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1988-2018

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the March-April 2018 edition of *Service Dealer*. The start to this year has been quite eventful for a couple of major trade shows of interest to our readers. First, the final outdoors LAMMA exhibition was forced to close a day early in January following high winds which brought damage to the site overnight. The roads which are never the easiest at the best of times around the Peterborough site, were thrown into chaos when the second day's opening was initially delayed and subsequently cancelled. To be fair to the organisers, they had little choice but to close the doors when health and safety was in question. And while on paper a move next year to the NEC would appear to be justified now, as our correspondent Martin Rickatson reports on page 42, there appears to be some informal disquiet among exhibitors – displeased as they are with increased costs.

Exhibitors also had plenty to mull over following BIGGA's decision to reconfigure the BTME turfcare exhibition within the Harrogate Exhibition Centre for next January. I visited a packed and vibrant show this year, but murmurs could be heard from some that the changes might not be for the better. Well not for them at least, as the logistics of moving to halls located upstairs could prove problematic – but the organisers say it's the visitor experience which they are looking to improve. You can read my thoughts on page 38. Meanwhile, it's a pleasure to feature on our cover this edition, a young man with a very bright future ahead of him. Chris Garlick of Garlick Garden Machinery, who won our Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year award at last November's ceremony, speaks to us this issue. Chris is a shining example of what hard-work, dedication and talent can achieve. The industry should be proud of him.



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TALLIS AMOS GROUP TAKES ON BS MOWERS

Acquires the trade and assets of Bristol-based professional dealer

Agriculture and turf dealership Tallis Amos Group Limited (TAG) has acquired the trade and assets of Bristol-based professional turf dealer BS Mowers Limited, as part of John Deere's Dealer of Tomorrow strategy.

BS Mowers is largely known for its expertise in the fine turf machinery industry throughout Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and North Somerset. To provide continuity of sales and service to customers in the area, all the BS Mowers staff led by Branch Managing Director Bob Culverhouse have been retained and the dealership will continue to operate as a turf-only outlet under the TAG banner from January 2018.

The business' current trading area will remain largely unchanged as a result of the merger.

"I'm delighted that the Tallis Amos Group has agreed to acquire our company and bring its combination of experience and expertise to this part of South-West England," says Bob Culverhouse. "It will allow us to grow the business and continue delivering the best possible parts and service support to existing and new customers, across a wider range of products from John Deere and

other leading brands."

The Tallis Amos Group is owned by the Tallis and Amos families, with Managing Director Ben Tallis, who is based at TAG's Evesham head office, and Sales Director Simon Amos, based in Leominster, running the company as partners. With this latest acquisition, the group now manages five outlets in Evesham, Leominster, Bibury, Narberth and Bristol.

TAG was identified as one of London Stock Exchange's *1,000 Companies to Inspire Britain* in 2015. This annual report is a celebration of the UK's fastest-growing and most dynamic small and medium-sized businesses.

"As a strong family-run business, we firmly believe the Tallis Amos Group is the right long-term partner for customers across its newly expanded sales area," says John Deere Limited Division Sales Manager Joedy Ibbotson.

"The dealership has a long history with Deere, a great deal of experience and a reputation among its customers for consistently delivering the highest levels of after-sales support."



Bristol outlet managing director Bob Culverhouse (left) with Tallis Amos Group director Colin McIntyre

MAIN SPONSORS ANNOUNCED FOR SERVICE DEALER EVENT

Kramp UK, STIHL GB and Husqvarna UK

Returning to the Oxford Belfrey Hotel this November, the *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards has announced this year's main sponsors.

Once again, the event specially curated for independent dealers across all product categories will benefit from Kramp UK as Principal Sponsor, STIHL GB as Platinum Sponsor and Husqvarna UK as Gold sponsor.

The date of this year's event has been confirmed as Thursday 15th November.

Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke said, "We're delighted to announce these major companies as supporters once again for *Service Dealer's* Conference & Awards.

"This year is the magazine's 30th

anniversary and as such we're planning a very special Conference & Awards. To have Kramp, Stihl and Husqvarna all on board for this is great news."

Des Boyd, Sales Director at Kramp UK, said the company was once again very pleased to be sponsoring an event designed specifically for the independent dealer trade. He said, "Both Kramp and the specialist dealer industry which we serve have the same aim – to satisfy the demands of the end-user, efficiently, professionally and profitably."

Simon Hewitt, Head of Marketing at STIHL GB said, "STIHL has sponsored the *Service Dealer* Conference since its inception and we're excited to renew our

partnership for 2018.

"With a wealth of educational content, discussion and time to catch up with contacts, the *Service Dealer* Conference and Awards is a date that everyone in the industry should have in their diary. We're hoping to see an even fuller house than last year!"

Husqvarna's UK Sales & Marketing Director, Ken Brewster said, "The *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards is an investment into the infrastructure and future development of the dealer network in the UK. Husqvarna is very pleased to be supporting this initiative."

Keep an eye on the *Service Dealer Weekly Update* and this magazine for further details on this year's *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards.



L-R: *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke, Des Boyd, Pete and Emma McArthur

APPOINTMENTS

LES MALIN APPOINTED MD OF ETESIA UK

Following Patrick Vives' retirement

In his third successive promotion, Les Malin has been appointed as the new Managing Director of Etesia UK.

After starting his career in the farming industry at the age of 16, Les moved into the grounds care industry in 1993. He joined Etesia UK from Amazone in 2000 as Area Manager and was appointed General Manager in 2006. He quickly became an influential figure within the company and in 2014 he was promoted to Operations Director – a move which saw him become the company's first ever UK director.

Following the retirement of Etesia SAS President Patrick Vives in December 2017, the board and

shareholders unanimously decided to promote Les to the position of Managing Director.

"Les is someone that we can absolutely rely on, so this promotion allows me to take more time out and enjoy retirement," said Patrick.

Throughout his tenure at Etesia UK, Les has seen the company grow. What started as an unknown company with just one product, Etesia now boasts an extensive dealer network throughout the UK and has added to its portfolio of products after becoming exclusive distributors of Pellenc battery-powered tools in 2010 and the Oeliatec weed control range in 2017.



L-R: Patrick Vives and Les Malin

Les has been instrumental in helping the UK become Etesia's third-largest market behind its homeland France and Germany.

Commenting on his promotion Les said, "It's an achievement and an honour, and I'm very grateful for the opportunity to prove myself.

"My aim is to try to help the business continue to grow and show the shareholders that we can do what we need to do and make it work for them."

DEALERS

TNS GROUP TO DISTRIBUTE MAJOR IN EAST

Full range of equipment

Major Equipment Ltd has appointed Thurlow Nunn Standen Ltd (TNS) as the new distributor for its Major agricultural and grounds maintenance machines in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridge.

TNS will be responsible for the sales, spare parts and service of the full line of Major products including grass toppers, amenity roller mowers, slurry tankers and slurry application systems. This agreement, says Major, is part of its long-term plan to consolidate its UK dealer network to provide a better service to its customers.

"TNS is a highly experienced and progressive machinery dealership," said James Cox, Area Sales Manager with Major. "This is an important step in a key geographical area for Major and we are delighted that TNS is on board with us."

Commenting on the announcement, TNS Sales Director Chris Tew said: "We're delighted to have been awarded the Major agency for the Eastern Counties. The Major product line-up has an excellent reputation and our team is looking forward to representing Major in our region."



James Cox of Major Equipment with TNS staff at a product training day

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APPOINTMENTS

BURDEN BROS AGRI APPOINTS

New Branch Manager for Framfield



Cara Jeffrey

Burden Bros Agri, the John Deere dealer for Kent, Sussex and Surrey, has announced the appointment of Cara Jeffrey to the position of Branch Manager for the company's Framfield location.

The company says Cara brings with her a wealth of experience having built a successful career in the retail sector. Her previous roles have included Commercial Manager for Marks & Spencer and Store Manager for both Matalan and Homebase.

Her career at Homebase included roles in HR and Change Management. These involved time at the company's headquarters in Milton Keynes and regionally across southern England. Prior to joining Burden Bros Agri Cara managed 10 Homebase stores in the South-East.

Cara holds a PRINCE2 Foundation Certificate in Project Management and is a qualified member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Commenting on her new role, Cara said, "I'm delighted to be joining a company that has family at the centre of its values, whilst being at the cutting edge of innovation and development within the Agricultural and Turf machinery sectors. I look forward to greeting my customers as friends and working in partnership with them to maximise their business and profitability."

DEALERS

NEW GRASSHOPPER DEALER FOR SCAMBLERS

For South-West Wales

Scamblers, which is based in Bourn, Cambridgeshire, has announced the appointment of Celtic Mowers Ltd, located in Swansea, as the Grasshopper dealer for South-West Wales.

A family-run business, established back in 1977, Celtic Mowers is the largest horticultural dealer in South Wales. With over 100 years combined in-house experience and an excellent professional reputation, Scamblers says Celtic Mowers is a perfect match to represent the Grasshopper brand throughout the region.

Director of the Swansea-based dealership, Terry Flynn said, "We're delighted to be appointed by Scamblers as the Grasshopper dealer for South-West Wales. We've long known about the quality of the Grasshopper product and now with a structured dealer support network headed by Scamblers in place, we're delighted to be a part of it. Our loyal customer base depends on us investing in the leading brands and we're delighted to welcome Grasshopper into our showroom."

Ed Scambler commented, "After a recent visit we were impressed with the professionalism and friendliness of the staff at Celtic Mowers and look forward to developing a good working relationship."



BIGWOODS AGRI TAKES ON VALTRA

New dealer for Somerset and parts of Devon

Agricultural and grounds care dealer Bigwoods Agri Ltd, based in Taunton, Somerset has become a Valtra dealer for Somerset and parts of Devon.

Tom Bigwood said, "We're very excited to join the Valtra family, with the T254 Versu Smart Touch winning both Tractor of the Year and Best Design at the recent Agritechnica show.

"Full training on Valtra products will begin and we will

also be taking part in the Valtra roadshow which will be taking place at our premises on 20th March 2018. This will give our customers the opportunity to view the full line-up.

"We have served notice with SDF UK, however we stated our interest in supporting our customers with parts and service until another dealer can be found, and this has now been agreed."



The new T254

DEALERS

RT MACHINERY JOINS VENTRAC NETWORK

Price Turfcare's latest appointment

RT Machinery Ltd (RTM), based at Nether Winchendon, Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire is the latest turf machinery dealership to join Price Turfcare's Ventrac network.

RTM was formed by MD Richard Taylor in 2001. An independent company, RTM says its strengths lie in over 30 years' experience, a keen interest in machinery and a willingness to provide a quality service and value for money.

Commenting on the appointment, Richard Taylor said, "Since Rupert Price launched his business just over a year ago, the Ventrac product has

really begun to take off in the UK.

"We're now getting out there and showing potential customers just what it can do. Rupert has done a tremendous amount of groundwork in the past 12 months and it's certainly paying off as this industry is waking up to the potential of the multi-purpose machine."

Rupert Price, MD of Price Turfcare, the UK and Ireland distributor of the Ventrac 4500 compact tractor, added, "We've been steadily building our dealer network over the past year and only taking on reputable dealers who we believe will add value

to the brand.

"We require our dealers to be pro-active, focussed on the product and capable of providing exceptional customer back-up and support. RTM certainly meet those requirements and we're delighted to welcome them to the Ventrac family."



L-R: Rupert Price and Richard Taylor

DEALERS

DOUBLE A BECOMES PELLENC DEALER

In the North-East of Scotland

Double A has recently been appointed as the authorised dealer for the full range of professional battery-powered tools by Pellenc, in the North-East of Scotland.

Double A is a family-run business owned by Sandy Armit and his wife Aileen. They started the business working from home in 1996 and have since seen it grow into one of the largest turf dealerships in the UK.



The company now operates from two depots, situated in Cupar and Aberdeen, and has built up a complete portfolio of products and services for customers covering all aspects of the business, including service contracts, repair and maintenance plans, detailed estimates, overnight parts delivery and finance options.

The success of the company has been based on providing customers with quality products along with a first-class after sales service.

To achieve this Double A has always aimed to source quality equipment franchises, and it is for this reason that Managing Director Sandy was keen to work with the Pellenc brand.

"I first saw Pellenc at a show in France in 2015 and was instantly impressed," he says. "We have customers who are looking for this type of product, so I made enquiries at SALTEX and it was obvious that they had advanced even further since I last saw them.

"A meeting with Etesia, (the exclusive distributor of Pellenc in the UK) ensued and we're now delighted to be promoting the brand."

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APPOINTMENTS

KRAMP UK FOCUS ON DEALER RELATIONSHIP

With new Retail Consultant appointment

Kramp UK has announced the addition of Leo Copping who has joined the team as Retail Consultant.

Leo, 33, is based at Kramp UK's headquarters in Biggleswade, Bedfordshire and is focusing on embedding the retail partnership with the UK dealer network.

"The UK retail customer is used to, and expects, a very high level of standards during their shopping experience," said James Buchanan, Field Sales Manager, Kramp UK. "With Leo joining our team we're better equipped to face a key challenge for our industry, to recognise and implement what is an acceptable retail experience for the end user. Assisting depots to move their retail

space forward, from what was once the workshop storeroom, to meet modern showroom standards."

Leo joins Kramp from Wyevale where he held a variety of roles concluding Area Manager, responsible for 16 centres across the South of the UK. Prior to Wyevale, Leo worked as a Trading Manager for Asda. Since leaving school he has worked in retail, in every role from the bottom up. This, says Kramp, enables him to bring a breadth of experience to his new role that will enable him to advise on all aspects of the retail journey.

"I'm joining the Kramp team at a true industry inflection point, when we can realise the potential of a



focused retail space," said Leo. "It's exciting to be able to start something from scratch, to build and shape that part of the business.

"As a team we'll work with our dealers to support this change, using retail as another route to market that could potentially allow them to reach a new target audience as well as their existing customer base."

APPOINTMENTS

AEA CONFIRMS SPEAKER LINE-UP

For AGM and Luncheon

The AEA 2018 AGM Conference and Luncheon takes place on Tuesday 10th April at 1 Great George Street, London.

The association has confirmed the speaker line-up for the day. Addressing the delegates will be:

Anthea McIntyre MEP – Member of the European Parliament for the West Midlands (Conservative). Anthea is the Party's Employment spokesman in Europe and sits on the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee and Employment and Social Affairs Committee.

Dr Simon Moores – Cybersecurity and Technology Adviser. Simon is a

leading futurist and an information risk consultant. A Vice President of the Conservative Science and Technology Forum, he is a *Guardian* newspaper contributor, and a co-author of *A Digital Plan for Britain*.

Derrick Wilkinson – Economist. Derrick is an economist specialising in food and agriculture. He has previously held the role of Chief Economist at the NFU and later at the CLA.

After Lunch Speaker, Alfie Moore – comedian and former Police Officer. Alfie Moore was a serving Police Sergeant with the Humberside Constabulary for 18

years. He is now a professional stand-up comedian with four sell-out Edinburgh Fringe shows under his belt as well as his own Radio 4 series.

Details from the AEA's website – www.aea.uk.com



Anthea McIntyre MEP

DEALERS ENCOURAGED TO GET INVOLVED WITH OPEN FARM SUNDAY 2018

Agricultural and groundscare dealers alike can benefit say LEAF

Hundreds of farms all over the country will open their gates for LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2018 on the 10th June – and specialist dealers, both agricultural and groundcare, are being encouraged to get involved.

As the farming industry's annual open day, the event offers a fantastic chance for the public to discover real farming at first hand and see for themselves how their food (and much more besides) is produced.

The organisers are advising specialist dealers to find out which of their local farms are participating this year and to team up to play a part on the day. If your local

farmer hasn't signed up yet, why not get in touch with them to see if they are interested in doing so, say LEAF. Having a stand or a presence at an Open Farm Sunday event contributes to the overall intent of the day, educating the public regarding all aspects of how farming works. Being involved will illustrate how the specialist dealer services the farming community. It will also put your name clearly in front of your local community of potential customers – who demonstrably have an interest in the land-based sector.

Speaking at the Service Dealer Conference last November, Caroline Drummond MBE, chief executive of LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), said, "After 12 years, Open Farm Sunday has grown hugely, with thousands visiting farms across the UK. There is scope for dealers to get involved, to help provide an insight into how agriculture works and show the technology involved in modern farming.

"This helps educate the public and catch the imagination of children. Inspiring them early tends to capture their interest for life."

Open Farm Sunday represents an excellent opportunity for dealers to raise their profile amongst existing and potential customers. The more involved one gets, the greater the potential rewards.

Since the event began in 2006 over 1600 farmers across the UK have opened their gates and welcomed 2 million people onto their farm for one Sunday each year - with 273,000 of those visiting in 2017 alone.

Annabel Shackleton, LEAF Open Farm Sunday Manager said, "We know from what visitors tell us how important LEAF Open Farm Sunday is in helping them understand the realities of farming and how it impacts on their lives. Last year, one in five visitors were doing so for the first time and 86% told us they learned something new. So we're calling on everyone to support LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2018 - it offers a perfect platform for everyone to shine a light on what they deliver and why supporting British farming matters."

To find out more about where Open Farm Sunday events are happening close to you, visit the website at www.farmsunday.org.



Caroline Drummond MBE

YOUNG MAN ON A MISSION

Chris Garlick of Garlick Garden Machinery, based in Preston, who started his business five years ago at the age of 21, talks to Lawrence Gale Msc, MBPR, about his hard work ethic which won him the 2017 Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year title

The company Garlick Garden Machinery was formed in 2013 when Chris Garlick (then 21) saw the potential of running his own business.

He felt the time had come for him to utilise the relevant skills and experience he had gained after undertaking a two-year apprenticeship at the prestigious Honda Institution in London while working for a local dealer in Preston.

He set up Garlick Garden Machinery, renting a small bay the size of a single garage with just enough room to house a few mowers for repairs and a work bench area. Like most small businesses, promotion started on a word-of-mouth basis, but this was soon followed up with some selective advertising in the local paper.

Word soon got around about Chris's caring attitude towards his customers, where he prides himself on giving them the best service possible.

Garlick Garden Machinery has grown and become very successful with Chris being nominated and winning the *Service Dealer Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year* title in 2017.

A recent visit enabled me the opportunity to speak to him and see for myself how such a young entrepreneur came to be nominated and win this prestigious award. On my arrival I was met by Chris, his mum Julie and his faithful, friendly pet dog Ferne – a friendly Golden Labrador, who has a prominent role in greeting their customers.

Service Dealer: What is your role at the company?

Chris Garlick: My official title is Owner/MD. However, as a family-run firm you tend to have a hands-on role with all parts of the business. My mum Julie has been seconded to help with all the admin roles and help promote the business via email, website and any e-commerce opportunities. She also takes most of, if not all, the telephone enquiries and helps run the shop sales. This leaves me to get on with the machinery repairs, sales and aftercare advice.

SD: How did you get into this career at such a young age?

CG: My love of machinery began when I began helping my Dad, who dabbled with doing up old machinery as a hobby. This led to the opportunity to work for a local dealer based in the Preston area where I was able to work on a wide variety of mowers and mechanical tools.

Essentially the business was focussed on repairs and servicing of mowers, however, it was not long before I began getting asked to supply new mowers and tools, mainly for domestic customers.



This led to the opportunity for me to set up my first dealership partner Hayter, after a promising meeting with Simon Atkin from Hayter, who continues to be supportive.

With the business taking off, I soon realised I needed to enlarge our working space and with the help and support of my parents we soon moved into our current premises, thus enabling us to have both a showroom and a working repairs area equipped with the relevant benches and tooling.

SD: Which brands do you represent?

CG: We carry an extensive range of new machinery to cater for our customers' needs and budgets.

After securing Hayter, others soon followed, so we have now grown the business to include Husqvarna, Toro, Cobra, Westwood, Ego, Atco, Bulldog, Silky and Mitox. We are now able to offer an excellent range of tools and machinery for both our domestic customers and more recently a growing professional landscape contractor sector.

SD: Do you have any problems recruiting staff?

CG: No, not really. I have already recruited an extra pair of hands to work with me in the workshop. Danny Melia has been with us for 16 months. He is currently undertaking

a two-year Land Based Service Engineering course at Myerscough College. With the business growing we have just recently placed an advert to recruit another person to join the company.

SD: How is your after sales, repairs and servicing business?

CG: It's very popular with plenty of repeat business. It was this area of the business I focussed on first, building up my reputation for good service back-up and a quick turnaround on repairs. We run two vehicles and tend to bring everything back for repairs and servicing – we do very little on site.

We repair and offer servicing for all types of garden machinery, ranging from strimmers to ride-on lawnmowers. Our engineers aim to get machinery repaired and returned as soon as we can, while using only quality genuine parts.

We also repair and service other grounds machinery including commercial mowers, golf and turf machinery, wacker plates, cement mixers, disk cutters, quad bikes, UTV's compact tractors, trailed mowers and flail mowers.

We send out an annual newsletter to all our customers with an update on the year's progress and any news. We also add in there as a 'thank you' a discount on all winter servicing.



In the busy workshop

I TRY AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN TO OUR CUSTOMERS THE IMPORTANCE OF MACHINERY SERVICING

We tend to be flat-out all year round but, as with most dealers, there are busier periods of the year. The biggest problem we face is having enough space to store the machines. Depending on the work required we try to turn things around within a week, depending on the availability of parts.

I try at every opportunity to explain to our customers the importance of machinery servicing. My selling point for customers is to explain to them that it's extremely important to get their machinery serviced before they put it away. I'll tell them how we fully clean their equipment, meaning there's no wet grass eating away at the cutting deck or seizing up components. We'll replace engine consumables such as spark plugs, filter etc. We go through their machine with a fine toothcomb, including draining all the old fuel out and replacing with Aspen.

SD: Do you attend industry shows and exhibitions?

CG: No, not at present. I don't really have the time, I'm too busy looking after our growing customer base. However, with plans in place to increase staff, I may well get time in the near future to visit select trade shows.

SD: Do you feel Brexit is affecting your business?

CG: Not really. We seem to be attracting new business, even with all the recent price increases.

I am finding that people are continuing to support us and demand a wide range of services. The domestic side of the business continues to grow, with more people getting interested in battery-driven products, particularly trimmers, hedge cutters and chainsaws. We are also seeing a growing interest in the sale of robotic mowers.

SD: What are your company's strengths?

CG: Customer service. I find that people are fed up with picking a box off the shelf, getting it home and finding

they've bought the wrong product. People are looking for advice. Money is hard earned and I'm finding people would rather spend a little bit more on the correct machines for their needs – machines where parts plus advice and help are available. This is something you don't get when buying off the shelf or on the internet. Furthermore, the machine comes fuelled and ready to use. If the customer requires I will deliver the machine to their home or help them to load it into their car.

I also take the time to keep on top of our Facebook page and website. I find customers like information on updates, offers and our latest news. I recently did a complete makeover on our website for which we continue to receive good feedback.

SD: Do you embrace the new technologies?

CG: Yes, in recent years we've seen an increase in battery led products. We're selling more and more battery-powered hand tools, trimmers, saws and hedge cutters along with a few domestic battery-powered rotary mowers. As mentioned before, we've seen an increase in robotic mowers – we're currently finding success with Husqvarna's Automower.

Again, a personal service is offered. I advise on which mower would suit a customer's lawn and how best to install it, prior to purchase.

SD: What, if any, new products and services would you like to add to your portfolio?

CG: We've recently acquired the Atco dealership, adding to our selection of domestic mowers, which is where the majority of our sales come from. In the future we would like to expand into the arborist side of the industry, carrying a range of climbing and rigging equipment and a further selection of PPE. We will keep pushing the service and repair side of the business, which keeps growing year-on-year and adjust the business accordingly.

SD: Is online selling a threat to dealerships?

CG: Yes, it could be deemed to be a threat, based on discounted prices. However, we do not sell machinery in boxes like web-based suppliers. Our prices reflect the after-sales service customers get from buying from a reputable dealer. All our machines are supplied fully assembled, with fuel and oil, ready to use. They also have a comprehensive pre-delivery inspection before being handed over. This is to ensure our customers receive the best service and equipment, as well as validating their warranty.

I personally would like to see fellow dealerships come together, enabling us collectively to meet up with our suppliers annually to discuss the way forward, to ensure that we as dealers are given an opportunity to retain a fair profitable margin to cover these additional services we offer. I think we should not undersell our expertise and knowledge – we should in fact up-sell ourselves and make a better margin from the products we're passionate about.

Competition between businesses is healthy and helps to drive the economy, but product should not be given away. Suppliers don't give it away, they withhold a constant margin, altering with quantities ordered, so why are we expected to give it away?

I feel if an end user wants a chainsaw with an RRP of £250, they will buy it, and then a good mark-up will be made by the dealer. However, if they can get the same chainsaw for £200 they will obviously buy the cheaper one and save £50. This drives down our margins, cheapens the brands we're supplying and overall doesn't really do anybody, apart from the end user, any good. I think within the industry we can work together and make this a profitable business for all.

SD: Has winning last year's *Service Dealer Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year* award helped promote your business?

CG: Yes, without a doubt. We've received lots of messages of support from customers who congratulated us on the award.

Mum and I ventured down to the Oxford Belfry Hotel on 16th November, knowing we'd made the final three in our category. We were optimistic, but knew we were up against some well-established dealerships.

After being given the award I immediately contacted my Dad who unfortunately couldn't join us, and posted our thanks on Facebook and our website. We would again like to thank all our customers for their continued support – without them none of this would have been possible.

We met some really nice people who have been in the industry for a long time, who were eager to offer ideas

and share their experience and knowledge.

We will continue to keep up our high standards of work and keep the business building to carry on offering as much as we can to our customer base.

SD: Where do you see the business going in the next 10 years?

CG: Well, who knows. The industry is changing, customers are more demanding, no doubt internet sales will increase. So we have to be savvy and develop our online resources and services to cope with the potential demand and to reach a wider audience.

However, with many of the online retailers selling machinery and making very little margins, I feel we would need to either change the attitudes of the online customer or encourage online-based retailers to help add more value to our industry. Then we could develop a user-friendly site which can almost mirror how we sell in the showroom, giving guidance and our expertise, but online.

I'm also keen to enlarge our current showroom and repairs workshop to allow us to carry even more products, machinery, tools and stock.

I'm sure there will also be an opportunity to bring in more staff, which in turn will free me up and give more time to develop the business.

SD: Thank you



Chris and mum Julie, with Ferne the Golden Labrador

SERVICING INFERIOR MACHINES

You, our readers, had plenty to say about servicing cheap Chinese-built lawn and garden products

A dealer contacted *Service Dealer* recently with an issue that they had been facing in their business.

Ben, from Midlands Grounds Machinery in Solihull, told us the company has problems regarding the many varieties of Chinese-made machines purchased cheaply by customers either online or in the sheds, when they arrive at its workshop.

Ben said, "We occasionally get the odd Qualcast branded machine brought in by customers who want them fixed. However, we have to sometimes deny them the option as there are no parts readily available, unless the customer is willing to buy them out of their own money.

"We can only help with the bare minimum on these machines with elements such as engines, pull cords or the odd universal cable.

"What frustrates me," continued Ben, "is that the main parts suppliers for these machines never offer a trade set-up for ordering – only a general public purchasing system. This can be expensive if we bought them, as we would have to buy them with VAT added on. We would then, of course, have to cover this price, passing on the cost to the customer.

"As you can imagine, this can sometimes upset potential customers.

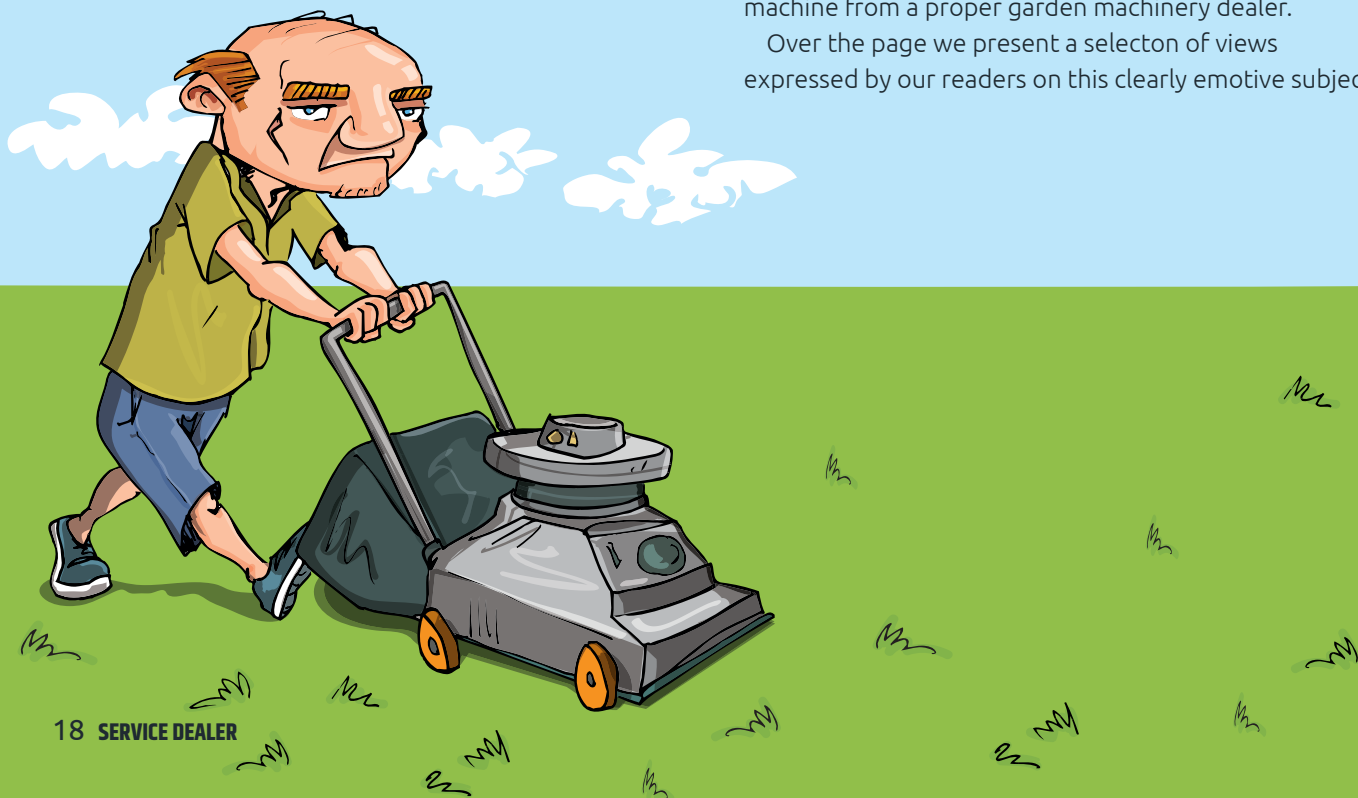
"I know some of these mowers are not usually the best in the world, but you wouldn't see a budget car manufacturer launch a product and not make parts accessible to trade customers who want to help other customers.

"If we as machinery dealers were aware of who the manufacturers were who made these machines and what the equivalent mower brands were that some dealerships sell, we could help the customers. Or, if we could get these manufactures to talk to the big trade parts suppliers to facilitate parts to trade customers nationwide rather than denying trade customers, we'd be in a much healthier position."

Predicatably this promoted quite a response on our *Service Dealer Weekly Update*.

On the whole, dealers who responded were quite dismissive of even trying to repair machines of this ilk. Many said it just wasn't worth the time, effort or cost involved. Others, however, did see a positive around machines of this type being brought into their dealerships. Some felt this was a golden opportunity to sell the benefits of buying a quality machine from a proper garden machinery dealer.

Over the page we present a selection of views expressed by our readers on this clearly emotive subject.



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There is an old saying, 'buy cheap and buy twice!' In my experience they really aren't worth getting involved with. The build quality (even the quality of the metal or plastic used) is so poor that even if a repair is managed it will soon return with more issues and by then the customer will expect us to repair it again and again, possibly several times in the same year. Generally, these will be the same customers who regularly use old or contaminated fuel and have little or no idea how to maintain any machinery. So no, if it's an unbranded or unknown brand I will steer clear unless it's an oil change, starter rope or something equally run of the mill.

P Sharman Horticultural Engineers, Beccles

So many times this happens that a customer brings in Chinese product and asks can it be repaired? After talking with the customer, you often find out that he owns a Kubota tractor which requires servicing along with a Hayter Harrier. Of course, I'm going to have a look at his Chinese product. It all depends on what the customer wants. As long as they are advised at the first instance with price etc.

Mowercare Garden Machinery Services, Dumfries

We do not entertain these type of machines, primarily due to the cost of labour compared with the cost of the machine. Secondly, parts availability and thirdly, by attempting a repair or service on one of these 'badged' machines, we are effectively encouraging their purchase in the first place at the expense of our own Chinese-sourced offering, which comes with all the parts and warranty support that we have signed up for.

I am interested to know how much a dealer would charge and the profit they would make out of servicing a machine that a customer had purchased from Argos or Homebase, for example, that they paid £79.99 for? For a customer to consider paying for a service etc on something of that value, you would need to charge no more than £30, surely? And that is impossible! Dealers should try educating their customers, and then they possibly won't buy a 'landfill' product next time.

Enfield of Maidstone, Kent

Unfortunately, we cannot stop customers from purchasing these machines as they are so cheaply priced and heavily advertised. People don't realise their error until they have a problem with the machine. I choose to take the fact that they have come to us as a potential for a new customer. Depending on the fault we sometimes have to advise that a repair is impossible or simply too expensive. This may result in nothing but, more often than not, we are able to turn it around and sell them a mower at a budget they are happy with and can get parts for. If the fault is not entirely known then we can advise that there may be a problem and the repair may not be possible. We charge a £30 deposit on all repairs (refundable off total bill), therefore if a repair cannot go ahead we are still retaining some profit. To be honest, we are not inundated with these machines, so I don't mind buying the odd part by credit card. Sometimes I just tell the customer where to buy it themselves. Sometimes we can use second-hand parts off old machines.

Hopefully if the customer leaves with a positive outcome then, fingers crossed, they will pass our name on to others for sales and repairs rather than buying cheap and difficult to repair models.

Alex McDougall Mowers Ltd, East Kilbride

We have the same issue on a regular basis with all types of garden machinery. We explain the difficulties and decline to take on the repair. Two points are relevant: if we ALL refuse to work on these 'spurious' brands then the consumer will get the message and buy branded products that can be repaired; and even if we could get the parts, is it financially viable given the standard charge-out rates in our trade to attempt to fix these low-quality and low price products? Would the customer happily pay us a hundred quid to supply and fit a coil on a mower they bought for £99? Is that a market we should be encouraging?

Southwest Garden Machinery, Launceston

Do you have any issues which are affecting your dealership that you'd like to hear other dealer's opinions on? Please contact the editor on steve@servicedealer.co.uk and we could pose the question on the *Service Dealer Weekly Update* for a future *Dealer Talk* feature.



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FORGET DISNEY, JOHN DEERE'S CENTRE IS WHERE THE ORLANDO ACTION IS AT

Most people travel to Orlando, Florida to visit its theme parks and enjoy some sunshine, but dealers and customers from around the USA also travel there to see the latest technology at a John Deere training facility, reports Cedric Porter



On show was the new ExactApply spraying system

Early January is normally a good time to be in Florida and catch some winter sunshine, but this year it was different. The day I visited John Deere's training facility it was wet and windy and a week or so before it had been so cold that Iguanas were freezing and falling out of trees.

The 245-hectare facility is just 20 minutes' drive from Orlando's hundreds of hotels and dozens of theme parks. It's situated on a 142,000-hectare cattle ranch, one of the largest in America. Opened in the early 2010s, the facility has played host to more than 9,000 visitors and the day I visited, I joined a group of US and Canadian potato growers who were attending the 2018 Potato Expo in Orlando. Many of them had

double-digit fleets of wheeled and tracked John Deeres plus sprayers and associated equipment.

Like facilities belonging to many large corporations, there was a pond next to the car park, but unlike most places, there were signs around the pond warning you to beware of the alligators. It was too cold for any four-legged gators to be basking, but there was a fleet of four and six wheeled JD Gators ready to ferry passengers and supplies.

Given that it only rains 75 days of the year in this part of Florida and summer temperatures are way into the 30°Cs, John Deere has foregone traditional classrooms and visitors are taught and entertained in the open air. There Deanna Kovar, Director of Production and Precision

Agriculture at John Deere explained the importance of fully using the digital technology available on farm machinery now.

"Not using the digital technology available on today's tractors, sprayers and harvesters is like putting your mobile phone in airplane mode. There are things that you can still do with it, but you miss out on its full functionality. Having invested in the technology, it's important you make the most of it."

Remote communications

The large open and remote spaces where most of North American farming takes place means that conventional communication can be patchy at best. John Deere is increasingly selling communication

masts that allow on-board digital functions to be fully utilised and machines tracked and monitored over long distances. On a more local crop level, John Deere's Field Connect system is an in-field monitor that detects soil moisture levels, alerting the farmer when soils are reaching saturation points or when they need irrigating. This system can link into a mobile in-cab weather analysing program that delivers specific 'live' information, which helps the operator make spray application or harvesting decisions as well as recording that information for future analysis.

Ms Kovar said that the interest in digital solutions has led to the development of a large range of monitoring and data applications from a large range of companies. This does pose problems for John Deere as it seeks to make its systems compatible with new programs and applications. She said:

"We realise that we can't do everything and that some of the programs and applications that are being developed are of real benefit to our users. We also recognise that we're the largest tractor company in the US and the world, so it makes sense for those independent companies developing new systems to work with is. Currently we work with around 60 providers of digital systems and are always open to working with more."

Investment in precision

Also on show at the visitor centre was the new ExactApply spraying system, which is being introduced across the world. It is designed to maintain droplet size, and spray pattern across a wide range of speeds, while reducing spray overlapping and drift. A key feature is a pulse system on the nozzle that is three times the frequency of alternatives, which means the sprayer operates at a constant pressure and droplet size regardless of speed across the

ground. There is also the ability to switch nozzles between two pre-selected positions in the cab, vary the spray rate across the boom, alert the operator in the event of a nozzle blockage and place LED lighting alongside nozzles to show the spray pattern in low light conditions.

In 2016 John Deere acquired a majority share in Hagie, an Iowa self-propelled sprayer manufacturer that specialises in high-clearance machines. Meanwhile, in September it bought Blue River Technology, a precision agriculture company that has developed vision technology and robotics to identify individual plants in a field and apply fertilisers or agrochemicals according to their needs.

John Deere's focus on technology has led it to recently open what it calls John Deere Labs in San Francisco, to allow it to interact with Silicon Valley companies and technologists, with the development of automated and driverless machines high on its wish-list.

The company's Head of Precision Agriculture Integration, Nathaniel Hartstock, told the Potato Expo that John Deere has had to embrace

technology in order to maintain its leading position:

"We have a reputation for selling bigger, faster and stronger machines than others and while that's still important, we need to also focus on making our machines easier to use, smarter and more precise. Driving this is the need to use fuel, fertiliser and agrochemicals more precisely and respond to the reduced availability of labour, which is an issue across the world."

Although the visit to Orlando focused on farm equipment, the latest ride-on mowers and utility vehicles were also on display. This included newly updated Gators that will be available in the UK this year. They feature larger and quieter cabs and an improved heating system.

While John Deere's Orlando site may not be the home of the world's scariest rollercoaster or the world's most famous mouse, it does showcase the company's latest technology and demonstrates that 100 years after it took over the Waterloo Company and launched its first tractors, it is entering a new era of digital, precise and automated machines.



Latest ride-on mowers were on display at the Florida training facility

CANADIANS SEEK QUALITY TO FILL ATV NETWORK GAPS

While the all-terrain and utility vehicle sectors are dominated by Japanese companies, Can-Am manufacturer BRP reckons it has something different to offer dealers and their customers. MARTIN RICKATSON talked to the firm's Paul Wood

From their inception as three-wheelers, through their development as four-wheel machines to the creation of six-wheel load-carrying variants, all-terrain vehicles have found a multitude of uses among the agricultural, amenity and outdoor equipment sectors. But while the Japanese motorcycle firms which were the original entrants into the ATV market continue to dominate the sector, that dominance is increasingly being challenged by firms focused only on the off-road market, for both work and leisure.

Among them is Can-Am, the ATV brand of BRP and the Canadian firm that was formerly part of plane and train maker Bombardier. Independent since 2003, BRP (Bombardier Recreational Products) also owns brands and businesses ranging from Ski-Doo snowmobiles and Sea-Doo 'personal watercraft' to Rotax engines. It's for the Can-Am range of work/utility and sports ATVs and UTV/side-by-side vehicles, though, that Service Dealer readers are most likely to know the firm, although perhaps as a more of a minnow than a major fish in the ATV pond. That's something UK/Ireland commercial and network development manager Paul Wood wants to change, and as a result he's on a dealer recruitment drive.

French-Canadian Joseph-Armand Bombardier founded the Bombardier business in 1942, after having developed and produced small numbers of a large snow vehicle design during the previous decade. The firm's first true modern day-style single person snowmobile, the Ski-

Doo, was introduced in 1959. Later decades saw the firm diversify into more widely-used transportation vehicles, including aeroplanes and trains. In 1998 the firm entered the ATV market with the Traxter, which had a distinctive but since-retired 'walk-through' saddle design. In 2002, Bombardier claimed the introduction of the industry's first model designed to safely carry two riders.

The following year, Bombardier Recreational Products (BRP) was carved off from Bombardier itself, with the Bombardier family retaining a 35 per cent stake and the remainder sold to investors. As a result, to reflect the change in ownership in 2006 BRP adopted the Can-Am brand name for its off-road products, including the Traxter side-by-side UTV and the Outlander ATV ranges. The company manufactures in six countries across three continents, and incorporates businesses which produce Ski-Doo and Lynx skimobiles, Sea-Doo personal ride-on watercraft, Evinrude outboard engines, Spyder on-road three-wheelers and BRP's own Rotax engine business, which supplies the power for the ATV/UTV ranges, among other products.

"Just a couple of years ago we were relatively small player in the UK, but as our dealer network grows and we extend and promote our product lines, that's changing rapidly," says Paul.

"We've been in the ATV market for twenty years, but until relatively recently had a small share of the UK market. Two years ago, at LAMMA, we launched



Recent agriculture and rural market-focused dealer appointments include Crawfords in Essex and Kent, Turney Group in the Midlands and C&O Tractors in the South-West



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our first utility side-by-side vehicle, and since then, with a fuller product range and the recruitment of some good dealers, we have grown our UTV and ATV market shares significantly. In total, across the UTV, ATV and sports quad sectors from 50-1,000cc, we now have ten per cent of the overall market.

“Much of that growth has come from our 2013-18 five-year business plan, which has seen the recruitment of a number of strong dealers as we have built our network. That’s something which is ongoing, and while we’ve opened 15 new dealerships over past two years, doubling the size of our network, we’re still looking to fill geographical gaps, particularly in the south-west and East Anglia. This year I want to make ten further appointments, with ten more in 2019.”

Dealer network

Selecting dealers has been a matter of seeking out established ATV dealerships with clear potential looking to switch franchises, followed by other agricultural, groundcare or related dealer types wanting to change suppliers or add ATVs and UTVs to their product lines, Paul explains.

“In recent years, in the latter case we’ve signed dealers such as Crawfords in Essex and Kent, Turney Group in the Midlands and C&O Tractors in the south west. Some makers are slimming down their product ranges, while ours is expanding. We’re also actively advertising to attract potential dealer enquiries.”

But what is it

that might attract a dealer into signing up to a Can-Am franchise over that for another ATV/UTV supplier?

“What we believe we can offer is encompassed in what we call our dealer value proposition. That comprises a number of things. We have a working Outlander ATV range that includes 570cc and 650cc 4x4 models, and 650cc plus 1,000cc 6x6 models with rear load deck. In addition, our full leisure/sport range is available to dealers, providing another potential income stream. In areas with high disposable income there is significant potential for sales of 1,000cc sports ATVs retailing at around £16,000. For working ATVs, in addition to machines capable of 37mph we also now offer T3b-homologated models with ABS, fully meeting road regulations and with a top speed of 65mph.

“On top of what we think is a better range, we offer more profitability, with a base margin plus quality margin for those meeting certain standards regarding premises, promotion, training and development. Meeting quarterly targets results in additional benefits.

“We also help dealers protect profit margins by ensuring sensible territory areas between dealers.

As a rule of thumb dealers are an hour apart, although obviously this differs by geography.

“There’s a minimum stock level as an initial buy-in, and twice a year a dealer must make a full stock commitment.”

Developments

Further new Traxter options

centre mainly around improved driver comfort, with a new premium rigid cab enclosure, an improved heater system and a cab



insulation kit. Also new is an optional auxiliary battery installation kit.

Turning to its Outlander single-seater ATVs, where Can-Am currently offers 570cc (48hp) plus 650cc (62hp) 4x4, and 650cc plus 1,000cc (82hp) 6x6 Outlander models, there are also new options for the 2018 model year. These include improved 6in and 11in polycarbonate windscreens to reduce wind chill when travelling at speed. Also new are alternative container options for the rear rack of 4x4 models, which now include new zippable nylon storage bags.

On the engine front, electronic Intelligent Throttle Control technology is said to produce smoother throttle response. Maximum speed is set in the factory at 60km/hr.

The most significant development is the industry's first antilock braking system for all-terrain vehicles. ATVs capable of more than 60km/hr (37mph) require ABS by law, and this therefore primarily applies to the sports/leisure sector. As a result, the top speed of these machines now 105km/hr (65mph).

Meanwhile, BRP is to become an official all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and side-by-side/utility (SSV/UTV) affiliated partner for the National Farmers Union (NFU) with its Can-Am brand. Announced at this year's LAMMA show, the move is part of BRP's strategy to forge partnerships



Utility vehicles have become a big seller for BRP's Can-Am business since it entered the market

with relevant organisations to assist in increasing awareness of the Can-Am off-road range, says Paul.

"The agreement will see BRP offer an exclusive deal to eligible NFU members for our Can-Am Outlander ATV and Can-Am Traxter utility SSV line-up, including the LinQ quick-attach accessories range, which includes rack extenders, bumpers and other items designed to make jobs more efficient yet be easy to remove. BRP, the Can-Am off-road dealership network and the NFU will be promoting the partnership offer throughout 2018."



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FROM THE £99 PETROL ROTARY TO AL-KO'S BLAZE

1992 – 1995

Continuing *Service Dealer's* 30th Anniversary year, we move on with our trawl back through the archives, checking out the early to mid 90s.

We begin this issue with the seismic event that many in the industry will still remember – B&Q marketing the first £99 petrol rotary. It's something which is still spoken about today

1992

B&Q TO MARKET £99 PETROL ROTARY MOWER

The leading DIY multiple, B&Q, prepared for a major onslaught into the petrol mower market by offering a model at just £99.

The mower, a YardKing side-discharge machine was available in two sizes, 20" at £99 side discharge or 22" with side collection bag at £169.

B&Q sourced the machines from US manufacturer Murray-Ohio, owned by Tomkins plc, whose companies also included Hayter and Beaver.

Sales Director of Hayter, Kim Macfie said, "I believe that this move by B&Q will affect the sales of electric machines rather than other petrol mowers."

B&Q's pricing policy virtually halved the previous average asking price for a petrol rotary.

John Chaloner of Henton & Chattell said, "The price is right but the product is wrong. I fear that B&Q is simply driving down the value of the market."

Oliver Stephens of Flymo said, "Petrol mowers are not the bulk of the market, and the consumer does require grass collection. We believe that people will stick with brands they know and trust."

Stephen Roberts of Atco-Qualcast said that the company needed to see what happened this year before deciding on any response. "B&Q is obviously trying to follow the experiences of the US market, but I really do not know whether that will work over here."

Bryan Peachey of Briggs & Stratton said that he had had initial

discussions with B&Q, "but they have yet to confirm how service will be provided. However, many dealers will welcome the opportunity of additional business."



DROUGHT WARNING COULD HIT MOWER MARKET AGAIN

For the fourth year running, lack of adequate rainfall was likely to be a major factor in the year's mowing season, it was feared in March.

Winter rainfall had again been way below average in many regions, and where substantial rain had occurred, it had tended

to fall rapidly in a two or three-day period to produce little in the way of groundwater recharge.

The worrying factor for the industry was that there were only two months left – March and April – during which any rainfall would be effective in replenishing groundwater storage.



1993

ATCO QUALCAST IN £17M MANAGEMENT BUY-OUT

It was reported in January 1993 that Atco-Qualcast had been sold to its management team in a deal worth £17m and concluded over the New Year.

The announcement came nearly two and half years after parent company Blue Circle indicated their wish to sell the business.

Heading the buy-out team was former marketing manager Stephen Roberts who became managing

director. He succeeded Michael Murray who indicated when negotiations began that he did not wish to participate in the buy-out.

The other directors involved in the MBO were sales director Brian Slythe, who had been with Qualcast since 1955, production director Colin Barker, technical director Arland Shaw-Taylor and finance director Gordon McMeechan.



HAYTER AND COUNTAX IN MACHINE DEAL AT GLEE

Manufacturers Hayter and Countax caused a stir at the GLEE '93 exhibition in September by displaying each other's products on their stands.

Hayter showed Countax tractors carrying the Hayter name and painted in the company's familiar green livery, whilst Countax had a range of four rotary mowers manufactured by Hayter on their stand, painted red and carrying the Countax label.

The cooperation deal was only

finalised a few days before the show and the tractors arrived late the night before the show opened at the NEC.

Speaking after the show, Hayter sales and marketing director, Kim Macfie reported an excellent response from their dealer network. "It is true to say that whatever reservations there might have been, as an initial reaction at the show, our dealers are delighted with the move and see it as being extremely beneficial."



1994

TRADE ASSOCIATION IN TURMOIL

In the face of mounting criticism from members, BAGMA held a number of crisis meetings during the early part of 1994 in a bid to halt a worsening financial situation which was described by a number of committee members as 'in a perilous state of disarray'.

One of the options considered was to sell the freehold of the Association's headquarters at Rickmansworth.

Members were also dismayed by BAGMA's refusal not to employ former GMA chairman Eric Brayshaw to head up the Garden Machinery

Association (GMA).

He and his wife Betty had organised a very successful and high-profile stand at Gardeners' World Live the previous June.

Former GMA chairman Colin Williams of Gateshead Lawnmower Centre said, "The GMA stand at the show was like a breath of fresh air, we had not had a presence like that at a major show for years. It put the name of the Association and its members firmly in front of the buying public in an exciting and positive manner."

However, that show had reportedly



cost almost £15,000 against a budget of £5000 at a time when BAGMA finances were not in good shape.

Eric Brayshaw said afterwards, "That is the kind of thing that can happen when you don't have a director-general, and the staff operated part-time."

SOLAR MOWER SET FOR UK DEBUT

The inventor of new solar mower powered mower due for launch in 1995 claimed in November 1994 that the Husqvarna Turtle Solar model infringed his patent.

Tony Paytas of Wisconsin-based Solar Power International claimed he patented the system well in advance of the solar mower development by a Belgian company who subsequently sold the manufacturing and development

rights to Electrolux in 1993.

Husqvarna were also planning to be marketing the 7" cutting width Turtle during the following year, for around £2000.

The Solar Power machine was a more conventional 21" rotary mulching mower which received its charge through three solar panels fixed to the top of the cutting deck. A day in the sun provided up to 2 hours cutting time.



1995

MASPORT AND SABO GO TO CLAYMORE

Two leading garden machinery brands, previously handled by Autocar before its collapse the previous November, were picked by Claymore Grass Machinery in March 1995.

The New Zealand-made Masport and the German Sabo products were to be distributed by Claymore, but in a more limited range than under Autocar's control.

Announcing the deal, Claymore's Keith Christian said, "We are delighted to have been awarded the distribution

of these leading brands. We shall be assessing the product range over the coming months but we have been pleasantly surprised at the strength of loyalty, particularly for Masport,"

Claymore, who also handled Bolens in the UK, would only be handling selected machines from Masport's mower range and would not be distributing either the Morrison or Masport cylinder models, nor the ancillary products.



AL-KO LOSES ALL IN HUGE BLAZE

Despite the total destruction by fire on Sunday 15 October 1995 of their UK headquarters, AL-KO Britain were back in business within three days, receiving new stock and despatching to dealers from temporary premises.

The fire, which swept through the company's Consett offices, warehouse and parts department, destroyed over £1.5m of stock. Police and fire officials said that they were unlikely to establish the cause, so extensive was the damage.

The fire was discovered at just after 2.30pm, but by the time the fire-fighters got to the scene the blaze was out of control.

According to md Tony Merrett, a few members of staff were working in the building until noon on the Sunday, but the premises was securely locked.

"It could have been as result of a break-in, or a wiring failure, but I'm just relieved that no one was seriously injured and that nearby offices were empty at the time."



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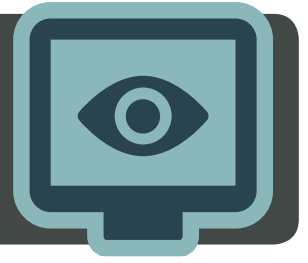
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WINTER SERVICING SURVEY 2018

Workshop levels seem to have been good this winter

We had a healthy response to our Winter Servicing Survey which showed some positive results for dealerships' workshops. Last year 54% of respondents said that winter servicing work had been up or well up on the levels it had been the previous year – this year that figure was slightly pipped with 57% answering in a similar fashion.

The percentage of respondents saying levels were down or well down had decreased marginally to 14%.

Interestingly, although weather came out top again when looking for factors which most influence service levels, with 35% citing this, a significantly increased number of respondents felt that their marketing activities played an important role this past year – 31% named this as the decisive factor.

There was an equal split among our survey respondents in terms of whether they had increased their labour rates or not this past year. For those that had, most had increased by just up to 5%.

Again most respondents hadn't increased their service staffing levels. This process is also still clearly problematic for dealers with almost all respondents describing the recruiting process as either difficult or moderately hard. This has barely changed since last year.

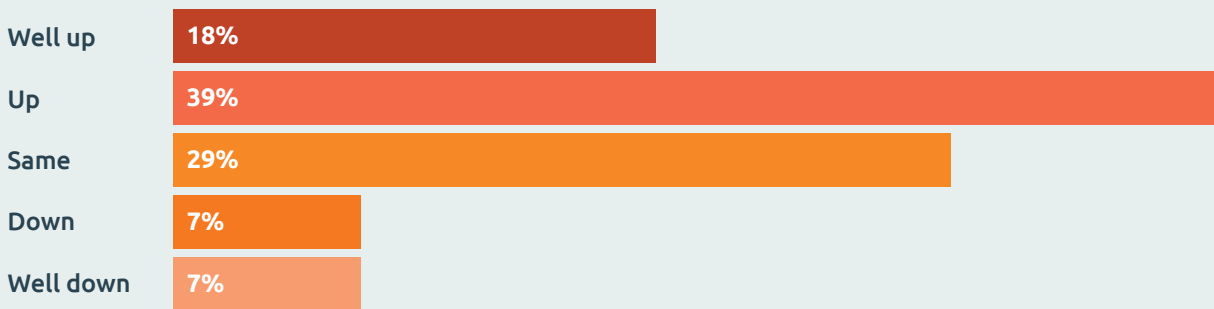
In terms of the training available for service staff, 'adequate' is how most respondents chose to describe the courses that are currently available, with only a disappointing 23% describing them as 'good' – and a somewhat concerning 31% describing them as 'inadequate'.

YOUR SAY

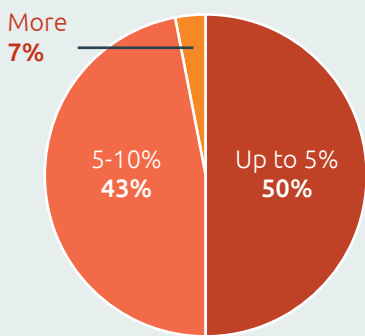
We asked you, 'are there any key issues which are currently impacting on the service side of your business?'

- The high demand for our hands-on service tends to restrict our ability to attend external service training courses. It would be truly positive if a greater level of training could be provided by suppliers and accessed online. The expense of external training is not the main issue opposed to the lost earning time. We know the importance of training and appreciate all the suppliers' efforts to provide it. But as mentioned previously we would appreciate the presentation of training online moving forwards. If taken overall with training for workshop and sales staff, along with attending manufacturers' presentation days, plus attending the odd trade show, lost earnings are considerable.
- Most people no longer think about winter service until it's time to get the mower out. We concentrate on people whose ride-on is still in warranty and we ring the person, which tends to get a better response.
- Training courses from John Deere for our commercial technicians are very good but good quality training for home-owner products is generally poor. Also charge-out rates for servicing home-owner products is poor as customers with machines bought because they were inexpensive do not want a service bill for £70 or more for a basic £125 mower. Yet these products cost just as much to service as a machine costing £500+ and parts are often hard to get.
- Trying to find the correct skill set required is very difficult and attracting people into this industry is becoming ever harder. I'm beginning to think the internet dealers have got it right – sell it out of area and don't worry about the service work. It is the hardest part of the business
- We feel that the industry is missing an industry-recognised apprenticeship or course. The industry as a whole isn't very appealing to mechanics.
- Cash flow and lack of help from the bank.
- The cheapness of new machines.

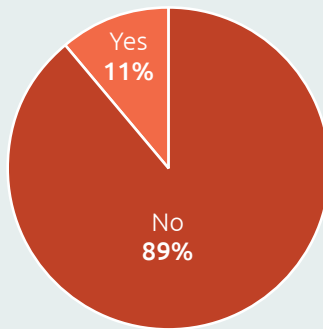
How are servicing levels this winter compared with last?



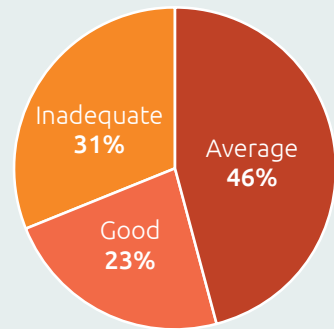
If you have increased your labour rates this past year, by how much?



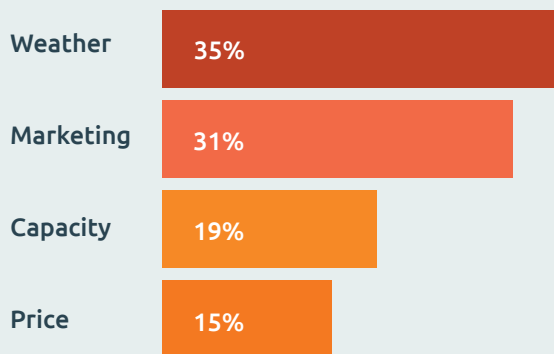
Have you increased your service staffing levels this past year?



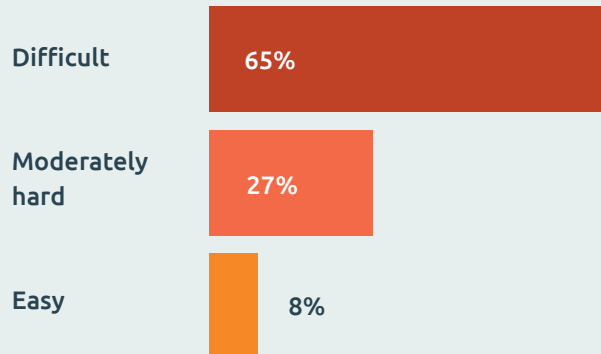
Do you find the standard of training courses available to your service staff...



What factors most influence your winter servicing levels?



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KUBOTA SHOWS NEW B SERIES AT LAMMA & BTME

Providing operators with a much tighter turning circle

Visitors to both LAMMA and BTME in January had a chance to view Kubota's new B Series compact tractors.

The new B1 (standard spec) and B2 Series (premium spec) tractors, supersede its B Series range of compact tractors.

The units feature the company's unique Bi-speed turn innovation to provide operators with a much tighter turning circle, advanced manoeuvrability and reduced turf damage.

Adrian Langmead, Groundcare Business Development Manager for Kubota UK, said, "Our B Series has been one of the most popular compact tractors on the market for years based on its performance, reliability, comfort and ability to cross different markets. The B1 and B2 Series capitalise on this even further, with a host of enhanced features to benefit our end-user customers.

"The premium B2 Series builds on from the B50 Series. The four new models, ranging from 20-31kw, boast a wide range of features, including Bi-speed turn. This enables operators to achieve a significantly reduced turning radius for increased maneuverability in tighter spaces. Three of the models feature Kubota's three-cylinder diesel engine, while the 31hp model is powered by our powerful four-cylinder diesel engine.

"The introduction of the B2 Series is all about raising the bar in the compact tractor sector. Kubota invests heavily in research and development and talking to the market, to ensure our products and solutions meet and exceed the requirements of our customers. The B50 was the first tractor in its class to feature an integrated cab design, giving operators 5% more interior space and reduced noise.

"The range also includes a rear three-point hitch for substantial lifting capacity across a wide range of implements."

For those looking for more of a standard spec machine, the new B1 Series is a suitable choice. With three models ranging from 16 to 24hp, this latest series is an evolution of Kubota's B1 utility tractor range. Featuring refreshed styling, with a new slanted bonnet offering a clear view of all operations, the company says the new B1 significantly enhances safety, control and comfort, while also offering power and dependability.

Adrian concluded, "Our latest standard and premium compact tractor ranges are a reflection of our continued commitment to providing the industry with the best machines on the market that don't let users down and enable all professionals to get the job done, time and again, efficiently and effectively."



T393 BRIDGES THE GAP FOR TYM

Between compact utility and mid-duty ranges

The latest addition to the TYM compact tractor range is the T393. It has been brought to the UK by Reesink Turfcare, the company says, because of its perfect positioning to bridge the gap in the TYM line-up, from the compact utility range into the mid-duty range.

The unit features a 39hp Yanmar engine, two transmission options: 12x12 speed manual with dash-mounted shuttle lever or a three-range HST transmission, and the highest lift capabilities in its class at 1,200kg.

It is available with either a rear-mounted ROPS or a factory-fitted cabin with air conditioning, plus the cabin features a high-capacity heater and front and rear work lamps.

Reesink says the T393 has one of the highest hydraulic flow rates with a maximum output

of 42 litres per minute, making it suitable for use with a wide range of hydraulically-driven attachments.

The cab features wide opening doors and there is no intrusive B-post on the tractor to hinder visibility.



MCLASSIC HYDRAULIC LOADERS INTRODUCED

For X2 Series compact tractors

A front-end loader for the new McCormick X2 Series compact tractor line-up has been introduced by distributor AgriArgo UK with mechanical parallel linkage fitted as standard for ease of use and added safety.

The McCormick MClassic 25 loader adds to the versatility and usefulness of the 43hp, 47hp and 54hp mechanical drive X2 Series tractors, giving them the ability to load and re-handle materials from manure and feed to gravel and soil, or to lift bales, pallets and small bulk containers.

"The X2 Series tractors – which replaced our GM models – are small but durable machines that are often used as scraper tractors on dairy farms and for different paddock management and grounds maintenance applications," says Ray Spinks, General Manager and Sales Director.

"With a loader fitted, the little tractor becomes even more useful, especially as it can get into buildings and other locations that are denied to larger, more powerful tractors and handlers."

With a lift capacity of 740kg from the ground to the full lift height of 2.60m, the McCormick MClassic 25 loader will typically handle a 530kg payload (measured from the load centre) when equipped with a multi-purpose bucket.

To minimise the risk of spillage back onto the

operator – especially important on X2 tractors without a cab – mechanical self-levelling of the attachment is fitted as standard.

"This feature also makes the loader easier to use, of course," notes Ray. "Once the bucket or fork has been crowded back, it will remain in the chosen position as the loader arms are raised."

The MClassic 25 loader is available with a selection of performance-matched attachments.



BTME ABUZZ

The packed halls were upbeat in Harrogate this January – however there was plenty of discussion regarding what next year's changes would bring to the show, reports Editor Steve Gibbs

BTME this year was certainly abuzz. Abuzz with packed halls, with greenkeeping professionals in their droves attending educational workshops and with rumours, speculation and discussion on what the show would like look like next year in its changed format.

First, congratulations are in order to BIGGA for putting on an event for which there is clearly a great demand and affection. Certainly, on days one and two, the halls felt absolutely packed at peak times. Almost too busy, as it was tricky to move about the aisles freely on occasion – which in a way is a good problem to have – and one of the reasons why the association says it needs to change the location within the Harrogate Convention Centre next January.

Alongside this move though, one feels that it should also look at the registration and show entry system, as that was one of the few true grumbles I heard at the show. Visitors were encouraged to pre-register to 'beat the crowds', but upon arrival everyone had to have the QR code they had been sent scanned, and a badge printed with a different barcode on it.

Between 9 and 10am, when a good proportion of visitors were arriving, this was creating queues of frustrated punters who were having to hang around for about 20 minutes to get in – which in the January weather is not ideal. Visitors and exhibitors alike seemed to be affected by this.

At SALTEx those who have pre-registered are sent their entry badge via email to print at home, so when you turn up at the show you just pop it in a lanyard, get beeped by the staff and walk in. A similar system next year when

there is apparently going to be just a single entrance for all show visitors would surely be desirable?

Vibrant exhibition

Once entry to the show had been gained though, it without a doubt felt vibrant and upbeat. Many exhibitors I spoke to were extremely happy with the number and quality of visitors they were welcoming to their stands.

Husqvarna for example, had returned to the exhibition after a considerable number of years away. The company is making excellent progress into the commercial sector with its robotic mowers, battery machinery and Fleet Services offerings and saw BTME as an opportunity to make valuable contacts in the golf world.

Kevin Ashmore, UK Commercial Landscape & Groundcare Manager, told me at the start of day two that he'd had a good mix of people coming on to the stand, all interested in the benefits that this new technology could offer their professional businesses.

Having only recently formed at the back end of 2017, Iseki UK and Ireland made their debut with a small stand that seemed constantly busy.

Product and Marketing Manager Richard Tyrell told me that at the moment the company is sticking with the established dealer network it inherited from Ransomes, but it would be looking to expand in time. He said he was very encouraged by the level of loyalty to the brand he'd heard during the show.

Kubota was showcasing new groundscape products including a new zero-turn mower and compact tractors. Product Manager Tim Yates said that even though the company has been making serious inroads into the



L-R: Husqvarna's Kevin Ashmore, James Walker, Graham Brown and Gary Philpott



L-R: John Clifford and Richard Tyrell on the Iseki UK & Ireland stand

CHANGE ITSELF IS OF COURSE OFTEN HELD WITH SUSPICION

agricultural sector in recent times, grounds care is still the heart of the company. He said what the recent developments in their agricultural machinery had allowed them to do though, was to bring across some of that cutting-edge technology which the market demanded, into the commercial sector.

The future

So if it ain't broke, don't fix it? Well, not quite.

BIGGA said that the show this year sold out to exhibitors back in September '17 and they had a waiting list of companies wanting to pay for stands which they had to turn down. So it's only natural that it would want to find more space to accommodate this, hence changing the layout within the convention centre. And as previously mentioned, the halls used this year were a tad overcrowded, with no real space for visitors to relax.

It's this 'visitor experience' which BIGGA is stressing it wants to improve.

At the conclusion of the show BIGGA Chief Executive Jim Croxton said of next year's show, "It's going to be more pleasant, people are going to stay longer around the halls, take a break, get some food and drink, see some innovations and have a look at some of the things we offer our members as well."

However, I did hear a few reservations from exhibitors about the changes being made, some of which were to do with logistics. A couple of the new halls to be used are located upstairs in the convention centre, which of course presents difficulties in getting machinery up on to stands.

Concerns were also expressed about ceiling height in

some of the rooms with exhibitors worried that stands which they already own might not fit in.

BIGGA was keen to point out that the new configuration of halls would have a natural flow, but I heard people concerned that some had the potential to become possible ghost towns – the way that Hall Q used to (which is one of the halls coming back into operation).

There was a rumour going around that to combat this the big-draw machinery boys would be split up and dotted around the exhibition to make sure people visited every corner, which is good for the show, but maybe those manufactures like being grouped together as they currently are in Hall M?

The biggest concern I think exhibitors have though, was that it seemed they wouldn't immediately be sure where exactly their stand would be located next year. Rather they would be putting in a request which the organising team would then do their best to accommodate. I'm sure BIGGA will be working hard with their customers to make sure they are satisfied, but concerns were clearly held. One would expect a period of rigorous negotiation will be commencing straight away.

Change itself is, of course, often held with suspicion. The unknown is feared, especially when what we've had is held in such esteem. Next January will be a true litmus test for the show. I'm sure it can't come around quickly enough for BIGGA so that it can prove it is able deliver on its promise of an improved visitor experience, while at the same time making it work for its commercial partners – who, let's not forget, are utterly vital to its continued success.



The halls were busy this year at Harrogate



Kubota's Tim Yates

BLEC MAKES NEW DEALER ANNOUNCEMENT AT SHOW

Acorn Tractors based in Derbyshire

BLEC, under the stewardship of Charterhouse Turf Machinery, announced its first new dealer appointment at BTME.

Manager of the BLEC division, Curtis Allen said at the show the wide variety of applications BLEC machines can satisfy requires a new network of dealers, and there has been a great deal of interest – the one criteria the company is demanding of new dealers being “a name renowned for quality and service”.

Curtis said they would be appointing more BLEC dealers based on merit and that they would not necessarily be current Charterhouse dealers.

The first announced appointment is Acorn Tractors, which is based in Derbyshire and stocks tractors, mowers and other turfcare equipment from a range of established industry manufacturers.

Acorn Tractors' owner Julian Simpson said, “We're delighted to have been appointed as BLEC dealers for the Central UK region. We've been involved with BLEC products for many years, both from using the machinery on contracting projects to selling as well.

“We look forward to offering BLEC machines for purchase or hire to new and existing customers.”

Curtis Allen also announced at BTME that in-line with demand, the BLEC range has been rationalised to a

number of core machines which sit happily alongside, as well as expanding, the current offering from Charterhouse in the UK. He said, “Additionally, each of the models in the new BLEC portfolio has been refined and further developed thanks to Redexim's manufacturing techniques to ensure maximum suitability and efficiency for the market.”

One such example of product development is the Turfmaker which has now been updated to include a new seed control rate system, new seed feed mechanism and weight ballast kits, all alongside a new look.



L-R: Dan from Acorn Tractors, Richard Lucas of Charterhouse and Julian Simpson, owner of Acorn Tractors

JACOBSEN SHOWCASES AR AND TR SERIES

Latest commercial mowing equipment

Jacobsen showcased its new AR series and TR series at the show

These series replace the previous AR-3, TR-3 and Tri-King machines. The

new mowers are built on a common platform, and are offered as standard or premium models.

The AR321 (standard model) and AR331 (premium model) are 3WD rotary triple mowers featuring 24.8hp Kubota diesel engines. The AR321 is fitted with relay control and analogue gauges as standard. Brand new cutting decks offer a quick height-of-cut adjustment system and eliminate the need for castor wheels. The AR331 has additional features such as a digital information display, a joystick control for lifting and lowering decks, and a superior comfort suspension seat. The AR331

also features AdaptiShift technology, allowing the decks to glide side-to-side to mow hard-to-reach areas.

The TR320 (standard model) and the TR330 (premium model) are triplex cylinder mowers. The TR320 has features including the ability to raise the cutting units to a vertical position, reducing the width of the mower to a minimum of 1.55m, easing transportation, access and storage.

The TR330 also features the additional benefit of AdaptiShift technology, a superior comfort suspension seat and intuitive digital controls.



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NEW OPPORTUNITIES AT LAST LAMMA BEFORE MOVE

High winds overnight cut short this year's LAMMA down to one day, but for those fortunate to have been there, plenty of new agricultural products were on show, with many offering new opportunities for dealers.

MARTIN RICKATSON was there

With parent company AgriBriefing (formerly Briefing Media) having previously announced a plan to move the 2019 event indoors to the NEC at Birmingham, January's LAMMA was the last event to be held outdoors at the East of England showground, Peterborough. What started as a small regional event for the Lincolnshire Agricultural Machinery Manufacturers Association has expanded rapidly in recent years, attracting national and global manufacturers, primarily because of the expense and ultimate demise of the Royal and Royal Smithfield shows.

But the idea of an outdoor show in January, with farmers attracted

to pull on their wellies and warmest clothes by free entry and a quiet point in the calendar, has lost some of its shine of late. High winds have now twice shut the show early following damage to marquees, and wet conditions have often made a mudbath of the venue, which has moved from showgrounds at Lincoln to Newark and then to Peterborough as more hardstanding and shelter was sought. Then there have been the frosty mornings when windows – and often door locks – of machines stayed iced until lunchtime.

So a move indoors seems sensible. Or does it? Inevitably – and, to an extent, fairly – it comes at a much-increased cost. AgriBriefing has stated that the show will remain free to attend for visitors, so that

additional cost has to be covered by the exhibitors – and that seems to have meant that not all are committed to attending the new show, with a number informally suggesting at this year's LAMMA that they were unlikely to attend the next one. Talk of the industry moving the Royal Smithfield Show to the NEC was a hot topic every December as far as 40 years back, but never resulted in commitment. Since then, with the development of low-cost airlines and the growth of Germany's Agritechnica and France's SIMA, allowing farmers wanting to look at big kit from international makers to do so relatively cheaply, there is a concern that the UK's ability to host a major showcase at a venue as large as the NEC has waned, if for no other reason than the fact that both the farming and manufacturing landscapes have changed significantly.

"The move to the NEC will provide an entirely indoor environment, bringing it up to the professional standards that are expected of a market-leading event," said Elisabeth Mork-Eidem, Group Head of Events at AgriBriefing.

"It's the UK's leading exhibition venue and provides unparalleled scale, facilities and transport links. We're looking forward to working with the NEC to ensure that LAMMA grows and develops further."

The first LAMMA show at the NEC will take place on Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th January 2019. In the meantime, more than 1,000 exhibitors attended the last outdoor



In the immediate term, the Lely round balers, Storm trailed forager and Tigo forage wagon will continue to be offered through Lely Forage Solutions and its dealers

show, and among them were a number unveiling products for farmers and dealers, several of which were seeking to sign up dealerships.

Tractors

Those interested in tractors and who didn't attend autumn's Agritechnica got their first look at new models from the big brands, including upgraded S-Series Massey Ferguson tractors, the new Case IH ActiveDrive 8 eight-step semi-powershift for Case IH Maxxum tractors and its CVX (CVT) option for certain Quadtrac models, plus standard-spec Puma X tractors and a reverse-drive Puma option.

Also present were Fendt's 900 MT tracked machines and the refreshed M7002 models from Kubota, with a five-range, six-step powershift. After making eight new appointments encompassing 12 depots last year, Kubota now has 40 UK agricultural dealers, with recent signings including H Pigney in Cumbria, JJ Farm Services in Gloucestershire and Shropshire start-up Battlefield Machinery. The firm says sub-dealer arrangements can work in some areas, and it is looking to talk to potential dealers in unfilled areas. Phasing in of implements to its range has been an important factor, says Kubota, and by this autumn that looks likely to include cultivation equipment.

While it is unlikely to be available in the near future, New Holland also showed the second generation of its methane-powered tractor, developed partly at its Basildon factory and from which some concepts are said to be likely to be engineered into coming models. Of more immediate note, McCormick showed three new X6 four-cylinder models, spanning 110-126hp, offering a compact option that combines X5 accommodation with the existing X6 transmission.

As the firm had previously promised, Arbos, the new Chinese-funded Italian maker, was present, and looking to sign dealers for its

range of specialist tractors and full-scale 100-130hp models, with larger machines on the way. Parent company Lovol has employed Tiziano Malavolti for some time as UK Sales Manager for precision drills from Maternacc, which it also owns, and he confirmed the immediate plan for getting tractor sales underway here now production has started in Italy.

"We plan to open a subsidiary

here, but in the immediate term we are looking to kick-start things by appointing and supporting dealers directly," he explained.

"Our four-cylinder 100-130hp tractors are now in production at the Goldoni factory in Italy, we have smaller models based on Goldoni designs to complement them, and larger machines will soon come on stream. We also have an expanding



Three new X6 four-cylinder McCormick tractors span 110-126hp, combining X5 accommodation with the existing X6 transmission



Shelbourne Reynolds now offers an in-house designed and built 2.8m heavy-duty flail mower to complement its hedge trimmers

arable implement line, and will begin combine production in 2020.”

Other tractor news included the launch of the industry’s first rubber-tracked tractors with continuously-variable transmission (CVT), in the form of Case IH’s Quadtrac 470/500/540 models and the Fendt 900 MT tractors. Already well-established in wheeled tractors, CVT brings greater fuel efficiency, allowing the tractor’s electronics to maintain machine operation at a defined engine or forward speed.

Other machinery

Adjacent to the Fendt stand, Lely’s forage products were on display in their traditional colours and badging, alongside reliveried versions of the brand’s balers on the Fendt and Massey Ferguson elements of the

AGCO stand. In the immediate term, the Lely round balers, Storm trailed forager and Tigo forage wagon will continue to be offered through Lely Forage Solutions and the Lely dealer network. However, key staff have now transferred over to AGCO, and Lely’s St Neots premises now becomes focused on Reesink Turfcare’s business. The wagon range will also be marketed as a Fendt product, the forage harvester as a Massey Ferguson, and the round balers under all brands. Production of Lely mowers, rakes and tedders ceases, with AGCO already owning the Fella product range.

Kioti UK gave a debut to the newly-homologated Mechron K9 2400 UTV, which replaces the 2210. Changes include new styling, a 10% power increase and a 30% boost

to braking performance. Stop-start characteristics are also improved with changes to CVT clutch design, and there is a new double-wishbone shock absorber system for the front suspension.

Sumo dealers were able to take a look at a second-generation prototype of the firm’s Vaxio high-speed one-pass seedbed cultivation. First shown a number of years ago, the machine is targeted as an alternative to the likes of Vaderstad’s TopDown, for situations where full deep subsoiling is not required. In the interim, the implement has undergone a series of improvements, and will be tested this spring before a decision is made on production plans.

Other cultivation highlights included the launch of the He-Va Evolution oilseed rape seeder, imported from Denmark by Opico. Combining disc openers, low-disturbance, medium-depth subsoiling legs, double-disc coulters and closing wheels, it can be fitted with a slug peller and granular or liquid fertiliser applicators.

Shelbourne Reynolds now has an in-house-built flail mower to offer alongside its Powerblade hedge trimmers. Built to a heavy-duty specification, the FBO 2800 features a double-skinned shell comprising two layers of 4mm-thick steel. From the PTO shaft, drive is transferred through a gearbox rated to take up to 235hp, depending on unit specified. Power then passes to the 220mm rotor via a series of five V-belts. There is 600mm of sideshift capability

Meanwhile, new names seeking dealers included Wildcat Machinery, which unveiled a new 3m, three-leg subsoiler, designed by former Simba engineers. Boston-based Chris and Rob Grundy, who are behind the firm, suggest its press design provides a greater consolidation area, while a double-V frame aids strength. Metcalfe feet are fitted as standard.



Tiziano Malavolti (left) says Arbos is seeking to directly recruit and support dealers for its initial 100-130hp tractor offering and smaller Goldoni-based models



Kioti UK debuted the newly-homologated Mechron K9 2400 UTV, which replaces the 2210

A RECORD START TO THE YEAR

Emyr Jenkins, of Jenkins Garden Machinery, says both sales and servicing have kept the company busy so far in 2018, but it has still found time to revamp its showroom



With the Christmas festivities over, the new year had a very positive start. We managed to get on top of many of the jobs we had in and reduced them to a much more comfortable 135. Although again, at the time of writing this, 25 are awaiting collection. I do fear, however, that with spring being just around the corner, we will struggle to get every winter service done.

Phone calls are coming in on a daily basis from both historic and new customers with the request, "I'd like to book my mower in" – but I know just as well as you that this is just the tip of the iceberg.

As soon as the weather breaks we can all expect the classic, "I need my mower serviced – if I drop it in this morning could I collect it this afternoon?"

We try to be as proactive as possible and use our system to book in winter servicing at the point of sale, which allows us to schedule most jobs, but with the best will in the world, you will never stop that group of last-minute thinkers who only consider the lawn when it needs

cutting! This, coupled with the fact that we still have more on the list to call, makes for a very interesting March.

It's fair to say from a sales point of view that we've started the new year off with a record January. This was helped in no small part by the fact that last year we began doing compact tractors and accessories, such as flails. Combined with a few very out of season ride-on mower sales, this has launched us into a lovely start.

Both the workshop and the front end of the shop have been busy this winter.

However, we still like to do our maintenance at this time of year. The project this time was to revamp the showroom and we decided to paint the floor and create a new counter – the project is still ongoing as the signage is currently being printed.

Brexit (I'm sick of it too!) seems to be having some impact on people's thoughts through conversations I've had, but as with every potential economic crisis, if the weather is right, the grass will continue to grow.



Jenkins Garden Machinery's revamped showroom



SAFETY REGULATIONS

PRODUCT BRANDING AND PRODUCT LIABILITY RISK



Edited by Adam Bernstein

Product liability is creeping ever higher up the list of boardroom priorities for businesses. Increased media attention on product safety incidents brings the potential for a badly managed crisis to kill off a company entirely, writes *Peter Shervington, Senior Associate at Eversheds Sutherland LLP.*

It's interesting that retailers and others in the supply chain who do not actually make a product often regard themselves as immune from product liability risks and assume that their suppliers will be the target of claims or regulatory scrutiny if things go wrong. Unfortunately, this is not often a safe assumption: many regulatory regimes place responsibilities not only on the manufacturer, but also on others in the supply chain, particularly those who place their brand on the product.

Most products intended for or likely to be used by consumers (including those which might be targeted primarily at professionals but which consumers may buy too) fall within the scope of the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (GPSR) which implements the

EU General Product Safety Directive. These regulations place a strict and onerous obligation on 'producers' to ensure that the product is 'safe' – meaning that under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions of use it presents either no risk or only the

minimum risk compatible with the product's use.

Critically, for the purposes of the GPSR, a producer is any person who manufactures a product, or a person who presents himself as the manufacturer "by affixing to the product his name, trademark or other distinctive mark". This means the obligations placed on producers are also applicable to retailers, merchants and distributors in circumstances where they place their own brand on the product.

The effect of this is that retailers and merchants applying their own brand to products need to ensure that they can be satisfied with the safety of those products. This means not only that they are designed and manufactured in accordance with technical requirements and industry standards, but also, for example, that adequate warnings and instructions for use are provided.

The act of placing an unsafe consumer product on the market is an offence, regardless of whether or not a producer knew about a potential safety defect, and there is a requirement to notify the authorities promptly where a producer becomes aware that a product he has placed on the market – or supplied – presents risks to a consumer that are incompatible with the GPSR.

Potentially, resellers and distributors who deal directly with consumers could face claims under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA). Here goods sold must be fit for purpose and of satisfactory quality.

The commercial benefits of own-branding are often compelling, but businesses entering this area should do so with their eyes open, understanding that by placing their name on a product they may be substantially increasing the legal and reputational risks which they bear.

See www.gov.uk/guidance/product-safety-for-manufacturers

EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

PENSIONS REGULATOR FINES FIRMS



The automatic joining of workers to a company pension scheme, known as auto-enrolment, was completed on 1st February 2018, says *Adam Bernstein, SME Digest Editor*.

It tackles a huge, impending social problem of people not having sufficient monies squirreled away to support themselves in retirement. It is so important that the Pension Regulator has issued fines to employers on more than 20,000 occasions. These can run up to £10,000 per day for the largest firms, but even the smallest firms can see fines of £50 or £400 per day.

The rules state that all employers must ensure their eligible staff are saving for retirement. Eligible staff are those aged between 22 and State Pension Age and who earn over £10,000 per year. Pension contributions for these employees currently need to be at least 2% of 'qualifying earnings' between £5,876 and £45,000 with at least 1% coming from the employer.

It may be job done for the government, but it is never truly complete for employers due to their ongoing responsibilities as part of the rules.

These can be broken into five steps:

1. Join staff to the company pension when they become eligible

You need to keep an eye out for newly eligible staff. Providing they (presently) earn over £833 per month or £192 per week and are between 22 and State Pension Age, you will need to put them in. Be careful with those people who were not enrolled first time round as they did not earn enough or were too young, because when their circumstances change you will need to put them in too. Do not ignore those who are not enrolled – if they ask to join you will have to enable this and pay contributions if they earn over £490 per month (£113 per week).



2. Deduct the correct level of contribution from an employee's pay and pay this and the required amount from the company to the pension provider

Be extra vigilant though when pay changes or bonuses are paid, as these events could lead to a change in the amount that needs to be deducted. Employers also need to comply with the increased contributions that will be in effect from April 2018 and April 2019.

3. Certify your scheme meets the requirements at least every 18 months

Certification is simply an audit of your pension scheme to make sure you have paid the right amount, for the right people. There is no need to submit anything, it is a self-certification, but you need to have your house in order should the regulator come calling.



4. Re-enrol any staff who are not in the scheme every three years

Re-enrolment of those who have opted out or left the scheme previously must happen every three years, around the anniversary of an employer's start date for auto-enrolment. This ensures staff are continually given the opportunity to save for retirement. Once this exercise is complete, the results must be passed on to the regulator.

5. Make sure you do not fall foul of any changes to the rules

The government has done a pretty good job of improving the rules as they go along. But there is a ruthless determination to ensure auto-enrolment remains successful and with the government currently consulting on any necessary amendments, the rules are almost certain to be tweaked.

More information: www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk



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HOW TO RSVP TO A REFERENCE REQUEST

It is a common misconception that an employer is under a duty to provide a reference for an existing or former employee, writes Philip Richardson, a Partner and Employment Law Solicitor at Stephenson's. In fact, other than where a reference is needed by a body or there is a prior written agreement to provide a reference, there is no strict obligation on an employer to give a reference to an employee.

In practice, however, it is rare for an employer to refuse to provide a reference. This is partly because it is good practice to do so and partly because of the adverse consequences a refusal would have on the employee concerned. The response to a general request for a reference may contain nothing more than factual information about matters such as job description, length of service and reason for leaving.

Although a reference given by one employer to another about an employee has qualified privilege, which protects employers from liability for untrue statements provided they 'honestly believed' in the truth of what they said, there are some limits to what an employer can say.

An employer must not give any information about convictions that are spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978 in Northern Ireland), unless the job in question is exempted; not maliciously make false

statements; or negligently make a wrong statement.

An employer also needs to consider carefully giving favourable references to employees whom they have dismissed on the grounds that their work was unsatisfactory.

Employers are often not aware of the action an employee can take if they have suffered a loss as a result of an inaccurate reference. These involve defamation and malicious falsehood where an inaccurate reference attacks the employee's reputation, and negligence for providing an inaccurate reference as employers have a duty of care not to make negligent misstatements.

It is also worth noting the protection for an employer who recruits someone on the basis of a good reference that then turns out to be inaccurate and they suffer loss as a result.

Former employers forget that a reference may come to light if an employee asks their new or prospective employer for a copy of the reference.

At the end of the day, employers must exercise care when preparing references. However, if an employer takes a common-sense approach, there should be nothing for the employer to worry about. Employers must ensure that all the facts on which the reference is based are accurate and that the overall impression of the employee is not misleading.

SME NEWS

EU to increase checks of consumer goods

The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) has welcomed the European Commission's proposal to "beef up" checks of consumer goods available in the EU. The proposals aim to increase EU Commission staff to assist member states in better monitoring the merchandise that ends up on the market.

The BEUC is happy with the efforts to advance consumer protection against faulty products – however it has said this is "only a first step towards safe goods in the EU".

The BEUC is asking the EU Commission to expand stricter surveillance to goods sold online; set up a pan-European accident and injury database; guarantee involvement of consumer groups in the future European network for market surveillance (Union Product Compliance Board), ensure more transparency about the results of member states' market surveillance activities; and take off the CE marking from the products' packaging – the logo misleads consumers who believe it is a safety seal.

Visit tinyurl.com/y7afoehg

Scottish tax system 'more complex than rest of UK'

The Scottish Government recently published its Budget 2017-18, which proposes various spending and taxation plans and includes increases in various tax rates. Scottish Finance Secretary, Derek Mackay, said the increases in taxation will mean no one earning less than £33,000 in Scotland will pay more tax. Some observers have suggested that the changes in tax rates make the Scottish tax system far more "complex than in the rest of the UK".

The proposed budget brings income tax changes which will see high earners "pay more than elsewhere in the UK" – with lower earners paying less. The changes include, among other things, a new intermediate rate of 21p for those earning more than £24,000; a new starter rate of 19p in the pound; the higher rate increase 1p to 41p; the top rate increase 1p to 46p; and the basic rate will be frozen at 20p.

See tinyurl.com/ydho587t

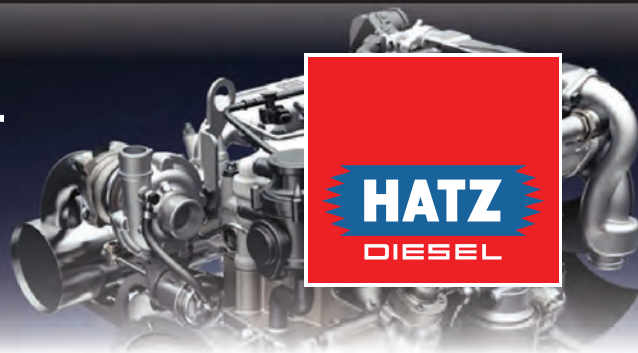
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WEBB SEARCH REVEALS NEW MOWERS

Two cordless models launched

Webb Garden Power has introduced two new cordless lawnmowers to its range of petrol and electric walk-behind mowers for domestic users in 2018.

These cordless models are powered by the latest lithium-ion battery technology with both machines featuring a 40V 4Ah battery. Webb says that is where the similarity ends though, as the two machines have completely different features and applications.

The Webb RR17LIP (pictured) is a 3in1 roller rotary mower with the ability to rear discharge, collect or mulch the grass cuttings. It has six cutting heights that range between a true 29mm-82mm available via one single lever, suitable for an area of grass up to 200m². With its ABS deck & split rear roller the machine is described as easy to turn in even the most complicated of gardens. Weighing in at just over 26kg, the company says it is still enough to give users a traditional striped lawn.

With a cutting width of 42cm the Webb R16LIHP cordless mower is suitable for a mowing area of up to 175m². It weighs 22.5kg and the company says it offers great manoeuvrability combined with superb mowing and collection performance. A single lever makes the height of cut

adjustment simple while its 55-litre capacity collection bag means less emptying

Both models come with a two-year conditional warranty. Their 40V 4Ah lithium-ion batteries with a full charge will run for around 35 minutes.

Charging the battery from empty to 100% will take 2.5 hours, however, the battery will charge to 65% in just an hour.



ATV / UTILITY

NEW RANGER 'MORE RUGGED, MORE REFINED'

XP 1000 features user-inspired improvements

Developed with over 100 user-inspired improvements, the all-new Ranger XP 1000 from Polaris is now in dealerships.

The model boasts power of 82hp, torque of 61lb-ft, towing ability of over 1,100g and ground clearance of 330mm.

Featuring the ProStar 1000 twin-cylinder engine, the model features a new one-piece frame providing improved chassis stiffness and automotive levels of refinement with a redesigned interior to provide more storage and capability. It also has a tighter turning radius and more precise steering.

With bold and aggressive new styling on the outside, the company says developments continue on the inside of the cab too. Dual-Sweep analogue dials and a 4" LCD Rider Information Centre provide comprehensive information to the driver, while thicker seat foam provides better



comfort. Practicality is boosted, too, with 51 litres of secure in-cab storage including a flip-up passenger seat and double glove box.

Rene Basei, Polaris EMEA Vice President, says, "Polaris is constantly innovating and looking for ways to improve customer experience.

"A big part of the development process comes from listening to and integrating customer feedback into new products; the new Ranger XP 1000 is a fantastic example of this. Feedback from those who have tested it has been extremely positive and we're sure our customers are going to think the same."

Polaris engineered accessories are available for the XP 1000 with over 200 available.

COMMERCIAL

SMOOTH ROLL FOR A SMOOTH GREEN

Toro's new GreensPro 1260

The new Toro GreensPro 1260 is the company's latest greens roller.

It takes all the features of the previous Toro GreensPro models and adds overlapping heads for a consistent roll over every pass, a quick latch coupler and pivot handle to easily transition from roll to transport, and features many easy maintenance features including only one grease point and added comfort such as a bi-directional seat adjustment lever, armrests and a rubber isolation mount.

But according to the company, perhaps the most important new feature is the split stainless steel smoothing rollers. The benefit of this is two-fold they say: uniform smooth greens are achieved in just one sitting and the risk of scuffing during turns is dramatically reduced.

Toro has also added a hydraulic drive system to the 1260. This replaces the hydro and chain drive and eliminates leaks and potential contamination of the grass as well as reducing the amount of maintenance

required with chain drive systems.

For the operator it's a more comfortable ride, thanks to the isolated engine, which means minimal vibrations and the ability to perfectly place the seat and steering column according to individual requirements. For maintenance there's less to clean and access is much easier, as is transporting the machine from green to green.

Jeff Anguige, National Sales Manager at Reesink Turfcare, the sole UK distributor of Toro, says, "The way this machine follows the contours and undulations of the greens, no matter how slight the undulations, results in an exceptionally uniform smooth putting surface."



DOMESTIC

HUSQVARNA FEELS THE PRESSURE

Four new pressure washer products coming to the UK in 2018

Husqvarna is moving into the world of pressure washers, with four new products coming to the UK in 2018.

The products will range in specifications and price, with 100, 200, 300 and 400 Series models being launched. The range is designed to target occasional domestic use through to part-time use, and capitalises on a popular market segment. Husqvarna says the move into high pressure washers reinforces the company's commitment to providing the authorised Husqvarna dealer network a solution for all aspects of outdoor maintenance.

The new range includes four new products: the PW125, PW235R, PW350 and PW450, with different levels of pressure and additional features on the more advanced models.

Every product in the range has a number of features and benefits as standard:

- A long and flexible hose enables a large working area for fast cleaning with less movement of the machine.
- Swivel coupling prevents hose tangling, adds comfort and makes it easier to store.
- A metal pump is fitted to increase reliability and for a long lifetime of the machine.
- Quick connect allows for fast set-up and lets you change accessories with ease.
- Lightweight with on board storage for accessories, power cord and pressure hose and wheels allowing easy manoeuvrability when using the machine and effective, compact storage.

The company says this means a range of products that are high-performing with maximum pressure, precision and minimal water use, for improved efficiency.

There is also a full range of easily interchangeable accessories such as a foam sprayer, rotating brushes and surface cleaners.

The more advanced models have added features such as: inbuilt detergent compartments, remote pressure controls and induction motors.

The machines start at £130.00.



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2. When verified, click on “log in” (top of the screen)
3. In dealer panel click on the blue payment button on the left hand side
4. Pay by credit card in under 2 minutes

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Increased plans for site promotion in 2018.

COMMERCIAL



HCA-265ES HD articulating hedge cutter

The ECHO HCA-265ES HD articulating hedge cutter is the latest addition to the company's range and offers an overall length of 2,446mm (cutting length 536mm), making it suitable for cutting tall or wide hedges with no need for a platform or ladder.

Operators can adjust the angle of the cutting head with one hand, helping to reduce downtime for repositioning. The cutting head also includes nine cutting angle presets through 135° for maximum versatility.

The HCA-265ES HD features a heavy-duty magnesium

gear case with needle bearings caged in the cutting head, which the company says provides added durability and less downtime. The cutting head itself can be folded 180°, making it easier to transport and store between jobs.

The hedge cutter also features triple-edged blades and a faster cutter speed stroke rate – 4,696 (1/min). Echo says this combination provides a faster slicing, cutting action, ensuring a clean and tidy finish. The blades on the cutting head are nickel-plated and laser-cut for long lasting sharpness, helping the unit to tackle a variety of different hedges.

The HCA-265ES HD features a 25.4cc professional grade engine. There is also an Easy Start system which allows the user to start the machine faster and with little effort. The shaft grip handle has been ergonomically designed, with the controls grouped close together for ease-of-use, better manoeuvrability and control.

A tool-less air filter cover allows for easy access even with gloves on, making it easier to clean the air filters while the commercial-grade felt air filter helps to keep dust and debris away from the engine, ensuring longer service intervals and better engine performance.

COMMERCIAL

LIGHTWEIGHT PETROL CHIPPER FROM FÖRST

ST6P is an extension of range of six-inch capacity machines

The new ST6P is an extension of Först's range of six-inch capacity machines, which is powered by a 37hp V twin petrol engine, meaning the

woodchipper is compliant with the new Stage V emissions legislation coming into play in 2019.

Först say they were able to manufacture the sub 750kg ST6P woodchipper through the use of a lighter engine, GRP panels and a shorter chassis. This allowed the company to utilise the same chipping chamber, flywheel, hopper, and feed roller system used on its ST6 machine.

The ST6P woodchipper boasts features and benefits including the manufacturer's feedroller system (FörstGrip), which ensures crushing power.

The machine also features an open top flywheel system ensuring chip is thrown, not blown, minimising blockages on wet material and helping to maintain increased velocity when chipping.



AGRICULTURAL

HE-VA STARTS AN EVOLUTION

New seeder for optimal oilseed rape establishment

The new HE-VA Evolution rape seeder is available in mounted 3m and trailed 4m and 5m versions.

The company says the new rape drill will provide a fully-loaded machine which can achieve precision drilling and seed placement, soil and nutrient management and pest control in one pass.

The seed bed is prepared by the low-disturbance, medium-depth sub-soiling legs and points which alleviate compaction and improve soil structure, with minimal surface disturbance. This encourages good rooting with resulting early, vigorous spring growth. A V-profile roller then reconsolidates, creating a micro-tilth ready for seed placement.

A front disc works ahead of each leg, slicing through the soil surface to ensure minimal soil disturbance. This prevents blackgrass seed being brought to the surface.

The HE-VA Accu-Disc double-disc coulter enables seed placement to be controlled precisely and consistently to a required depth, ensuring no seed is visible on the surface, providing ideal conditions for germination. The rear wheel then closes and reconsolidates ensuring good seed to soil contact.

Slug pellets can be accurately applied in the same pass as the rape seed is drilled, using HE-VA's twin multi-seeder operated by a single control box, preventing slug damage in the early stages of growth.

An optional Nitro-Band or Nitro-Jet can also be added to put on granular or liquid fertiliser exactly where and when the young plant needs it, giving an initial growth boost and pushing the rape seedlings ahead of any pest damage.



AGRICULTURAL

LANDINI CATCHES A NEW CAB

4-D Series's new cab option provides safety and full protection

A new cab option is available for the latest addition to the Landini tractor range – the basic-spec 4-D Series.

Initially available only in open platform guise, the 4-D tractors are now also available with a cab that provides added safety and full protection from the elements.

The new range aims to meet the needs of growers and livestock farms wanting a simple workhorse tractor for routine jobs such as light cultivations, haymaking and yard scraping.

Specifications are kept as simple as possible with few frills, which not only helps to keep the price down, but also means that owners are not buying features they are unlikely to use.

There is also the practical benefit that the open platform and cab floor and side panels can be washed down without fear of harming electrical installations and the like.

Up front, a new 2.9-litre Deutz four-cylinder engine provides power outputs of 68hp, 75hp and 88hp, all driving through an Argo Tractors' fully mechanical transmission.

This is operated by floor mounted gear levers, including the synchro forward-reverse selector to the left of the driver.



EVENTS 2018

MARCH 2018

- 17-2/4 Ideal Home Show, Earls Court, London
www.idealhomeshow.co.uk
- 17-18 West of England Game Fair, Bath & West Showground, Somerset
www.westofenglandgamefair.co.uk

APRIL 2018

- 5 CountryTastic, Three Counties Showground, Malvern
www.countrytastic.co.uk
- 10 AEA Conference & AGM, London
www.aea.uk.com
- 24-26 The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC
www.cvshow.com
- 26-29 Harrogate Spring Flower Show Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, North Yorkshire
www.flowershow.org.uk/spring-show-2018

MAY 2018

- 7 North Somerset Show, Wraxall, Bristol
www.nsas.org.uk
- 12- Nottinghamshire County Show, Newark Showground
www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com
- 13 Balmoral Show, Belfast
www.balmoralshow.co.uk
- 17 FTMTA Grass & Muck Event, Gurteen Ag College, County Tipperary
<https://ftmta.ie/>

- 17-19 Devon County Show, Westpoint, Clyst St Mary, Exeter
www.devoncountyshow.co.uk
- 22-26 Chelsea Flower Show, London
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 28 Surrey County Show
www.surreycountyshow.co.uk/surrey-county-show
- 30-31 Staffordshire County Show, Staffordshire County Showground
staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show
- 30-31 Suffolk County Show
<http://suffolkshow.co.uk/>
- 30-2/6 Royal Bath & West Show The Showground, Shepton Mallet
www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/

JUNE 2018

- 1-3 Gardening Scotland, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh
www.gardeningscotland.com
- 3 Rutland Show, Rutland Showground
www.rutlandcountyshow.com
- 7-9 Royal Cornwall Show, Royal Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge
www.royalcornwallshow.org
- 7-9 South of England Show, Ardingly, West Sussex
www.seas.org.uk/south-of-england-show
- 13-14 Cereals 2018, Chrishall Grange Duxford, Cambridgeshire
www.cerealsevent.co.uk

- 14-17 BBC Gardeners' World Live – Birmingham NEC
www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com
- 15-17 Royal Three Counties Show, Malvern, Worcestershire
www.royalthreecounties.co.uk
- 19-20 Royal Cheshire County Show, Tabley, near Knutsford
www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 19-21 Salon du Végétal, Nantes, France
www.salonduvegetal.com/pro/en/
- 20-21 Lincolnshire Show, Lincolnshire Showground, Grange-de-Lings, Lincoln
<https://lincolnshireshow.co.uk/>
- 21-24 Royal Highland Show, Royal Highland centre, Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org
- 24 Derbyshire County Show, derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 27-28 Royal Norfolk Show Norfolk Showground, Norwich
www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk



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AS SOON AS THERE'S A WORKBENCH AVAILABLE!

Just like the NHS, our industry also faces its periods of glut

How many times have you heard the words, "what, four weeks? I can't wait that long to cut my grass!"

Yes, it's close to that time of year. The grass is up around the ankles and the mower has been sitting all winter, caked with muck and old fuel rotting away in the carb.

Of course, you should have enough mechanics to fix every mower that comes in each day and return them the next, ready to go to work for their ungrateful owner who moans about the price on the invoice and does everything to get out of paying. Now that maybe sounds a bit extreme, but it reminds me of my recent time under the NHS.

People say of the NHS that there are not enough nurses, doctors, ambulances or beds. They say the NHS should be prepared, as it's the same every winter. The newspapers get wind of this and all hell breaks out. 'Our A&E departments can't cope!' 'There are no beds!' The people who really need attention and procedures are left disappointed and disillusioned by, what in my opinion is, a great institution offering the best services possible to an ever-growing and increasingly demanding population.

What is my point here? The point is there will always be periods of glut in every industry. It's human nature that we only make demands at the last minute on things that aren't important enough to prepare for or pay attention to as a matter of urgency. How many of us put off going to the doctor until we're forced to, then we expect he or she to work miracles to make us better? Probably the same number of us who put off having the mower serviced or fixed until the grass is up over our ankles.

Will it ever change? For over 50 years I tried and watched all sorts of ideas to attract customers to bring their machines in early. Discounts, free this, free that, all to no avail. How do we make the lawnmower as important as all the other gadgets that fill up our lives?

Would the NHS be any better if more money was pumped into it? Have we been let down by successive governments who don't want to tell us the truth about the costs of running the service? Should we be paying more from our pay packet towards the upkeep of what is generally known as the best in the world? Some say it's the money or lack of. Others say it's how the money is spent.

Can the same be said about the service we give our customers? Could we be better if more money was invested into our dealerships? Even then would it be possible to please the last-minute

demanders? Are we brave enough to look at our hourly labour rate and charge what's really needed to give the services that the public demand?

I suspect we will just bungle along knowing the workshops will be chocker in February and the phones will be red hot with the same old question: "you've had my mower a week, why isn't it ready?" All part of the business we're in. Will it ever change?

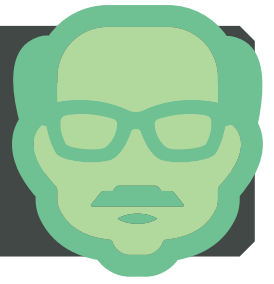
A last word on the NHS. No doubt many of you reading this will have had your own experience of the NHS. All I can comment on is my recent experience having undergone a triple by-pass. Without the dedicated people, too many to mention, who looked after me and continue to do so, I would not be here today writing this piece.

Perhaps you should remind your moaning customers, in the nicest possible manner, that you are happy to use your skills to keep their mower alive and ready to go, albeit "as soon as there is a workbench available!"

On a personal note, thank you to everybody out there who sent their good wishes. It meant so much to know you were thinking of me and boosted my morale enormously.



JIM GREEN



SPEAK UP!

GETTING THE NETWORK TALKING

It's always great to hear what you think

It's been superb this issue to receive some feedback, from you, our valued readers.

Whenever there's an opportunity to hear what our community of dealers thinks on a given subject, I know the team at Service Dealer Towers are delighted.

The fantastic response received to the debate on servicing or otherwise of, let's call them, 'inferior' machines didn't really surprise, but was very much appreciated. If there's one subject sure to get garden machinery dealers talking, it's these units flooding the market at knock-down prices. Well, that and internet-only retailers!

With the *Service Dealer Weekly*

Update, the team can gather your feedback easily on any industry news that piques your interest. Please keep it clean obviously, but everyone should always feel free to contribute. I know the Editor felt a little hurt when someone questioned how his mind works and suggested he was in the wrong job for even raising the subject as a discussion point a few weeks ago – but at least it proved people were reading and wanting to engage!

The surveys which are run on the *Weekly Update*, with the results published in these pages, are another opportunity for you to let us know what you think on a given subject. I always enjoy reading the responses



received in the *Your Say* section – which never fail to be forthright!

So please, if there's a subject close to the heart of your business, which you'd like to hear other dealers' opinions on, why not contact the Editor on steve@servicedealer.co.uk and get the network talking!

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

PLOUGH DID HE DO THAT?!

Bad news for snow clearing attachment manufacturers

A video of a Pennsylvania man clearing heavy snow with just a cardboard box tied to his ride-on mower went viral recently.

The clip posted by Kaitlynn Toporzycski, who lives in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, shows Jonathan Schill, her fiancé, ploughing a driveway with a John Deere ride-on and a cardboard box.

According to the *York Daily Record*, Schill was 15 minutes into his snow shovelling following the first big snow of the season, when he decided he needed a snow

plough. Having just moved house, he only had a shovel, a much larger driveway than before, and no access to a plough.

He looked in his garage and found a 50-inch TV's cardboard box which had a shiny coating and decided to see if he could fasten it to his lawnmower.

The video of what happened next has been viewed over nine million times on Facebook.

Check out the video at tinyurl.com/y8kewpvl





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