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NOV / DEC 2017



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EDITOR’S MESSAGE

Welcome to the November/December 2017 edition of *Service Dealer*.

There are a couple of very important dates for dealers’ diaries almost upon us. Firstly, very soon after you read this, the IOG’s SALTEx exhibition at the NEC will take place. As you can see later on in this issue there’ll be plenty of new machinery to take a look at – but as ever, the true value in an event such as this is meeting up with peers and colleagues to discuss the issues of the day and get a feel for how the industry is performing. Come and see us at stand M030

This discussion, with the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experiences, is very much the order of the day at the next event which I hope as many of you as possible will be attending – the *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards.

Taking place on the 16th November at the Oxford Belfry Hotel, the theme this year is *The Challenge of Change: Embracing & Adapting to a Changing Market*. The team has every intention to make this day as positive and hopeful as possible. The line-up of expert speakers will all be tackling their diverse subjects, focussing on the opportunities that can be grasped through change. Even a subject as polarising as Brexit will be addressed from the point of view, that yes it’s happening, so how can dealers make the best of it?

The day will, as ever, finish on a celebratory note with the Dealer of the Year awards ceremony. The calibre of entry has once again given the judges an unenviable task. All nominees should be justly proud that they are representing a vibrant industry – and by both sticking to their core values, while adapting to the modern trading environment, are offering consumers a very real alternative to the mass channels.



OUR PEOPLE

www.servicedealer.co.uk

EDITOR
STEVE GIBBS
[@ steve@servicedealer.co.uk](mailto:steve@servicedealer.co.uk)

CONSULTANT EDITOR
CHRIS BIDDLE
[@ chris@servicedealer.co.uk](mailto:chris@servicedealer.co.uk)

FEATURES EDITOR
MARTIN RICKATSON
[@ jmr.agriculture@gmail.com](mailto:jmr.agriculture@gmail.com)

SME DIGEST EDITOR
ADAM BERNSTEIN
[@ adam@adambernstein.co.uk](mailto:adam@adambernstein.co.uk)

PRODUCED BY
THE AD PLAIN LTD
Pipe House, Lupton Road,
Wallingford, Oxfordshire,
OX10 9BT, UK

[01491 837 117](tel:01491837117)

www.theadplain.com

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MANAGING DIRECTOR
DUNCAN MURRAY-CLARKE

DESIGN & LAYOUT
ALEX FAULKNER

ADVERTISING SALES
SUSAN PALLETT

[@ susan@theadplain.com](mailto:susan@theadplain.com)

[07973 507 174](tel:07973507174)

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STIHL PARTNERS WITH DOBBIES GARDEN CENTRES

Five-store pilot across Scotland

Following the STIHL Group's decision to broaden its retail network to include non-traditional servicing dealers it was announced recently that as part of a five-store pilot – with a view to future developments – consumers will now be able to purchase STIHL cordless and electric products and accessories from designated Dobbies Garden Centres across Scotland.

The new pilot programme has been rolled out across Dobbies Garden Centres in Edinburgh (Melville), Aberdeen, Dundee, Ayr and Glasgow (Braehead), all of which will feature STIHL's new Point of Sale system – specifically designed for garden centres.

In a press release statement Robin Lennie, Managing Director at STIHL GB, said: "We're delighted to announce this new pilot programme in five of Dobbies'

stores. While the demand for STIHL cordless products is at an all-time high, we're committed to working with retail partners who not only offer a high quality shopping environment, but also well-trained staff to provide advice and support to our customers. We are therefore very pleased to be working with Dobbies who share STIHL's values."

Andrew West, Purchasing Director at Dobbies Garden Centres, commented: "We're thrilled to launch such an exciting new partnership with STIHL. Dobbies' discerning customers are keen to see brands like STIHL in our stores and we're excited with this development."

In a letter to traditional servicing dealers explaining the move into Dobbies, Robin Lennie wrote, "The importance of STIHL's existing Approved Dealer network was and remains unaffected by this

announcement since STIHL petrol-powered machines and accessories as well as servicing, continue to be exclusively available through STIHL Approved Dealers."

He went on to say, "I appreciate the concerns that some Approved Dealers may have but I want to reassure you that we will continue to hand pick all STIHL retailers and will only work with those prepared to commit to our quality requirements with regards to merchandising and training."

After this news initially broke *Service Dealer's Weekly Update* received comments from multiple dealers expressing their disappointment at the move. STIHL quickly followed this up with statements at its annual press meeting, underlining its commitment to dealers. Read a full report on what they had to say starting on page 26 of this issue.



INDUSTRY

AL-KO BUYS MASPORT

German company takes over New Zealand mower maker

German manufacturer AL-KO Gardentech is to take over the New Zealand garden and outdoor equipment manufacturer Masport.

Masport is the market leader in New Zealand and the number two in Australia in the development and production of gardening equipment under the brands Masport and Morrison.

In the UK Masport is distributed by FGM Claymore and AL-KO by Rochfords Garden Machinery. *Service Dealer* has been told that no changes will be made to these distribution arrangements.

Masport will continue to function as an independent company and operate under the AL-KO umbrella with its current Masport brands.

“We’re pleased to bring one of the strongest garden equipment brands across the Atlantic to the AL-KO Group with Masport,” said Stefan Kober, CEO of AL-KO Kober SE.

Dr Wolfgang Hergeth, Managing Director of AL-KO Gardentech said, “Steve Hughes, who has been running Masport for 10 years, will continue to direct the business and report directly to me in the future. Both brands will benefit from an exchange of know-how. To

Steve Hughes, md Masport and Dr. Wolfgang Hergeth, md AL-KO Gardentech



what extent a mutual product and market integration will take place, we will examine with all due care.”

Steve Hughes, Managing Director of Masport said, “We will form a strong duo on the global gardening market. I’m delighted that we’re now able to continue our positive development under the umbrella of a modern entrepreneurial group and continue to offer our customers innovative products.”

DEALERS

HAYES GM SELLS BARNSTAPLE BRANCH

To Blakewell Services Ltd

Hayes Garden Machinery has announced that it has sold its branch located in St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple to fellow dealer Blakewell Services Ltd.

Owner James Hayes says the firm will now concentrate its efforts in expanding the overall business of its South Molton, Devon premises. There it will continue to offer full services to all customers, current and new, throughout the whole of the North Devon region.

James said, “It’s our belief that this move will benefit our customers through consolidation of our services in a much

improved workshop and showroom facility, plus having all of our specialists under one roof.

“The showroom and workshops at South Molton are to be extended and modernised to accommodate the expansion as it is our intention to add to our ranges and venture into other associated products related to home and garden, estate and professional contracting.

“We will continue to progress with our appointed agencies such as STIHL, Honda, Husqvarna, Cub Cadet, AL-KO, Mitox, Weibang, Ego, Eliet, Solo plus accessories, spare parts and repairs for most makes of garden machinery.”

Rob Ridge of Blakewell Services said, “We purchased the new branch in order to expand our ever-growing business, to support new and old customers alike and to continue supplying a fantastic service and product range.”



James Hayes

MANAGEMENT CHANGE AT BARRUS

Announced at recent dealer days

E P Barrus Ltd announced at its two Dealer Days which took place in September at Upper Aynho Grounds, Oxfordshire, the appointment of Phil Noble to the role of Field Sales & Technical Manager for the Garden Division.

After 19 years' service with Barrus, Phil is stepping up from his position as Area Sales Manager. He has a long track record in the garden machinery sector, gaining extensive experience working in both technical and sales positions for a number of garden machinery companies and dealerships.

Phil's predecessor at Barrus, Martin Wasley, retired at the end of September.

"I'm delighted to take up this new challenge at such an exciting time in the Garden Divisions development," said Phil. "The new Cub Cadet model line-up introduced this season has been extremely well received, both by our dealer network and the end user, and we have an impressive range of products and industry-first enhancements lined up for 2018. With the support of an experienced external and internal sales team, I'm looking forward to driving the business forward and providing the highest levels of sales

and technical after-sales back-up to our loyal dealer network."

The company's two Dealer Days where Phil's appointment was first announced saw a strong turnout of dealers with around 100 in attendance each day. Dealers had four product stations to be introduced to by the Barrus team with plenty of time after lunch to get their hands on the equipment and try out the new offerings.

Phil Noble talked the dealers through the extensive range of Cub Cadet walk-behind and ride-on mowers for the new season, while David Duncan explained the Cub Cadet zero-turn machines, which included the XZ2 and the more commercial XZ3 units.

Peter McVeigh spoke about the Wolf Garten machines, ranging from the domestic lithium-ion walk-behinds to the Wolf Expert ride-on machines. Finally, Martin Wolsey, in one of his final engagements before retiring

from the company, introduced the new MTD Lawnflite walk-behind and ride-on models.

Dealers also got a chance to see the new range of CE UK garden tools that Barrus will now be handling.



Phil Noble

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ROCHFORDS COMPLETE DEALER ROADSHOWS

Good attendance and new machines on show

September saw Rochford Garden Machinery set out on a week of Dealer Roadshows, starting in Betchworth in Surrey, followed by Newark in Nottinghamshire, and ending at Sparkford in Somerset.

The first show in Betchworth attracted a strong attendance for the first RGM show in the South-East for a number of years, and Nottinghamshire again brought a large crowd. The final event in Sparkford was again popular, with the total number of dealers visiting throughout the week in excess of 300.

“The turnout was very good. I would say this was one of the best dealer events I have ever been a part of and the response from our new products has been fantastic,” said Stewart Anderson, Managing Director of Rochford Garden Machinery.

The format for the day started with Stewart presenting a brief overview of the company’s performance, with growth for AL-KO, Mitox, and Weibang. Overall The company has had a strong result in 2017, despite what many have called a challenging year. Stewart then presented the new brand identity and range for Weibang, which is now fully available.

“The new range is not only proven in terms of exceptional reliability and performance,” Stewart said, “but it’s also now appealing to the consumer.”

The offering sees a new identity, with the domestic range changing to a rich high gloss red, with metallic silver features, and the pro range staying in hammerite black, but with the same silver features.

Following Stewart came Mark Rochford who

introduced the new AL-KO Comfort tractor range. He explained the role that dealer feedback had played in its development; the range has been completely redesigned and replaces the Edition tractors with what he described as “new levels of quality and performance”.

MITOX was next up with a completely new range of brushcutters. Stewart introduced the new machines which feature Xforce engine technology.

He explained, “We’ve been working over the past couple of years to produce the same power output as the premium brands from Japan and Europe and our new range produces as much as 60% more power than the previous generation.”

Other updates at the Roadshows included a new marketing plan for 2018, with all new showroom stands for AL-KO and Mitox, and a range of bespoke Point of Sale.

Also in attendance was Excalibur, showing its dealer business system, specially designed for service dealers, which saw a great response.

The afternoon sessions allowed all in attendance the opportunity to put the new range through its paces.

“Everyone was keen to get out and use the products in rain or shine. From my point of view the best demonstrations were in the rain, as dealers could not believe the performance of the lawnmowers. We received lots of positive feedback over the week and new stockists signed up all over the country,” said Stewart.



Mark Rochford & Bonnie Rallison presenting the simplified AL-KO lawnmower range

ARIENS HOLDS DEALER MEETINGS

Growth in partnership

Ariens Company invited Countax, Westwood, Ariens and ECHO dealers to its Growth in Partnership dealer meetings held in September.

Following the successful format of previous years, the events took place in two locations, the Oxford Belfry and Ripley Castle in North Yorkshire. Both days were led by John Horn, Senior Vice President for International Sales and Marketing.

“This year’s dealer meetings have been a great success, with strong attendance on both days,” said John Horn. “Our dealer network is the cornerstone of our business, so it is imperative that we provide them with a new generation of products, sales tools and services to better serve the end user.”

At the venues, the company officially launched the new E36 lawn

tractor and dealers were also able to see the Ariens APEX, a new commercial zero-turn.

Along with information on new products, both days were structured to provide dealers with useful tools to help grow their businesses. After the main presentations they were able to attend various break-out sessions which focused on apprentice recruitment advice and marketing tools available to dealers.

During the afternoon session, there was an opportunity to test drive the new E36 and the anticipated Ariens APEX zero-turn on the demo ground.

Ariens Company is the UK distributor for ECHO tools. On the demo ground dealers were encouraged to try out a wide range of products including chainsaws,



brushcutters, power blowers, hedgetrimmers and the new 50V lithium-ion battery series (hedgetrimmer, power blower and trimmer).

Dealers who attended the Oxford Belfry meeting were given a factory tour of the Great Haseley facility by Operations Director, Phil Edwards.

At the end of the day, the Ariens Dealer Advisory Council (DAC) led a closed discussion with dealers exploring industry issues and ideas to support the dealer network.







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TRILO INVESTS IN FACILITY

And appoints more UK dealers

Lister Wilder is the latest UK dealer appointment for Dutch company Vanmac bv, manufacturer of the Trilo range of blowers and vacs.

The dealership group will represent Trilo across Gloucestershire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire.

It is a time of development for Trilo as its headquarters in Amersfoort, Holland is just commencing a one million-euro overhaul.

No section of the factory has been overlooked in the refurbishment. A comprehensive re-layout of the production flow will be the result with automatic picking of minor parts coming in as well as new painting booths and offices – all to be completed by first quarter 2018.

When finished, Joint Company Owner Leo van Loen (grandson of the founder) who runs the business with Peter van Mispelaar, said he expects to see efficiency

improved by 25% and lead times down to two to three weeks.

Sales of Trilo equipment in the UK initially took place through an importer, but a decision was made in November 2015 to bring the UK in line with the rest of Europe by employing its own direct sales team. With 24 years of combined experience of the range, Jon Proffitt and Jeremy Vincent now represent the company in the UK. They split coverage of the country North and South between them and, with the aid of a growing list of dealers, have overseen a revival of the brand with what they describe as an “impressive increase in sales”.

When asked if they are looking for further dealers in the UK, Jermeij Vincent said, “We’re always open to speak to dealers but, of course, it’s finding the right people.”

Jon Proffitt confirmed, “We have some areas around the country we would be looking to fill.” ●

Trilo UK's Jeremy Vincent and Jon Proffitt





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**SERVICE
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CONFERENCE + AWARDS

2017

MAXIMISING THE OPPORTUNITIES OF CHANGE

November's Service Dealer Conference will be striking a hopeful tone

The organisers of this year's *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards are aiming to strike a hopeful, positive tone to counteract some of the negativity that has pervaded the discourse this year.

Taking place at the Oxford Belfrey Hotel on Thursday 16th November, this year's conference tackles the subject of *The challenge of change: Embracing and adapting to a changing market*.

Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke says, "There is no doubt that product technology, manufacturer sales strategy, and the immediacy of social media are all moving so quickly at the moment. These elements in their own right, if left unchecked, have the ability to leave us all behind.

"Add to that politics, pricing pressures and all the uncertainty the media can amplify and you soon see why some people are feeling a little 'half empty'.

"But what about the opportunities that all this advancement and change could bring? We think that this year's conference should be focussing on the challenges that face us

and how to plan and prepare to maximise the opportunities that will undoubtedly arise.

"There's plenty to discuss and I'm delighted with the speaker line-up and content this year, and I sincerely hope that you can join us."

Speakers

The line-up of speakers chosen to present at this year's conference will be offering the dealer delegates insightful food-for-thought on a diverse range of subjects.

Among the speakers will be **Jim Wade, Principal of JCB Academy**, who will be talking on the subject of *Developing engineers and business leaders of the future*. As part of his presentation he'll be looking at how groundscare and ag dealers as well as manufacturers can sell their sector to students as an alternative to the automotive industry.

Cedric Porter, Journalist and Ag Supply Consultant, will be discussing *Making the most of Brexit opportunities*. He'll be taking a look at how dealers should be positioning their businesses to be Brexit-ready, as well as looking at the long-term opportunities and minimising the challenges ahead.

Also presenting to the delegates will be **Julio Romo, Digital and Innovation Strategist**, who will be giving valuable insight on how to use digital and social media to present yourself and to get your local community to engage with you.

Take a look at the *Agenda of the Day* for a full breakdown of the day's events.



Duncan Murray-Clarke, Owner Service Dealer

AGENDA OF THE DAY

- 09:15** Registration and coffee
- 10:00** **Caroline Drummond MBE – CEO of LEAF**
What drives change for your customer base and how do you meet their needs while having a sustainable business model?
- 10:50** **Jim Wade – Principal of JCB Academy**
Developing engineers and business leaders of the future
- 11:20** Coffee break
- 11:40** **Scott Bernhardt – President of Planalytics**
How companies can avoid chasing last year's weather and improve the accuracy of sales forecasts
- 12:00** **Cedric Porter – Journalist and Ag Supply Consultant**
Making the most of Brexit opportunities. Brexit will impact on all businesses over the next few years. What opportunities will there be? How can you make the most of them and how can you protect your business during the biggest change in a generation?
- 12:20** Lunch, networking and exhibition to sponsor showcase
- 13:20** **BREAKOUT SESSIONS x2:**
- **Standing out from the crowd**
Secrets designed to promote you and your dealership. Insight on how to use digital and social media to present yourself and get your local community to engage with you
 - **Technology**
Get beyond your website to CRM, ecommerce and the virtual showroom
- 14:20** Coffee break
- 14:40** **Summary of breakouts**
- 15:00** **Plenary: Simon Batty MD of Maple Associates**
Dealership performance: Recruiting the right staff, winning profitable customers and keeping both long-term – what's the secret?!
- 15:00** *Growing sales across the whole portfolio through targeting of customers and effective sales management.* Five best-practice tips and a *How to* guide.
- 15:50** *Recruiting, developing and retaining staff in a competitive employment market.* How to identify and attract the right talent, motivate and engage people, and how to develop them properly without losing them. An interactive session and a takeaway summary.
- 16:25** Tea break
- 16:40** **Panel debate: Pt 1 Embracing and adapting to change.** Julio Romo, Caroline Drummond, Cedric Porter, Jim Ward
- Pt 2 question time** – Wrap up of the day
- 17:40** Conference close by Duncan Murray-Clarke
- 17:45-18:15** Post conference networking drinks

SUPPORTING MAGGIE'S

Cancer Care charity

Service Dealer will be supporting Maggie's cancer care charity at the Conference & Awards.

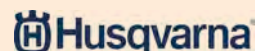
Owner Duncan Murray-Clarke said, "We're delighted to be supporting such a worthy cause. Maggie's is a national charity with cancer support centres across the country. At its heart, Maggie's is simply there for anyone and everyone affected by cancer, offering a programme of support that has been shown to strengthen physical and emotional wellbeing."

All Maggie's Centres are based in the grounds of NHS cancer hospitals, providing free practical, emotional and social support.

Maggie's receives no government funding, and therefore relies on voluntary income.



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A ‘LEGENDARY’ LAUNCH

Husqvarna used a forestry machinery show in Switzerland to debut to the world its new-generation 70cc chainsaws. Editor Steve Gibbs reports

Husqvarna chose the Forst Messe, forestry machinery exhibition in Lucerne, Switzerland recently to launch its new-generation 70cc chainsaws – which the company is describing as “legendary”.

The manufacturer says these new chainsaws, led by the 572 XP, are built around six key factors which can generate high power output and rapid acceleration, which it believes makes them “agile productivity powerhouses”.

The new 572 XP won’t be in seen in UK dealerships until Q1 of 2018, but the global roll-out has begun with Austria, Poland and Switzerland taking delivery in October. North America will have to wait until the second half of next year with the rest of the world following up in 2019.

Pavel Hajman, President of the Husqvarna division, led the presentations to the assembled guests at the launch which included European dealers and press, saying he had “tremendous pride” in the new chainsaws.

He said, “Since Husqvarna started chainsaw production almost 60 years ago, we have been focused on constantly improving chainsaw performance and the user experience.

“We’re confident that the new 572 XP will show that Husqvarna is an innovation leader in the world of chainsaws, with a strong commitment on sustainability.”

Gent Simmons, Global Director Product Management Chainsaws, also spoke, telling the audience, “This saw has developed from us getting out and truly

understanding our customers. In every part of the world they all have different needs which we have addressed.

“Also, it’s incredibly important for us to speak to our dealers worldwide,” he said. “They’re such an important knowledge bank for us to draw upon. We pride ourselves in staying close to them and our customers.”

These new chainsaws are built from scratch on a new platform, which Husqvarna believes is set to be the new foundation for professional chainsaws going forward. Their development has benefitted from digitalisation, as Husqvarna has further employed new technical solutions including sensor-based data collection and digital prototyping.

The company says digital prototyping enables highly accurate stress analysis to optimise chainsaw design, while sensors were placed on the chainsaws in field tests to collect data on usage statistics.

Husqvarna made sure to make the guests at the launch fully aware that their professional ambassadors have spent the past couple of years testing the saws in locations all around the world. These professional arborists have been making sure these new products work under a variety of environmental conditions. From extreme heat in South Africa to extreme cold in Siberia, the company is confident it has proved these units under all forms of duress.

The six key factors that make the 572 XP

12% higher cutting capacity

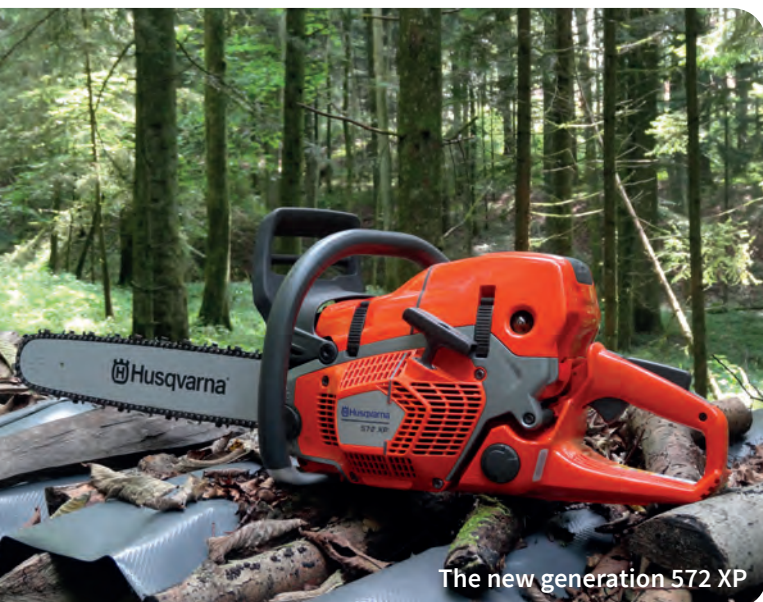
The 572 XP has a 12% increased cutting capacity, even when using long guide bars, compared with older Husqvarna chainsaw models within the 70cc range. This is made possible by the new engine layout and improved cooling.

The engine gives users a 30% broader RPM range compared with previous generations, increasing the optimal range from a band of 2,000 to 3,000 RPM.

The lighter and smaller diameter of the flywheel generates rapid acceleration.

Power-to-weight

A good power-to-weight ratio means higher productivity due to more available engine output. The power-to-weight improvement comes from better weight distribution in the machine and a good engine layout. The crankshaft and muffler, together with other critical components, have been designed



The new generation 572 XP

for functionality, and extra reinforcements have been made for enhanced strength and reliability. To balance out this increase, weight optimisation has decreased the weight of several components such as the flywheel (30g), starter cover (30g), crankcase (200g), clutch cover (30g) and ignition module (29g).

This translates into a weight of 6.6kg and a power level of 4.3kW, a considerable power-to-weight improvement compared with previous Husqvarna chainsaw models in the same displacement segment.

Cooling capacity up 20%

Cooler engines equal better power and performance, and increased product lifetime. The 572 XP has an increased cooling capacity, up 20% compared with previous generations of Husqvarna chainsaws. The boosted cooling capacity is the combination of new hardware, digitalisation and engine control (soft cut out system).

When it comes to hardware, the heat barrier in the 572 XP is made from specially-crafted polymers which are heat resistant, provide extreme insulation, are light-weight and integrated in the cover..

Digital air flow analysis enables optimisation of airflow in the product, thereby refining the placement of cooling apertures and internal deflectors. The newly designed internals also mean fewer dust and dirt particles will get trapped in the cooling fins.

The soft cut out system (an ignition management system), protects the engine from harmful over-revving by automatically adjusting the ignition timing at top rpm. This means a 30% decrease of internal pressure build-up in the engine – compared with Husqvarna chainsaws without this feature – for smoother operation, lower operating temperatures and maximum possible uptime.

Optimised filtration

Standard on the 572 XP is a heavy-duty air filter with a large filtration surface area to enable longer use and better filtration. The larger filtration area – compared with previous generations – means an increase in working intervals with maintained performance, and the saw requires less frequent cleaning.

10 times quicker air/fuel mix adjustment

With the launch of the 572 XP AutoTune has been updated, making automatic adjustments up to 10 times faster than the previous version. The update has four improvement areas compared with previous generations:

Quicker tuning is made possible by a new micro-processor, which decreases time the system needs to tune the engine. This means in practice, that all the engine settings are 100% correct after the first few cuts.

Broader adjustment range is made possible with new

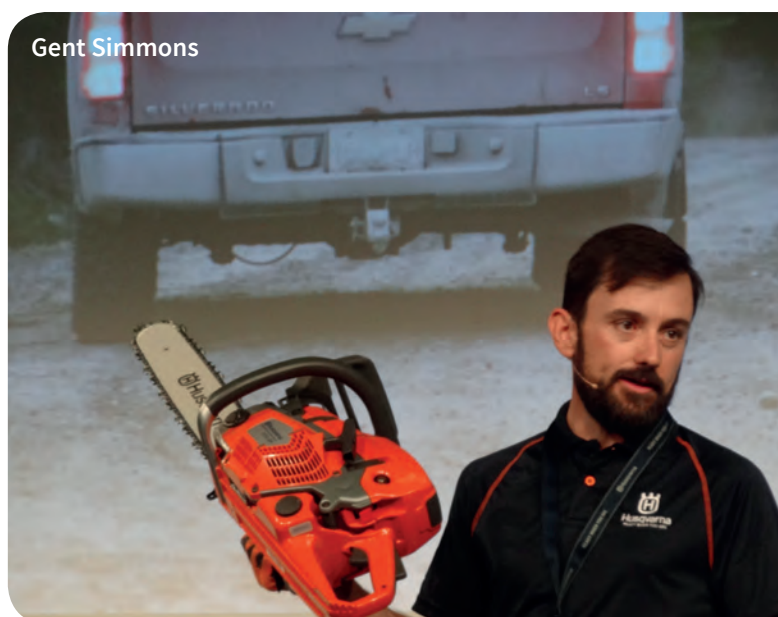
software that calibrates from low speed up to top RPM.

Partial throttle calibration has been added to AutoTune. Mid-range RPM are continuously measured by the system and used for optimising engine performance.

Lean out protection minimises the risk that overheating will occur, thereby preventing severe engine damage.

New X-CUT chain with start/stop tie-strap

The second chain to leave the new chain factory in Huskvarna, Sweden, is the X-CUT C85, and will be standard on the 572XP from 2018, thereby optimising the cutting experience. The new chain is a full chisel, 3/8” chain for professional use and features a golden tie-strap that helps loggers keep track of the start/finish of their filing loop. The company says the chain is sharp out of the box, pre-stretched, highly durable, and improves cutting efficiency. ●



BIGGER AND BUZZIER GLEE

Plans afoot to expand the show next year reports editor Steve Gibbs

This year's Glee exhibition, which took place at the NEC during September, felt significantly larger and more abuzz than in recent times. With the previous few visits I have made, the show had felt kind of perfunctory – not exactly dying, but perhaps going through the motions somewhat – certainly for specialist dealers.

This year though there were clearly more exhibitors – including one returning major machinery manufacturer – and with the show featuring heavily in live broadcasts on *BBC Breakfast* on its opening day, there was the feeling that a significant event for a vibrant industry was taking place.

Plans are already established to expand the show next year. More halls will be opened with a reorganising of the exhibition's layout. Is this a sign that the gardening industry is enjoying an upswing in fortunes?

Perhaps. Simon Belcher MD of Handy Distribution, which once again had the most significant machinery presence at the show, certainly believes attending Glee each year is very important for his company. It has plans in place already for a differently shaped, but still impressively large stand in 2018, following the redesign.

Once again Simon said the customers they were seeing come onto the stand, which featured

Handy, Webb, Flymo, McCulloch, Karcher, Gardena, GreenWorks and Bosch, were not so much specialist dealers. "We're talking to garden centres, hardware stores, mail order and DIY shops mainly," he said. "Over the three days we'll see a handful of dealers probably. But for us it's always about the quality of people we talk to though, not the quantity."

Asked what visitors to the stand were talking to them about, Simon said, "We were seeing a lot of interest in the Webb mowers. We've really started to make some penetration into the petrol market with those."

Also generating interest was a new range of three Karcher pressure washers, which are exclusive for independent retailers. The three new models at £99, £149, and £199 retail price points, are only available through wholesale distribution, and will offer independent retailers units which customers will not be able to purchase from any of the mass channels.

"We're trying to make the pressure washer market a viable avenue for the independent," said Simon.

Handy was also launching a range of battery-powered products, branded PowerWorks, which are GreenWorks machines, rebranded, to allow them to channel manage products into certain market streams. Simon said that with the PowerWorks brand it would be possible to have two dealers in the same town who both wanted the GreenWorks products, to stock essentially exactly the same machines, but without conflicting.

Elsewhere the returning machinery manufacturer was STIHL, who with its fairly low-key, small stand was promoting its Compact Cordless range of products.

Targeting garden centres and suitable DIY/hardware stores, when asked if the company had signed up any of these new-style retailers at the show, Dave Mackay, Business Development Manager said, "We've met some keen garden centres here at Glee which is great to see and was always our remit for this show. However, we're taking a sustainable approach to new sign-ups which offers the right balance to new retailers and our loyal dealer network."

It was only after the show that STIHL made the announcement that it had signed up Dobbies Garden Centres across Scotland for the Compact Cordless range.

It'll be interesting to see if more announcements of similar retailers they met at Birmingham will be forthcoming. Also, will they attend again next year? Perhaps if it's going to be even bigger as the organisers promise, maybe we'll see other machinery companies starting to find their way back into the halls at the NEC?



Handy's Simon Belcher with a display of Webb mowers

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READY WHEN YOU ARE

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Joanne Balmer-Smith of Balmers GM Ltd, based in Burnley, talks to Laurence Gale MSc MBPR about keeping up with the latest developments in order to satisfy their professional clients

A recent trip to Burnley enabled *Service Dealer* the chance to visit the impressive Balmers GM Ltd, a well-established sportsturf and amenity machinery dealer and part of the John Deere UK & Ireland dealer network.

The business was originally established in 1979 by founder David Balmer as Burnley Garden Machinery Centre, repairing domestic machinery and a small amount of commercial equipment from local councils, golf and cricket clubs.

The company currently employs 50 people across both the Wakefield and Burnley depots, offering new and used equipment sales, service, parts and commercial hire to a wide range of customers. These include local authorities, golf clubs, contractors, the leisure industry, equestrian centres and homeowners.

In 2012 John Deere and Balmers were the official suppliers of golf course maintenance equipment to The Open Championship at Royal Lytham and St Annes Golf Club. More recently in September 2015 Balmers' John Deere coverage increased to include the West & South Yorkshire areas with a second depot opening in Wakefield.

Service Dealer caught up with Joanne Balmer-Smith to find out more about the company and how it faces an ever-changing economic climate in the supply of machinery to a diverse turf grass industry.

Service Dealer: What is your role at the company?

Joanne Balmer-Smith: As you can imagine working within a family business, my role is very varied. I've been on and off with the business for the past 20 years and in my time here, I've worked within all the departments – sales, spares and service – which has given me a broad, general knowledge of all aspects of the company.

Balmers GM remains a family business with David and Ann Balmer very much involved, with myself and two brothers, Mark Balmer and Thomas Balmer, all working full time at the company. Alongside David Balmer are Simon Phillips and Darren Barker as Company Directors, heading up the core management team.

SD: Which manufacturers do you represent?

JBS: Being a John Deere main dealer means that we can supply a diverse range of machinery to a diverse range of customers, such as lawnmowers for homeowners, specialist turf equipment for golf, football and sports clubs, commercial mowers for professional users, and a wide range of tractors and utility vehicles to many different types of customers.

To complement this we hold multiple franchises with other manufacturers such as Roberine, Wiedenmann, Allett, Greenmech, Scag, Etesia, Snow-Ex & STIHL.

SD: Do you find it easy to recruit and retain staff?

JBS: Yes, we're very lucky, we can offer a wide range of job opportunities within the company, ranging from sales reps, stores, delivery drivers, admin and mechanical posts.

Being a long-established family-run business, we tend to be able to retain staff longer, with many staying for many years – both Simon Philips and Darren Barker between them have served the company for 67 years.

Due to the diverse range of products that we sell though, from a petrol lawnmower to a hybrid golf machine, finding experienced technicians that are familiar with the product has always been problematic. Ideally, we look for technicians from a ground-care background, but with this proving very difficult at times we often have to look further afield such as the agricultural industry, motor trade or even greenkeepers with a technical background.

In addition, we're always on the lookout for enthusiastic and motivated young people, which is why we've got involved in the John Deere Turf Tech Apprenticeship Programme.

Our current JD Apprentice, Nathanael Kendall, is currently on year two of his four-year apprenticeship. Nathanael is based at our Burnley depot with regular trips down to the new, purpose-built apprentice training facility opened in 2016 by John Deere and training provider ProVQ in Radcliffe-on-Trent,

Nottinghamshire and the John Deere HQ in Langar for the classroom-based learning. The rest of the time Nathanael is very much hands-on in the workshop supervised by his mentor.

For us as a business, the apprenticeship scheme has been a real success story, as the calibre of young people coming through is high and they are turning out to be great additions to the company.

SD: What sorts of clients do you supply?

JBS: A diverse range of turf professionals: sports clubs such as golf, football and rugby clubs; landscapers and professional contractors; local authorities; schools and universities; homeowners and private estates, and caravan and holiday parks.

SD: What changes are you seeing in the industry?

JBS: As environmental directives continue to grow, the increase in hybrid technologies across larger machinery are developing. The modern greens and fairway mowers are a good example of this. Also the acceptance of alternative power such as battery for smaller equipment is really taking off with the increase in the machines' reliability. We fully embrace this technology as we believe any unique selling point over competitive machinery is a bonus.



SD: Do you see continued value in industry exhibitions?

JBS: I feel the importance of industry shows reduces if we still continue with two shows per year. If we could drop to one main show and hold it centrally, then I think we would attract more end users. If you look at the people currently attending shows, it tends to be more trade representatives rather than customers. Something needs to change.

SD: How is the current financial and political situation affecting you as a company?

JBS: We feel that the full impact of Brexit has not yet been fully felt within our industry. It is certainly having a negative impact on recovery. We're finding that our customers are lacking in confidence when it comes to committing to spend, with quite a few saying they are "waiting to see what happens". This means they are often keeping their machinery going for longer periods than originally planned. The upside to this is that we have seen an increase in growth from within both our parts and service departments.

To help sales we offer a wide range of finance solutions for all our customers. John Deere Financial is often used for commercial machinery and package deals, along with independent brokers, whilst we ourselves have recently introduced same-day finance for our end user and homeowner customers.

SD: What is your mix of new and second-hand sales?

JBS: Used machinery sales are an integral part of our business. Unlike new sales, with used we set both the buying and selling price, therefore dictating our own profit margins.

SD: Are you finding the golf market is recovering?

JBS: Yes, but there is tighter control of spending by clubs. Some are also realising they need to invest in the course and machinery to fend off competition from other clubs in the area.

Another factor of the speed of recovery is the increasing pressure on grounds professionals to deliver quality surfaces on reduced budgets. Certainly, in many golf clubs there is an increased pressure on greens staff to justify the benefits of an equipment replacement programme to their members and committees due to the sheer volume of people that have to be consulted.

SD: How have traditional end-of-season services been faring in recent times?

JBS: We've seen a slight decrease due, we believe, to a number of factors. These include reduced budgets, in-house repairs, the rise of independent mobile mechanics and more machines being serviced by hours rather than annually.

However, this has been off-set by an increase in the sale of service packages and extended warranties such as John Deere PowerGard, which give our customers the benefit of fixed-cost maintenance throughout ownership of the machine.

SD: Nearby Burnley Football Club has recently built its new training ground. Did you supply any of the machinery?

JBS: Yes, our Sales representative Andrew Meeks has been looking after their needs. Historically they had a mixture of machinery with other makes of tractors and cutting equipment. They had very little experience with John Deere and Wiedenmann.



Joanne Balmer-Smith with Burnley FC's Head Groundsman Barry O'Brien and Balmers sales representative Andrew Meeks at Burnley's training ground

“THE INCREASE IN HYBRID TECHNOLOGIES ACROSS LARGER MACHINERY IS DEVELOPING”

Andrew arranged a number of demonstrations, to show off an array of mowing and aeration equipment. After demonstrating the 7700A cylinder mower and the 4049R compact tractor, the club chose these two products as the backbone of the fleet, complemented by 1026R and 2036R compacts, two Allet RM rotary mowers, Dennis pedestrian cylinder mowers and a Sisis Littamina and Two Wiedenman Terraspikes. Barry O’Brien, the Head Groundsman, has been very pleased with the support he’s received from us. We visit on a regular basis and look after their needs promptly.

SD: What do you think the future holds for Balmers?

JBS: Much more of the same. We will keep developing our service delivery and continue to build on our family business reputation. Our recent relocation to our new premises at Manchester Road, Dunnockshaw, Burnley in October 2014 has helped us enormously – we now have the ability to store more parts and speed up our repair and servicing services.

We also hope to see further growth in the hiring of machinery. We currently have over 250 machines in our hire fleet, which is continually expanding. Our hire solutions include fixed-term contracts with or without maintenance – for example, we were recently awarded Stockport Metro’s grounds care hire contract, which involves hiring out machinery to cover its needs for the next several years, with the possibility to extend. We also have contracts with other local authorities such as Manchester City Council, as well as housing associations.

As the saying goes, the grass never stops growing! So, there will always be a need to supply machinery and equipment. The trick will be investing into the next generation of mowing equipment and foreseeing the needs of our ever-changing turf grass industry.

SD: Thank you



Burnley FC’s training ground is supplied by Balmers



Company Director Simon Phillips



Matt Lord, a technician at Balmers, in the workshop

COMMITTED TO RETAILING PETROL PRODUCTS THROUGH DEALERS

STIHL used the annual new product press conference at its German HQ to reinforce its support for dealer retailing and set out its new wares – both petrol and battery-powered – for the coming year. Martin Rickatson went along

STIHL has clarified its commitment to dealers at the annual press meeting held at its German HQ, alongside the unveiling of a series of new products, including the industry's first chainsaw with electronic fuel injection and a 'team' operating concept for multiple units of its iMow robotic mower.

Dr Bertram Kandziora, Executive Board Chairman, and Norbert Pick, Executive Board Member for Marketing and Sales, reported a year-on-year turnover rise of 13.4% and a 3.6% rise in global employee numbers. Taking the opportunity offered by a gathering of European trade and consumer press from both domestic and professional titles, they stressed that any retailer of STIHL petrol products must have full workshop facilities, service training and parts support.

"This is why we make a distinction between garden centre or store retailers, which have the potential to be stockists of our cordless products, and dealers, who have the specialist knowledge and resources to sell, support and service our petrol products as well," said Mr Pick.

"As we grow our range we anticipate that the majority of our cordless product sales will be entry-level machines at the lower end of our price range. But while the battery market is growing at a rapid rate, our belief is that this type of power will not replace petrol in professional products any time soon, for reasons such as battery size required for longer working periods."

The plan to gradually merge the Viking product line into the STIHL range, which will be completed by the end of 2018, is ongoing, and STIHL unveiled a selection of consumer products under the new branding, including the first STIHL battery-powered rotary mowers. The RMA 339 C and RMA 448 TC are four-wheel machines with respective cutting widths of 37cm and 46cm, and mono handles for easy grass box access from the left-hand side. Both feature 36V lithium-ion batteries.



Industry's first robot mower 'team' concept

On top of these domestic and semi-professional products were two other developments aimed at professional users. On the chainsaw front, STIHL revealed it has the world's first chainsaw with electronically-controlled fuel injection in the final stages of testing. Fuel mixing on the MS500i is sensor-controlled and the engine has no carburettor.

Meanwhile, Viking, the mowing machinery arm of STIHL that is due to be fully merged into its parent by this time next year, has unveiled what it claims is a world first, with the launch of iMow TeaM – an app which allows the simultaneous control of up to 10 of its iMow mowing robots. The launch could see the machines begin to move from domestic and light professional grounds use towards uptake by more and more professional users, believe Viking and STIHL management.

By controlling up to 10 of the iMow MI 632 M mowers together, the iMow TeaM app can control the cutting of up to 4,000 square metres or more of grass, taking the technology into areas such as football pitch, golf course and park mowing.

The mowers can cut a predetermined area of grass at the same time – even at night, if required – and work independently, with STIHL and Viking suggesting this helps to overcome the difficulties of finding labour and allows more skilled staff to be freed up for other tasks. In addition, they point out that the use of multiple units can help to maintain surfaces such as football pitches within narrow time windows.

“THE USER ALWAYS HAS FULL CONTROL AND ACCESS TO THE MACHINES FROM ANYWHERE VIA THE FREE VIKING APP FOR SMARTPHONES OR TABLETS”

The mowers are coordinated by an intelligent software product, developed by Viking, which organises and oversees the deployment of the team. The user always has full control and access to the machines from anywhere via the free Viking app for smartphones or tablets. Self-explanatory, simple menu guidance is used to ensure operators require no prior technical knowledge, with a ‘wizard’ guiding users through the initial installation. Once the mowing plan has been finalised, the server automatically transmits the data to the whole team.

The iMow TeaM navigates inside a perimeter wire laid out on the ground, and patterns are guided by a randomised algorithm designed to create a neat, even cutting pattern. If the robot mowers are required to devote extra attention to particular areas, up to

four intensive zones, with a choice of three intensity settings, can be programmed via the app. With the aid of smart technology the machines then work more intensively on those areas.

On slopes up to 45% and on difficult terrain the controller responds by throttling back. On-board sensors detect if it starts raining, the battery power drops or the job has been completed, and the robot mower then heads for a docking station where it parks under cover and recharges.

Each machine can use any docking station free at the time. The docking stations can also be sited in a secure area at a distance from the area of grass to be mown, said to be especially advantageous in the case of areas of land that are accessible to all, such as public parks or football grounds.



Dr Bertram Kandziora, executive board chairman, reported a year-on-year turnover rise of 13.4 per cent.

iMow models are mulching mowers, and cutting height can be set within a range of 20 to 60mm, with finely-shredded cuttings returned to the soil as nutrients. The cutting blades are sharpened on both sides and the direction of rotation reverses regularly to ensure even wear. Sensitive lifting sensors fitted to the iMow are said to ensure instant detection when the unit is lifted up, with the blade coming to an immediate stop.

Battery power also for 'multi-tools'

A new addition to the STIHL KombiSystem power tool line is the battery-powered KombiMotor STIHL KMA 130 R, aimed at all-round professional grounds maintenance, particularly in noise-sensitive areas. Like its petrol-powered counterparts, the cordless KombiMotor can be equipped with the established STIHL KombiAttachments, but is practically noiseless in operation. The EC motor starts via a button, with speed selectable in three settings, and the 36V lithium-ion battery is worn as a backpack.

Beyond vegetation management, STIHL unveiled new product developments in other areas, all of which are available to STIHL dealers prepared to commit to the necessary sales and service training. The SE 133 ME is a wet/dry vacuum cleaner for industrial use aimed at tradespeople such as builders dealing with large volumes of dust. Intake speed can be infinitely adjusted as required, and automatic filter cleaning maintains optimum suction power.

Meanwhile, the TS 440 circular cut-off saw is said to have been engineered for limited access cuts, with

extended guard adjustability allowing the top of the cutting wheel to be exposed, and aimed at situations where traditional guard positions limit access, such as the undersides of concrete, metal, cast iron or stone pipes in trenches when the ability to excavate is limited. The expanded guard adjustability is made possible by STIHL's new QuickStop sensor-activated wheel brake technology, said to be a world first and capable of stopping the rotation of the cutting wheel in fractions of a second if kickback occurs.

With supplementary products crucial to dealers looking to provide full equipment packages, STIHL also showed off new protective clothing, including the Advance X-Vent head protection set for chainsaw users. It includes enhanced SNR 28 ear protection and an etched metal visor with high light transmittance which meets EN 1731 regulations. The two-part Protect MS high-visibility protective suit, meanwhile, consists of jacket and trousers, made from breathable, lightweight outer fabric with reinforced knee, elbow and shoulder areas and a high quality cut protection layer on the arms and legs, chest and abdominal area in accordance with EN 381 cut protection class 1.



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AG KIT MAKERS REVEAL PRODUCTS FOR 2018

Ahead of November's Agritechnica, summer 2017 saw the unveiling of a raft of new models from major farm machinery makers. Martin Rickatson rounds up the products some dealers will be selling, and others will be up against

AGCO has made a pitch for the top end of the combine market. With the launch of what's claimed to be the industry's largest machine, topping a three-model line, AGCO dealers are being promised the opportunity to compete with the dominant names in the combine sector, following the launch of the maker's new 'Ideal' harvesters. The introduction marks AGCO's first common platform development, and moves away from the hybrid drum-and-concave plus rotors format of the Massey Ferguson Delta to single or twin rotors for threshing and separation.

Ideal, which will be marketed under both Massey Ferguson and Fendt badging with identical livery and pricing, is one of AGCO's biggest investments in product development, at \$200m (€166m). Its statistics include the biggest grain tank on the market, the fastest unloading rate, and the largest threshing area, calculated as being 31% bigger than anything

else that is currently available.

The combines are made for Europe in AGCO's Breganze, Italy, plant, and engineered at the design centre that remains at the firm's former combine factory in Randers, Denmark. In a significant departure for AGCO's top-end European combine design, there is no drum and concave up front, but instead a beater/feed rotor transfers material straight to the leading impeller element of a 4.8m-long rotor – or a pair on the two larger machines.

Each 600mm-diameter reversible rotor then features a series of rasp bar sections for threshing, followed by Dual Helix fingers for separation.

AGCO claims a 20-50% power and fuel saving over current systems, and there are only 13 belts on the machines, with no belt-driven pumps.

Holding 17,100 litres on the largest model, the manufacturer claims the Ideal 9's grain tank is 18% larger than anything currently available. Discharge rate is 210 litres/sec, said to be 32% faster

than the nearest competitor.

Engines range from a 451hp AGCO Power unit in the Ideal 7, through to MAN 538hp and 647hp engines in the Ideal 8 and Ideal 9.

Drive to the front is through either tyres or suspended tracks, and on either 800 front tyres or 660mm tracks (wider units are available) overall transport width is 3.3m.

Top speed on either of the two front drive arrangements is 40km/hr (25mph).

Cutterbar options include standard or Powerflow units up to 12.2m, with a 15m said to be in development, and AGCO has designed an in-cab AutoDock coupling system that automatically engages all mechanical, hydraulic and electrical connections. The cab is based on that first seen on the company's D-series RoGator self-propelled sprayers.

"The Ideal range results from a global *Voice of the Customer* study, the findings from which prompted our R&D team to start from a blank sheet of paper," said AGCO CEO



AGCO's new common platform Ideal rotary combine is designed to help its dealers increase their presence at the top end of the harvester market

Martin Richenhagen.

“It’s part of our global platform strategy, supporting synergies across different regions to save costs and optimise supply chain management, in a similar development to the Massey Ferguson Global Series tractors. But while in combines it makes sense because of lower volumes, we won’t go fully down this same route in tractors.”

Francesco Quaranta, AGCO vice-president of global harvesting, said the maker wanted 20% of the European combine market within the next three years.

“We’re targeting more than that in this top sector. The Ideal will replace both our hybrid Delta and, for other markets, single rotor Fortia combines.”

Meanwhile, an expanded line of equipment is now available through both Massey Ferguson and Fendt lines, with Fendt dealers also now having available to them

the trailed and self-propelled sprayers formerly sold under the Challenger brand, and new versions of the former Challenger MobilTrac crawler lines, alongside new Lely-based Fendt round balers and forage wagons. See next issue’s Agritechnica report for more details.

INDUSTRY’S FIRST CVT TRACKED TRACTOR FROM CASE IH

Alongside a new eight-step, three-range semi-powershift transmission, ActiveDrive 8, for the Maxxum range (other Case IH powershifts have been similarly renamed), plus a new 175hp (max) six-cylinder Maxxum 150 model heading the line – claimed to be the lightest, smallest tractor in the industry using a six-cylinder engine of this power output – Case IH dealers have updated Puma 185 Multicontroller to Puma 240 CVX models to offer for 2018.

The machines now benefit

from front axle suspension improvements, incorporating a double accumulator for enhanced ride. Puma 185 Multicontroller to Puma 240 CVX models can also now be equipped with Adaptive Steering Control (ASC) variable-rate steering, while Puma Multicontroller and Puma CVX tractors can now come with ISOBUS Class III, making possible two-way data transfer between the tractor and any compatible implement, and allowing the implement to feed back information that can then control tractor settings such as forward speed, as well as allow implement features to be controlled via the AFS 700 terminal screen.

But the big news from Case IH is the industry’s first tracked tractor with a continuously-variable transmission. CVT will be available on the Quadtrac 470, 500 and 540 tractors and wheeled Steiger equivalents, while the default



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transmission on all models remains the 18-speed powershift.

The new CVXDrive transmission can be operated to work at a desired forward speed or engine speed, with Automatic Productivity Management software then able to adjust engine and transmission management accordingly. At 617 peak horsepower, the Quadtrac 540 is reckoned to offer the highest available power of any CVT tractor on the market. Comparable figures for the Quadtrac 500 CVX and Quadtrac 470 CVX are 558hp and 525hp. The new transmission is targeted at those seeking greater fuel economy and ease of operation, says Case IH. Top speed is 43km/hr.

CLAAS UPDATES TRACTOR LINES

There are updates and additions to the line of Claas mowers, rakes, tedders and balers for 2018 – more next issue – alongside some significant tractor range revisions.

The Arion power bracket is now bookended by the 125hp 510 and the 185hp (205hp max) 660. Changes to the Hexashift six-speed powershift include a cruise control function and a Smart Stop brake/clutch feature. The continuously-variable CMatic option now includes foot throttle deactivation for the cruise control and two storable engine droop values.

A completely new ProActiv front axle suspension system features a triangular suspension cylinder arrangement in which the units are angled outwards, while 50hr grease point numbers have been cut to four. A new Dynamic Steering system allows the driver to alter the number of steering wheel turns needed to achieve the same steering lock.

All Arions are available with either the established five-pillar cab or a new four-pillar option with full-length left-side door, inherited from larger models. In addition to the 110L/min load-sensing hydraulic

system, there is a 150L/min option.

Meanwhile, Claas has introduced a new mid-spec level for Arion 500/600 and Axion 800 tractors. Between the mechanical spool valve CIS specification and the CEBIS ‘electronic’ tractors is a new CIS+ spec for customers seeking electronic spool valves but not the level of technology offered by CEBIS. CIS+ is available for tractors with either Hexashift powershift or CMatic CVT transmissions, both of which are operated using the Claas DriveStick. Specification includes the ElectroPilot joystick – which now features shuttle buttons – and 7in CIS pillar display, which as well as providing information can control valve timing and flow rates, headland management sequences

and ISOBUS implements. Top-spec tractors get a new CEBIS touchscreen terminal, which now includes a quick-adjust Direct Access feature for frequently-used functions, operated by tapping the machine silhouette on the display, or by the armrest controller.

Claas has also refreshed its Axion 900 line, which now includes higher engine outputs with a new 445hp 960 top model, refined CMatic CVT control and the new CEBIS touch display. Up to eight spool valves are fed by 150 or 220L/min load-sensing hydraulic systems, controllable via rocker switches, the ElectroPilot four-way joystick or configurable armrest function buttons and multifunction control lever. ●



Case IH now offers a CVT option on its Quadtrac 470, 500 and 540 models, and their wheeled equivalents



Revision of the Claas Axion 900 line sees higher engine outputs across the board, with a new 445hp 960 top model

DEUTZ-FAHR NEW DEALER OPPORTUNITIES



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ELECTRIC AVENUE

That's where the newly renamed Stiga Ltd wants its dealers to rock down to. Editor Steve Gibbs reports from its 2017 conference

Dealers filing into the Stiga Ltd (formally GGP) conference at the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham during September, found themselves greeted by the Eddie Grant classic *Electric Avenue* blasting out of the PA system. It didn't take Sherlock Holmes to work out that this was a clue indicating what was to come.

The three-day event was very well attended this year. Across the Tuesday to Thursday period Stiga said around 600 visitors, over three-quarters of its UK customer base, visited Birmingham. In financial terms this represented 86% of the company's turnover.

National Sales Manager, Gary Whitney, was first on stage, joking that next year they are going to need a bigger room.

He praised the Stiga dealers for their hard work over the past year, which he described as being an

"unusual and somewhat difficult" 12 months.

Gary talked of how prices and margins had been under pressure, primarily due to the value of sterling since the Brexit vote. He confirmed, though, that the company's intention was to protect its dealers, and their customers, as much as it could from these "severe fluctuations" in the exchange rate by taking a longer-term view.

Gary was followed on stage by Duncan Martin, Managing Director of the company, who offered his traditional State of the Union presentation.

He began by addressing the company's name change, saying the parent company had reverted to using Stiga as its global branding as it reflects the "importance and the energy which the company is deploying in its aim to become a one billion-euro global company".

He confirmed, though, that

in the UK the company will not cease in its concentration on the Mountfield and Atco brands – promising to continue to invest heavily in marketing and product development.

"We're committed to providing a comprehensive, UK-focussed product range for both of our leading UK brands," Duncan said. "Our aim is to bring the Stiga name forward to be as recognised as Atco or Mountfield."

Looking back on the season just gone, Duncan described it as "a season of two halves." There was a very good early start with plenty of sales right through to early May when the weather slowed everything right down.

"From then on," Duncan said, "it feels like we all had to work very hard for every sale." He said this reluctance by the consumer to spend freely had hit the mass channels particularly hard, with the likes of B&Q and Homebase reporting up to double-digit percentage falls in like-for-like sales.

However, he was pleased to say that after Stiga announced itself as a £50m company at last year's conference, it had maintained that this year, increasing slightly to £51.7m. A like-for-like comparison showed this to be an 11% growth – the success of which Duncan put down to its specialist dealers, who he said have been "out-performing the market".

Cordless growth

Duncan then went on to talk about where he believes future growth for the dealers will come from: cordless machinery.

From a start of virtually nothing in 2015, this year Stiga sold 20,000 cordless units. "We believe 100% in



Line up of Stiga cordless mowers

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“OUR AIM IS TO BRING THE STIGA NAME FORWARD TO BE AS RECOGNISED AS ATCO OR MOUNTFIELD”

the cordless market and the growth it offers,” he said. “Globally Stiga is investing hugely in this sector.”

He continued: “Cordless is such a big opportunity for dealers. We need to embrace and welcome this development. Dealers need to be the experts in the showroom and in the workshop.”

Addressing those who still might hold some scepticism of the sector, Duncan said, “I know some dealers have concerns over the lack of potential servicing revenue which cordless products might bring, but cordless products still go wrong and they still get damaged in use. We as specialist dealers need to understand the products. We need to be the experts that customers can turn to for good, sound advice and back-up.”

“We are confident that year-on-year growth of the cordless products will not slow down. It

will be bigger than petrol in the foreseeable future – certainly in petrol hand-held products. The decline in that sector will be huge. Cordless will without a doubt step-up and take over the biggest part of that marketplace.

“Battery power is the future,” Duncan stated. “This is a new technology in an old industry. We’ve been wishing for a development like this to come along so we can sell more products and this is our opportunity.”

He encouraged the dealers in attendance to get on board and to become the experts in the field.

“It opens machinery up to young and old,” he said. “Cordless includes everybody who wants to enjoy their garden.”

In quite dramatic terms he described cordless as the “biggest garden machinery development in a generation”.

To underline Stiga’s commitment to the sector, a brand new lithium-ion-powered, out-front ride-on mower was revealed on stage to the dealers. It was said that the new e-Park 220 will run for one hour 30 minutes on one charge –which takes three hours 50 minutes to complete from flat to full. The unit will retail for £7,000.

The rest of the conference was taken up with presenting Stiga Ltd’s extensive range of machines, across their brands, to the dealers. Following these presentations there was plenty of time for everybody to get outside and try the equipment out for themselves.

Gary Whitney closed the conference, asking the dealers in attendance to be confident in growing their business with Stiga. “Choosing to grow with us,” he promised, “will make your business stronger.” ●



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SUPPLY AND SALE OF TOP HANDLE CHAINSAWS

Dr Keith Hawken, Technical and Standards Director of the AEA, highlights the top handle chain saw scenario

Chainsaws for tree service are for professional use and are more commonly known as top handle chainsaws. They are primarily a different design from rear handle chainsaws as the positioning of the 'rear' handle is sited on the top of the machine. This handle layout permits the chainsaw to be used one-handed when needed under particular circumstances. These chainsaws are engineered to offer balance and manoeuvrability in trained hands, allowing the operator flexibility to work from varying angles and positions when high in the tree, whether from a rope and harness, platform or climbing within the tree.

However, it is the expressed opinion of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that this design ignores one of the fundamental design aspects of rear handle chainsaws, namely that they should be held with both hands when being operated. The HSE's concern is that one-handed use may result in the operator having less control over the chainsaw when used that way.



All operators of top handle chainsaws must be trained before attempting to use one

During discussions back in 1997 on an International/European safety and testing standard for top handle chainsaws there was an agreement that manufacturers would control the sale of this particular type of chainsaw to trained tree service operators only. Supply and sales control would be achieved via their dealers and distributors.

Manufacturers were requested to explain and provide instructions to their dealer/distribution network on what steps they could take to satisfy themselves that they were selling a top handle chainsaw to a bone-fide tree service operator or company. This was achieved by several options, either:

- **Through a long-term business relationship whereby the dealer knows that it is a tree service company or operator; or,**
- **Through the potential purchaser producing business correspondence that is specific to tree service operations and for this it has been suggested business insurance that was specific to tree climbing operations; or,**
- **The purchaser produces certificates of competence that are specific to tree climbing and use of a chainsaw off the ground.**

There was also a requirement to display specific warning information on the packaging box explaining that use is restricted to tree service operators only. In addition, a safety information leaflet was shipped inside the box which included details on the safe use of top handle chainsaws and, in

particular, when they could be used one-handed.

This agreement remains in place today.

Unfortunately, with the advent of distance/on-line selling and marketing there have been instances where top handle chainsaws have been offered for general sale to non-trained operators, increasing the risk and likelihood of serious accidents.

All sellers, dealers, and distributors of new or used top handle chainsaws have a responsibility to ensure that this type of equipment is only supplied to trained professional operators thereby minimising the risk of exposure to serious accidents that can be inflicted when in un-trained hands.

As an added safety precaution it is also of paramount importance for the operator to be made aware, and personally make sure, that all safety personal protective equipment is worn and used correctly when using a chainsaw to help prevent injury; ie

- **A safety helmet**
- **Eye protection**
- **Hearing protection**
- **Appropriate gloves for the task**
- **Leg protection**
- **Protective boots**
- **Non-snag outer clothing and high-visibility clothing is recommended.**

Further information on top handle and rear handle chainsaws is available on the HSE safety information leaflet on chainsaws: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg317.pdf> and through the Arboricultural Association. ●

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A CASE OF AS YOU WERE

Dealers report little change on previous year

The results of our autumn 2017 dealer survey saw little change from when we conducted a similar survey at this time last year – if anything the results could be read as slightly less encouraging than in autumn 2016.

With the key question of “how has your overall business compared to last year?”, there was an even split between respondents who said it was up and those who had said it was down (38% each). This contrasts with 2016 when a clear majority (56%) said that overall business had improved.

Taking the different facets of the dealership’s business individually, the biggest disappointment for a majority of dealers who responded was that machine sales were down on 2016 – 56% said machines sales were fewer than previously, compared with only 35% the year before.

Performing well again though, for our respondents, was the service department – 50% said they saw an

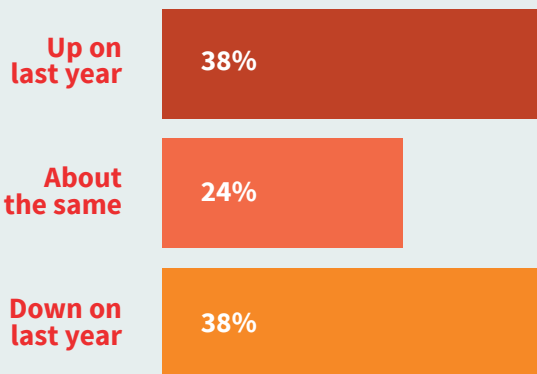
improvement here in 2017, which while not as many as last year when 62% said their service department was up, is still a significant number more than who reported a downturn (38%).

Parts sales, according to dealers who took our survey, have proved to be the most constant, with 52% saying levels have remained about the same this year.

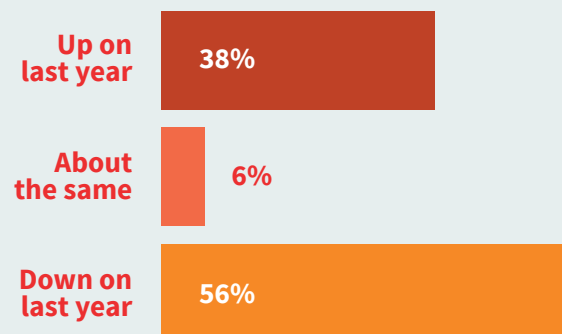
Dealers who took our survey on the whole said that charge-out rates haven’t changed much this year – 50% said they were set at between £30-£40 per hour, which is what most said in 2016 as well.

Finally, in terms of staffing, while most who responded once again stated that levels had remained the same in 2017, a decent number clearly felt that business was doing well enough to warrant taking on more people. 27% said they had increased their number of employees, which compared with only 14% saying that last year, which has to be seen as a positive.

How has your overall business compared to 2016?



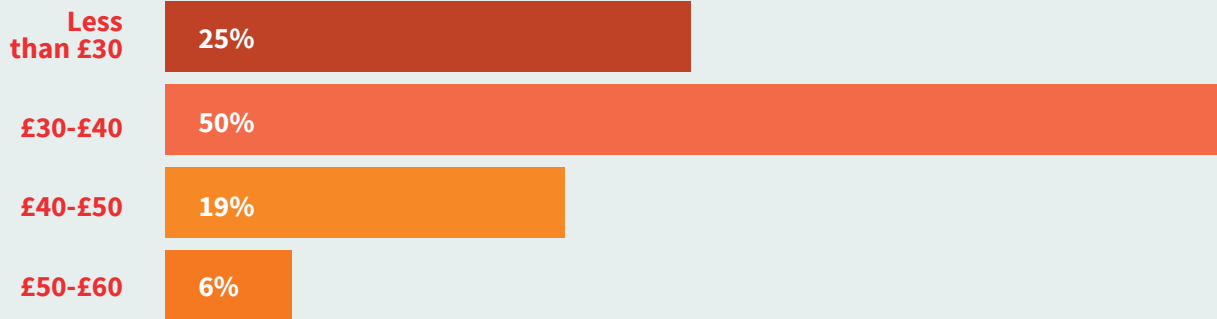
How have your machine sales (whole goods) performed this year against 2016?



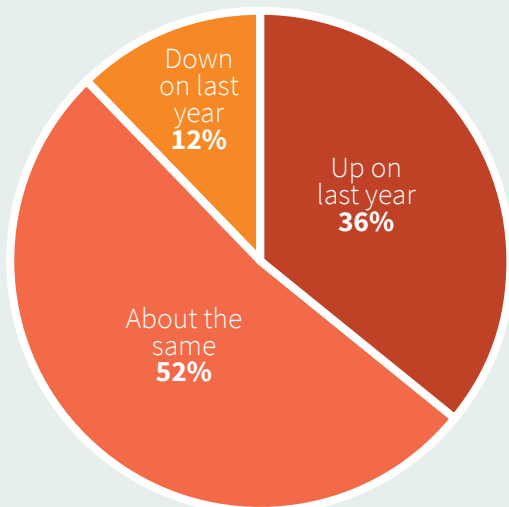
How has your service department/workshop performed this year compared with 2016?



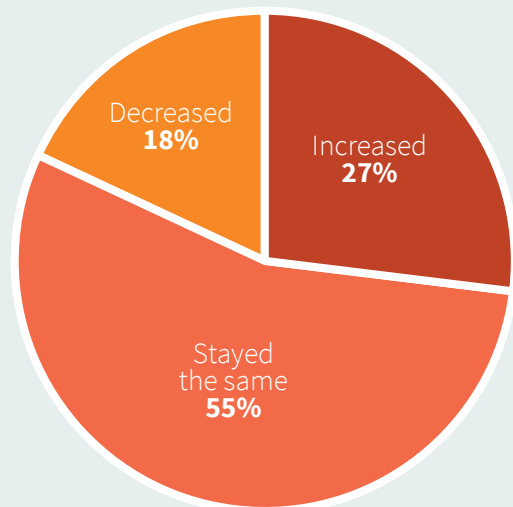
What is your current retail labour charge out rate per hour?



How have your parts and accessories sales performed this year compared with 2016?



How have your staffing levels been this year compared with 2016?



YOUR SAY

WE ASKED: WHAT HAVE BEEN THE HIGHLIGHTS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS OF 2017 FOR YOUR DEALERSHIP?

- This season has been a very good one for all departments, although we have suffered like most with product availability from most manufacturers. I do understand why, as we have seen a large increase in demand this season, and if most dealers have seen the same as us, they have not been able to keep the supply chain moving. We didn't foresee the demand growth for this year, so how can the trade persecute the manufacturers for non-supply or extended lead times? Frustrating, yes – but still, wow, what a season!
- About the end of June we seemed to hit a wall. Sales slowed and haven't really recovered.
- Our highlight was to clear our winter-stock and then re-order from virtually all our machinery suppliers. We were mostly disappointed with the weather.
- We have experienced good sales of petrol brushcutters and spares this season, but extremely poor sales of petrol mowers. We've also seen a big increase in service work and repairs. On the downside, there is plenty of competition from the internet and the sheds making selling existing stock very difficult. However, new customers do keep on finding us.
- Automowers and battery products sales have been up – as have small ride-ons/garden tractors. Walk-behinds have been about the same by volume, but up by value
- Highlights – we're still trading! Disappointments – the weather!

SALTEX SET TO SHINE

Plenty to interest specialist dealers at the NEC

SALTEX 2017 takes place once again at the NEC, Birmingham, from 1st-2nd November.

Now well established in its indoor home at this later time of year, SALTEX once again will offer dealers an excellent opportunity to check out new products, meet with suppliers and discuss with colleagues the issues of the day.

The *Service Dealer* team will be attending the show on both days, so why not come along to our stand at **M030** and say hi?

At the time of going to press the show had attracted over 250 exhibitors – a number that organisers believed was set to grow further in the weeks leading up to the event. Confirmed to return are a number of leading brand names spanning the whole turf management industry, including manufacturers and suppliers of products and services for the maintenance of pitches, grounds, landscaping, parks and estates.

SALTEX will also once again boast features such as:

- **Learning LIVE** – an all-encompassing free-to-attend education programme offering grounds and open space practitioners across all disciplines, volunteer as well as professional, the chance to increase their CPD points.
- **Ask the Expert** – free pitchcare advice from the IOG's team of regional pitch advisers based on the IOG Hub.

- **Outdoor demonstrations** – providing an opportunity to see a number of products in action directly outside the SALTEX halls 6, 7 and 8.
- **The SALTEX College Cup** – a national student-led sports-turf challenge sponsored by Ransomes.
- **Pathology & Soil Science LIVE** – allowing visitors to look in detail at the symptoms of some common turfgrass fungal disease problems.
- **The Young Groundsmen's Conference**, sponsored by Rigby Taylor and Top Green – an ideal opportunity for young people looking to advance their career in the grounds care industry.
- **The IOG Industry Awards** – the UK's biggest celebration of groundsmanship held on the evening of the first day (1st November) at the National Motorcycle Museum.
- **New for 2017! The Job Clinic** – the chance to receive one-to-one advice from industry expert Frank Newberry on how to progress a career, write a compelling CV and perform well in an interview.

SALTEX 2017 is free to attend and open on the 1st November from 9am-5pm and on the 2nd November from 9am-4pm. To register your attendance and beat the queues visit www.iogsaltex.com

WHAT TO SEE

GRILLO GETS OUT FRONT AT THE NEC

New FD900

At the show Grillo will unveil its new out-front mower, the FD900.

The company says this small compact machine is suitable for the professional user requiring performance and cutting quality in a robust, unique design.

Powered by a three-cylinder 26hp Yanmar diesel engine with a maximum road speed of 15km/h, the FD 900 features a high performance three-bladed 126cm cutter deck. Its two main blades are equipped with steel

fans to give increased collection performance.

The hi tip 750L collector has a reciprocating baffle to ensure the clippings are dispersed evenly and to fill the collector to capacity.

Each time the collector is emptied the grass chute is automatically cleaned.

Permanent 4wd, centralised height of cut, certified ROPS and full road kit are just some of the features on this new machine.

STAND E065



STIHL TO HIGHLIGHT PRO CORDLESS RANGE

Centre stage will be the FSA 130 brushcutters

STIHL's lithium-ion PRO Cordless product range will be showcased at SALTEX.

Taking centre stage will be the new FSA 130s, described as powerful and lightweight brushcutters specifically designed for working on large areas of thick grass at length.

Visitors to the stand will be able to see up close the HSA 94 hedge trimmers, suitable for maintenance teams working in urban areas, especially around schools, hospitals and housing estates. The high-performance and robust professional cordless hedge trimmer is available in a heavy-duty cutting or a high-speed trimming version.

The BGA 100 will also be on display, a light and quiet hand-held blower that comes with three power stages as well as a boost mode, suitable for use in noise-sensitive areas.

All the products can be used in conjunction with backpack machinery, offering the high capacity contractors require in the grounds care industry.

Simon Hewitt, Head of Marketing at STIHL GB, said: "The popularity of cordless tools continues to rise and exhibiting at SALTEX provides us with the perfect opportunity to highlight to contractors how our lithium-ion PRO range can handle the toughest of jobs. We are very much looking forward to seeing new and existing customers at the show."

STAND H070



NEW DEVELOPMENTS FROM EXCALIBUR

Including new CRM and Postcode Lookup features

Excalibur Software says it has been gaining momentum in the past two years since its official launch at SALTEX 2015.

The software was developed by brothers Gareth and Emyr Jenkins to suit their dealership, as the various solutions that were already available didn't meet their needs.

They have since rolled out that software to a growing dealer network with companies from Aberdeen to Devon utilising it to improve their businesses, with a constant stream of updates and new features being developed and incorporated since the initial launch.

Recent developments, including the new Customer

Relationship Management (CRM) side of the software and the new Postcode Lookup feature were displayed at Rochford's annual roadshow which took place in early September.

Sales and Marketing director Emyr Jenkins said "The Rochford event is a key date in our calendar. The support from all the staff and management at Rochford has been incredible. Giving us the opportunity to pitch the benefits of Excalibur directly to an existing and substantial dealer network has helped us to expand our sales greatly."

Programming Director Gareth Jenkins said, "The next phase for Excalibur is to focus on the Hire Module. Although not every dealer will hire out machinery there are enough out there to make this a focus of the software.

"Our expanded focus on the customer-relationship management aspects of Excalibur over the past year has seen us drastically improve our communication with our existing customer base, which is the foundation for all dealerships within the garden machinery industry."

STAND A053



Gareth and Emyr Jenkins introduce dealers to the system at a Rochford Roadshow.

TOTAL BUSINESS SOLUTION

Offered to dealers by Evopos

Denis Bullen, MD of Dorset-based Evopos, will be demonstrating the company's all-in-one business software package which combines desktop, web and mobile technology.

Denis says Evopos is built for modern business using Microsoft .NET and SQL technologies. As an all-in-one business management system it is built to handle customer data, workshop service, whole goods, stock control, accounting, web integration and more.

Says Denis, "Most business software can lack in the user interface department, however Evopos has a simple interface which is easy to learn and consistent. We take great pride in its usability.

"Evopos is scalable, made up of modules which you can pick and choose. Basically you are not going to pay for something you don't need. Software that costs less and does more."

Key benefits include:

- Complete customer order tracking;
- Links to supplier price files, electronic catalogues and EDI ordering systems;
- Price levels – customer pricing;
- Special and back ordering options;
- Easy to learn and simple to operate;
- Workshop history stays with the whole goods even if it is brought and sold to another.

"Stock control is a key function," Denis continues. "It allows you to target your slow and fast-moving items, monitor stock levels, and review detailed history to help you make sure you keep only the moving stock at the best prices.

"The workshop module will allow you to book in jobs and organise your engineers, allowing you to generate reports that can help you to improve efficiency and produce time sheets. This all leads to a better customer service.

"The whole goods module allows you to buy, sell and track any serialised item, providing you with a detailed history for each unit."

Ecommerce site solutions

Evopos believes many websites dealers use can lack an option to sell product online or the 3rd party ecommerce site does not import online sales orders directly into the dealer system in use. This can make the job of processing sales orders extremely time consuming.

Denis Bullen says, "Recently we have been dedicated to providing our dealers with the perfect solution for managing their web stores. We integrate with some of the most popular ecommerce platforms around including Magento, WooCommerce, nopCommerce and many more. There's no need to redo any of the hard work and time put in to creating your online presence. You'll be able to link with Evopos in just a few minutes. Evopos will upload your stock and downloading your orders instantly, increasing productivity and saving you time and money.

"Evopos also has its own ecommerce solution, a low-cost option for a complete website with a live link to your stock so customers are never let down by incorrect stock levels. Our websites can be up and running in as little as a couple of hours, ensuring you can maximise your online potential."

STAND K122



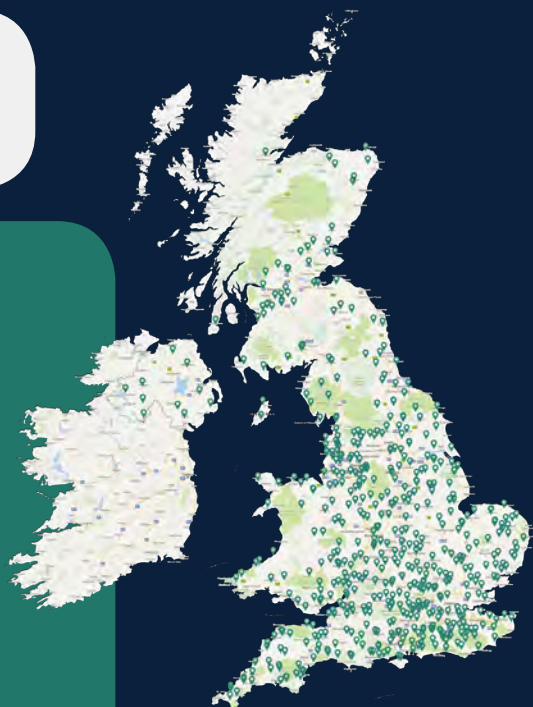
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CORDLESS TAKES CENTRE STAGE FOR MAKITA

Growing pro garden machinery range

Makita will be exhibiting within the BALI Zone this year.

The BALI Zone features and promotes BALI Registered Affiliate and Contractor members. Also confirmed for 2017 are Boningale Nurseries, M&M Timber, Green-tech, Ground Control and British Sugar TOPSOIL.

The Makita UK stand will showcase the ever-growing

garden machinery range suitable for professional landscaping contractors, groundsmen and forestry workers.

“We’re delighted to be joining the BALI Zone at this year’s SALTEX and to be teaming up with other leading names in the landscaping industry,” says Mark Earles, Business

Development Manager, Makita UK. “Our cordless range will be taking

centre stage but visitors will be able to learn about the entire range, including our petrol and electric models.”

The company says the 18v battery platform makes it economically viable for the tool owner as there is the option to purchase the ‘body only’ version of the tool if they already have the battery. This battery platform continues to expand with innovations such as the twin-18v battery 36v application.

Makita says many of its ground-care machines offer a considerable reduction in vibration and can be used all day without harm to the operator. Also the firm boasts that these machines are considerably quieter while still delivering a professional performance. This quiet approach means teams can work around parks, schools, hospitals and cemeteries without causing nuisance and annoyance.

STAND K190d



EUROPEAN DEBUT FOR WALKER MOWER

Zero turns on display

Birmingham sees the European debut for the new S18 zero turn mower from Walker Mowers. This new model powered by a Briggs & Stratton 18hp Vanguard engine comes with a range of

cutting widths.

Walker Mowers say that a recent US two year study, undertaken by themselves, recorded an average 20%-25% improved productivity when using a Walker out front zero turn machine against many competitor machines. The full results of this study can be found at the www.walker.com website.

In addition to the new S18 model, three other models will be included on their stand.

Newly appointed UK sales staff and representatives from the US including family member Ryan Walker – will be present to discuss the new growing opportunities for both dealers and commercial operators.

Stand E010



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BATTERY POWER FROM FGM CLAYMORE

XD garden tools on show

FGM Claymore will be showing new products including the Snapper range of XD Battery Powered Garden Tools.

Powered by Briggs & Stratton, the complete system includes a leaf blower, string trimmer, hedge trimmer, chainsaw and brand new for 2018 are three cordless lawnmower models (push and self-propelled, 19" and 21")

Launching at the show is a new addition to their zero turn range from Simplicity, the SZT250. The model offers a zero turning radius, front and rear suspension and rollers for striping.

Other products on the stand will include Tanaka and Harry brushcutters and hedge trimmers and a selection of Masport lawnmowers. Orec's commercial petrol rotary mower (FL500BC) and Rabbit Ride-On Brush Cutter (RM980F) will also be available to view.

Stand D012



TWO STANDS FOR T H WHITE

In order to showcase Ferris, Wright, Spider and Jensen

T H WHITE is taking two stands at SALTEX 2017 to showcase its brands including Ferris and Wright mowers, Spider slope mowers and Jensen woodchippers.

The company says it will be seeking the right dealer partners in certain areas of the UK with whom mutually-beneficial relationships can be built.

Visitors will be able to get hands-on with three Ferris ride-on mowers: the petrol 52in IS®2100Z, the new 61in diesel-powered IS®2600Z and top-of-the-range V-twin 72in IS®3200Z which combines power with dual, commercial Hydro-Gear® ZT-5400 Powertrain® transaxles. On show as well will be

the Ferris 400S light commercial zero-turn.

Also built in the USA, a Wright Stander 32in will be displayed together with the Stander i36in and Sport i48in models.

Spider remote-controlled slope mowers will be represented by the original 18hp ILD-01 and the ILD-02 models, both of which feature patented 360° unlimited steering, forward and reverse 4wd, an integral mulching kit, low fuel consumption and fantastic manoeuvrability. With the optional winch they can operate on slopes up to 55°.

For smaller tasks there is the Spider Mini. The latest machine in the Spider range is the 3RIDER which offers the choice of operation as a ride-on mower on slopes up to 15°, or as a remote-controlled slope mower on steeper terrain.

Newest addition to the brands imported by T H WHITE is Jensen woodchippers. Until now, Jensen's presence in the UK has been limited, but T H WHITE is now importing Jensen machines, stocking all necessary parts in the UK, and is rapidly developing a dealer network to deliver sales and service across the country. At SALTEX Jensen will have its own stand directly across the aisle from the main T H WHITE Machinery Imports stand. On show will be three of Jensen's most popular and competitively priced machines: the A530 petrol, A530L diesel and the A540 Spider (tracked).

STANDS H190 and H202



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ENGINEERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PROFESSIONALS

The skills shortage is a serious issue affecting a number of UK market sectors, not least the turfcare and agricultural industries. Here, KEITH MILLER, Kubota UK's Service and Training Manager, discusses the issues and outlines how Kubota is meeting the skills challenge head-on

There's no doubt that a key challenge facing the groundcare and agricultural markets both today and tomorrow is a lack of candidates with the right skills that can grow and develop with a business and add real value in the future.

The good news is that in recent years there has been a renewed focus to drive up the number of apprenticeships. According to Government statistics, apprenticeship participation now stands at a record level, with over half a million apprentices starting in the 2015-16 academic year.

However, it's not all positive, with the engineering sector in particular being one that is suffering severely from a lack of applicants with the required skills and experience. In fact, a recent report commissioned by Engineering UK projected that the country will require 1.8 million new

engineers and technicians by 2025.

What's clear is that if we, as an industry sector, are going to continue to grow and innovate, the skills shortage needs to be addressed and we must become a more attractive proposition to fresh, young and talented people.

One of the first stumbling blocks to achieving this is the perception that apprenticeships are deemed less valuable and less prestigious with young people (and their parents) compared with a university education. It is the job of our industry, the Government, schools and FE colleges now to combat these misconceptions and promote the benefits of on-the-job training.

Another issue for the turfcare and agricultural sectors is actually how appealing young engineers see our industry. This is a difficult one to address, because for those undertaking more general mechanical engineering courses,

the lure of working in automotive engineering for the likes of JLR and Aston Martin for example, is more tempting and attractive for many younger people than working within the groundcare or agricultural machinery sectors for instance.

Whatever opportunities we have as an industry to address these issues and 'sell' the benefits of a career in machinery can only be a positive step forward. For me personally, I've been involved in this sector all my working life, having joined Kubota after completing my agricultural apprenticeship. It's been a fantastic experience working in a dynamic and innovative sector and one that I'm extremely proud to have been involved in for many years.

Kubota UK takes its commitment to bringing this next generation of talent into the machinery sector seriously and has introduced a number of initiatives to ensure we deliver this promise. We believe investing in apprenticeships is essential to Kubota's future success, as well as helping the next generation of service engineers achieve their potential.

They are also a great way of ensuring that your company is building a workforce with the skills that are needed specifically for the business we are in, which will enable us to grow and develop, as well as offering young people an opportunity to kick-start an exciting and rewarding career.

Kubota Apprenticeship Programme

We have developed excellent affiliations with key educational institutes such as Harper Adams



Keith Miller, Kubota UK's service and training manager



University, Warwickshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture, Brooksby Melton College and the CITB National Construction College to provide a stream of suitable candidates who are ready to enter the industry and further their learning.

Our apprenticeship scheme tailors the education of apprentices in accordance with the opportunities identified within Kubota's infrastructure. By training students from the very beginning exactly in line with Kubota's beliefs, employees are highly motivated, committed and supportive of the company's business objectives.

By doing this, we achieve greater levels of employee retention upon completion of the scheme. Our aim is to produce engineers who will go on to become ambassadors for Kubota. Typically, the apprenticeships range between three to four years, as this is a recognised successful timescale in terms of achieving measurable competencies. The apprenticeship scheme offers candidates an NVQ in Service and Engineering (at least Level 3), which affords valuable exposure for career progression.

Apprentices are given a broad range of service engineering activities as part of the programme, from intensive product training, parts, diagnostics and the rebuilding of machines. It is designed to give them a complete overview of the company's service function and experience of Kubota's first-class aftersales operation.

The latest recruits to the Kubota programme are Charles Barnard, who has joined the company's service team to work towards his Agricultural Land Engineering course (NVQ Level 2) at Brooksby Melton College in Leicestershire. Charles joins George Nowell, who is also working towards an Agricultural Engineering degree from Harper Adams University, and Matt Davies, who is studying towards his Groundcare Horticultural Engineering apprenticeship (NVQ Level 3) at Pershore College.

Investing in our workforce

Kubota also actively engages its current workforce through a programme aimed at upskilling employees' business acumen. The qualifications include customer service, business administration

and team leadership, to name but a few. This further education takes place within the immediate work environment, effectively minimising disruption while maximising impact.

It's not just apprentices and staff that we are investing in. In addition to this, we've been working in partnership with Harper Adams University and its sandwich year courses and have recently taken on our second 12-month placement student.

For the past academic year, Will Barker supported our growing marketing team as part of his Business Studies degree, gaining a valuable insight into how we as a business market our brand.

Will supported the team to help it meet its objectives and deliver a centre of marketing excellence for Kubota UK. This included working on the extensive programme of events and exhibitions we undertake, merchandise, dealer support and marketing communications such as advertising, social media and PR.

This year, we are pleased to welcome Jack Marris, who is also from the university.

APPRENTICESHIP RULING REVERSED

Level 2 now on approved list

On 7th September the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) informed the Land-based Engineering – Training and Education Committee Ltd (LE-TEC) that its previous decision to withdraw the Landbased Engineering Level 2 Service Engineer apprenticeship from the Government’s approved apprenticeship list has been reversed.

This decision was made after consideration of the representations made to them by LE-TEC, supported by the recent survey results. Furthermore, the newly updated Level 2 Service Engineer apprenticeship standard and its associated assessment plan have been approved.

The Land-based Engineering Level 2 Service Engineer apprenticeship

now joins the Level 3 Technician apprenticeship as being fully approved and deliverable.

Publication of both the Level 2 and Level 3 Land-based Engineering standards will appear on the Government’s website when the IfA funding committee has reviewed the funding bands as being appropriate.

Meanwhile the advice given by the IfA is that training providers and employers should enrol new apprentices onto the published apprenticeship standards to enable them to start immediately and transfer the apprentices onto the new standards when they are published.

LE-TEC is the Land-based Engineering Training and Education Committee Ltd. It is a registered company formed from three industry organisations representing the Land-based Engineering sector, the Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA), the British Agricultural and Garden Machinery Association (BAGMA) and the Institute of Agricultural Engineers (IAgrE).



AEA LAUNCHES NEW TRAINING FOR BUSINESS PROSPECTUS

Bespoke courses for the land-based and agricultural industries

The AEA has launched its *Training for Business* prospectus for 2017-18.

The association offers bespoke courses for the land-based and agricultural industries and said that the pricing structure has once again been held at introduction season levels.

A spokesperson said, “These courses offer exceptional training at very reduced costs to our members.”

Contact Angela on ab@aea.uk or 01733 207602 for further information or download the prospectus from the website at tinyurl.com/ybk89hkq.



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INSOLVENCY

PHOENIX COMPANIES RISING FROM THE ASHES

Occasionally firms are set up to fail through the deliberate actions of their management with a view to defrauding creditors. In certain situations, directors of the failed company turn to what is known as a 'phoenix' company, say *Paul Taylor and Sarah Carlton of Fox Williams LLP*.

This describes the practice of carrying on the same business or trading successively through a series of companies which in turn become insolvent – the idea being that a new business rises from the ashes of an old one. Each time this happens, the business of the insolvent company (but not its debts), is transferred to a new, but similar, phoenix company, usually through the use of a pre-pack administration.

A pre-pack administration involves the business of the liquidated company being sold as a 'going concern' through a process orchestrated by an appointed insolvency practitioner. The insolvent company then ceases to trade and

might enter into formal insolvency proceedings or be dissolved.

Phoenixing often harbours negative connotations, mainly because of the actions of directors who force their companies into insolvency to then purchase back company assets through the new company, leaving behind any liabilities in the insolvent company.

The governing law of England and Wales allows shareholders, directors and employees of insolvent companies to set up new companies to carry on a similar business, so long as the individuals involved aren't personally bankrupt or disqualified from acting in the management of a limited company, and the trading name of the new company is not the same or similar to that of the insolvent company. Setting up as a new entity is legal if the process has been managed properly.

There are strict regulations placed on the directors of an insolvent company and any appointed insolvency practitioner regarding the use of a phoenix company to carry on the business of an insolvent company. The intention of the regulations is to protect the interests of unsecured creditors and to prevent company directors from escaping their obligations. It is a criminal offence under the Insolvency Act to knowingly carry on business with an intention to defraud creditors. If this is proven an insolvency practitioner may make the decision that the director is liable to make a contribution to the company's assets on winding up.

Directors who don't conduct business in line with their legal obligations face potential disqualification from acting as a company director.

Remember: it is legal for a phoenix company to be formed from the insolvency of a prior company. However, any director that is subject to a disqualification order or a bankruptcy order cannot act as a director of the newly formed company.

Further reading at tinyurl.com/ycccgun6



Edited by Adam Bernstein

BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

Harassment and bullying remain significant workplace issues despite increasing awareness of the problem, writes *Adam Bernstein, SME Digest Editor*.

Indeed, the Acas Workplace Trends 2016 report noted that “last year over 20,000 calls were taken by the Acas helpline on bullying and harassment with some people reporting truly horrifying incidents including humiliation, ostracism, verbal and physical abuse.”

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), there are many typical harassment and bullying behaviours which can manifest in the workplace, from unwanted physical contact and unwelcome remarks to shouting and persistent unwarranted criticism. Its research shows that employees affected by these behaviours are more likely to be depressed and anxious, less satisfied with their work, have a low opinion of their managers, and want to leave the organisation.

Bullying is not specifically defined in law but Acas gives a definition. It says that “bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of

power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient”.

Acas goes on to note that bullying is subjective – one person may consider it firm management while another may feel that they’ve been bullied. The CIPD says that the legal position with respect to bullying is complex as “there is no separate piece of legislation which deals with workplace bullying in isolation”.

On the other hand, the Equality Act 2010 defines harassment as “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”. This could be on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Fundamentally the CIPD says the law protects individuals from harassment while applying for a job, in employment and in some circumstances after the working relationship has ended (for example, in connection with a verbal or written reference).

Employers are liable for harassment between employees,



and can also be liable for harassment which comes from a third party. And where discrimination-based harassment has occurred employers and individuals can be ordered to pay unlimited compensation, including the payment of compensation for injury to feelings. Individuals can be prosecuted under criminal law too.

Bullying and harassment is an unpleasant side to human nature. The number of incidents seems to be on the rise, but thankfully the issue isn’t universal. Even so, employers and employees cannot ignore the subject.

Further reading at tinyurl.com/3effbvh

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NO SUPPLY

A recent Supreme Court case has potentially opened the floodgates for employees to bring claims against their employers, writes *Chloe Themistocleous*, associate at *Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP*.

Before July 2013 individuals were free to bring Employment Tribunal claims. However, in July 2013 the Government introduced Employment Tribunal fees for anyone wanting to make a claim or appeal a judgment. The fee to lodge a claim was £160 or £250 (dependent upon the nature of the claim) and the fee to pursue the matter to a final hearing was a further £230 or £950 (again dependent upon the nature of the claim). If employees won their claim, the tribunal judge could order the employer to pay any fees incurred.

After the introduction of tribunal fees the number of claims being brought fell by 80%, but the ratio of claims being successful did not change.

Whilst claim numbers were dropping, unrest in trade unions was growing and Unison decided to challenge the Government's implementation of the fee regime, claiming not only that it was unlawful but that it indirectly discriminated against women. At the end of July (2017), the Supreme Court agreed and quashed the tribunal fee regime.

As a result of the judgment no further fees can be charged by the Employment Tribunal until a replacement scheme is introduced. This means new claims can now be brought for free again and no hearing fees will be charged claims already lodged.

As for those who have already paid tribunal fees, the Ministry of Justice has undertaken to reimburse fees already paid. What is not yet clear, however, is whether that undertaking extends to compensating employers who have been ordered by tribunals to reimburse fees paid by claimants

when their claims have been successful.

Without the deterrent effect of fees, employers now face an increased risk of employment-related claims from current and former staff.

It is also possible that some individuals might now try to claim they should be permitted to bring out-of-time claims in respect of past alleged breaches of their rights, arguing that the now found to be high and unlawful fees prevented them from bringing a claim until now.

The Government may try to act quickly to replace the system quashed by the Supreme Court, however in light of Brexit there is already a hectic parliamentary schedule. When a replacement system will be debated and passed is unknown – it could be months or even longer.

Further reading at tinyurl.com/y9orc4hz

SME NEWS

VOA maps improvements to business rates appeals platform

After listening to concerns, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has published a roadmap of planned upgrades to the check, challenge, appeal platform it launched in April to establish fair business rates bills in England. Immediate upgrades to the appeals portal include the ability to save progress when carrying out a check, allowing users to complete it at a later date. A useful overview of future changes can be found at tinyurl.com/y9hj2q6w

Be watchful for fake HMRC communications

The Association of Taxation Technicians (ATT) is urging taxpayers to be vigilant of cybercrimes and phishing scams where criminals pretend to be HMRC in order to obtain sensitive personal details.

The warning comes as HMRC embarks on a number of taxpayer surveys and communications towards the end of 2017.

Phishing scams involve emails, texts, letters, phone calls or faxes which purport to be from HMRC. Some of these fakes are very sophisticated, with many of the scammers using email addresses, website and logos that look very similar to official HMRC ones.

Tell-tale signs of a phishing attempt include sloppy spelling and grammar, using non-specific forms of address such as 'Dear Customer' and stressing the need for urgent action.

A current list of digital and other contact issued from HMRC can be seen at tinyurl.com/kn93ggf

Please take proper advice before acting on anything written here.



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DOMESTIC

TORO TIMEMASTER MINDS NEW RELEASES

With recoil or electric start options

Toro has announced the launch of a new line of fast, comfortable and efficient commercial-grade zero-turn mowers. It has launched two new Timemaster models featuring Briggs & Stratton engines, available with either recoil or electric start options.

These mowers are suited to homeowners with a large lawn, as they benefit from a 76cm cutting width. Both models feature the Automatic Drive System with traction assist. This automatically adjusts the mower's pace to the walking speed of the user and assists with maintaining a constant speed, even when used on more challenging terrain. The Quick Stow handlebar stores vertically for easy compact storage and adjusts to ensure a comfortable mowing experience for operators.

The machines adopt a blade brake clutch (BBC), allowing users to stop the cutter blade while the engine is running as they travel over non-

grassed areas or are emptying the bag. Users are also able to easily adjust the cutting height using two levers, adjusting the front and rear axles independently.

The company says the new models provide a cleaner cut as they have a redesigned blade for improved collection. A Dual-Force cutting system also helps to maintain a healthier lawn, by repeatedly chopping the grass clippings into tiny pieces and returning them back into the lawn to provide nutrients and moisture to the soil.

Christopher Cooper, Product Marketing Manager for Toro said: "The latest models offer new and improved functionality, but remain easy to use and maintain high quality turf conditions."



PSD CHIPS IN WITH NEW WOOD SERIES

New model from TS Industrie

PSD Groundscare has launched the WS/16-35D chipper from TS Industrie.

Stéphane Courtois, TS Industrie Sales & Marketing Director explains: "In the wood chipper family, we have recently added two new products: an entry-level and a mid-range model, so that every professional is able to find the equipment that suits their budget and requirements. We offer a complete range of capabilities from 12 to 23cm diameter." The units are equipped with a No Stress system, two feed rollers to facilitate the entry of the branches, electric controls, a 270° rotating chimney and a folding hopper for easy transport.

The WS/16-35D, although weighing less than 750kg, chips branches with a diameter of 16cm with its Kubota 35hp diesel engine, as does its turntable model, the WS/16-35DT.

To simplify life for landscaping professionals, TS Industrie has developed a wide range of sub 750kg machines, so that an end-user can tow this machine with a simple Category B driving licence.

Stuart Mercer, Sales Director of PSD Groundscare said, "The introduction of the WS/16-35D now ensures TS Industrie has a robust, reliable and efficient solution for almost any arborist requirement and compliments the existing range perfectly.

"I have already had a number of customers show interest in the expanding range and look forward to demonstrating the outstanding capabilities of the machines."



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COMMERCIAL

ECHO OFFERS A QUIET PROFESSIONAL TRIM

DHC-200 50V lithium-ion model

ECHO has introduced a new hedge trimmer, the DHC-200 to its 50V lithium-ion battery series.

“The ecological features of the new DHC-200, as with all the ECHO lithium-ion series products, offer contractors and professional landscapers exceptional benefits,” says ECHO.

“The low noise makes them

suited to use in noise-sensitive areas such as schools and nursing homes. Low emissions are beneficial in their use in parks, nature reserves and organic gardens.”

It is described by the company as lightweight and comfortable to use, due to the ergonomic design of the front handle which helps with

manoeuvrability. They also say gardeners trimming ornamental hedges can count on the variable speed control for precision cutting and optimized run-time.

The 62cm double-sided precision cut blades provide a clean cut with a long-lasting sharpness. The machine uses energy efficient motor controls to manage motor speed, power delivery and battery temperature for improved cutting performance and battery life.

The DHC-200 comes with a 2Ah battery and rapid charger as standard, with an optional 4Ah battery for a longer run time. The rapid battery charger ensures the 2Ah battery is boosted to 80% capacity in 24 minutes and the 4Ah in 48 minutes. It comes with a two-year professional use and five-year domestic warranty.



COMMERCIAL

IBEA FLAILS GET THE JOB DONE SAFELY

Tracked or wheeled versions available

Ibea Flail Mowers are available from Autoculture with 16” tractor wheel transmissions, which can make short work of heavy-duty brush, tall overgrown grass, thistles and saplings.

Plus, say the company, they are easy to use due to an uncomplicated design and controls.

For steeper slopes or banking applications a crawler tracked transmission option is available. The machines are available with a range of Honda commercial engines from 5.5 to 14hp.

Models start at 60cm (24”) wide with 32 blades up to 85cm (34”) with 48 blades with prices from £1,607.88 + VAT up to £3,917.75 + VAT.

The units feature vibration damped, easily adjustable handlebars that not only adjust height but

also swing to the side allowing safe cutting under trees or along fence lines. It also comes with a built-in rotor brake for added safety for the user.



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3D FILM APPLICATION FROM KUHN

High-capacity trailed bale wrapper

KUHN Farm Machinery has added a new model to its range of round bale wrappers with the RW 1810 high capacity satellite wrapper – the first trailed round baler to feature the company’s 3D binding technology.

With a 30% faster cycle time compared with the previous RW 1800 round bale wrappers, plus features which include KUHN’s AUTOLOAD capability, INTELLIWRAP system and optional 3D wrapping, the new RW 1810 can wrap up to 100 bales per hour with six layers of film on a 1.25m bale.

Two high-speed satellite wrapping arms rotate at up to 40rpm during wrapping (when driving at 5kph or faster) and apply 70% pre-stretch to the film as standard to produce a tightly bound bale. The amount of pre-stretch can also be reduced to 60% where necessary and the wrapper can be set to automatically stop or operate at half speed if one of the film rolls tears or runs out.

KUHN’s AUTOLOAD facility enables the new machine to quickly, gently and automatically load, wrap and unload round bales of up to 1,400kg in weight and up to 160cm in diameter without any operator input and without the need for the tractor and baler to come to a standstill. This not only increases overall capacity, but also reduces fuel consumption and prevents operator fatigue. The AUTOLOAD facility also enables the RW 1810 to be operated behind a tractor or directly behind a baler.

The new machine is operated via a VT30 control box

with 3.5” colour and touch screen which uses KUHN’s PROCESSVIEW software to control all the machine’s wrapping functions and settings.

Film application is controlled by KUHN’s INTELLIWRAP system which allows the operator to select the number of film layers (4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or 9) and to adjust film overlap to match local conditions, crop quality and storage periods.

The company’s optional 3D wrapping system, which uses pivoting pre-stretchers, can also be specified: this system packs a tighter bale by removing more air and ensures the edges of the bale are better protected by creating a 20cm overlap across this vulnerable zone. It also prevents rigid grass stems from puncturing the first layers of film by applying the film in the same direction that the bale is turning on the wrapping table.



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FRESHLY PICKED ORCHARD TRACTORS FROM LANDINI

Rex 4 Series has a sleek new appearance

An all-new range of Landini orchard and vineyard tractors has launched.

The Rex 4 Series have a sleek new appearance but, more importantly say the company, they bring a greater choice of models, new transmission configurations - including three-speed powershift on power shuttle versions - an improved operator environment in the new cab, and optional front axle suspension for the first time.

In terms of overall size, base configurations and power outputs, the new Rex 4 Series mirrors the current Rex. The 'F' models are narrow orchard tractors, the 'GE' versions have a lower stance for added stability, and the 'GT' has the wider axles and larger wheel options suitable for wide orchards.

Minimum operating widths are 1.3m for the 'F', 1.35m for the 'GE' and 1.5m for the 'GT' versions – while the new 'V' models can be configured down to just 1m wide.

For Landini southern area sales manager Steve Cann, whose dealers Richard Tooby in Herefordshire, Horsepower in Kent and Culverwells in East Sussex and

Kent are regular suppliers to the fruit sector, the availability of vineyard specification models across the new range is a welcome change.

“With the current Rex we have just one model; with the Rex 4 Series we have the same six power outputs from 69hp to 111hp as for the wider tractors,” he points out. ●



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- 12-18 Agritechnica, Hanover, Germany
www.agritechnica.com/en/
- 15 AgriScot, Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Edinburgh
www.agriscot.co.uk
- 16 Service Dealer Conference & Awards Oxford Belfry Hotel, Thame, Oxfordshire
www.servicedealer.co.uk
- 27-28 Royal Welsh Winter Fair, Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, Powys, Wales
www.rwas.wales/winter-fair
- 29-30 CropTec 2017, East of England Showground, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire
www.croptecshow.com/

JANUARY 2018

- 3-5 Oxford Farming Conference, Oxford University
www.ofc.org.uk
- 17-18 LAMMA 2018, East of England Showground
www.lammashow.com
- 23-25 BTME 2018, Harrogate Convention Centre
www.btme.org.uk

FEBRUARY 2018

- 3-8 Golf Industry Show, Henry B Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas
www.golfindustryshow.com
- 4-8 Spring Fair 2018, Birmingham NEC
www.springfair.com
- 6-8 Doe Show 2018, Ulting
www.ernestdoe.com
- 7-8 Executive Hire Show, Ricoh Arena, Coventry
www.executivehireshow.co.uk
- 13-15 World Ag Expo, International Agri-Center, Tulare, California
www.worldagexpo.com

MARCH 2018

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

APRIL 2018

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

MAY 2018

- 7 North Somerset Show, Wraxall near Bristol
www.nsas.org.uk
- 16-19 Balmoral Show, Balmoral Park, Belfast
www.balmoralshow.co.uk
- 17-19 Devon County Show, Westpoint, Clyst St Mary, Exeter
www.devoncountyshow.co.uk
- 22-26 Chelsea Flower Show, London
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 28 Surrey County Show, Stoke Park, Guildford, Surrey
www.surreycountyshow.co.uk/surrey-county-show
- 30-31 Staffordshire County Show, Staffordshire County Showground, Weston Road, Stafford
www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show
- 30-2/6 Royal Bath & West Show, The Showground, Shepton Mallet, Somerset
www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97

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- 3-4 The National DIY Show, Ricoh Arena, Coventry
www.totallydiy.co.uk/content
- 3 Rutland Show, Rutland Showground, Oakham, Rutland
www.rutlandcountyshow.com
- 7-9 Royal Cornwall Show, The 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 2017, Boothby Graffoe, Nr Lincoln, Lincolnshire
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 Cheshire County Show, Knutsford, Cheshire
www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 20-21 Lincolnshire Show, Lincolnshire Showground, Grange-de-Lings, Lincoln
www.lincolnshireshow.co.uk
- 21-24 Royal Highland Show, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org
- 27-28 Royal Norfolk Show, Norfolk Showground, Norwich
www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk



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HERE TO STAY . . . OR GONE TOMORROW?

You never own a customer

It's not a hidden secret that I'm a staunch supporter of the garden machinery specialist dealer network – always have been, always will be. From my time at Barrus developing dealer initiatives, through to my years at GGP imparting some home-truths about selling and marketing, and now my involvement with *Service Dealer* and with the Garden Trader website (specially put together by the *Service Dealer* team), it's my continuing passion to support UK specialist dealers nationwide.

I do, however, have a few observations taken from my time recently spent speaking to dealers around the country.

First, the number I've spoken to who either don't or rarely read their emails. Many were surprised when I made the phone call to ask if they'd received the mail about the Garden Trader website. Some said they hadn't had time to pick up their mail whereas some said they'd received it but had no time to act upon it. It's also odd how many dealer email addresses are wrong on their own websites and even more concerning, the number of dealers who don't have a website.

It begs the question: how many other opportunities are being missed by the lack of a website or by not taking 10 minutes each evening to clear the incoming emails?

There are a number of dealers who claim they don't need to advertise or promote themselves as they have enough customers and work and don't need any more – which is nice if you can get it!

Nobody ever owns a customer, so isn't it dangerous to assume they will always come back? Therefore isn't it best to keep yourself up in lights?

Customers do disappear, they may move away, they die, they fall out with the dealer, they shop around for better deals and prices etc. So it's always a concern when the words, "I've got enough business!" are spoken.

Surely there is only one way to keep enough business and that's by looking after current customers and encouraging new ones?

Sadly, I have to report that there are a number of the old-school dealerships getting ready to hang up the shop keys and take a well-earned retirement. However, never believe you know everybody in the trade – new blood is flowing all over the place and they know how to use social media to their advantage.

The majority of go-getter young entrepreneurs and media-savvy dealerships know the power of social media. Most of their business is now coming through Twitter, Facebook or websites. These media are creating their own word of mouth traffic – even louder and quicker than the traditional kind.

Is it noticeable that manufacturers rarely advertise in national newspapers and the 50/50 allowance for local press advertising is being bypassed these days through encouragement of the use of social media through their own websites; even catalogues can be downloaded.

Is it a case of, if you're not seen you can fast become a has-been? Isn't that why as an industry we should all be a part of the social media revolution, keeping the specialist trade in front of the consumer, not just for sales but for the long-term survival of the dealer network?

Customer service is what the specialist dealer network is all about – that should be screaming at potential customers in your area through that little screen we all love to hate.

Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year; who you are, what you have to offer, where you are, how to get there, who to speak to, when you are open – all the information the potential customer needs in this fast-moving world we live in.

Most really do want to buy locally. ●



JIM GREEN



FRAUD ADVICE

BEATING THE SCAMMERS

Dealers always need to be on the look-out

It's a sad fact in this modern world, both personally and in business, that there are some unscrupulous individuals out there who wish to

deceive and con us.

The team here at *Service Dealer* have unfortunately had to report on a few occurrences affecting dealers in our industry on the *Weekly Update* recently, which prompted many readers to get in touch to let us know about similar scams and attempted scams which they had also been affected by.

It seems almost inevitable that dealers will meet a fraudulent transaction at some point – very possibly perpetrated over the phone. That certainly appeared to be the most common complaint, going by responses received.

The principal advice offered to

dealers is that payment over the phone should never be taken from 'customers' who you don't already have a relationship with.

Keith Christian, Director of BAGMA, got in touch to say, "If you're involved in distance selling make sure you have the payment cleared and secure before you release any goods. Genuine purchasers will and should understand the need for this."

Plenty more sound advice can be found on the Action Fraud website (www.actionfraud.police.uk). And remember, if you are in any doubt about a transaction's validity, do not proceed.



MINI MIIMO

HONDA REVS-UP 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Robot mimics Type R & Fireblade

Honda's robotic lawnmower Miimo has joined the company's special year of 25th anniversaries with two Type R and Fireblade-inspired prototypes.

These fully functioning, special editions have been created to celebrate a quarter of a century of Honda's halo racing marques, Type R and Fireblade.

In trademark Championship White with the Red H badge front and back, Miimo Type R features a black and white spoiler, black bumpers and the Type R logo emblazoned down both sides.

Miimo Fireblade wears the famous red, white and blue

tri-colour paint scheme and the 'face' of the iconic super sports bike, topped off with the HRC (Honda Racing Corporation) logo.

Both models were subject to their own custom paint job rather than a vinyl wrap, with graphics

made of specialist cast wrapping film applied and sculpted around Miimo 520's curves.

No doubt people who are fans of both *Top Gear* and of not having to mow the lawn themselves are over the moon! ●





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