldest established architectural ironmonger in Britain. It has grown to become one of the most respected AIs in the industry, combining innovation with specialist bespoke design and boasts projects which include some of London's most iconic buildings. Here Yannedis Branch Manager Graham Thomas and past employees Wayne Harris and Harry Singh reflect on the company's eventful history.



Paul Yannedis would be proud of our continuing specification and supply to some of London's most high profile projects including the Olympics Aquatic Centre, Hammersmith Academy and the refurbishment of the Maybourne Hotel Group (Claridges, The Connaught and The Berkeley Hotel). I think he would be particularly proud of our high quality bespoke designs, including restoration ironmongery - I'm sure these would have had pride of place in his showroom display cabinets! At a time of uncertainty (yet again) in the construction industry it's even more important to look forward to the future with optimism. With the stability and support of a large plc behind us, Yannedis is laying the foundations for a very positive future".

It seems hard to find anyone in the AI world today that hasn't been associated or involved with Yannedis at some point in their career. It is a company whose reputation and legacy has allowed its name to survive the turbulent trading years of the last century and leave it well placed to carry the Yannedis ethos of quality and integrity forward in this millennium.

This view is echoed by Lloyd Worrall Group Regional Manager GB, Arun Kulkarni, "Yannedis is such an important name within architectural ironmongery, there will never be a time when it is not associated with the industry. Whether owned by Lloyd Worrall, Macnaughton Blair or Grafton Group plc, Yannedis will always be left as a stand-alone brand that the industry should aspire to".

Paul Yannedis was born in Greece in 1878. His background in the ironmongery trade began in London working with Carter and Ainsley for several years. He set up his own business in 1911 at the age of 33 in Featherstone Buildings, Holborn. Shortly afterwards he moved the business to an old 'Penny Bank' building he had purchased at 25 Theobalds Road where the company remained till the 1980s. The listed Yannedis sign can still be seen outside. Harry recalls: "Everyone used to joke that there must surely still be some money stashed in the basement vaults. Nobody ever really took the rumours seriously until one day someone emerged triumphant from a particularly detailed 'stock check' with £50 in fivers."



Wayne Harris remembers the showroom as being immaculate, with glass-fronted display cabinets and draws packed with samples of every conceivable item and finish.

The location was a good choice and the Holborn area soon became popular amongst ironmongers, being ideally located between the busy commercial markets of the west end and city whilst also close to the architectural practices of Grays Inn Road and Covent Garden. Wayne remembers at least six other ironmongers in the area: "N F Ramsey were over the road and Comyn Ching, Stedalls, J D Beardmore and Allgood were all nearby."

Business was evidently brisk and relationships good. Paul Yannedis was highly regarded with a reputation for business acumen, integrity and impeccable manners. He is said to have lent Allgood founders Derek Carter-Clout and Paul Sherville product samples to help them get their business off the ground.

After the war, Yannedis continued to forge a reputation for innovation, installing one of the ear-



liest sets of automated doors at their Theobalds Road showroom - using a large pressure mat to activate the mechanism. Paul Yannedis died in 1951, but his wife Lillian, 30 years his junior, remained on the board till the 1980s.

The 1970s and 80s were a period of significant growth with Yannedis taking on additional London premises in Stratford (now home to Harbrine) and their current warehouse and distribution centre in South Woodford. Future owners Terry Moore and

John Pepperrell joined from Giffco in the early 1970s.

The company also embarked on an expansion programme around the UK as Wayne Harris recalls: "Between 1975 and 1990 Yannedis opened branches in Horsham, Bristol, Birmingham and Newcastle. We also built up a strong export business supplying high profile projects including the Emir's Palace in Doha and the Hotel Arts in Barcelona, part of the Olympic development."

Product innovation also continued with Yannedis the first to introduce polished stainless steel products into the UK in the 1980s. "We got exclusive rights to the range from Newman Tonks" recalls Harry, "Nobody was really sure if it would catch on, but it was a huge success - forcing Newman Tonks to produce their own 'semi-polished' version in order to keep a slice of the market". At the same time Yannedis maintained its reputation for producing custom-made ironmongery ranging from detailed historical reproductions to the latest contemporary designs. Business was good; the company employed over 100 staff across the UK and turnover was in excess of £10m, but circumstances for the whole market were about to change.

The downturn of the 1990's was as tough for Yannedis as it was for everyone else in the construction sector and the company contracted heavily in order to survive. It was bought by Newman Tonks in 1994. Until that point it was still majority owned by the Yannedis family.

In 1998, with the market more buoyant, the company underwent a management buy-out lead by Terry Moore and John Pepperrell and Yannedis once again enjoyed a period of independence, growth and innovation. Notable projects ranged from classic reproduction ironmongery for the refurbishment of Windsor Castle and St Pancras Station to the latest stainless steel door furniture and accessories for 30 St Mary Axe (The Gherkin).

In 2003 Yannedis was acquired by Lloyd Worrall Group and incorporated into their nationwide

operation. In 2008 the Lloyd Worrall business was itself acquired by Northern Ireland based Macnaughton Blair Ltd, part of the Grafton Group plc - a major building materials and services supplier operating in the UK and Ireland. Once again, Yannedis retained its name with the associated heritage, but now with the security of a major

group behind it.

Today Yannedis focuses primarily on the London and South East markets and specialist projects, continuing to work closely with architects, specifiers and contractors to deliver the highest quality and reliability.

Graham comments, "After 100 years, I'm sure



Palace of Westminster



Windsor Castle



30 St Mary Axe



Tabard Square



City of London Academy



The Ideas Store



Grosvenor House Hotel



St Pancras Station

More project information can be found on our Project Pages at: [www.yannedis.com](http://www.yannedis.com)

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For more information visit [www.gai.org.uk](http://www.gai.org.uk)

