

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

JAN / FEB 2016

SERVICE DEALER CONFERENCE & AWARDS

Dealers gather to share experiences and celebrate success



- ❖ BTME Preview
- ❖ LAMMA preview
- ❖ SALTEX review
- ❖ GIE - EXPO report

- ❖ Agritechnica
- ❖ Husqvarna Silent City
- ❖ Henton & Chattell dealer day
- ❖ Training & Education



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Introducing Stephen Egerton

We're proud to welcome Stephen on board as our new Territory Sales Manager in Great Britain. Stephen has a wealth of experience within the industry and is sure to be a great addition to the team.



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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

As my first comment as the new Editor of *Service Dealer* I want to pay my heartfelt tribute and thanks to my predecessor and mentor, Chris Biddle. I've worked with Chris on the magazine since 2001 and it's no exaggeration to say that a kinder, more brilliant man, you could not be luckier to meet. Chris has established a magazine which is a vibrant, vital resource for the UK dealer trade, the quality and integrity of which myself and the new team fully intend to continue. Chris is still very much around though. You'll find his wise words at the back of the magazine each issue – and I shall be meeting up with him regularly in our Salisbury city centre 'office', The Ox Row Inn, to chew the fat and discuss the issues of the day.

This idea of debating current topics was very much at the forefront of our recent Service Dealer Conference. It was an all too rare opportunity for specialist guys from across the country to get together to air their concerns. It was an exhilarating day, full of fascinating and valuable debate, which would not have worked as well as it did without the contribution of everyone who attended. And while there were some legitimate concerns about the state of the industry (notably the influence of the internet), what was abundantly clear across the whole day, from the panel debates to the awards, to the networking late into the night, was that the UK independent dealer trade is a resource of which we should be incredibly proud and should hold in high esteem.

Service Dealer fully intends to reflect this in each and every issue.

Steve Gibbs, Editor



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DEALERS

DEALERS OF THE YEAR HONOURED

At the Service Dealer awards

In a glittering ceremony at the Belfry Hotel on November 19th, the prestigious Service Dealer Awards were presented. Now in their 12th year the awards recognise outstanding sales and service advice and support by dealers in the garden machinery, sportsground machinery, farm machinery, forestry equipment and ATV/Quad sectors.

GARDEN MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR

Presented by Ian Small from Briggs & Stratton.

WINNER: Hayes Garden Machinery, Devon.



The judges said: “Still under 30, James Hayes has been a dealer for just four years but now runs two branches in Devon, employing eight people and demonstrates huge enthusiasm and ‘out of the box’, thinking.”

Finalists:

Masseys, Derbyshire;
Ibbetts, Cambridgeshire.

FARM MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR

Presented by Julian Thompson from Kramp UK.

WINNER: Ripon Farm Services Ltd, North Yorkshire.



The judges said: “The founder, Geoff Brown, who started the company in 1982, constantly ensures that his staff go beyond customer’s expectations. The company successfully merged with a neighbouring dealer in 2012 and now employs over 230 people.”

Finalists:

Goodrowes of Chichester, West Sussex;
Farol Ltd, Oxfordshire and branches.

PROFESSIONAL TURFCARE DEALER OF THE YEAR

Presented by Brian Sangster, President of BAGMA.



WINNER: RT Machinery Ltd, Buckinghamshire.

The judges said: “Led by an outstanding MD, Richard Taylor and his family, RT Machinery continually demonstrates a highly commendable appetite for growth, expansion and improvement, underpinned by exemplary customer service.”

Finalists:

Mason Kings, Devon and branches;
Ernest Doe Ltd, Essex and branches.

FORESTRY EQUIPMENT DEALER OF THE YEAR

Presented by Robin Lennie from STIHL.



WINNER: Briants of Risborough Ltd, Buckinghamshire.

The judges said: “In a very competitive category, the family company of Briants, now run by the third generation, continues to invest for the future – and is exceptionally well regarded by a loyal customer base.”

Finalists:

Gustharts, Tyne and Wear;
Buxtons, Staffordshire.

ATV/QUAD DEALER OF THE YEAR



Presented by Steve Gibbs from *Service Dealer* magazine.

WINNER: Mike Hope of Wooler, Northumberland.

The judges said: “Established in 1977, Mike Hope has established a highly regarded sales and service dealership with the focus on ATVs. He retains customer loyalty, even when they move away – perhaps they recall his motto, ‘There is always hope!’”

Finalist:

Congleton Garden Machinery, Cheshire.

Chris Biddle, Consultant Editor of *Service Dealer* magazine, said: “All the winners this year have demonstrated outstanding commitment to providing excellent customer service. It doesn’t matter whether the company is big or a small, what counts is that they make their customers feel special – and that service is at the heart of their business.”

Chris Biddle also presented a **Lifetime Achievement Award** on the night to the recently retired Ron Miller of GGP UK.

Read a full report of the Conference & Awards starting on page 17.



SERVICE DEALER

TRIBUTES PAID TO RETIRING CHRIS BIDDLE

Industry praises magazine founder

Chris Biddle, founder and recently retired Editor of *Service Dealer* magazine, was praised by the industry at the Service Dealer Awards.

Following a glowing and amusing presentation by *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke, tributes from leading figures across the industry were displayed on screens during dinner at the Oxford Belfry Hotel.

THE HEARTFELT CITATIONS INCLUDED:

Ian Small, Sales and Marketing Manager, Briggs and Stratton UK said: “Chris has been the voice of the industry – informing, educating and inspiring for over 27 years, but most of all he is a true gentleman.”

David Sturges, CEO, Godfreys said: “The voice of our industry for over 27 years.”

Robin Lennie, Managing Director, STIHL UK said: “Chris has the ability to look like he isn’t paying any attention to what’s going on and then write the most relevant editorial piece.”

Dave Roberts, Managing Director, Kubota (UK) Ltd said: “Chris has made a great contribution to the continual development of the relationship between

manufacturers, the dealer community, and our end user customers, and that will be an enduring legacy in the industry.”

Darren Spencer, European Manager, Ariens UK said: “An ardent supporter of both manufacturers and dealers, combining unique insight and understanding of both sides of the product relationship, Chris’s writing has educated multiple generations.”

Duncan Martin, Managing Director, GGP UK Limited said: “Chris has always been at the forefront, promoting the unique benefits provided by the industry, and through these efforts has often been the adhesive that has kept the industry working together.”

Kim Macfie, Retired Sales & Marketing Director, Hayter Ltd and Past President, AEA said: “Chris has probed, pushed, encouraged, promoted and enhanced our industry – and its people – with a distinction that is universally admired.”

Keith Christian, Director of BAGMA, said: “Chris has kept the industry on the right page and provided a gentle nudge in the right direction when needed as well as keeping us informed about what is going on under our noses.”

Mark Earles, Makita (UK) said: "I think Chris has created something other industries would crave for."

Les Malin, Operations Director, Etesia UK Ltd, said: "Chris has a knowledge of this industry that knows no boundaries."

Martyn Thomas, Chervon Europe Ltd said: "Chris has the great ability to get to the real story behind the facts."

Alan Prickett, Managing Director, Ransomes Jacobsen said "Chris's ability to act as a dealer advocate with manufacturers has helped to create some of the great trade relationships we see across the UK now."

David Ashcroft, Cyril Johnston and Gardencare said: "Always a pleasure to work with, a great thinker, visionary and supporter of our industry."

James Woolway, Managing Director, OPICO Limited said: "Chris is a proper journalist/editor; he has his finger on the pulse, great relationships around the industry and is probably the best wordsmith in the agricultural industry."

David W Jenkins, Managing Director, DJ Turfcare Equipment Ltd. "Chris has been one of those people that you could always rely on to take an industry wide view of many subjects. His ideas and overview have always been worth considering even if you did not always agree with him."

Jake Vowles, Director General, AEA-Agricultural Engineers Association-1988/2007. "Chris has provided the most valuable source of information communicating to everyone the successes and failures of the industry, the mergers and acquisitions of the companies and commenting on the people who make this such a great industry."

And **Jeremy Coleclough**, Founder, OPICO Ltd said: "A blinder of an innings from Biddle!"



Duncan Murray-Clarke & Chris Biddle

DEALERS

LELY OUSTS THREE SCOTTISH DEALERS

Replacing with in-house turfcare service branch

Lely UK has reached agreement with three of its Toro dealers in Central Scotland to relinquish their contracts at the end of May 2016 to pave the way for Lely to provide its own sales and customer support services in the region.

The dealers are Henderson Grass Machinery, Hamilton Bros and Thistle Groundcare Equipment.

Lely said it will continue to give the dealers its full support and backing between now and the end of May for sales activity. The company also says all parties will work together to ensure a smooth transition of the Toro business to a new service centre in the region, currently being planned by Lely.

Strategic review

In a statement Lely said: "Maintaining the excellent customer service provided by these dealers will be a top priority, with ongoing co-operation and support in place for the dealers to meet servicing commitments going forward."

The move follows a review of Lely's route to market strategy for Toro products.

The review concluded that change was needed if the long-term aims for the Toro brand and business in Central Scotland were to be realised – in particular the desire to enhance the focus on the Toro brand, as well as Lely's TYM compact tractor offering.

Lely UK turfcare Senior Manager David Cole said: "The process leading to this decision was undertaken in collaboration with the Toro company and has not been undertaken lightly. To be clear, our decision in no way reflects on the performance of the businesses affected. It's more a case of enhancing our brand positions and channelling resources for growth.

"Our vision for that growth and future customer support has created a roadmap for where we can take our brands in the next five to 10 years in Scotland.

"We are very grateful to the dealers affected by this decision for their good work in the past and expect to continue to work with them going forward."

Disappointed

In a joint statement, the directors of the dealers said: "As independent family businesses we are proud to have firmly established the global Toro brand locally in Scotland over the last 15 years. This has been achieved by nurturing our clients, building their trust in the Toro brand and in that of our respective companies.

"Whilst we are disappointed at Lely's decision to move the operation in-house, we shall embrace the change and reassure our immensely loyal customers that we will continue to maintain our exemplary standards of service until the cessation of their contracts."



Henderson Grass Machinery is one of the dealers affected

INDUSTRY

AUTOCULTURE BRINGS BACK IBEA

Italian garden machinery range

After a number of years apart, Autoculture Distribution has once again become allied to IBEA Power Products, the Italian-produced range of garden machinery.

Mark Searle from Autoculture commented at this year's SALTEX: "We are all looking forward to getting behind IBEA again, visiting dealers old and new with what is ultimately a tried and tested brand.

"The first job is to get the flow of parts going again; finding out what is needed and getting it to the customer in a reasonable time frame is paramount to our success. We built the name of IBEA last time round on back-up support and good parts supply, which we want to do again."

Hannah Searle said: "Over the winter we are looking to build on the IBEA name, showing our customers that Autoculture and IBEA really are back for the future."

If you want to become an IBEA dealer or find out more about the range, call Hannah on 01342 870242.



Mark and Hannah Searle at SALTEX with the IBEA machines

INDUSTRY

OPICO TAKES ON STRAUTMANN

UK distribution confirmed



OPICO has taken over the UK distribution of machinery from German manufacturer Strautmann. This includes the main product ranges: trailed and self-propelled vertical auger diet feeders, forage wagons, and rear discharge muck spreaders.

OPICO takes on the responsibility for technical support and supply of parts for machines already on-farm, from 1st January 2016, and will be working with the Strautmann dealer network.

OPICO's MD James Woolway said: "I'm very pleased to take on what I consider to be the market-leading machinery ranges in the areas of fodder transport and feeding technology.

"Strautmann is a very focussed company which is investing heavily in research and development. With livestock farmers needing to minimise their costs of production to remain competitive, the design and technology behind Strautmann machinery has much appeal."

DEALERS

BEN BURGESS EXPANDS DEERE TURF

Peterborough Grass Machinery becomes homeowner only

John Deere has announced that dealer Ben Burgess & Co Ltd will be expanding its professional turf business in East Anglia from January 2016.

The Norwich-based company will be selling and supporting the full John Deere turf machinery range from its agricultural outlet at Coates, near Peterborough, from 6th January. As a result, Peterborough Grass Machinery Ltd at Westwood will be operating only as a John Deere homeowner equipment dealer from that date.

“As the turf industry continues to develop with the increasing use of new technology, higher value equipment and greater customer expectations for improved product support, John Deere and our dealers must be in a position to react to this ever changing market place,” said John Deere Limited Turf Division Manager Chris Meacock.

“Over recent years we have been developing the national dealer network and working closely with dealers to improve their businesses, their level of product specialisation and the support they are able to provide to meet customers’ demands. These improvements have led to the need for larger, even more professional businesses capable of supporting all the functions the market now requires, while still maintaining a strong local presence.”

Ben Turner, Ben Burgess’ Managing Director said: “Having already established a successful golf and turf business in our existing area of responsibility, we plan to introduce a hire service and a wider range of parts to this new sales area, as well as the increased level of specialist sales and service support that the professional turf market requires.”



“(Left to right) Nathan Setchfield, Johnathan Harpham and Ben Burgess Coates branch manager Steve Trostler

APPOINTMENTS

KUBOTA NAMES NEW PRODUCT MANAGER For Agricultural Division

Kubota UK has announced that Rob Fox, who has worked in the company’s service and aftersales team for the past 11 years, has taken up a new position in the company’s commercial team after being promoted to product manager for Kubota’s Agricultural Division.



The investment in the agricultural team forms part of the company’s long-term strategy to expand into the larger-horsepower tractor market, increasing its market coverage and share position.

In his new sales orientated role, Rob is responsible for working with and supporting Kubota’s dealer network and its sales and marketing teams. This includes maintaining effective relationships with Kubota’s dealer and end-user customers and providing all the technical product and training support across the company’s agricultural product range, including its M Series, MGX-II and M7001 Series tractors.

Rob Edwards, Business Development Manager for Kubota Agriculture, commented: “The addition of Rob Fox further strengthens our team. He has extensive knowledge and experience in the agricultural industry.”

At Kubota, Rob has worked his way up through the company’s Service Division, playing a significant role helping in the development of the company’s customer satisfaction survey and tailoring service training packages for its dealer network.

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A VIEW OF THE FUTURE

HUSQVARNA RECENTLY PRESENTED ITS SILENT CITY CONCEPT, WHICH RELIES ON SMART MACHINES. CHRIS BIDDLE REPORTS

Dealers, customers and journalists from across Europe and the United States visited Antwerp to hear from Husqvarna on future developments, particularly in the professional landscaping sector.

Under the title of Silent City, Husqvarna showed off its view of the future of landscaping, enabling machines to ‘talk’ to contractors and operators by the use of smartphones, smart watches and other mobile devices – thus providing real-time data from across a fleet of machines.

Husqvarna CEO and President, Kai Warn, described the use of connected battery power as “the biggest leap in our industry since the motorising of outdoor products”.

The company launched a prototype of a lithium battery with integrated Bluetooth connectivity. The battery could be paired with an operator’s mobile phone to be used for his own information or be shared with team leaders or management.

Fleet Services

The innovation extends the Husqvarna Fleet Services project, launched in 2014, that provides an on-line platform to share data from smart sensors incorporated onto products. The service is shortly to be upgraded with the launch of a smartphone app version to provide at-work data.

An interesting observation came from a Dutch landscaper, Douwe Snoek, who is using the Fleet Service system. He admitted that operating trimmers and blowers was often regarded as a lowly and unskilled occupation. “By equipping the guys with mobiles which will plan their day, monitor their work and provide loads of information, certainly makes them feel more important and valued,” he said.

The company also unveiled a new design concept for the hedge trimmer of the future: the Husqvarna Ramus (the Latin for ‘branch’). A futuristic design and weight that has been halved from conventional trimmers, the Ramus is fitted with a connected battery and an integrated camera to display the view from the cutter head when cutting high hedges or complicated shapes.

The prototype of the connected battery is currently patent-pending, and future details are yet to be defined.





The Remus concept trimmer



Kevin Ashmore and Ken Brewster of Husqvarna UK



Mark Bartram



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WORKING CLOSELY WITH DEALERS

EDITOR STEVE GIBBS ATTENDED THE SECOND OF HENTON & CHATTELL'S DEALER DAYS TO HEAR HOW THE COMPANY IS HELPING THEIR NETWORK



The second of Henton & Chattell's Autumn 2015 dealer days took place at Oakley Hall Hotel, near Basingstoke.

Despite the at times apocalyptic weather, the event was very well attended with over a hundred dealers gathered to hear about Henton & Chattell's plans for 2016 and to try out a selection of new products.

Market overview

The day began with MD Peter Chaloner giving an overview of the market. He remarked how total unit sales for Henton were a little down on 2014, but how this was a slightly unfair comparison as 2014 had seen quite unusually high sales levels. He said a more accurate comparison would be against a more regular

year such as 2013, and this held up favourably. He also cited both the bad weather conditions and the uncertainty around the general election as contributing



to a slow start to the season.

He went on to explain how Henton & Chattell wants to work as closely as it can with its dealers. He said: "We have three main ways in which we want to help our dealer network: through pricing, through range development, and through driving customers through your doors."

On pricing, Peter said how this is the most challenging aspect of a dealer's business today. "Dealer profits are being squeezed by manufacturers' pricing policies," he said, "but we have another way." Henton looks to make sure that its dealers' core margins are always healthy and Peter stressed how it doesn't force unrealistic stocking terms on its dealers.

Addressing the range, Peter

said, "It's very important for us to develop complimentary products to our key lines where appropriate."

He spoke of having an office in Shanghai overseeing innovation on the ground and said: "New product development is key to our ongoing success and differentiating products is essential."

In terms of getting customers through the doors of dealerships, Peter explained: "Certain major brands are pulling back on their marketing budgets. This is a quick fix for making their bottom line look slightly healthier, but it's a disaster in real terms. We've taken the opposite route to this and are increasing our advertising spend. As such, new and exciting for 2016 will be our first foray into television advertising."

BRANDS

Billy Goat

Before the dealers had the opportunity to get hands-on with the products, a series of



presentations were given on Henton's various brands, beginning with Peter Chaloner on Billy Goat.

He told the dealers: "There has been real growth with the Billy Goat range thanks to your help, and the range is set to expand with the introduction of the Plugr aerators which will be great for your contractor customers."

Ego

Peter Melrose of Ego explained the benefits of its high-voltage, lithium ion-powered range and how he was very keen to encourage



more of the attendees to sign up as dealers. As the brand's desire is to reach the high-end homeowners, they only stock exclusively through the specialist dealer channel. He said: "We don't enforce large stocking orders on you, so it's eminently affordable to try Ego in your dealership."

Cobra

Andy Marvin, Trade Sales Manager, talked through the real success story that Cobra has been over the past couple of years. He attributed a fair degree of this success to how the range had been marketed, in particular crediting a series of videos presented by the BBC's Martin Fish on its website.

He said: "Consumers have changed the way they research products now. Videos such as these are vitally important and as such we're endeavouring to create one for every product."

There will be further Cobra



products coming in 2016, including more lithium ion- powered machines such as blowers, trimmers, chainsaws and a 16" rear-roller push mower.

Briggs Power Products

Lee Lewing, Internal Sales Manager, spoke about the Briggs Power Products range which includes water pumps, Sprint Series generators, as well as Power Washers. A new innovation seen on these was the Power Flow+ technology which allows high-airflow cleaning of hard to reach and high-up places.

Allett

Leigh Bowers presented on the Allett brand. He said as well as the professional market, Allett was targeting with its cylinder mowers those homeowners for whom their lawn is their pride and joy. He said: "These people are out there for whom price is not the



main deciding factor in purchasing a mower for their home."

The presentations were concluded with Liz Chaloner introducing the dedicated team at Nottingham to the dealers and explaining how they are there to support them in any way they can.

She said: "We are incredibly lucky with our team working with us and we want to thank them all. But most of all we want to thank you, our dealers, because without our customers we are nothing. We greatly appreciate all your support."

NEW NAMES AND CONCEPTS FOR A NEW ERA

Beyond the mainstream launches, November's Agritechnica, the biennial German farm equipment show that's the world's largest of its type, provided a glimpse of what UK dealers could be retailing in the future. MARTIN RICKATSON reports



While the farm machinery business is undoubtedly under the weather, and battering down the hatches for what many manufacturers and dealers believe will be a challenging year, the mood among stand holders and visitors at Agritechnica 2015 was surprisingly buoyant. And if there was a theme to the event, it was arguably the debut or return of a number of names looking to capitalise on the agricultural downturn by exploiting new design ideas or lower-cost manufacturing, expanding their markets and challenging the established players.

November's show was the largest in the event's 30-year history, making additional use of two new buildings constructed in the Hanover Exhibition Grounds, taking to 23 the total of the site's vast halls in use. They played host to 2,907 exhibitors from 52 countries, and attracted 450,000 visitors, of which around 100,000 came from overseas.

Among them, approximately 10,000 were from the UK and Ireland. Since the advent of low-cost flights and the demise of big domestic machinery exhibitions such as the Royal and Royal Smithfield shows, Agritechnica and the February-held French show SIMA have become go-to destinations for many farmers from these shores seeking to keep abreast of new equipment developments.

But while many of those visitors will have understandably spent much of their time getting up to speed with the latest offerings from the industry's big names, less well-known makers from the likes of Russia

and China were noticeable by a significantly increased presence at this year's event. With developments from the major makes covered comprehensively by weekly publications and the internet, our coverage concentrates on what – if the ambitions of makers from such countries are fulfilled – some dealers could yet be selling in years to come.



Many mainstream makers unveiled to potential customers machines previously launched to dealers and the press during the summer. With its new X8 flagship, though, McCormick was an exception. The maker had used recent shows to drip-feed small details of its development while keeping the tractors themselves well under wraps. Models span 264, 286 and 310hp, using FPT 6.7-litre engines, and four-range ZF continuously-variable transmissions.



Zetor promised recently that it would be expanding its product line in both directions with three and six-cylinder machines, and went some way to fulfilling this at Agritechnica with the unveiling of two prototype tractors. This 49hp machine features an 8F/8R synchromesh transmission capable of 30km/h, 1,100kg rear linkage lift capacity and is just 1.73m wide and 2.45m high. It will be available in 2wd and 4wd. A production date is to be confirmed.



Attracting even greater attention on the Zetor stand, although probably further from going into production, was this collaboration with Pininfarina, the Italian styling house better known for its work with car makers. Back at Agritechnica 2009, Zetor showed off a high-horsepower prototype, the Maxterra, but suggestions are that this project is on the backburner and that, following the recent introduction of 144hp and 160hp Crystal models, new machines above this power level may be taking a different direction.



There's no suggestion yet that Terrion tractors are coming to the UK, but the Russian maker has long sold machines into Germany and has recently been branching out into new markets including France and Switzerland. It produces machines of 180, 200, 280 and 360hp. The latter uses a ZF CVT transmission, while the smallest model features a four-step semi-powershift from the same maker. All of the machines are powered by Deutz engines.



Also from Russia comes this articulated high-hp tractor, part of a range from Kirovets, which was formerly part of the same group as Terrion until it demerged the latter conventional tractor business. Its 428hp is produced by a six-cylinder, 12-litre Mercedes-Benz engine, while the machine's hydraulics come courtesy of fellow German firm Bosch Rexroth. Transmission is a domestically-made 16-speed powershift.



Russia's biggest farm equipment firm, and becoming its most globally active, is Rostselmash, the harvesting equipment specialist that also owns Canadian tractor maker Versatile. This RSM1401 self-propelled forage harvester features a 400hp Mercedes-Benz/MTU six-cylinder engine, hydrostatic transmission, and a 0.7m-wide chopping cylinder with 630mm diameter and 24 knives. Chopping lengths can be altered between 4, 7, 10 and 17mm.



The majority of the shares in Canadian tractor maker Versatile were purchased by Rostselmash back in 2007, but the brand and its Winnipeg factory remain largely unaffected. The new owners are making its products available to a wider market, though, and Lincolnshire-based JPM Agricultural has a number of its Delta-Track four-tracked tractors now at work in the UK. It's looking to broaden its offering here into new areas such as this conventional tractor range in 260/290/310hp sizes, and is seeking dealers.



For harvest 2015, JPM also brought a Versatile-liveried Rostselmash rotary combine into the UK for testing and demonstration, and during 2016 hopes to also bring this straw walker machine over here. The RSM161 is a six-walker machine with a drum/beater/drum/beater threshing arrangement. Power is provided by Cummins, a six-cylinder, 8.9-litre engine producing 380hp. Grain tank capacity is 10,500 litres.



If you know a tractor anorak who reckons they can list a hundred makes, or recite an A to Z of manufacturers, ask them to name two tractor types beginning with Z. Chinese firm Zoomlion is making a big push to get its products suitable for wider sale into European markets. The brand was recently borne out of Chery Heavy Industries, one of China's largest construction equipment companies. The firm also makes a wide range of harvesters for cereals, rice and maize, and a full line of implements.



There was more than one self-propelled forager from Russia and the CIS states on display at Agritechnica. This Palesse FS8060 is from Gomselmash, based in Belarus. It's powered by a Liebherr V8 engine producing 675hp and driving through a hydrostatic transmission. Chopping cylinder diameter and width figures are 630 and 780mm respectively, and chop length can be varied in steps from 6-24mm.



Polish-built Ursus tractors were a relatively common sight on UK livestock farms from the 1970s to the early 1990s, but since then the firm has retrenched from certain markets to focus on eastern Europe and other areas where lower cost tractors are in higher demand. However, it appears to be in good health, and was at Agritechnica for the first time in many years with tractors from 50-250hp plus details of a product range including rakes, tedders, round balers and bale wrappers.

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DEALERS GATHER TO FACE THE FUTURE HEAD ON

The inaugural Service Dealer annual conference saw over 130 delegates from across the agricultural and outdoor power equipment sectors debate how to meet the issues they face over the next five years. Despite their different markets, it was clear they face similar challenges. MARTIN RICKATSON reports



The conference concluded with a Question Time-style debate

Ensuring the customer – whether past, present or potential – gets the best possible attention. That was arguably the common thread running through the panel debates at the inaugural *Service Dealer* conference. From raising the profile of dealer service to using greater precision in marketing and attracting and retaining high quality staff, all the key topics raised connected with that theme. But there was also room for some humour and a customer viewpoint, courtesy of the meeting's keynote speaker.

Borne out of the long-established *Service Dealer* awards ceremony, previously held during the SALTEX groundscare show before its move from Windsor to the NEC, the new conference has been organised by The Ad Plain (TAP), publisher of *Service Dealer*, to extend that event into a forum for exchange of ideas across the industry, said TAP MD Duncan Murray-Clarke in his opening address.

“Whether a single outlet family dealership or multi-branch business, those retailing and supporting farm, turf and outdoor power equipment share many similar challenges,” he pointed out.

“At this and future conferences, we hope to provide a platform to debate and address those issues, and come together to share ideas and information to help the sector evolve and grow.”

Lively debate then ensued between the audience of well over 100 dealers and the four sets of panel

members which formed the backbone of the day's topic discussions, but not before a light-hearted opening talk – punctuated by some more serious customer insights – by the day's guest speaker, Gloucestershire farmer, farm park owner and BBC *Countryfile* presenter Adam Henson.

While it centred on a humorous recollection of his family's involvement in farming and his own career to date in both agriculture and the media, much of what Adam had to say resonated with the day's theme in terms of how his business has focused on performance, presentation and diversification. And as a dealer customer he also provided insight into his expectations of a dealership, and highlighted some similarities between his business and that of a farm or outdoor power equipment dealer.

Adam's father was a first generation farmer who diversified by founding the Cotswold Farm Park, which opened in 1971 and now attracts 120,000 visitors annually. Developing the farm in this way has helped counter downturns in agriculture, he suggested. But since taking over the business, Adam acknowledged that it had become gradually more difficult to keep an eye on all parts of his arable and sheep farm, plus the park and associated café.

“I felt I was in danger of becoming a ‘busy idiot’, and needed help with the workload. After discussions, that led to a business partnership with a neighbour who

was a friend from college, with him overseeing the daily farm operations. With a history in agricultural finance, he can give a different viewpoint on the business, and we can share concerns, worries and successes. Working with someone whose skills complement yours can help advance your business and identify new ideas.”

He went on to describe how, as the Cotswold Farm Park and its associated café and photography venue business has grown, he has made considerable use of professional advice, and brought in a marketing agent to identify ways to improve promotion and boost income.

“We realised we needed to have a similar approach across all that everybody in our business does, whether it’s our own farming, the contract farming we now also do, the farm park, or our café.

“Communication is key, as is detail. Despite all the things that may go right, should there be one downside of an experience, that’s what customers will remember.”

That approach encompasses those he buys from as well as those he employs.

“With our collective acreage and contract-farmed land, we’re now covering 1,200ha (3,000ac), and we’ve only been able to expand this way by adopting the latest technology to improve timeliness of operations, and precision farming hardware to maximise efficiency.

“In investing in that technology it’s been important for us to be able to work with personable manufacturer and dealer staff who we can trust to be honest about machine capabilities, and true to their word about support and back-up. That’s something worth paying for.”

PANEL DEBATE ONE:

What internal and external factors will shape and determine the future role and strategy of specialist sales and service dealers in the land-based machinery market?

Moderated by former Agricultural Engineers Association Chief Executive Roger Lane-Nott, the first



Service Dealer owner
Duncan Murray-Clarke

panel debate of the day brought together Alex Scott, MD of TH White Group, Ian Nutt, MD of Lister Wilder, David Sturges, CEO of Godfreys, and Lewis Anderson, New Business Development Manager at Rochfords, to debate the future challenges facing dealers.

“Many of those challenges, such as low grain or milk prices, are outside of our control,” pointed out TH White’s Alex Scott.

“Strategic planning is an essential part of making the best of what we have. It’s important to identify what make us dealers and what makes us good ones if we’re to shape our future.”

Lister Wilder’s Ian Nutt pointed out the influence increasing size and sophistication has had on farm machinery sales, with tractor sales numbers having dropped nearly 80% in 70 years.

“In the ag sector we’ve faced falling unit numbers for a long time but, of course, that’s currently being exaggerated by low commodity prices and a difficult export market,” he noted.

“But there are ways we can challenge this. For example, today’s high-tech equipment customers

Panel One: L-R: Lewis Anderson, David Sturges, Ian Nutt and Alex Scott





Adam Henson responds to a question from a panellist

want to know the likely cost of ownership before they commit to a purchase. Well-trained sales staff should be able to provide this information.”

Godfreys’ David Sturges suggested dealers needed to find new ways to challenge the fact that potential customers have more choice over where to buy outdoor power equipment products, including big barn stores and the internet.

“I worry about how much ‘new’ product is ‘me too’ and not particularly innovative. Dealers need to identify lines that differentiate and give them an edge.”

He also highlighted that dealer-sold and serviced equipment tended to be of higher quality and possess a greater level of technology than shop/net-sold goods.

“That provides an outlet for dealer support, service, customer relationship building and hopefully product renewal. People still want to deal with people.”

Rochfords’ Lewis Anderson stressed his belief that strong service levels and customer perception of a dealer owe a lot to the staff that are part of a cohesive team.

“I think it’s essential that when adding a staff member the process is akin to adding to a family. They need to feel and be treated that way to get the most from them and offer the best service to the customer.”

Both Alex Scott and Ian Nutt raised the issue of how the internet is changing not just (in the case mainly of garden equipment) the way consumers buy machines, but also, across all sectors, how they become informed about possibilities, options and alternatives.

“In the car sector, dealership footfall is down because people are browsing for product information on the internet before deciding whether to view,” noted Mr Scott.

“Ultimately, many of those coming into the dealers are now already well informed about what’s available to them.”

Mr Nutt pointed out how much time car dealers spend getting to know the needs of each individual customer, and suggested the ag and outdoor power equipment trades have potential to tap here.

“Good customer relationship management should encompass knowledge of – and proactivity regarding – buying/replacement patterns and service needs. And small things – similar to the Waitrose concept of a free coffee for shoppers – can make a difference to the customer’s experience. Make sure dealer visits will be enjoyed by all.”

Lewis Anderson brought the subject of diversification back into focus, but urged dealers considering new retailing areas to think carefully.

“New product groups can be a good way of extending your offering and customer base, but be careful with diversification and ensure you can do new products properly, with the same level of expertise as your existing offerings.”

PANEL DEBATE TWO:

Service and the impact of technological change

Chaired by former *Service Dealer* owner and editor Chris Biddle, the second panel debate considered how best to ensure service and parts make a major contribution to the dealer’s bottom line, plus the likely impact of changing technology. The panel consisted of Tom Bigwood of Somerset farm and grounds care machinery dealer Bigwoods, Neale Hopley of Staffordshire forestry and garden equipment dealer Buxtons, and Guy Freeman of Cambridgeshire-based Ibbetts, grounds care and Unimog dealers.

Neale Hopley noted that as margins on wholesales are shrinking, the contribution of service to dealer profit is becoming more important.

“Even if an internet purchaser comes to us



Panel Two: Seated L-R: Guy Freeman, Neale Hopley and Tom Bigwood. Chris Biddle moderating



Panel Three: L-R: Andrew Meek, James Hayes and Brian Mitchell

with a problem, we aim to give good service on the basis we hope they will remember the experience and return to us," he said.

"We also have the opportunity to show them the products we stock and explain why they're of better quality, and how we can help more easily to support a machine retailed by us."

Service, suggested Guy Freeman, should actually start with the sales manager having faith in the product being sold and the service team supporting it.

"Sales staff need to know they'll be backed by the service department, while dealers also need good people manning the phone who understand service issues."

Tom Bigwood outlined a new loyalty scheme his firm has been developing which gives customers who have had their machine serviced with Bigwoods a preferential rate on its next service.

"Once you have a foot in the door you have data on the customer and the machine – age, last service, etc. That's invaluable."

Asked by an audience member whether they felt the growing trend to battery-powered outdoor power equipment represented a threat to service, the panel response was broadly that, if the industry adapted, there would remain opportunities.

"Service times are likely to be faster and the cost for the customer reduced, but these products do still have maintenance requirements," pointed out Guy Freeman.

"We need to be prepared – we have seen this year's sales double."

PANEL DEBATE THREE:

Communicating with customers

The day's third and final debate asked which communication methods work best to connect dealers with customers. Chaired once more by Roger Lane-Nott, on the panel was Brian Mitchell, Head of Retail at Cyril Johnston, James Hayes, owner of Devon firm Hayes Garden Machinery, and Andrew Meek, Director of Congleton Garden Machinery.

Brian Mitchell opened the session by outlining the need to make maximum use of customer data for maximising service and marketing opportunities.

"We had details of 5,000 customers on a database that was not being used," he explained.

"To utilise it fully, we first moved away from scattergun blanket marketing and cleaned up the data – cutting out flats, people who identifiably had no gardens and suchlike.

"Secondly, we broadened our marketing channels to make use of more electronic media. Messaging this way is far cheaper than mail. Ten per cent of our sales now come from leads from Facebook, Twitter, Gumtree, eBay and other electronic marketing. But we won't become an internet-based dealer. A physical one will always be able to react faster to changes in consumer demand, weather and the like."

There was still a significant place for traditional face-to-face marketing, though, reasoned James Hayes.

"We've only been attending outdoor exhibitions – open days, county shows, steam rallies – for the past four years, but find they work well, and we now use the best ones to get in front of customers at every opportunity.

"Many people don't realise dealers offer service and repair, and we've been encouraging sales staff to highlight this."

Clearly identifying different customer segments and how they communicate is crucial to getting messages across, concluded Andrew Meek.

"Remember that there may still be age/generation groups who respond best to mail/paper communication, while if you are targeting younger customers with a particular promotion, electronic media may gain more response." ●



Delegates at the conference

A PERFECT COMBINATION



The vast outdoor demonstration site

Editor Steve Gibbs visited Louisville, Kentucky, to attend the GIE-EXPO trade show and found it had the balance of indoors and outdoors just right – with the wonderful advantage of an exclusive Dealer Day

It was my first visit to Louisville, Kentucky to attend the GIE-EXPO show.

And wow! What an eye-opener.

As a first time visitor the initial aspect that hits you is the sheer scale of the endeavour. The Kentucky International Expo Centre is a vast place and GIE-EXPO takes up a good proportion of it.

Put together jointly by the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) and specialist show organiser Sellers Expositions, one of the attractions that makes this show so special is the perfect combination of indoors and outdoors space. That's what keeps the crowds and the exhibitors coming back year on year – there's certainly no debate here over whether the show should take place every other year!

Dealer Day

An innovation that the organisers brought in a couple of years ago, of the show's first day being a Dealer Exclusive Day, is a wonderful concept.

The atmosphere on the show floor on the Wednesday was relaxed, but with serious business being done – with a smile. It was busy but not over crowded, with dealers being able to walk up to the teams of manufacturers' reps and talk to them freely and at length.

Lewis Anderson of Rochford Garden Machinery was working on the B3C Fuel Solutions stand to learn from the US dealers about their experiences with the product to bring that knowledge back to the UK. He told me, "Dealer Day is great. It allows me to talk to dealers and tell them what discount is available without me having to look over my shoulder to see who's listening in!"

Also the fact that many of the stands were dishing out free beer and food as part of the opening day reception certainly helped the convivial atmosphere. This was supposed to be kept back until the official start time of the reception at 5pm, but as far as I could tell, dealers were getting beers put in their hands from as soon as the

show floor opened at 3pm!

Prior to this on Dealer Day, in the large Dealer Resource Pavilion area, there was a series of both free and paid-for, educational seminar sessions, laid on specifically for independent dealers.

One superb session was from Bob Clements, a training and development specialist, who works with dealerships across the country. Entitled *Seven principals of a high performance dealership*, Bob gave an engaging presentation, talking through concepts such as treating your customers as honoured guests, flat rating more tasks and creating processes which are repeatable in order to keep your costs down.

An inspirational speaker, Bob's presentation certainly gave the dealers in attendance, which included David Dixon from Newcastle, plenty to consider.

Optimism

When the doors were opened to the contractors, groundsmen and other turf professionals on the Thursday

and Friday, the show floor and the demonstration ground were suddenly packed to the rafters. A much more hectic atmosphere prevailed.

But again there was an atmosphere of deals being done, and of equipment being sold, in an industry that certainly feels like it has the wind behind it.

Chairman, President and CEO of Briggs & Stratton, Todd Teske, confirmed this sense of a buoyant industry currently in the US. In a presentation he said, “Our focus in recent years has been on innovations – and in many cases the innovations have exceeded our expectations once we’ve launched them into the market.

“There are a couple of things currently which I am really optimistic about. One is the commercial market.

“When you look at the situation here in the US with commercial mowers and ancillary equipment, over the last five or six years, it’s been dramatic. A lot better than the consumer business and I think that’s going to continue.

“If you look around this show there’s a lot of folks here with some very interesting things. So from that standpoint I get very excited from both a market point of view and from the innovation.

“From the consumer side, it’s the same thing with the innovation. If you look back three, four or five years a lot of the equipment you see here today didn’t exist.

“I think consumers are starting to get the notion that there is better



A relaxed, but buzzy atmosphere on Dealer Day

stuff out there. They are now considering factors like starting and noise, and how they probably shouldn’t just be spending \$159 on a walk mower. This is all being helped by the upturn in the housing market.

“But in general, if you take all this innovation in the market, I get real fired-up about where we’re at.”

New launches

There were, of course, new products being launched across the show. However, when we might see any or all over here wasn’t clear.

For instance, President of Jacobsen, David Withers, said he was thrilled to be introducing a new range of zero turn mowers, the ZT Pro Series, at GIE-EXPO, but some further development needs to be carried out on the machines before they will be CE compliant for a UK release.

Battery power was big around the show. Ego Power, GreenWorks and Stihl were three companies extolling the virtues of a cordless future.

And Toro, on its stand, was showing off its new MyRide suspension system, which is available on six models.

In fact most manufacturers had two stands, one indoors where new machines could be explained and introduced with fancy visuals and displays, and one outdoors for both dealers and end-users to fire the machines up and get a feel for what they could do.

Expansion

GIE-EXPO 2015 was a reflection of the positive state of the current US market.

And in 2016 organisers are actually looking to expand, such is the desire for more exhibitors to join the party. It’s getting to the stage where the town of Louisville itself is busting at the seams at the influx of visitors. Although apparently ground has been broken on a couple of new mega-hotels downtown, which should help matters in subsequent years.

It’s difficult to say that shows over here should take a leaf out of their book and find that balance of an indoors and outdoors experience. A suitable venue, the weather and finding the right time of year dictates this. Although it is a shame because I certainly got the impression that exhibitors and visitors alike were all caught up in the show’s special atmosphere.



Jacobsen President David Withers introducing the new ZT Pro series



Chairman, President and CEO of Briggs & Stratton, Todd Teske



KRIS KISER

While at GIE-EXPO, Editor Steve Gibbs sat down with President and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, Kris Kiser, to talk fuel, trends in the market and the demonisation of the lawn

The charismatic Kris Kiser knows what it takes to get things changed in the American political system.

Having worked for a Congressman as a Special Assistant in his personal office for nine years and then two years as the Chief Administrative Staffer with the Joint Economic Committee, he knows how Washington works.

Does this come in handy now he's acting on behalf of the outdoor power equipment manufacturers of North America?

"Absolutely it does," says Kris. "We're advocates for the industry, so when there's an issue before the Congress, like this ethanol thing, we're the industry's voice."

Look Before You Pump

This ethanol thing is just one of the major issues currently on the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute's (OPEI) radar. Roughly the US equivalent of our AEA, the use of increased percentages of ethanol in filling station gas, which is fine for a subset of automobiles but harmful when left in mowers, chainsaws and the like, is taking up a lot of Kris's time.

The OPEI has dedicated itself to spreading the message of the potential dangers of ethanol and misfueling to dealers, professional users and consumers in America with its 'Look Before You Pump' campaign.

"I talk incessantly about this fuel business," says Kris. "The underlying statutory situation remains a problem. Congress is wholly focused on the elections, which means there's no fix whatsoever in place. No light at the end of the tunnel."

"We have a fuel problem in this country. The government is driving fuels into the market place for which nothing is designed. E15, E30 E85, which may work for your automobile, but may kill everything we have out here at the show. It's a big deal."

"It's always been hard if you own gas-powered equipment. Now it's even tougher with the ethanol, as the fuel will go stale and destroy your equipment."

So how has this situation come about?

"Part of it is a political problem," says Kris. "And to a degree, part of it is testament to the political clout of the corn-growers in this country. They are at war with the oil and gas producers. They're arguing over who's better? Who's better for climate change? Who's better for the environment? There's a big beef right now. And when you get two big political interests who are fighting, it's a stalemate."

"Plus our political situation is essentially unworkable. No one gets along, no one talks anymore, so it's not getting fixed."

The demonisation of the lawn

Kris's frustration with this situation is obvious. But it's not the only major issue he's dealing with currently.

Acting on behalf of his 100 members, producers of machinery designed to cultivate and care for landscaped areas, he has a battle on his hands coming out of California.

The on-going drought in this most sizable and influential of states, has led to what Kris describes as "the demonisation of the lawn".

"The managed landscape is obviously in our industry's interest," he says. "It's our bread and butter. And the California drought situation has aggravated that. What we've seen now with the drought is a host of new robust problems that are directly affecting the OPE industry – what I call the demonisation of the lawn."

"All of this derives largely from the local government. The messages coming from the Governor's office and other regulators are demonising the lawn as a water-guzzling problem. They're drought-shaming lawn-owners."

"They're saying the best thing you can do to save water is tear up the lawn. Well the lawn

doesn't need to be over-watered or removed. We've got this fixation that we want a lush, green carpet. Well it doesn't need to be."

Radically, the OPEI is now encouraging homeowners to let their lawns turn brown. "We're telling people 'if your lawn's challenged and it's not getting enough water, well it'll go brown. It's not dead, it's just going dormant."

"If you've got the right grass, like a Bermuda or a Buffalo, those are tough plants. They'll come right back."

TurfMutt

What steps are Kris and his team taking to combat this political onslaught?

It turns out, quite an innovative and fun approach – getting the nation's families on-board.

Since 2009, OPEI has worked with the live action/cartoon character, TurfMutt, an educational character that teaches children about the importance of properly caring for and maintaining plants and grasses in their communities and backyards. In 2015 the OPEI and TurfMutt entered into a new partnership with Scholastic Education,



the world's largest producer of children's books and a leader in educational resources.

This partnership has expanded the TurfMutt programme including new lesson plans for teachers, take-home sheets, learning activities, a revamped website, blog, interactive games and a digital storybook.

Now TurfMutt's backpack programme sees materials sent home with school children for the whole family, offering tips on how to sustainably take care of your managed landscapes. This idea of getting the nation's kids on board is similar to how the need to recycle took off in the 1990s.

And recently TurfMutt has been found on TV, on an established Saturday morning TV show on CBS called *Lucky Dog*. The most recent season, which began in November

2015, featured Kris Kiser alongside TurfMutt, and will expand to eight episodes.

Kris and TurfMutt visit people's homes and advise them on what they can be doing to make their environment for their families and pets both natural and sustainable.

"So we're doing what we can to begin to encourage folks to do the right thing," says Kris. "You can have the lawn but we've got to get smart about it."

A good year

All this is not to say that the US outdoor powered equipment market is in the doldrums. Quite the opposite, in fact.

"It's been a good year," Kris confirms. "Now the country's doing well again, interest rates are low, housing sales are up, foreclosures are down and the weather is cooperating, so we're pretty strong right now."

"We ship about 30 million units a year. That's everything: chippers, trimmers, chainsaws, mowers etc. And we have very specific shipping reports. OPEI has a highly detailed market statistics collection programme for our members."

"But we don't make those numbers public. We provide it to our members. But only the members that report data in can get data out."

This buoyancy was clearly reflected in the mood of the exhibition where I met Kris. "It's a bigger show than last year, and last year was the biggest show ever," he comments.

When asked if he's seeing any particular trends at 2015's GIE-EXPO, there's one word that immediately springs to mind: batteries.

"We're seeing a trend in this. A lot of these guys have recently come into the marketplace in a meaningful way."

"We're now finalizing our first six electric categories into our statistics programme, which is a big deal for us as we've never done this before. Once we process those figures, then we'll really start to see if there's a genuine trend in cordless. Are gasoline numbers going down? Are electric numbers going up? Are they both going up?"

"We're all looking forward to seeing those numbers."

Kris Kiser clearly relishes his role. His enthusiasm, drive and commitment to the industry are readily apparent. Under his stewardship and with the current cautiously optimistic forecast for growth in the US outdoor powered equipment industry, the OPEI and its GIE-EXPO show look set for some good years ahead. ●

A GREAT START

The IOG's moving of SALTEX to the NEC in November exceeded many people's expectations. Steve Gibbs reports

Walking around the NEC on two wet and dreary November days, a positive vibe appeared to emanate from all quarters – from the IOG organisers, from the exhibitors and from the hoards of turf professionals who packed out the halls both days. And the figures released by the IOG after the event confirmed that their expectations were exceeded. The independent audit, conducted by BPA Worldwide, confirmed that a total of 8,714 unique individuals made 10,112 visits to SALTEX 2015. The IOG say this officially makes the show the largest turf management exhibition in the UK.

Buoyant

Speaking to many exhibitors, the vast majority were upbeat about the show itself and about the level of business they were doing from their stands. Branson Tractors for example, which was launching its range of compact tractors at Birmingham, was delighted by the level of interest its small space containing just a single tractor had generated. It signed up new dealers at the show and was even confident it had secured a

buyer for the display model. MD Nathan Walker said: "I've never experienced a more buoyant SALTEX."

Ian Small, Sales and Marketing manager of Briggs & Stratton UK said: "I think the show has been a success. We need this to gel and for the industry to get behind it. We've had some great people exhibiting and plenty of quality visitors."

And they didn't appear alone in having their expectations exceeded. The consensus of opinion I was hearing was that the halls were very well laid out, with smart lighting, innovative displays and with no one company dominating the floor space. It did very much remind me of the indoor section of the American trade show I had recently visited.

Battery power

I asked plenty of exhibitors if they felt not being able to turn on their machines to demonstrate them working had inhibited them in any way, and I was surprised to hear most confirm that it hadn't been a problem at all.

Certainly it wasn't a problem for the distinct trend of manufacturers showing off their battery-powered equipment, who could start them up



MD of Branson Tractors, Nathan Walker



Briggs & Stratton's Ian Small



SALTEX 2015 at the Birmingham NEC was well attended on both days

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inside the halls to illustrate their lack of noise, emissions and vibrations. Companies such as Ego Power, Stihl, Bosch and GreenWorks all illustrated how the cordless sector is really starting to make inroads into the professional turfcare industry.

A real change in the marketplace seems to be kicking off - which again I had seen mirrored at the American show.

Concerns

Of course, you can't expect everyone to be 100% pleased with everything. Mark Dyos, VP of Maruyama US, posted on our Weekly Briefing e-newsletter, "Whilst we love the new look at the NEC, we miss the ability to demonstrate our product in the open air. Please IOG, provide some outdoor space in that vast arena."

Also there were some grumblings heard over the car parking situation, both with the charges and the difficulties some faced finding

a space. IOG CEO Geoff Webb said this was an issue they would be taking up with the NEC.

And of course, the news that PSD Groundscare had some machinery stolen from a 'secure area' within the NEC was very concerning.

Future

But on the whole it certainly appeared to me that there was a start of something very promising at the NEC. And with the IOG confirming that there are no plans to return to Windsor, it is going to require the industry to get on board with it.

Going forwards, how this new indoor winter show co-exists with BIGGA's indoor winter show, separated by just a couple of months and not too many miles, will be interesting to observe.

Will both shows be able to maintain their levels of exhibitors and visitors?

NEW AT THE SHOW

As ever, SALTEX saw plenty of product launches. Highlights included . . .

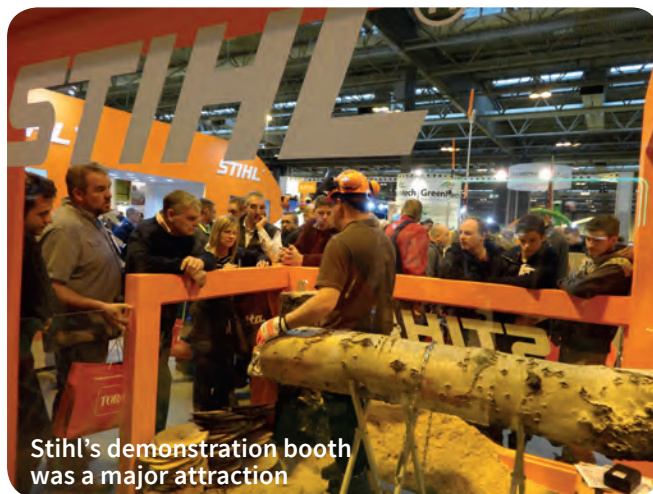


Kubota stand

Rochford Garden Machinery was displaying the Mitox 280BVX Premium blower vacuum. The unit, while aimed at consumers, benefits from professional levels of vibration.

Bosch exhibited a key addition to its range, the GEN 230V-1500 Professional Mobile Power unit, which provides off-grid power for all-day working. The unit has twin AC sockets and allows for simultaneous charging of two batteries, or direct running of two electrical appliances. An LCD display presents real-time status information and enables the user to manage remaining 'tank' capacity.

Grillo UK launched its latest Climbers. Powered by 22hp or 27hp B&S engines, these four-wheel drive brushcutters feature a 13-litre fuel tank,



Stihl's demonstration booth was a major attraction

electromagnetic clutch, pedal-operated diff lock on the rear axle, tow hitch and lights as standard. Cutting width is 98cm and cutting height is adjustable from 35mm to 135mm.

Stihl attracted the crowds to its stand with both its demonstration booth as well as the newest additions to its cordless range. These included the BGA 100 blower, AR 3000 battery backpack and FSA 90 and 90R brushcutters.

Kubota's impressive showing included its new Grand L40-II Series deluxe tractors. These units feature an integrated cab, designed specifically for operator comfort and increased productivity. The newly branded HST Plus hydrostatic transmission advanced technology also featured. ●

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BUSINESS MONITOR

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BUSINESS PROSPECTS 2016

The mood among dealers appears to be one of optimism

Some encouraging results came out of our 2016 Prospects survey which we conducted at the end of November. The impression given was one of quiet optimism, but obviously tinged with some concerns, as you would expect.

The fact that 48% of dealer respondents described their general mood going into this new year as 'confident' though is reason to be heartened. This is backed up with increases expected by the majority in machinery sales (43%), service work (50%) and parts and accessories sales (52%).

Dealers don't appear to be rushing into expanding their staffing levels though. Caution is being exercised here with 40% saying they might possibly take on

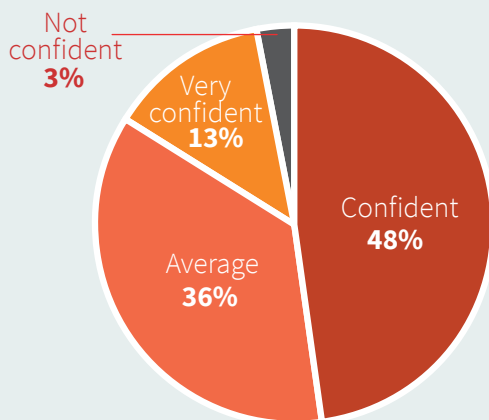
more people depending on how the year begins.

Similarly, in terms of taking on new apprentices, there appears to be an interest there, but only if work levels demand it. 35% said they would take on an apprentice if they were able to find a suitable candidate and 29% said they would if business levels demanded it.

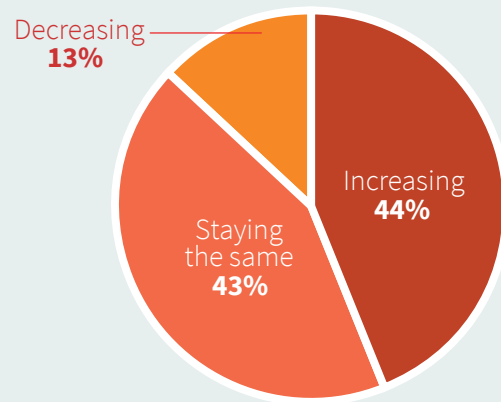
In terms of challenges faced, those old perennials the internet (35%) and the weather (29%) were cited as having the largest effects on business prospects this year.

The IOG should be pleased to hear that the move of Saltex to the NEC doesn't seem to have affected dealer opinion too adversely, with 48% saying they intend to visit the show in 2016.

In general, how confident for your business do you feel going into 2016?



Do you see your machinery sales for 2016...



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YOUR SAY

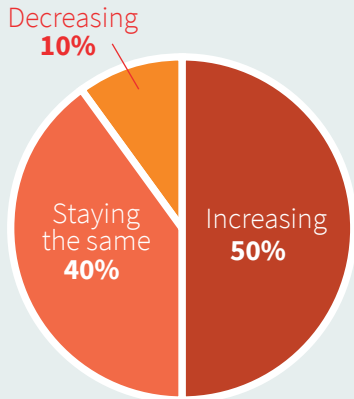
WE ASKED YOU WHAT WAS GIVING YOU CAUSE FOR CONCERN GOING INTO 2016...

- I can see 2016 being a lot harder trading than 2015 as farmers are not getting good returns, plus they have increased costs.
- Getting customers to acknowledge that if their fuel is bad it is not our fault. Trying to educate customers is time-consuming, especially when called out to a machine that won't start and finding it is their fuel! They often then expect it to be repaired FOC if we have serviced it.
- Minimum/living wage rises and pension scheme coming into force. It's hard enough to make a living as it is!
- The Internet and how manufacturers deal with it. The internet now dictates the profit margin for the dealer network. The buying public will no longer pay a bigger premium from a bricks and mortar supplier. As buyers get happier with buying online it will make it more important for the service dealer to maximise and focus on the profitability of their workshops and parts business.
- If dealers keep discounting on the net the whole network will suffer. On Black Friday an online retailer had 30% off major brand chainsaws. Where is it going to stop?
- We need to get a better quality applicant for apprenticeship vacancies. Plus someone in the mid-range age bracket would be desirable, if possible. If we could we would then be in a position to take on the extra work which has been offered.

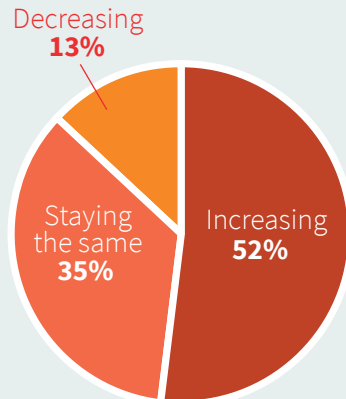
And what you felt optimistic about . . .

- We always believe that the customer will get the message that 'the specialist dealer talks to the customer'.
- The grass will grow from our ankles to our knees – it's just a matter of when!

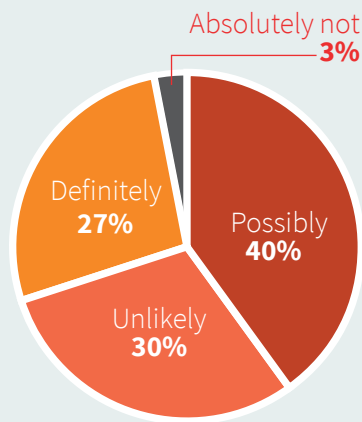
Do you see your service work for 2016...



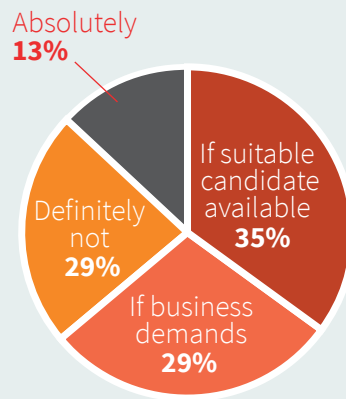
Do you see your parts and accessories sales for 2016...



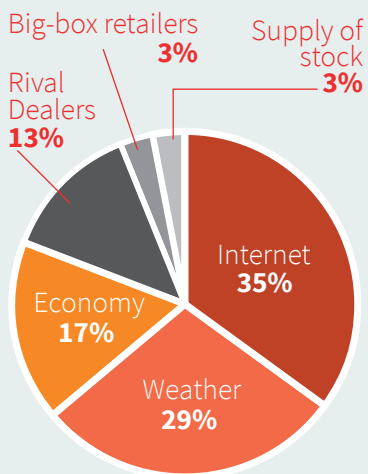
Do you anticipate having to take on more staff in 2016?



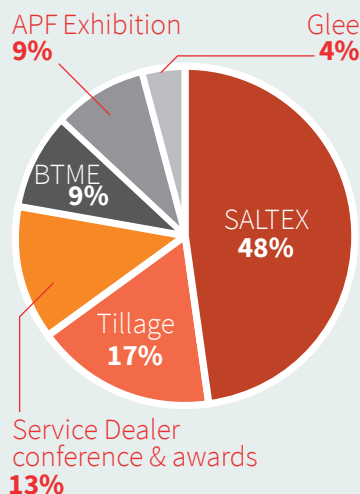
Are you looking to take on new apprentices in 2016?



What do you anticipate as being the biggest challenges to your business in 2016?



Which shows and events do you think you will attend in 2016?



BTME 2016 SET TO BE BIGGEST YET

But will it feel the effects of a recent and similar SALTEX?

BIGGA, the organiser of BTME which takes place this month, say 2016's show is shaping up to be the biggest yet.

The annual gathering in Harrogate this New Year might have a slight sense of déjà vu about it for some visitors though, coming hot on the heels of a certain other indoor turfcare show.

Many visitors to the Harrogate International Centre will have inevitably made the trip slightly further South to the Birmingham NEC in November, to check

out the new look SALTEX.

While BTME is, of course, a different beast, concentrating solely on the golf course industry, there will be a distinct crossover in both exhibitors and visitors. Whether this will manifest itself in a decrease in footfall for BIGGA's show, only time will tell.

What BTME will always have over other turfcare shows, of course, is the town of Harrogate itself. No other exhibition's location can compete with the genuinely welcoming and

communal atmosphere that is created in this picturesque North Yorkshire town every January.

Feedback

Organiser BIGGA is doing its utmost to make sure BTME is still an integral part of the turfcare year. It says it has listened to visitor research and exhibitor feedback and updated the show hours, with the exhibition now open from 8.30am-5pm on Tuesday 19th January 2016, 8.30am-5.30pm on Wednesday





and 8.30am-2.30pm on Thursday.

The exhibition covers five halls with hall Q of the Harrogate International Centre complementing the other four that will again be packed with exhibitors from every corner of the turf management industry.

GolfBIC

This year also sees a momentous partnership with the Golf Business and Industry Convention (GolfBIC) presented by the UK Golf Course Owners' Association (UKGCOA) and the Organisation of Golf and Range Operators (OGRO).

This is a well-established and popular annual event attracting top presenters and a wide range of delegates from every corner of the golf industry.

Previous GolfBIC events have covered a diverse range of subjects from social media in the golf industry to recruiting golf professionals, and have included in-depth panel discussions on crucial industry issues.

A centrepiece of GolfBIC has traditionally been the networking dinner, and this is being held on the Wednesday evening.

Continue To Learn

BTME will again feature a comprehensive education programme with another range of quality speakers gearing up to present at Continue to Learn 2016, which runs from Sunday 17th January to Wednesday 20th January.

Last year's programme broke all records, delivering 215 hours of education to nearly 3,000 delegates,

and the association's hopes are high of exceeding these numbers. A range of workshops, sessions and seminars are planned with speakers including Beth Guertal, Professor of Turfgrass Management and Soil Fertility at Auburn University, Dr John Kaminski, Turfgrass Management Professor from Penn State University and Mike O'Keefe, Global Placement Manager at Ohio State University, plus dozens more.



Turf Managers' Conference

Continue to Learn again incorporates the increasingly popular Turf Managers' Conference, which has outgrown its original venue of the Crown Hotel and will be held in the HIC's Royal Hall.

For the first time, Continue to Learn will also feature a half-day educational conference in association with the IOG, focusing on groundsmanship related content.

Welcome celebration

The aforementioned social scene in Harrogate will be complemented by the Welcome Celebration, sponsored by BIGGA Partner Jacobsen, toasting the achievements of BIGGA members over the past 12 months. This will be held in the Royal Hall on the Tuesday evening and will feature the unveiling of the winners of the inaugural BIGGA Awards.

The three categories are:

BIGGA Young Greenkeeper of the Year, sponsored by Jacobsen; the BIGGA Greenkeeping Achievement of the Year, sponsored by Pitchcare; and BIGGA Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year.

Striking a balance

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton said: "We're hugely excited about BTME 2016. We're particularly delighted to be hosting GolfBIC and this is another signal of our clear intentions to drive more and more of the industry's key decision makers to Harrogate.

"This means thousands of influential figures from across the turf management industry will fill the halls throughout the week, ensuring high quality enquiries and conversations for our exhibitors.

"Hall Q will be open for the first time in several years to accommodate more and more visitors and exhibitors.

The change in opening hours is in response to visitors' and exhibitors' feedback. There is so much going on during the week that we need to strike the correct balance between the exhibition, education and networking, and these new hours reflect that.

"The Continue to Learn programme has gained a fantastic reputation within the industry and we're again intending for it to cater for all levels of greenkeeper. We're thrilled that our friends at the IOG are working with us to provide a groundsmanship focused element this year which reinforces our aim to ensure a huge range of delegates from across all facets of the turf management industry.

"I'm already looking forward to seeing our exhibitors, members and all of our friends from across the industry at BTME 2016."

For up to date show information visit www.btme.org.uk or follow @BIGGA_BTME on Twitter.





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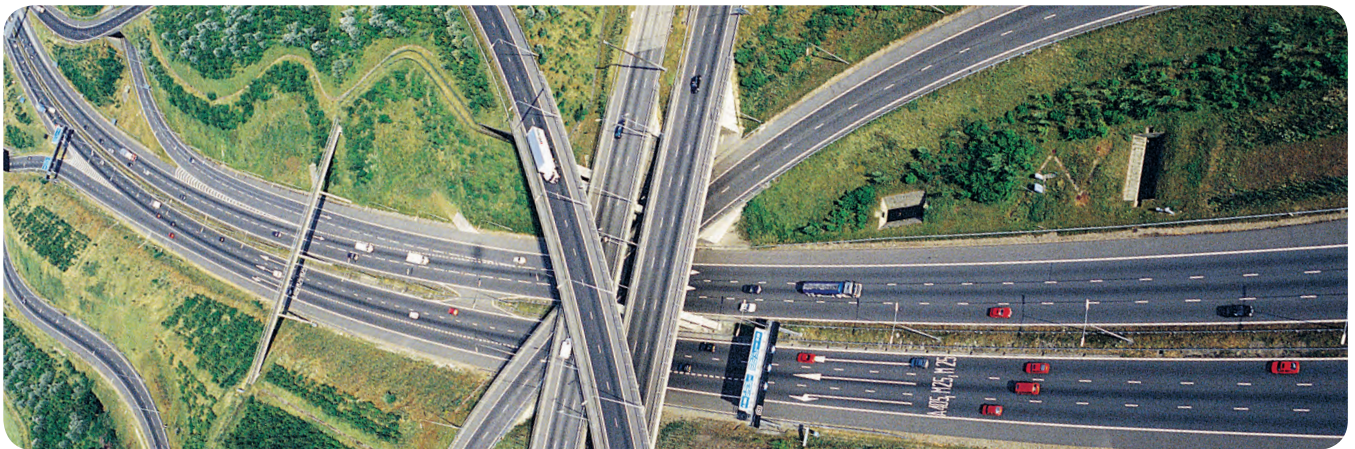
HOW TO GET TO BTME

Your routes to Harrogate



Did you know?

- Harrogate is one of the more desirable places to live in and visit in the UK.
- Harrogate sits smack-bang in the middle of the UK and benefits from fantastic transportation links.
- Harrogate International Centre itself sits right in the heart of Harrogate, within easy walking distance of around 4,000 bed spaces and over 100 restaurants and bars.
- Driving to HIC? There are 300 car parking spaces at the Harrogate International Centre alone, and a further 1,200 nearby.



CAR DIRECTIONS



SAT NAV: King's Road, Harrogate, HG1 5LA.

From the North and South on A1M, exit A59 to Harrogate (five miles from town centre).

From M1: To Leeds – 15 miles from Harrogate (A61).

From Manchester: M62 to Leeds – 15 miles from Harrogate (A61).

From the South A1(M)

Leave A1(M) at Wetherby, signposted to Harrogate (A661). Continue until you reach the outskirts of Harrogate. Follow signs for Skipton (A59). After Fire Station (on left) take 2nd left turn into Kings Road, continue for approximately half a mile. The Harrogate International Centre is situated on the right.

From the North A1(M)

Leave A1(M) at junction 47 signposted A59 to Harrogate. Continue on ring road (A658) until signposted to Harrogate (A661). Follow signs for Skipton (A59). After Fire Station (on left) take 2nd left turn into Kings Road, continue for approximately half a mile. The Harrogate International Centre is situated on the right.

From the East

Take the A59 to Harrogate. Continue on ring road (A658) until signposted to Harrogate (A661). Follow signs for Skipton (A59). After Fire Station (on

left) take 2nd left turn into Kings Road, continue for approximately half a mile. The Harrogate International Centre is situated on the right.

From the West

Take the A59 passing through Skipton. Continue on to Harrogate. On reaching the outskirts of Harrogate follow the signs for Harrogate International Centre.

RAIL



Main line services are to Leeds and York, then regional railways to Harrogate. The Exhibition Centre is 15 minutes' walk from the station.

Taxi fare is approximately £3.50.

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LOOKING AHEAD TO LAMMA

The UK machinery market is facing a seriously challenging season, but for those seeking ideas on boosting efficiency, January's LAMMA will be an essential visit, says MARTIN RICKATSON

It's perhaps a mark of the lean, no-frills approach that UK farming has had to take in recent years that its premier farm machinery show now takes place outdoors in January. The days of a trip to London each December to visit the Royal Smithfield Show at Earl's Court, or the annual summer gathering of machinery makers from all sectors at the Royal Show every July, now seem a distant memory.

But there remain few better places for the industry to display its wares and show how its products can improve the businesses of buyers than a full national exhibition. And while it has grown by default, following the demise of the aforementioned events and through the appeal of its own low-cost, no entry fee approach, the former Lincolnshire Agricultural Machinery Manufacturers Association event is now the go-to show for livestock and arable farmers and equipment makers alike.

Purchased from the Association in 2012 by Briefing Media, parent firm of *Farmers Guardian*, the event has retained its independence and is undergoing significant investment following its relocation from Newark Showground to the East of England Showground at Peterborough. Despite suggestions for further relocation to another site with more hardstanding or to an indoor venue, organisers say that following extensive feedback, LAMMA is staying at

its current home, with considerable investment being put into the site to improve the visitor experience.

LAMMA 2016 is likely to provide the first chance for many farmers and dealer staff to see new tractor launches from the industry's major names, including John Deere's 9RX four-tracked crawler, the 270/300hp New Holland T7HD and Case IH Optum machines, the cabbed version of Massey Ferguson's 4700 tractors, Zetor's 144/160hp Crystal, the Claas Axion 870 and McCormick's long-awaited high-hp X8 range. At the other end of the power scale, CTC of Bidford on Avon will attend LAMMA as the new importer for South Korean-made 21-74hp Branson tractors.

The combine market is sure to be tough in 2016, but makers and dealers are responding by promoting the efficiency and operating cost advantages of updates and upgrades. Claas has a new 4D cleaning system for its Lexion 700 hybrid combines, while Case IH will show its updated range of 140 series Axial-Flow combines.

RECO's decision to cease importing agricultural and turfcare equipment is likely to be a talking point at LAMMA, with the new Lincs-based Sulky Burel UK operation exhibiting for the first time, and Strautmann forage wagons and diet feeders featuring on the stand of new importer Opico. The latter will also be showing off its new UK franchise for Sky min-till and direct drills from France. British diet feeder maker Shelbourne-Reynolds will be launching an upgraded diet feeder range and a new line of heavy-duty hedge trimmers.

A workshop area in hall 4 will accommodate tool, component and aftermarket supplies specialists, while livestock equipment and supplies, plus associated equipment such as forage machinery, will be found in/around hall 8.

For the first time, LAMMA will feature a used equipment area in a 'Dealers' Den' in hall 9, hosting dealers, online traders of used machinery and secondhand equipment publications.

Diversification equipment needs will also be covered, by exhibitors from industries ranging from recycling machinery and construction equipment to forestry and grounds care tools and alternative energy sources.

LAMMA 2016 takes place at the East of England Showground, Peterborough, on 20th and 21st January. Parking and admission are free, while shuttle bus services will run from Peterborough railway station. Show hours are from 7.30am to 5pm. Full English breakfasts are served in the Arena restaurant at a discounted price from 6.30am to 8am.



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GOLDS FOR BROWNS IN KUBOTA DEALER SERVICE AWARDS



Longstanding Kubota dealer, George Browns Ltd, has been awarded five gold and one silver Kubota Dealer Service Excellence Awards, in recognition of its commitment to service excellence.

The awards, which are assessed and presented every two years by Kubota UK, are based on dealer equipment, facilities, commitment to training and, most importantly, customer service. The Kubota customer satisfaction survey is submitted to customers after every product sold and is used to rate the service department of every Kubota dealer.

The five gold were awarded to branches at Buckingham, Cheshire, Leighton Buzzard, Daventry and Haddenham, with its Dunmow branch taking silver.

Kevin McConnell, Service Manager at George Browns Ltd, commented: "This achievement really demonstrates to our customers how seriously we manage our after-sales service. It's one of the most important aspects of our business and it enhances what Browns means to our clients.

We'd like to thank Kubota for their support and all the staff at our depots for taking on the challenge, working hard to go the extra mile for customers and understanding the importance of the after sales service. Now that we've achieved gold level, we'll be raising the bar and pushing for the next achievement!"

For more information about the Kubota Dealer Service Awards, call 01844 268000 or visit www.kubota.co.uk

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For Earth, For Life


UK DEALERS FLY TO TORO US

For parts training insight



Toro Parts service dealers from across the UK travelled to The Toro Company world headquarters in Minnesota to see first-hand how the turfcare machinery and equipment manufacturer operates its parts division.

A place on the five-day knowledge-based trip with Lely UK was secured after each dealer was entered into a prize draw, having demonstrated exceptional performance. The final guest list was comprised of representatives from Cheshire Turf Machinery, Kings Worthy Garden Machinery Ltd, Lely Turfcare South East, Lloyd Ltd and Oliver Landpower.

Knowledge trip

Dan Dubas, of Toro Parts Sales and Marketing at Lely UK, says the trip was designed to provide a unique insight into the company and offer invaluable knowledge on the logistics behind achieving market leading service levels.

“The knowledge obtained during the various facility tours and presentations will provide our dealers with the information required to continue achieving the highest standards when communicating the benefits of Toro and Lely’s Original Equipment Manufacture message,” he said.

Nathan Bond of Oliver Landpower was struck with, among many things, the insight the trip provided into upcoming new technology for the sector from the renowned Toro Centre for Advanced Turf Technology (CATT). He said: “I was most impressed with the fact that Toro puts so much into future development rather than relying on what it has now.

“It was a great experience to see the scale of the manufacturing and parts operation and to see the detail it puts into producing, for example, the cutting reels, and balancing them perfectly.”

Technological advances

There was a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the design, engineering, and testing facilities and assembly lines; collaborative discussions on marketing programmes and aftersales support; as well as a visit to the Toro Parts manufacturing facility and distribution centre in Wisconsin.

For Ian Weston, from Cheshire Turf Machinery, this trip was his second with Lely UK. He said: “I went to the USA about 12 years ago on a similar tour of the factories. The biggest difference I noticed between then and now is the advance in technology and how much Toro has invested in the latest equipment to be more efficient, cost-effective and streamlined in the production of parts and machinery. The benefit of trips like this is the first-hand view of what goes on behind-the-scenes and how much time and effort goes into the products.”

KUBOTA UK’S INAUGURAL SKILLS CONTEST

Putting staff’s technical competence to the test

The cream of Kubota UK’s service team gathered in September for the first Kubota Skills competition in the UK, an event that seeks to put the technical competence of its staff to the test.

The event has long been an annual fixture in Japan, but the decision was taken to follow that lead and roll out a UK-specific event to test Kubota staff and serve as a prelude to the launch of the Kubota National Dealer Skills Competition later in 2016, which will widen the entry to include technicians working at dealerships

across the company’s UK network.

The flagship UK competition opened with an introduction from Kubota UK MD Dave Roberts, who was joined by representatives from Kubota Japan and Kubota Spain, who were in attendance to gauge success, with a view to rolling the event out across other sales centres in Europe.

The stakes were high for the six competitors taking part in the inaugural event (the youngest of whom was only 21 years old), as the winner went on to represent

Kubota UK in Japan in December, competing against other Kubota sales territories for the coveted No.1 Technician Gold accolade.

Assessment

The assessment criteria for the competition were twofold: a written, hour-long assessment followed by an intense 90-minute challenge, with competitors tasked with diagnosing and fixing five faults on the Kubota M110GX-II tractor. Each was judged not only on their ability to remedy all five faults, but to demonstrate the method behind their decision making process.

Keith Miller, Service & Training Manager, commented: "While the first priority for today was to test the service skills of our staff and demonstrate Kubota UK's service excellence, the event also served as a dry run for 2016's dealer skills competition, which will be run in the same fashion. Our dealer network is made up of highly skilled, highly professional individuals and we think it's important to celebrate that and test the expertise of those working with Kubota machinery in the field day in, day out.

"It was important for us to make today not

just tough, but fun and engaging, and something that our dealers will be excited to get involved in. There's also the opportunity for healthy competition between dealers to take the UK crown and compete against their counterparts on the world stage."

After a feverish day of diagnosis, one of the younger members of the Kubota service team, James Westbrook, was crowned champion, having completed all the tasks in the allotted time and demonstrated competence and method in his diagnostic process.



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Investing in the future

24 NEW CLAAS APPRENTICES

On technician and parts schemes

This past autumn saw 24 new students join the CLAAS Agricultural Apprenticeship scheme, of whom five are training for the new Parts apprenticeship.

Of the 24 students who come from CLAAS dealerships throughout the UK and Ireland, 18 are conducting their training at Reaseheath in Cheshire, and the remaining six from the North of England, Scotland and Ireland are studying at SRUC Barony.

The 19 students studying for the CLAAS Agricultural Technician Apprenticeship at Reaseheath and Barony



are working towards achieving the Extended Diploma in Landbased Technology over the next three years. This high level vocational qualification is designed to meet the Government's calling for training programmes that meet employer's needs.

CLAAS launched the Parts (Sales and Marketing) Apprenticeship, which is also based at Reaseheath, in 2014 in order to bring into the industry the next generation of young, knowledgeable and experienced parts personnel.

Over the course of their apprenticeship, the Apprentices will be continuously assessed for their competence and skills, using both work-based evidence and e-portfolios.

Both sets of Apprentices may also be selected to visit the CLAAS Group headquarters in Harsewinkel, Germany. They will also spend time training within CLAAS UK headquarters, at Saxham in Suffolk.

In their final, fourth year, the Technician Apprentices will also undertake additional advanced technical and industry training, so that by the time they qualify they will be eligible for LTA 2 status.

AEA TRAINING FOR BUSINESS RETURNS

Season 2 underway

Season two of the AEA's Training for Business is underway. The new prospectus is available on the AEA website at www.aea.uk.com/aea-training-for-business.

Training for Business provides bespoke industry specific business training courses to the land based industries. Anyone can enroll, whether AEA members or not.

Angela Barnatt, Executive Assistant at the AEA said, "The excellent feedback from previous training delegates has helped us make many improvements, such as a strapline following the title of each course to succinctly highlight the course contents for quick reference."

For information contact Angela on 01733 207602 or ab@aea.uk.com.

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PROSPECTUS

2015/16

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DOMESTIC

MITOX LAUNCHES BLOWER VACUUM

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A lightweight yet ultra high performance blower vacuum has been introduced to the Mitox range.

The Mitox 280BVX Premium delivers high power output and, with the combination of a specially designed fan and mulching blade, produces maximum performance, whether it's blowing or vacuuming.

It features commercial levels of vibration of only 2.0m/s². Suitable for the garden and landowner, the 280BVX allows long periods of fatigue-free use with optimum user comfort and ease of operation being the key focus.

3 in 1

Effectively three machines in one, the Mitox can be used as either a dedicated blower or as a blower vacuum, with the additional feature of a shredding function, allowing a reduction ratio of 12:1. Conversion from blower to vacuum is speedily done using the quick-release tube system.

As with all Mitox Premium models, functionality and

user comfort is paramount, with simple features such as the auto choke return, soft-touch handles and quick-release tubes. The blower tube design is innovative in itself with a kinked tube offsetting the machine's gyro forces, rendering it effortless to handle in use. There's a simple cruise control that allows the speed to be set for easier operation and an auto return stop switch that resets to the 'on' position for trouble-free starting. The 27.6cc engine produces 0.8kW of power to give a maximum airspeed of 161mph.

The Mitox 280BVX weighs in at just 4.7kg as a blower and 5.8kg as a vacuum and comes with a collection bag, shoulder strap and a two-year homeowner warranty.



DOMESTIC & COMMERCIAL

LIGHT AND COMPACT ECHO

Latest generation chainsaw

The latest model in ECHO's range of new generation chainsaws, the CS-2510TES top handle, is its lightest and most compact saw to date.

The dry weight is 2.3kg and the company says that with its ergonomic, compact design the saw is highly manoeuvrable and can be used for long periods with little operator fatigue. The engine



produces 1.11kW to give the CS-2510TES a superior power-to-weight ratio.

A key feature is using the starter cord toggle as a tool to open the fuel and oil filler caps. This can be done even when wearing gloves. Wider tank openings also make oil and fuel refilling easier and the oiler adjustment is conveniently on top for operator access.

Other features to make the operator's life easier and more productive include a swing-out lanyard ring for attaching the chainsaw to harness ropes, leaving the operator's hands free for easier and safer climbing, while the rotating plastic chain catcher is a key safety feature.

Narrow louvres in the body are designed to prevent pine needles and debris from penetrating the engine compartment.

LEISURE

RZR SHARP FOR 2016

New addition to Polaris family

Polaris has announced a new edition to the RZR family of sport side by side off-road vehicles, the Polaris RZR XP Turbo EPS.

Boasting an impressive acceleration of 0-60mph/96.6kph in just 5.89 seconds, powered by an all-new Polaris ProStar 144hp engine, the razor-sharp performance has been officially turbocharged.

The company says the aim with the RZR is to bring hallmark power, suspension, agility, comfort and customisation to provide the ultimate off-road experience.

To harness all that power there's a new, fully engineered and stronger driveline coupled with a tougher transmission and high performance, true on-demand All-Wheel Drive system. Polaris has taken highly-tuned FOX Podium® Internal Bypass shock absorbers to create the RZR's precisely tuned suspension.

Polaris says the vehicle's new front swaybar and retuned rear swaybar dramatically decrease body roll for a more confidence-inspiring ride, while the standard Electronic Power Steering provides the sharpest point-and-shoot handling to make the vehicle very responsive to the driver in all terrains.

Also available are an abundance of accessories.



COMMERCIAL

NEW MID-RANGE METRACS

Reform launches new models

Focussing on ease of maintenance, performance and serviceability, the Metrac G and H7 RX with mechanical or hydrostatic drive are the new spearheads of the Reform mid-range.

The company says the new controls improve operator comfort and ergonomics, while the optional LED roof lighting ensures better visibility at night and in poor weather conditions.

The innovative ergonomic cab interior includes air conditioning, a height and tilt-adjustable steering column, generous storage space and on-board computer. With the G7 and H7 RX the operator can control central functions, such as front and rear PTO, easily and accurately with one hand, and all controls are grouped according to function.



Hydraulic vibration damping on the front and rear linkages means more comfort and safer working. The 70hp four-cylinder turbo diesel emission stage 3B engine delivers pulling power, smooth running, and a long service life, and the 250Nm torque at 1,000 rpm means there is power to spare in any situation.

The Metrac G7 RX is available with up to 12 forward and 12 reverse gears, while the H7 RX comes with a four-speed Hydro, two-speed mechanical and two speeds electronic with Reform's Automatic/Manual mode. The front and rear linkages on the G7 and H7 RX models lift 1.500kg with a maximum gross vehicle weight of 3.800kg, allowing safe and efficient work with numerous attachments.

Other benefits include final drives in the axles, front, rear, crab, and four-wheel steering, compact dimensions and safe operation at up to 45 degree angles.

COMMERCIAL

WINTER RANGE EXPANDED BY BOBCAT

New additions include skid steer and tracked loaders

The Bobcat range of products for winter maintenance work continues to expand. In the past 12 months, additions have included the S450 skid-steer loader and T450 compact tracked loader.



The S450 and T450 feature the same new generation cab design used on all larger new generation Bobcat compact loaders. Hydraulic performance has been increased in both models and they are equipped as standard with the quick-change Bob-Tach attachment mounting frame.

Customers can also choose the optional Power Bob-Tach system to change non-hydraulic attachments simply by flipping a switch inside the cab.

The company boasts that these are now part of a comprehensive choice of tool carriers that can be combined with the Bobcat range of winter weather attachments, such as snow blowers, buckets, snow blades and salt and sand spreaders, to provide compact and versatile solutions for dealing with the effects of all types of winter weather.

AGRICULTURAL

DEERE FORAGERS FOR INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

New models in 8000 series

John Deere has announced the addition of three new models to its 8000 Series range of self-propelled forage harvesters, which utilise advanced technology to reduce crop losses and boost performance, including new Active Fill Control (AFC) for automated filling of trailers.

visibility. This helps to improve stability when working on steep slopes or while travelling on the road at speeds of up to 40kph.

The machines are designed to provide customers with up to 15% more productivity, increased uptime, lower operating costs and faster, easier maintenance.

The forager cab features an anti-glare screen, Bluetooth connectivity, plenty of storage room and automatic air conditioning, adjustable from the CommandARM.

These models expand the horsepower range to deliver optimal harvesting speed, fuel economy, reliability and forage quality, and line up as follows:

Other advanced features include a GreenStar 2630 with touchscreen display and all functions conveniently located in the CommandARM, Remote Display Access (RDA) and AutoTrac automatic steering with RowSense. Each model can also be equipped with HarvestLab.

- 8300, with a 490hp Stage IV 13.5-litre engine;
- 8700, with a 761hp Stage II 19-litre engine;
- Top-of-the-range 8800, with a 845hp Stage II 19-litre engine.

Because of their longitudinal engine layout, the new foragers feature an improved airflow through the entire machine, resulting in lower cooling requirements and more power for chopping. At the same time the lowered engine position provides an improved overall centre of gravity and enhanced





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EVENTS 2016

JANUARY 2016

- 5-7 Oxford Farming Conference
www.ofc.org.uk
- 19-21 BTME 2016, Harrogate International Centre
www.btme.org.uk
- 20-21 LAMMA 2016, East of England Showground
www.lammashow.co.uk

FEBRUARY 2016

- 2-4 Doe Show 2016, Ulting
www.ernestdoe.com
- 6-11 Golf Industry Show, San Diego, California
www.golfindustryshow.com
- 7-11 Spring Fair 2016, Birmingham NEC
www.springfair.com
- 9-11 World Ag Expo, Tulare, California
www.worldagexpo.com
- 10-11 Executive Hire Show, Ricoh Arena, Coventry
www.executivehireshow.co.uk
- 16-17 Totally Tools, Ricoh Arena, Coventry
www.totallydiy.co.uk/content
- 16-18 Salon du Végétal, Angers, France
www.salonduvegetal.com

MARCH 2016

- 18-03/4 Ideal Home Exhibition, Earls Court, London
www.idealhomeshow.co.uk
- 19-20 West County Game Fair, Shepton Mallet
www.westcountrygamefair.co.uk
- 31 CountryTastic, Three Counties Showground, Malvern
www.threecounties.co.uk/countrytastic

APRIL 2016

- 16-17 BASC Gamekeepers' Fair
www.bascgamekeepersfair.co.uk/
- 26-28 The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC
www.cvshow.com
- 21-24 Harrogate Spring Flower Show
www.flowershow.org.uk

MAY 2016

- 2 North Somerset Show
www.nsas.org.uk
- 14-15 Nottinghamshire County Show
www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com/
- 11-13 Balmoral Show, Belfast
www.balmoralshow.co.uk
- 24-28 Chelsea Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 19-21 Devon County Show
www.devoncountyshow.co.uk
- 21 Fife Show
www.fifeshow.com/
- 21-22 Royal Welsh Spring Festival
www.rwas.co.uk/spring-festival/
- 28 Shropshire County Show
www.shropshirecountyshow.com
- 28-29 Herts County Show
www.hertsshow.com
- 30 Surrey County Show
www.surreycountyshow.co.uk

JUNE 2016

- 1-2 Staffordshire County Show
www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show/
- 1-2 Suffolk County Show
www.suffolkshow.co.uk/
- 1-4 Royal Bath & West Show
www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/
- 3-5 Gardening Scotland, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh
www.gardeningscotland.com
- 5 Rutland Show
www.rutlandcountyshow.com/
- 9-11 Royal Cornwall Show
www.royalcornwallshow.org
- 9-11 South of England Show
www.seas.org.uk/shows.asp?ID=2
- 15-16 Cereals 2016, Boothby Graffoe, Nr Lincoln, Lincolnshire
www.cerealsevent.co.uk
- 16-19 BBC Gardeners' World Live - Birmingham NEC
www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com

- 17-19 Three Counties Show, Malvern
www.threecounties.co.uk/threecounties
- 19 Cranleigh Show
www.cranleighshow.co.uk/
- 21-22 Cheshire County Show
www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 22-23 Lincolnshire Show
www.lincolnshireshowground.co.uk/whats-on/event/the-lincolnshire-show
- 23-26 Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org
- 26 Derbyshire County Show
www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 26 Royal Isle of Wight County Show
www.riwas.org.uk/
- 29-30 Royal Norfolk Show
www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk

JULY 2016

- 2-3 Smallholders' Show, South of England Showground, Ardingly
www.smallholdersshows.co.uk
- 5-10 Hampton Court Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 6-7 Livestock Event, Birmingham NEC
www.livestockevent.co.uk
- 8-10 Kent County Show
www.kentshowground.co.uk
- 9 Newport Show
www.newportshow.org/
- 12-14 Great Yorkshire Show
www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk
- 16 Camborne Show
www.camborne-show.org.uk
- 18-21 Royal Welsh Show
www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show/
- 20-24 RHS Flower Show - Tatton Park
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 22-24 UK Game Fair, NAEC Stoneleigh Park
www.ukgamefair.com/
- 23 Mid Devon Show
www.middevonshow.co.uk
- 26-28 New Forest & Hampshire County Show
www.newforestshow.co.uk
- 29-30 Border Union Show
www.buas.org/show/



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THE SUM OF MANY PARTS

Twelve years ago, we launched our annual quest to identify outstanding achievement and excellence among the dealer community. Over the years, our Dealers of the Year have ranged from very small dealers to large multi-branch dealerships.

What they shared was individuality, commitment, passion, flair – and a total commitment to customer needs. Choosing winners has always been subjective – small and sometimes unique attributes often influenced the judging decision.

The winners represent the industry as a whole. They are standard bearers. A benchmark for an industry which strives to provide the best choice of products, with unrivalled customer service (in all its senses).

But does that message get across to the consumer at large? Does the average homeowner think of going to a specialist first? A few do, but the masses certainly do not.

Perceptions persist that the machines we sell are too expensive, that we are too elitist and prone to unintelligible techno-speak. “We’re not like that,” you cry. I’m sure you’re not, but that’s often the common perception.

And anyway, why should they go to a specialist when all the answers to their queries are there online, backed up by the latest *Which?* report on the Best Buys?

Even worse, far too many consumers do not realise that there actually is a specialist network of dealers who sell and service lawnmowers and machinery for the garden – for a living.

Perhaps I’m being too negative. Over recent years the internet has provided unparalleled opportunities for manufacturers and dealers to set out their stalls, promote themselves, debunk myths and provide advice and guidance. Many have grasped that nettle with both hands, (perhaps too enthusiastically for some of their fellow dealers) and have skilfully got themselves to the top of search engines and in among the social media babble.

But what we are missing, I believe, is the sum of the many parts.

As a specialist branch of the gardening and horticulture industry we do not present ourselves forcibly or effectively. The plant and flower ‘gardenistas’ tend to look down on our place in their world. We regularly fail to feature in any TV gardening programme except as an after-thought.

Why? Partly because there is no central resource for credible and authoritative information about our industry. As the seasons ebb and flow, we should be prominent as an industry, making our case, providing advice and inspiration, and crucially providing support to those who make it tick. Who is going to challenge *Which?* over a Best Buy for a product sourced from afar for which there is scant support?

At our recent conference, we heard from several dealers concerned at the growing number of consumers who had bought products after ‘online research’, but which were totally unsuitable for their actual needs.

We can continue to ‘tut-tut’ about that – or we can do something about it.

“THE WINNERS REPRESENT THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE”



JIM GREEN



MOW-TER SPORT

VIKING SETS FASTEST MOWER RECORD

133.6 mph set in Norway



A lawn mower from Viking, recently set a new World Record for the fastest lawn mower land speed.

On 5 November 2015, Finnish driver Pekka Lundefaret used a converted Viking T6 Series lawn tractor to achieve a speed of 215 km/h (133.6 mph) on the runway at Norway's Torp-Sandefjord Airport.

The average speed of 215 km/h was achieved over the regulation distance of one English mile (approx.1.6 km). Although the first attempt failed and it looked like the event would have to be called off due to rain and fog at the airport, which is located south of Oslo, the record was finally broken. The airport safety personnel provided the perfect backup, coordinating the attempt between the scheduled take-offs and landings.

The project took several months of preparation between Viking, its Scandinavian distributors STIHL and the Norwegian Motorsports Association and was headed by Marius Gjevik from the "Norwegian Speed Factory", who contributed valuable advice from professional motorsport.

The World Record rules require that the lawn mower should have a mowing deck and a grass catcher box. With 408 HP under the bonnet, a Formula 1 paddle shift and Formula 3 tyres, the Scandinavian team was extremely well equipped and driver Pekka Lundefaret had reason to celebrate in the end: "I can't believe that we managed to set this world record despite less-than-ideal weather conditions. I would like to thank everyone who supported this crazy idea."

To watch a video of the record-breaking drive visit tinyurl.com/owfe49n.

HEAR HEAR

WRONG TYPE OF TRACTOR NOISE!

Archers fans complain

The makers of Radio 4 agricultural soap opera *The Archers*, have revealed that their eagle-eared listeners are very keen to point out their mistakes - going as far as to spot the wrong type of tractor sound!

Speaking at the Cheltenham Literature Festival recently programme archivist Camillia Fisher said the show has received missives from fans about things as specific as a character getting their car MOT'd four



months too early or incorrect birdsong.

However, the true dedicated enthusiast will even let them know when they hear a rogue machinery noise! The Daily Mail quotes the show's agricultural expert Graham Harvey as saying, "We did a scene in the yard during silage making. And there was a sound effect of a tractor driving by behind.

"We had several letters saying that it could not possibly be a silage tractor and that it was a Massey Ferguson model whatever-it-was." ●



COBRA

Exclusive New Products For 2016

Cobra are proud to be launching a range of exciting new products for 2016 increasing their impressive portfolio to over 100 products.

These new feature rich machines will include a Li-ion Cordless Lawnmower with a dedicated rear roller together with a new 20" Aluminium deck Lawnmower featuring the Briggs & Stratton InStart engine.

The petrol handheld range will now have a Hedgetrimmer and Long Reach Hedgetrimmer both powered by Cobra engines and there is also new 24v & 40v Li-ion handheld models to further complement the Cobra range.



For more information please visit: www.cobragarden.co.uk or call: 0115 986 6646



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