

# Allied Glass heralds the return of its decoration unit

Allied Glass's decoration facility has risen from the ashes after a catastrophic fire in autumn 2016. The company invested in the latest machinery to offer the most advanced decoration techniques from a new site. Greg Morris spoke to Michael Hogley about the facility's transformation.



“To see everything wiped out like that was heartbreaking”



The first thing you notice about Allied Glass' new decoration and warehouse facility is how fresh it feels. Gleaming white walls, a high ceiling and a shiny floor greet you as you step in to the manufacturing area.

The facility has only recently opened after a huge effort from company staff and management to get it up and running. The most eye-catching items are the modern pieces of decoration equipment situated in the centre of the shop floor.

Pride of place is a KBA-Kammann K15 machine, while alongside it is a Tecno5 automatic machine and nine semi-automatic Dubuit machines.

The company's Head of Design and Decoration, Michael Hogley, (*pictured above*) is understandably proud of the new investment.

“The first time I walked in was the relief of how great this facility is, it is modern, clean and state of the art. The whole facility site had an extensive renovation prior to us so when we came in it was literally brand new.

“We essentially opened the doors to a new factory and it gave us the opportunity to put our own mark on it. It was a blank canvas and we had the time to work on it and it has paid dividends today.”

The idea was to create a one stop shop for glass packaging. The company wanted to take control of the entire pack so not only does it provide the glass packaging but also the secondary processing of the decoration as well.

“There has been a drive in demand for decorative ware within the spirits market in recent years

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because it adds luxury and value, so that was the driver to create a decorative facility,” he adds.

The site is also equipped with two new Pennekamp lehrs as well as plenty of warehouse space. The site offers decorative options such as silk screen printing, ceramic inks, organic printing and precious metal printing, such as real gold and platinum.

It is a remarkable turnaround from just over 18 months ago when on October 6, 2016 the decoration facility was completely destroyed.

At the time it was located at Cross Green Way, situated a mile from Leeds city centre. The fire started accidentally on a Thursday night after most staff had gone home. A strong breeze meant

bottles while Allied got back on its feet.

A few months later, in January 2017, the facility’s 30 staff were brought to the new site to help with the renovation work.

Then just seven months after the blaze, in April 2017, the group moved into the £2.5 million facility at Wakefield Eurohub in Yorkshire, UK.

“It was an unbelievable turn around, especially when you consider the lead times of such large pieces of machinery,” says Mr Hogley.

“The whole team did really well, everybody from up at the top right the way down. Everybody was passionate about getting it back up and running. A lot of people had a lot of involvement throughout the years to get the department to where it was.



◀ The KBA-Kammann K15 machine takes pride of place in the new facility.

“The first time I walked in was the relief of how great this facility is, it is modern, clean and state of the art.”

“It was a stressful time but it also showed what Allied - and the industry - could do as a business when faced with tough times.”

the small, isolated fire quickly spread, burning everything in its wake, including the site’s decoration machinery.

“To see everything wiped out like that was heartbreaking,” recalls Mr Hogley. “But from that lowest point something amazing came out of it. Without that fire we would not have this brand new facility and state of the art equipment that we have here today.

“The mentality was that we would come back bigger, better and stronger with new machinery and in a better position than we’d been in. But to do that we knew we would have to go through short term pain to get there.”

A plan was formed to move to a new site conveniently situated between its two manufacturing plants in Yorkshire, UK. Negotiations took place with other glass manufacturers who offered to help by supplying

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The 196,000ft<sup>2</sup> space is located half way between its Leeds and Knottingley manufacturing plants.

The previous Cross Green site had the Dubuit and Tecno machines but the machinery in the Wakefield site is more automated and, alongside the Kammann machine, can handle larger volumes.

Most of the glass that requires screen printing comes from the Knottingley site, where the company’s premium coloured lines are based.

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The manufactured bottles, anything in size from 50ml to 4.5 litres, are delivered to the site, where they are left for a couple of days while they adjust to the new temperature. They are then printed on and either put into storage at the warehouse or sent directly to customers.

The majority of products decorated there are spirits bottles, and the glass can be sent around the globe when it leaves the Wakefield site (pictured above).

“A lot of the precious metal and luxury goes into Asia where there is a requirement for it at the moment. On the other hand, in the UK in particular, we deal with a lot of craft, which is in much smaller volumes.”

The balance between dealing with the much larger volumes of the mass market and the smaller runs of the craft movement means that the company believes it has addressed with the investment in the new machinery.

While the Kammann machine can deal with runs of up to 100,000 bottles a day, the smaller Dubuit machines are suited for much smaller production output, such as a craft customer, which may only require 2000 bottles a year. The latest, six-colour print Tecno5 machine is suitable for smaller and mid-level ranges.

“The new equipment gives us more flexibility and decoration options and allows us to push the boundaries of what we can do,” states Mr Hogley.

The new equipment offers a range of options.

The Kammann K15, for example, is an automatic printing machine, capable of doing up to six colours in one pass, can print round corners, shaped containers as well as squares, rectangles and flats.

“The industry looks at the Kammann machine as the industry leader,” adds Mr Hogley. “It has brought immediate results and allows us to push the boundaries of innovations within print. There’s so much we can do with it and it allows us more scope. It’s a really good piece of kit!”

Innovation remains key to the sector. Customers are constantly trying to differentiate. All of the brands try to tell a story and the entire pack, from glass to decoration, must reflect the values the brand is communicating.

“We’re seeing more choice and a faster pace of innovation now. The investment in the machines allows us to offer more flexibility. We have the machinery and set up here to allow us to service that need in the industry.”

“Customers who have visited us have been impressed. They’ve seen that we have great pieces of kit, a fantastic facility and that we are back in business.”



From a manufacturing point of view, the new machinery allows more rapid job changes on the smaller machines. A job change will typically take 30 minutes on the Dubuit machine and four job changes a day are not unknown as a result.

“We have the breadth of machinery to fit not just the high volumes but for the craft scene too. Those guys can be anything between 2000 and 10,000 bottles a year so we still need that flexibility and we do that with the semi-automatic Dubuit.”

The new Pennekamp lehrs play a crucial role in the decoration process. They are the same type of lehrs found at any glass plant but operate at a different temperature. While in a glass factory they would typically start at 550°C, printing starts at a

lower temperature. Depending on the job it can start at about 210°C, rise to 410°C and then to 550°C. It will then drop back down for a cooling off period. The temperature has to gradually rise to allow the bottle to adhere (cure).

Work is still ongoing at the site, with the offices being refurbished and a training facility for 15 people set to be unveiled in the summer.

The company has to keep on top of the latest decoration techniques and trends. One topic is Industry 4.0, the ability for machines to talk to each other and its use in decoration. Another is the ability to decorate the entire surface of a bottle, which has become more commonplace.

But for now, the organisation is proud of its new environment and keen to promote its latest developments.

“No one has a facility as new and fresh as this. We’re evolving and we know that we can’t stand still. Customers who have visited us have been impressed. They’ve seen that we have great pieces of kit, a fantastic facility and that we are back in business,” concludes Mr Hogley. ■

Allied Glass decoration unit, Wakefield, UK  
[www.alliedglass.com](http://www.alliedglass.com)