

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

MAY / JUN 2014

ATV MARKET 2014

Review of the ATV and Utility market along with new products and accessories

❖ Lubricants and fuels

❖ **Countax: feedback counts**

❖ **NEW: Business Monitor**

❖ **Diary of the Season**

❖ **New Product Update**

❖ **Training & Education**

❖ **2014 Events and Shows**

❖ **Jim Green column**



FACE TO FACE

Duncan Martin





H&C COBRA

Henton & Chattell launch Cobra Garden Machinery

The Cobra range consists of nearly 70 petrol and electric powered products including: lawnmowers, chainsaws, brushcutters and many more.



SSP's from £879.99

PROFESSIONAL RANGE

- Powered by Honda and Kawasaki
- The range incorporates 7 models
- 4 wheeled or rear roller options
- Cast Aluminium Decks
- Blade Brake Clutch
- Shaft Drive
- Fan Assisted Collection
- 70ltr - 75ltr grass bag capacity
- 13 - 76mm cutting height



SSP's from £289.99

REAR ROLLER RANGE

- Powered by Cobra, Briggs & Stratton and Honda
- The range incorporates 6 models
- Full width rear rollers
- Hand and self propelled drive systems
- Cutting widths ranging from 18" - 22"
- 60ltr grass bag capacity
- 17 - 75mm cutting height
- Easy adjust handle lever



SSP's from £289.99

PREMIUM RANGE

- Powered by Cobra, Briggs & Stratton and Honda
- The range incorporates 7 models
- Mulching and side discharge
- Large diameter wheels
- 4 speed gear boxes on selected models
- Cutting widths ranging from 18" - 22"
- 60ltr - 70ltr grass bag capacity
- 25 - 75mm cutting height

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

It's the phrase that dare not pass their lips. 'Green shoots (of recovery)'. Politicians hesitate to say the words lest they be seen to be too bullish. Instead they hammer home worn clichés like 'cost of living crisis' and 'we're all in this together' on the basis that if they say them often enough and loud enough, they will be accepted as the truth.

Heaven help us, for we've got another year of trial by cliché before we all go to the polls next May.

In meantime, the 'green shoots' phrase will do our industry nicely. It's been a tough few years – and a particularly testing 12 months. Wild weather and a woolly economy has meant uncertainty all around, but now confidence levels amongst dealers are as high as we have seen them for some time.

Manufacturers are reporting a strong start to the season – and it's still early days.

Supply chains cannot be ratcheted up at will, and even at this stage of the season, there is a danger that stock levels may be put under pressure. Even more reason to be vigilant on margins – and cut out the race to the bottom on prices.

Chris Biddle, Editor



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BUSINESS

AL-KO GOES SOLO

ACQUIRES GERMAN GARDEN PRODUCTS COMPANY

AL-KO is strengthening its product range with acquisition of the Solo range of garden machinery, forestry machinery and sprayers.

Subject to anti-trust law approval, as part of an asset deal AL-KO will acquire the complete Solo range as well as the associated trademark rights. "The quality of Solo products perfectly matches our philosophy," said AL-KO Board Member Stefan Kober, "and now with the integration of Solo, we will be strengthening our specialist dealer network."

Manufacture

From mid-2014, gardening and forestry equipment from Solo will be produced at AL-KO's production plant at Obdach in Austria, where it currently manufactures lawnmowers and tractors. Solo will continue with the development of sprayers and cut-off saws from its facility at Sindelfingen.

With the addition of Solo gardening and forestry equipment, AL-KO says it is aiming for a substantial increase in dealer sales in the future. The AL-KO dealer range will be expanded with saws and trimmers from the Solo products range.

"We will launch our best quality products under an exclusive specialist dealer brand by combining the best of Solo and AL-KO. Customers of the specialist dealers will profit from the know-how of two strong brands in one product range," said Wolfgang Hergeth, manager of AL-KO GERÄTE GMBH.

UK distribution

In the UK, the Solo range has been distributed by Lely UK since 2009. It has already been announced that Handy Distribution will take on the the UK distribution of Solo sprayers (see separate panel, right). In a letter to UK dealers recently, David Jackman of Lely UK confirmed the transfer of the sprayer product group to Handy but added that Lely will continue to support the Solo range of chainsaws, brushcutters and hedgecutters "until further notice".



BUSINESS

HANDY TAKES ON SOLO SPRAYERS EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTOR FOR UK

From 15th March Handy Distribution became the exclusive distributor of Solo's range of sprayers & accessories, for the UK & Northern Ireland.

The Solo sprayer range was previously distributed in the UK by Lely UK Ltd.

Dean Speake, Sales & Marketing Manager at Handy Distribution, said, "Solo has a sprayer for every job in the garden, on the farm, and for construction and industry. If you add to the sprayer range the huge range of accessories available for Solo sprayers, you have a truly complete sprayer offering."



2 0 0 9

the Solo range has been distributed by Lely UK since 2009

APPOINTMENTS

SENIOR MANAGEMENT APPOINTMENTS AT RANSOMES

As a result of an extension to its trading territory, which now includes South America, Ransomes Jacobsen has announced further promotions at its European head office in Ipswich.



Richard Comely

Richard Comely, former Director of Marketing and Product Management, has been promoted to Director, Global Product Management, responsible for a team of Product Management specialists in both Ipswich and at the company's head office

in Charlotte, North Carolina. His team is responsible for all new products coming on stream in the near future and the continued development of existing products.



Gina Putnam

As a result of Richard Comely's move into a dedicated and focused Product Management role, Gina Putnam, the company's former International Marketing Manager, has been promoted to Director, Marketing and Communications –

International.

Commenting on these appointments Managing Director Alan Prickett said, "Richard Comely, with his vast knowledge of product management from over 20 years in the turf management sector, was the obvious choice for this position.

"Gina's rise within the business has been nothing short of meteoric, having joined us back in 2011. She has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the global turf industry from her time at the GCSAA and Bernhard's; her contacts around the world have been an invaluable resource to our business and her work ethic is prodigious.

"These are well merited promotions."

APPOINTMENTS

NAIRN BROWN PROMOTE

Glasgow-based John Deere dealer Nairn Brown (Glasgow) Ltd has promoted Graham Stewart to Sales Manager.

Graham has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the industry having worked within the company's Service and Parts Departments, and has played a key role in the Sales Team for several years.

Managing Director Robert McEwan said, "Graham is well respected by our customers and suppliers alike and this is a well-deserved appointment.

He will be leading the Sales team, working with Sales Director Norman Bartlett to service customers across the West of Scotland."



APPOINTMENTS

NEW ASM AT EMAK



Emak UK Limited has appointed Mark Barnes as its new After Sales Manager to replace David Webster who retired at the end of 2013.

Mark joins the Burntwood, Staffordshire-based organisation with a brief to maintain its service levels and to aid the Dealer network with their technical queries.

Mark has a wealth of experience in the garden machinery industry having worked previously in Sales Manager roles for Saxon Industries & Buxtons Ltd and more recently as After Sales Manager for Etesia.

DEALERS

INSCAPES ACQUIRES JG PLANT

LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR BUYS DEALERSHIP



Inscapes, the Bridgend-based sports ground engineering and commercial landscaping organisation, has acquired New Holland dealership JG Plant Ltd as part of its growth and development strategy.

JG Plant, which is also based in Bridgend, is a well-established sales, hire and servicing company for new and second-hand tractors and plant machinery. The company was due to close through retirement by the current owner Terry Coles.

Amalgamation

Inscapes, which already had a close working relationship with JG Plant, seized the opportunity to acquire the company recognising the huge benefits of the amalgamation. These include shared overheads, consolidation of an experienced sales force, penetration into new markets and cost savings in terms of inter-company plant and equipment hire.

The acquisition allows the creation of seven new jobs at JG Plant, with the combined operation now employing more than 25 local people. The new organisation will be based at JG Plant's current location adjacent to Inscapes's premises on the Brackla Industrial Estate.

Shared clients

Gareth Rees, Inscapes' Managing Director, commented, "We've been working with JG Plant for more than 15 years. When we found out that the company was planning to close, we recognised an opportunity that we couldn't let go, particularly as we have an ever-increasing demand for plant and machinery hire to carry out our own core activities at key UK locations.

"JG Plant has a client base of more than 2,000 customers which include farmers, local authorities, sports venues and construction and ground works companies. In short, our key target market, and we already share a number of key customers, so it was a logical step to bring the two companies together.

"We will be basing our future operations from JG Plant's current showroom and stores in order improve the customer experience for our mutual client base."

7 INSCAPES
ACQUISITION
ALLOWS THE
CREATION OF
7 NEW JOBS

APPOINTMENTS

TRIMAX BOOSTS SUPPORT

Trimax Mowing Systems has appointed Rikki Bown to support the company's dealers and customers located across the South of England, South Wales and the Channel Islands.

Taking over the role of southern area Sales Manager from Paul Stewart – who is now Operations Manager for the UK – Rikki is a qualified engineer who brings more than 12 years' experience gained within the turf and grounds maintenance industry.

He will work with and assist Trimax dealers with the promotion, sales and support of Trimax tractor-powered turf mowers among professional customers located in the southern half of the United Kingdom.



\$7.65bn

John Deere's global sales were up 3% in the first quarter

BUSINESS

DEERE PROFITS RISE 5%

Q1 REVENUES UP TO \$681M

John Deere has announced a 5% increase in first-quarter profits on the back of stronger equipment sales.

Deere said it earned \$681.1 million, or \$1.81 a share, last quarter, compared with a profit of \$649.7 million, or \$1.65 a share, a year earlier.

Global sales, including finance revenues were up 3% to \$7.65 billion. Equipment sales increased 2.3% to \$6.95 billion, exceeding a forecast of \$6.62 billion.

However, Deere is projecting its total sales will drop 3% in 2014 as the anticipated fall in US farm incomes this year will dampen demand for large agricultural equipment, such as tractors and combines, and forecasts that industry sales for agricultural machinery in the US and Canada will decline 5% to 10% for the year.



BUSINESS

KUBOTA TEAMS UP WITH ECHO IN U.S.

Kubota and ECHO have announced a Dealer Alliance in the US aimed at growing their combined sales within the professional turf and consumer lawn and garden markets.

As part of the alliance, ECHO and Shindaiwa will become the preferred brands of hand-held outdoor power equipment within the Kubota dealer network. The alliance also names ECHO Bear Cat as a preferred brand of chippers, shredders, log splitters and wheeled trimmers within the Kubota dealer network.

Commercial & domestic

According to Todd Stucke, Kubota Vice President of Agriculture and Turf Equipment in the US, the Kubota dealer network includes over 1,100 sales and service locations.

"We are excited about the opportunity to bring ECHO, Shindaiwa and ECHO Bear Cat products into the Kubota dealer network," said Stucke. "These brands are well known in the market and they allow Kubota dealers to position a complete line-up of products to commercial landscapers and homeowners alike."



BUSINESS

STIHL THE MOST ATTRACTIVE EMPLOYER

STIHL is the most attractive employer in the consumer durables sector in Germany, according to the 'Best Employer' survey conducted by *Focus* magazine this year.

Overall, STIHL was ranked 37. In the engineering sector, STIHL took second place.

Dedicated staff

Commenting, Dr. Michael Prochaska, Executive Board member for Human Resources, said: "STIHL is perceived as an attractive employer and is able to assert itself in the competition for the best talents across Germany. We will only maintain our innovative strength if we can recruit dedicated staff."

Focus interviewed more than 19,000 employees in the survey. The rankings included in particular the willingness of employees to recommend their own employer as well as their assessment of other employers within the industry.



DEALERS

ETESIA APPOINT MORRIS'S STORES

Etesia UK has announced the appointment of a new Pellenc dealership – Morris's Stores based in Rhuddlan, North Wales, covering the entire North Wales area.

Jonathan Morris, the company's Managing Director, who took over from his father, describes its customer base as domestic and professional, having increased commercial

sales with local caravan sites and councils. The company is now responsible for both Etesia and Pellenc products within their allocated area.

"We looked at Etesia a few years back as it fits in nicely with the other products we offer. It's a brand that has been growing over the years and a lot of people have spoken highly of it," said Jonathan.



DEALERS

DOUBLE AWARD FOR DOUBLE A IN ORLANDO

At the recent GIS exhibition in Orlando, Sandy Armit, Managing Director of the Double A Trading Company, based in Fife, was presented with the Dakota award for best UK dealership as well as the Campey UK Dealership Award for 2013.

A Dakota Award is given to the dealership that has delivered the best

sales and service of Dakota products in the UK throughout the previous year.

"All of our dealers work extremely hard to reach very ambitious sales targets," said Richard Campey. "Double A has an excellent team of sales and service engineers and thoroughly deserves this recognition."



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DEALERS

GREENMECH GO ORANGE

Manufacturer of wood chippers and green waste shredders GreenMech Ltd has appointed Orange Plant as a regional dealer.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne-based Orange Plant currently has seven depots around the country engaged in the sale and hire of arboricultural equipment and has grown rapidly since its inception 10 years ago. Both companies see this carefully thought-out link-up as a major step in the growth plans each has in place.

Switching brands

“Since 2001 we’ve been exclusive to Timberwolf products,” said Joanna Chapman, Orange Plant’s MD, “but while we’ll continue to carry their machines in our fleet, and provide service support to machines we’ve sold into the market, we decided to switch to the GreenMech brand. The innovation it’s brought to the industry will see new markets opening up for us.”

Signing the agreement on behalf of GreenMech was its Sales Director, Martin Lucas. “This is a significant step for us,” he said. “In Orange Plant we have a company with vast experience in the Arb market that can help us design tomorrow’s machines that will bring additional benefits to tree surgeons, contractors, groundsmen and local authorities.”



BUSINESS

AMAZONE SALES TOP €500M

HIGHEST EVER YEARLY FIGURES IN 2013

In 2013, Amazonen-Werke again significantly increased sales and, for the first time, exceeded the €500 million mark.

With a new record of €515 million, the turnover in 2013 was about 12% higher than that of 2012 (€460 million).

Parallel to the increase in turnover, the number of permanent Amazone employees rose to 1,800. The export share is still about 80% and the investment in research and development amounts to more than 5% of the turnover.

Great Britain

The markets with the highest revenues are France, Russia, Poland, Great Britain and Scandinavia.

In Great Britain, Amazone Ltd saw a record turnover with significant increases especially in the areas of fertiliser spreaders and trailed and self-propelled sprayers. To cope with this additional business, staffing levels were increased in both service and product support.



500

In 2013, Amazonen-Werke again significantly increased sales and, for the first time, exceeded the €500 million mark.

BUSINESS

BARRUS AT THE DOUBLE

OPENS NEW £2.5 MILLION EXPANSION AT BICESTER HEADQUARTERS

Barrus has opened a new 8,000 sq ft tools distribution centre at its Bicester headquarters for dedicated storage of its WOLF-Garten and Wilkinson Sword brands. At the same time, the company has moved its main distribution facility for outdoor power and marine equipment from Bicester Garrison to the former RAF/USAF based at Upper Heyford.

The opening of the new Tools Distribution Centre took place on 7th April in a ceremony hosted by Barrus Chairman Robert Glen and his family. His granddaughters, Gabriella Hart and Olivia Newall officially cut the ribbon in the presence of local MP, Sir Toby Baldry, and the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire.

Robert Muir, Managing Director of E P Barrus, said that the new facility was only the first phase of a planned expansion programme as the company was preparing for a doubling of its present turnover. "Already, sales are up 30% at our half-year point compared with last year," he said.



Opening ceremony party



Robert Glen



John and Steve Bufton



Mark Smith, Martin Wasley and Ron Smith

BUSINESS

MIDLAND POWER ACQUIRED

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE-BASED HIRE COMPANY BUYS BUSINESS



Worcester-based Midland Power has been bought by The Hire Supply Company UK based at Long Eaton, Nottinghamshire.

The deal was finalised on 7th March and has resulted in jobs being saved at the outdoor power equipment distributor.

A new company has been formed, HSC Midland Power Ltd, which will operate under the control of John McGhee and Clive Graham from the premises at Worcester, and all the 14 staff previously employed by Midland Power will transfer to the new company.

The Hire Supply Company supplies the hire industry with a range of products, notably portable heating and cooling solutions, site lighting and safety equipment.

Midland Power was formed over 40 years ago by Ian Fidoe and Barry Goode, before being sold to Andrew Gunn who also ran Chipperfield Garden Machinery Centre. ●

DIARY OF THE SEASON



This issue, we revisit a previous winner of the Dealer of Year Award, Sims Garden Machinery in Stratford-upon-Avon to get their take on the season so far.



Margins, margins, margins. They are the only words in town for specialist dealers having to conduct business in the internet age.

Stratford-upon-Avon dealership, Sims Garden Machinery, decided to take the bull by the horns this year. “We now price many of our major brands at retail in the showroom” says general manager David Smith “and I don’t think it has made a scrap of difference to our sales”

“Previously we tended to apply a rounded 10% off on our price tickets, but margins are so precious these days that we now start at the manufacturers’ recommended selling price and work from there – and my aim would be to have everything at retail or recommended selling price”.

“Many people who come through the door don’t really know how much they should be paying

for say, a rear roller rotary. Of course, most will want to feel that they still get good value for money, so depending if there is a trade-in, we will knock a bit off or throw-in an accessory”

“There are the paper-waivers naturally, who have discovered a crazy price on-line, but we normally say that we can’t match it and suggest they buy it from the internet – and take their chances from there”

It’s been a good season so far for the long-standing company. Founded in 1908 as an agricultural engineer and merchant by Frank Sims, the company is now owned and run by Frank’s grandson, Barry, who has now been joined by Barry’s son, Ben, who becomes the fourth generation of the Sims family to be involved in the business.

The agricultural machinery side of the business went almost

25 years ago and it is a sign of recent upheavals that in 1980, four leading farm machinery dealerships had branches in Stratford; Sims, Savills, Western Farm Implements and Burgess. By 2000, all four names had disappeared from the agricultural sector.

For Sims, the decision to exit farm machinery in 1990 and concentrate on garden machinery (which until that time had only been a small part of the business) meant a real turning point.

Within five years, the focus was entirely on grass machinery and the company had become one of the largest dealers in the West Midlands.

In 2009, the company moved to a new purpose built premises on the Waterways development in Stratford, which was four times the size of its old branch unit.

There it developed an award-

winning showroom that has since become a standard of excellence for others in the garden machinery business.

Designed by a leading retail consultancy, InterTech, and supported by many of Sims' leading franchises such as Honda, Stihl and Kubota, the showroom maximised the use of innovative lighting, flooring, walk-ways and 'shop-within-shop' concepts.

Worth the risk

It was a considerable gamble for Sims, and one where the timing could have been better in hindsight. The financial crash of 2008 had dented consumer confidence in a way that couldn't have been foreseen during the period when the company were making their extensive plans to re-locate the business.

However, five years on, with the economy now looking in better shape, the wisdom of that move looks more and more sound.

Sims previous branch was a 1950s style showroom located on a main road near the centre of Stratford. Location was probably its best asset.

Owned by Stratford Town Council, Sims had been the tenants for over 50 years. But when a developer came along with an offer to develop the site in return for a move to a building that it had erected alongside the canal in Stratford, Barry and David decided to take the plunge.

Losing a main road site did not concern them. "Over the years, we had watched the decline of garden machinery dealers on the High Street" said Barry "Anyway parking was a nightmare which deterred customers dropping in on impulse".

The new showroom certainly created a wow factor, particularly amongst the well-heeled with big houses and garden in the affluent Warwickshire villages "But at first, some of our traditional customer base, contractors, tree surgeons

and landscapers used to look round and say they now couldn't afford to shop here!" says David Smith.

But that initial 'shock of the new' has disappeared over the past five years – and the company is benefitting from the considerable investment and attention to detail in creating a showroom that set

the manufacturer no credit, nor the selling dealer to effectively give machines away, and then often expect another of their appointed dealers to sort things out for them when things go wrong"

"To my mind, it should always be the dealer who sells the product who must accept

THEY TEND TO HIDE FROM THE ISSUE AND BLAME EU RULES.



David Smith, Sue Sims and Barry Sims

new standards – and others are following suit around the country.

2014 has started well for the company who won a sizeable supply contract over the winter months.

"Compared with last year" says David "the weather has gone for us this Spring"

Paying the price

But he is still concerned about the pricing tactics of some fellow dealers. "To give away over 20% on a product, particularly at this time of year is crazy. It's virtually all the margin – and no company can survive that!"

However, he blames some manufacturers more for their failure to act when their products are devalued to such an extent.

"I think they tend to hide from the issue and blame EU rules. To my mind that's nonsense. It does

responsibility for the product".

"The issue of dealers being asked to drop everything and fix a machine sold by a competitor at a knock-down price is getting dealers hot under the collar – and could break the relationship between some manufacturers and their dealers over the coming months"

"This business is as much about the spirit of the supplier/dealer relationship as it is about the letter of the contract. It is up to the manufacturer to decide who is 'playing the game' and who is not – and then take action when needed".

There are many dealers who hold strong opinions about the way the specialist dealer network must move forward, and David Smith for one is never short an entertaining and highly relevant observation. Views which others at the 'sharp-end' of the business will readily recognise. ●

50 YEAR REUNION AT BASILDON

New Holland kicked off the golden jubilee celebrations of its flagship tractor factory in Basildon recently by reuniting over 70 veteran workers who clocked in on its opening day 50 years ago.



UK GUESTS ENJOY US SHOW

A party of 70 Ransomes Jacobsen guests and staff from Europe, augmented by a further 20 from the Asia-Pacific territory attended the Golf Industry Show in Orlando recently. Pictured here is the group that flew to Charlotte to visit Jacobsen's manufacturing facility.

CHARTERHOUSE TAKE ON GGM AS NEW DEALERS

Dougie Archibald, northern area manager for Charterhouse Turf Machinery, left, welcomes GGM's Andy Melville to the network.



SILSOE PLAQUE UNVEILED

Former staff of Silsoe College attended a ceremony unveiling a plaque, marking the site where it once stood recently.

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The Discover AGCO show took over two halls at Birmingham, showcasing their entire machinery range.



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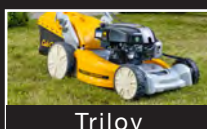
John Wheeldon, the 6th person recruited into JCB by company founder Joseph Cyril Bamford in August 1948, has died at the age of 87. He's pictured here on the right in January 1964 carrying Mr Bamford aloft with colleague Bill Hirst after a £250,000 employee bonus was announced. ●

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Q1: SUMMARY JANUARY - MARCH 2014

INTRODUCTION

Our industry is historically poor at providing credible statistics – and we are not helped by stupefying rules that prevent, for instance, the publication of market share information in the farm tractor market until a year has elapsed.

The aim of the Service Dealer Business Monitor is to present a quarterly review of business trends, confidence levels and business information as seen through the eyes of the dealer trade. For this, we are pleased to be able to present our findings in association with Ibcos Computers, the leading supplier of business management software to the UK dealer trade.

The survey does not ask for financial data, rather an indication whether business is static, up or well up.

Over the months we will be conducting other specific surveys into different areas of dealer business in order to build up a picture of trends and business activity over the year. Thank you to those dealers who participated in the first of these surveys.

Q1 OVERVIEW

Our business is driven by two factors, the economy and, more importantly, the weather. So any like- by- like quarterly summary has to take account of these two factors.

ECONOMY

Q1 2013: UK GDP rose by 0.4 during January-March 2013, finishing the year at +1.9%.

Q1 2014: The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) quarterly forecast for Q1 2014 has upgraded its growth forecasts for the next two years – from 2.7% to 2.8% in 2014 and from 2.4% to 2.5% in 2015.

WEATHER

WINTER 2012-2014 (December – February)

A colder winter than average and marginally wetter although February was exceptionally dry at 68% of average. Mean temperature was 3.3C (0.4C below average). Rainfall 350mm (106% of average)

MARCH 2013

An exceptionally cold month, particularly in the second half, Heavy snow mid month was followed by flooding in parts of south west England. Mean temperature 2.2C (3.3C below average), Rainfall 68% of average

WINTER 2013- 2014 (December – February)

An exceptionally stormy season, with at least 12 major winter storms affecting the UK in two spells. Mean temp was 5.2C (1.5C above average). Rainfall was 532mm (161% above average)

March 2014

Much drier than preceding months with a number of warm spells. Mean temperature was 6.2C (1.2C above average) Rainfall 85% of average

(Average is for the years 1981 – 2010)

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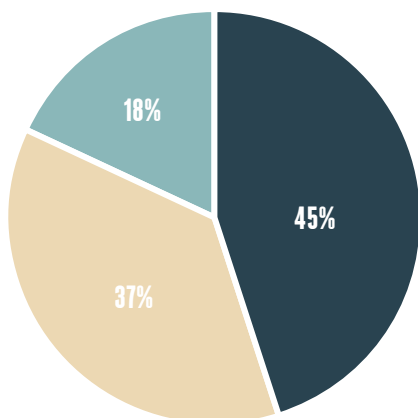
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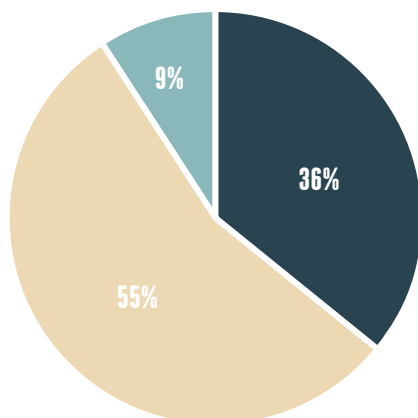
Q1: DEALER PERFORMANCE

● Well up
 ● Slightly up
 ● Similar to 2013
 ● Slightly down

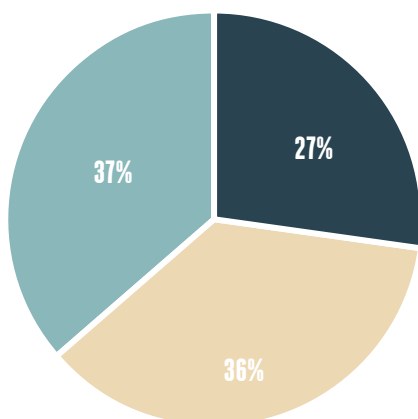
OVERALL BUSINESS



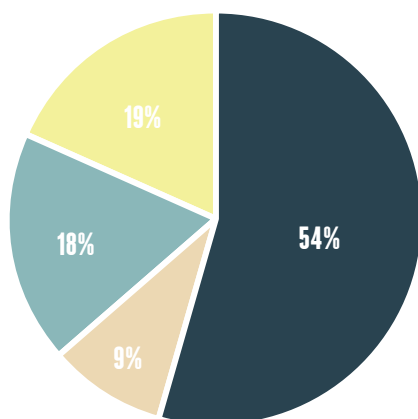
MACHINE SALES



PART SALES



SERVICE



INFLUENCING FACTORS

81% cited the weather as hugely influential in Q1 business, whilst on-line competition was very split between 36% who said 'hugely influential', 36% 'marginal' and 28% 'no influence'. Stock issues were regarded by 90% as having no influence on business.

BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

37% Very Confident
63% Moderately confident

STAFF LEVELS

37% Have Increased staff
18% Plan to increase staff
36% No plans to increase staff
9% Decreased staff

SERVICE CHARGE OUT RATES

9% Increased by up to 5%
28% increased by 5-10%
9% increased by over 10%
54% No increase

TRAINING PROVISION

10% very good
20% good
20% Average
20% Below average
30% Very poor

TRAINING ISSUES

The key issues on training for dealers were cost and time away from the business, but also half the respondents cited non-availability of suitable courses and lack of information.

SUMMARY

The overall picture for Q1 is that business has increased for virtually every dealer, with no respondent reporting overall business down in the first three months, almost certainly because of favourable weather conditions. There appears to be a trend for recruiting more staff, with over 50% saying they have increased or plan to increase staff in 2014. The provision of training appears to be an issue or more likely the provision of information about what is available and where. The comments accompanying the survey largely centred on internet trading but also on franchises being discarded where they proved to be unprofitable or too troublesome.





CONSUMER CREDIT LICENCE CHANGES

Alterations to registration occurred on 1st April

Most dealers hold a consumer credit licence from the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) covering categories C (credit brokerage), D (debt adjusting) and/or E (debt counselling).

From 1st April 2014, these are now regulated activities under the new Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regime for consumer credit.

Dealers should have by now applied to the FCA for interim permission to continue their consumer credit-related activities. They need to have done this even if they already hold FCA authorisation for insurance-related activities.

Applying for full authorisation

Dealers holding interim permission will be called up to apply for full authorisation within a three-month 'application period' at some point between 1st October 2014 and 1st April 2016.

The application form is not yet available, although this is expected to be very detailed and to require submission of a full business plan, together with details of dealers' products and the systems and controls they have in place to ensure regulatory compliance.

What will being authorised mean for dealers?

Dealers will need to make sure they comply with the rules set out in the FCA's new consumer credit sourcebook (CONC), which came into force on 1st April 2014 (although there is a six-month 'grace period' to enable firms to implement measures to ensure compliance).

It is expected that there will need to be a significant culture change within many firms to ensure the interests of customers really are at the heart of their business.

SCAM MOWER SITE

Service Dealer's weekly *Update* e-newsletter has reported recently on what purports to be a direct selling website trading as RideMow – which was being described as a complete sham, unlawful and criminal by online reviewers.

There was no information about the people behind the RideMow site which offers 'Briggs & Stratton Ranger' ride-on tractors at very low prices.

Rochford's investigation

Stewart Anderson, MD of Rochford Garden Machinery, revealed that it had been pursuing the company for a number of months. He said: "We have been acting on behalf of the manufacturer of the products shown on the Ridemow website.

"As a result we instructed one of the UK's top Intellectual Property legal teams to put

together a case. This work has been on-going since. As part of this work, specialist investigators have been instructed. They have conducted extensive research to identify the people behind the Ridemow site. They have also made test purchases on our behalf. A further investigation, using cutting-edge methods, is also being commissioned.

"As well as taking legal action, we have reported Ridemow to Trading Standards, the Police's Action Fraud and BBC's *Watchdog*.

"If any dealers would like to talk with us about the work done to date and the findings of our investigations, we would be happy to hear from them."



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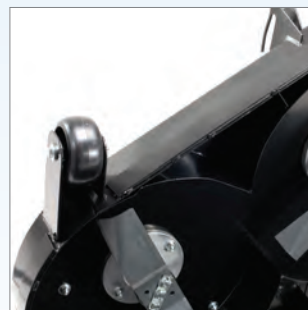
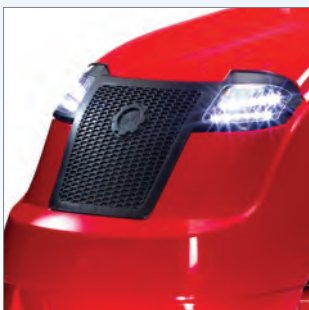
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BRIGGS & STRATTON

ANATOMY OF A NEW TRACTOR

POST-IT NOTES PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF THE NEW COUNTAX TRACTOR RANGE. CHRIS BIDDLE REPORTS.



There is something comforting and familiar about arriving at the Countax factory in early Spring. Very little appears to have changed on the surface over the years. Can it really be 25 years since Michael Heseltine opened the new office block, or more than 10 years since Princess Anne cut the ribbon for the new factory extension?

The rural location is still totally in keeping with the products produced. Countax founder, Harry Handkammer, had a vision to create a British garden tractor, built for British conditions. Today, Made in Britain remains as powerful and emotive a tag as ever.

Harry is no longer on the scene, having sold the company to US manufacturer Ariens four years ago, but you don't have to scratch the surface very far to discover that Countax is a very different company today.

The culture, the ethos and the thinking has been largely turned on its head since Ariens took over. But this is not 'city' culture, its roots are in the homesteads, the villages, the communities of rural America.

Located in Brillion, a small Wisconsin town a third of the

size of nearby Thame, the Ariens family has a tradition that far outstrips that of Countax. In September 2013, the company celebrated 80 years in business, and remains an iconic brand to many American householders.

Since acquiring Countax, Ariens has injected many of the cultures – and yes, core values – that have become a cornerstone of its own success over the years. Briefing notes ahead my visit included an update on *Kaizen*, an explanation of *Oobeya* and the results of a recent *VOC* (none of them new Countax models).

In the quest for greater efficiency and cost control, even the manufacturing of garden machinery is today based around innovative techniques pioneered by the likes of Toyota. Translated, *Kaizen* broadly means 'continuous improvement', except that the concept is much wider than just manufacturing and directly links the roles of everyone from the CEO to the maintenance staff. Getting everyone in the company to 'buy in' to a new philosophy was always going to be something of a challenge, says MD David Sturges: "Some were highly enthusiastic,

others deeply sceptical, with the majority somewhere in between."

However, there is no getting away from the fact that the layout of the factory, given the varied nature of machine tools and equipment, gives the impression of neatness and tidy organisation. "One of the results of us implementing 'lean' processes," says David. "The aim is cut out the clutter and make everything easy to access and control."

The customers' voice

Which brings us to *VOC* and *Oobeya*. Just over two years ago, Countax decided to completely rebuild the successful C Series tractor which had been largely untouched since 1993 apart from a few modifications. "First step was a *VOC* exercise," says David.

VOC? "Voice of the Customer." Silly me for not twigging.

Around 150 Countax and Westwood users were invited to the Great Haseley factory in the Spring of 2012 to help in the initial planning. "We thought we might get 20 or so acceptances, but in the event nearly 120 wanted to participate.

"Obviously, we get regular feedback from dealers on what

their customers are saying about the products, but this was an opportunity for us to hear directly from those who own and use the machines.

“If there were two clear messages, it was that price was not a major issue, and that they all wanted the new tractor to retain the robustness for which Countax is renowned, but with easier controls and a better driver environment.”

In an extension of the VOC exercise, an interesting role reversal took place when dealers were also asked to the factory and invited to sell the qualities of the tractors – and their competitors – to Countax staff.

Feedback analysed, the Countax team set to work designing the new generation of tractor. Which is where *Oobeya* comes in.

Oobeya is simply a ‘war room’. Think of Churchill’s War Cabinet Room, a nerve centre, where all the planning is co-ordinated, only this time it’s a new garden tractor rather than a battle to be won.

“We needed to get everyone involved right from the start, and the *Oobeya* room was not only a consistent location within the factory where we could hold meetings, but a place for anyone involved in purchasing, assembly, engineering, machining, styling or marketing to drop in at any time to pour over the prototypes as they were assembled and update themselves on progress.”

The updating process was simply communicated through a plethora of Post-IT notes – hundreds and hundreds of them stuck to white boards.

“Might look basic,” says David, “but it worked and didn’t overcomplicate things, even if we did have to go for industrial quality Post-It pads, we were getting through them so quickly.”

The re-design was completed in time for the launch to dealers in September 2013. Production started in January, slowly at first, just four

units a day initially, then up to eight, and now over 20 tractors a day are rolling off the line at Great Haseley.

At first glance the new tractors (the Countax and Westwood) look almost the same, except for livery, but have sleeker bonnet styling, ‘beefier’ axles, new badging,

with senior management working in rotation in the UK. Nick Ariens has just returned to the US after completing a one-year stint. He has been replaced by Mike van Helvoirt who has moved from Brillion to Bicester with his family for two years during which time he will look after

ONLY THIS TIME IT’S A NEW GARDEN TRACTOR RATHER THAN A BATTLE TO BE WON



David Sturges on the Countax production line

a more natural and comfortable seat position for the operator with controls more conveniently arranged – and a bonnet that can now be removed in five seconds.

“That’s the challenge,” says David Sturges, “to build a completely new model from the ground up, so that it looks very familiar without departing radically from the original design.”

Although they operate as separate manufacturing facilities, there is clearly a great deal of co-operation and information exchange between Brillion and Great Haseley. Ariens has a constant presence in Oxfordshire

Ariens, Countax and Westwood product management in Europe.

Ariens see potential for the new Countax-built models in the US, especially in the northern States where grass conditions are similar to the UK and where quality of cut and finish are likely to be appreciated.

Outwardly, the Countax factory retains its British manufacturing heritage, but the past four years have resulted in huge cultural and operational changes throughout the company. Rather like the new tractor. Again, a reassuringly familiar look, which belies the radical re-design within. ●



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Duncan Martin, GGP
Managing Director

NEW TECHNOLOGY WITH AN OLD FASHIONED FEEL

GGP's internet strategy is making others sit up and take notice. Chris Biddle talks to GGP UK Managing Director Duncan Martin.

How does a specialist dealer stand out from the crowd? Easy, it's service.

The dealer trade association has a picture of a gear-wheel underpinned with the message 'Symbol of Service', as if to say 'buy a machine from your friendly local dealer, and if something goes wrong, he'll whip out his spanners and fix it'.

But is that what service is all about today?

Not according to Duncan Martin, MD of Global Garden Products (GGP), the Plymouth-based UK subsidiary of the Italian-owned mower maker, supplier of Mountfield, Atco and Stiga brands. He says that service starts at the point of sale, and even well before that.

"Today all retailers, large or small, need to meet the 'I want it today' demands of the buying public. As the internet becomes a more and more integral part of the buying process, so dealers will need to meet these new conditions head-on."

Eight years ago, GGP embarked on setting up a direct selling site – with a difference. Mountfield Online offered machines at attractive prices but with the profit margin on the sale going straight to the dealer nearest the customer.

"Frankly, it would be easier for us to ship machines out to dealers and let them get on with it," Duncan says, "but we saw the market changing and decided to make our plans early."

The concept startled many dealers – and Duncan concedes that in the early days progress was slow and

the learning curve steep. "But to understand where we were coming from you have to look at the seminal moments that have shaped the specialist dealer network over the past 40 or 50 years.

"When the garden machinery industry developed rapidly in the 1960s and '70s, dealers really had it all

their own way with strong, home-produced brands such as Mountfield, Hayter, Atco, Qualcast, Flymo and others. It wasn't quite a licence to print money, but not far off!

"All that changed when the DIY sheds came on the scene. The likes of B&Q and Homebase had buying power well beyond the dreams of any dealers. They were open seven days a week, provided ample parking space and were able to advertise widely on TV and in the press with huge promotional budgets, mostly paid for by their suppliers."

Dealerships that had expanded their businesses in the 'good times', really felt the pinch and a number of high-profile names fell by the wayside.

"Specialist dealers had to battle for business," says Duncan, "and often were only saved by the weather going in their favour after the Spring, when many of the sheds had moved their focus to barbecues and garden furniture. They also moved up-market with more expensive and specialist products for the discerning buyer – and largely abandoned the low-cost, volume sector. And it's a sobering thought that the internet wasn't invented until 1988. That would prove to be a catalyst for huge change".

**IT WOULD BE
EASIER FOR
US TO SHIP
MACHINES OUT
TO DEALERS
AND LET THEM
GET ON WITH IT**

90 years of experience

The Third Age of the Dealer started at the beginning of the new Millennium. At first, the internet was marked by a scramble to utilise the new technology. Millions of pounds were spent by big companies and entrepreneurs, resulting in some success, but many, many failures. The story of the Dot-Com boom and bust is still a history lesson in how not to manage new technology.

For those who sat out the initial frenzy, or proceeded with caution, there were valuable lessons to be learned, but one thing was for sure – there would be no turning back. The internet, as a force in today's society, was assured and set in stone.

“Crucially,” says Duncan, “it meant that dealers and smaller companies now had the opportunity to outshine each and every one of their competitors – whatever their size. Never has the phrase ‘level-playing field’ been so apt or appropriate.”

In this fast-moving age of the internet, mobile communications and social media, where even six year-olds often have their own tablet computers, driving forward this new technology for GGP were two people with 90 years of industry experience between them.

This year, Duncan Martin is celebrating 40 years in the garden machinery business, and if you subtract 40 from 90, that provides the marker on how long Sales Manager Ron Miller has graced this industry!

Dealers who have attended the GGP conferences held at the Heritage Motor Museum at Gaydon in recent years will have become used to the Duncan and Ron Show.

“Ron is my eyes and ears out in the field,” says Duncan.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO OUTSHINE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEIR COMPETITORS

“He’s as passionate about seeing this industry grow as I am, and I think you can say that the new technology fascinates Ron and I in an old-fashioned way.

“We work with some excellent outside web-developers who have the talent and skills to put into practice the ideas and strategies that we develop in-house at Plymouth,” says Duncan. “But it’s not rocket-science. Put simply, our aim is to supply the customers with the product they want, when they want it – at a price they find attractive.”

Branches the key

Developing a successful online strategy will always be a work in progress. A fast moving market, the changing demands of customers and new trends means that the goal posts are always being moved.

Although, Mountfield Online started eight years ago, the major breakthrough came around four years ago, when GGP saw the way other retailers were moving. It was then that the company introduced next-day delivery for products ordered online – and immediately online sales took off.

“There should be no real difference between the likes of John Lewis and a local dealer,” says Duncan. “They are both meeting the needs of a customer. They often offer the same, price-matched product – and from there it’s down to how the customer is handled. Is the order processed quickly? Is the product delivered speedily and as promised?”

Another retailer that Duncan uses as a benchmark is ScrewFix. “Look at its website, it’s superb; it offers an efficient, no-frills service. Order it online and either go to collect locally or get it delivered – and Next, which now offers a 10pm order time for next-day delivery. It’s the way that buying stuff is moving and is shaping the expectations of customers from all retailers.

“But the common denominator between John Lewis, Screwfix and Next is that they are growing their bricks and mortar branches to operate hand-in-hand with their online offering. We’ve come a long way from the early days of opportunist sellers offering cut-price machines online from the comfort of their living rooms, with no support in place.



Ron Miller

“That’s why a formally appointed dealer network has to be the cornerstone of our online retailing. They go together. GGP will continue to operate the current online offer of white glove or direct delivery from which the dealer receives their profit and yes, customers will continue to visit dealer showrooms to buy.

“Either way the customer will enjoy the reassurance that they will have service and assistance at hand, and shopping convenience included. That’s where the dealer has the advantage. Furthermore, we will be introducing new measures to make sure our appointed dealers can continue to compete in the world of modern retailing!”

Setting ground rules

After early resistance in some quarters, the chatter amongst the trade today is starting to suggest that GGP has got an online policy that actually works, providing as it does a clear ‘heads-up’ on margins and an unequivocal dealer agreement that sets out ground rules for trading – and perhaps should be the model for others to follow.

That is fine in theory, more difficult in practice. Nobody wants to get into the dangerous waters of industry collusion over pricing levels. However, there is clearly unrest among dealers about the high level of discounts being offered by some of their colleagues.

“If a dealer offers a reasonable level

of discount only to be shown a piece of paper that shows a fellow dealer’s offering over 23%, thus giving away most of his margin, then he’s stuck between a rock and a hard place. Refuse to give in and he risks being labelled a ‘sharp profiteer’ and is in danger of having that label bandied about; give in and he’s doing business for nothing and setting a dangerous precedent.

“To my mind, if manufacturers sets out clear ground rules for taking on a franchise – and apply them rigorously if they are flouted instead of turning a blind eye – then many of these problems would be sorted.

“It would also open their eyes if they spent time in a dealership from time to time, really appreciating what it is like at the sharp end these days.

“We only channel our products through an approved dealer network, and don’t use distributors. That way, we have a contract and direct dialogue with every Mountfield, Atco or Stiga dealer – and have direct control over the way that our products are sold.”

MANUFACTURERS SHOULD SET OUT CLEAR GROUND RULES, THEN APPLY THEM RIGOROUSLY



GGP Dealer Conference and Product Demonstrations at Heritage Motor Museum

LET SOMEONE DOWN ONCE AND YOUR HARD-WON REPUTATION COULD BE IN TATTERS



Click and collect

Reflecting on the way that the 2014 season kicked off in March, with sales well above early projections, Duncan says the omens are looking good for the rest of the year. “You know what they say, ‘if you have a good March, put it in the bank’ – and then look at the season as a whole.”

He has more confidence in the present state of the dealer network “than for a long, long time,” but says that many of them still have a lot to learn about the true meaning of customer service.

“We have a terrific team here at Plymouth who will unfailingly work to get products out of the door, and will not go home until everything’s despatched. That’s the level of service that customers expect these days. Let someone down once and your hard-won reputation could be in tatters.

“We’ve come a long way in eight years. Most of our dealers see our websites as theirs and are excellent at matching our advertised online prices, and they know the margins on which they’re based – and they communicate well with customers who have bought online.”

Now Duncan and his team are busy eyeing up ‘click and collect’ purchasing, a growing trend that will surely favour dealers.

“It’s clear that many customers buying online would like the opportunity to collect from a local supplier,” Duncan says. “That puts an onus on everyone in the

chain. For us, to ensure that when they do buy via ‘click and collect’, that their local dealer has that model in stock; and for the dealer, who must ensure that the product is ready to be picked up at a moment’s notice.

“I can see this becoming more and more popular with consumers, and the dealer benefits by having the customer in his premises with the opportunity to show off his facilities and sell other products. Nothing but a win-win for the dealer,” adds Duncan.

The UK online selling model has been a trailblazer for the GGP Group as a whole.

“It’s taken us some while to get it to this stage, and we’re still some way from being the real deal,” says Duncan. “But our experience and our approach is now about to be rolled out in Germany, France, Italy and other European markets that have all lagged well behind the internet selling trends that have grown so rapidly in the UK in recent months.”

One thing is for sure: online selling is set to grow and grow, year on year. It will become increasingly sophisticated and set new standards in customer service. We have passed the ‘everybody jump in with both feet’ days. Dealers and suppliers need to work together with a common aim.

Sell more, retain margin – and keep the customer happy. Same old, same old really, but with the kind of new techniques and tools that are being demonstrated by the GGP model. ●

ATV SUPPLEMENT

COVER STORY P.28



STABILITY IN THE ATV MARKET

SIDE-BY-SIDES MAKE GAINS

PRODUCTS P.30

- ❏ Gator takes four passengers
- ❏ Polaris plays the ace
- ❏ New area manager
- ❏ Wipe away weeds



**HONDA EMPLOYS
CAR-DESIGN
KNOW-HOW**

STABILITY IN THE ATV MARKET

SIDE-BY-SIDES MAKE GAINS

The ATV market, or more accurately the Utility Vehicle market, has remained remarkably stable over the past few years (around 10,000 units annually). There appears to be a finite market for off-road transportation used in agriculture with the majority of volume sales concentrated in the sheep and livestock hills, dales and moors of Scotland, Wales and the South-West.

What has changed markedly in recent years, however, is the mix of products, with more and more emphasis on units being able to transport more than one person, or carry supplies or goods to far-flung areas.

This has been illustrated once more by market figures for 2013 which show a decrease of around 5% in the total market, but over a 10% decrease in the sales of conventional quads, and a rise in the sale of side-by-side units – a continuing trend according to market statistics issued by the AEA (Agricultural Engineers Association).

Of course, ATV's/Quads always have had a 'rakish' image, mainly based around the images of riders using their sports cousins for trials, eventing or sheer adrenalin-rush riding.

It is an image that the 'business-end' of the market works hard to disassociate itself from.

Even so, when a tragic accident happens and even though it may involve people using machines for pleasure, it does reflect on the whole of the industry.

Chairman of the AEA ATV/Quad/Side-by-Side Group, Phil Everett of Polaris says: "Training and education is still the number-one challenge for the industry as a whole.

"Our market is influenced by weather events, the outbreak of farm-based diseases such as foot-and-mouth or in a

electric power is growing but that progress is still very slow. "There are a few applications that are ideal for an electric quad," he says, "but typically an owner would also have a conventional petrol or diesel ATV as it does mean a complete change to the way the machine is charged and run. Most suppliers quote a 20-50-mile capacity on a full charge,

TRAINING AND EDUCATION IS STILL NUMBER ONE CHALLENGE FOR THE SECTOR

small way by the economy, but essentially the sales volumes in the UK remain fairly level."

Trends come and go. Diesel units have become more and more popular over the years, but, according to many dealers, there is a move back to petrol for the lighter units.

ELECTRIC

Also, as in many automotive areas, electric power is starting to make a break-through. Two years ago, Polaris launched the Ranger EV and the market has seen a few new entrants such as the Eco Charger range from Devon-based Electric Quad Bikes.

Dave Johnson of Shropshire Quads, a dealer specialising in electric ATVs, says that interest in

but that depends on loading which could impact on battery life. Many users are still reluctant to operate within those limits.

I've sold around 15 electric ATVs over the past year or so, and those customers usually bought for a specific purpose – and are happy with the flexibility and lower noise levels. ●

ATV/UTV MARKET

2010	10,149 units
2011	10,554 units
2012	10,359 units
2013	9,850 units

Units sold into agriculture, does not cover leisure or sports units

KUBOTA HANDLE TOUGH CONDITIONS

Kubota's latest compact and high performance all terrain utility vehicle, the RTV500, provides users with exceptional handling and a host of innovative features to maximise control even in tough conditions.

Its engine is liquid cooled to ensure reliability and to minimise noise and vibration, reducing the risk of disturbing wildlife and making it suitable for a wide range of jobs.

The vehicle has an excellent centre of gravity and equal weight distribution. All the wheels have robust semi-independent rear suspension systems to compensate for rough terrain and uneven ground.

Other key features include a standard frame integrated ROPS and a manually tilting dumping cargo bed that can haul up to 200kg of dirt, gravel or hay.



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ATV & UTILITY VEHICLES

NEW VEHICLE

HONDA EMPLOYS CAR-DESIGN KNOW-HOW BOOSTS EFFICIENCY, COMFORT AND HANDLING

Honda say they have applied decades of technology and design know-how from car manufacturing to enhance its utility ATV range.

Developed at its Car R&D centre in Ohio, for the first time using Computer Aided Engineering (CAE), the new models offer fuel efficiency gains of 10% over their predecessors and enhanced rider comfort, handling and durability.

Changes have been made to both the all-rounder TRX420, and the workhorse TRX500.

Efficiency up, running costs down

An aim of the development process was to improve fuel economy by 10% to reduce running costs and meet emissions regulations, without sacrificing performance. The new models deliver that, with the added benefit of smoother throttle control and power delivery, due to an enhanced fuel injection system with optimised mapping, using feedback from an O2 sensor located in the exhaust.

Comfort and control

Ride is more stable, predictable and smooth as a result of using CAE to develop the new frame, now some 20% stiffer and 5lb lighter than previously.

Handling and comfort are further enhanced with increased travel to both the front and rear suspension - now adjustable for preload - delivering more precise traction and rider comfort whatever the job in hand.

Durability

One of the most immediately noticeable changes to the new models is the all-new bodywork; more rugged and functional to improve durability and better protect the rider from mud and debris.

To keep servicing costs down the new models feature an automotive-specification fuel pump from a Honda CR-V, with new filters offering a fivefold increase in life to 100,000km. Uniquely the pump now sits within the fuel tank to reduce exposure to heat..

Capability and usability

To further increase the capability of the range-topping TRX500, rack weights are increased significantly, from 30 to 40kg on the front and from 60 to 80kg on the rear, with maximum weight capacity up from 220 to 250kg.

This increases load-carrying ability and allows use of a wider, heavier range of applications and attachments.

On-board electrical power is also increased by more than a fifth (21%), with the addition of a new dry-type battery with an uprated ACG; allowing the use of higher-power applications such as sprayers and slug pellets.

The new models will be available in both red and green, with a wide range of accessories, from Authorised Honda Dealers across the UK.



NEW VEHICLE

GATOR TAKES FOUR PASSENGERS

NEW XUV 855D S4 FROM JOHN DEERE

John Deere's new XUV 855D S4 Gator utility vehicle is suitable for anyone needing to transport extra people in addition to carrying materials, tools and equipment such as pedestrian mowers.

The company boasts the S4 combines versatile off-road performance, work capability and comfort for up to four passengers. It has the same cargo box, towing and payload capacities as the new XUV 825i model, at 454kg, 680kg and 635kg respectively, and features fully independent suspension.



It is powered by the same 22hp three-cylinder liquid-cooled diesel engine featured on the current XUV 855D Gator; the S4 also has a top speed of 32mph, and comes with power steering as standard.

Extra storage

To allow for extra passengers or cargo space, the S4 features an

olds down to provide a flat surface for extra storage. A spacious under-seat storage compartment is also included.

The vehicle is available in olive & black livery, and can be ordered with a variety of factory and dealer installed options and attachments.

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NEW VEHICLE

POLARIS PLAYS THE ACE

ENTIRELY NEW TYPE OF OFF-ROAD VEHICLE



Polaris has announced an entirely new type of off-road vehicle with the introduction of the Sportsman ACE 4x4.

The vehicle's architecture is completely new to the industry and features a revolutionary, sit-in chassis that they say is nimble and comfortable to operate.

Central positioning

To ensure a low center of gravity all the major components, including the driver, are positioned centrally between the four wheels for a responsive ride.

Along with this low centre of gravity, the vehicle boasts 26.04 cm of ground clearance and 24.1 cm of rear travel due to its fully independent rear suspension (IRS) fitted with performance, twin tube shocks featuring adjustable preload.

Engine

Powering the Sportsman ACE is an all-new 32 horsepower ProStar™ Electronic Fuel Injected (EFI) Engine featuring an internal counter-balance shaft for smooth, vibration-free power.

The dual overhead camshafts and a 4-valve cylinder head work with the advanced engine management system to precisely deliver the fuel for power and instant, predictable throttle response. The engine is designed to reduce internal friction which dramatically reduces noise and significantly increases efficiency making it the most fuel-efficient engine Polaris has offered.

Comfort

For a comfortable ride, the vehicle has a unique ROPS cab frame. The secure, high-backed, adjustable bucket seat is paired with an adjustable steering wheel to give the driver flexibility. It's also equipped with a 3-point seat belt, and has side bolsters to keep the operator properly positioned in the center of the machine.

The steering wheel offers 8.9 cm of tilt adjustment and the driver's seat slides back and forth by 10.2 cm to customise the fit for the rider.

The Sportsman ACE is equipped with the same On-Demand True All-Wheel Drive (AWD) system found on all Polaris Off-Road Vehicles. The system eliminates the guesswork by automatically engaging when the rider needs more forward traction and then reverts back to two-wheel drive automatically when the AWD is no longer needed.

Storage

With an integrated 10.6 litre semi-dry, front storage compartment, and a high-capacity Lock & Ride cargo box with rack extenders and rear tie-down rails, that also accepts the accessory Lock & Ride cargo box for additional dry storage, the vehicle can carry up to 260 kg of gear.

It is pre-wired for the installation of a winch with up to 1587 kg of capacity, and it also features a 680 kg towing capacity.

POLARIS APPOINT

Polaris Britain has appointed Richard Coleby as District Sales Manager for the North of England, Scotland and Ireland.

He has worked his way up through every aspect of sales from demo's to key account management for blue chip organisations and looks forward to combining this background with that of his dealer sales relationships.

"I'm here to help dealers look at new markets as well as support their focus on the agricultural sector. There is great potential," he says "in developing new business areas with the Polaris Brutus range and Polaris electric vehicles in the facilities management sector and I look forward to working with dealers to that end."



ACCESSORIES

WIPE AWAY WEEDS

An ATV-towed Rotowiper from Wessex uses a smaller amount of chemicals compared to spraying due to it targeting the vulnerable underside of the weed leaf.

The 55 litre chemical tank coats an adjustable height roller with weedkiller and the wiper roller rotates in the opposite direction to travel, coating the underside of weed leaves thoroughly and efficiently, as well as wiping the stem.

A pump is controlled remotely from the safety and comfort of the seat of an ATV or UTV, the rotor is spirally welded for maximum strength and two check valves in the centre of the roller



keep it evenly coated with the chemical.

The weed wiper just hooks onto any standard ball hitch or a three-point linkage version is available. The working width is 2.4m and the Rotowiper is mounted on large wheels with a wide wheelbase to keep it stable.

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RANSOMES LAUNCH NEW SALES AND TECH TRAINING

Structured around LTA programme

Ransomes Jacobsen has introduced a Sales and Dealer Technician Certification and Awards programme.

The aim is to recognise and encourage sales staff and technicians in their career development with the technicians' initiative structured around the Land-based Technician Accreditation (LTA) programme.



Recognition & development

Hanfried Sievers, Training Manager at the company's Cutting Edge Training department, explained, "Our aim is to recognise personal achievement and development within the Dealer network as it's the individuals within our business, who push themselves to achieve, who are the people that will build and take our business forward. We feel they should be rewarded accordingly and we have introduced an awards element into the programme."

The Awards programme, which recognises participation and merit performance at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels, came into effect on 1 January 2014. Every 12 months a selection process will determine who is eligible for the awards. Salesmen and Technicians will be advised of their progress using the Continuing Professional Development programme, launched in 2013, to guide them through the levels.

The Gold level awards will be presented at a 'Gold Club' luncheon ceremony, to be held at Ransomes Jacobsen's Ipswich headquarters, hosted by the President of Jacobsen, David Withers each year.

TRAILBLAZER LAND-BASED APPRENTICESHIPS

Industry at the forefront of reform



The Institution of Agricultural Engineers (IAgrE) has joined forces with a number of top UK companies and industry associations to collectively develop an apprenticeship standard for the role of Land-Based Engineering Technician.

The Institution has signed up to the second phase of the Government's Trailblazer apprenticeship initiative, which is being developed by the Land-based Engineering Training and Education Committee (LETEC), which along with IAgrE includes the Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA) and the British Agriculture and Garden Machinery Association (BAGMA).

Together they will work with employers and machinery dealers,

such as CLAAS UK Ltd, Toro, Kubota (UK), AGCO Ltd, Ransomes Jacobson, John Deere and Case New Holland, to develop this new trailblazer apprenticeship.

LTA

The group is proposing that the Landbased Technician Accreditation Scheme (LTA) forms the basis of the Land-based Engineering Technician Trailblazer apprenticeship. The LTA scheme is administered by IAgrE which facilitates the registration of suitably qualified technicians as Engineering Technicians (EngTech) with the Engineering Council (UK).

"Registration as EngTech is about promoting professionalism, helping the work-force to feel proud to be employed as a

technician, and reassuring the customer that they are benefiting from a well trained and qualified professional", said Alastair Taylor, chair of LETEC and CEO of IAgrE.

The industry itself launched the LTA scheme in 2007. Its aim is to establish a clear career path for technicians through the achievement of four qualification levels defined as Entry (LTA 1), Standard (LTA 2), Advanced (LTA 3) and Master (LTA 4).

To date, dealership technicians achieving LTA qualifications have done so by undertaking training courses largely provided by the main tractor and machinery franchises. An independent LTA route is available for those working with non-franchised dealers.

GRADUATION DAY

FOR JOHN DEERE APPRENTICES

A total of 19 young service technicians have graduated from the latest John Deere Ag Tech, Parts Tech and Turf Tech advanced apprenticeship programmes, run by national training provider Babcock.

Iain Bond from dealer Sharmans Agricultural Ltd of Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire was named ag & turf apprentice of the year, while parts apprentice of the year was Ryan Murch of Smallridge Bros Ltd, Barnstaple in Devon.

The group of third year students received their certificates at the John Deere Forum visitor centre in Mannheim, Germany, during a specially arranged visit to the company's tractor and cab factories and European Parts Distribution Centre (EPDC).

The presentations were made by Deere &



Company's Regional Training Delivery Manager Dr Lutz Schueppenhauer, John Deere Limited Training Manager Chris Wiltshire and Babcock Programme Manager James Kesterton.

TRAINING FOR BUSINESS

AEA's new service for the industry

The Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA) has launched its new service for the industry – 'AEA Training for Business'.

It is the result of a members' initiative and is designed as a service to members at a reduced cost to other providers. The aim is simple: to provide business (non-technical) training opportunities for AEA members and their dealers. The courses are available to non-members at the full price.

The prospectus lays out the Aims and Objectives, the Process, the initial Curriculum subjects, Pricing and other administrative information.

Full programme

Chief Executive of the AEA, Roger Lane-Nott said: "We will announce the full programme for 2014-15 in June providing a full training programme from September 2014 for the next year. I anticipate there being around 25 courses available from Customer Service, Negotiating Skills, Introduction to Finance, Health and Safety and a full suite of Windows courses at all levels and many others dictated by demand.

"The price will be lower than many other providers and the AEA sees this as a service and benefit to members rather than a profit-making concern. The price you see listed on the course announcement sheets is the full list price. Members will be charged around 20% less.

"The courses will be relevant to the industry rather than generic. The dates will be established at times convenient for all and will be delivered primarily at the AEA Training Centre at Peterborough or if demand dictates, at company premises or any other location."





AG ENGINEERING CENTRE OPENED

Minister opens £2.9m Innovation Centre at Harper Adams

A £2.9 million centre to support advanced agricultural engineering teaching and research has opened at Shropshire's Harper Adams University.

Lord de Mauley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for natural environment and science, conducted the official opening of The Agricultural Engineering Innovation Centre (AEIC).

Expertise

The Environment Minister said: "Harper Adams's new £2.9m Agricultural Engineering Innovation Centre for precision agriculture is a world-class example of the innovation

and agri-engineering expertise we have in the UK.

"We need to do all we can to translate research into new products, processes and technologies if we are to increase the competitiveness of the agricultural sector, address the challenge of food security and enhance the environment."

NCPF

The AEIC is home to the National Centre for Precision Farming (NCPF), which aims to promote and evaluate the use of technology as a vital aspect of precision agriculture, and provides a focal point for the

industry, offering a place for agriculturalists to meet and source information, and gathering and disseminating good practice from within the UK and abroad.

The building houses a range of 'clean' engineering facilities and was developed thanks to an award of £1.5 million from the Higher Education Funding Council for England's Catalyst Fund, announced by Prime Minister David Cameron in October 2012, plus funding from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, the University, and philanthropic donations from, among others, the Douglas Bomford Trust and the Eric Lea Estate.

SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE GETS HANDS-ON WITH ENGINES

BRIGGS & STRATTON SUPPORT COLLEGE

Briggs and Stratton has donated four of its latest eco-friendly engines to South Worcestershire College, a national centre for training apprentices in land-based services engineering.

Darren Layton, Course Manager, said: "We currently have 35 students from all over the country taking this

course which is dedicated to training engineers in the maintenance of lawn mowers and outdoor power tools. We have a great national reputation in this field, but in order to continue to offer high standards we need to be able to provide students with the training and experience in working on the very latest engines.

"The College has enjoyed the support of Briggs and Stratton for a number of years and it is immensely positive that we can work together to produce the country's future land-based servicing engineers."

One of the local students, Craig Wright of Bretforton said: "Almost all students currently in the College workshop will come across a Briggs and Stratton engine in their workplace. To be able to train on the very latest models means that we are getting real hands-on experience with engines that we are likely to be working on for many years in the trade."



INDUSTRY FIRST AT BARONY MEETING

Manufacturers, dealers, educators and specialist bodies come together



Representatives from all walks of the land-based industry came together at SRUC Barony recently to discuss providing engineers and technicians of the future

How to provide the land-based engineers and technicians of the future – that was the aim of a recent successful meeting hosted on the Barony Campus of Scotland's Rural College, near Dumfries.

Way ahead

In what is regarded as an industry first, representatives from manufacturers, dealers, schools, careers services and awarding bodies, together with specialist SRUC Barony staff, met to chart the way ahead.

According to Drew Easton, Dean of SRUC's Barony Campus and the driving force behind the initiative, "It was an excellent example of education and industry working in perfect harmony. Instead of each group meeting separately we had all the UK main players in one room, discussing an issue that the industry needs to address. We must find the most effective way of attracting, educating and

retaining good people while ensuring they have the skills and motivation the sector requires."

Robust discussion

The event opened with speakers detailing what their particular challenges are now and what they perceive are the challenges of the future. It set the scene, giving an overview of what is happening in the different areas, and how collectively there may be an opportunity to influence and shape the future.

Once the scene had been set the workshop session began involving sub groups that discussed, sometimes robustly, a range of detailed issues including strategies to encourage girls into land-based engineering, how schools can prepare young people for work experience, course levels and structures for the future, smart delivery systems, qualification benchmarking and

development, and strategies to retain qualified staff. The agreed outcomes from these group sessions were the focus of a full group discussion in the afternoon.

Benefit to all

"The day proved to be productive," said Drew Easton. "The work done will provide the industry with a good foundation to build from, along with a group of people that have the will and ability to bring about change for the benefit of everyone involved."

The event was supported by the following companies and organisations: CLAAS, John Deere, Massey Ferguson, Fendt, Valmet, Krone, Kubota, Lely, Ritchie, SDS (Skills Development Scotland), BAGMA (British Agricultural and Garden Machinery Association), AEA (Agricultural Engineers Association), SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) and IMI (Institute of Motor Industry). ●

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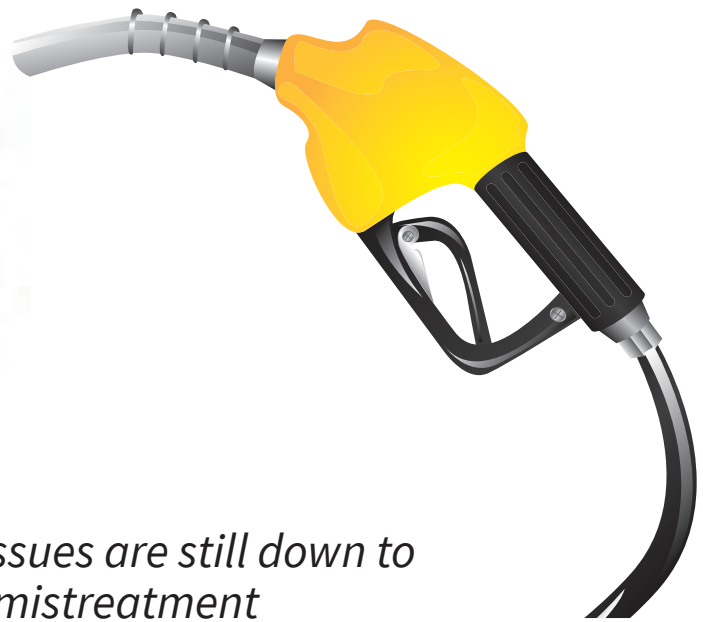


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FILL 'ER UP



Too many service issues are still down to consumer mistreatment

Engine manufacturers spend millions on research and development of their products. They are designed for a range of applications, operating in extreme temperatures and conditions and by people who may or may not have an understanding of the need to look after the kit they are using.

Unfortunately we live in an age when operating instructions and maintenance advice are often widely disregarded and ignored until something goes bang or bust.

And it can start right at the beginning of the machine's life.

With so much more kit being purchased online, often by-passing the dealer who would provide a pre-delivery inspection, there is a growing number of 'complaints' from consumers about machines that have failed immediately after delivery.

"We probably get one or two calls a week where a machine has been delivered and the customer doesn't bother, or indeed doesn't realise, that the engine oil had to be added," says Nick Rosam, Area Service Manager for Briggs & Stratton UK.

"Machines might have been transported upside down, and if the customer had checked, the dipstick

might well have been showing some residual oil and made the assumption that it was oiled and ready-to-go.

"I think it reflects on our present society – people's attention span is getting shorter and shorter. It doesn't matter how many warning signs, stickers or labels we attach to the engine, we can't seem to stop this kind of error happening far too frequently."

Choosing the right oil for small engines is often a cost consideration. Conventional or often higher priced synthetic?

The Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) has established a numerical code system for grading motor oils according to their viscosity characteristics. SAE viscosity gradings include the following, from low to high viscosity: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 40, 50 or 60. The numbers 0, 5, 10, 15 and 25 are suffixed with the letter W, designating they are "winter" (not "weight") or cold-start viscosity, at lower temperature. Most lawnmower engines use 10W-30 with an SF or the higher SG classification.

Crude oil is at the heart of conventional oil before it is refined and blended with additives. Most

synthetic oils also start as crude but go through a more complex processing down to the molecular level leading to a lubricant which offers a variety of benefits including:

- Better wear control
- Better viscosity
- Better low temperature fluidity
- Better deposit control.

To what result?

By using a synthetic oil, the engine life is often extended and the risk of equipment failure reduced. But there is a cost issue in that, depending on brand, synthetic oils can often cost double that of conventional oils.

But it is a matter of choice. Buy a premium brand toothpaste and it doesn't mean that you should brush your teeth less or visit your dentist less often.

"We don't really have many issues with the conventional or synthetic choice," adds Nick Rosam, "but for those who decide to use a synthetic oil, it should be noted that the bedding-in period for a new engine should be longer (10 hours) compared with using a conventional oil (5-10 hours). ●



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INCREASED ETHANOL BLEND ON THE HORIZON

Move to E10 moves nearer

Fuel begins degrading almost as soon as you pump it. As fuel breaks down, gums and varnishes are formed that can stick intake valves and clog fuel lines, resulting in severe starting problems. And the longer the fuel is left in the tank of an unused machine, especially during the Winter months, the greater the risk of problems.

This is especially true today as ethanol-laced petrol is increasingly common.

Ethanol is made by fermenting and distilling starch or sugar crops such as sugar cane, sugar beet, wheat or other grains... or pretty much any fruit and vegetable matter or waste.

At the moment, ethanol content could be anything up to 5% of the fuel sold. This blend of fuel is called E5 and at this ratio you are unaware of the ethanol's presence. This, however, is set to change because the ethanol content in petrol is about to be doubled to 10% – in a blend known as E10.

Since March 2013, a revised British Standard for petrol (EN228) has allowed oil companies to supply petrol containing up to 10% ethanol, and although no company has yet made the move, it is only a matter of time.

Ethanol acts as a solvent and can loosen deposits in the fuel system,

causing fuel pump, hose, filter and fuel injector blockages.

The good news is that E10 will not replace all sales of E5. In November 2013, the Motor Fuel Regulations were amended to protect E5 for a further three years. Retailers selling three million litres or more must offer E10 unleaded and E5 super-unleaded until January 2017. You'll also be able to spot E10 thanks to legislation requiring pumps dispensing petrol with more than 5% ethanol to be labelled: "UNLEADED PETROL 95 E10 Not suitable for all vehicles: consult vehicle manufacturer before use".

In 2009 all EU member states signed up to the Renewable Energy Directive, which requires 10% of road transport energy to be from renewable sources by 2020. The current UK minimum required by the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation is 4.75%. There are no current plans to mandate the 10% level.

In Europe the transition has been patchy, with France converting in 2009, followed by Germany and Finland in 2011. There, E10 fuel take-up has been hampered by some inconsistent marketing plus consumer nervousness.

According to a recent report by *What Car* magazine, Sainsbury's has said it doesn't have immediate plans to introduce E10, while Shell

said: "We will only offer E10 when we are confident motorists are ready, understanding what it is, why it's coming and that their cars are compatible".

Tesco's Jerry Burton, senior technical manager of fuels, said: "Ultimately E10 will be the standard regular unleaded petrol grade. The transition to this is to some extent dependent on the success of any public awareness campaign."

Any petrol-powered product, like a lawnmower, snow blower or leaf sweeper that is only used seasonally, and which stands idle for long periods, will be susceptible to fuel degradation.

To combat that, a wide range of additives are available, such as the Briggs & Stratton Fuel Fit, which will prevent the corrosive effects of the ethanol in fuel. The alternative is to run the equipment on alkylate fuels, such as the products supplied by Aspen. This is an environmentally friendly fuel, from which harmful health-risk benzenes are removed, but which come in at a much higher price than regular petrol from the forecourt. In the end it comes down to customer choice – and whether consumers are prepared to pay a higher price for the extra benefits of engine protection and a healthier working environment. ●

LOOK BEFORE YOU PUMP

Aggressive campaign by US OPE industry as E15 rolls out

Consumer education is the real challenge for the US outdoor power equipment industry as a number of States move from E10 to a 15% ethanol content in fuel (E15).

A survey conducted on behalf of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), the international trade association representing 100 small engine, utility vehicle and outdoor power equipment manufacturers and suppliers, found that US consumers are ill-prepared for the introduction of higher ethanol fuel blends.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approved the introduction of some mid-level ethanol blends (E15, E30, E85) for use in a small, subset of automobiles in an effort to comply with a federal renewable fuel mandate.

The EPA has stated E15 and higher is not legal for use in off-road engine products, and only legal for a subset of automobiles.

According to Kris Kiser, President of OPEI: “The only warning against ‘mis-fuelling’ is a small 3”x5” pump label. Given most consumers are unaware even that the current ethanol level in their fuel is up to 10%, the odds of using the wrong fuel are heightened.

“Most people believe any fuel sold at a petrol station or other retail fuel station is likely legal and safe for any engine product. This is not true. OPE owners and purchasers need to become aware of the fuel for which their equipment was designed, built and warranted – and use only that fuel.”

He adds: “The problem is that these higher ethanol fuel blends

may be dispensed alongside current fuels, but they are illegal and risky to use in hundreds of millions of small engine products and applications.”

This includes mowers, garden tractors, chain saws, boats, snow throwers, trimmers, UTVs, power washers, blowers, as well as small engine applications such as water pumps and irrigation systems.

The study conducted on behalf of OPEI found:

- The vast majority of Americans (71%) are “not at all sure” if it is illegal or legal to put high level ethanol gas (ie, anything higher than 10% ethanol) into engines such as those in boats, mowers, chain saws, snow mobiles, generators and other engine products.
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Americans say they assume that any petrol sold is safe for all of their cars, as well as for OPE products.
- For Americans who drive up to the fuel pump, price is overwhelmingly the number-one thing they notice (91%). Whether the pump accepts credit cards (64%) and the octane rating (55%) come in second and third place. Only a quarter (25%) of them notice the ethanol content.
- Seven-in-ten (71%) of Americans say they use the least expensive grade of petrol whenever possible.

“Obviously, the ethanol survey responses are troubling to the outdoor power equipment industry since our products are designed



and warranted to run only on 10% or less ethanol blended fuel. The data shows us that consumers are unprepared for the roll-out of higher ethanol blended fuels at today’s gas stations and the potential for misfueling is high,” adds Mr Kiser.

“Many consumers are determined to buy the least expensive fuel, while they still assume that the same fuel can go in their car as well as their mower, chain saw or generator. This points to a huge awareness gap and dire need for education.”

To protect current owners and future purchasers of small engines, UTVs and outdoor power equipment, OPEI has launched a high-profile campaign ‘Look Before You Pump’ on how to identify the right fuel for outdoor power equipment. ●



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The Service Dealer Industry Awards (incorporating the Dealer of the Year Awards), now in their sixth year, will be held on the first evening of the 2014 SALTEX Show.

The event will be held at a new venue this year, the stunning Chapel at the impressive Beaumont Estate,

an impressive hotel at Old Windsor.

As always, the Awards are an opportunity to meet and mingle, to socialise and network in a friendly and convivial atmosphere after the first day of this key industry event – and an excellent opportunity to entertain dealers and guests.

THE AWARDS CATEGORIES

DEALER OF THE YEAR

- Garden Machinery
- Professional Turfcare
- Farm Machinery
- ATV/Quad



APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

- Grass Machinery
- Farm Machinery
- ATV/Quad



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

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INFORMATION

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For further information, please contact
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Scenes from past Service Dealer awards



SUPPORTING PERENNIAL AT 175

Service Dealer is delighted to announce that it will be supporting Perennial, the UK's only charity dedicated to helping horticulturists in times of crisis, which celebrates its 175th anniversary this year.

Perennial's Patron HRH Princess Alexandra and President Alan Titchmarsh attended the 175th birthday of the organisation at The Roof Gardens, Kensington on 17th January.



Alan Titchmarsh says: "From grounds staff who look after sportsgrounds to parks staff who tend borders and lawns for the enjoyment of all; gardeners, landscapers, designers, nurserymen and women all share a passion for plants and an understanding of the importance of our green spaces. The work of Perennial, a charity that exists exclusively to support and assist all those working in or retired from horticulture, is needed today more than ever." ●

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DOMESTIC

VIKING BRINGS ROBOTS TO UK

iMOW AUTOMATED MOWER

VIKING has launched the iMow robotic lawn mower.

The company says advanced and intuitive programming make it easy for users to set iMow's agenda for work, with a clear control panel guiding them through any changes they want to its mowing schedule. They can also remove and use the control panel as a wired remote control - guiding iMow beyond its perimeter wire to mow isolated lawn areas like a verge for example.

Longer working

The mower boasts short working hours, the result of its good 30cm cutting width plus a high-capacity STIHL lithium-ion battery with energy management which, amongst other benefits, means it can work for longer between charging.

Another distinguishing feature of iMow is its capacity to maintain large areas of lawn - up to one acre in fact.

Its cutting system features a single rotary mulching blade, chopping cut blades of grass millimetre-short before depositing them back almost invisibly in the lawn. For enduring performance the blade changes direction of rotation each time the mower sets to work, so the blade wears evenly on both sides.

VIKING has initially trained and equipped 22 of its Approved Dealers to retail, install and provide full after-sales support for iMow this year.

iMow



DOMESTIC & COMMERCIAL

SHARPEN ANY EDGE

Described as a valuable addition to any showroom or retail unit, the AnySharp Edge revives dull tools and blades in seconds.

The product uses patented tungsten carbide technology to improve the efficiency of almost any outdoor tool or machinery blade including hardened steel and even serrated blades.

Designed specifically for outdoor use, it's lightweight and handheld with no need for a work surface. Pass the blade through the AnySharp 3 or 4 times to restore a super sharp edge.



- Rigid safety guard - protects hands
- Ergonomic thermoplastic rubber handle - for optimum grip (suitable for left and right hand users)
- Needs only light pressure - ensuring only microscopic amounts of metal are shed.
- Lightweight for use outdoors.

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DOMESTIC

AL-KO LAUNCH 5-YEAR WARRANTY ON HONDA-POWERED EASY-MOW RANGE

AL-KO have announced an extensive new warranty coverage on their Honda-powered range of Easy-Mow machines.

Rochford GM say the new 5-Year whole-machine warranty makes the Easy-Mow range an even more appealing prospect for consumers - and further enhances the quality perception of the German-engineered range.

Easy to use

With models from 42cm - 51cm, with both push and self-propelled

options, the AL-KO Easy-Mow range also benefits from quality features throughout.

With mulching kits supplied as standard with every model, the Honda engines aren't the only thing that make the Easy-Mow easy to use. Large fabric grass collectors with full indicators and soft grip controls are also standard.

Central height adjustment, variable speed and side discharge functions are available on selected models.

Peace of mind

Rochford GM Marketing Director Mark Rochford commented, "We are pleased to announce the new 5 Year Warranty across the AL-KO Easy-Mow range. The new warranty gives the consumer peace of mind when buying an Easy-Mow, and shows the confidence we have in the quality of the AL-KO product."



COMMERCIAL

COMMERCIAL FIRST FROM JOHN DEERE

John Deere's all-new X950R is the company's first commercial rear discharge/rear collect diesel lawn tractor.

The unit is aimed at professional groundsmen and greenkeepers, landscape contractors, educational and recreational markets, and land management organisations.

Configurations

The basic machine is available this spring in four different configurations to suit different customer needs, with a choice of 122 or 137cm rotary mower decks and either a 550-litre (low dump) or 670-litre (high dump) materials collection system.

The deep design of the high capacity steel decks allows a constant grass flow and copes with all mowing conditions, while the collector can be opened in any position.

Additional user-friendly features include a unique single multi-function hydraulic lever for operating the mower deck, collector and front-mounted implements, and a separate hydraulic pump for lifting and emptying the collector quickly at low engine rpm.



COMMERCIAL

ROLLER-ING ON

Wessex has developed its ProLine RMX professional roller mowers into a whole family in various configurations and sizes, from the rigid deck to the massive eight metre Tri-Deck.

For example, cutting large areas they offer the folding wing roller mowers which can be safely transported on roads, making them suitable for councils and contractors.

Customers can choose from the RMX-360 3.6m or the version on a ProGlider fast tow chassis or the even larger 5.6 metre Tri-Deck.

No electro-hydraulics are required and there are no electric clutches. The transmission system allows wings to be engaged and disengaged whilst in work, without a clutch mechanism.

Wing control is independent, they are operational with one wing lifted, and the folding wings can cut gradients from -30° to +30° with the middle deck remaining on level ground.

There is independent float on all decks and the linkage system allows the rear deck to follow the direction of travel, minimising tyre and roller scuffing.



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AGRICULTURE

VARIOUS VARIANTS

The Variant 385 - 360 range of variable round balers from Claas has been given several new features for the 2014 season.

Wider pick-up

For 2014, the 360, 365, 380 and 385 models will now be available with the new 2.35m wide XXL pick-up, giving it the widest pick-up on the market for round balers.

However, the pick-up has not only been made wider; it has also been given automatic chain tensioning. This helps reduce maintenance time, so more time can be spent baling.

More features

The oil reservoir has also been enlarged from 3.0 litres to 6.3 litres and incorporates an integrated filter and continuous chain lubrication to again help reduce maintenance time.

In addition, the hydraulic performance of the balers has also been increased, so the bale discharge is now completed within just 6 seconds, with the result that the process of opening and closing the tailgate (without tying time) is now 30% quicker than with the old models.

Quadrant options

As an option, Variant balers can also be fitted with the moisture sensor from the Quadrant range.

Integrated into the left-hand side of the tailgate, the crop moisture content is displayed on the Claas Communicator 2 terminal, which is used operate and monitor the entire work process from the cab.



ACCESSORIES

SIX NEW ROBOMOWS LAUNCHED



Robomow is marking the launch of six new premium range models with a targeted communications campaign to increase brand awareness and boost sales in the UK.

For small- and medium-sized lawns (up to 200m², 400m² and 600m²) the Robomow RC302, RC304 and RC306 offer a compact and efficient solution, while the RS612, RS622 and RS630 can tackle larger areas (up to 1,200m², 2,200m² and 3,000m² respectively).

Marketing

The UK media campaign will look to target a broad range of potential customers, from those who are keen to maintain the appearance of their lawns but find mowing a chore, to more green-fingered homeowners who appreciate the environmental and other benefits of the Robomow such as its low energy use, powerful mulching system and cost savings when compared with alternative lawn mowing solutions.

Also new for 2014 is the Robomow App, which allows users to manage their lawnmower via their mobile or tablet device.

Mower Magic is the sole UK distributor of the Robomow.



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COMMERCIAL

CUSTOMER SPRAYERS COME TRUE

DMMP Limited, the UK distributor of Chapin, has announced two new sprayer models and new product innovations in response to feedback from US and UK customers.

63800

On the new 63800 sprayer, the new 6 inch Wide Mouth opening gives a 50% wider opening with a completely perforated filter basket which facilitates easy filling and minimises spillage.

In addition, the 63800 also enjoys a true 15 litre capacity, non-leak viton seals, multiple nozzles, a reinforced see-through hose and a handy new feature; a carry handle on the lid.

63900

The new 63900 knapsack has a Hybrid Piston Diaphragm pump (meaning there is both a piston and diaphragm pump in the unit) which results in the PSI being higher plus it is virtually leak proof.

Another new feature to the 63900 is the JetClean Self Cleaning Filter which works by producing on each downstroke a burst of spray across the in-tank removable filter, keeping it film-free and stopping sediment from entering the pump cylinder. It also sports a 6" Wide Mouth opening and 15 litre capacity.



AGRICULTURAL

LIVE BY THE SWORD

4.5M HYDRAULIC-FOLDING 5-LEG GRASSLAND SUBSOILER



OPICO has expanded its existing Sward Lifter range with the introduction of a new 4.5m hydraulic-folding 5-leg model, available with either shear-bolt or hydraulic reset leg protection.

Larger tractors

Designed to break up hard pans and surface compaction whilst lifting and opening the subsoil, the new Sward Lifter is suitable for tractors of 150hp upwards and folds down to 3m for transport.

The unit has a Cat III Linkage, heavy duty headstock and folding frame. It incorporates all the standard features of the existing 3-leg machines: a Prisma roller, leg spacing of 90cm, and replaceable reversible shins on the fronts of the legs which can be fitted with either cast winged points or cast 6cm chisel points.

Damage protection

The Sward Lifter has a disc at the front which cuts through the turf, enabling the subsoiling leg to travel through the sward without contaminating the surface with soil. Damage is prevented by way of a shear-bolt or hydraulic reset system fitted to each leg, which is then followed by individual spring loaded rollers which press the turf back down, leaving a smooth sward with minimal soil contamination.

The shear-bolt model is suitable for lighter soils, whilst the hydraulic reset model is ideal for stonier conditions.

EVENTS FOR 2014

MAY

- 4-5** South of England Spring Garden & Leisure Show, South of England Centre
www.seas.org.uk/spring-show
- 5** North Somerset Show
www.nsas.org.uk
- 8-11** RHS Malvern Spring Festival
www.threecounties.co.uk/rhsmalvern
- 14-16** Balmoral Show, Belfast
www.balmoralshow.co.uk
- 17** Otley Show
www.otleyshow.org.uk
- 17-18** Royal Welsh Spring Festival
www.rwas.co.uk/spring-festival/
- 20-24** Chelsea Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 22-24** Devon County Show
www.devoncountyshow.co.uk
- 24** Shropshire County Show
www.shropshirecountyshow.com
- 24-25** Herts County Show
www.hertsshow.com
- 26** Surrey County Show
www.surreycountyshow.co.uk
- 28-29** Staffordshire County Show
www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/county_show.html
- 28-29** Suffolk County Show
www.suffolkshow.co.uk/
- 28-31** Royal Bath & West Show
www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97
- 30-1** Gardening Scotland, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh
www.gardeningscotland.com

JUNE

- 5-7** Royal Cornwall Show
www.royalcornwallshow.org
- 5-7** South of England Show
www.seas.org.uk/shows.asp?ID=2
- 11-12** Cereals 2014, Chrishall Grange, Nr Duxford, Cambs
www.cerealsevent.co.uk
- 12-15** BBC Gardeners' World Live, Birmingham NEC
www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com
- 13-15** Three Counties Show, Malvern
www.threecounties.co.uk/threecounties
- 17-18** Cheshire County Show
www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 18-20** Lincolnshire Show
www.lincolnshireshow.co.uk
- 19-22** Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org
- 22** Derbyshire County Show
www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 25-26** Royal Norfolk Show
www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk

JULY

- 2-3** Livestock Event, Birmingham NEC
www.livestockevent.co.uk
- 5-6** Smallholders Show, South of England Showground, Ardingly
www.smallholdersshows.co.uk
- 6-10** AgEng 2014, Zurich
www.AgEng2014.ch



- 8-10** Great Yorkshire Show
www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk
- 8-13** Hampton Court Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 12** Liskeard Show
www.liskeardshow.org
- 11-13** Kent County Show
www.kentshowground.co.uk
- 14** Cumberland Show
www.cumberlandshow.co.uk
- 16** Driffield Show
www.driffieldshow.co.uk
- 19** Camborne Show
www.camborne-show.org.uk
- 18-20** CLA Game Fair, Ragley Hall, Alcester, Warwickshire
www.gamefair.co.uk
- 21-24** Royal Welsh Show
www.rwas.co.uk/en/welsh-show
- 24** Launceston Show
www.launcestonshow.co.uk
- 23-27** RHS Flower Show - Tatton Park
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 26** Mid Devon Show
www.middevonshow.co.uk
- 25-26** Border Union Show
www.buas.org/show/index.html
- 29** Malton Show
www.maltonshow.com
- 29-31** New Forest & Hampshire County Show
www.newforestshow.co.uk

AUGUST

- 2** Garstang Show
www.garstangshow.org
- 2** Emley Show
www.emleyshow.com
- 2** Cranleigh Show
www.cranleighshow.org.uk
- 3** Herefordshire Country Fair
www.herefordshirecountryfair.co.uk
- 6** North Devon Show
www.northdevonshow.com
- 7** Bakewell Show
www.bakewellshow.org
- 8-9** Shrewsbury Flower Show
www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk
- 9** Chepstow Show
www.chepstowshow.co.uk
- 10** Ripley Show
www.ripleyshow.co.uk
- 13** Vale of Glamorgan Ag Show
www.valeofglamorganshow.co.uk
- 12-13** Anglesey County Show
www.angleseyshow.org.uk/anglesey-show.html
- 17** Mid-Somerset Ag Show
www.midsomersetshow.org.uk
- 19-21** Pembrokeshire County Show
www.pembshow.org

- 20** Gillingham & Shaftesbury Show
www.gillshaftshow.co.uk
- 28** Bucks County Show
www.buckscountyshow.co.uk
- 30-2** spoga-gafa 2014
www.spogagafa.com

SEPTEMBER

- 2** Service Dealer Dealer of the Year Awards, Windsor
www.servicedealer.co.uk
- 2-4** IOG Saltex 2014
www.iogsaltex.co.uk
- 7-10** Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC
www.autumnfair.com
- 10** Tillage Live 2014, Gloucestershire TBC
www.tillage-live.uk.com
- 14-16** Glee 2014
www.gleebirmingham.com
- 18** Thames Show
www.thameshow.co.uk
- 17-20** GaLaBau 2014, Nuremberg, Germany
www.galabau-messe.com
- 18-20** APF 2014, Ragley Estate, Alcester, Warwickshire
www.apfexhibition.co.uk
- 20-21** Royal Berkshire Show
www.newburyshowground.co.uk/show-2013
- 28-30** Golf Europe 2014, Ausburg, Germany
www.golf-europe.com

OCTOBER

- 1** The Dairy Show, Bath & West Showground
www.bathandwest.com/dairy/96
- 4-5** South of England Autumn Show & Game Fair, Ardingly
www.seas.org.uk/autumn-show/
- 18-19** Countryside Live, Harrogate
www.countrysidelive.co.uk
- 22-24** Green Industry & Equipment Expo, Louisville, USA
www.gje-expo.com

NOVEMBER

- 12-16** EIMA International, Bologna, Italy
www.eima.it/en

EDITORS NOTE

Please note, these dates have been checked and verified as correct at time of going to press. Some dates included last issue were noted as being incorrect - apologies for any inconvenience caused.

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Our launch issue focuses on combating sportsground flooding with drainage. We speak to the Secretary of the Land Drainage Contractors Association (LDCA), Bruce Brockway, and feature info from Sport England on how to apply for grants for flood damaged grounds.

Packed with industry news and new machinery, each issue of *Turf Pro* is filled with video content and interactivity.

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JUL/AUG FEATURES

GROW SERVICE PARTS

Maximising Revenues

WORKSHOP, TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Equipment and Tools update

FACE TO FACE

Raghu Das, recently appointed
Leader of Hayter's Spellbrook site



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Editorial to Steve Gibbs: steve@servicedealer.co.uk Advertising enquiries to Chris Biddle: chris@servicedealer.co.uk

JIM GREEN



EPIC JOURNEY

225 MILE FORAGE AID MISSION



A Yorkshireman who drove more than 200 miles during this year's floods in his New Holland T7 to help deliver 30 tonnes of forage for flooded-out farmers in Somerset says his action succeeded in highlighting their plight - and he'd do it again.

Philip Rowbottom, who runs an arable operation at Mount Farm, near Woolley, Wakefield, was so moved by seeing tracts of land swamped under water that he launched Forage Aid, which took off with backing by the NFU.

Moral support

Joined by agriculture contractor Andrew Nicholson, he completed the 225-mile journey from Wakefield to Bridgewater in 10 hours, each carrying a 15-tonne mix of silage, haylage, hay and straw.

It was dropped off at Sedgemoor agriculture market to be distributed by the local branch of the NFU.

"We were very well received," said Philip. "They were pleased to

see the moral support more than the load of silage. It was the fact that we were from the farming community and we were aware and doing something about it.

"Farmers in the South West are facing 18 months without livestock feed so what we did was trivial physically - but as a support and a shoulder to lean on it was a massive support for them. They are not on their own."

Dealer support

He was backed by New Holland dealers Russell Group, based in Yorkshire, where Philip and Andrew are both customers.

A spokesman from Russell Group commented: "Philip and Andrew have done a marvellous job flagging the particular problems faced by farmers trying to look after their livestock and produce food for the UK. Were very proud a New Holland machine supplied by us was part of it."

FUTURE TECH

CHAINSAW WEILDING ROBOT!

A robot outfitted with chainsaws can climb trees and its branches on its own, so says a report from IEEE Spectru.

The pruning robot weighs about 29lbs, and it can climb trees with trunks that span between 2.3 inches to 9.8 inches. The machine could help prevent accidents, but it is still undergoing testing in an "experimental forest".

You can watch a video of the robot's development at tinyurl.com/q2fdraq (or if you just want to see the automatic climbing and cutting action skip to 4.10).



15t

15 tonnes - mix of silage, haylage, hay and straw driven 225 miles to farmers in the south-west

40mph

JCB developed the first and still the only high speed tractor. The Fastrac is designed to combine all the benefits of a normal tractor with road versatility

65kph

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

DANCING DIGGERS HIT VEGAS



JCB'S famous Dancing Diggers were on show in Las Vegas recently as the company launched its new products at Conexpo - one of the construction industry's biggest equipment trade fairs.

The company was taking the wraps off a host of new machines, and drawing the crowds in their thousands to the stand were the Dancing Diggers. Their hourly dance routines, set to music and accompanied by a string quartet, proved to be a show highlight, said JCB.

Watch a video of the Dancing Diggers in action at tinyurl.com/ooshxeh

GREEN MOWING

LAWNMOWER FUELLED BY THE GRASS IT CUTS?

That's the aim of a US university team



Graduate student of the George Mason University in Fairfax County, Virginia USA, Jason Force doesn't like cutting the lawn.

Not enjoying both the process and indeed what he sees as the wastefulness of disposing of clippings, he is working on a prototype robotic mower which actually fuels itself via the grass which it cuts.

EcoMow

According to a report on DigitalTrends.com the EcoMow Harvester is built onto the body of an electric hobby truck, and equipped with a small biomass gasifier reactor that converts grass pellets into fuel for the mower.

The site says that when it trims the grass using its low-power non-kinetic electrical bar cutter, the clippings are collected and moved into a "pelletiser", where high temperatures and pressure are then used to form the grass into dry pellets. From

there, these pellets are moved to a small gasifier reactor where they're converted to synthetic gas. This biomass fuel is then filtered, cooled, and mixed with air before it's used to power the robot's small engine.

The mower, which Force and his team are currently seeking development funding for, is also equipped with an alternator to collect power for the bot's other onboard electrical systems.

"You tell it where you want it to mow, press go, and it just goes," Force said in an interview with the university's newspaper. "You have to preload some grass pellets into it at the start, but then the machine makes the pellets all by itself."

Apparently Force and his team have applied for a number of different grants to help move development forward.

For more information visit www.ecomowtech.com

JOB DEDICATION

PRISON OFFICER BATTLES THROUGH SNOWSTORM ON MOWER

A US Department of Corrections officer from Morganton, North Carolina braved the snow and ice recently to get to work - on his ride-on mower.

According to wbtv.com, Officer Thomas McCall notified Foothills Correctional Institution that he was on his way to work, but would be a little late.

When he arrived nearly two hours later, the gatehouse staff notified prison managers that Officer McCall had arrived for work on a lawnmower.

Wbtv.com quotes NC Department of Public Safety Communications Director Pamela Walker as saying, "Knowing the weather conditions and the importance of adequate staff to provide appropriate custody and security of the prison, Officer McCall realised that the only way to get to work was to ride his mower from Valdese to Morganton."

The journey took McCall about two hours through inclement weather, snow packed roads and a stop to re-fill the mower with fuel.





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