

30
YEARS
1988-2018

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY
MAY / JUN 18

Area Focus
Profiles of Scottish dealers

GDPR
What dealers need to know

Flashback
1996 - 1999 in review



I, ROBOT

Dealer of the Year double award winner Pete McArthur of Strathbogie Forest & Garden is a pioneer in the sale of robotic mowers



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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the May-June 2018 edition of *Service Dealer*. This issue see the start of series of features focusing on a specific region of the UK, where we talk to dealers about the issues and challenges facing them in that particular region.

We start in Scotland where dealers of differing size and franchises told us about their current concerns, which by enlarge turned out to be the introduction of the upcoming GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations). So in addition to our Cover Feature about the hopes, aspirations and business prospects of a cross-section of Scottish dealers, our small business expert Adam Bernstein has put together a 'bluffers guide' to GDPR in the SME Digest of this issue which I hope will provide some clarity.

The other major issue which we kept hearing about are the difficulties dealerships are currently facing in recruiting new staff. It seems at the moment people are struggling, and I'm afraid to say we have no simple answers. Hopefully by highlighting the issue though, the industry can get talking. Dealers, manufacturers, trade associations – everybody needs to come together to discuss what steps can be taken to make the industry a more appealing prospect to people looking to start their career.

This dialogue between all parties has never been more important. It is, in fact, a guiding principal of our annual *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards which we officially launch this issue. Hopefully more dealers than ever can come along to the Oxford Belfry this November, where pressing issues such as this will be freely discussed.



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DEALERS

RANSOMES CONFIRMS DEALER CHANGES

In the North of England

Ransomes Jacobsen has confirmed several changes to sales territories in the North of England and Wales to, it says, "streamline and strengthen" its UK dealer network.

Ransomes Jacobsen, which distributes Ransomes and Jacobsen turf-care equipment, E-Z-GO golf carts, and Cushman utility vehicles in the UK, operates as part of Textron Specialized Vehicles Inc.

Following a review of regional coverage, three dealers: FR Sharrock Ltd, Rickerby Ltd, and Burdens Group Ltd will take on additional territories as part of their current dealer agreements.

These three dealers are experienced with the full range of Ransomes Jacobsen products and the manufacturer said in a statement that they are geographically well-placed to offer "an excellent customer experience for sales and after-sales support, spare parts and service".

FR Sharrock Ltd,, which has depots near Manchester and Stoke, has extended its current areas in the North West and Midlands to now include the areas of Lancashire, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Derbyshire, with additional responsibility for Harrogate and Doncaster.

Rickerby Ltd, which has depots at Carlisle and Hexham, has been awarded an extension to its territory to cover an area from Dumfries and Galloway down to the Lancaster

district of Lancashire and North Yorkshire.

The Burdens Group Ltd which has depots at North Kyme and Sutterton, will cover the East of England from Yorkshire in the North down to the A14 through Northamptonshire.

Commenting on the changes to the dealer network, International Sales Manager at Textron Specialized Vehicles Inc, John Quinton, said, "I would like to thank our partners for their continued hard work and dedication to the Ransomes Jacobsen product range. Our dealers are very knowledgeable about the machinery, and have an excellent track record of first-class customer service and support. We're delighted with the way the dealer network is set up and look forward to supporting our dealers and customers moving forward."

In addition to these changes, John Osman Groundcare will now focus on the Textron Golf family of products for North Wales, including Jacobsen turf-care equipment, E-Z-GO golf carts and Cushman utility vehicles. The Ransomes franchise for this area has been awarded to FR Sharrock Ltd.

Previous representatives GGM Groundcare and Platt Harris Groundcare had their Ransomes Jacobsen dealer agreements terminated last year and are now successfully selling Baroness Turf Equipment.



INDUSTRY

BOOST TO RECRUITMENT

New careers brochure launched

The Landbased Education and Training Committee (LE-TEC) has published a new careers guide aimed at informing school leavers and others of the wide range of opportunities in the agricultural, grasscare and power equipment industry.

LE-TEC is a joint initiative between AEA, BAGMA and IAgRE to co-ordinate training, education, recruitment and promotional activities across the landbased engineering sector.

The 16-page brochure, *World of Opportunity*, which is available in print and digital formats, features information on the dealer sector, manufacturers and suppliers, apprenticeship opportunities, the LTA scheme and further/higher education colleges and universities. It contains pen pictures of those currently working in the industry including apprentices, technicians, sales and

parts specialists and employers.

The brochure was written and compiled by Chris Biddle, Editor of the IAgRE journal *Landwards* and founder of *Service Dealer*, together with Southampton-based designer Martin Hebditch.

Chris says, "In many ways this was one of the most challenging, yet satisfying, projects I have ever worked on due to the sheer diversity of the sectors encompassed by the title Landbased Engineering which, let's face it, probably means little to outsiders.

"I had excellent support and feedback from the LE-TEC partners as the project progressed, and we never had to lose sight of the fact that we had to speak to those to whom our industry was a real unknown."

Early reaction came from dealers. David Sturges, now with JD dealer Burden Bros after long spells with manufacturers Hayter and Countax

said, "I think this is a great initiative. The brochure looks really professional," while Steve Halley of Cheshire Turf Machinery, said, "Thanks for your efforts in attracting young people to our industry. As you know, once hooked, many people stay in the trade for life."

To view the digital version of *World of Opportunity* visit tinyurl.com/y78ay6z5



DEALERS

NEW OPICO GRASSLAND & STRAUTMAN DEALER

In North Yorkshire

OPICO Ltd has announced the appointment of Franks Curtis, based between Pickering and Malton in North Yorkshire, to its Strautmann and OPICO grassland machinery dealer network.

Commenting, James Woolway, OPICO's Managing Director said, "David Franks and his team have a wealth of knowledge and experience and the dealership covers a good mixed farming area,

with a strong tradition of grassland and dairy operations – perfect for these brands. We're delighted to have them on board."

Franks Curtis Managing Director, David Franks added, "The Strautmann range of forage wagons and diet feeders is a valuable addition to our machinery portfolio. We pride ourselves on supplying our customers with a dedicated after-sales package.

"Our highly trained engineers



L-R: Mike Burley, Territory Manager, OPICO and David Franks, Managing Director of Franks Curtis

have already been to the Strautmann service training in Germany and are fully up-to-speed with both the Strautmann and OPICO grassland product ranges."

DEALERS

KUBOTA STRENGTHENS GROUND CARE NETWORK

Join forces with Staffordshire-based Buxtons

Kubota UK has strengthened its dealer network after joining forces with Staffordshire-based groundcare and arboriculture specialist Buxtons.

The appointment of Buxtons is part of the manufacturer's ongoing investment to ensure its range of groundcare machinery is supplied through an independent dealer network that is committed to a first-class service offering.

The new partnership means Buxtons will now supply Kubota's complete range, from walk-behind, ride-on, out-front and zero-turn mowers, to compact tractors and RTV utility vehicles.

Neale Hopley, Managing Director of Buxtons said, "We're absolutely

delighted to become a Kubota dealer. Although we previously supplied groundcare equipment, our range was limited. This new relationship with Kubota enables us to significantly expand our business, giving us the chance to target a much wider range of commercial sectors including local authority, education, equestrian and the sports turf market.

"These are exciting times for Buxtons. Kubota is a trusted brand that turf professionals know will get the job done and not let them down. We're extremely excited to be working in partnership with Kubota and are looking forward to growing our business with them."

Adrian Langmead, Business Development Manager for Kubota UK's Groundcare Division said, "We pride ourselves on having a dealership network that is second to none.

"By signing Buxtons up as a new dealer we can extend our reach across a 30-mile radius throughout the Staffordshire area, enabling us to secure key accounts within the commercial market.

"Buxtons is a well established and respected dealership, so it was a natural fit to partner with an organisation whose commitments reflect our own. We're looking forward to the longevity of this partnership."



Buxtons representative Colin Goldfinch, Kubota Groundcare Business Development Manager Adrian Langmead, Kubota Groundcare Dealer Manager Andy Southerton, Buxtons Managing Director Neale Hopley and Buxtons representative Jon Lawson



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INDUSTRY

NEW RANGE OF ROBOT MOWERS FOR UK

Including a Drop & Mow model which requires no installation

Magic Distribution (a trade division of Mower Magic Ltd) the specialist robotic mower distributor in the UK, has secured an exclusive UK Distribution Agreement with Italian manufacturer Zucchetti Centro Sistemspa.

Having specialised in the field of robotic mowers in the UK for over 10 years, Magic Distribution already distributes the Robomow range of products. The company says the new partnership allows Magic Distribution to add a second range of robotic mowers to its present line-up, offering more choice to consumers and dealers alike.

Zucchetti manufactures robotic mowers under the Ambrogio Robot brand. Magic Distribution says Ambrogio has been a well-known technology leader in robot mowers across Europe for over 18 years, with what it describes as "a unique wide range" of robotic models.

Interestingly, the range now includes a Drop & Mow model that requires no installation and utilises a range of sensors to recognise where a lawn ends. The range also features a model for extremely large lawns of up to

7,000sq m and steep slope models for up to 55% gradients. Ambrogio has sold over 220,000 Ambrogio robots across Europe to date.

John Hall, Managing Director at Magic Distribution said, "Ambrogio Robot is truly at the cutting edge of autonomous technology and innovation, with very high build quality standards. This exciting new range complements our Robomow line-up and fills many gaps in the rapidly growing robotic mower category. Securing exclusive distribution rights will allow us to grow closer ties with current partners and engage with new customers with wider solutions not previously available in the UK Market.

"We remain committed to Robomow and believe that, with the recent growth in the UK market, there's plenty of room for an additional range of robotic mowers that offer something different to dealers and consumers."



APPOINTMENTS

EP BARRUS APPOINT

New Lawn and Garden Marketing Executive

EP Barrus Ltd has appointed Emily King to the role of Lawn and Garden Marketing Executive.

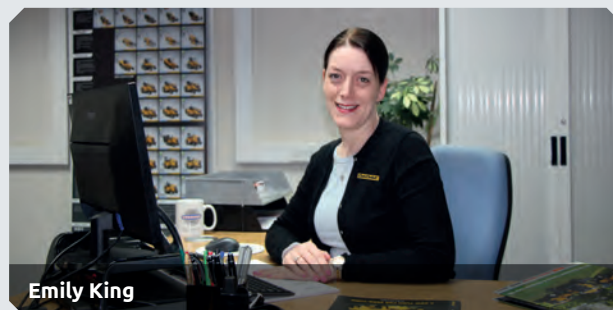
Emily brings with her a wealth of marketing experience. After graduating with a degree in Advertising and Promotions, Emily completed a Sales Diploma and has since worked with high-profile brands including BMW and Mazda. Her experience includes online and offline marketing and, with knowledge of channel marketing, she is well suited to also support the company with its marketing.

Emily will be supporting Cub Cadet dealers in promoting the brand as well as looking after all marketing for Lawnflite.

Emily said, "I'm thrilled to be joining Barrus in the Lawn and Garden Division. It's an exciting time for the company having just celebrated its 100-year anniversary and with the new products being launched this year I'm happy to be on board. Gardening

has become a passion for me and I'm excited to be working on some of the most loved brands in the industry."

Tim Hart, Director of Sales & Marketing at Barrus commented, "With a strong background in channel marketing and her broad knowledge of on and offline activity, I know Emily will provide a great support to our dealer network and help the Lawn and Garden Division with its next phase of growth."



Emily King

EVENTS

STIHL GB ANNOUNCES 40TH ANNIVERSARY DEALER CONFERENCE

18th October in Liverpool

Plans have been announced to celebrate STIHL Great Britain's 40th anniversary in October with a Dealer Conference entitled *Life Begins At 40*.

Taking place on Thursday 18th October in Liverpool the event occurs the day before the STIHL TIMBERSPORTS World Championship which is being held for the first time ever in the UK at the Liverpool Echo Arena on the 19th and 20th October.

Simon Hewitt, Head of Marketing at STIHL GB, said, "As well as celebrating four successful decades, we'll use this opportunity to plan for future growth and profitability together with our dealer network.

"Commencing with lunch, *Life Begins At 40* will address some of the most important issues affecting our industry and will be the ideal opportunity to discuss new ideas and

share best practice. The conference and workshops will be followed by an action-packed evening incorporating the STIHL 40th Anniversary Dealer Awards."

Life Begins At 40 is exclusively open to dealer principals or senior directors within STIHL approved dealerships.



DEALERS

SCAMBLERS TAKES ON ETESIA

Scamblers, based in Bourn, Cambridgeshire, believes it now has a complete portfolio of grounds care machinery after it was confirmed as an Etesia UK dealer.

First established in 1974, the family-owned business specialises in supplying compact tractors, bank tractors, mowers, utility vehicles and grounds care machinery for every aspect of turf and grounds maintenance.

However, Ed Scambler, Company Director, admitted that he was keen to strengthen the portfolio of products and this led him to Etesia.

"Etesia is a brand that I've been wanting to sell for around 20 years now," he says.

"But, due to prior agreements we had in place we were not really able to do that. I had been looking to

complete a whole portfolio of good-quality commercial and domestic equipment and I think that with the addition of Etesia, we have finally completed that portfolio.

"We've now been able to go out and hand pick the products that we want and I'm confident that with Etesia on-board, it means we have the most comprehensive range of equipment."



APPOINTMENTS

UK SERVICE MANAGER ROLE AT HAYTER & TORO

Martin Holden takes up position

Hayter and Toro recently announced the appointment of a new UK Service Manager.

Martin Holden first started working for Hayter, over 25 years ago, as a Service and Warranty Clerk. Progressing through various roles within the company, and most recently supporting International Distributors in Aftermarket Operations, Martin has now taken on the new title of Service Manager UK.

As an expert in the industry for

many years, Martin's new position will see him partnering with dealers to ensure end users experience "world-class customer care" when Hayter and Toro products are being serviced. Since the new appointment, Martin has reached out to all UK dealers for input regarding continuous improvement activities.

Martin comments, "My focus is to continue to advance our service levels and ongoing commitment to the customer. In the near future, I will



be visiting our dealers to better understand ways that we can further build and improve our service network."

INDUSTRY

JOHN DEERE ACQUIRES KING AGRO

Carbon fibre technology manufacturer

Deere & Company has signed a definitive agreement to acquire King Agro, a leading, privately-held manufacturer of carbon fibre technology products with headquarters in Valencia, Spain and a production facility in Campana, Argentina.



"This transaction provides John Deere customers with the chance to benefit further from King Agro's unique knowledge, designs and expertise in carbon fibre technology," said John May, John Deere's President, Agricultural Solutions and Chief Information Officer.

In 2015, John Deere and King Agro agreed to develop and distribute carbon fibre booms for John Deere spray application equipment in agriculture, offering growers the advantages of carbon fibre's versatility, strength and durability in self-propelled sprayers.

John May said the transaction will provide benefits in sharing best practices in product development, manufacturing, technology and scale, as King Agro builds on a history of innovation.

King Agro has been a family-owned business with approximately 180 employees and an extensive 30-year history of developing various carbon fibre products. The company will retain its brand name, trademark and commercial relationships.

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2018

ONWARDS TO 2048!

The theme for November's Service Dealer Conference has been announced

Service Dealer has launched this year's *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards.

Taking place once again at the Oxford Belfry Hotel, on Thursday 15th November, the theme for this year has been announced as *To 2048 – Insights for our Industry and how to prosper over the next 30 years*.

The event will include leading industry speakers and experts, panel debates and breakout sessions.

The Conference programme is based around the most commonly expressed concerns and issues identified by dealers in interviews and surveys published in *Service Dealer* and from feedback and suggestions from last year's attendees. Thank you for all your responses.

Service Dealer's owner Duncan Murray-Clarke said, "Last year saw *Service Dealer's* most successful Conference and Awards to date. We were thrilled with the feedback we received. Such positivity pushes us to raise the bar year after year and to find a relevant theme for dealers that encapsulates the industry's challenges and mood of the moment.

"This year sees *Service Dealer* proudly celebrating its 30th anniversary and to honour this momentous occasion, we thought it was only fitting to look back over the past 30 years, as well as looking forward to the next 30 and the opportunities that lie ahead. The Conference will cover topics that will help your business to prosper over the coming years. We hope you can join us!

"We aim to give dealers tangible insight into future challenges, tackling topics such as Succession and Urbanisation – plus guest speakers will give first-hand accounts of what large spending customers expect from a dealership. The breakout sessions enable even greater participation having proved extremely useful in previous

years, raising many valuable talking points."

Service Dealer is dedicated to supporting the UK dealer network. The *Service Dealer* Conference is for you the dealer, offering independent help and guidance to help push your business forward. Available now are a limited number of specially discounted Early Bird tickets at:

Conference = £120 (Normal price £195)

Awards = £85 (Normal price £99)

Combined ticket = £200 (Normal price £260)

Act now to make sure you don't miss out!

Further information on the Conference is available on the *Service Dealer* website at www.servicedealer.co.uk

There you can buy tickets, find out more about the day's agenda and register your interest in attending.

Keep an eye out on the *Service Dealer Weekly Update* every Friday, which is where you'll find out about new developments and additions to the Conference line-up as soon as they are confirmed.

INSIGHTS FOR OUR INDUSTRY

▶ 2048

HELPING YOU TO PROSPER OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS

DEALER OF THE YEAR COMPETITION 2018

Could it be your dealership this year?

Entries are now open for this year's Dealer of The Year competition.

As ever the glittering presentation ceremony will take place in the evening at the Oxford Belfry following the day's Conference.

Similar to last year, the core dealer categories for the 2018 competition are:

- GARDEN MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR
- PROFESSIONAL TURFCARE DEALER OF THE YEAR
- FARM MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR
- FORESTRY EQUIPMENT DEALER OF THE YEAR
- ATV/QUAD DEALER OF THE YEAR

You can be nominated by customers, suppliers, manufacturers and you can also nominate yourself. Many factors are taken into account when judging the categories, but the most important is customer feedback.

There are also two other award categories:

- Star of The Dealership
- Apprentice of The Year

These categories will open for voting later this year and once they do, we want you to tell us who really goes that extra mile to help make your business a success. This is a great opportunity to nominate an employee who exceeds expectations within your business.

In the meantime, however, the five core dealer categories are open for entry via the *Service Dealer* website now.

Visit www.servicedealer.co.uk to make sure your dealership is in with a chance of being recognised this year.

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Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and Des Boyd join Pete and Emma McArthur to celebrate their Overall Dealer of the Year win

AREA FOCUS – SCOTLAND

For this first in an occasional series, Service Dealer visited a cross section of dealers around Scotland.

The diverse companies who opened their doors to us, all had their own unique ways of running their businesses, but common pressures were apparent. Discussed were topics such as the

struggle to recruit; the challenges of new technology; competition in the marketplace; as well as the usual issues inherent in running a small business.

We begin our feature with our Dealer of the Year, double-award winner...



I, ROBOT

Pete McArthur of Strathbogie Forest & Garden is finding great success with the sales of robotic mowers. Here he talks to Editor Steve Gibbs about this developing sector, the value of the right premises, recruitment and the relationship between dealer and manufacturer

Strathbogie Forest & Garden Limited, based in Huntly, Aberdeenshire in the North-East of Scotland, was the major winner at the 2017 *Service Dealer Awards* – coming away with the Forestry Machinery Dealer Of The Year title, as well as the Overall Dealer Of The Year accolade.

The business, which is run by owners Pete McArthur and his dad Bob, along with Pete’s wife Emma, was established in June of 2000 when the family team purchased the business from previous owner William Grant who had established the company in the late ‘70s.

A major development for the company came with the establishment of its new premises, which had their official opening in April 2016. Established on a site which previously held a massive chicken shed, the new purpose-built building, located in five acres of land close to the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen, is the result of a £400,000 investment and represents a space five times the size of the previous store. Pete said at the time of the opening that the new and improved showroom, workshops, office space and product display areas had breathed new life into the business.

Walking into the showroom today it is easy to see what makes the Stathbogie business so special. The light, airy showroom is spacious, modern and welcoming. It is also very clearly set out between the company’s two

main brands. As you walk in there’s STIHL to the left and Husqvarna to the right. There are one or two other forestry brands dotted around such as Oregon and Silky, but it’s clearly these two rival manufacturers which are the heartbeat of the business.

This clear delineation between brands, combined with the attractive display techniques and natural flow around the store, makes Strathbogie an inviting place for customers to visit. Those that know which of the two brands are their favourite can head straight to their section, while those undecided can take their time and allow themselves to browse and be guided into making the choice that is right for their needs.

Regarding the layout of the new premises, Pete said, “A conversation often had is how to generate more people coming into your showroom, rather than going off to B&Q or the internet? I saw a survey a little while ago asking the public where they would go to get a part for their hedge trimmer and no one was saying their local dealer.

“I think dealers can have a problem with perception with the general public. People must think that as soon as they enter a dealership they’re going to get covered in oil!

“We used to find with our old store,” Pete continued, “it was the females who didn’t want to come into the shop. That premises had a ‘man only’-type feel to it. But now that’s all different. Also, when Emma goes out to serve

the customers, it kind of softens the atmosphere and can relax female customers.

“The problem is, there are not enough dealerships like this. Some dealers simply stock too many brands, which confuses customers and can put them off. And you need to make the customer’s natural journey around the store as easy and unobstructed as possible.”

I ask Pete what other advantages he’s found with the new premises since they moved from a town-centre environment. As well as the improved customer parking, it’s the increased outdoor space for demonstrations that has proved especially useful, he says. “It’s given us room to show more products inside and out when the sun is shining. The demo areas available to us here allow us to replicate scenarios for the customer. We also have the ability to host open days and can accommodate several activities at once. Being where we are it’s also easy to guide traffic to our showroom and with the local surroundings it creates a peaceful shopping environment.”

Robotic mowers

Many customers are visiting Strathbogie now for robotic mowers. An early advocate of the technology, Strathbogie only deals in the Husqvarna Automower.

Pete is highly regarded as an expert in the sector, not only by his customers and his supplier, but also by fellow dealers who are keen to pick his brains as to how they can increase their own robotic sales.

“I had a dealer on the phone to me for about an hour one day,” Pete says, “asking how do you sell robot

mowers? There are obviously dealers now being tasked with selling the products and some are finding it difficult. They’re going back to traditional ways of selling, which don’t really work with these products.”

What techniques do work then?

“You do find that one very effective way of getting people interested in robots in the first place, is when they see them in action on other installations you have already carried out. Or in our case, we’re lucky in having our outdoor demonstration area.

“Last year, for example, we set up an Automower installation out the front here to cut the company’s initials into the grass. It’s a nice way to show off how the mower can cut any shape and in all directions. This year we’re setting it up in a golf course design, with greens and rough areas. Once it grows out and we have flags in the ground it should look pretty special.”

It’s methods such as this which are proving very successful for robotic sales for Pete. So much so that he now has his eldest son Cameron, who is just 19, working on the Automower side – and when I visited back in February he was already snowed under and the season hadn’t even begun yet.

“We have more, possibly quite high-profile, projects coming up with robotic installations,” Pete revealed. “If these come off they have the potential to be pretty significant and of course will make us even busier.”

Located where they are, in the stunning North-East of Scotland, the robots which they’ve sold will be getting placed into some quite spectacular settings. It’s because of this that the company has invested in a drone, the



intention being that once some of these new installations are completed, video footage of the machines in action can be taken from above. These clips will then be uploaded to their website and social media channels to further show off the technology.

“Our customers tell us what they want from a robotic mower is that it gets the job done properly,” says Pete. “They’re not interested in the machines being overly speedy so much, more important is that they cut the grass effectively. That’s why we’re very confident and happy just selling the Automower.”

Pete bought into this idea of robotic mowers 10 years ago and says he persisted with it even when it was very much an uphill task. “The advances over the past 10 years have been incredible,” he says, “and it’s incredibly exciting where the next developments are heading with robotic technology.

“I’d say Husqvarna is the current market leader in robotic mowing, but several other manufacturers are joining the race which makes it exciting to be involved in this market. It really is just beginning to gain momentum.

“It’s a little bit of a rollercoaster of a journey as there is nothing more satisfying than when you get the most complicated installation working – but when you get the flashing light, it’s not a great feeling!”

Recruitment and industry issues

Despite working closely with such cutting-edge technology, Pete says that Strathbogie suffers as many dealers across the whole of the UK do, with attracting new staff to join the business.

Describing the whole recruitment process as simply ‘very hard’ Pete explained, “The North-East of Scotland traditionally was very lucky to have great employment within the oil industry that paid great wages at a very

young age, but with all good things, it inevitably came to an end.

“The reality has kicked in now, with great job losses and reduction in wages. However, in some cases people find it hard to change their lifestyle and therefore think that they can demand the same wages in other industries.

“This affects us now when we’re looking to employ in that we may think we’ve found the ideal candidate, but because they’ve become so reliant on their exorbitant wages, our industry can’t fulfil their requirements.

“Setting our sights to the school leaver was an option but we’ve found that the industry we work in just doesn’t seem to excite most people – the perception of getting covered in sawdust, dead grass, oil and petrol somehow doesn’t appeal!

“Younger people seem to be keener on sitting at the computer or updating their status on social media – although I do believe that the education system has a lot to answer for, not just the student.”

What does Pete believe needs to happen for the situation to change?

“I feel the manufacturers must stand up and show our sector as an exciting industry to work in, with great opportunities available all over the world. There’s nothing surer than the grass will always need cutting and trees need pruning.

“I actually think that at the moment this industry takes quite some beating in terms of all the advanced technological developments it’s coming out with. Yet when you speak to kids, they have no sense of what’s going on in the sector.

“Are the manufacturers to blame for this? Is it the dealers? Is it the teachers? Certainly someone is responsible.

“I do believe, however, that the manufacturers need to



Pete and his dad Bob, enjoy a joke with a customer

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'jazz up' the image of the industry so to speak, in order to appeal to youngsters looking to start a career – but how they do this, I don't know."

Asked if there's anything else in the industry currently which he feels needs addressing, that thorny issue of internet retailing is mentioned. "We firmly believe that pricing structures within certain businesses are less than comparable," Pete says.

As well as that, Pete holds views on the manufacturer-dealer relationship. "We would like to see manufacturers holding dealerships more accountable for how they demonstrate and display the products which they sell and stock," he says. "Dealers should be obliged to offer clean and effective displays, without clutter, to represent their brands.

"We believe the brand has already created the perfect picture, but to fulfil customers' expectations the dealer must then toe the line and display products accordingly, giving the customer an exclusive experience and aftersales service. We're of the opinion that the manufacturers should make the dealer re-invest in their premises on a percentage basis of the turnover achieved with that manufacturer. This would have the effect of both encouraging less discounting and more importantly, creating the perfect shopping experience.

"Alongside this, limiting the number of manufacturers under one roof would be beneficial to the customers' shopping experience, as sometimes they are lost in a world of machinery where they don't know what they are

looking for. This can often lead to them being mis-sold the incorrect product for their tasks.

"We believe these changes would create a more friendly and trustworthy service, therefore building a great relationship between the customer and their local dealer."

The future

Asked where he sees the future for his dealership, Pete says he believes that robotic and battery products will be the major contributor to its continued success.

"There's no point in us as a dealer just resting on our laurels with petrol power," he says, "we need to embrace the next generation of technology."

He also believes that developing the relationship with their customer base is a priority, "so they contact us first for advice on new purchases or servicing of existing products".

Key to all this, of course, is driving more customers in through the door. "We'll be doing all we can to enhance our visibility in the local area," he says. "We also want to develop links with local schools with the intention to hopefully cultivate our employees of the future."

Pete sums up Strathbogie's philosophy saying, "As we only stock Husqvarna and STIHL our customers come in here looking for the best of the best in terms of product. We give them that prized product and the appropriate price which goes with it.

"If you can then follow up that sale with the back-up service it deserves, you've got a customer for life."



Pete McArthur outside Strathbogie's purpose-built showroom in north-east Scotland



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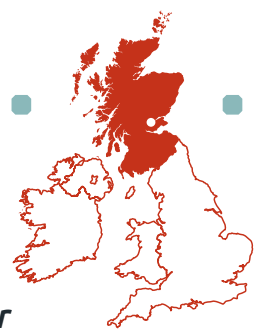
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STRATTON ATV

Success achieved working side by side with the gamekeeping sector

Stratton ATV, based in Perth, won *Service Dealer's* ATV Dealer of the Year award at last November's ceremony. Run by Iain Stratton, the company moved into its current premises, a unit on the Inveralmond Industrial Estate just off the A9, in July last year. The company is a solus Polaris dealer, offering sales and service across the company's range of ATVs and utility vehicles.

Iain says that the vast majority of his customers are the many estates located within their expansive trading area. He says, "Almost 95% of the customers we service are estates. We cover a really large area – all of Perthshire, all of Fife and we sub-deal into all of Aberdeenshire."

Stratton ATV makes the most of its limited space within its unit. The day we visited it had 19 machines in various states in the building, including many kids' ATVs which were on a recall, to fix an issue with the brakes.

With the premises feeling more like a workshop than a traditional showroom, I ask Iain if he gets customers coming into browse?

"Occasionally," he says. "The whole idea of moving to

this new place is that our previous premises was half the size and we had no room for a showroom whatsoever. With this new facility Polaris is doing a Star Dealer initiative, so we're turning this into a bit more of a retail space. We've got a bit of work to do and need to move a few bits around, but that's the intention. With our small team though, everything just takes just that wee bit longer."

What is the usual sales process for Iain then?

"It's a strange one that – we're probably a bit different to a lot of people. Our key customers are gamekeepers and they talk to each other so much. One will buy one and will tell other gamekeepers about what it does and where they bought it. I'll then get a phone call asking for a demo.

"We'll then demo on their ground for them, so they can see what it's like. We'll then put together a quote over email and take it from there.

"Very rarely do we get someone come in here and want to view the vehicles."

Stratton ATV is based on an industrial estate close by to several other agricultural machinery dealers including branches of AM Philips and Reekies. However, Iain doesn't see these particularly as direct competition to his business – mostly because of his specialisation in Polaris. Those other companies may have ATV or utility vehicle offerings, but they are not the same as his.

"The closest Polaris dealer to us is down in Stirling," explains Iain. "It really is a large area we cover. In fact I think we have the biggest area for Polaris in the UK.

"Also I think we're the third highest-selling Polaris dealer in the UK, which is quite a feat when you consider some other dealers will be selling hundreds of ATVs a year. We mostly do our business with side-by-sides to estate customers."

The estate customers don't want ATVs?

"Quad bikes don't sell particularly well to estates as you need to make sure that all the guys are competent on them – that's the difficulty. But with a side-by-side you've got a seatbelt, a roll cage, you've got some protection. They're a really nice bit of kit.

"I honestly believe Polaris are the best machines. With the side-by-sides especially we have a product which is always growing. The company are constantly innovating."

Asked how Polaris is as a company to work alongside, with no hesitation Iain replies, "Excellent – and being a solus dealer they certainly give us all the support we need."

Iain says he has never really considered diversifying into selling other related power equipment. "We're so busy



Iain Stratton

“THE PLACES WE VISIT TO SELL THESE MACHINES ARE FANTASTIC”

with these,” he says, “I’m not sure what we’d do if we had more to cope with.

“If we ever got to the point where we were twiddling our thumbs we might look at taking on some other brands, but until then, I don’t think so.”

The company has recently taken on board a young lad as an apprentice. Is it a bit easier to get young people interested in ATV/utility vehicles than it is say, lawnmowers?, I ask Iain.

“I think so,” he replies. “When I started 20-odd years ago, I was a car mechanic. But for me, I found that a bit boring, a tad same-old, same-old. With these vehicles I’m dealing in now, there’s quite a lot of difference.

“Plus the places we get to go in order to sell them are fantastic. I’ve seen so much of Scotland since I’ve been working on this, it’s been fantastic. You’re able to visit some amazing countryside and you meet some really good people. A lot of them have become great friends. That’s a real bonus.”

Asked if there’s any particular quirks in dealing with the customer base he serves, Iain says, “In some ways it’s a strange sort of market dealing with shooting estates. They don’t tend to argue much on price. We always give them a good deal, so they always come back to us.”

So do you not need to promote yourself so much if you’re getting this great word-of-mouth between gamekeepers?

“Well we’ve got our Facebook page, but we’ve found our biggest advertising is our word-of-mouth. And it’s working for us – we sold at least a new machine a week last year.

“We do attend some shows though. We did the Fife show for the first time last year. We always do the Highland Show with Polaris and we do the Scottish Game Fair. Off the back of each of those we sold machines, so they can be effective.

“We don’t do any media advertising though – right now

we don’t need to. I think if you can provide a really good customer service, you don’t need to advertise so much.”

So this customer sector which Stratton ATV is serving sounds like it’s working perfectly for their business?

“The gamekeeper world is unbelievable,” says Iain. “You can tell one who’s based five minutes away something about a machine and I’ll get a call an hour later from one who’s based three hours away, asking about what the guy’s said and requesting a demonstration.”



Iain with the kids' ATVs on recall

AC GARDEN MACHINERY



Vacuum cleaner and mass channel repairs help Kilmarnock dealer's business

AC Garden Machinery is based in a compact premises on a Kilmarnock industrial estate. Having been established for seven years now, the sales and repairs business is run by couple Bert Cole and Lorraine Hamilton.

Bert previously worked for McNulty Mowers for over 20 years, but decided he'd like to try working for himself and thus he and Lorraine started the business. "I've been doing up lawnmowers since I was 12 years old," says Bert, "but running a business was something new to me."

Lorraine explained how it was tough to get the dealership established. "When we started, we began with £20 in our pockets. We were doing the car boot sales every Sunday to get rent. Then we managed to get this one unit – and we just kept going from there.

"The business has had its ups and downs obviously, but you have to stick with it. I really do enjoy it though."

Bert and Lorraine say that when sales are a bit sluggish, as they were last year for most of Scotland due to the weather, it's the service side of the business that keeps them going. This is also aided by the fact that AC also services and repairs vacuum cleaners, which the business has been specialising in since its inception.

"Having the vacuum side really helped us," said Lorraine. "People would come in to have their vac repaired and would realise that we also did garden machinery. We could then take that customer relationship on from there."

As a small business AC also does repairs for Service Link, mending machines bought from B&Q and the like. "We're the only dealers in Ayrshire who'll do the work because they're cheaper machines," says Bert, "The biggest problem we encounter with this work is when Service Link tells customers that we repair the battery machinery – which we don't."

AC finds it can attract new customers to its store through its own marketing methods rather than pay for expensive advertising. "We just do Facebook really," explains Lorraine. "We did Yell.com at the start but felt that was too expensive for no return. But with Facebook we've got 3,500 likes. And I put together our website myself, having done a course in design back in 1999."

Bert and Lorraine had a real scare which almost forced them to close the business a few years ago, when Bert

suffered two strokes in January 2013. Bert was resilient though, and just two months after it happened he got himself into work to make sure he could still do the job.

"The day he walked back in here for the first time," Lorraine recalls, "he stripped the back end of a Honda lawnmower, serviced it and put it back together. It took him all day and I said to him, 'are you happy now?' And he said, 'no that should've taken me three hours!'" Four months later Bert was back working full time.

Asked where he sees the future for his business, Bert says, "Hopefully surviving. Hopefully moving to bigger premises. And if we do move to somewhere bigger we may look to take someone else on. It'd certainly make my life a lot easier."



Bert Cole and Lorraine Hamilton

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HENDERSON GRASS MACHINERY



Proud family heritage still going strong after 134 years

Henderson Grass Machinery has been around in one form or another since 1884. Since restructuring the business in 2001 the company runs three depots at Haddington, Selkirk and Kinross. Prior to this though, when the company was known as Geo Henderson Ltd, the business comprised of seven depots plus an iron foundry and a nail factory.

Great-grandson of the company founder, George Henderson, explains that as the years went by, and the older generation passed away, it became clear that the company was becoming too unwieldy – plus the Henderson family could have been in danger of no longer being majority shareholders in the company which bore their name. So George and his brother set about selling off the excess depots and sites, and with the money were able to buy out the other shareholders to leave themselves in charge of the company. This allowed them to carry out a refocussing of the business.

“Selling off those unrequired assets,” says George, “allowed myself and my brother to form the company into the business which we wanted. We were also able to bolster the business in the years following the 2001 formation of Henderson Grass Machinery when we bought up another dealer, which boosted our Kubota offering.”

Before the business changed Hendersons was pretty much dedicated to just one market sector: agriculture. George says this solus focus could tend to leave them vulnerable. Advice was taken which said they needed to broaden their customer base and look at other things. Hence across their three depots now, they deal in domestic and commercial grass machinery as well as still serving their traditional farming base with machinery.

Asked if one sector performs better for them than the other two, George says, “It’s swings and roundabouts really. You’ll get one year where it’s good in ag, but then the next it’ll go quiet. Then you’ll do well in groundcare if say a council decides to change its machinery. It’s therefore vital for us to deal in all three.

“On the whole though,” continues George, “we can’t complain at the moment. Sales have been fairly steady.

Our biggest problem has been availability of product.”

Asked how they get their message out regarding all that they offer to their local communities, George says, “We like to think a lot of it is word of mouth. But we do go to all the local agricultural shows. We only concentrate on these local shows now, having in the past done the Highland Show. But we can’t justify the costs of those big shows any more. Farmers used to come on to the stand and buy tractors in the old days. Those days have gone now with demonstrations down on the farms being the norm.

“We’ll also do some local paper and local radio advertising off and on, targeting domestic consumers with offers. And what has also been working well for us recently is that we have a member of staff who concentrates a lot on social media marketing.”

Talking of staff, is Hendersons also feeling the difficulties associated with recruitment in the industry?

“We’ve always had luck with apprentices,” says George, “but even the colleges round here are struggling to find good quality students now. When we lost some staff recently, we replaced who we needed to replace, but some restructuring did take place.”

Finally, is George Henderson optimistic for the future? “On the whole yes,” he says. “We are fortunate in this industry in that despite any uncertainty there may be, we know that the grass will always grow.”



George Henderson

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ACTION LAWN & LEISURE



Promotion of robot mowers is looking up

Based in Stirling, Action Lawn & Leisure is now in its 20th year of operation, having been in its current premises for 15 of those. With Bob Bruce at the helm working alongside his wife Fiona and son Ian, and with three workshop staff, the dealership specialises in STIHL and John Deere Homeowner. Previously to concentrating on the domestic side of the market, Bob had clocked up 20 years in Ag, working with the Reekie Group.

Upon entering Action Lawn's premises, what catches the visitor's eye first is a raised platform, straddling a display of mowers, which provides a flat, astro-turfed surface for a Viking iMow robot mower to trundle back and forth on. This simple, yet effective measure for showing off these machines is the result of Bob looking to increase his inroads into this emerging market.

"We had the robots on the floor initially, but customers weren't seeing them," explains Bob. "And to be fair we weren't really switched on to them. So, we decided that to display them effectively we'd have to do something radical because we don't have the space. I thought the only way we're going to be able to show them off is to lift them to eye level.

"We only began the display in October last year, so we've not really had time yet to truly assess its impact on sales. However, it was certainly our best means of utilising the space, because as well as demonstrating the iMow we can still display mowers underneath.

"Customers are definitely paying more attention now though to the robotic mowers. They're stopping and asking about them, which they weren't before."

Action used to sell lots of different brands, but has since

rationalised to mainly just STIHL and John Deere with a bit of Briggs & Stratton and AL-Ko.

"We only want to work with suppliers who work with us," says Bob, "and we have excellent relationships with STIHL and John Deere. We were actually one of the early dealerships to sell Viking in Scotland.

"We've built our Viking business up very well over the years, but we're okay with the change to orange that's coming. We're sales people here, so we can adapt."

Asked what the competition is like for Action locally, Bob has some strong views on where the true competition lies. "Our competition isn't other local dealers, it's the ones based in London or somewhere, selling over the internet," he says.

Does Bob repair machines purchased online or at big box stores?

"As long as they're registered for warranty," he says – adding, "They can't expect to be top of my list though! My priority has to be my customers."

Bob says he does like to advise people who come in with a cheap machine bought online or from a shed that their money would be better spent buying something they stock.

Bob is pretty clear where he sees the future growth coming for his dealership: battery. "I'm pleased with the good strides we're making with cordless products currently," he says. "I'm definitely a convert. We've very much had our eyes opened to the potential of the products.

"The machines now are so reliable. People buy one item and they'll come back to buy something else to go with it."



Bob, Ian and Fiona Bruce

RUSSELL GAS & MOWER CENTRE



Servicing seeing excellent growth for family-run dealership

Russell Gas & Mower Centre has three branches in Scotland, located in Edinburgh, Larbert and Stirling – the latter of which is run by Kevin Russell. The business is second-generation, started by Kevin's father with the Stirling branch bought by Kevin's dad from Robin Sutton when he retired. Russells as a company continues very much in the family today with Kevin's brother Brian running the Edinburgh branch.

The business started out originally specialising in gas sales, but as Kevin says, as that side of the business subsides somewhat due to modern houses not needing as much gas, the garden machinery side of things is where attention is focused.

So who are Russell's customers now in the Stirling area? "Most of our customers our private homeowners," says

Kevin, "maybe 25% are professional customers, mostly landscapers."

As you would expect then, most of Russell's sales are in walk-behind lawnmowers with a few tractors thrown in. "We also stock the Honda robotic mower," Kevin says, "but there isn't much demand for it round here. Our traditional customers don't seem to be interested in it so much. The robots I have sold have gone to totally new people who we didn't know as a business, and they came in knowing what they wanted.

"Battery products are going well though," Kevin continues. "When Honda did their deal last year, those models flew out the store."

Kevin does express a few slight reservations about the growing cordless technology. "We do worry that too much battery machinery in the market will eventually affect our workshop. However, as sales go, I think that at the moment it's replacing electric rather than petrol. It's starting to knock on that market a little and it'll only get bigger in the future."

When asked how important the servicing side is to his business, Kevin answers, "I've always felt that it's not that important. The big money comes from sales, although my dad always pointed out to me that servicing is where the profit comes from.

"I must say though, that our servicing business is definitely growing. We're now at a point where maybe we could stop servicing anything which we don't sell or machines from manufacturers we don't represent. But that just feels like we're turning away business. Plus, we do have examples of people coming in with their B&Q-bought product, who we've converted into a new customer of ours."

Looking to the future, like many dealerships, Kevin says Russells struggles with recruitment. "That's a big issue round here," he says. "It's scary really. You can't find new people."

Asked where they look to find new candidates, Kevin says, "Everywhere really. Mostly advertising, with the newspaper being the one which used to work best. You used to get better candidates through there."

However, things are going well for Russells right now with Kevin having his son working with him in the workshop. So today, this family business can proudly state that it is three generations strong.



Kevin Russell (right) with his son Euan



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FROM A STALWART'S DEPARTURE TO AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

1996 – 1999

Continuing *Service Dealer's* 30th Anniversary year, we continue with our trawl back through the archives, checking out the final four years of the '90s.

We begin with an industry stalwart choosing to call time on the mower sector and end with the surprise appointment of a dealer to the head of a major supplier . . .

1996

LES EVANS LEAVES FLYMO

Flymo announced in January 1996 that its long-serving MD Les Evans was to leave the company in April to take up the senior post of Director of Marketing at Electrolux's worldwide Floor Care business, which had annual worldwide sales of £1 billion.

Les remained in his post until his successor, Peter Ginger, was appointed in April.

Speaking to *Lawn & Garden*

Equipment at the time, Les said, "It is with considerable sadness that I leave Flymo and the lawnmower business but I'm greatly looking forward to this new challenge."

Les had been at Flymo for 27 years, the previous 12 as Managing Director – and was only the third Managing Director in the company's history following Charles Brammall and Peter Bullock.



LINDA ADAMS' SUDDEN PLYMOUTH DEPARTURE

In a brief announcement after GLEE in September, Ransomes announced that Linda Adams' 18-month reign as Managing Director of the Plymouth Consumer Products division was over, saying that she was leaving the company to "pursue other interests".

She was immediately replaced by former Cushman General Manager Jerry Ogren, who arrived

with the brief to restore dealer confidence in the company's products.

It had been known that a number of dealers had been vigorously expressing their dissatisfaction at the continuing poor performance of the company.

Problems had persisted, particularly in quality and supply of spare parts.



1997

B&Q SETS UP SERVICE NETWORK

In February 1997 it was reported that B&Q had appointed a garden machinery service network which would be operational from March that year.

A meeting of leading manufacturers met the B&Q team at the multiple's Southampton headquarters on 31st January and agreed the names of a 100-strong list of dealers who would handle warranty work for B&Q's 260 stores. B&Q insisted that only one dealer

would be nominated for each store, with a number of dealers being responsible for several B&Q outlets.

Despite its huge buying power and the ability to return machines to its suppliers, B&Q was known to be keen to limit the number of returns that were handled by its stores.

The service network was thought to have come about as a result of B&Q looking favourably upon Flymo's recently launched Service Link scheme.



SALE OF RANSOMES CONSUMER LIKELY AFTER DEAL

It was believed in November 1997 that a sell-off of the Ransomes Consumer division was likely to be announced immediately after the Textron purchase of parent company Ransomes was finalised.

Textron had agreed a £137 million deal to take over the Ipswich-based mower manufacturer on 10th November 1997.

Textron at the time had no involvement in the consumer products sector, having disposed of Homelite to John Deere some years previously.

It was believed at the time that

a deal had already been struck for the sale of the Plymouth-based manufacturer of the Mountfield, Westwood and Laser brands, and that this had formed part of the negotiations between Ransomes and Textron.

It was speculated that there were a number of interested parties who found the Ransomes Consumer operation an attractive proposition. Australian-based Victa was known to have shown interest, as had MTD. It was also believed that Hayter's parent company, Tomkins, could be an outside bet.



1998

SALES RECORDS SHATTERED

Manufacturers in May 1998 were saying that year's season was breaking all records, but they were still cautious about forecasting the level of sales at year-end.

Flymo reported that the May bank holiday weekend broke all known sales figures for the company.

"We have never known such demand over a holiday weekend," said Marketing Manager, Andrew Mackay.

"According to the sheds the whole DIY and garden sector was extremely buoyant over those four days."

There had been an overall increase in petrol rotary mower sales, which were up 4% by volume over the period and 8% by value.

However, given the problems of supply among many manufacturers at the time, Flymo, for one, was anticipating that the 1998 season would reflect the "normal nineties" level of 1.2 million units.

Andrew Mackay said, "We're currently working three full shifts over a 24-hour period at Newton Aycliffe and we're still struggling to keep up with demand."



ECHO 'TRANSFERS' TO COUNTAX

The UK distribution of Echo products was moving from Allen Power Equipment to Countax in June 1998.

An announcement from Tokyo-based Kioritz Corporation, manufacturer of Echo products said, "An agreement has been reached between Allen Power Equipment and Countax for the transfer of all products and parts in order to bring into line European strategy for the distribution of Echo. The decision has been made for the sake of all parties involved."

It was apparent, however, that

the move took Allen by surprise.

"The people from Kioritz were over last autumn," said Allen MD, Peter Jefferis, "but gave no indication of any impending change. We were advised of their intentions by fax in January when they said our agreement would end at the end of April."

"It's crazy to make a change mid-season. We suggested November, but have now agreed to relinquish Echo at the end of June."

Countax MD Harry Handkammer said, "Kioritz has never told us why it decided to offer us Echo,



but the range will fit well with our plans to offer an expanded product line-up."



1999

TOMKINS TO SELL HAYTER AND MURRAY

In announcing to the City a share buy-back programme valued at £418 million in March 1999, Tomkins also confirmed its intention to sell both Hayter and Murray.

The sale of both of its mower-making subsidiaries confirmed the statement made by Tomkins in July 1997 that the future of the business comprising Professional Garden & Leisure products was 'under review'.

Commenting on the news, Tony Bourke, Managing Director of Hayter said, "We have informed all of our staff, but we're looking forward to the future with a high degree of optimism.

"Hayter is currently performing strongly and we shall continue to grow opportunities in the turfcare industry, in partnership with our dealers and distributors."



KENT DEALER TO BE NEW ALLEN MD

The board of Allen Power Equipment sprung a surprise in September 1999 when it announced that one of its dealers was to become Managing Director in succession of Peter Jefferis, who was due to retire later that year.

Peter Bateman, who was 32 at the time, was the General Manager of Sevenoaks-based dealership Godfreys, when he was earmarked for the role.

Peter Jefferis described the

appointment as "...an exciting move which will surprise many people".

He added, "Peter is an exceptional talent, who will bring insight and experience to the company, along with a fresh and progressive management style."

Peter Bateman was quoted as saying, "I'm thrilled to be replacing Peter Jefferis. As one of their dealers, I can perhaps recognise those areas which might need attention. I am looking forward to the challenge."



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CORDLESS MACHINERY SURVEY SPRING 2018

Significant majority say cordless machinery sales have increased in past year

Similarly to last year we enjoyed an excellent response from dealers who wanted to let us know their thoughts on the current state of the cordless machinery market.

The headline result this year is that a whopping 68% of dealers who responded to the survey said that they had seen their sales of battery-powered machinery increase over the past year. This is compared with just 10% who said they had seen a decrease in sales of battery-powered products.

It seems that most dealers are specialising in just one or two brands of cordless products with two proving the most popular answer (42%). A tiny amount said they didn't stock any (3%).

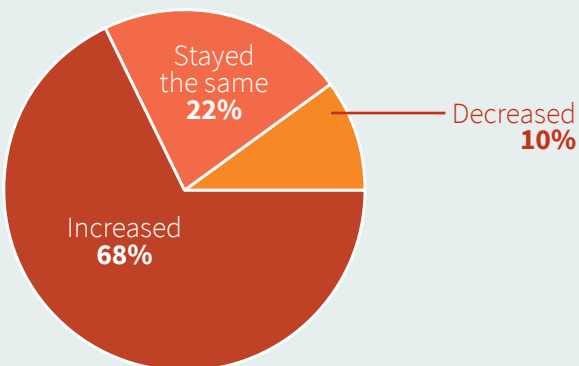
Interestingly there was a real split in opinion this year over what is the most important factor in the

sale of cordless products. Last year battery run time was way in the lead with 40% of respondents saying that it was the crucial factor in making a sale. This year, however, it was placed as joint most important with 'ease of use' and 'reliability' on 26% each.

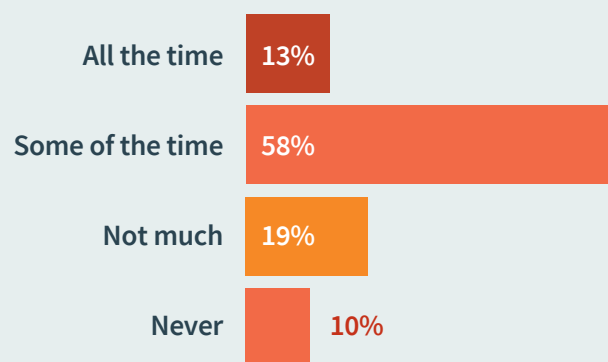
Also quite a significant finding with this survey is that when asked 'do you get any service work from the sale of cordless products', last year there was a clear majority answer of 'none at all' (52%). This year, however, that answer is split between 'none at all' and 'a little bit', both on 48%.

Additional purchases made after buying a cordless machine, similarly to last year, are in the main 'some of the time' (58%) and dealers who responded said that customers are coming in demanding the products 'occasionally' (39%).

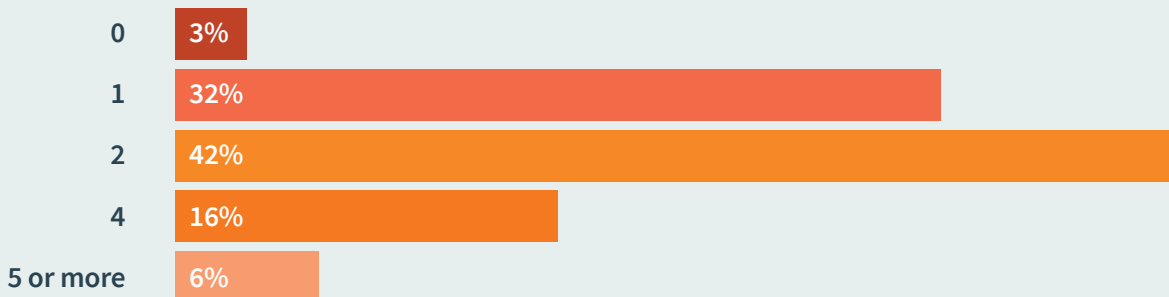
Have your sales of cordless machines over the last year ...



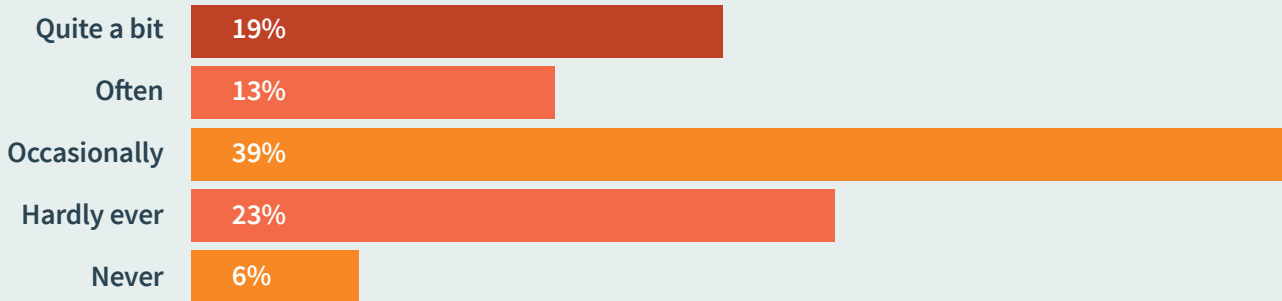
Do you find customers make additional purchases following a cordless machine sale?



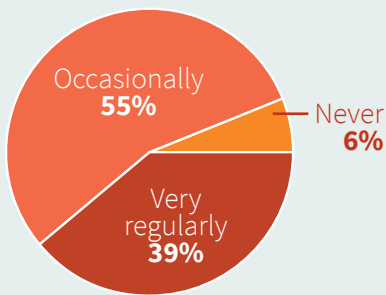
How many brands of battery powered/cordless machinery do you stock?



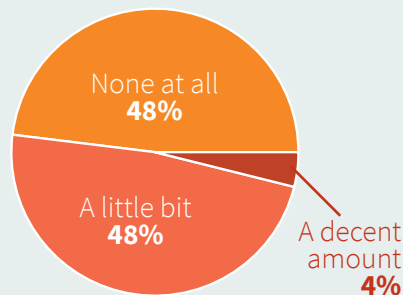
Do your customers demand cordless machines from you?



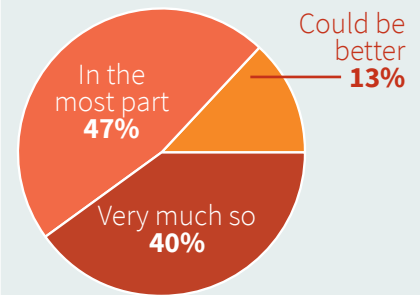
Do you recommend a cordless machine over a petrol one to a customer . .



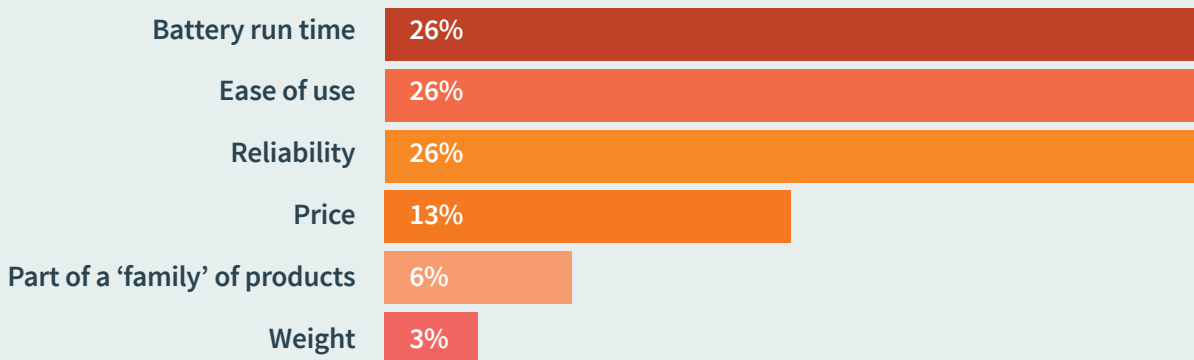
Do you get much service work from cordless machinery sales?



Are you well supported by the manufacturers of the cordless brands you stock?



What is the most important factor in the sale of a cordless product?





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YOUR SAY

We asked you to let us know your feelings on the current state of the cordless machinery market for your dealership.

- We have definitely seen an increase in cordless tools, especially in the domestic side of the industry, although professional customers are starting to look at these items as well now due to internal combustion engines beginning to be phased out of cities due to emissions laws. As far as servicing, we have only had a few cordless mowers in and really all that needs to be done to them is to sharpen blades, airline out vents and clean under the deck and bodywork before they go back to the customer.
- The lack of servicing and the ability to sell these products in a box are not good news for service companies and our ability to remain profitable. There is undoubtedly a place for these products as there is for mains-powered products, but the mass change that manufacturers seem to think is coming I very much doubt. Battery-powered tools have been around for decades but have not replaced all mains and petrol-powered versions. Anyone seen a battery-powered generator yet?!
- We have followed the market with cordless machinery and we believe within five years it'll be 75% of the domestic market. We're now looking at ways to make it more appealing to commercial users. We generally make more profit from cordless equipment but have a limited amount of service work available on those machines.
- Cordless product is here and while it means we will lose out on some two-stroke workshop work, we usually find ourselves with a backlog of this in any case. Plus, the pricing on two-stroke workshop jobs is not always that profitable compared to larger machines.
- Battery reliability and the claimed performance seem to be an issue on some brands we sell. Premium prices tend to mean performance perfection is expected by end users. The future is battery, but just not quite yet, would be my take.
- Battery products, providing they are a quality brand, are the future of gardening and we can't deny that. For now, there are plenty of people who will only swear by petrol. We're more than happy to offer a battery product and even recommend it to someone who would be better suited to one. Our workshop has enough ride-on machines coming through to rely on that if all of the mowers went cordless and didn't need servicing. We do still offer a battery product service which is, of course, much cheaper than a petrol mower. What sells the battery range are 'green' customers, ease of use and virtually no on-going running/servicing costs. We have no current concerns about it taking over the petrol kit and running out of servicing/repairs.
- We still have stock from three years ago. There are too many cheap products in supermarkets and the like.
- After my first use of a battery-powered tool I realised that these machines are going to change our industry. I have embraced them and the sales are increasing very fast. Our business is totally focused on cordless.
- There was an increase in the number of cordless machines sold by the business last year. There is an increase in the number of customers coming in asking about cordless equipment. The reasons behind this vary from it being easier to use and start, their environmental credentials, and the fact there is no fuel to store or mix. We can see this side of the industry becoming more popular with the domestic gardener, especially with the problems associated with petrol, as most people want to make the job simple and straightforward. The business has also noticed an increase in trade enquires with regard to cordless equipment, mainly hedge trimmers and blowers, by those who do a lot of work for universities, care homes, schools and hospitals, who have been asked about reducing the impact of the noise associated with these tools.
- The cordless domestic market started to pick up more last year. We're also starting to get enquiries from local authorities and schools in towns and cities who are interested in these tools due to the looming realisation that two-stroke is not seen as environmentally friendly and due to the health and safety of storing flammable liquids, plus vibration levels. It would be wise for manufacturers now to start creating or planning battery diagnostic kits and courses to train mechanics and staff, just in case faults occur with products in the future.



STIHL LAUNCHES FIRST EVER MOWER RANGE

Five new machines powered by 36V lithium-ion batteries

New for 2018 is STIHL's first ever range of lawnmowers.

The five new machines are powered by 36V lithium-ion batteries which are interchangeable with other cordless STIHL tools including hedge trimmers, leaf blowers, grass trimmers and chainsaws.

Two of the new mowers are part of the company's Compact Cordless range, which are suitable for medium-sized gardens powered by COMPACT (AK) batteries. For larger gardens, there are three mowers, all powered by PRO (AP) batteries, which are compatible with up to 25 other cordless STIHL tools.

The mono-comfort handlebars offer tool-free height adjustment and are easy to fold, minimising storage space and providing easy access to grass collection boxes.

The company says a straight, tidy and quick cut is easily achieved, due to the strong air current generated by the flow-optimised blades. The airflow makes the grass stand upright for a more efficient cut, before blowing the cuttings into the grass catcher boxes. The grass fill level indicator makes it easy to spot when the box is full and the clam-shell style opening allows for speedy emptying.

The energy efficient ECO-mode regulates the blade speed in line with what's mowing to maximise battery life, while one-step cutting height adjustment adjusts the height of the mowing deck. Larger

models also feature one speed drive, which self-propels the mower on inclines and more sizeable lawn areas.

The mower range comprises:

- RMA 235 – uses the AK battery system, weighs 14kg (excluding battery) and is suitable for lawns up to 300 sq m, with a 30-litre grass catcher box and 33cm cutting width. (NB – this model does not feature the mono-comfort handlebar);
- RMA 339 C – uses the AK battery system, suitable for medium-sized lawns up to 400 sq m, has a 40-litre grass catcher box and a cutting width of 37cm;
- RMA 443 C – uses the STIHL AP batteries, suitable for larger lawns up to 350 sq m, with a 55-litre grass catcher box, 41cm cutting width and space to store a second battery;
- RMA 443 TC – all of the above, plus one speed drive and the ability to cut larger lawns up to 500 sq m;
- RMA 448 TC – also using STIHL AP batteries, suitable for lawns up to 450 sq m, with a 55-litre grass catcher box, one speed drive, space to store a second battery and 46cm cutting width.

The majority of mowers in the new range can also be retrofitted with a mulching accessory.



EGO GOES PRO

First ever dedicated range of commercial cordless garden tools

EGO Power+ is launching its first dedicated range of commercial cordless garden tools.

Powered by the patented design of the 56V Arc lithium battery system, the range comprises three high-spec tools: a hedge trimmer, a commercial line trimmer, and a blower. The company says all offer super-tough, low maintenance construction to help groundcare professionals.

EGO says it has spent a lot of time talking to professional users to better understand what is required from them of its tools. The result, it says, is a range of tools designed to perform “beyond the expectations of even the most challenging user”.

The company describes the three new tools as being “packed with innovation”. The hedge trimmer, for example, has blades that are made from laser-cut steel with diamond-ground edges to ensure a sharpness

and cleanness of cut. They are then laser-hardened to ensure they stay sharper for longer.

The brush cutter has a carbon fibre shaft which makes it lighter for ease of handling, but, even more importantly according to EGO, it makes it extremely strong.

“Where standard aluminium shafts bend or get damaged, this shaft stays strong to meet the day-to-day routine of handling, transporting and storing,” the company said in a statement.

The new professional blower, at its maximum, can blow at a rate of 1,079m³/h with a speed of 212km/h and a force of 20 newtons. This level of performance is up there with the very best petrol backpack blowers. Unlike petrol blowers, however, operational volume is low at just 80 decibels, meaning that it can be used in sensitive areas without causing disruption.

Additional to these three tools EGO will launch a new backpack battery. With an IP rating of 56, this new battery is described as suitable for all weather conditions.

“Reliability is a must for groundcare professionals, but comfort is also essential when people are working every day. The development of our battery technology is matched by a commitment to high-spec construction, giving users a suite of tools engineered for their needs,” explains Steve Roskell of EGO.

“The range is comfortable and convenient to use, delivers exceptional results and – backed by the EGO Arc lithium battery – matches and even exceeds what can be achieved with conventional petrol-powered tools.”

The EGO Power+ Commercial Range is being launched for spring/summer this year.



COBRA'S CORDLESS POWERED BY 40V LI-ION

Three cordless mowers

Cobra's three 40V cordless models are designed for instant starting with no fuel or cables required.

Described by distributor Henton & Chattell as "feature rich", the lawnmowers include single-lever height adjustment, mulching, side discharge or rear roller cutting systems and are suitable for small to medium-sized gardens. The 40V lithium-ion batteries are compatible with the Cobra range of cordless hand-held machines.

Range highlights include:

- 40V lithium-ion Samsung batteries;
- 16"–18" cutting widths;
- Hand and self-propelled drives;
- 50–60-litre grass bag capacities;
- Four-wheeled and rear roller options;
- Batteries fit the Cobra 40V hand-held cordless range.

Hentons says the Cobra 40V lithium-ion battery technology suffers from no self-discharge and has no memory effect. Each battery has a run time of up to 30 minutes when used in ideal grass cutting conditions.



SNAPPER UP NEW XD 82-VOLT MODELS

Three new lawnmowers have been added to the range for 2018

The Snapper XD 82-Volt Lawn and Garden System powered by Briggs & Stratton is available from FGM Claymore.

Three new lawn mowers have been added to the range for 2018. Available are a 19" push or a 19" and 21" self-propelled model with a steel 3-in-1 mowing deck, providing mulch, side discharge or bagging options.

These machines feature single lever height-of-cut adjustment allowing users to choose from seven different cutting heights. Vertical storage saves space and users benefit from push button starting



PROVIDING THE POWER LINKS

Familiar to most farm equipment dealers as a power take-off shaft maker, GKN Walterscheid invited the agricultural press to visit its primary German manufacturing facility to learn more about its business and latest developments in PTOs and other products. MARTIN RICKATSON joined them

Look around the trailed or mounted tractor-powered machines in most farm machinery dealers' yards, and it's a fair bet GKN Walterscheid PTO shafts will be attached to many of them. Take a wander into the stores and it's highly likely new replacement shafts will be a key feature. Although there are a number of other makers in the market, the UK-owned German manufacturing business is prominent in the sector.

The Walterscheid concern will next year celebrate its centenary, Jean Walterscheid having founded the company as a maker of bicycle parts in 1919, from premises in an old washhouse in Siegburg, a town in Germany's Rhineland region. Fifteen years later the firm began building car and truck axles, moving into newer premises close by, and by this time employing 15 staff.

After the company and its facilities were restarted post-World War II, Walterscheid diversified into the production of power take-off shafts, as the post-war revolution in

implements powered directly by the towing tractor rather than an ancillary engine gathered pace. By 1955, this had helped the firm's staff roster reach almost 400 people. Six years later, axle production was transferred to a new facility at nearby Lohmar, and employee numbers had more than doubled to 940.

During the 1960s the firm continued to expand its home operations while also branching out overseas, founding a joint-venture company in Italy with British partner Birfield. Later that decade, Birfield, Walterscheid and a number of other European manufacturers of driveshaft components merged to form a new firm, Uni-Cardan.

By 1966, Birfield had been acquired by long-established British engineering firm GKN, which had itself been founded in 1902 by the merger of long-standing steel manufacturing businesses Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds, whose origins can be traced back to 1759 and the founding of the Dowlais ironworks in Wales.



Part of British engineering giant GKN, Walterscheid's manufacturing activities centre around PTO shafts and guards and tractor hitch systems.



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This agreement resulted in GKN acquiring an interest in Uni-Cardan, and the British company gradually increased its shareholding to take a majority, but retained many of the familiar brand names, including Walterscheid.

Today, GKN Walterscheid is part of the GKN off-highway division, a £400m driveshaft, gear, clutch and tractor linkage/trailer hitch business with nine manufacturing and assembly sites and key agricultural component facilities in Germany, America and Japan, employing 2,300 staff. While much of its output goes directly to manufacturers, in the UK its agricultural aftermarket products are distributed primarily by Kramp.

Although it also manufactures various other components for tractor-implement connection and drive – such as 100,000 lower links and 300,000 link ends each year – PTO shafts and the guards for them remain the core focus of Walterscheid production, particularly at its Lohmar factory in Germany, where 400,000 shafts are produced annually. To this end, the business has recently introduced some innovative new developments to its range, and among them is UltraPlus, a new combination of re-engineered guard, shaft and torque limiter design.

“This design features more than 100 newly-developed or re-engineered components that will feature on future Walterscheid shafts,” says Wolfgang Adamek, head of construction and development at Walterscheid and in charge of design for UltraPlus.

“The new universal joints, which double service life, increase safety, enhance operating reliability, lower maintenance requirements and reduce wear, are one example of this. The new design also has benefits both for the environment and for operator cleanliness, due to significantly lower loss of lubricant. UltraPlus is available with either P450 (50-degree) or P675 (75-degree) CV joints.”

The new shaft’s standard 50-degree wide-angle joint has been specifically designed for wide constant-angle applications, while the shaft tube uses a new ‘ST’ profile that means both protective halves are connected in such a way that the shaft, including the constant velocity joints, is completely enclosed. As a result, only one holding/safety chain is required, while when specified in combination with Walterscheid’s full CVJ guard, the other safety chain can also be omitted. Easier handling, reduced



The new UltraPlus PTO guard/shaft design has more than 100 new components that will feature on future Walterscheid shafts

wear, stability and compatibility with current SD/SC profile safety guards are claimed to be the key arguments for the new guard concept.

“The new design overcomes current issues with fixed guards around the shaft connection points to the tractor and the implement,” suggests Mr Adamek.

“It means the user is better protected, service access is made easier, which means it’s more likely to be carried out, lowering the risk of failures and unsafe modifications – and it’s also easier to mount and dismount the shaft.”

The redesign also includes the new Walterscheid Premium Guard Cones, created to simplify mounting/dismounting and maintenance of PTO shafts and clutches. The implement guard cones can be opened and removed in a few quick steps, claims the maker, with automatic 360-degree single click locking. A universal hole pattern is said to suit almost all applications.

Meanwhile, the newly-developed K90TF and K90/4TF friction clutches that feature in the new shaft design are said to have been engineered to make maintenance and adjustment easier for dealers to carry out, thus extending friction lining service life. In addition to secure venting and easier maintenance courtesy of a simple lining exchange system, new diaphragm springs in the new clutches automatically compensate for wear in the lining, which is said to maximise constancy of torque and reliability. Improved bearings help a new cam-type cut-out clutch operate significantly more quietly. Lubricant volume has been increased and the seal improved and, as a consequence, maintenance requirements are reduced, as is the risk of dirt accumulation, while grease losses are lower, increasing service life and operating reliability.

As an option, the Walterscheid profile tubes can now be

equipped with the maker’s new single-nipple lubrication system. Good greasing accessibility, homogeneous grease distribution via only one grease nipple and secure lubrication regardless of shaft length and position are said to not only ensure a longer service life and higher performance, but also provide for easier handling.

But it’s not just PTO shaft and guard design that gets a makeover in the 2019 GKN Walterscheid range. Also from the firm is a new hydraulic top link with a number of updated features designed to meet the needs of farmers and contractors using larger tractors and implements, seeking greater safety and comfort, and demanding longer service life and greater reliability. The top link is compatible and interchangeable with current standard top links, and can be installed without additional components.

The most significant feature is an integral shock absorption system, said to provide markedly higher driving comfort and safety. GKN Walterscheid engineers developed an absorber mechanism which is directly integrated into the hydraulic cylinder and hence does not require any additional space. During operation, the desired absorption rate can be adjusted to individual tractor-implement combinations.

Walterscheid says the concept allows for a secure operating position without continuous actuation of the check valve, while impact loads caused by implement bounce are isolated from the tractor. This is claimed to result in reduced component wear and markedly improved driving performance, grip and safety due to the effect it has on the front axle, helping it to remain adhered to the ground. Walterscheid dealers should find all of these products are now available to them.



Walterscheid’s new hydraulic top link incorporates an integral shock absorption system for greater driving comfort and safety

WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES...

...another one often opens. The withdrawal of one farm equipment dealer from the local area to focus its operations on home turf has seen a group of former employees form a new Shropshire business centred on a different key franchise.

MARTIN RICKATSON learnt more

When, a few years ago, Kubota announced ambitious plans to break into the market for mainstream agricultural equipment, with the opening of a factory in France to produce a new range of 130-170hp tractors, and the acquisitions of implement makers Kverneland and, more recently, Great Plains, it was faced with a big dealer recruitment task. With most of its dealerships focused on the grounds care sector, a new agricultural network was required, and the company chose to follow two paths to create this. One was to attract established dealers to switch supplier; the other was to identify progressive firms looking for their first tractor franchise.

The new Shropshire-based Battlefield Machinery business that has just completed its first year of operation is actually a blend of those two types. While the company itself is new, the team behind it is formed in part from the management of a previous business that had been selling and supporting another brand from the same location. Located on

the Battlefield Enterprise Park on the outskirts of Shrewsbury, the new company has taken over the premises formerly occupied by Ravenhill, which has refocused its agricultural retailing operation on its original home areas in Northern Scotland. Battlefield opened for business just two months after Ravenhill had vacated the premises.

Of the company's directors, Richard Evans previously worked for Ravenhill, but most recently spent four years working for Kverneland, which was purchased by Kubota in 2012. The other, Meyrick Pope, formerly managed the branch when it was under Ravenhill ownership, and now oversees the new business's parts and service operations. Company Secretary Sue Clubb has been a key figure in managing monthly accounting and getting the operation up and running, while Battlefield also employs Grant Williams, who works alongside Richard in sales, and has retained five experienced Ravenhill service engineers and an apprentice, plus a service manager and parts supervisor. A further sales team recruit, former

Murley salesman Lewis Stokes, has recently joined the business.

"When we were looking to develop our own business, we were offered the opportunity to become Kubota's key agricultural dealer for a region South of Shrewsbury, through the Telford area and right down to Kidderminster," explains Richard.

"While it wasn't our only choice, it was our primary one, and the appeal in signing with Kubota lay in the size, commitment and independence of the business, and its plans for the future. Security is worth a lot.

"The growth of its agricultural product line, which now covers tractors from 50-170hp, RTV utility vehicles and an expanding forage and cultivation implement range from both Kubota and Kverneland brands, was what made Kubota particularly appealing. It gives us a huge opportunity to target the professional farming market in South Shropshire and surrounding areas. We're very fortunate to have a wide range of farms on our doorstep, from the big arable units in the East to smaller mixed and dairy farms, but the bulk of our customers are family



The staff now includes a three-strong sales team, five experienced service engineers and an apprentice, plus a service manager, parts supervisor and administrators.

businesses. Teaming up with Kubota was a natural fit for us and perfect for our customer base.”

While not a true start-up in every sense, given its management and staff’s experience working at the same dealership premises, Richard acknowledges that he and the rest of the Battlefield team have had to learn and develop some new skills.

“Things such as people management can prove challenging, particularly with regard to recruitment and replacing retirees, and we’re very glad to have the proven and committed people we have. Currently we’re trying out some apprentices, and have one now on our books, one joining later this year, and are probably seeking another for next year.”

Meyrick Pope explains that the Directors’ plan is to utilise the collective knowledge of its staff to shape the business to fit the needs of the area’s farmers and other rural businesses.

“We have modern workshop facilities already at our disposal, and our five service engineers are each equipped with a service van for in-field or on-farm repairs and servicing. And we’ve now increased total staff numbers from 10 to 15.

“Our service team’s work got off to a good start working on existing equipment. But we also have other capabilities – we’re able to do NSTS sprayer tests, for example.”

Rob Edwards, Business

Development Manager for Kubota Agriculture, is particularly pleased with the new signing as Kubota seeks to fill the gaps in its agricultural dealer network.

“Joining forces with Richard, Meyrick and the Battlefield Machinery team expands and strengthens our dealer network coverage into what is an important farming region,” he believes.

“We’re under no illusions about the current challenging market conditions, with farmers and contractors increasingly examining cost of ownership. But when combined with Battlefield Machinery’s service reputation, this strengthened network coverage will enable us to increase our market presence.”

While many tractor manufacturers, Kubota included, are expanding their product offerings to include lines of grassland and arable implements, more specialist machinery tends to remain the preserve of specialist suppliers, and to this end Battlefield Machinery has signed up with a number of supplementary franchises. Currently, not all of the Kverneland product line, particularly with regard to arable equipment and livestock machinery such as diet feeders, is available under the Kubota brand, with the latter focused for now on fertiliser spreaders, round balers, wrappers, mulching mowers, mounted and trailed disc mowers/ mower conditioners, rakes and

tedders. It is anticipated that Kubota will be expanding its line to include arable equipment from this autumn, but for now Battlefield offers this machinery under the Kverneland name, giving customers access to a range of ploughs, tillage equipment and drills, plus diet feeders. In addition, under the Vicon brand the Kverneland association gives the dealership a full line of mounted, trailed and self-propelled sprayers.

“The Kverneland, Vicon and Kubota implement ranges account for a quarter of our turnover,” notes Richard.

“They encompass most grassland and arable machines we need to allow us to offer our customers a full range of equipment, and give us access into larger farms and contracting businesses than our 170hp maximum current Kubota tractor offering might otherwise enable us to do.”

Beyond this, Battlefield has a small number of non-Kubota-affiliated suppliers for specialist equipment. The company’s trailer supplier is Scottish manufacturer Marshall, which is also a source of muck spreaders, slurry tankers and livestock trailers.

Further tanker and spreader options come from French firm Pichon, while for hedge trimmers the firm is a supplier of Alamo’s McConnel brand. Rolls, presses and subsoilers are sourced from York firm NRH, and Battlefield is also a dealer for Browns Agricultural Machinery’s varied range of equipment, including bale handling implements, grassland aerators, post drivers, subsoilers and yard scrapers.

“Having sold 26 tractors, we’re really pleased with the way our first year has gone,” says Richard.

“As regards to gaps in our portfolio, to be honest we’re happy to not be in the low volume and very competitive business of combines, forage harvesters or telehandlers. But we are looking forward to Kubota developing its tractor offering.”



Battlefield opened for business two months after its Shrewsbury premises had been vacated by another dealer



DATA PROTECTION

A BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO THE GDPR

In April 2016, after four years of debate, the European Union finally passed a dry, but important, piece of legislation, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). EU member states were given a two-year period to implement it into their own national law. Despite the move towards Brexit, the UK will be implementing the GDPR and it will continue to have effect through a new Data Protection bill that is currently wending its way through Parliament. The UK will be fully compliant from 25th May 2018 and all businesses, irrespective of size or type, need to plan for the new changes.

Worryingly, a number of surveys over the summer of 2017 indicated that many businesses either know nothing of the changes or have not taken any steps to comply. Indeed, a survey by law firm Blake Morgan reckoned that 90% of firms are ill-prepared. And just as concerning, a recent survey in January has suggested that up to 60% of European firms are unprepared for the GDPR. With less than three months before implementation they're on dangerous ground.

Stated goal

The aim of the GDPR is to establish a single set of data protection rules across Europe. Organisations and businesses outside the EU will also be subject to the GDPR when they

collect data concerning any EU citizen; this is one of the reasons why the UK is keeping the legislation after Brexit. Quite simply, the GDPR will give individuals better control over the personal data held by others.

It's worth noting that personal data is defined as anything – any information – relating to a person who can be identified directly or indirectly. It is irrelevant how the information is garnered; private, public or work roles are all covered by the GDPR. Numerous surveys over the summer of 2017 have suggested that firms will have difficulty in complying with the GDPR unless they make significant changes to how they operate. It makes no odds how small a company is or how much data it holds; so long as data can identify an individual the GDPR will apply. The rules – under the

present Data Protection Act and the GDPR – also apply to structured paper records. If records are searchable, they're caught by the legislation.

New rights

In essence, under the GDPR, individuals have similar rights as they have at present, but with enhancements. These rights include the right to be informed; the right of access; the right to rectification; the right of erasure (to be forgotten); the right to



Edited by Adam Bernstein





restrict processing; the right of data portability (move data from one firm to another); the right to object; and the right to not be part of any automated decision-making process.

Children are, for the first time, specifically covered by the legislation which determines a child as being someone under 16. Those firms taking on someone under 16 (say work experience) need to consider age-verification processes and seek parental or guardian consent when data processing.

As for the new right to data portability, it only applies to personal data an individual has provided to a controller; where the processing is based on the individual's consent or for the performance of a contract; and when processing is carried out automatically. For portability to work, data will have to be kept in a commonly used structure and in a machine-readable format.

New penalties

The GDPR markedly changes the enforcement and penalty landscape. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) can presently levy fines of up to £500,000 under the Data Protection Act. The GDPR raises that

to a maximum of 4% of global turnover or 20m euros – whichever is higher.

Secure data

Those holding data on others will have to "implement appropriate technical and organisational measures" in relation to personal data that they hold. In plain English, they'll have to ensure that data is kept securely, and that staff are briefed on the law. More importantly, holders of personal data will have to design safeguards into their systems which need to be appropriate and in proportion to the degree of risk associated with the data held. Technically speaking, this could involve the encryption of personal data; ensuring the "ongoing confidentiality, integrity, availability and resilience of company systems"; and having the capability to quickly restore any data lost following an incident (it's worth noting that accidental deletion of data counts as a reportable event).

Seek consent

A fundamental tenet of the GDPR revolves around the need to require consent to be given by an individual whose data is held. Consent is specifically defined by the



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GDPR and means “any freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous indication of his or her wishes by which the data subject, either by statement or by a clear affirmative action, signifies agreement to personal data relating to them being processed”. Firms need to be able to show how and when consent was obtained. It cannot be obtained through pre-ticked boxes and nor can it be bundled with other matters such as an employment or contract. Any data obtained must be for specific, explicit and legitimate purposes. Importantly, firms need to recognise that individuals can withdraw their consent at any time and have a right to be forgotten; if their data is no longer required for the reasons for which it was collected, or an individual makes a request, it must be erased. If firms want to contact their customers – past, present or future – they will need consent to do so.

Tell individuals

When collecting data, it’s a requirement of the GDPR that individuals are told about the identity and contact details of the data-gathering business; the purpose of acquiring the data and how it will be used; whether the data will be transferred outside of the EU and EEA (say by a payroll provider); how long the data will be stored for; their right to access, correct or have data held erased; the right to withdraw consents previously given at any time; and the right to lodge a complaint with the company and the ICO.

Access to data

Importantly, the GDPR demands that individuals must be told how their data is processed in a clear and understandable way. Individuals can make requests to see their data, and these must be fulfilled “without undue delay and at the latest within one month of receipt of the request”. Under the current regime, holders of data have 40 days to comply with a request for data. Where requests to access data are clearly pointless or excessive then businesses will be able to charge a fee for providing this information.

Reporting breaches

Another change brought in by the GDPR requires companies to report any breaches of security “leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data transmitted, stored or otherwise processed”. Where the breach involves personal data, companies must notify the appropriate authority, most likely the ICO, “without undue delay and, where feasible, not later than 72 hours after having become aware of it” if the breach is likely to “result in a risk for the rights and freedoms of individuals”. This could, if a breach occurs on a Friday, mean working through the weekend.

Appoint a Data Protection Officer

Clearly someone within a business will need to take responsibility for data protection compliance and depending on the size and complexity this may require someone to be formally designated as a Data Protection Officer (DPO).

The DPO must take proper responsibility for data protection compliance and have the knowledge, support and authority to carry out their role effectively.

Key steps to take

In March 2016, the ICO published *Preparing for the General Data Protection Regulation – 12 Steps to Take Now* (<http://bit.ly/2deJ72T>). Summarised, the main nine points set out the essence of what SMEs need to do:

1. Ensure that staff are aware that the law is changing and anticipate the impact of the GDPR.
2. Document what personal data is held, where it came from and with whom it is shared.
3. Review current privacy notices and make any necessary changes.
4. Review procedures to address the new rights that individuals will have.
5. Plan how to handle requests within the new time frames and provide the required information.
6. Identify and document the legal basis for each type of data processing activity.
7. Review how consent is sought, obtained and recorded.
8. Make sure procedures are in place to detect, report and investigate data breaches.
9. Designate a Data Protection Officer to take responsibility for data protection compliance.

To conclude

The GDPR is not going away and Brexit is not going to save a business from complying with its requirements. The penalties are, from the end of May, going to become markedly harsher. Those that choose to ignore the new rules are setting themselves up for a fall. Time spent on the ICO’s website (<https://ico.org.uk>) will be time well spent.

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TRYING FOR PERFECTION

At least two centuries of Rugby's history are written in the stones and other monuments that stand around the School Close, where in 1823, local lad William Webb Ellis, with a fine disregard for the rules of football, took the ball in his arms and ran with it, originating the game of rugby football. LAURENCE GALE visited Rugby School to discover what the professional grounds team there expects from local dealers

Rugby School is one of the oldest independent schools in Britain, offering co-educational day and boarding schooling in Warwickshire. The school grounds and vast sporting facilities total some 250 acres.

Like many top fee-paying public schools its reputation is always quantified by its academic, cultural and sporting successes. There is, however, no doubt in my mind that much of this success is being driven by the provision of high-quality horticultural standards and the provision of high-quality playing surfaces.

In recent years, under the guidance and leadership of its Head Grounds Manager, James Mead, and his dedicated team of groundsmen and gardeners, the school grounds have been transformed into some of the finest school amenity and playing facilities in the UK.

The improvement to the playing surfaces, particularly the rugby and cricket pitches located at the Close, has attracted a lot of interest with several professional teams using the grounds for matches and training.

Since arriving at the school some 13 years ago, James

has over time convinced the school to invest resources into recruiting more staff and new machinery, while at the same time increasing maintenance and renovation budgets.

The net results are the transformed state and appearance of the school grounds and the fact that they can accommodate a very busy sporting calendar of fixtures across many sports.

One of James's longest-serving staff members, Graham Lloyd, with nearly 50 years' service, has seen many of the beneficial changes resulting from this investment, particularly from the purchase of new machinery.

Graham is the school's dedicated mechanic, responsible for maintaining the large fleet of machinery, with over 70 major pieces to maintain. The school has also invested in providing him with a new workshop, a four-post ramp lift and a set of Bernhard's Duel Express Cylinder grinders.

As you can imagine, the fleet of machinery is very diverse, ranging from pedestrian mowers through to large ride-on rotary/cylinder five-unit mowers, tractors, leaf sweepers, scarifiers, aerators, leaf blowers, power hand

tools and people carriers.

The school has always had a policy of buying machinery outright and James always involves his staff when choosing new equipment as they are the ones who will be using it on a daily basis.

However, they still want to ensure they are getting the right equipment for the job. This is generally achieved by arranging a number of demonstrations with local machinery dealerships, attending trade shows and meeting up with manufacturers.

A recent visit to Rugby School enabled me the opportunity to speak to James to discuss the benefits of investing, maintaining and building up a good working relationship with the manufacturers and dealerships that supply the school.

Service Dealer: Why do you buy your machinery outright?

James Mead: We feel more comfortable buying outright as it gives us more flexibility and control over what and when we can invest in machinery. Also, we're not tied to any long-term finance or leasing agreements.

SD: Where do you buy your machinery?

JM: We tend to support local dealerships that over the years we have built up good working relationships with and who understand our needs and expectations.

We've built up a large fleet of machinery bought from many leading manufacturers that include the likes of Toro, Kubota, New Holland, Trimax Mowers, CubCadet INFINICUT and ATT TMSsystem, Sisis equipment, Allett Mowers, Wessex, Etesia, STIHL, Iseki, Benford rollers and Husqvarna, to name a few.

SD: Which dealers are you using?

JM: The Mowershop (Northampton) Ltd based in West Haddon; Browns at Daventry; Murley Agriculture & Garden Machinery based in Warwick; and TH White's Redditch branch.

SD: What do you expect from the dealers you work with?

JM: We expect a good two-way working relationship with these suppliers, in terms of retaining warranties, supply of spare parts and relevant training. Keeping abreast of new products and services is also key. This is achieved by regular meetings with the dealerships and attending relevant shows and demonstrations.

SD: What are the benefits of having your own repair and machinery workshop?

JM: Having our own dedicated mechanic in Graham and the workshop has been instrumental in maximising the performance of our machinery and reducing any downtime due to breakdowns.

We also ensure that we meet all manufacturers' and dealerships' warranties and service requirements on all the machinery we purchase. Keeping our machinery in a good working condition also prolongs the lifespan of our machinery.

SD: Do you carry a large range of spare parts?

JM: We tend to carry a reasonable number of spares, but generally rely on our good working relationship with our dealers, who offer quality back-up and support service on spares – usually offering a 24–48-hour turnaround.

SD: What new equipment do you envisage purchasing in the coming years?

JM: There will always be a need to replace and upgrade old machinery. In recent years we've also seen a dramatic shift in hybrid technology and battery-powered machinery. We're currently using some battery-powered STIHL hedgecutters and leaf blowers, but I've no doubt that we'll be looking further into investing in these new technologies in the coming years.

SD: Thank you.



Head Grounds Mmanager, James Mead

SNOW PROBLEM HERE

Emyr Jenkins, of Jenkins Garden Machinery, says that while the rest of the country ground to a halt with the 'Beast from the East' there was a small part of Carmarthenshire more concerned with the late start to the season...

S now? What snow?

Seriously, while the country ground to a halt with the 'Beast from the East' there was a small part of Carmarthenshire that had an icing sugar dusting of snow. Twenty miles west of us a local battery supplier fell three times on his own drive while Cardiff (45 miles east) reported up to 50cm of snow, which, was a more accurate depiction of what the rest of the country saw.

The snow certainly brought with it some issues. Some couriers were delayed with parts but, truth be told, it was not a big deal at the start of March. The more pressing issue for us was how late the season started. By the end of March things had picked up, but the slow start definitely brought its own problems.

Fast forward to the beginning of April and the picture is very different. The customers who "weren't in a rush at all" during the snow have suddenly realised the grass is growing. I'd love to say that the workshop has caught up,



but we're back up to 139 jobs as I write this.

On the subject of the workshop, once the weather breaks we are at serious risk of starting to let customers down.

I think customer care plays a massive part in our industry. However, that doesn't necessarily mean 'the customer is always right'. Sometimes it is about educating the customer and managing their expectations. Customers often compare us with the car industry, which is probably a good one to strive towards, however it doesn't mean that the two industries are identical. Here is an example of two customer conversations I had within three days of each other.

Customer 1

The first customer had a full Westwood service. All service parts, oils, transport VAT etc. When given a price he said "How much? I can have my car serviced for £120". Of course, this customer clearly doesn't understand that the work involved in a full service takes a lot longer than a car and the fact that there is transport involved, hydrostatic oil etc.

Customer 2

The second customer booked his ALKO pedestrian lawnmower in for a service. When given a price he asked: "What do you do in a service?" When one of the staff explained the detail involved in a service and how we even take the wheels off to grease the ratchet, his response was, "wow, do you know I paid £250 to have my car serviced and I honestly couldn't tell you what they've done. You do more to my mower than they do to my car!"

I think the important lesson that I take away from this is to educate the customer as to what is done in the service and to manage their expectations.

And as I finish writing this, Howell has just sold an Ariens Ikon zero-turn. I think we can safely say the season has finally arrived!



Jenkins Garden Machinery's revamped showroom

PRODUCTS

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steve@servicedealer.co.uk

DOMESTIC

FIRST LAWN TRACTOR WITH EFI ENGINE

From Cub Cadet

Cub Cadet has launched a new model within its Enduro Series.

The XT2 PR106IE debuts the Cub Cadet EFI (electric fuel injection) engine. The company says this engine is easier to start, even when cold, particularly useful after a long duration of being stored away. Cub Cadet says the machine will use up to 25% less fuel when compared with standard carburettor engines.

Other claims for the EFI engine made by the company are that it also has 5-10% higher power and torque than carburettor engines, and is much more reliable, being less

susceptible to icing and random engine stoppages.

As with every model across the XT range, the XT2 PR106IE features a cut, collect and mulch system, and a stable and smooth V-Belt system with a smooth hydrostatic drive system. It also features Tight Turn xTreme, delivering a turning circle of 17cm. Drive harmonisation provides smooth, efficient powered delivery. The solid and corrosion resistant e-coated frame provides long lasting protection and stability.

The mower features a 106cm/42" cutting deck, able to cut up to 8,000 m² per hour. The integrated bag full system identifies when the 320-litre bag is at capacity and it benefits from an electronic bag lift. The machine also has a Bluetooth app, called Cub Connect, which keeps track of inspections and servicing. The optional anti-dust system protects against swirling grass and dust.



DOMESTIC

ALEXA, LET'S MOW!

Husqvarna launches voice control for robotic mowers

At an event at its Newton Aycliffe base recently, Husqvarna announced that its robotic mowers will soon be compatible with the cloud-based voice activation service, Alexa.

Once the integration launches on 1st September this year, homeowners with Husqvarna Automower will be able to start, stop, park and get status-updates from their mower by asking Alexa.

At the launch, the company demonstrated the functions of Just ask Alexa and future Amazon Alexa features for their robotic mowers. The first version will be available in all Automower Connect equipped robotic mowers, including the many thousands of connected Husqvarna robotic mowers already in gardens and parks across the world today.

This first version will be able to take care of the most commonly used commands such as start, stop and park, which the company said will provide an additional way of integrating with the robotic mower, besides the current mobile applications.

"We've made our Automower Alexa-compatible, as cloud-based voice services are growing fast", said Sascha Menges, President of the Husqvarna Division.

"Our customers rightly expect Husqvarna products to be in the forefront, giving them multiple and ever more convenient ways of interacting with the product."



COMMERCIAL / AGRICULTURAL

UTILITY COMPACT TRACTOR LAUNCHED BY KUBOTA

36.6hp machine features a three-cylinder D1803-M-E2 engine

Kubota UK has launched the L1361 Compact Utility Tractor.

The 36.6hp machine features a three-cylinder Kubota D1803-M-E2 engine, manual or three-range speed hydrostatic transmission and a 38-litre capacity fuel tank for extended periods of use.

The new model also includes 4WD and live, continuous-running rear PTO exclusively available on the HST model.

The frequent and alternating use of various implements are supported by the machine's three-point hitch and impressive lifting capacity, for easier and flexible use.

The company says

by featuring a quick-detach front loader, the model allows for easier and quicker use of implements, including the new LA525 front loader with a curved boom design.

The bevel gear front axle has been designed to deliver a tight turning radius, with full power transfer to the wheels at every steering angle. This enables greater traction across all terrains.

Ergonomics have also played a significant part in the L1361's refreshed design, says Kubota, with a spacious operator deck and slanted front bonnet for greater field of vision when handling front loader operations to ensure maximum safety.

Adrian Langmead, Business Development Manager for Groundcare, said: "Regardless of terrain or job requirement, the L1361 allows operators to get the job done better and faster, all with greater comfort, performance and ease."



COMMERCIAL

TRACMASTER GET 'WAISTED'

BC65 Lawn Scarifier Attachment with 48 free-swinging blades

Tracmaster Ltd has launched the CAMON BC65 Lawn Scarifier Attachment – a 65cm wide scarifier to fit the BCS Two Wheel Tractors and Rotavators.

The CAMON BC65 includes many of the same features as the LS42 Lawn Scarifier including the free-swinging "waisted" blades in a staggered layout to provide maximum coverage, fine blade height adjustment for all types of lawns, and interchangeable lawn rake and lawn slitter cartridges.

The BC65 is suitable for the BCS Two Wheel Tractors and rotavators from the model 738 upwards. The Scarifier features 48 free-swinging waisted blades, a full-width front roller for even scarification, and a floating PTO swivel joint for uneven ground conditions.



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EVENTS 2018

MAY 2018

- 7 North Somerset Show, Wraxall, Bristol
www.nsas.org.uk
- 12-13 Nottinghamshire County Show, Newark Showground
www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com
- 16-19 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
- 26-27 Herts County Show
www.hertsshow.com
- 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

JULY 2018

- 1 Cranleigh Show
www.cranleighshow.co.uk/
- 3-8 Hampton Court Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-hampton-court-palace-flower-show
- 6-8 Kent County Show
kentshowground.co.uk
- 7 Monmouthshire Show
www.monmouthshow.co.uk
- 7-8 Smallholders & Country Show, South Of England Showground, Ardingly
www.smallholdersshows.co.uk
- 8 Royal Isle of Wight County Show
<http://www.riwas.org.uk/county-show>
- 10-12 Great Yorkshire Show
www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk
- 14 Newport Show
www.newportshow.co.uk/
- 23-26 Royal Welsh Show
www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show/
- 18-22 RHS Flower Show, Tatton Park
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-flower-show-tatton-park
- 21 Camborne Show
www.camborne-show.org.uk
- 24-26 New Forest & Hampshire County Show
www.newforestshow.co.uk
- 27-28 Border Union Show
www.buas.org/
- 27-29 The Game Fair, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire
www.thegamefair.org
- 28 Mid Devon Show
www.middevonshow.co.uk



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WHAT IS IT ABOUT A £99 PETROL LAWNMOWER?

That significant benchmark has raised its head again

Circa 1991 the first £99 petrol-engined rotary lawnmower appeared. It was nicknamed the 'dustbin lid' mower. It comprised an engine, four wheels, handles and a 20" side discharge steel cutter deck. The dealer profit on that machine at that time would have been around £24 – at today's value of the pound it would probably retail at around £140.

It was unheard of and created havoc. An affordable petrol mower aimed at the mass market who up until then, at that price range, tended to be mains-electric buyers.

The steel deck era rocketed. Before this it was almost impossible to sell steel deck machines, or rather dealers didn't want to. Aluminium was the order of the day, with 16", 18" and 21" the common sizes. Price was a major issue for the mass markets and it wasn't long after the dustbin lid took off that steel deck machines were appearing from everywhere in all sorts of sizes and types. The sheds were in their element, being able to offer their customers petrol-driven machines at what were ultra-affordable prices compared with aluminium decks.

The main brands developed their steel deck mowers into excellent working tools offering longevity way beyond their early 60s and early 70s counterparts, which had given the steel deck its bad name.

During the '90s specialist dealers realised the sheds were here for the long term and were forced to try to compete by stocking the dreaded steel deck machines, accepting lower profits. However, over a period the steel deck became the norm, the quality and longevity grew better, becoming accepted by the trade and end users alike. Today, probably over 80% of petrol mowers sold have steel decks.

Manufacturers continued to offer aluminium, plastic and steel decks as choices, remaining so today. The 'good, better, best' sales pitch took off. Prices vary tremendously, and customers are bombarded with a myriad of feature benefits. At least the dealer has the advantage of being able to offer his expertise to guide the customer through what has become a minefield of engine size, cutter size, material type, collect, side discharge or mulch, self-propelled or push.

Does brand matter? Do Mr and Mrs Smith really care? To a point, yes. In the UK are we not lucky to have some of the best publicly recognised lawnmower brands? It comes through in a showroom environment

how much easier it is to sell a product if the customer recognises the name on the label. Is it not noticeable that it is the best-known brands that are driving the market and leading the way in the price war?

But is it the brands that are driving the price or is it the price that is driving the brands?

The headline question asks, "What is it about a £99 petrol lawnmower?" Why do mass retailers see that as the target price to attract the mass market? Just recently, after almost 30 years since the appearance of the first £99 petrol mower, it has raised its head over the parapet once again. Advertised in the *Daily Mail* by Homebase was a 40cm petrol-powered mower, complete with collector, reduced from £109 to £99 including VAT, under its own Sovereign brand.

Is there a new generation of lawnmower users out there that will see this as a way onto the affordable petrol-powered lawnmower ladder once again? Will dealers be forced to join in on the act and accept the £24 profit?

The most important question is, what does the potential dealer's customer think when they walk into the showroom to see a 40cm push mower with collector advertised at well over £200? At least in 1991 it could be argued in the showroom that all you got was a dustbin lid with an engine for your £99 – or £140 in today's money.

Not so in 2018; now you get a 'proper mower' with a grass collector included in the £99 price tag. Which is £41 cheaper than the dustbin lid would have been today!



JIM GREEN



THESE ARE THE DROIDS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

ROBOT MASTERS!

The future holds great potential

Robotic mowers are at a very interesting point in their simulated life. Anecdotally, what the team here at *Service Dealer* towers is hearing from dealers is that there appears to be a real spread of feelings about them.

There will be some dealers who feel they are just not for them, or more specifically not for their customers.

There are others who do a bit with them, would like to do more, and are looking for ways to up their volumes.

And there are others still who are complete advocates of the technology, and are doing a thriving trade in the machines.

Clearly the manufacturers have the utmost confidence in robots, which they are now beginning to seriously target at not just the high-end domestic market, but increasingly the commercial sector also. Parks, golf clubs, municipal green spaces are all being cited as potentially perfect areas on which to set a robot, or team of robots, about their business.

One of the key elements in this confidence which the manufacturers have in robotic mowing, is that they know they will have barely scraped the surface yet in what the technology can potentially be capable of. Yes, I imagine all the brands will be happy that their offerings have got the vital element right and can do a great job of cutting the grass effectively. It's the bells and whistles beyond that which will push the machines further into mainstream acceptance – the way they've been

embraced in countries like Germany and Sweden.

It was interesting to hear about this issue from Husqvarna and its progression into voice control over its Automowers via the Alexa gadget. Even more mind-blowing though, is hearing their clever people's ideas of where the machines could potentially get to beyond that.

One possible future sees the robot mower become a sort of 'garden hub' which, via sensors, could be in command of all sorts of outdoor tasks. It could monitor the health of a garden's plants, its watering needs, fertilisation requirements; it could act as a security feature; as a line-marker for sports; or simply to bring WiFi into the outdoors. It makes my brain ache just thinking about it!

'Smart living' as it's termed, with many features around the home controlled by one central voice-activated hub, is apparently set to triple in popularity by 2022. The US has embraced this philosophy more quickly than the rest of the world, but experts believe it's only going to become more commonplace everywhere.

Apparently now though, there isn't that much smart living technology specifically designed for the garden out there.

So it would seem that dealers have the perfect opportunity to position themselves at the forefront of this exciting future. Why shouldn't the specialists in the equipment which we've historically used in the outdoor space, make themselves the experts in this future outdoor smart living world?





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