

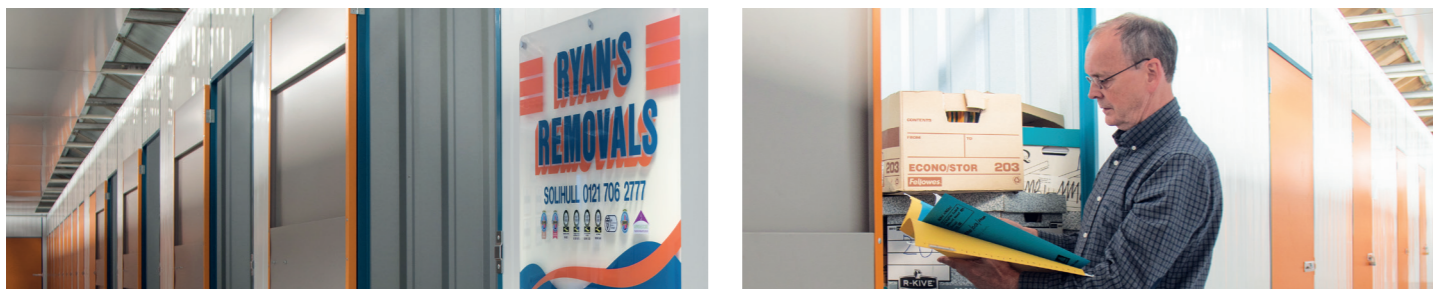
Ryans Removals

boosts its self storage capacity



The number of Self-Access rooms has increased from

69 to **170**



Responding to the growing popularity of self storage, Ryans Removals has made a significant investment in this side of the business, increasing the number of self-access rooms from 69 to 170, and the company already has plans to further expand its capacity in 2018.

The seeds for the current expansion were sown back in 2014 when Ryans removals operation and container facility site was clearly outgrowing its existing site, and the company needed to decide on how it would expand. "The question at the time was do we expand our exports and imports department or do we expand our wooden container section?" recalls Managing Director Tom Ryan. "At the time we were very happy with our domestic and commercial workload, so we knew we had to expand one other area of the business due to significant demand." As Ryans wanted to purchase the property, finding the right place proved to be quite a task, and after many hours of searching for a warehouse which could accommodate 3 containers high, the company purchased its current head office at York Road, Hall Green, Birmingham. "We decided to increase the number of wooden containers which resulted in us adding rooms within our new warehouse for the customers that wanted

self access," says Tom. "In 2014 we already knew self storage was popular and decided we wanted to offer a service for potential storage customers who did not want container storage." The rest is recent history. Ryans joined the BAR's Self Storage Special Interest Group after the move to the new premises in order to establish this side of the business right from the start. "As soon as we started growing our self storage side of the business we knew the importance of connecting and branding our storage to make it strong and to grow with the changes that may or may not happen in the storage sector." Fast forward to 2016 and Ryans' 69 rooms and 315 wooden containers were 90% full week in week out and more and more customers were enquiring about self storage, so much so that Tom knew it was time add more rooms to the site and possibly other storage options as well.

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Tom Ryan, Managing Director, Ryans Removals

Adapting the warehouse to customer demand

Tom explains that Ryans' main warehouse is split in two, with containers on the right side and rooms on the left, and with a purpose-built floor above the rooms with 100 wooden container storage on top. "With growing customer demand for self storage, the decision was therefore taken to replace the wooden containers above the self-store rooms and add more self access rooms, a move which took 12 months of planning," Tom explained to R&S.

By the end of the spring 2017 Ryans had emptied and flat packed all its wooden containers above the rooms and placed the contents outside into newly purchased 20ft. shipping containers. "After a large-scale reorganisation, we now have a total of 170 self-access rooms, a hydraulic lift, as well as 20 x 20ft. shipping containers on site for rent," says Tom. "Moving forward into 2018 we are planning underground storage as well improving our archive areas and, if the demand remains, more self-access rooms."

Marketing strategies

Ryans Removals markets the self storage side of the business using the usual channels, such as the company website, and word of mouth brings much of the business, as Tom explains. "We have a good reputation in our local Area of South Birmingham for household removals and commercial removals, so this also advertises our storage for us – for example, a lot of customers that move with us will use our self-access rooms as overflow while they decorate their new home." The company is also looking at new ways of advertising, along the lines of social media and in the community.

Tom says that while self storage is not just about cost, owning the freehold site certainly helps Ryans Removals to offer a competitive pricing structure. Being flexible and listening carefully to customers' needs is all part of the Ryans service. Customers can choose between self storage and container storage depending on their circumstances and needs. "We constantly keep ourselves updated on the market trends, or new products or services that we could offer," adds Tom. "We like to keep it fresh, modern, family friendly but at all times professional and secure."

An attractive offering for small businesses

One area that is proving to be a good niche for Ryans is archive storage for small businesses in the area. "We try

to cater for all storage solutions but the one we feel is growing nice and steady is demand for our archive storage," says Tom. "These are not large corporations but small local businesses. They like us because we are safe, secure and easy to get to (we are located between two main roads leading from Solihull to Birmingham City Centre), so we are ideal for small businesses looking for extra space."

Ryans is also looking seriously into underground storage on site as an additional way to increase capacity. While Ryans Removals continues to grow, Tom is determined that the company will retain its strong identity as a family-run business, with over 50 years in removals and storage.

"We never want to let that go; we can still keep our storage facility friendly and personal," says Tom. "Clearly a lot of self access customers want to come in and out of their rooms as fast as they can with easy parking and access, but you also have customers that want to feel relaxed and welcome as they are storing their personal or business effects and may be on site several hours a week. It's important to support their needs as well."



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