

# SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

May/June 2023

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## THINGS CHANGE WHEN PEOPLE TALK

Women from dealerships around the country have been discussing means of encouraging greater diversity and inclusivity in the workplace

### GETTING THE INDUSTRY NOTICED

Intention of incoming AEA president

### BOUNDARYLESS POSSIBILITIES

New tech extending robotic appeal

### YAMS

Strong support shown by dealers for Yorkshire event



### NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Sims GM's next gen tell us how they are developing the legacy begun by their great-grandfather over a century ago.



Letter from the editor  
**Steve Gibbs**

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**W**elcome to the May /June 2023 edition of *Service Dealer* magazine. We're delighted this issue to feature members of our expert panel of women dealers from businesses around the country. We've been listening to these panellists, trying to think if there are some simple, practical means of raising the profile of the dealer sector amongst all people, but particularly amongst a demographic of young women.

It doesn't appear to be a radical viewpoint to observe that the land-based engineering sector is one that is male dominated. This appears to be borne out by our latest survey, the results of which you can read this issue starting on page 44.

I think everyone would agree that having as wide a pool of potential candidates to draw upon as possible when looking to recruit, would be beneficial to all. So, considering ways to reach a section of society who

have traditionally been unlikely to have even considered applying for a role in a dealership, sounds like a pretty uncontroversial ambition. As with anything new, though, we have heard from some dissenting voices. We were told that a lack of candidates was nothing to do with the "gender narrative" by one reader. I'm not really sure what that meant, to be honest – but, if putting heads together and collecting ideas from specialists, leads to anybody thinking about a career in a dealership who hadn't considered one previously, surely that can only be seen as a positive?

Speaking at the AEA's recent conference, TV and press political pundit, Andrew Neil talked of how labour scarcity is a phenomenon common across all sectors, all countries, and is here to stay. So surely if anything can be achieved to make the dealer sector more visible to more sections of the workforce, it must be worth giving it a try?

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INDUSTRY



## Roberine find new UK distribution

Through Spearhead

**Spearhead has announced they have become the exclusive UK and Ireland distributor for Roberine.**

The Alamo Group, who are Spearhead's parent company, bought the Dutch Power Group, who owned Roberine, back in March 2019.

Spearhead has initially introduced four Roberine amenity mowers with the promise of further development in this area.

Serving the UK and Irish market, Spearhead said in an official statement that they "...will provide enhanced UK-based customer support, including help with road registration, rapid parts distribution, and general aftercare."

The Spearhead Roberine range includes four ride-on commercial mowers. The F3 (3 gang) machine is available as a flail or cylinder mower, whilst the F5 (5 gang) machine is also available as a flail or cylinder mower.

Antony Prince, director of sales and marketing at Spearhead, said: "Adding high-end, commercial ride-on machines to our line-up fits perfectly with our growth plans. And this is only the start. Using our product development strength, here in the UK, we're working to expand the range soon."

"We want those managing amenity space to have the best possible equipment supporting them."

DEALERS

## Peacock & Binnington expand offering

Take on Grange Machinery



L-R: Oliver Beekes, Grange Machinery, national sales manager; Marcus Bourne, Peacock & Binnington group sales manager; Alastair Hall, Grange Machinery, area sales manager

**Grange Machinery Ltd has extended its dealer network, with the appointment of Peacock & Binnington to cover North Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire.**

A family-run company based in Holderness, East Yorkshire, Grange Machinery manufactures agricultural machines and wearing parts, offering what they describe as "affordable solutions" to farmers.

P&B, which has been serving farmers since 1894, will cover their territory from five outlets: Brigg, Corringham, Halsham, Selby and Kirby Misperton.

"Grange Machinery is delighted to welcome Peacock & Binnington to our network of dealers in the UK," commented managing director Rhun Jones. "With P&B being local to Grange, we have worked closely with the company in the past, and find them to be extremely professional and forward-thinking, with a fantastic reputation amongst farmers in the local area."

Graham Main, managing director of Peacock & Binnington, added: "We are pleased to be joining forces with Grange Machinery. The range of products very much complements our existing franchises, and, being a local company, suits the conditions in our area perfectly."

"Rhun and his team have developed a professional business, and we are excited that we have been appointed."

DEALERS

# Johnston Gilpin acquired

By Stephen W Moore Ltd

**John Deere's agricultural and sports turf machinery will be available through a single, larger dealer in the counties of Antrim, Derry/Londonderry, Armagh and Down in Northern Ireland after Stephen W Moore Ltd announced that it is acquiring its neighbouring franchise, Johnston Gilpin & Co Ltd.**

Both Coleraine and Lisburn branches will continue trading from the current locations, and Deere says that customers will experience a simplification of all aspects of parts and service in the region as a result of the move, which is in line with their Dealer of Tomorrow strategy.

All Johnston Gilpin & Co employees will be transferred to Stephen W Moore, and the company's branch in Lisburn will continue to trade under the name Johnston Gilpin.

The expanded dealership will offer the full range of John Deere agricultural machinery as well as domestic and professional turf care products.

Dealer principal Stephen Moore said: "This is an exciting time, as we prepare to nearly double the size of our business with the next stage of our evolution."

"We have known the McConnell family and the Johnston Gilpin group for many years, and the whole team has done a fantastic job serving agricultural and turf care customers in the territory. It is clear we share the same core values around delivering unrivalled customer service, so I am looking forward to integrating the two businesses under the Stephen W Moore banner."

"The transition will be smooth and steady, ensuring that it's business as usual for our customers while we are learning from each other behind the scenes."

Stephen W Moore has been a John

Deere dealer since 2008 in Coleraine.

"As well as covering a larger area and the benefits that scale brings to a business like ours, we will now be able to offer the full range of professional turf care machines, parts, service and technical knowledge," Stephen added. "As one franchise with access to more machines, parts and know-how, the training and advice we can offer to customers and staff will continue to improve."

John Deere's division sales manager, Brian D'Arcy, said: "The acquisition is a great fit for our dealer network and the new, larger business - backed up by the support from John Deere - is an

extremely strong proposition for our customers in Northern Ireland.

"Both companies are well-established, with knowledgeable staff and connected support. Looking ahead, the business will go from strength to strength, and be in a position to make the future investments required in facilities, logistics and advanced precision technologies."

"Our special thanks go to Donn, Randal, Neale and all the McConnell family for their valuable and longstanding contribution to the industry after serving as a dealer in the area for John Deere for the past 54 years."



L-R: Neale McConnell; Randal McConnell; Donn McConnell; Alison Moore; Stephen Moore



EVENTS

# “Scotland has been desperate for something like this”

First Scottish turf event for almost 15 years takes place



The Scots Turf Show took place at Hamilton Park Racecourse in March

The first Scottish event aimed at turf professionals for almost 15 years, the Scots Turf Show, opened its doors at Hamilton Park Racecourse on March 1, with organisers saying visitors began to pour in an hour before official registration had even opened.

The trial show was devised by 17 industry companies, who said they wanted to give something back to the Scottish turf community by providing a local turf event, accessible to a vast swathe of groundsmen and greenkeepers from all areas of sport, that had never had the opportunity to attend a local industry event.

One visitor was David Roxburgh, head groundsman at Rangers Football Club, who said, “Something needed to happen here in Scotland, I think it’s been great. The fantastic turnout here hasn’t surprised me, because I think Scotland has been desperate for something like this. It needs a big show, and I think this could possibly be the

forerunner of something great.”

Organisers say the number of registered visitors had risen above the target of 200, with 287 attending on the day.

The day began with an introduction to the idea behind the show by Alan Thomson of AllGrass and Richard Heywood of Campey Turf Care Systems. The guests were immediately engaged with two 20-minute speakers, Gary Smith senior agronomist from the STRI, quickly followed by Joe Shaw from SIS Pitches, before heading out into the spring sunshine for the outdoor exhibition area.

After a couple of hours of interaction with the exhibitors, the group enjoyed a lunch in the hospitality suite overlooking the magnificent racetrack at Hamilton Park. Then it was back to the marquee for two more short seminars, one from Kelly Marie Clarke agronomist from Origin, and, finally, an introduction

to Hamilton Park itself by Ashley Moon, managing director of Hamilton Racecourse.

The organisers said it is important to the companies behind this event to gauge the response of the visitors going forward, with a view to expanding the event significantly next year.

One of the main drivers of the day, Alan Thomson from AllGrass, explained: “Don’t get me wrong, we are not reinventing the wheel here, but simply putting it on a different path, and a path that can continue to build excitement for the Scottish and beyond markets. ‘Connecting the Industry’: this is something that Richard and I believe we can do, and, hopefully, with the many ideas for the future, we can achieve this.”



Organisers have announced March 6, 2024, as the date for next year’s event.

DEALERS

# New Holland award their dealers

UK and ROI Dealer of the Year Awards

New Holland has recently announced the winners of its 2022 UK and ROI Dealer of the Year Awards, which celebrate excellence in performance and service quality across its UK and Ireland dealer network.

The awards were announced at the 2023 Dealer Kick Off Meeting, which was held at the Basildon plant followed by an evening dinner and horseracing at the Chelmsford City Racecourse. The awards were presented by Sean Lennon, vice president New Holland Agriculture Europe, together with David Rapkins, the company’s recently appointed business director for UK & ROI.

David Rapkins said: “I would like to express my congratulations to all the 2022 New Holland Dealer of the Year winners. These awards are created to motivate and encourage all our dealers to drive business growth. We acknowledge and thank the whole team in each dealership, which includes service, parts, marketing, administration support and all the sales teams.

“2022 was a very successful year for New Holland and our dealers, which shows the excellent teamwork across our whole dealer network.”

## MAIN CATEGORY WINNERS:

- Overall UK Dealer of the Year: **Lloyd Ltd**
- Ireland Dealer of the Year: **MC&S Agri Sales Ltd**
- Medium UK Dealer of the Year: **Ravenhill Ltd**
- Small UK Dealer of the Year: **Burkes of Cornascriebe Ltd**

## PRODUCT LINE CATEGORY WINNERS:

- Combine Dealer of the Year: **Russell’s Ltd**
- Tractor Dealer of the Year: **Ravenhill Ltd**
- Hay & Forage Dealer of the Year: **Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd**
- Aftersales Dealer of the Year: **Agricar Ltd**
- Implements Dealer of the Year: **Agricar Ltd**
- Construction Equipment Dealer of the Year: **Menai Tractors Ltd**
- Telehandler Dealer of the Year: **Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd**



Lloyd Ltd were named overall UK Dealer of the Year

INDUSTRY



# Future tech partnership established

By Bobcat

Bobcat Company have partnered with Agtonomy, to collaborate in the areas of electrification, autonomous operation and digital technology.

Through this partnership, Bobcat say that they and Agtonomy, a Silicon Valley agtech software company, will collaborate to create new ways of enhancing Bobcat equipment for increased productivity and performance.

Together, the companies say they will focus on addressing pressing issues in agriculture by developing electric-powered and autonomously-operated solutions.

“The agriculture industry offers many opportunities for innovation advancements, and we are focusing on developing solutions for real-world application,” said Joel Honeyman, Bobcat Company vice president of global innovation. “Through this partnership with Agtonomy, we are identifying ways to make our customers more productive and efficient in their ag operations.”

Agtonomy say their focus is on developing solutions for farmers that allow them to remotely complete day-to-day tasks, more efficiently and with more precision.

“We are ecstatic to be joining forces with Bobcat in utilising technology to make farming operations more productive, profitable, and sustainable,” said Tim Bucher, CEO and co-founder of Agtonomy. “With our shared commitment to innovation, we are confident that we can develop solutions to overcome some of the biggest challenges facing agriculture today.”



EDUCATION

# IAgrE offer full support

To new T-Level qualifications

**The Institution of Agricultural Engineers (IAgrE) say they fully support the new T-Level qualifications for the land-based sector that go live in September 2023.**

T-Level courses in construction, engineering and manufacturing were launched in 2021, and the Technical Qualifications for Agriculture, Land Management and Production cover land-based engineering.

IAgrE say the new T-Levels are technical-based qualifications in England that have been developed with employers and businesses with content that meets the need of industry and prepares students for work, further training or study. These are two-year courses equivalent to 3 A-levels, and will eventually replace the National Diplomas in England.

The two-year programme will be delivered at local colleges and training providers. The courses will be 80% classroom-based and 20% practical. Included in the course is a 45-day industry placement, which will give the student valuable workplace experience. The course content will be aligned to the current Level 3 land-based engineering apprenticeship standards.

The government's Skills for Jobs white paper reforming post-16 further education and skills is at the heart of the plan to create a technical education system. The aim is stronger links between the classroom and workplace, putting employers and standards at the heart of all technical qualifications.

IAgrE CEO Charlie Nicklin said: "The



IAgrE CEO Charlie Nicklin

introduction of T-Levels in England is a great opportunity to refresh full-time, land-based engineering education, which is currently delivered through the existing National Diplomas. The content has been aligned with the well regarded Level 3 land-based engineering apprenticeship standards. Involving industry specialists in its compilation ensures that the content is up-to-date with current technologies. It's important the industry gets fully behind the qualifications by supporting the work placements that will help to deliver the future technicians and engineers the sector desperately needs."

The primary aim of the T-Level learning programme is to provide students with entry to skilled employment within a specific occupation or sector, and to support further higher-level training and progression to university. Students will develop occupationally focused skills and knowledge that are valued by employers as essential for employment, and the industry placement will help them apply and refine their technical and practical skills, plus knowledge and behaviours to ensure they are ready for the world of work.

They may have been designed for industry by industry, but there are concerns that industry is still not demonstrating enough commitment to the roll-out. IAgrE believe that, if this vocational programme is going to succeed, it will need the industry's commitment and backing.

DEALERS



Oliver Gerrish and Phil Turner, area sales managers, Lister Wilder

# Lister Wilder take on new range

Stella machines from PSD Groundscare

**PSD Groundscare have announced Lister Wilder as a new dealer for the full range of Stella products.**

From their branches across the south of England, the dealership will be supplying and promoting the range including the Racoon ride-on flail mowers and the URS remote-control tracked mowers.

Phill Hughes, sales director at Lister Wilder, said: "We believe that both our professional and private customers will recognise the engineering quality that's built into the machines, and the products have a position within our portfolio that we were previously missing. We're really looking forward to showing customers new and old the benefits and quality that the Stella range offers, and have invested in a fleet of demonstration machinery to do so."

PSD sales director Stuart Mercer added: "We have worked with Lister Wilder for many years, and it's great they have joined the growing dealer network offering the Stella range of mowers. When we showed the Lister Wilder team the machines in action, they were blown away, and were excited to be able to offer it to their customers."

INDUSTRY

# Boss moves home

Following three years of growth



L-R: Phil Everett, MD; Vanessa Robinson, operations manager; James Crawford, technical support and warehouse manager; and Matt Richardson, after sales manager

**Boss ORV, the sole UK distributor of Corvus Off-Road Vehicles, has moved into new headquarters.**

The company says the move is another major landmark for themselves, who started trading in 2019, importing the Corvus Terrain 4x4 side-by-side utility vehicles.

"We have had three years of extraordinary growth," says Phil Everett, the Boss ORV managing director. "We have managed to outgrow our existing facilities in half the time we expected. The opening of new offices in Staffordshire puts us right at the heart of the UK and central to all the major road networks.

"All our dealer support functions will be based here, including a brand-new stores facility, which allows us to stock a much larger quantity and diversity of spare parts and accessories."

Phil attributes the expansion of the business to the rapid acceptance of the Corvus Terrain vehicles by both dealers and users as a major contender across a wide range of markets.

"The Corvus dealer network has grown substantially to meet the needs of users in agriculture, groundcare, construction, amenities and private estates, to name but a few," says Phil.

DEALERS

# Olivers awarded

By Spearhead

**Spearhead has awarded family-run dealer Olivers with its '2022 Dealer of the Year' accolade.**

The manufacturer say they have worked closely with Olivers for over three years. The dealership's five branches serve Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Surrey, Hampshire, West Sussex, and the Isle of Wight.

To select its winner, Spearhead say they analysed annual sales growth for all dealers turning over a significant amount with the brand, and then reviewed feedback from several departments to assess the shortlist.

"The Olivers team is incredibly proactive, and we have a great relationship with them," said Antony Prince, director of sales and marketing at Spearhead. "MD David Jarman, and sales directors William Helliwell and Russell Hallam, have worked tirelessly throughout 2022 with our area manager, Simon Gurney. The results have been phenomenal, and we're delighted to give Olivers this award."

David Jarman, Olivers' MD, commented: "We've thoroughly enjoyed working closely with Spearhead to drive our sales growth. Both businesses are on the same page, and it's testament to everyone that we achieved so much last year."



L-R: Antony Prince - Spearhead director of sales and marketing; David Jarman - Oliver Agriculture, MD; Simon Gurney, Spearhead, sales manager GB West; Russell Hallam, Oliver Agriculture, south area sales director



DEALERS

# Another new dealer for Mean Green

Shinners Bridge GM also take on Altoz mowers

**Overton (UK) Ltd have announced Shinners Bridge Garden Machinery as their latest dealer for the electric Mean Green and Altoz tracked mowers.**

Andy White MD of Shinners Bridge, said: "With our rapidly growing commercial range, these products fitted in particularly well with our business dynamic. With a customer base covering some challenging terrain, having



L-R: Stuart Bruckner, commercial sales, Shinners Bridge GM; Richard Overton, MD, Overton; Andy White, MD, Shinners Bridge GM

now the option, of both battery and petrol commercial machines, we can provide satisfaction and quality of cut to all our end users.

"The added bonus, is the brilliant working relationship we have developed with Overton (UK), providing our staff with training and excellent product support. We look forward to working together on a long-term basis."

DEALERS

# Honour for Double A

Campey's name them as Dealer of the Year



L-R: Richard Heywood, Campey product specialist; Sandy Armit, Double A Trading Company; and Richard Campey

**Campey Turf Care Systems has announced the Double A Trading Company Ltd as their Dealer of the Year for 2022.**

Double A was formed in 1996, and is an equipment supplier to the Scottish groundcare industry, employing 45 staff over three outlets from locations in Fife, Aberdeenshire and Glasgow, offering customers a local service across Scotland.

Managing director Sandy Armit received the award at this year's BTME exhibition in Harrogate. He said: "Winning the Campey award of Dealer of the Year is a very welcome recognition of the hard work of the whole team that occurs on a daily basis, and this only happens if we are all performing, whether that is sales, administration, parts or service. Everyone plays their part in creating a business customers want to buy from, and we can be very proud of that achievement."

Responsibility for supplying Double A is now in the hands of Campey product specialist Richard Heywood. He said: "It is a pleasure to work with Sandy and the brilliant team at Double A. We strive to assimilate the customers' needs with our product range, and good communication is essential."

Sandy added: "This direct support from Campey is key to our success, and provides an invaluable benefit for the customer. We have grown the business steadily since 1996, but have had growth in the last five years, opening a new outlet in Aberdeenshire and taking over responsibility for John Deere turf equipment in the west of Scotland. Doing all of this through Covid and Brexit has had its challenges, so now we are in a period of consolidation, making investment in people and training to ensure each part of our business is working at optimum performance before we move on to the next stage of our journey."

DEALERS



Married team, Georgina Cornock-Evans and Arwel Evans

# Arwel's awarded Fendt franchise

Furthering the business

**Fendt has announced a new partnership with dealership Arwel's Agri Services, based near Lampeter, mid-Wales.**

The family-run business was established in 2008 by husband and wife Arwel Evans and Georgina Cornock-Evans. Together with their team, they will service southwest Wales, primarily covering Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, and Pembrokeshire.

Arwel said: "We have always seen Fendt as a premium brand, with tractors that are a good fit for the farming industry we have here in Wales. This is why a partnership with Fendt felt like the right move for us. Since our appointment as a Fendt dealer, the level of interest shown for Fendt tractors has been both welcoming and positive."

Whilst traditionally a livestock area with a focus on grassland management, Arwel believes the new franchise will make the business more competitive at supplying tractors to mixed and arable farms.

"We wanted to further the business by competing with the wide variety of brands in the area, and working with Fendt will help us achieve this. Our staff are all very excited and positive, and have been very supportive in our decision to work with Fendt," he says.

Arwel continued: "We have built a business from scratch that is customer-focused, and we are eager to welcome the opportunity to represent the Fendt brand. We are confident that the move will give our customers the quality product and service packages they need to farm more efficiently."

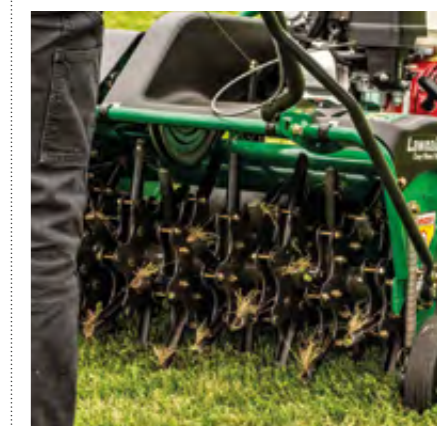
Welcoming Arwel's, Martin Hamer, national sales manager for Fendt, said: "Arwel, Georgina and their colleagues are a great match for Fendt. They share our ethos of supplying customers with the highest quality premium products, and then providing a high-quality, customer-focused after-sales experience."

"We look forward to working closely with Arwel's Agri Services to build the Fendt brand in southwest Wales."

INDUSTRY

# Bobcat takes on Ryan

Expanded portfolio of machinery



**Bobcat is now offering the line of Ryan turf care equipment in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA).**

Part of the company's new ground maintenance equipment (GME) range is now available from their network of authorised dealers. The expanded portfolio of machinery includes aerators, power rakes and dethatchers, an overseeder and sod cutters.

Daniele Paciotti, attachments and GME product line director for Bobcat, said: "By entering the turf equipment segment, we now offer a competitive product range for work on grass in all the sports pitch, municipal and cultural institutions.

"As well as Ryan Turf Equipment," Daniele continued, "the GME range in EMEA includes compact tractors and mowers, in addition to Bobcat's existing ranges of mini track and small articulated loaders.

"Following on from our success in the North American market, Bobcat has set ambitious goals of being ranked within the top three GME players in Europe, and to double growth in the global GME market by 2027."



INDUSTRY



# Low emission fuel use approved

By Kubota in its diesel engines

**Kubota (UK) Ltd has approved use of the paraffinic fuels HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) and GTL (Gas To Liquid) in all its diesel engines, which, they say, will contribute to a lower carbon footprint for Kubota internal combustion engines.**

Approval follows the company's internal evaluation of these alternative fuels. It has confirmed that any paraffinic fuel that complies with the European standard, EN15940, is suitable for use in all its diesel engines.

"This is a tremendous benefit for operators who are required to meet environmental conditions where CO2 emissions are monitored and measured," explained Tim Yates,

Kubota (UK)'s agricultural and ground care sales manager. "For those working in urban locations, for example, or with county councils and environmental projects, achieving a lower carbon footprint is now possible with Kubota-powered equipment."

The manufacturer says they recognise that HVO, which is synthesised from vegetable oil and fat, and GTL, which is synthesised from natural gas, are becoming increasingly popular as alternative fuels, due to their environmental benefits that offer reduced emissions.

Tim continued: "This is another example of Kubota's engineering excellence, to enable a change in approved fuel without any modification.

It provides owners and operators with yet another fuel choice to suit their operating environment."

When using these fuels, operators should comply with any appropriate local regulations in the areas being used, say Kubota. There is no requirement to flush fuel tanks or change filters, as HVO and GTL are safe to mix with diesel. Nor are there changes to existing maintenance intervals or warranty conditions when using these fuels. Operators may notice a slight degradation in engine performance from using the lower-density paraffinic fuels, compared to diesel.



Model Pictured: Cobra LT86HRL

# COBRA

## Why Not Become a Cobra Dealer in 2023?

With over 150 products in the Cobra range including the new Lawn Tractor and Fortis Cylinder Lawnmower ranges in 2023, Cobra is fast becoming a market leading brand in garden machinery. Contact us today to join the growing number of Cobra Dealers across the U.K.

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Cobra reserves the right to change models, specifications & prices without prior notice. E & OE. \*Warranty period based on domestic use.



# Boundaryless possibilities

New technology was on display at a show targeted at the mainstream horticultural press this spring. *Service Dealer* editor STEVE GIBBS went along to see what suppliers were promoting to the gardening public.

In March, I attended a small industry exhibition in London that I have visited many times over the years. Whenever I go, I do find it interesting to compare and contrast what level of support the machinery brands that our readers stock have chosen to offer the show.

The Garden Press Event isn't open to the trade or the public. Rather, it's targeted specifically at journalists who represent the horticultural press - be that physical media, such

as the gardening pages of national newspapers and magazines, or the thriving online community of blogging, vlogging and podcasting gardeners.

The concept of the day is that the exhibiting companies can show off their latest products and services to the media, who will then cover the developments in print and online, in places that the buying public engage with. The intention is to raise the profile of companies who, presumably, are not exactly household names for the

average consumer, hopefully leading to increased footfall, or website visits, for the retailers who stock them.

When I first began attending eight or so years ago, there were perhaps only two or three outdoor powered machinery companies who took space at the show. This increased year on year immediately pre-pandemic when, from memory, they were in attendance in their high teens. This number had dropped slightly last year with the first post-Covid show - and it's a tad



The Garden Press Event took place in the Business Design Centre in Islington



Makita were getting their message out about the breadth of their range of battery-powered machinery and the quality of their own-made batteries at the show. Pictured are Rebecca Harbone and Mark Earles



Henton & Chattell featured a double stand showcasing both EGO and Cobra - the latter of which highlighted their new ride-on and cylinder mowers. Pictured is Peter Chaloner



The Garden Press Event took place in the Business Design Centre in Islington

disappointing to report that there were even fewer at the Business Design Centre this year, around half the amount who came at its peak.

One company who chose not to exhibit this year told me their non-appearance was because they did not see the value in it. They felt machinery was overlooked by the mainstream press in favour of flowerpots and bird-feeders - which, in this year of increased costs and more trade shows on the industry's calendar than ever before, is an entirely fair comment.

That said, speaking to the machinery companies who were in attendance, all appeared upbeat and positive regarding the opportunities the Garden Press Event presented them in regards to upping their profiles with consumers. One even remarked to me that the media visitors to the show this year seemed of a better quality overall than last, representing as they did, high-profile journals rather than niche online outlets.

## Machinery trend

And what was the machinery trend that these writers and broadcasters will have seen across the stands? For me, it was the arrival in a major way of boundaryless robotic mowers.

Dealers, of course, will be familiar with examples of this type of technology, with various companies producing their ilk for several seasons now. 2023, however, does appear to be the year where big-name manufacturers will be heavily promoting these autonomous machines that do not require a wire installed around the edge of the garden. STIGA, Kress, Husqvarna and

Barrus (with the Segway brand) were all showing off their latest domestic versions.

These machines are clearly a hot topic. Recently, a dealer we spoke to as part of our national panel told us that they considered boundaryless robots to be the source of greatest excitement and potential growth for their dealership this season. Apparently, there is plenty of pre-release buzz amongst certain customers.

I can see, too, how stories about these advanced developments could well find favour amongst journos in search of an eye-catching story. There's clearly an appetite amongst publishers to cover this kind of area, so it would not surprise me that, if any machinery articles did make the consumer-facing press from the show, they'd be covering these machines.

Hopefully, those exhibitors who chose to attend this year did achieve their goal of column inches in the right publication or features on the right blog. Opportunities for the specialist brands that our readers stock to gain wide, mainstream media coverage are not as frequent as one would hope, especially considering just how popular a pastime gardening is amongst the British public.

If some crossover publicity was gained for these boundaryless robots, for example, hopefully next year a few more machinery exhibitors will be encouraged to return to this targeted show. If the show can perform its job as intended, any opportunity to gain mass publicity for the specialist kit that the independent dealer network stocks should be enthusiastically grasped.



# SEEN AT THE SHOW

STIGA



## STIGA bringing A.I to British gardens

Three cable-free robots launched at Garden Press Event

STIGA used the Garden Press Event to launch new autonomous robotic lawnmowers to the British market.

The three fully-autonomous, cable-free robot mowers, which the company say are the first to bring predictive AGS technology to the garden, are: A 1500, A 3000 and the A 500.

The manufacturer says their patented Active Guidance System (AGS) enhances the GPS RTK signal reliability by using 4G to transmit vital course correction data. This means the link between robot and base remains reliable, no matter what obstacles or distance lies between them. The system learns satellite blind spots throughout the garden at various times of the day, ensuring that the robot has an unbroken link to the infrastructure that allows it to navigate with the accuracy required.

With no need to lay a cable in the lawn, users can use the app to drive the robot mower around the perimeter and any obstacles. It's done once, and the system remembers every detail. Because it is virtual, it can be adjusted if the layout of the garden should change.

By using accurate navigation, the company says the robot can cover the lawn significantly more efficiently. According to

STIGA, this equates to less cutting time when compared to a random navigation robot, meaning the plant time is allowed time to heal between cutting schedules. This way, the grass stays healthier.

Featuring carbon steel pivoting razor blades, which spin at 2850rpm, the company says they will perform a neat cut without tearing the grass. The height of cut can be adjusted between 20mm and 65mm, and can be controlled remotely via the smartphone app.

At the heart of every STIGA robot mower is an ePower battery built on lithium-ion batteries, which the company says contain chemistry optimised for reliability and durability. The new robots optimise the battery usage as they work within organised cutting patterns, ensuring that there is no chance of over-mowing. There is also the option to programme the mower to create straight line patterns, so users can still create stripes if they wish.

The robots cut the lawn in two mowing cycles - these are performed consequently. It will re-start any cutting cycle from where it stopped on the previous cycle, and can be programmed to work in multiple mowing zones, always returning to the charging station by the fastest route.



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- Chainsaws
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KRESS



## Kress promote unmanned and wireless mowing

Range RTKn robots

Kress were on trend at the show, displaying their boundaryless robot mower options. Described as meeting the demands of a wide range of applications, terrains and surroundings, the company say their RTKn models provide “human-like results no matter the incline or obstacle.”

Functioning without a boundary wire or on-site antennae, the RTKn technology uses a global navigation satellite system which provides autonomous geo-spatial positioning to achieve centimetre-level accuracy, without the use of antennas.

Operating in parallel lines, Kress boast that large areas of lawn are mowed as quickly as by an experienced landscaper, and with no labour cost. They say the machines will provide operational savings and minimal impact on energy bills.

In addition, Kress allows users to micromanage their lawns with Multi Zone setup, and precise control over distinct mowing zones. Available to users anytime, their smartphone app lets owners mark out specific mowing areas, and, in case there’s a paved road in-between, a path can be traced to allow the

mower to reach them.

If external factors compromise satellite positioning accuracy, the manufacturer says its inertial navigation takes over to precisely route the mower until it reaches an open sky area and satellite navigation is restored.

Also on the company’s stand were examples of the eight-minute charging Cybersystem battery platform.



Gary Tulley and Tony Macer

HUSQVARNA



Husqvarna Aspire

## Power for all from Husqvarna

Battery system includes robotic option

Promoted by Husqvarna at the show was the launch of a complete product range that supports the Power For All battery system.

The manufacturer’s Aspire range includes a robotic mower, walk behind mower, grass trimmer, pruner, hedge trimmer and blower.

The Power For All Alliance is described as one of the world’s largest cross-brand battery alliances, and was co-founded by Husqvarna Group, through its Gardena brand, and Bosch in 2020. The Husqvarna brand joined the Power For All Alliance in 2022, meaning consumers can use the same 18V battery for multiple devices in and around their home and garden, regardless of manufacturer.

Pavel Hajman, acting CEO of Husqvarna Group, said: “Electrification is changing society and is essential in the transition to a low-carbon economy. Husqvarna Group is on an electrification journey with great ambitions to enable garden owners to shift from fossil fuel to battery-powered products. Successful collaborations and powerful batteries really make a difference in this progress.”

The Husqvarna Group has said that shifting from petrol to battery-powered products is one of their strategic priorities. They say their ambition is to have 67% of the company’s motorised products run on electricity by 2026.



Sam Collins and Rachel Jones

SEGWAY

## Segway launches Navimow robot in UK

Displayed on Barrus’ stand at the show

Seen on Barrus’ stand, Segway has launched its smart robotic lawnmower, Navimow, in the UK, along with the new AI-powered VisionFence Sensor.

According to the manufacturer, this VisionFence Sensor accessory enables Navimow to mow complex lawns more intelligently and accurately than ever before. Its dedicated AI chip and visual recognition algorithm helps the robot to recognise multiple objects more quickly and precisely. Incorporated with a neural network trained with real-world data, Segway say the mower can always identify the lawn’s edge, even when the satellite is weak in areas with challenging layouts.

Designed for a lawn area of up to 3,000 square metres, the robot utilises the Exact Fusion Locating System, allowing it to select the optimal mowing path and automatically change the mowing direction after completing a round of mowing, which avoids the traces left by repeated mowing paths. The noise level is minimised to 54 decibels, and, designed with safety in mind, the Navimow has multiple built-in sensors, including an IMU and Lift sensor for front and rear lifting, along with VisionFence and Bump sensors for obstacle avoidance. And the BladeHalt sensor provides an extra layer of safety, stopping the blades if an object has contact with the sensing area.

Its app operates as both a knowledge hub and a smart remote control. With a few taps, users can find detailed tutorial videos and guidelines, allowing them to follow a set of instructions to map out a virtual boundary for their lawn. The average setup time is claimed to be 20 to 30 minutes, if guidelines are followed correctly.

In addition to using the Navimow app to set and adjust their mowing area, users can remotely operate and monitor the mower from anywhere at any time. Alongside the ability to check the real-time mower status, adjust the mowing schedule or set an anti-theft alarm, users have access to the latest features by downloading over-the-air (OTA) updates via the app.



STIHL



## STIHL keeping the garden tidy

New SHA 56 cordless vacuum shredder and blower

Alongside new cordless blowers, chainsaws, hedge trimmers and a vacuum, at the Garden Press Event STIHL displayed the new SHA 56, their first cordless vacuum shredder and blower.

Offering three functions in one, the unit can be used for blowing, vacuuming, and shredding garden materials, including leaves, hedge clippings and green waste.

The manufacturer says the SHA 56 makes it easy to clean up garden waste, which can then be vacuumed and shredded into one collection bag. This reduces the need to rake manually, and the shredded debris is compacted down to use less space in the green waste bin or compost.

The inclusion of a 180° rotating handle, along with a carry strap, ensures comfortable operation in both blowing and suction mode. Plus, the adjustable length blowing tube can be altered to suit the user’s height for the best blowing position close to the ground.

Variable speed control means the SHA 56 can be used to blow leaves and waste on a variety of surfaces, and moving from blowing to vacuuming tasks can be done by changing the attachments, without the need for additional tools or equipment.

The long zip on the 40-litre catcher bag ensures fast and easy emptying, and, for optimum filling, the bag fills from front to back. To reduce clogging due to dense or damp matter, the suction tube is designed in a conical shape, and the inclusion of a shredder blade on the fan wheel reduces material volume.

The SHA 56 can be used for up to 25 minutes with the recommended AK 20 battery, depending on the material being shredded.



# Getting the industry noticed

That's what the AEA's incoming president said was the Association's aim at their recent AGM and Conference, held once again at the Institution of Civil Engineers' building in Westminster. Editor STEVE GIBBS attended.



Andrew Neil

## Geopolitics, economics, and generational analysis

That guest was **Andrew Neil**, who many will know from his numerous TV and press roles, and whom the AEA billed as a 'media trailblazer'. His presentation was both entertaining and thought-provoking, and one that delegates certainly seemed to enjoy as a start to the day.

Andrew based his talk around what he saw as the major geopolitical trends. Essentially, he believed that these were:

1. **The current labour scarcity issues are a worldwide problem and are here to stay.**
2. **The next big risk is deflation.**
3. **We are in an era of big government and big taxes - regardless of which political party wins the next election.**

It was a fascinating address, presented with good humour, that finished on a positive note celebrating UK diversity. It received a huge round of applause from the delegates.

Faced with the daunting task of following on from Mr Neil was **James Webster**, senior agribusiness analyst with the Andersons Centre. James' presentation considered the economic prospects for UK agriculture, looking at how 'agflation' had affected the sector in recent years.

He summed up his thoughts, considering the threats and opportunities for the ag market. He said that, on the downside, costs will remain high in the short term, and shifts in the support systems available to farmers will reduce the margins available. However, looking for positives, he said there is still a large scope for farming efficiency improvements, and he believed there are opportunities for those eager to find them, and still good profits to be made by good operators.

Finally addressing delegates was **Dr James Redmond**, who is a generational change and future of work expert from the University of Liverpool. In an entertaining and engaging presentation, he considered how businesses might develop multi-generational teams to work in harmony with each other. His thesis was that we need to accept that technology is not neutral, and has, in fact, changed society. The impact of technology on the different generations has created fundamental differences in the way they act and interact - and businesses need to be aware of this and adapt accordingly.

He said modern employers who want to succeed need to listen to their staff. He said younger generations credit being valued in the workplace, perhaps more highly than financial rewards. He also said it is the attitude of a business that is key to Gen Z. A combination of Digital Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence is what appeals most to younger people.

## Attracting and retaining staff

Following the speakers, pre-lunch, the AEA's incoming president, **Martin Hamer**, national sales manager for Fendt, gave his inaugural address.

What I found particularly interesting was when Martin turned his concentration to how the industry needs to attract and retain more team members across the board.

Martin said: "I believe the AEA is making great strides to get our industry noticed by those we need to run our businesses in the future. And making the case that our industry is at the top, or at the very least on, the career aspirations list for those in the education system."

He was keen to stress that the industry shouldn't just be attracting the offspring of farmers, but "the broad base of potential product specialists, marketers, parts managers, purchasing managers, engineers, IT

specialists, accountants, machine operators, and people managers, to name but a few."

Martin said that he believes that the AEA's We Are Land-Based programme is "leading the charge to spell out opportunities and clear career progression and qualification pathways, to attract the widest possible cohort of interested people – right from school through to university, and those considering a career change."

He paraphrased JFK's words slightly, saying: "We all need to ask not just what can government, industry bodies, advisors or analysts do for our businesses – but what can we do for our businesses?"

He challenged the many business leaders of large organisations in the room to ask themselves: what were they doing to attract and retain staff?

He went on to say: "I'm a firm believer that achievement leads to contentment. I also believe that you can't just motivate people to achieve. But you can create an environment where they are motivated and happy, which leads to achievement."

He concluded: "As leaders we have to reflect and put ourselves in our employees' shoes, our dealers' shoes and our customers' shoes. Is it clear what's expected of them? Do they see where they fit in? Do we train them and give them the skills to understand and enhance what we want them to do? Are we creating the right environment?"

I thought Martin hit the right tone with his speech, and I think all reading this would agree that attracting and retaining staff is one of, if not the most challenging and vital tasks facing dealers and manufacturers today.

Hopefully, Martin raising this subject in a room full of influential industry figures indicates that recruitment is at the top of the AEA's agenda - and will act as inspiration for the listening employers to redouble their efforts to raise the profile of our sector.

**2** 023's AEA Conference was a well-attended event, with plenty of dealers present amongst the delegations of manufacturer and supplier representatives who make up the Association's membership.

The format of the day saw a variety of speakers address the conference, followed by a lunch and further talks by the incoming president and specially invited presenters. There should, in fact, have been an even greater variety of speakers, with Conservative MP Mark Spencer, Minister of State Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, due to speak. However, "urgent business" drew him away at the 11th hour shortly before the conference began - but thankfully, the first guest was happy to speak for longer and take questions from the floor.



Incoming president Martin Hamer addresses delegates at the 2023 AEA Conference in Westminster





Lauren and Ben outside the building that has housed Sims GM since 2009

# New kids on the block

LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR, caught up with Lauren and Ben Sims, of Sims Garden Machinery, hearing how they are developing the legacy began by their great grandfather over a century ago.

A trip to Stratford-upon-Avon allowed me to meet Lauren and Ben Sims, who are the fourth generation of the Sims family to run the long-established Sims Garden Machinery – a company started way back in 1908 by their great grandfather, Frank Harold Sims.

With a long and storied history, which is well-documented on the dealership's website (simsgardenmachinery.co.uk), Sims GM has been located at their current premises since 2009 - a move that saw them set up business in a building that was four times the size of their old unit. That same year, Sims was awarded 'Dealer of the Year' by Service Dealer for a showroom which the magazine described as "a standard of excellence for others in the garden machinery business."

As the company settled into its new location, a fourth generation was introduced to the business. In 2013,



Sister and brother team Lauren and Ben Sims

Ben began working for the company part-time while he completed his degree at the University of Worcester. Since graduating in 2016, Ben has worked full-time for the company, and is now a director himself along with his sister, Lauren, who then gave up her own career working for the police to take over the reins of her mother's role as the company's HR, admin and accounts manager.

It was fascinating to listen to Ben and Lauren talk about their roles and how they believe the business can develop under their leadership.

They certainly have plenty of ideas, and are keen to continue the family values the company have extolled for well over 115 years. Ben's role is sales manager, and he oversees all day-to-day management issues of the business - albeit still under the watchful eye of his home-based dad, Barry.

Like most family businesses, the owner's children tend to get involved at an early age, helping out in the shop, as it was in Ben's case. From his early teenage years, Ben worked weekends and helped building up machines and carrying out PDI inspections. Once he passed his

driving test, he was then able to deliver machines and parts.

He even continued working for the company whilst attending University of Worcester. After qualifying, he went travelling for a while, before finally returning to take up a full-time post within the company.

Likewise, Lauren would help out in her teenage years, before deciding to go to University of Hull and gaining a degree in psychology at University of York. This was followed by a master's degree in forensic psychology, which led to her job working for the police.

The skills gained by both Ben and Lauren have certainly helped in the running of a dynamic, challenging business.

## Combining the traditional with the modern

Ben and Lauren say the dealership attracts a wide range of customers from across the county of Warwickshire and surrounding areas, mainly domestic and larger landowners and estates managers, with a few parish councils, local schools and some contractors.

They have, over the years acquired an array of machinery products, including the likes of Ariens, Allett, Billy Goat, Cobra, Echo, Gardena, Hayter, Honda, Husqvarna, Iseki, Mountfield, STIHL, Stiga, Snapper and TORO, to name a few. Their 700m2 showroom is packed full of machinery, with over 250 - yes, 250! - machines on display.

The company has nine full-time staff, and a couple of part-timers. Ben explained: "We have three full-time mechanics, all industry-trained and qualified, together with a fully-equipped workshop. They can carry out repairs or services to almost any type of groundcare machine, whether it be warranty repairs on items we have sold, failure repairs or annual servicing."

On top of machinery servicing, Sims also offer a sharpening service for all types of garden tools, such as secateurs, loppers and shears, as well as lawnmower blades, hedge trimmer blades and chainsaw blades.

Ben and Lauren were keen to point out that, coming from a younger generation as they do, they have plenty of fresh ideas, and recognise the potential and importance of online sales, coupled with new ways of



Sims have over 250 machines on display





Ride-on mowers in the showroom

Customers still value choice in-store, believe Sims

marketing their products and services.

Lauren said: "We need

to develop our own online distribution and sales centre, without compromising our current showroom experiences. Many customers are now expecting next day service and delivery of products."

Lauren continued: "Customers still value the touch and feel approach, and often come in to buy a particular product, but then try others and find that they may be more applicable and end up buying something completely different to what they had in mind. An example of this is that, once they have done their research online, they may have a preconceived idea of the particular product they want. Often they will have narrowed down their choice on three hedge trimmers for example, with price being the primary driver for their purchase. Once they are in the shop, though, and pick up a given product, more often than not, they will change their mind once they have handled it. So we still believe the showroom is a vital element, and must be well stocked with a fine choice of products. Hence why we stock so many different brands."



The dealership employs nine full-time staff and a couple of part-timers



Despite the rise in online sales, the showroom is still vital to Sims' business

### Rise of the robots

Sims see great potential in the future of boundaryless robotic mowers

programmes. Like most businesses, you must adapt to change.

Ben told me that, since Covid they have seen a dramatic rise in customer interest in both robotic and battery driven products. "Sales of robotic mowers are growing substantially," he said. "We now offer a vast array of different makes of robotic mowers, including STIHL, Husqvarna, Stiga - both wired and wireless versions. We are currently advertising for a dedicated robotic salesperson, and hope to start them as soon as possible ready for this season's demand."

Both Ben and Lauren believe that, in the next few years, sales of battery-driven products and robotic mowers will increase even further, and, over time, will replace petrol-driven products. "This may mean the number of petrol products we service and repair will reduce in the coming years," says Ben. "However, we are in no doubt there will be a need to offer a service to repair and service battery products."

"It will just mean our mechanics will have to be trained to fix and deal with more electronic components and have a understanding of software

"The way GPS technology is moving," continued Ben, "It will not be long before the cable laying for robotic mowers will be a thing of the past. The cost comparison for buying one that needs cable installation, and one that doesn't, is coming down. Customers are wanting these mowers to cut ever more complex laid lawn areas, and the cost of wire installation for these sites can be over a thousand pounds. Whereas a combined price for a GPS model that does not need wires is becoming much more affordable."

### Looking ahead

In terms of promoting the business to find new customers, Lauren explained their thinking to me. "We are now devoting a lot of time and resources into our marketing strategies," she said. "A huge portion of our marketing budget goes into online search engine optimization and pay per click ads. In the past, we would send out physical leaflets, but we know the trends have changed now."

Lauren continued: "As for attending shows, we do not have the time to attend too many. We may do the odd one or two local events, perhaps. With 80% of our sales being domestic machinery we tend to use our online marketing, emailing and social media channels to keep our customers and potential customers informed of our services."

I enjoyed my time meeting up with Lauren and Ben, and finding out about the day-to-day challenges they face as a machinery dealership. It is clear that the family's drive and ambition that has sustained the company for well over a century has been passed down through the generations.

This talented new generation will continue to deliver the family business' core values, ensuring the dealership can continue to serve a new generation of customers.



# Things change when people talk

*Service Dealer* has established an informal group with women in key roles at dealerships around the country. Editor, STEVE GIBBS, reports

**S**ervice Dealer is delighted to have formed a new group that has been discussing issues faced by women in dealerships, and thinking about what could possibly be achieved as an industry to improve the critical lack of representation in roles across the sector.

Following the establishment of the group, *Service Dealer* owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke said: "I don't have to tell

our readers that the *Service Dealer* Conference and Awards demographic is predominantly male and 'of an age.' This is, of course, reflective of the industry. But I can't help being a little optimistic with our awards last year, as there appeared to be some - if small - momentum shift. By establishing the group, we wanted to see if we could leverage the experience, wisdom and knowledge of our readers in some way to perhaps encourage a more diverse set of entries into the awards this year.

"There is also the wider discussion to be had, of course, regarding the industry and what can be improved for women who are currently members - or for attracting potential new members. And, who knows, maybe we can spread the net wider, in time, regarding inclusion."

Duncan continued: "I have no preconceptions regarding this scheme. Initially, the hope is just to see what we can do to help through utilising the advice of our expert group. Then

we can see where it leads. We are, though, in the unique position to be able to feed back to the whole industry - dealerships, distributors and manufacturers alike."

## Changing perceptions

When the Group held its first meeting, some home truths were raised.

We heard that ours is clearly a male dominated industry. There are, of course, women in roles at dealerships around the country, perhaps often in admin or office roles rather than workshop or sales positions. Also, these women may well be second or third generation, choosing to enter the family business. The real challenge, perhaps, is finding ways of encouraging women from completely outside of the industry to consider joining a dealership.

Hannah Robinson, of Brian Robinson Machinery, explained: "It's a difficult sector to bring women into because it's clearly heavily male-dominated. For the first two-and-a-half years I was service manager, I had males refusing to speak to me on the phone about their machinery issues. They would try to go around me, asking to talk to others, but they would get passed back to me, which was embarrassing for them.

"When you are the boss' daughter, you do feel you have a little more control on something like that. But, for someone coming in from outside of the industry, that must feel even more uncomfortable. Management would have to put their arm around them and say: 'You can do this.'"

This problem of archaic attitudes of certain customers is one that all our group members could relate to. Apparently, farmers or other professionals can often point-blank refuse to speak to women working in a dealership.

Jessica Hutton, of Oak Garden Machinery, agreed, saying: "I also get customers asking: 'Can I speak to parts?' And when I say 'I can help you', they go: 'But is there a man there?'"

"Once they realise that you do know what you're talking about, they do accept you - but it takes a bit of time."

Joanne Balmer, of Balmers GM, said she had seen some changes over the years, but concurred there was still room for improvement. She said: "I've been in the family business for 25 years, and I have seen a huge shift in attitudes from a customer point of view towards women working in the business. It's much better than before, but it still isn't perfect."

We also heard some shocking testimony that male customers have acted a lot worse than simply refusing to be assisted by women in the dealership. Kelly Burgess, of Buxtons, told us: "Actions and words have been known to cross over into sexual harassment. Both in person and over the phone. Asking me what I'm wearing, for example. I shouldn't have to deal with that. That side is incredibly challenging."

Kelly's sister and co-worker, Sophie, added: "I'm relatively new to the business, but I fully expect to come up against these attitudes from customers as well during my career."

Hannah had also experienced similar, saying: "I've had customers take banter way too far with me on the phone, to the point where I've refused to speak to them."

This notion of specific types of banter within the business is also something that is regularly encountered, the group told us. Shrugging it off, or giving it back were mentioned as methods of dealing with this - although it must be asked, why does it even need to come to that?

Encouragingly, we heard that the younger generation of women who come up against such behaviour that goes too far are not prepared to simply tolerate it.

## What can be done?

Moving on, the group has been giving thought to methods which might be employed to encourage more young women to consider joining the industry - because, as all our group members are keen to stress, working in a dealership as a woman can be a fulfilling, varied and rewarding career.

One quite simple, but potentially effective, means that more

manufacturers might want to consider using, we were told, is to improve the visibility of women in their marketing materials. More images of women in workshop or sales positions when promoting jobs, or in their general campaigns, would help towards normalising the idea of women working in dealerships.

Joanne Balmer said: "It's a fact that we need to attract more women into the industry, not just family members. There are plenty of women in dealerships, but in typical female roles of admin and marketing.

"When I'm doing a visual for recruitment, even for technician roles, I will try to find ones that feature a woman in there doing the job. Visuals can quickly capture imaginations. That might make people think: 'Oh, women can do these roles.'"

"The difficulty is getting good images from the manufacturers - so they could step up and help with this. To be fair, though, I am seeing an improvement in use of inclusive imagery from some of our suppliers."

Also potentially helpful when looking to recruit more women, it was suggested, could be to offer a more detailed breakdown of job requirements.

Hannah Robinson said: "Service manager jobs, for example, tend to be an extremely male-dominated role. But, to make it appeal to women, I feel we need to break down the skills required, to explain the position more clearly.

"It's not all about being a product expert immediately. To a large degree, it's about being organised - and women are fab at that. I learnt about faults and machinery as I went through the job. But with my organisational skills and my preparational abilities, I delivered."

Through this sort of approach, it was felt that it may be possible to achieve a sales-rep crossover - appealing to women in sales positions from other sectors where representation is naturally higher.

Joanne Balmer said: "I do not know one female sales rep in our industry. Most, though, to be fair,

## Meet the team

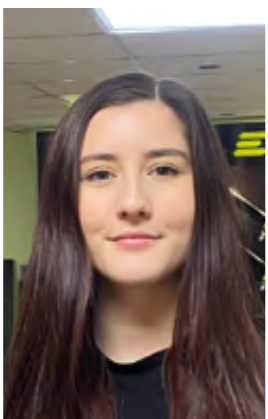
The group is comprised of:



**Joanne Balmer**  
Group marketing and operations manager, Balmers GM



**Hannah Robinson**  
Operations and marketing manager, Brian Robinson Machinery Ltd



**Sophie Burgess**  
Digital content and social media coordinator, Buxtons



**Kelly Burgess**  
Key account manager, Buxtons



**Jessica Hutton**  
Business development manager, Oak Garden Machinery





**Hannah Robinson**

“This group is important to me, because I feel very passionate about encouraging more women into the agricultural and grassland sector due to it being a male-dominated industry. I would like to use my experience within the industry to promote jobs for women within agriculture, and show them that it is ‘okay.’”



**Jessica Hutton**

“The industry as a whole needs to get better at looking after women.”



**Sophie Burgess**

“I strongly believe that a diverse workplace brings together the strengths and ideas of people from all walks of life. Shining a light on some of the issues currently faced by people in our industry is an important first step in improving diversity going forward.”

have a technical background, coming up through the workshop – and, as there’s not many women there, perhaps that’s why we suffer?

“But you do get female sales reps in other industries – so perhaps that’s where we now need to look? Of course, trying to recruit anyone, regardless of gender, is difficult. And I don’t care if an applicant is male, female, non-binary – if someone is willing, excited, wants to do the job, and is capable, come and work for us. We’re crying out in skilled roles in particular. But I do believe this required wave of recruitment needs to come from the younger generation getting trained up.

“And, if a good proportion of these can be young women – that must be a positive step.”

**Looking ahead**

The group has now spent much of its time discussing how to proceed from here. There have been some fabulous ideas floated, that will be made public in due course. It’s no secret to suggest, though, that all have as their guiding principle raising the profile of the dealer sector

in general - with a specific aim of hopefully getting a message across to younger women that dealerships could have plenty to offer as a long-term and successful career path.

Everyone agrees that how and where these messages are conveyed is key to cutting through to a section of society who most likely have little to no awareness of what may be broadly termed the land-based engineering sector. Again, without going into specifics at this stage, the group feels that humanising available roles within a dealership, putting a relatable face and real-life experiences in front of people, could be a productive avenue to explore, rather than just talking about jobs such as parts, sales, technicians, etcetera, in abstract terms.

Related to this, finding pioneering women to act as influencers, to tell their stories and act as inspirational figures in the online space, is also an area that everyone feels has great potential.

All of the ideas that are being discussed have at their heart the desire to increase the diversity

of dealerships. And this desire isn’t some grand, political ideal. No, it genuinely wants to be of practical benefit to businesses. The advantage of greater diversity in staff members was clearly illustrated with an anecdote that Jessica related, regarding a conversation she’d had with a female customer.

Jessica said: “This customer had told me how pleasant it was to be able to speak to a female member of staff in a dealership, as she didn’t feel intimidated or out of her depth because she wasn’t a machinery expert. She then felt comfortable spending time in our showroom talking with me.” Interactions like this will, of course, kick off a productive, and hopefully long-term, working relationship. Which is, of course, what being an independent specialist is all about.

The group knows that, without a doubt, there is potential to improve female representation in the dealership sector, which will, in turn, benefit the whole industry.

Sophie Burgess said: “I am thrilled to be a part of this journey of promoting diversity among dealers across the country, and potentially around the world. In my opinion, having more women in the industry will be advantageous to all, because different skillsets and diverse perspectives can be offered to businesses.”

Kelly Burgess added: “I think raising awareness amongst the industry, just asking everyone to think about things a little more, is important. I’m concerned that, in businesses where there isn’t a daughter to be speaking up, perhaps issues can get overlooked?”

Hannah Robinson agreed with this, saying: “If there’s not a family member there to point these things out, what’s going to be the catalyst to change that established mindset?”

Circumstances are better today than what they used to be, Jessica felt, but clearly there is more that can be done. “I’ve been in the industry 9 years,” she said, “And it has changed in that period. There



**Joanne Balmer** (centre, with colleagues)

“I’ve been working within the groundcare machinery industry on and off now for 25 years. It’s an exciting and varied profession to be part of, but, unfortunately, we still don’t see many females within our dealerships. So I’m looking forward to being involved with this group to start conversations of how, as an industry, we can come together to make it a diverse, inclusive and welcoming sector for all to work within.”



**Kelly Burgess**

“Growing up in the arboriculture and lawn care industries has had its challenges, and learning to overcome prejudice has been something that is now second nature. I am grateful to be a part of any movement to raise awareness of the challenges women face in our industry. I hope that, by understanding what currently goes on, more support will be offered to others.”

are definitely a few more women coming through, but there could still be some more support for us.”

Duncan Murray-Clarke concluded by saying: “It is no secret that men and women think differently. So, a combination of both makes complete sense.”

Whilst Joanne summed up the intentions of the group, saying: “I can’t recall many other times that this whole issue has been discussed publicly in the industry. “And things change when people start talking about them.”



# Dealers back Yorkshire Machinery Show

With the ninth edition having been held back in February, the one-day Yorkshire Agricultural Machinery Show continues to attract strong support from dealers across the four counties and beyond. MARTIN RICKATSON attended the event to find out how the region's trade is faring

Working on the well-established principle of a free-entry exhibition held outside at a quiet time of year for the farming trade, the Yorkshire Agricultural Machinery Show, colloquially known as YAMS, was run for the ninth time this year, and its formula appears to remain popular with both farmers and dealers. Held at the York Auction Centre, at Murton on the outskirts of the city, the single-day event welcomed a crowd of around 15,000 people to the 2023 show in

early February. They were able to browse the wares of around 250 exhibitors, including most of the major agricultural dealerships from across North, South, East and West Yorkshire, plus suppliers of vehicles, implements, spares and sundries from beyond the region. And with early February's weather having played ball for the day, the crowds seemed keen to make some serious enquiries, according to many of the dealers present.

Among them was Farmstar, the four-depot Case IH and Kubota dealer headquartered at Marr, near Doncaster, whose franchises also

include Kubota-owned Kverneland and Manitou, and which covers large areas of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. Founded in 1988, the company's longest association is with Case IH, which it has represented since 1990. Today, it employs 90 staff across its four branches, of which Newark is Kubota-only. Marr and Brigg sell Kubota tractors to 100hp, but are predominantly Case IH Agriculture outlets in tractor (and other equipment) terms, and Market Weighton is Case IH only. General manager Sam Davies, who works across all four Farmstar depots, reported a good start to the



Around 15,000 people came to the 2023 Yorkshire Agricultural Machinery Show back in early February, while 250 exhibitors attended

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year after a successful 2022, but noted there was some caution among farmers and the machinery sector about the likely direction of the trade from spring onwards.

“Our 2022 turnover, which should be confirmed shortly, should be a new high for us,” he said.

“Inflation, of course, played a part in this, but many arable farmers had a good year, with a decent harvest and most having bought fertiliser in advance of the price rising. That’s carried through to the first few months of 2023, and there’s been plenty of



Sam Davies, general manager at Case IH and Kubota dealer Farmstar, said: tractor sales during 2022 had been strong across the firm’s four branches

positivity. But with grain prices now easing back, and a lot of input and machinery costs still high, spring and summer look more uncertain, and some seem nervous about what might happen from here on.”

Tractor sales during 2022 were strong across the four branches, he said, with a notable turn at the top of the power tree towards wheeled machines away from tracked ones, as some farmers seek greater universality and higher-horsepower conventional wheeled tractors become available.

“That said, we still do a fair number of tracked machines. So far this year, we have seen a marked increase in queries into hire tractors, perhaps as some farmers reconsider the implications of having larger machines depreciating in their sheds for nine months of the year.”

Kverneland is the business’ key arable equipment franchise, offering key implements including ploughs, cultivation equipment, drills, fertiliser spreaders and sprayers, and Sam reported a good year for most lines.

“We have been one of Kverneland’s best dealers for many years, and have a very good relationship with them, with Kverneland implements through our Case IH outlets and both Kverneland and Kubota ones via the Kubota-only depot.

“We have also offered Bednar

equipment since the UK business’ marketing arrangement with Case IH UK was agreed a few years ago.

“It complements, rather than competes with, the Kverneland line, which tends to top out at 6m with cultivators and 8m with drills. That covers us for the bulk of the market with some high quality, in-demand machinery, but, for the growing proportion of very large farms, the Bednar line works well, with min-till drills and disc cultivators of up to 12m.”

### Demo successes

Demonstrations – whether individual or general public – continue to be the best way to show farmers exactly what a machine can do, and often move them close to a purchase decision, noted Sam.

“We had a couple of really successful cultivation days last autumn, with Case IH tractors and Kverneland cultivation kit. Timings are always challenging for these things, but the date was in the strange period when many people were undecided about starting drilling, because of how dry it was.

“There’s still a broad mix of establishment types practised, even on neighbouring farms, but they are often equally successful. It’s about the system the farmer thinks is right for their business and land. And, while



Two-branch Fendt and Valtra dealer Wilfred Scruton had already-sold Valtra units on its YAMS stand, reflecting a successful start to 2023

their business and land. And, while it’s a very cyclical market, the plough isn’t dead yet – two years ago, we had a record year, and sold close to 30 units, and wet years, blackgrass issues and root crop growing sustain the market.”

But there are plenty of challenges to balance out the highlights, he noted.

“Tractor on-farm prices have risen by over 25% over the past two years, while money is more expensive than it was a year ago. Forecasting is becoming more difficult because of the capital required to trade with higher prices, and, as a consequence,

it’s difficult to adjust profit margins.

“We’re also under greater pressure to stock equipment of all types, and do more pipeline ordering, while many makers have also shortened terms for stocking. Forecasting how much stock to carry, and the parts quantity needed to support it, is a big challenge.”

Farm mergers and enlargements, as some farmers leave the sector and others seek economies of scale, have become a key driver of machinery-buying policy, noted Sam.

“That’s not just about fewer, larger machines. Sometimes, a new owner or contract farmer will have a particular

idea about a tractor brand, and that can be a challenge for a dealer if it means a change.

“And with the price of fuel, it’s never been more important to get down the right driveways to the best prospects. We’re seeing more and more conquest sales as the market gets more competitive, and customers are increasingly looking at lifetime cost of ownership for machines. As one farmer recently said to me: “I need to know from a dealer quoting higher prices how I’m going to get £30k more margin out of this field if I buy this tractor, which costs £30k more than that one.”

In a refrain familiar across the industry, Sam also spoke of the challenges of staff recruitment and retention.

“The one upside is that this has forced us to look outside the industry for new blood. We have a workforce of around 90, and recruit a high calibre of staff to match our growth, so for our financial management, for example, we’ve looked directly to the finance sector itself, and are quite prepared to look outside the business in other areas – half a dozen of our staff are ex-forces.

“On the sales side, we’ve recruited from other industries with sales experience, and have learned new ideas here from sectors where the attitude to targets and prospects is



Farmstar, which sells the full line of Kubota ag equipment from its Newark depot, had separate stands for its key Kubota and Case IH tractor franchises



New Holland dealer Websters reported a good start to the 2022-23 combine sales year



undoubtedly sharper than in farm machinery. We're fighting over a shrinking pool of customers, so have to be more proactive.

"What has also changed our approach slightly has been Covid, which showed us how we could be more flexible, and that, with laptop and phone, sales staff can work from home, get straight out onto farm, but also hot desk in the office – it's still important they come in regularly to swap ideas and keep up with what's going on in the business, with other sales staff and the firm in general. Our IT investment last year was double what it had previously been, to ensure everyone had what they needed, and this has undoubtedly helped."

John Jackson, after-sales director for three-branch East Yorkshire New Holland dealer Websters, which also sells Manitou, Maschio and Polaris, among other franchises, was pleased with the level of enquiries at the show after a good start to the year.

"Last year was good for parts and service, but challenging for sales and retaining margins," he acknowledged.

"Perhaps the biggest issue was getting hold of equipment, and managing customer expectations over orders

versus availability, given the problems in the manufacturer supply chain.

"We also faced issues with goalposts moving on pricing after customer deals had been concluded, often reducing margins. Farming is a small and specialised business, and everyone knows everyone, so you have to be careful how you handle things, but our handshake is our word, and I think that still counts for a lot to our customers."

John was cautious in predicting whether 2023 would offer significant improvement, but was pleased with what had been a solid performance from the dealership's three branches during 2022.

"Many are wary of spending money from last year and balancing this against tax implications, and, while some are very cautious and will only run a machine in warranty, others are happy to go a year or two beyond, depending on the circumstances, balancing the cost to swap versus the cost to repair, so are holding back and thinking: 'Maybe that tractor will do another year'.

"But our focus is firstly on keeping our customers happy and retaining their loyalty, and that's what we plan to continue doing."

John said the 2022-23 combine year had been a good one for new business, with the company having retailed a number of units. Websters also holds franchises for Maschio, Claydon, KRM, Broughan, Marshall, Indespension, Shelbourne Reynolds, Agriweld and Teagle.

"Claydon is a relatively recent franchise, which we took on in autumn 2020 for East Yorkshire, parts of South Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire. It's worked well for us so far, and we're really pleased with interest and sales. And YAMS gave us one of the first chances to publicly display our relatively recent agreement with Landquip, which gives us another sprayer line to offer, with aluminium booms across the board.

"Like many other businesses, recruitment remains a challenge, especially on the technician front, but also in parts and sales. But, having worked on both manufacturer and dealer sides, I think this is a great industry, with plenty to offer those who have the right mindset, and we have built a great team here, all of whom are looking forward to tackling the challenges remaining in 2023."



With free entry and good weather, the single-day show attracted strong crowds well into the afternoon



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Claims can be registered on-line from 1st February 2023 and must be registered within 28 days of purchase for qualifying models. Qualifying models must be purchased by 30th June 2023 to qualify and registered within 28 days.



# Fine-tuning a trusted format

For 63 editions, the Doe Show, the dealer 'open house' organised by the east/south-east England agricultural, grounds care and construction dealer Ernest Doe, has drawn existing and potential customers each February. For this year's show, the firm tried a few new ideas. MARTIN RICKATSON spoke with its management at the event

**M**any dealerships now hold annual open days, but few have done so for as long as Ernest Doe. The East Anglian/south-east England business, which today operates across 19 branches from Norfolk down to Kent across to Sussex and up to Herts and Cambs, has welcomed visitors every February since 1960 to its Essex headquarters. With extensive outdoor space, and the family business's own farm surrounding the site, the company has been able to display an array of used machinery from across its branches, ship in obsolete parts

stocks from other depots to create a single sale site for visitors to browse, invite its suppliers to show off new equipment, and even demonstrate machines at work, as well as encourage those attending to browse its flagship showroom for clothing, tools and more.

But keeping a concept such as this fresh each year can be a challenge. Not everyone likes wholesale change, and there is an argument for not meddling with a successful format. However, ensuring an event moves with the times to reflect shifting customer interest is essential.

"Year on year, the show grows in size and



Taking place in the company's 125th year, the 2023 Doe Show, which included a historical photo display, was the 63rd event, the first having taken place in 1960



New features included a dedicated display of viticulture machinery, a new business area into which Ernest Doe has recently invested significantly

popularity, and we try to keep things updated and improve the way we do it to ensure that continues," said Graham Parker, Ernest Doe sales director.

"So for 2023, we retained our core features, but introduced a new layout, plus a dedicated zone for fruit and viticulture machinery, a new area for us. We improved visitor comfort with more heated marquees, offered our usual free hot soup and refreshments, had lots of food catering on site, and provided plenty of our usual free parking directly opposite the show."

With CNH Industrial being the firm's major franchise partner, and its branches divided almost equally between Ernest Doe outlets, where the lead brand is New Holland, and Ernest Doe Power, where it is Case IH, distinct areas were given over as usual to the two makes.

"Back in late-2019, we rationalised the number of suppliers we deal with, focusing on those that perform best for us and trying to eliminate overlaps, and making all available through all our branches, regardless of whether they are Ernest Doe branches where the main franchise is New Holland, or Ernest Doe Power ones where it is Case IH," said Angus Doe, managing director.

"We have a choice of franchises in most other product implement areas, and, since that year, these have all

been available through all branches. This was one of my first decisions when I became managing director three years ago, and it has worked well across the business, giving customers a wider choice though their nearest branch."

But the New Holland and Case IH arms of the business remain distinctly separate, and this year at the show the company moved the Case IH marquee to a more prominent part of the showground, as part of a new agricultural machinery zone designed to keep all machinery relevant to this customer audience in one area, explained Graham.

"An extension of that included all our major implement manufacturers, including Dal-Bo, KRM, Lemken and Shelbourne Reynolds, plus our newest franchise, Horizon Agriculture, with its own dedicated stand."

Formerly known as Sly Agri, a number of Horizon's DSX single disc coulters direct drills were retailed for 2022-23, said Graham, and the show had generated a number of enquiries.

"It's a franchise that ties in well with our existing arable equipment, with British engineering that suits UK farms well, and a company driven by farming people who are easy to deal with."

As part of the agriculture area, the Doe Show also included a 'Tech Zone,' with items of commercially-available

technology on display, including the FarmDroid, the Danish-made solar-powered robot seeder-weeder imported by Doe franchise Opico.

"This area, and the working Farmdroid FD20, really seemed to draw an audience," noted Graham.

"We were very excited when Opico, with whom we have worked for a long time, announced an import agreement with Farmdroid, and were delighted to sign as one of its first dealers. We sold five units in our first year, and have a deal in the making for five units to one customer, while another is about to buy his second based on his success with the first. It will be exciting to see the machine's development, and we're confident we can sustain several sales a year.

"After a successful launch in 2022, our grounds care zone was expanded to feature additional manufacturers, with an emphasis on lithium-ion and battery-powered technology, plus robotics – autonomous mowers are increasingly being purchased by professional turf outfits, in response to similar labour issues that are affecting many of the industries we supply.

"We had a broad display of equipment from brands including Ransomes Jacobsen – which showed its new HR380 outfront commercial rotary mower – E-Z-Go, Iseki, Trilo, STIHL, Wiedenmann, GKB,





With Ernest Doe having notched up five unit sales in its first year, a 'Tech Zone' included a demo of the FarmDroid, the Danish-made solar-powered robot seeder-weeder imported by Opico



After a successful launch in 2022, the groundcare zone was expanded to feature additional manufacturers, with a focus on lithium-ion and battery power plus robotics

Mean Green Mowers, Ferris and Wessex International. Also present was Husqvarna, which showed off its recently-introduced CEORA autonomous commercial mowing solution. We also had the Stihl Tour bus and demonstration team present, while Milwaukee power tools made their first appearance at the show.

"Beyond agriculture and groundcare, our third main business area in construction was also given a raised profile at this year's show. We increased the size of our construction zone, and raised the profile of all our key brands, including Hyundai, Thwaites, BOMAG, Atlas Copco and Epiroc, surrounding the popular demonstration plot where we have excavators at work. This was backed by greater promotion to the sector, and direct invitations."

Initiatives that have worked well previously for the firm, and so remained unchanged, included a clothing clearance area within the main marquee, which also featured multiple Ernest Doe suppliers whose products are stocked in country stores, from bale netwrap to hand tools.

"At this time of year, we need to move our old stock to make way for new items arriving in the spring, and the show has always been a good way to help find show buyers for our used,



Ernest Doe reckons to have sold a number of Horizon's DSX single disc coulters direct drills for 2022-23, its first year with the franchise

ex-demo and clearance machinery," said Angus Doe, managing director.

"We make a point of clearly displaying prices on equipment, and visitors know and appreciate we are keen to sell at the event. This means customers can buy up brand new warranted machines at clearance prices, and many recognise the opportunity this represents to obtain some genuine bargains."

### New business

The agriculture zone incorporated a display of viticulture machinery, a new business area into which Ernest Doe has recently invested significantly, following the successful sale last year of the first two New Holland self-propelled grape harvesters – one for grapes and the other for blackcurrants – in the UK. The company has appointed Tom Wheatley as its viticulture machinery specialist, based at its newest Ashford branch, and has created a group of franchises offering relevant equipment, including Berthoud, Dondi, Ideal, KRM, Marshall, Teagle, Fleming and Provitis, complemented by vineyard tractors from New Holland and Case IH.

Looking back over the previous year, Angus reported a gain in tractor market share on both the New Holland and Case IH sides of the business.

"Recent developments from both our brands have given us a really good product range, with reliability and technology to match any others. The extension of New Holland's standard T7 range, and the Case IH Puma line, have given us products that may not look radically different on the outside, but are quieter, more refined and have multiple internal improvements. The 250-300hp sector is a big market for us, so we are getting really stuck in

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Other working demos included a telehandler display; Ernest Doe was also New Holland's telehandler dealer of the year for 2022



Angus Doe (right) and Graham Parker reckoned the new show features and the promotion generated by marketing manager Hayley Hill had boosted attendances

with the new product, and starting [to] trade a lot of competitive makes."

According to Graham, this has been supported by good combine business over recent months, aided by 2022's decent harvest, with good yields and prices.

"We've done well with combine sales from both brands, and have been pleased that supply hasn't been an issue. We placed significant orders last April ready for harvest 2023, so we are in a good position again, and still have some units available for late orders."

Among the elements that have helped grow Ernest Doe's business over the past has been the opening of a new Ernest Doe Power branch in mid-Kent, near Ashford, adding to its Case IH coverage focus south of the Thames.

"It's working very well for us," says Ed Perry, general manager for the Ernest Doe Power business.

"It's a good fit with our branch further north at Dartford and the depot to the west at Ringmer in Sussex."

On the New Holland side, Angus professed to be particularly proud of Ernest Doe's award from New Holland as its telehandler dealer of the year for 2022.

"We have such a strong relationship with New Holland, and the telehandler is perhaps underestimated, but such a

good product that's continuing to evolve, as our sales are proving after farmers try it for themselves. Being supported with the levels of parts and service and technical back-up that we receive for a long line of other New Holland products is also a big plus."

Ernest Doe achieved a double in last year's New Holland Dealer of the Year awards, also taking the hay and forage equipment title, and the company reports particular success in big square baler sales.

"We were really pleased to also take this award," says Angus.

"The new ultra high density baler from New Holland, the 1290HD, was particularly successful for us, and really suits the farms and contractors in our region. That was supplemented by a number of round balers and other grassland kit from the range New Holland has grown in recent years.

"With the growth of big baler business across our branches, we have just sent 35 service engineers and other staff to the factory in Belgium for training, so we can maximise customer support across our branch network."

With Ernest Doe celebrating its 125th anniversary this year, alongside the other new features the show also hosted an impressive photographic display charting the history of the firm

and previous Doe Shows, attracting a lot of attention from visitors at the entrance.

"All the new elements of the show came together really nicely, and helped us attract a strong attendance that I was really pleased with," said Angus.

"The whole team here did a superb job of organising the event and staffing it over the three days, and Hayley Hill our marketing manager did a brilliant job with its marketing and promotion, even co-opting Graham into putting himself up for being filmed for online video promotion."

From Hayley's side, the first day of the show provided a good measure of overall success, with additional car parking being required by late morning.

"We've never been a business that looks backwards too much, but with such a rich history and heritage in abundance, it was nice to be able to reproduce and display some pictures from company history that few people may have seen before," she said.

"Few other dealerships have the ability to do what we can here. While we are predominantly an agricultural machinery business, we have a significant groundcare interest, a sizeable construction equipment concern, and 19 country stores, so now we are able to give a much more rounded display of all we offer to all of our key audiences."

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# The importance of ‘wowing’ your customers

**Sara Hey**, vice president of operations and development at Bob Clements Inc, the dealership development company based in Missouri, shares the insights she offers U.S. dealers with Service Dealer’s UK readership every issue



**THIS ISSUE: Great customer service**

**T**he market is competitive, and every customer is important. So, how are we supposed to stand out and capture all the business we can? Well, we know that several things can help with this, but the most important is setting yourself apart. You do that by “wowing” the customer through excellent customer service.

Did you know that 78% of consumers have bailed on a transaction because of a poor service experience? That means that almost 80% of all consumers will refuse to make a purchase due to not being “wowed” by your business. Let that sink in. Setting yourself apart from your competitors, and providing excellent customer service, is important. So, how do you “wow” your customers and set yourself apart from the competition? Simple. Provide legendary customer service, competitive pricing, and stand behind your work. Let’s look at these three key components.

**Customer service**

The simplest customer service skills are the most important ones. Being patient, attentive and knowing your product will start every conversation in a positive frame of mind. Even a frustrated customer can be calmed by these traits. An employee’s ability to use positive language and a slow, controlled demeanour will provide customer service that will grow customer relationships and loyalty.

**Pricing vs. customer experience**

When asked, the majority of customers will say the price of an item or service almost always affects their final decision. So, how do you keep your margins up and not run off potential sales? At BCI, we often quote Bob, who says: “We want

customers to leave your dealership saying your prices were a little higher than the competition, but your service was great!” In order to do this, you have to manage inventory well, so you have what the customer needs when they need it, provide prompt and friendly service, and create an atmosphere where the customer looks forward to returning. Remember, when striving to “wow” your customers, you don’t always have to be the cheapest. Compare your prices with others in your area and find a place in the middle.

People are more than happy to pay for quality products and a quality experience.

**Stand behind your work**

This may have happened to you. You purchased an item or brought in a piece of equipment for repair, and then, when you got it home, realized the work wasn’t done correctly. Not properly handled, these situations can be a business killer. Everyone in your dealership, from the top down, need to adhere to the value that we own our mistakes and stand behind our products and services. Customers prefer working with a business that owns up to their mistakes, and that is willing to take steps to correct them. In fact, customer relationships can actually be stronger after a problem than before if handled well. Do you have a guarantee on your service work? If so, make a point to post this in your dealership so you can bring another level of confidence to your valuable customers. Standing out in a crowd of competitors and “wowing” your customers is no easy task. Working to implement these three components to provide great customer service will help you be the first choice for your customers in your area!



# A late start to the season

**Jason Nettle**, of Winchester Garden Machinery, says that, with the weather being unhelpful in the early part of this year, the relationship between dealer and supplier is more critical than ever



**I’m writing this diary entry during the week running up to the Easter Bank Holiday weekend – traditionally, of course, the real kickstart to the season.**

This year more than ever I’m sure dealers across the country had their fingers and toes crossed that it would be the mother of all kickstarts. Because, goodness knows, we all needed it.

By the time you read this, you’ll know how your business has fared. Certainly, in the opening months of 2023 it felt like we’ve all been patiently (or not so patiently) waiting for the season to go boom!

One thing is for sure: grass is a resilient plant. Given the right conditions, it will grow, the season will be off, and with that growth comes the customer. This week, we have seen a massive upturn in calls coming into our service department chasing service work. Sadly, we have experienced some lengthy delays on this front, with parts being on back order. This has left some customers unhappy with the level of service they have received, and what’s really frustrating for us, the dealers, is the delays are out of our control. Servicing dealers bend and flex, reacting to changing conditions throughout the customer journey, always striving to achieve and exceed expectations. Sometimes, no matter how hard we try, it’s never enough. Always remember that the positive experiences outweigh the negative experiences.

There’s no denying that the season is late to start. Extremely late. The weather has been tough for us this year, and hasn’t offered the false or early start we have been used to in previous years. Normally by now, there’s been at least a couple of decent weeks in March where

customers want to get cracking on their lawns. We just need the weather to play ball now for a sustained period, and I think many are feeling we could be in for a great year.

I believe that the relationship between dealer and their manufacturer/supplier is more critical than ever. Each relies on one another at the best of times, but, with circumstances beyond anyone’s control, as well as coming off the back of last year, now is the time when close and considerate business relationships are essential.

Various dealers I have spoken with are packed to the gunnels with machinery now – which is, of course, an unusual situation, considering where we’ve all been this past couple of years. We’ve all been feeling the pressures, but, through ingenuity, entrepreneurship and damn hard work, we’ve stuck in there and got to this point.

I believe the manufacturers’ reps should be in regular contact and making in-person visits, just to touch base, to see if there is any extra help or guidance they can provide. They should be looking to work with the dealers to know if they think they’ve got the product mix right for the season. Forecasting where there might be a shortfall in stock will be advantageous in this year of the unknown, because, let’s face it, what is a normal season these days? Can you remember the last one?!

Given what has been said with the late start, lack of stock, but, conversely, too much stock of the wrong mix, I still feel upbeat. I hope that everyone received the support they needed, and, further, let’s hope that, through working closely with our suppliers, we can enjoy a steady and stable rest of 2023 – and beyond.







# BUSINESS MONITOR

Taking the temperature of the dealer network, sponsored by Garden Trader

## A male-dominated industry

No real surprises from our 'Women Working in Dealerships' survey

**A**ccording to the readers who responded to our recent survey regarding women working in dealerships, the suspicion that the sector was male-dominated was confirmed.

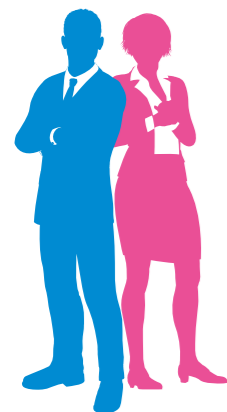
When asked for a percentage ratio of males to females in their places of business, the most popular answers received were **80% male to 20% female** (30%) and **90% male to 10% female** (18%).

Also in-keeping with fairly commonly-held beliefs, were the roles we were told that women tend to hold within

dealerships. The most popular answers our respondents gave were admin, management and finance – with parts and service coming bottom of the list.

Everybody who responded said they would like to employ more women in their dealerships, with the roles of sales and service coming in as the most desired roles they would like to fill.

70% of respondents said they felt diversity was an important consideration for their business when employing, with experience and work ethic given as the main quality looked for when recruiting for any role.



### What is roughly the male to female percentage ratio of team members in your dealership?

- 30%** said there were **80% Male** compared to **20% Female**
- 18%** said there were **90% Male** compared to **10% Female**
- 16%** said there were **50% Male** compared to **50% Female**
- 15%** said there were **70% Male** compared to **30% Female**
- 13%** said there were **60% Male** compared to **40% Female**
- 4%** said there were **30% Male** compared to **70% Female**
- 4%** said there were **20% Male** compared to **80% Female**

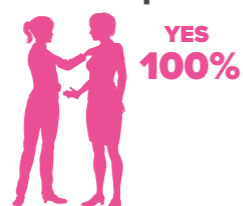
### What roles in your dealership are filled by women?

- 21%** Admin
- 19%** Management
- 16%** Finance
- 15%** Sales
- 11%** Marketing
- 10%** Parts
- 8%** Service

### How important is inclusivity and diversity to you and your business?

- Very important**  
**70%**
- Its a consideration**  
**22%**
- Not important**  
**8%**

### Would you like to employ more women at your dealership?



### If yes, is there a particular role you would like to see more women working in?

- YES 100%**
- 43%** Sales
- 29%** Service
- 10%** Parts
- 9%** Admin
- 9%** Marketing

### What is the main quality you look for when recruiting for any role?

- Experience 52%**
- Work ethic 30%**
- Personality 18%**



## “Your say”

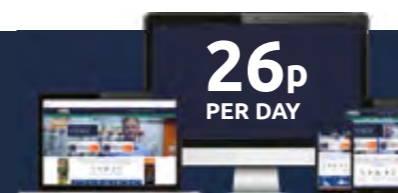
We asked you: do you believe there is an issue with too few women choosing to join dealerships - and if so, what might be done to change the situation?

- Peoples' attitude towards women in this industry needs to change to help this situation. For example, I was on a training course recently when someone on the course randomly came out with: "I notice there are no women here, as they wouldn't be able to install a robot mower." To which I replied: "I have two women on my team that are more than capable of installing robotic mowers." My business wouldn't be where it is today without having women on my team. They can take on any role within the business. Gender doesn't come into it – whereas a good work ethic, and willingness to learn, does.
- There is space for more women to come into the industry in any of the roles. Personally, I would not have ended up in this industry if it were not for family. It's not an industry that is highly advertised, not only for females, but males also, and it can lead to so many different opportunities if they are keen to advance themselves.
- No. There's too few candidates full stop. Nothing to do with this gender narrative.
- There is a serious shortage of skilled mechanics. I feel encouraging young women into this area of the business would only increase the pool of people, and, therefore, be a benefit.
- Male or female - it doesn't really matter. There are too few people choosing to join dealerships. Period.
- Too few women in non-admin positions. Need to bring more women through apprenticeships for both service and parts.
- I think it is still viewed as a dirty trade. Yes, there are dirty dealerships out there, but also some very clean ones.
- There's an issue with too few people (male or female) choosing to join dealerships. A total lack of worth ethic amongst people in general, and the asking starting salaries for unqualified and unskilled personnel, is unrealistic. Totally surprised that the likes of BAGMA have not brought together an apprentice scheme with the big manufacturers and colleges to offer training along the lines of the big ag dealers, the John Deeres of this world. Certainly nothing in the small garden machinery sector near us.
- IMO, there is an issue with anyone wanting to join this industry. We currently have people from different countries, genders, and LGBT. It's historically a male industry, so continues to attract males. We have always had women in our workplace, and I do feel it's for the better, and definitely creates a better working environment to have a diverse workforce. How we attract more women is down to making the whole industry more attractive first.

## Industry first, profit second

That's the philosophy of Garden Trader and we have made our annual subscription affordable at £96 for the whole year, which equates to 26p per day and an average of just 83p for every potential customer the site delivers to dealers.

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**GDPR**

## Data protection law and marketing a business

Data protection law has been with us for many years. Most recently, it was updated via the Data Protection Act 2018, following the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). However, from the cases detailed in the press, it's clear that not everyone understands the law, or that they choose to ignore it, *writes Chris Else, managing partner of Else Solicitors LLP.*



**The problem is especially acute for businesses wishing to market themselves, whether to other businesses or consumers. An awareness of the full implications and potential risks for breaching the rules where information is gathered on individuals is essential.**

Data protection is governed by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Its website contains a full explanation of the purpose of data protection, runs through the rationale of how the law works, how it protects an individual's personal information, and highlights the processes that can be put in place to prevent breaches of the GDPR.

It should be noted that the GDPR covers information relating to an individual or an identifiable natural person, known as a 'data subject'. In reality, this covers just about every type of transaction any business would engage in, whether it is with potential customers, members of staff, or suppliers.

**It's about consent**

While a review of what a business proposes to do with the information it collects and stores is a good first step, it also makes sense to have its terms and conditions of business correctly incorporated into each transaction. This will give customers the option to consent to a firm's GDPR policies, either directly or by implication, because they are contained in terms of business.

The main lawful basis for keeping personal information is a contractual obligation upon the business to do so. The most straightforward way of ensuring this happens is that, when quotations are provided, the terms of business are incorporated into the contract and make customers aware of the firm's GDPR policy, which entitles the business to retain personal information.

An example of this might be when customers shop around for a quotation. The business needs to process data to ensure that the best quote is given, and

this allows data to be captured for a legitimate purpose. Other examples include an employer who processes personal data on employees in order to deal properly with taxation obligations, or if a court order obliges the disclosure of personal information against an individual either within the business or in connection its activities.

Decisionmakers in a business must be made aware of the extensive obligations contained in the law. This can be done through regular briefings with employees. Another good move would be the establishment of a GDPR checklist process, and a solid data protection audit to further ensure compliance.

Individuals have rights under the law which data gathering businesses must give consideration to. In summary, these mean that individuals have the right:

- To be informed
- To have access to information
- To rectify faulty information

- To be forgotten or otherwise known as the right of erasure
- To restrict processing
- To prevent data portability
- To object
- Not to be subject to automated decision making and profiling processors.

These rights are underpinned by statute, and the provision of information to data subjects and communication with data subjects concerning the exercise of their rights is key. This is because the GDPR provides them with rights, remedies, and compensation where their rights are breached.

Part of this duty means communicating to each customer the name and contact details of the organisation's data protection officer, or the same for any representatives that also deal with individuals contracting with the business. Similarly, individuals must be told the purposes for the processing of their data. This also means highlighting to individuals any transfer of their personal data to third parties or other organisations.

Another element of the law concerns

retention periods and the deletion of information that is no longer needed. It should be remembered that individuals have the right to rescind consent. It follows that businesses that are correctly observing the law will make sure that they regularly check with individuals that they are still happy to have their information retained.

**Direct marketing**

Direct marketing is backed by a separate piece of legislation - Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 (PECR). It applies strict rules to communicating direct marketing by text or email to an individual, in that firms must have the individual's consent before they can market to them.

However, a soft opt-in might apply where a business has sold a product or service to an individual, or has collected personal data in negotiations for a sale and subsequently messages similar products or services - and the individual is provided with the opportunity to opt out of the marketing at any point.

Notably, consent is not required for postal marketing, either to a corporate entity or individual, or marketing by

email or text to corporate subscribers. Regardless, any associated personal data must be processed in line with the obligations under data protection legislation.

**Dealing with data breaches**

It's a fact that leaks and breaches of personal information occur. All such instances should be recorded, and, if the breach needs to be reported to the ICO, serious consideration must be given to the circumstances of the leak and the making of the report. Again, the best place to seek guidance is from the ICO and its website.

There are countless examples of penalties – British Airways in 2020 (£20m fine), Marriott Hotels, also in 2020 (£18.4m), Ticketmaster in 2018 (£1.25m) and even the Cabinet Office in 2021 (£500,000). Fines can be levied for administrative failures as much as incorrect processing or a data breach.

**In summary**

**Good advice is essential, especially where the legal position is not fully understood, or the business is new. Making mistakes can prove very expensive.**

**WORKING CONDITIONS**



## Workplace temperatures and employment law

Whilst employment law and health and safety requirements require separate and specific attention, there are times when these two specialist areas cross over. Workplace temperatures are one of these areas, *writes Alexandra Farmer, head of team and solicitor at WorkNest.*

**Interestingly, workplace temperatures are a topic lawyers are commonly asked about in the summer months, when heatwaves result in people feeling too hot to work. However, as we move through the winter and into spring, especially with the fuel crisis affecting the UK, this topic will come across lawyers' desks more than usual.**

Perhaps surprisingly, there is no law for minimum or maximum working temperatures in the UK.

From a health and safety perspective, employers are required to ensure that temperatures in all workplaces inside buildings are reasonable. Guidance published by the Health and Safety Executive advises that temperature in a



workplace should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius, or at least 13 degrees Celsius where work involves rigorous physical effort. However, there is currently no guidance on the upper end of the scale. In the summer of 2022, we saw unions and a number of MPs call on the government to set a maximum workplace temperature. We have seen similar calls previously, such as in 2013, but, to date, there doesn't appear to be any formal move towards the introduction of a maximum temperature.

People usually work best at temperatures between 16°C and 24°C, although this varies depending on the type of work being carried out. For example, strenuous work is better performed at slightly lower temperatures than office work. The Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers recommends the following temperatures: heavy work in factories 13°C; light work in factories 16°C; hospital wards and shops 18°C; offices and in dining rooms 20°C.

Temperatures that vary too much from this can become a health and safety issue. Workers who get too hot could experience dizziness, fainting, or even heat cramps. In very hot conditions, a person's blood temperature rises – if it exceeds 39°C, there's a risk of heat stroke or collapse. Delirium or confusion may occur above 41°C, and blood temperatures at this level can prove fatal.

But, even on the lower end of hot temperatures, heat leads to a loss of concentration and increased tiredness, which means workers are more likely to put themselves and others at risk. Working in the sun also increases the risk of skin cancer. Therefore, employers have a duty of care to ensure no one works in unsafe or unhealthy conditions, including cold weather.

Workplace temperature is just one consideration when an employer undertakes a risk assessment. From time to time, if the employer identifies some particular hazards with the temperature (for example, an upcoming heatwave or cold spell), they should consider how this can best be managed in the workplace. They should discuss proposals with their employees. For instance, a temporary relaxation of dress code is a common way to manage a heatwave.

If employees feel that the temperature at work is not 'reasonable', they should raise it with their employer. This may be due to general concerns about the temperature, or an individual issue. Temperature may be a bigger issue for an employee with a medical condition. By way of example, employees experiencing menopause symptoms will often report having hot flushes, and may look to their employer for support. Alternatively, an employee with a chronic chest condition may struggle when temperatures drop and they feel too cold. If aware of an employee's medical condition, an employer should carry out risk assessments to identify and address any specific risks to their health. This may result in physical adjustments being put in place, such as temperature control or providing an electric fan.

If an employee doesn't feel appropriately supported in the workplace, there are a number of potential claims that could be brought in an employment tribunal, including a claim for constructive unfair dismissal. This occurs when the employee resigns in response to conduct by their

employer that they believe amounts to a repudiatory breach of contract. Or they could bring a claim due to a failure to make reasonable adjustments to support a disabled person in the workplace.

Furthermore, a failure by the employer to adequately address the risks presented by workplace temperature, and which results in an injury, may lead to a claim for compensation owing to the employer's failure to fulfil its duty of care. Accordingly, the employer must take extra precautions to keep the employee safe from harm, and these responsibilities cover where and when the work is carried out, the clothes and equipment provided to the employee, and the training given in advance.

Lastly, temperature can also be an issue before employees even get to work. As a result of climate change, we are seeing more extreme weather in the UK. This may lead to employees feeling unable (or possibly even unwilling) to attend work. The advice to employers is to have an adverse weather and travel disruption policy that sets out what happens if an employee cannot make it into work because of extreme weather. This should include other reasons for non-attendance, such as public transport strikes.

The starting position is that employees should make reasonable efforts to get into work, failing which they may be subject to disciplinary action. Where this isn't possible, alternative working arrangements may need to be considered. So employers should ensure that the policy details options, such as working from home and changes to working patterns.

**In summary**

**Like it or not, our climate is changing. Regardless, though, it's a fact that employees work best and are more productive when comfortable. Maintaining the right temperatures is not an expense – it's an investment.**



People usually work best at temperatures between 16°C and 24°C, although this varies depending on the type of work being carried out



# Products

**DOMESTIC**

## Zero expansion from EGO



**Introduction of two new ride-ons**

**Following the launch of the world's first battery-powered zero-turn ride-on mower, EGO Power Plus is expanding its range with the introduction of two new ride-on mowers.**

Suitable for homeowners with large plots of land, the company says the ZT4200E-S and the ZT5200E-L build upon the accomplishments of the original Z6 (ZT4201E-L). Features include Peak Power technology, intuitive screen, and three driving modes remain on the new models, whilst fresh features have also been introduced.

One of the new models - the ZT4200E-S - drives like a car, and turns like a zero-turn ride-on mower with its steering wheel system, whilst the other - the ZT5200E-L - offers a considerably larger three-blade option with a 312cm fabricated cutting deck.

Vince Brauns, group product manager at EGO, said: "By introducing a steering wheel model, we are opening up the zero-turn ride-on platform to users who would prefer that mechanism to a lap bar. As well as performance and accessibility, we have also added some useful usability features, such as putting the battery level gauge in a better line of sight and improved comfort through an air-ride seat, USB connection, and cruise control for those who need to dedicate a good few hours tending to their lawn."

Primarily a side discharge mower, the ZT4200E-S can also mulch and collect with the aid of additional kits. It also features four blade speeds and three driving modes for fast cutting efficiency, whilst maintaining a run time of up to 2.5 acres on a single charge. As with all other EGO ride-on mowers, it is compatible with all EGO batteries and uses

Peak Power technology – the equivalent of a 22hp petrol engine.

Building on the success of the first Z6, the 132cm zero-turn ride-on is a larger three-blade mower, featuring a fabricated deck and larger wheels to support the additional weight. The zero-turn lap bar steering system provides access to the machine, as well as unobstructed views of the working area.

Both mowers are sold as a kit with the CHV1600E 1600W charger.

Additional accessories include a sun-shade, on-board storage, rear bumper and mulching kit.

**5 SECOND INFO**

- Peak Power technology
- Drives like a car
- Capable of 2.5 acres on a single charge
- 312cm fabricated cutting deck
- CHV1600E 1600W charger included



AGRICULTURAL

# Patented folding bed

Two new four-metre front mowers from Krone

**Krone has launched two new four-metre front mowers based on the success of its existing EasyCut F 400 CV Fold design, which features a unique, patented folding bed.**

The two new mowers include the EasyCut F 400 Fold (non-conditioning) and the EasyCut F 400 CR - with two integrated conditioning rollers and a rigid cutterbar.

The EasyCut F 400 Fold includes the company's patented four metre folding bed and a swathing auger design.

Jim Holmes, Krone UK national sales manager, says: "The F 400 Fold's 45cm diameter auger output can be adjusted to vary swath width, which helps ensure the tractor won't run over the swath and contaminate the crop.

"The cutterbar offers convenient hydraulic folding from the driver's seat via a slewing gearbox. Folding into a transport package under three metres wide, it offers safe road transport and smooth passage through narrow gateways and lanes."

When combined with the EasyCut B 1000 rear mower, a working width of more than 10 metres can

be achieved, with an adjustable 57cm overlap on each side.

The EasyCut F 400 CR expands the company's speciality offering for lucerne growers on the world market.

Jim says that this front mower is equipped with a rigid cutterbar and a standard conditioning unit consisting of two profiled 25cm-diameter polyurethane rollers.

"As an added benefit, buyers can also opt for the extremely robust steel M-Rolls which process the forage intensively yet gently, avoiding fragmentation and speeding up wilting," he explains.

As the market is niche in the UK, the EasyCut F 400 CR will be available as a factory order.

Krone say the 4m front mowers present a further step towards implementing even larger working widths and area outputs at increased forage quality for all conditions and applications.



COMMERCIAL

# Makita make more Max mowers

Expanded its 40VMax XGT range

**Makita has expanded its 40VMax XGT range with two new self-propelled XGT lawnmowers.**

The LM001G and LM002G 40VMax XGT Brushless lawnmowers are powered by the manufacturer's 40VMax XGT Li-Ion battery technology. Both models benefit from the option to work with two batteries in parallel, so that when one battery runs out, the system automatically switches to the other.

With a 62L collection box, the LM001G has a 480mm cutting width and offers a no-load speed of up to 3,200rpm. The machine can also be operated in a quieter 'Noise Reduction' mode with a no-load speed of 2,500rpm. The LM002G, with 70L grass box, affords users with a 534mm cutting width with a no-load speed of 2,800rpm, or 2,300rpm



in the 'Noise Reduction' mode.

Each feature 10 height positions, from 20mm at the lowest setting and 100mm at the highest, and both can be operated with a choice of three cutting modes: Normal, Soft No-Load, or Noise Reduction. Other key features include the electric brake, soft start, anti-restart function and constant speed control to ensure safety.

Makita say the new products are designed for rough terrain, with large wheels and high-end steel decks that minimise damage from obstacles and flying debris, as well as IXP4 weather resistant construction. The mowers include a mulching function and a grass level indicator. Furthermore, the machines can be easily stored in a compact, vertical position, due to the foldable handle design.



COMMERCIAL

# New look for Sherpas

AS 940 range of ride-on mowers has been redesigned

**The AS 940 Sherpa range of ride-on mowers from has been redesigned for 2023.**

AS-Motor developed the Sherpa specifically for mowing high grass. Technical innovations for 2023 include improvements to the fuel tank, locking mechanism, tyres and tyre sealant, with a choice of engine now on offer to meet different budgets. Aesthetically, the mowers feature new-look paintwork and an additional front panel.

Described by the company as lightweight and agile, with a low centre of gravity, the mower is suitable for managing

high grass and slopes. Constructed with over 99% recyclable parts, the mower's engine, cross-blade cutting system and permanent all-wheel drive ensure efficiency and durability.

The AS 940 Sherpa 4WD XL model offers large tyres for even higher ground clearance and stability, while the AS 940 Sherpa 4WD RC is the world's first rough-terrain ride-on mower with remote control. All models combine ergonomic comfort with safety and ease of use.



COMMERCIAL

# Backpack cordless blower first

Launched by STIHL

STIHL has launched its first cordless backpack blower for professional users, which they say offers significantly less disruptive sound due to its Noise Reduction System.

With a maximum blowing force of 26 newton, the new BGA 300 is the most powerful in the STIHL cordless range and features a high air speed. The new cordless blower is powered using the company's professional AP System AR 2000 L or AR 3000 L backpack batteries.

Due to the Noise Reduction System, the company says the BGA 300 produces fewer high pitch frequencies often associated with cordless blowers, meaning operation is much more pleasant and less intrusive for bystanders.

The maximum blowing force can be selected from three power setting options via the selector switch, allowing for efficient energy management and longer runtimes. Boost mode may also be selected to provide maximum power for the toughest clearing jobs. Furthermore, the new cordless blower features an LED power display and cruise control function to enable energy management and comfort.

For the optimum blowing angle, the unit boasts a curved nozzle as standard, and the blower tube length can be adjusted to meet different requirements and operating situations. A straight nozzle is also available as an accessory.

The blower is described by the manufacturer as easy to handle, due to its slim design and comfortable carrying system that optimally distributes the weight of the backpack device and reduces the strain on the user when used for long periods.

Other features include wide feet for secure footing whilst on the ground, a hook for the blower tube for easy transport and storage, as well as compatibility with the Smart Connector 2 A.



UTILITY VEHICLES

# 25th anniversary Grizzly released

Yamaha has announced a new edition

On the 25th anniversary of the Grizzly ATV, Yamaha has announced a new edition featuring new instruments, brakes, accessories and graphics all coupled to the second generation MK II 686cc 4-valve SOHC engine which features the latest EFI throttle body as well as fine-tuned ECU mapping.

The new model features the manufacturer's CVT Ultramatic automatic transmission.

"The new model features an independent suspension system, which uses adjustable nitrogen gas shocks, enabling the rider to change settings to suit differing loads and terrains. The Grizzly is also the only model in its class featuring four-wheel hydraulic disc brakes, for improved braking performance and overall control," says Dan Palmer, power products manager.

The intelligent On-Command® drive system features a push-button control that switches from 2WD, 4WD or 4WD with Diff-lock and back, to optimise performance in changing terrain and weather conditions.

"The anniversary edition comes with one of the highest standard specifications in its category and features a front-mounted WARN VRX 25 winch. With a carrying capacity of 140kg and able to tow 600kg, it has one of the highest carrying capacities of any ATV in the UK," Dan adds.

For added comfort, the new Grizzly is equipped with Electronic Power Steering (EPS).

The multi-function digital instruments feature a fuel gauge, speedometer, odometer, dual trip meters, hour meter, clock, 4WD/Diff-lock status, transmission gear selector and EPS warning light. Three separate storage compartments offer space for tools and equipment. The Grizzly is also fitted with a heavy-duty brush guard, front bash plate, over fenders and hand-protectors for increased rider and vehicle protection.



COMMERCIAL

# Bahia's battery boost

Now available with lithium option

Etesia's Bahia M2E, the electric professional ride-on-mower with grass collection, is now available with a lithium battery option.

The M2EL is powered by a 51.2V, 100Ah lithium battery, which the company says enables users to get up to three-and-a-half hours of action before it needs recharging. The new lithium option is also 85 kilograms lighter compared to the older lead acid battery version.

A compact ride-on mower, 0.82m wide and 1.98m long, the M2EL features an a tight turning circle, and can be easily transported.

With its low centre of gravity, the unit's 33/67 weight distribution on the front/rear axles makes it a highly stable mower that can cope with slopes. Its 240-litre



collection box is fed by a wide discharge chute, ensuring good filling of the material.

It is also described by the manufacturer as highly economical - the running costs are £0.35 against £3.57 for the petrol version, and there are the reduced maintenance costs – such as no engine belt, no filters, and no engine oil.



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COMMERCIAL



# Compact launch for Bobcat

Entering the groundcare market

A new line of Bobcat Compact Tractors has been launched for the Europe region.

The machines are part of the ground maintenance equipment (GME) range announced by the company last October. Building on the company's success in the North American market, the company say they aim to rank within the top-three GME players in Europe, and to double growth in the global GME market by 2027. Together with the

compact tractors, the GME range in EMEA includes mowers and turf equipment, as well as Bobcat's existing mini track and small articulated loaders.

Daniele Paciotti, GME product line director for Bobcat, said: "Bobcat is offering three Compact Tractor platforms – the 1000, 2000 and 4000 series – which feature nine new models from 25 to 58 HP, designed to meet the varying needs of customers in EMEA. First deliveries of compact tractors to our dealers are planned for February, with the initial focus on the UK, Italy, Poland and Benelux, where our dealers have showed a great deal of interest."

Each of the nine models in the Bobcat compact tractor range varies in size and engine horsepower, with the option to choose between manual and hydrostatic transmissions: three-point hitch, with telescopic or quick lower links, and open canopies (ROPS) and cabs. All the models offer all-day comfort in the generously-appointed workspace. With air conditioning (cab models), a suspended seat, an adjustable steering wheel, linked pedal and intuitive ergonomic controls.

Together, the company says the nine models offer a wide choice of applications, and can be equipped with front, mid and rear connections and power take-offs. Features include an independent PTO, auto-PTO, PTO Cruise, HST Cruise or Draft control, ensuring optimum productivity and uptime.

The Bob-Tach system comes as standard on all machines with the front-end loader option, enabling users to switch between different attachments. Fuel consumption is kept to a minimum due to the Eco PTO feature, while the linked pedal ensures optimum driving performance from the three-cylinder engine.

Every tractor model comes standard with four-wheel drive.

COMMERCIAL

# First electric ride-on from Scag

EVZ released by STM

Scag have introduced their first electric ride-on, the EVZ, available through the STM dealership network.

Power is provided by the Vanguard 48V 5kWh lithium-ion commercial battery pack.

According to the company, estimated productivity is up to five acres per charge, though this depends entirely on cut height, terrain and conditions. The required Vanguard 1050W battery charger is included with each mower.

Estimated charging time is five hours for full charge, or three hours for 80% charge.



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# Cash is king ... but profit keeps you going

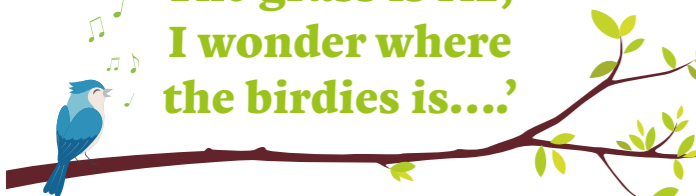


Our anonymous columnist, THE SPROCKET, continues to tell it as it is, with thoughts on the start of the season, finding new staff and warranty woes

**T**he Sprocket rides again. As I write this, the sun is shining, and I can hear the gentle whisper of the grass growing from my office window as well as the distant sound of a lawnmower humming away - thankfully, a well-tuned one that is not humming its heart out trying to get into a rhythm.

Whatever the economy is doing, the arrival of spring is a welcome event for all garden machinery dealers. With stocks higher than the grass, a warm and wet spring would be fantastic indeed. Years of selling lawnmowers has ingrained that old poem in my head that apparently came from Brooklyn, New York, by an unknown writer, and originally called *Spring in the Bronx*.

**'Spring is sprung,  
The grass is riz,  
I wonder where  
the birdies is....'**



There is more, but let's hope it does not translate this year into 'I wonders where the customers is.' With inflation bouncing up again, and the retail sector suffering even more, along with the consumer generally battering down the hatches, are we in for a tougher time than during the height of the pandemic?

You can read all the economic forecasts you like and still not get it right. The longer-term ordering nature of our industry does make for some nifty guess work. However, if you are cutting grass once a week, you better make sure your promotion machine is in full swing, and guarantee you grab the attention of your local customers while they are struggling to get their gardens under control.

It does seem like stock is getting through, but I hear

some dealers have received handheld battery product from year-old preseason orders, but without batteries and chargers. Get this, though: they had to pay for what they cannot sell! Madness!

There seems to be a concern that, as stock is coming through the system, there may be a tendency to overstock to avoid some of last year's issues. In a normal season (*'what's that?!' I hear you cry*) this would probably be OK. So let's hope we have a better than normal season, and the weather is kind enough to encourage British gardeners into the dealerships. Try and keep your margins secure and don't dump stock. We all know cash is king, but profit keeps you going in the longer term.

## Recruitment – help yourselves!

Right, that's the obvious stuff done. So now onto a crusade that is gathering some momentum, and one everyone should be taking notice of - even though you may be girding up your loins for the onslaught of customers coming your way as the season gets going.

Recruitment. Stop moaning about it and do something to help yourselves and our industry compete with those multi-nationals that have the wherewithal to get out there and fund expensive recruitment campaigns for their attractive job roles. We don't, but people are working hard in the background to raise the awareness of our industry generally, across all sectors, as an attractive career with good prospects and good packages.

There are campaigns for retraining, placing services personnel into industry, as well as the usual recruitment pools that are getting ever smaller. These are not enough, and only scratch the surface of what is a serious longer-term problem in our aging industry. We must recruit from a younger age, and we have to invest time into this across the whole of industry.

Everyone can do something to help. Supporting careers days in your local schools or colleges is one way to do this. Advertising apprenticeship vacancies on the government's apprentice recruitment web site ([www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-vacancies](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-vacancies)) may get you somewhere.

Checking out the new **'We Are Land-Based Engineering'** website ([www.wearelandbased.engineering](http://www.wearelandbased.engineering)), and using this information locally to help people understand the industry and what is on offer, can help too. Steering the mums and dads of youngsters who are moving toward further education to these sites would help.

If you need assistance to gather material to promote careers locally through your business, check out what the industry trade associations have to offer by way of material or guidance. Just giving people a nudge toward a website will help with recruitment.

## Warranty

Now I am going to jump in at the deep-end and talk about warranty in our industry.

This is something I have been involved in for a long time, and, whilst the way product is sold nowadays (online for instance) is different, the issues of warranty have never really changed. One cannot encourage the dealer network to hang on to a decent margin and ignore the cost to a business of warranty. I do wonder how many businesses properly monitor what warranty really costs them?

If a dealer signs up to a franchise, and the contract says we will only pay you a fraction of your hourly labour charge out rate, that may be okay as long as you made money out of the sale, or that warranty claims were minimal. In the case where a dealer is required to carry out warranty repairs on a product they have not sold, and where there be a stream of claims, how is that sustainable?

Dealer charge out rates vary across the country and suppliers reimbursement for warranty claims also varies considerably. In terms of percentages, a supplier's reimbursement could be as little as 50% of a dealer's charge out rate, which is a nonsense. Even at 30%, it is still crazy for suppliers to think this is fair when you consider that many repairs have set times worked out by a factory in pristine workshops that don't account for telephone time, visits, mileage and administration.

One also must consider that, in the current labour

market, technicians are in short supply and can cost a dealership £30 to £35 an hour just to stand in the workshop looking good. So why on earth does a supplier think that paying out less than this for warranty work is fair, or is supporting the dealer? Usually, a warranty complaint is the result of a faulty design or faulty equipment, and it should not be for the dealer to subsidise the supplier, who may have got it wrong. If you add to this the requirement for dealers to repair machines not sold by them, it is adding insult to injury in terms of what the cost is to the dealer.

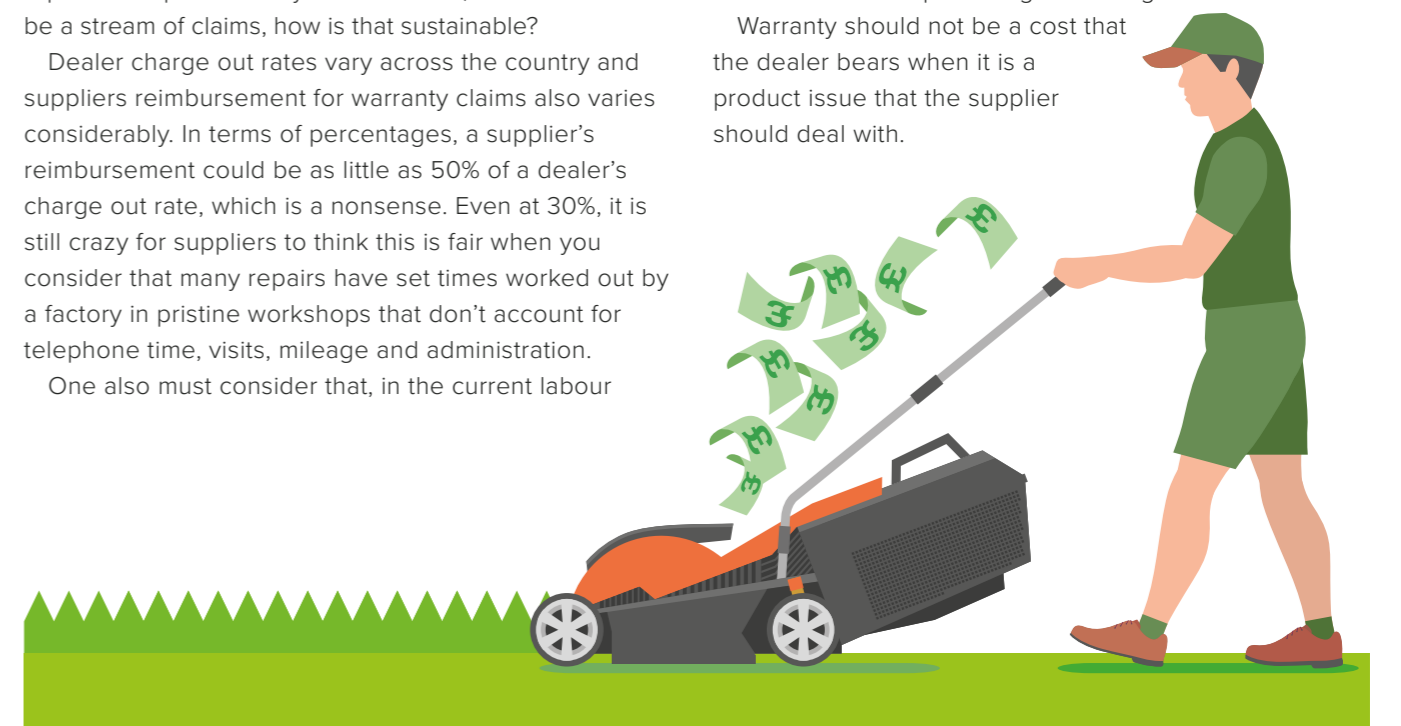
There are suppliers out there who treat their dealers fairly when it comes to warranty reimbursement, but these tend to be the companies that control their own manufacturing and supply chains. Others paying low labour rates are simply trying to save themselves money at the expense of the dealer.

As an age-old problem, is there a solution to this? Maybe, but it requires a degree of trust and cooperation between the supplier and the dealer. It also will need to mean that those dealers that try it on to make up the shortfall in warranty will need to behave better.

So, to all you suppliers out there, how about you consider, as a group, a rate of reimbursement based on a dealer's charge out rate, but with a built-in discount from the dealer network of, say, 20%, for the sake of argument?

The cost of a technician is getting higher. They are in short supply, but, without them, there is no after-sales service on offer. The dealers with workshops and after-sales service need to be able to bill a sensible number of hours per day to justify having a workshop and trained people to staff it. They should not be penalized by poor warranty reimbursement when it is not their fault that the product goes wrong.

Warranty should not be a cost that the dealer bears when it is a product issue that the supplier should deal with.









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