

# SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

MAR / APR 2016

# COMPACT TRACTORS

*Market developments and a new player on the scene*



❖ Conference & awards 2016

❖ Dealer Profile

❖ BTME review

❖ LAMMA report

❖ Machinery Auctions

❖ SME Digest

❖ Business Monitor

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**FACE  
to  
FACE**

DARREN SPENCER  
ARIENS UK

# You don't stay ahead by standing still.



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New LM46SPR



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His view from the edge

# EDITOR'S MESSAGE

**W**elcome to this latest issue of *Service Dealer*. Within these pages you'll find we've heard from several manufacturers who are currently actively looking to expand their UK dealer networks. The independent specialists, such as yourselves, are in demand to take on a variety of machinery types at the moment. I've recently spoken to companies who are looking to appoint for their compact tractors, their zero-turn mowers or their hand-held equipment, to name but a few, and this is across the country. Of course, they all say they are looking to appoint the right dealers, but certainly it appears that opportunities are out there. Once you have this new equipment in your stores, the trick is then getting customers to purchase. An awkward beast at the best of times, whatever frustrations they may throw at you, an adage which any retailer worth their salt must live by, is the Customer Is King. And funnily enough this is the theme of our *Service Dealer* Conference this November! Methods for attracting, satisfying and retaining customers will be discussed at the event, which once again will run alongside our Dealer of the Year awards. And this year we'll be asking for your customers' help in judging this. So find out more about how you can get involved in the competition this issue. It's a very simple process to enter your dealership to be in the running. And who knows, to say you are in with a shot of winning, or indeed actually taking a Dealer of the Year title, could be just that little something extra to impress that potential buyer into making a purchase?

**Steve Gibbs, Editor**



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## DEALERS

# THEFT AND ARSON DESTROY DEALERSHIP

## *Mower & Saw Services suffer*

Mower & Saw Services in Colchester was burgled in January with a number of STIHL items stolen.

If this wasn't enough, once the police and all who were on site left the premises that evening, the suspected intruders then returned and committed arson, leaving the dealership's showroom completely destroyed.

The store owner, Christine Hart, and her team are having to undergo a complete rebuild.

At the time of going to press Christine was hoping to reinstate the store's workshop using a temporary structure within the building so she could continue to service her loyal customers as the surrounding store is rebuilt.

Christine and STIHL took the opportunity to alert the industry to this issue, asking dealerships to remain extra vigilant when it comes to security.

Christine said, "As we all know, burglary is a real concern for the trade. Arson is an even graver concern. If you are faced with a burglary, do not leave the property unattended that night. Stay on the premises

and ensure the police are on call. I can only hope that this doesn't happen to any other dealerships.

Christine released some pictures of the destruction to *Service Dealer* saying, "These do not make pretty viewing.

"However, my main concern now is to stop this happening to any other dealers. They may be competitors in business but I would not wish this on my worst enemy."



## DEALERS

# FARMSTAR AWARDED

## *Kubota Gold Service Excellence*

Midlands agriculture and groundcare machinery dealer, Farmstar Ltd Newark Branch, is the latest Kubota dealership to receive the Kubota Gold Service Excellence Award, meaning that the firm has achieved the highest possible standard for its service, maintenance and parts offering.



L-R: Richard Cheesebrough (Kubota Dealer Manager), Tom Lockwood (Farmstar Service Manager), Simon Hall (Farmstar Branch Manager), and Alan Kirby (Kubota Regional Service Representative)

Tom Lockwood, Service Manager at Farmstar Newark, stated: "Aftersales is a key part of our business and we pride ourselves on providing the best aftercare we can offer to all our customers. With this in mind we are thrilled to be presented with the award, as good service will inevitably lead on to strong business results, including referrals from existing customers that generate new sales leads."

Alan Kirby, Kubota Regional Service Representative, said, "The Awards have been put in place to find out the service capability of each dealer, to help raise the standards across the network to what Kubota expects, and most importantly, to what our customers expect.

"For Tom and his team at Farmstar to be awarded the Gold standard is a significant achievement and is reflective of the training he and his staff have undertaken."

## INDUSTRY

# LELY SPLIT AG AND TURFCARE

## *Turfcare Technologies formed - immediately triggers buy-out*

Lely's Agricultural and Turfcare businesses have split and a new trading company, Turfcare Technologies Limited, formed - which immediately prompted a take-over bid from a Dutch-based conglomerate.

Speaking to Service Dealer, David Cole, managing director of Turfcare Technologies, said the rationale behind the business separation was to create two independent businesses, each having the freedom to develop their own strategies and able to focus on growth in their own and respective markets.

"This process of evolution, places the turfcare business, including turfcare in Ireland and Denmark, in an ideal structure for future growth," he said.

He added that although the ag and turfcare businesses were now clearly split, there were no plans to move the new company away from its present base at St Neots where they will still share common facilities such as warehousing and some back-office facilities.

"The planning and implementation for Turfcare Technologies had started during the middle of 2015, but formally came into effect at 1 January 2016," he says.

It was during this period when an approach was received from Netherlands-based, Royal Reesink N.V. for Turfcare Technologies. The proposal is that the new company become part of the Royal Reesink holding company, which specialises in the distribution and sale of capital equipment and allied support services.

There are 19 companies in the Reesink group, including Jean Heybroek which has enjoyed a business relationship with Toro for 60 years.

As a result, Lely and Reesink, with the full support of the Toro Company, have signed a Letter of Intent for Reesink to acquire the Lely Turf business.

David Cole confirms this announcement is one of mutual intent to reach agreement for the change in the ownership of the Turf business. While not finalised yet, this is seen as a further, positive opportunity for the future of the company's Turf activity. The 'agreement of intent' with Reesink is expected to be completed during the summer.

There are no indications that the deal between Lely and Reesink will have any impact on the Toro-owned Hayter operation at Spellbrook.



## APPOINTMENTS

# ARIENS RESTRUCTURE TEAM

## *John Horn to head up UK sales & marketing*

Ariens UK has announced a number of changes to its management structure.

Senior Vice President of International Sales and Marketing for Ariens, John Horn will assume the position as leader of the UK Sales and Marketing teams alongside his other international responsibilities. As such, he will work closely with European Manager Darren Spencer and the international leadership teams to further develop the subsidiaries located in the UK and Scandinavia.

Jef O'Riley, Ariens Company European Marketing Manager, will report directly to John as part of

the new structure.

Steve Campbell, formally UK Sales Manager has been made 'Product & Business Development Manager'. Steve will also report to John Horn and under his new role will take responsibility for product management of the Countax,



Westwood, ECHO and Ariens brands in the UK. He will also lead the commercial sales efforts, identifying opportunities and supporting dealers in their relationships with commercial customers.

Matt Wilson, along with his current responsibilities, completes John's new team in the role of 'Senior Area Sales Manager'. He will oversee the UK sales team on a day-to-day basis.

Ariens Company has also taken the opportunity to redistribute the territories of the four Area Sales Managers to complete the structure for the company's long-term goals.

## INDUSTRY

# 2015 TRACTOR SALES DOWN 14.8%

## *Lowest unit total for over a decade*

The AEA says registrations of agricultural tractors (over 50hp) reached 10,598 units in 2015, a drop of 14.8% on the level of the previous year.

As a single month December 2015 showed a fall of 3.1% to 558 units.

AEA Economist Chris Evans said, "This is the lowest unit total for over a decade and clearly reflects the difficult conditions that farmers faced in a year when most commodity prices were very weak."

The average size of unit has continued to increase with a 1.3% rise last year to 157.1hp.



## APPOINTMENTS

## NEW DEALER MANAGER FOR KUBOTA

### *Andy Southerton joins*

Kubota UK has strengthened its team with the appointment of Andy Southerton as its Dealer Manager.

Within his new role, Andy will support the dealer network across the UK on products, parts, industry trends, sales and training.

Andy is well grounded in the field, bringing a new and exciting offering to the team, having spent over 20 years within the tractor and groundcare sector. He joins Kubota from George Brown's dealership where he's spent the past five years as Branch & Sales Manager, helping to improve sales, setting targets, managing stock, and overseeing the day-to-day running.

Commenting on his new position, Andy said: "It's an extremely exciting time to join Kubota UK, and I'm eager to start my new role.

"After working client-side within dealers for eight years, my new role will enable me to impart my dealer knowledge and help grow Kubota in the UK, building on existing strengths and maximising opportunities for growth and success at a time

when the product ranges are continually expanding.

"I look forward to working closely with dealers to grow their expertise to then pass on to the consumer, making sure that everyone who buys, hires and operates a Kubota machine, whatever model it may be, has the best possible service experience."



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## DEALERS

# MAKITA GROWING ITS NETWORK

*Promising dealers revenue from PDI, service and maintenance work*



Makita says that its long-term commitment to securing an increasing presence within the grounds maintenance, landscaping and garden machinery market is proving a welcome boost for professional equipment distributors.

While sales of the Makita range are accelerating, the workshop business is providing a strong growth stream of revenue and long-term customer relations for servicing garden machinery dealers.

Makita has already established an initial network of approved servicing Pre Delivery Inspection (PDI) dealers who can supply their expanding range of garden machinery.

Service dealers have been appointed to take on Pre Delivery Inspection of the range including cordless, mains and petrol engined garden products. The company says that when an approved PDI dealer hands over a newly inspected and tested machine they are rewarded by Makita UK for this service. To secure the valuable extra 24-month warranty, the end user customer must return the machine to that Dealer for an annual service within the first 12 months. As long as the customer returns the product to the PDI dealer, the approved dealer can then offer their customer the extended two-year warranty cover (1+2 year).

### Dealer partnership

Kevin Brannigan, Marketing Manager, Makita UK says: "Our policy for Makita garden machinery products is that they should be supplied directly to the end user

customer with the assurance that they are set-up and ready to use safely. In offering a professional service via approved PDI dealers, our additional 1+2 year warranty package is designed to build confidence in our products and ensure that servicing dealers are able to provide professional support to the grounds maintenance, landscaping, and forestry industries, as well as to discerning domestic gardeners.

"For too long garden machinery dealers have had to bear the overheads of any PDI work they have undertaken. As a company we work in partnership with our dealers and customers for mutual benefit."

Current Makita dealers have given positive comments on the PDI partnership. For example Gareth James, who has run Eifionydd Engineering in Porthmadog for 20 years, said of the package: "It builds a strong relationship with the customer which brings them back in the future for more business. I believe the Makita PDI dealer package covers the time and effort and contributes to the workshop overheads. It certainly influences our product recommendations to clients."

Whereas Kieran Powell of Radmore & Tucker in Exeter said: "These PDI rewards actually help to support our business overheads. It is right to have the machines running properly from the start and shows the customer the correct way of using machines. It's also an incentive to return for servicing."

Dealers interested in joining the Makita PDI network are asked to email Makita UK at [SERVTECH@makitauk.com](mailto:SERVTECH@makitauk.com)

## DEALERS

# T H WHITE OPENS NEW BRANCH

*Serving farm and groundcare customers*

T H White has opened a new agricultural and grass machinery branch in Hampshire while closing the dedicated groundcare depot it opened at Timsbury a couple of years ago.

The company has purchased a 3.6-acre site at Windyridge, two miles West of Stockbridge in Hampshire. The new site is a combined T H White, Agriculture and Groundcare branch hosting Case IH and Ransomes Jacobsen as primary franchise partners.

Offering sales, service and parts for machinery and implements, T H White says the new location better serves its sales territory to the South and East for both divisions while maintaining good road links to Case customers served from the Frome branch. The new

location has excellent workshop and office space along with generous visitor parking.

The Timsbury staff have relocated to the new premises.



## APPOINTMENTS

# HONDA POWER APPOINTS

*New Sales Operations Manager*



Stephen Morris, Head of Honda Power Products, has announced the appointment of Andrew Parr as Sales Operations Manager for Honda UK.

In his new role Andrew will manage the sales and development of Honda Power Products and continue to work closely with the Honda dealers on a national basis.

Andrew originally joined Honda UK in 2013, as Northern Area Sales Manager for Lawn & Garden. Over the past 20 years, he has carried out a number of roles, seeing him work across the full marketing mix from PR Account Manager at Radcat Marketing, Business Development Manager at a specialist media recruitment agency and Area Sales Manager at Yamaha. During this time, Andrew has developed his strengths in sales, PR and relationship management with many Honda dealers.

Commenting on Andrew's new appointment, Stephen Morris said: "Andrew's knowledge and expertise will be a real asset to the management team and he will play a key part in strengthening our presence on a national level.

"His role will be pivotal as we set up the development of our dealer network to strengthen our position in the market."

## INDUSTRY

# KRAMP PARTNERS KONGSKILDE

## *On the distribution of wearing and spare parts*

The Kramp Group, incorporating Grene and Kongskilde Industries A/S, has entered into a strategic cooperation about the distribution of wearing and spare parts.

Kongskilde says it considers customer service and consistency of supply to be key competitive parameters and has made targeted efforts to strengthen that part of the business. Therefore, the company has now entered into a strategic cooperation with the Kramp Group on the distribution of wearing and spare parts for agriculture. The agreement states that the Kramp Group will take over the European distribution of Kongskilde wearing and spare parts to dealers during this first half of 2016.

"We have for a long time wished for quick delivery of wearing and spare parts to our customers all over Europe. With Kramp/Grene as our partner, Kongskilde is now able to offer the best delivery service in the market," CEO of Kongskilde Industries, Ole Gade, said.

As part of the cooperation, original parts can now be delivered by the Kramp Group to the dealer network. Kramp will take over the stock obligation, and to the Kongskilde dealers this will mean that the ordering process will be simpler as Kramp already delivers to most of them.

"Delivery of Kongskilde parts fit very well into our distribution set-up, and the delivery times will be extremely attractive to the majority," Kramp Group Executive Board Member Carsten Thygesen said.

"The customer will order online or by phone and the dealers will benefit from our fast and reliable delivery service. It can hardly be any simpler."



# THE CUSTOMER IS KING

*And always will be*

**O**n 17th November *Service Dealer* will once again be holding a dealer conference and evening awards ceremony at the Oxford Belfry Hotel.

Following surveys taken post last year's event we have once again listened to what issues are concerning you. As such we are pleased to announce that the theme for this year's conference is *The Customer Is King – and always will be!*

Under this banner we intend through keynotes, panel debates, break-out sessions and expert presentations to really get to grips with the subject – hopefully sending attendees away with some fabulous new ideas for creating, satisfying and retaining customers.

*Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke says: "We were delighted with the response to last year's conference, but this year we're determined to make it even more valuable and unmissable for our readers.

"We realise that even more people are keen to engage and contribute to the discussions. To this end, as well as the whole conference panel debate sessions we will be running a choice of smaller group break-out sessions. These will allow dealers to learn about and get involved more intimately in subjects they have an interest in, from a choice of social media, website design and traditional marketing.

"After these break-outs we'll all get back together and the key points raised in each group will be shared with the whole conference so no-one misses out on a really key nugget of information.

"I'm truly excited about the prospects for sharing and gathering knowledge on this most vital of subjects."

## Dealer Development Specialist

To help shape the day's content, we are delighted to announce that we will be joined by Simon Batty, Managing Director of Maple Associates.

Simon has over 15 years' experience of supporting dealer teams selling Massey Ferguson, JCB, New Holland, Valtra, Kubota and Challenger brands in addition to the company's wider equipment and machinery portfolio of products in agriculture, arboriculture and groundcare. Author of the Dealer Leadership Development Programme, he has worked with the ownership and executive teams of distributors and dealers in several international markets to identify and deliver significant measurable improvements in profitability, cash flow and balance sheet performance.

Taking a whole-business approach to performance improvement, Simon uses simple KPIs, dealership processes and proven training methods to help sales,

service and parts teams reach their true potential. A strong advocate of active prospecting, consultative selling and a customer-focused sales strategy, Simon has worked with dealer sales and aftersales teams to win improved loyalty and improve their performance across their full product and services portfolio.

Simon has a reputation for encouraging dealership teams to engage with real change and to deliver measurable and sustainable improvements that help them develop their careers, as well as delivering their company goals and objectives.

## Dealer Of The Year Awards

Once again, following the conference in the evening at the Oxford Belfry, we will be holding the ever-popular Dealer of the Year Awards.

This year we will be slightly changing the format to fit in with our *Customer Is King* theme by inviting those people most crucial to your business, your customers, to have their say.

Once again dealers will be able to enter themselves in the competition, or be nominated by one of their suppliers, but then once you are in the running we want your customers to get involved by sending us their comments through an online portal.

We will also be adding a new award this year, for the Star Of Your Dealership, be it a technician, parts, or sales person. We'll want you to let us know who shines for you.

Judging will take place during the summer months, so keep an eye on our weekly newsletter as we will be publishing full details in a forthcoming issue.



# MAKE A CUSTOMER, NOT A SALE!

Thursday 17th November, 2016 – 10am-5.30pm – Oxford Belfry Hotel

**Keynote address:** Prominent business leader.

**Panel debate:** *The Customer Is King* –

- Existing and new customers – how to get, maintain and retain them.
- Customer service – how do we set the right expectations in the first place and then over-deliver?
- Research – information gathering. Know your customers.

**Break-out sessions x3:** Methods of communicating with customers –

- Social Media.
- Technology and website design.
- Traditional marketing.

**Executive summary of breakouts.**

**Plenary:** Sales, aftersales and dealership performance with Simon Batty –

- Growing sales in a competitive market.
- Improving aftersales profitably and cash flow.
- The competitive dealership.

**Panel debate:** Question time – a wrap-up of the day.

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# NOT JUST A BOX-MOVER

*BRANSON TRACTORS IS IN THE MIDST OF SETTING UP A DEALER NETWORK FOR ITS RANGE OF SOUTH KOREAN-BUILT COMPACT TRACTORS. EDITOR STEVE GIBBS MET MD NATHAN WALKER WHO EXTOLLED THE VIRTUES OF ONLY SELLING THROUGH SPECIALISTS – NEVER DIRECT*



“I’m pretty much colour-blind when it comes to the competition.”

That’s how Branson Tractor’s MD Nathan Walker feels about where he’s going to generate sales for the new range of compact tractors his company is importing from South Korea.

Having been in the compact game for a number of years now with his association with New Holland and the Compact Tractor Centre, he certainly knows a thing or two about the market. A key insight being that he knows he needs to get a strong dealer network in place to start making in-roads into the sector.

## Company history

Branson Tractors as a brand is new to the UK market, but it hasn’t just appeared from nowhere. The key players involved in the launch are well known to the industry.

Nathan’s history is with Lewis Equipment and New Holland. Lewis, the renowned manufacturer of compact tractor attachments, formed a partnership with New Holland for the distribution of compact tractors in 2007, which was when Nathan joined as General Manager of that division of Lewis.

What New Holland wanted to do was have a one-stop-shop for its dealers. It wanted to go up

against John Deere and Kubota, so in partnering Lewis it had a stock-holding facility, and had a source of attachments which meant it could sell loaders, backhoes, mowers and the like.

Nathan says, “In 2011 we took that New Holland-Lewis partnership and made it a separate company. At that time I bought into the business and became a director of The Compact Tractor Centre. Two reasons for this: one, we wanted to make sure the Lewis-New Holland partnership worked as a business in its own right; and two, at that point we also set up a retail dealership.”

However, in April of last year Nathan handed back the New Holland business in favour of Branson.

So just to be clear, it’s now the Compact Tractor Centre which is the importer of Branson Tractors – not Lewis. “What we didn’t want to do was align Lewis with one particular brand of tractor, because it makes attachments for all sorts of brands,” explains Nathan.

“Our set-up is with the Compact Tractor Centre as importer and the name on the top of the invoice. That’s how we deal with dealers. But the outward face is Branson Tractors. We have a clear message to the customer: the brand is Branson. The customer doesn’t need to know the name the Compact Tractor Centre, but the industry does.”

Branson machines themselves are the international brand of Kukje Machinery of South Korea. That's who makes the tractors. The name apparently came from the desire of the Americans needing a name that was robust and easy to pronounce.

### Dealer network

Nathan's aim now is to build a strong dealer network for the range.

"I'm aiming for 20-25 dealers, but that will include some with one-depot operations and some that will be multi-branched. So I'd say I'm aiming at about 40-50 outlets, and I'd like to be doing that within a year to 18 months.

"But I'm not just appointing without careful consideration. I'm going through due diligence to make sure they're the right people to represent our brand."

Asked where he feels dealers will be taking sales from with the range, Nathan gives his colour-blind answer. "A lot of compact tractors come from South Korea. For example TYM, Kioti, LS – so we're really up against those guys.

"But it's all fair game."

### Spec and price

It's all very well having a strong branding and identity, but if the tractors can't compete on both price and specifications there's no point in launching, and Nathan is well aware of this.

"There's plenty of cheap machinery out there, being brought into the country from all over the world – from China, India, the Far East, from everywhere. Unless we've got a better spec than those guys, we're never going to compete with the big players, and by that I mean John Deere, Kubota and New Holland.

"So unless we have a product that can



stand up against those, forget it.

"Also, unless we've got a competitive edge in terms of pricing we may as well not bother, because the dealer will stick with their main franchise. There are some dealers we've spoken to who are smaller scale lawn and garden dealers who want to make the next jump up the ladder and get into tractors.

"But by and large, the majority of those who have spoken to us are tractor dealers who have already got a main franchise.

"So unless we've got a competitive product at a competitive price, we're not going to do any business. But that's precisely what we do have."

### Relationships

As with everything, it's relationships with people that have been helping Branson to get off the ground.

"I know a lot of these dealers who've been speaking to us," says Nathan. "I've been supporting them with comprehensive back-room support for the past eight years, so they know this is our USP. They know we



Dealers check out the range at a Ride and Drive day

are not just a box mover. They know we understand the product and because I'm also a retail dealer, I understand it from both sides of the fence. I know what they need in terms of support to sell the stuff.

"That's having clear access to pricing, having a clear understanding of terms, having reliable delivery time scales and having the value-added bits. With Branson we're not just doing the tractors – we're doing all the parts, all the service, all the warranty, all the fluids, literally everything.

"So what we're building for dealers is a one-stop-shop."

And importantly in terms of trust, Nathan has set out his stall with the dealer trade that Branson will never deal directly to the customer.

He says: "One thing I've made explicitly clear from the get go is that we will not deal direct. As you go down the pecking order and get to the smaller scale importer-distributors, some think it's acceptable to flog stuff out the back door, direct to a customer.

"I believe that undermines the value of the dealer in the food-chain. We're selling a technically advanced product and you need to have a comprehensive support to back this up. So we will only sell through dealers who can support this product."

So, if a dealer signs-up to Branson, can they feel confident that they are going to be fully supported?

"Absolutely. Our business plan is not short term, it's a long term plan. We're introducing a new brand and we don't want to be giving up on it next year.

"When a dealer signs up to Branson, they're signing up for a minimum of 12 months. That's to give both parties a good run at it. We're not about knee-jerk reactions to changes in the market. Dealers are signing up to 12 months territory – meaning I won't

appoint anyone else in their area for 12 months. If we appoint someone, they're the dealer.

"This applies very much to the smaller lawn and garden dealers who are coming up through the ranks and are trying something new. It gives them a degree of comfort so they can invest in what they're doing. You've got to support people if you want to work with them long term. That's very much our intention."

## The future

Nathan Walker is clearly very confident in his range. When I met him he was in the middle of a couple of Ride and Drive days where he was encouraging dealers and press to get onto the machines to try them out and poke and prod them for themselves.

Tractors from the 00 Series, which start at 21hp, through to the K Series, which go up to 74hp, were available to demo. And from Nathan's point-of-view, encouraging noises appeared to be coming from all quarters.

So the inevitable question is, how many of these machines does Nathan hope to sell?

"We've written a three-year business plan and within that we've worked out good case and bad case scenarios," he says.

"I don't want to make those figures public, but let me give you an example. In Germany, the importer-distributor is a guy called Klaus Weber. He sells between 500 and 600 Branson tractors a year, into a market that is 5,000-6,000 units a year. This is up against the main player of John Deere, followed by Kubota. So he's taking 10% of the 0-74hp tractor market and he's been active for seven years. If I can do that in three years, I'll be quite happy.

"If I exceed that, I'll be very happy."

Branson Tractor's MD Nathan Walker





# COBRA

## *Exclusive New Products For 2016*

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

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

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



For more information please visit: [www.cobragarden.co.uk](http://www.cobragarden.co.uk) or call: **0115 986 6646**



# NEW GENERATION FROM MCCORMICK

*X4 SERIES COMPRISES SEVEN ALL-NEW CAB OR PLATFORM MODELS FROM 64HP TO 107HP*

**A**s part of a wholesale upgrade of the McCormick tractor range, seven new models have been developed with unique transmission and engine combinations plus a spacious cab.

The McCormick X4 Series is a small full-size tractor design with power outputs from 64hp to 107hp and a wide choice of specifications.

Notable features include optional creeper gears and ground drive power take-off for specialist turf maintenance machinery; a low-revs Eco 40kph transmission option for more fuel-efficient road travel; and a new cab design that is spacious yet compact.

A narrow header rail creates a deep windscreen for maximum forwards visibility; full-size doors provide easy access with no 'B' pillars to interrupt the view to either side; and controls on the right-hand console are angled towards the driver.

The novel idea of housing the cab air filters in the rear pillars makes them easy to reach for cleaning and results in a slim roof panel for low overall height - the four smallest models measure just over 2.4m to the

top of the cab, while the three larger machines, which have a slightly longer wheelbase to maintain balance and traction with bigger implements, stand at 2.5m.

Two- or four-wheel drive, cab or open platform, and a choice of synchro shuttle and power shuttle transmissions add to the specification mix.



## SIROMER AWARD THEIR DEALERS OF THE YEAR *INAUGURAL HONOURS IN THREE CATEGORIES*

Siromer, the compact tractor company, has announced their first ever Dealer Awards, which they plan to host annually.

The first awards have been split into three categories:

- **Exceptional Performance** - awarded to **Stuart Wright Tractors of East Anglia**. Having built an extremely strong relationship with their clients they have succeeded in providing compact tractor and equipment solutions in their local area, which has included the provision of several units of the new, larger CH Range Tractors.



Tooby & Williams

- **Outstanding Contribution** - this is awarded to **TRW Engineering of Cornwall & Devon** for their continued effort in helping to raise awareness of the Siromer brand, both within their local area and nationally. Tim, from TRW is a firm favourite on the county show circuit, having exhibited at over five shows last year, including: The Royal Cornwall, Midlands Machinery and The Devon County Show.

- **Dealer Of The Year** - this goes to **Tooby & Williams of South Wales**. Recognised for having developed both an excellent reputation and outstanding customer service for the Siromer brand Tooby & Williams expanded their tractor owners network by 40%.

Louise Howard, Managing Director of Siromer said "It has been a fantastic year for Siromer as we continue to grow. We wanted to recognise the hard work and efforts that our dealer partners put in by creating these awards as a way of thanking them."

# EASY SAILING WITH KUBOTA

## CASE STUDY – WAVENEY SAILABILITY

Kubota's B1620 compact tractor has been put to work at Waveney Sailability in Suffolk in order to speed up the time it takes to launch and recover the sailing and rescue craft at the activity centre.

The 16hp tractor was fitted with turf tyres to provide a stable grip on wet and muddy surfaces, while the inclusion of a front ball hitch and electric winch help the team maintain control when getting the rigid inflatable boat in and out of the water.

Malcolm Brown, Assistant Sailing Instructor at Waveney Sailability, comments: "Since the arrival of the B1620 tractor, the tasks that we have to carry out following a busy day of sailing with very few volunteers has been made significantly easier and safer.

"We use the tractor to manoeuvre, launch and recover our sailing boats and rescue craft, which was previously very difficult due to the weight of the equipment. The tractor has been well received by the team at Waveney Sailability as it helps to speed up the time it takes to bring the boats back to land when the team have been out sailing."

Equipped with Kubota's E-TCVS diesel engine

for increased power, cleaner emissions and low noise levels, the B1620 offers an increased travel speed to allow the team at Waveney to move between destinations quicker. The inclusion of four-wheel drive prevents the tyres slipping and the Rollover Protection System provides safety when using the tractor on an inclined surface.

Waveney Sailability, which specialises in providing sailing classes to individuals with disabilities, was presented with the compact tractor following a grant from Sports England.



# CLAAS EXTENDS OFFERING BELOW 140HP

## NEW ATOS RANGE

The last year has seen CLAAS completely revise and extend its tractor range below 140hp.

Between the ELIOS, AXOS, ATOS and ARION 400 ranges, CLAAS

offers one of the widest ranges in the sub-140hp market, with 20 distinct models varying in power output from 70hp to 140hp.

The compact ATOS is a completely new addition to the range and six models are available, powered by three- and four-cylinder engines ranging in power from 76hp to 109hp.

For each ATOS model a wide range of transmission and specification offers are available. For those who just need a simple, straightforward tractor with the minimum of electronic control systems, the ATOS is available with a 10 forward/10 reverse speed mechanical transmission and mechanical reverser.

For greater functionality and especially when used with

a loader, the ATOS can be specified with a TWINSHIFT two-speed or TRISHIFT three-speed powershift transmission and REVERSHIFT clutchless reverser.

The specification options across all models includes the availability of either two- or four-wheel drive, with the choice of either a 540/540 ECO or 540/540ECO/1000/1000ECO PTO, with the ECO option providing a 60 litres/minute hydraulic output at a reduced engine speed of just 1,600rpm.

A new feature is the SMART STOP function on models with REVERSHIFT. When engaged, this enables the transmission to be automatically de-clutched when the brake pedal is engaged, making this option ideal for repetitive yard or loader work.





# DARREN SPENCER

With Ariens the name over the door now in Oxfordshire, Editor Steve Gibbs met European Manager, Darren Spencer to talk about the future of the company, new products and the value of a strong dealer network

“We’re very much poised to grow our dealer network,” says Darren Spencer, European Manager for Ariens Company. “That’s definitely our target in 2016 and 2017.”

Darren, who returned to Great Haseley last year, having first joined the company when the Countax name was above the door 25 years ago, is now responsible for Ariens’ business across Europe and Scandinavia. Previously Operations Director at Countax, he had most recently been based in Australia as Manager for Ariens Australia.

However, now back in the Oxfordshire countryside, he has his sights firmly set on increasing the number of Ariens dealers across the UK in order to provide sales and service for the wealth of new products on their way. It is specifically with the ECHO and Ariens brands where Darren sees the biggest growth forthcoming.

“In terms of Countax and Westwood we have good market share, we see opportunity to grow that share though organic growth of the current dealer network, with the addition of dealer network expansion in some regions, however the ride-on market as a whole is not growing at the same-rate as that of hand-held product, so it is fair to say we expect less growth in this sector,” he says.



An almost completed Westwood tractor on the production line

## Zero Turns

One area where Darren believes there is potential for this development is with Zero-Turn mowers.

Traditionally perhaps seen as a more ‘American’ product, Ariens is looking to make inroads into the high-end consumer sector with these machines over the next couple of years.

“We’re introducing some new products from Ariens,” Darren says, “including the IKON-X Zero Turn which we are very excited about. It’s a product we’re putting a lot of focus on in 2016.”

“The industry data from the AEA tell us that sales of zero-turns is growing. Figures from 2014 suggest the market is around 1,000 units, but that grew 30% year-on-year. So in terms of size, yes it’s small, but it’s clearly growing, and this particular model is aimed at the high-end consumer – or ‘prosumer’.”

Does Darren think there are enough of these types of buyers out there for machines such as this?

“I believe so. We’re a bit of a micro-market in this country where finish is perhaps more important to our customers than it is to customers in other countries. A lot of other countries just want to make long grass short, and they don’t really care what it looks like. In Australia, where I have worked recently, for example, typically the consumer simply wishes to cut as low as possible to extend the time to the next cut, especially in regions such as Queensland that experience tropical conditions.

“Whereas in the UK, many consumers demand a finer finish.

“But for the consumer who has a large area to cut and wants to do it pretty quickly, then it’s a perfect solution.

“So we will be targeting the high-end consumer market through our network of garden machinery dealers.”

And to help get this message across of the benefits of these mowers to the consumer, Ariens’ big marketing

# “OUR RANGE WILL HAVE A RANGE OF BATTERIES TO SUIT BOTH THE CONSUMER AND THE PROFESSIONAL – AND THESE WILL BE UNIVERSAL TO FIT INTO ALL THE VARIOUS PRODUCTS”

push with the IKON this year will be a ‘Why Zero Turn?’ campaign.

“Customers are going to seek some guidance,” continues Darren. “When you first see a zero-turn and you see that the majority are controlled by handles, they could be quite daunting. The customer’s going to need educating that this system is easy to operate and highly manoeuvrable – and that the machines can move 30-40% faster than a garden tractor.

“We as a company got together and thought ‘how can we be part of growing the zero-turn market?’ And it’s not just promoting the product, it’s promoting the concept. It’s more about creating a market rather than taking market share. It’s saying ‘this is why you might consider using a zero-turn mower’.

“For us, it’s like lithium-ion; it’s coming, and this is why you need it.”

## Battery

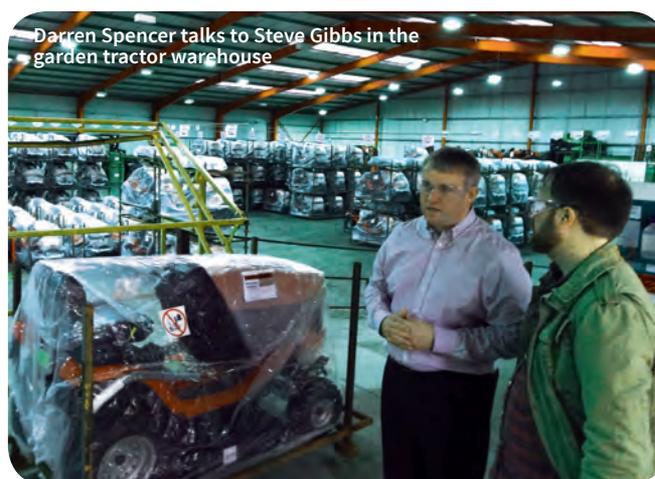
Almost inevitably, this is the other area where Ariens sees market growth – cordless machinery. With many manufacturers recently making sure they are not left out of this rapidly burgeoning marketplace, Ariens has a full range coming this year.

“I was in Chicago with ECHO recently, testing the new prototypes,” Darren confirms. “We have some 56-volt, lithium-ion products on their way.

“If you speak to most dealers it still only represents a small minority of sales – I hear the figure 5% quite a lot – so it’s still very small.

“But for me there is a watershed moment coming for the lithium products, which will be driven by two key pieces of information: one is price and the other is battery life. Currently battery life is accelerating rapidly and prices are coming down.

“At the moment, in terms of volume sales, the price/power level is still a bit of a challenge compared with the entry-level equivalent petrol-driven product. But that gap is certainly lessening.”



Darren Spencer talks to Steve Gibbs in the garden tractor warehouse

Does Darren believe the public are being educated that a battery-powered unit can do the job of a petrol engine?

“I think even now there is a perception that battery-power is more suited to the consumer rather than the professional. But all the big brands are producing equipment that is very specifically targeted at the commercial user.”

Importantly, does he see it as a struggle to convince the traditional garden machinery service dealer that they they will want to stock these machines, what with the lack of service work off the back of them?

“I think that’s a justifiable concern for a dealer to have. However, I don’t believe you can say there won’t be any service work. I mean you’ve still got a shaft that’s connected to the end of the motor, connected to the cutting head – which is still the area that is going to get worked hard. So while it’s fair to say that there’s going to be less service work, there certainly won’t be none at all.

“Our range will have a range of batteries to suit both the consumer and the professional – and these will be universal to fit into all the various products. So there’s a range of sales there for the dealer. It’s almost like the multi-tool concept in that regard.”

## Specialist sales

Integral to all of Ariens' plans though, is a robust, specialist independent dealer network.

"I believe the key to selling all these products is demonstration," says Darren. "We've certainly always felt that with the Countax and Westwood brands.

"We're a premium product with a premium price, so the effective way to sell our products is to put the consumer in the seat. Therefore, part of our marketing campaign will have a demonstration element attached. We've recently invested in demonstration trailers which our salesmen can take around the country to get consumers onto the machines.

"Where the IKON-X has done extremely well in the US is because it occupies unique positioning of being a consumer price machine with professional features. When you look at professional ride-ons the key touch-points are normally fabricated cutter decks rather than pressed, cast spindles and one-piece frames. What Ariens has actually made here is a hybrid where it's incorporated a number of professional features into a consumer-price product, so we expect demand to come from the high-end consumer/light-duty professional.

"The physical strength of the product then becomes an appeal, which is something that can be most effectively communicated to consumers via demonstration by a knowledgeable dealer."

## Manufacturing

Currently the Ariens branded products are not manufactured at Great Haseley – they are shipped to the UK fully assembled.

"Today the plant is primarily focussed on Countax and Westwood," Darren explains. "In the future we may consider manufacturing some Ariens brand products in the UK, but not at the moment."

When asked how the company can remain competitive with the attendant costs involved with manufacturing in the UK, Darren admits that being part of a global company certainly helps.

"If you look at manufacturing a ride-on mower the biggest costs are the engine and gearbox. So being part of a larger organisation really helps us to leverage that bigger buying power. In addition to this, the majority of components outside the engine and transmission are sourced within the UK, this enables us to retain lean levels of on-hand component inventory, reducing overall on-hand inventory. This greatly aids our ability to manage cost and operate profitably while retaining an ability to respond quickly to the demands of our customers.

"A lot of visitors arrive initially believing that we are just an assembly plant, but we are in fact a fully integrated manufacturing business. Steel comes in one end of the Great Haseley factory, and a fully formed product comes out of the other. We're proud of that, and welcome visitors to the plant to see for themselves, which of course does give us the ability to respond quickly to the market."

## Profitability

Darren Spencer sees a bright future for Ariens and its dealers in the UK. When asked why a new dealer should consider signing up to it, he is quick to answer:

"There's a lot of new product coming this year, combined with a lot of innovation. Lithium-ion will be a big piece of that.

"The USP of all our brands has always been their quality durability. Those dealers who've worked with us for a long time say we've always been a profitable franchise for them, particularly when considering the long-term value return of the full product life-cycle, initial sale, service revenue, and in many cases, re-sales as used machinery.

"Ariens Company today can offer more products than ever before, and our established range of Countax and Westwood branded ride-ons is well-known; add to this a full-range of ECHO and Shindaiwa hand-held products and chippers, Ariens ZTs, walk-behind and chore products, an Ariens dealer today has more opportunity to generate profitable sales.

"Our strategy is to make successful brands with great margins for our dealers," he concludes.



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# STILL A PLACE FOR THE FAMILY BUSINESS

*Farming is changing, and dealer networks are changing with it, forming larger operations to match. But the experience of Oxon-based LJ and CA Cannings suggests there remains room for the flexibility and personal approach of single outlet family dealerships, says Martin Rickatson*

**W**hile almost all farm machinery dealers hold a multitude of agencies to provide customers with the full selection of equipment they require for their enterprises, it's often the tractor franchise that dictates the success and stability of the business as a whole. Winning a big name can help to gain and retain customers, while losing a contract with a major maker can have a significant impact on sales,

service income and parts business, possibly even forcing a merger or closure.

But is it the be-all and end-all for a dealership? While LJ and CA Cannings has endured its share of upheavals caused by tractor maker takeovers and policy changes, a successful focus on diversification and specialisation meant that when, two years ago, it suffered the withdrawal of its tractor franchise for "manufacturer restructuring"

reasons, Managing Director Les Cannings considered not replacing it.

"It was something we thought about," says Les, who runs the East Challow, Wantage-based business with his wife Carole and sons James, Michael and Daniel.

"Having lost the Renault franchise when its tractor division was sold to Claas, and then most recently seen our Valtra agency withdrawn after 10 years following AGCO's decision



Major franchises include Deutz-Fahr tractors, combines and telehandlers, plus Sumo drills and cultivation equipment



Les Cannings (right) oversees the day-to-day management of the business, with Michael (right) concentrating on service and James (centre) on sales

to give it to a bigger multi-brand, multi-depot dealership, I wasn't sure we wanted to commit again to signing with a tractor maker.

"We have strong, long-term franchises in other farm machinery areas, to the point where, for example, we employ a full-time sales and demo specialist for Sumo cultivation and drilling equipment. We also do well with Lely forage equipment, and most recently signed with Amazone, making a good start with sales of sprayers and fertiliser spreaders.

"And I think we are well-diversified. In 1999 we purchased a small local plant hire company, and have developed this to cover a full range of equipment including compact tractors, telehandlers, mowers, Wacker Neuson mini-diggers, Thwaites dumpers and Polaris ATV/UTV vehicles. With more people wanting to do their own light construction work, we provide a range of 0.8-5t excavators, and with an emphasis on customer service and competitive prices

we've built this division into a thriving and integral part of our business."

### New franchises

These successes meant that not replacing their tractor franchise came under serious consideration when AGCO made its Valtra decision in January 2013. Indeed, the firm wasn't actively seeking out a replacement when it was approached by SDF UK to enquire whether it would be interested in a Deutz-Fahr franchise. Four months later, new signs were up at the East

Challow premises where Les Cannings has been based since founding his business in 1976.

"We were sufficiently impressed with the products and the promises made that we felt confident we could put our name behind them," he explains.

"Taking on Deutz-Fahr also gave us the chance to offer combine and telehandler products, and we've sold models of both since taking on the franchise, in addition to a number of tractors. And for the first time, as well as the main agricultural tractor ranges we also

**TWO-WAY SUPPORT IS VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF A DEALERSHIP**

now have access to compact models below 50hp from the same maker, which will open up other potential new markets for us, having previously made some inroads into this sector with Kioti.

“But customer backing also played a part in our decision to sign up as Deutz-Fahr dealers for the local area. We had a lot of support when we lost our previous franchise, and we’ve been really pleased that we’ve retained and converted customers since we switched. We aim to provide them with loyalty, goodwill and support, and they have given the same to us. I’d like to think that’s because they value what we can provide as a smaller, independent family business – flexibility, continuity and personal service.”

## Diversification

Les Cannings took on his first tractor franchise, with Lamborghini, in 1985, nine years after forming his agricultural engineering business. In the early 1990s the firm was appointed the Renault dealer for the area, before the Claas/Renault deal meant tractor sales moved to the harvesting specialist’s local dealership. That led to Cannings signing a deal to sell Valtra tractors, which the firm sold for a decade until 2013’s switch to Deutz-Fahr.

“But many of our other franchises



LJ and CA Cannings has been based at its East Challow premises near Wantage since the firm was founded in 1976

have been just as important to our business,” says Les.

“As well as Sumo, Amazone and Lely, we hold agencies for Teagle, Twose, Kidd, Kawasaki outdoor power equipment, Stiga, Mountfield and a sub-dealership for Stihl. Around 50-60% of our turnover is from farm machinery, so with the outdoor power equipment and our hire business and other activities, we’ve got plenty of different strings to the business.

“We’ve held the Polaris agency for 10 years and have had good success selling ATVs and UTVs to local shoots, and even hiring them for film sets. And the homeowner and grounds care markets are important to us too. We’re proud to hold the

franchises for Stiga and Mountfield garden machinery, which we believe are two of the most prestigious value-for-money manufacturers in the industry, producing reliable, high quality products, and we offer servicing and repair on most makes and models of home and commercial mowers.”

## Looking ahead

With 2016 looking likely to be a tough year for farm machinery dealers, how does Les feel that manufacturers can help to support the trade, both in the difficult seasons like this and the better ones that are hopefully to come?

“Two-way support is vital to the success of a dealership. The ordering/stocking process is probably our biggest bugbear. Holding stock is good for being able to show customers what’s available in a manufacturer’s product line, and from their point of view it acts as an incentive to sell, but keeping stock is a headache if a market cannot quickly be found for it before first payments become due to the manufacturer.

“In an ideal world I’m sure a lot of dealers would be keener to order stock if they knew manufacturers would play their part to help to move an item on if it was in demand elsewhere.”

Although the firm’s East Challow



ATV sales and service are a key feature of the business, with Cannings having had good success selling ATVs and UTVs to local shoots, and even hiring them for film sets



Key outdoor power equipment franchises include Stiga, Mountfield, Kawasaki and a sub-dealership for Stihl

premises are tucked away in a small rural village, they are just two-and-a-half miles from the market town of Wantage.

“One day we may move, but it’s not in our immediate plans,” says Les.

“We’ve been here for 40 years and plenty of people know where we are. To attract those who don’t, and keep us in the public eye, especially among potential garden and

our own demo days.

“Last summer we held a tillage demonstration event which proved a great success, enabling us to show existing and potential customers our complete range of Deutz-Fahr tractors, combines and telehandlers, plus cultivation and drilling equipment from Sumo and Amazone. In addition, we had a technology area demonstrating Deutz-Fahr’s Agro Sky GPS and

respectively, part of a 19-strong staff team of which seven are service engineers, five operate the stores and the hire side of the business, four are in the sales team and two look after accounts, using Symix management software. Gaining and retaining young staff is an important part of the business, Les believes.

“Three of our service team are under 21, and we’ve committed to training them up, looking after them

## WE’VE BEEN REALLY PLEASED THAT WE’VE RETAINED AND CONVERTED CUSTOMERS SINCE WE SWITCHED

outdoor power equipment buyers, we advertise in locally-distributed free magazines – they’re cheap to place ads in and widely distributed. We also take a stand at the local Newbury Show, which attracts all of our main customer types, from farmers to garden machinery buyers, as well as attending local ploughing matches and organising

ISOBUS systems. Demos like this, getting the customer into the seat, are undoubtedly a good way to show what machines can do and help their decision-making. We’re considering doing something similar this year with grass equipment.”

Sons James and Michael work on the sales and service teams

and keeping them on board. I think it’s essential to keep staff informed and ensure they understand the issues of the business and its aims. That’s essential for its long-term prospects, and with a sound group of franchises and customers, plus family management, I think those prospects are as healthy as those of any larger dealership.”

# A COUPLE OF GREAT DAYS IN HARROGATE

*And a half day . . . not so much. Steve Gibbs reports*

“It’s great to see the halls buzzing.” So said Nick Darking, Charterhouse Turf Machinery’s Sales Manager, shortly before receiving a surprise presentation for 25 years’ service at the recent BTME.

And in those couple of moments BIGGA’s Harrogate show was summed up for me. For on the Tuesday and Wednesday the halls were indeed buzzing. There was a real atmosphere of vibrancy and upbeatness around the stands, with very decent crowds making it tricky to walk from one place to the next on occasions.

This buzz was replicated with the hoards of greenkeepers making their way up the escalators to the Continue To Learn sessions at the International Centre. An incredibly wide and very valuable spread of seminars was laid on and taken advantage of from Sunday to Wednesday.

And with Nick receiving his prize and a friendly slap on the back,

that encapsulated the other, more intangible, element which makes BTME work so well: the camaraderie and networking side. The halls this year, in general, seemed to have a smile on their faces. This must be in no small part thanks to the town of Harrogate. The appeal of the exhibition is without a doubt aided immensely by its location.

Judging by the town’s bars, restaurants and hotels of an evening, the majority of visitors must stay over for a night, making the opportunities for networking and catching up with colleagues easy and fun. This is one element that Saltex, being located at the NEC, will never be able to replicate.

However, one change that I would say Saltex has got right with its recent upheaval, is the change to a two-day exhibition. The Tuesday and Wednesday genuinely were buzzing at BTME – but Thursday felt unnecessary. The exhibitors

and visitors were rattling about the halls somewhat, waiting for the official close time of 2.30pm to start their journey home.

## Numbers up

To be fair, BIGGA says there were actually 1,606 through the doors which is 10% up on the final day last year. But it is a massive drop-off from the day before when there were 3,330 in.

And in terms of sheer numbers BIGGA will insist that it has the formula right. The headline following the exhibition was that it was 1,000 visits up on 2015 with 7,936 people through the doors (3,000 first day, 3,330 second day and 1,606 on day three).

Three show days are a big commitment for many people though – a lot of days away from the workplace, what with set-up and travel days factored in. If visitors knew it was two-day show I’m sure those 1,600-odd could have made one of the previous days. Two days certainly seems enough to get round a show of BTME’s size.

This is just the exhibition itself I’m talking about here. The education side seems to be working great with its Sunday to Wednesday format – it just seems that when that ends, so does the atmosphere in the halls, to a degree.

## Clashes

The other problem that the show presents to potential visitors and certain exhibitors is its timing. The show regularly clashes nowadays with LAMMA in Peterborough. And as you can see from Martin Rickatson’s report in this issue, that



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was a great show again this year.

Many readers of this magazine will no doubt sell machinery that is on show in both Peterborough and Harrogate, and would find value in a visit to both. And several manufacturers must either debate which show to take a stand at or have reps flying up and down the country. Indeed, I spoke to several people who did need to be in two places at once and thus felt they weren't able to devote the full time they'd ideally like to at either show.

It really doesn't seem an ideal situation and one would imagine it wouldn't take a lot of effort for the organisers of each to get together and come to an arrangement for subsequent years?

### Still worthwhile

All that said, this is by no way denigrating the show itself. As well as the sheer number of visitors through the doors on the first two days, lots of exhibitors I spoke to were pleased with



the calibre of visitor they had attracted to their stand.

First time stand-holder Central Spares, for example, told me how it was meeting entirely new leads that it hadn't encountered before and was thus delighted with how things had gone. Colin Gale said, "We're here to meet the end users, with some greenkeepers seeing our equipment for the

first time, and they're leaving our stand impressed. It's been really valuable for us."

So a good show once again, lots of interesting new products on display, a wonderful opportunity to meet up with colleagues and friends and discuss in person the issues of the day; just maybe a tad too long and with a somewhat unfortunate scheduling clash.

## TRILO TO ESTABLISH UK DEALER NETWORK

### *Change to selling direct in UK announced at show*

Vanmac bv is no stranger to the UK market with its range of Trilo blowers and vacs.

But at BTME the company announced that it would be selling its full product line directly via a network of established dealers. This move will bring the UK into line with its strategy in the rest of Europe and allows the company to better tailor its sales and service of Trilo machines to the UK market.

To assist with distribution and the setting up of the nationwide dealer network, Trilo has employed the services of Jon Proffitt as UK Factory Support Manager.

Jon is an established name within the industry and is well versed with the Trilo range of products. He has a wealth of knowledge of the UK market, having been

in the groundcare machinery industry since the 1990s.

Jon will be liaising with dealers and customers throughout



John Proffitt with Peter van Mispelaar, Commercial Director, Vanmac bv

the UK and Ireland.

Trilo says this direct route will provide it with better feedback from the UK industry to ensure it meets the requirements of the end user, while providing customers with more competitive pricing, quicker customer response and the opportunity to order parts directly from its factory in The Netherlands.

The newly appointed UK dealers will also have access to direct factory information and the parts shop 24-7.

Commenting on his appointment at the show, Jon said: "Trilo products have a great reputation for their quality and efficiency and I'm really looking forward to building this further, and exploring new opportunities with the new UK dealer network."

# JOHN DEERE UNVEILS NEW ROUGH MOWER

## 9009A TerrainCut

John Deere unveiled its new 9009A TerrainCut rough mower as the latest addition to the company's A Model family of fairway, rough and tees, and surrounds mowers.

"With the new 9009A TerrainCut, our widest model yet, users can maximise both productivity and cut quality from a wide area mower while having more control over how the machine performs in the rough," said John Deere Limited Turf Division Manager Chris Meacock.

The machine has five 68.6cm independent rotary mower decks, providing an overall cutting width of 2.7m.

Rated at a maximum 55hp, the direct-injection four-cylinder diesel engine uses integrated cooled exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) and automatic particulate filter cleaning to meet Stage IIIb emission regulations.

A deep-shell deck design with rear discharge stands the grass up for a cleaner cut, while dispersing the grass clippings evenly over a wider area. In addition, height of cut adjustments can be performed without tools using an innovative notch system, simply by pulling a lever.



LoadMatch transmission settings provide consistent cut quality and climbing performance, while the AutoPedal feature lowers sound levels and fuel consumption during transport.

The mower's established TechControl system delivers premium control for operation, maintenance and diagnostics.

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# RANGE SHOWN BY KUBOTA

## *New Grand L40-II tractors and latest RTV feature*

Kubota showed its range of turfcare equipment at Harrogate on an eye-catching stand in the newly reopened Hall Q.

Featured were the new Grand L40-II Series deluxe tractors. A key feature of these models is the new integrated cab, designed specifically for operator comfort. A deluxe seat and extended legroom are a staple, accompanied by big improvements to the control panel which improve ease of use for the operator and heighten performance.

Access to the operational and hydraulic controls and levers is

aided due to the size of the control panel, with the ergonomic design suitable for lever placement.

Adrian Langmead, Business Development Manager for Kubota Groundcare, said: "Alongside improvements inside the cab, fuel efficiency remains a key feature of the L40-II model. That's why, in addition to functional and operational improvements, our E-TVCS (three vortex combustion system) engine will deliver efficiency and reduced emissions output to further streamline operational costs and improve profitability."

Among other tractors and mowers on the stand was the new RTV-X900 utility vehicle that is fitted with a 21.6hp, three-cylinder liquid-cooled diesel engine.

Variable hydraulic transmission has been improved on from the original RTV, with a new advanced VHT-X, which offers a wider torque band and large coolers to boost performance and durability.

Kubota's unique dynamic braking, which provides additional braking power and greater driving control on descents, remains a key feature of the range, while the new model is fitted as standard with a high rigidity frame, that helps to isolate passengers from noise and vibrations while also ensuring the machine is durable enough to carry heavier loads.

Limited-slip front differential and locking rear differential brakes help to reduce wheel spin, allowing greater control in wet conditions.

Ground clearance on the X-Series has also been improved with 10.4" travel height allowing the vehicle to glide over lumps and bumps. Height-adjustable front and rear suspension also ensures the correct vehicle height, depending on load, allowing for a safe and comfortable ride, no matter how heavy the load.



Andy Southerton, Kubota's new Dealer Manager, on the stand

# JACOBSEN DEBUTS LIGHTWEIGHT WIDE AREA MOWERS

## *LF557 and LF577 added to line-up*

The new Jacobsen LF577 lightweight wide area fairway mower made its world-wide debut at Harrogate.

The new mower, one of two additional machines to Jacobsen's LF range, features seven cutting units with a mowing width of 3.53

metres. The company said its five cutting units offer a prodigious output of 4.5 hectares per hour at a mowing speed of 12.9 km/h.

An electronically controlled hydrostatic traction pedal provides smooth operation through controlled acceleration and

deceleration helping to increase traction. This helps to prevent wheel spin and the low pedal effort increases operator comfort. Also, its SureTrac 4WD parallel-cross series system provides traction and climbing ability. In the event of a front wheel losing

traction, the power (hydraulic fluid) is split and transferred to the rear wheels ensuring optimum traction at all times.

Situated in a moveable armrest control pod, Jacobsen's InCommand control system puts all controls within easy reach and includes a full text LCD display screen, one-touch joystick, electronic cruise control, operator storage and 12-volt power socket.

The mower uses the Classic XP cutting units with 17.8cm diameter units fitted with either nine- or 11-blade reels. Smaller 12.7cm diameter Classic XP units with either seven- or nine-blade reels and TrueSet adjustment are used on the Jacobsen 557.

The standard power unit is a Kubota 28 k, three-cylinder, liquid cooled diesel engine with an optional Kubota 36.5 kW four-cylinder, liquid cooled diesel engine.



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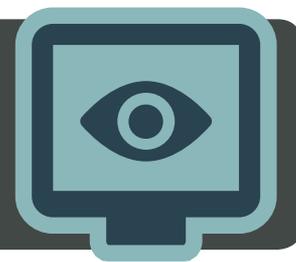


THTILL3.5

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# BUSINESS MONITOR

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## WINTER SERVICING SURVEY 2016

*Workshops across the country appear to be busy*

We had an excellent response to our Winter Servicing Survey which showed some encouraging results. Most notably, 51% of respondents said that servicing work this winter was up or well up.

This is following a similar survey we did this time last year which saw 59% then say the same thing. So we seem to be seeing year-on-year rises for the most part.

Again weather came top when looking for factors which most influence service levels with 61% citing this, with marketing the next closest, but still some way off, at 19%.

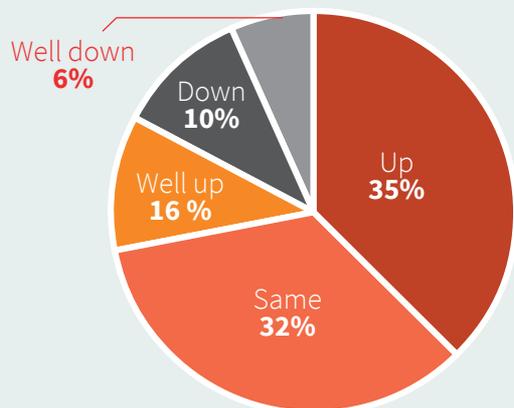
Still in the minority, but more dealers responded in the positive this year to the question 'have you raised labour rates?' Last year only 23%

had, but this year 41% said they'd put their charges up (by up to 5% in the most part).

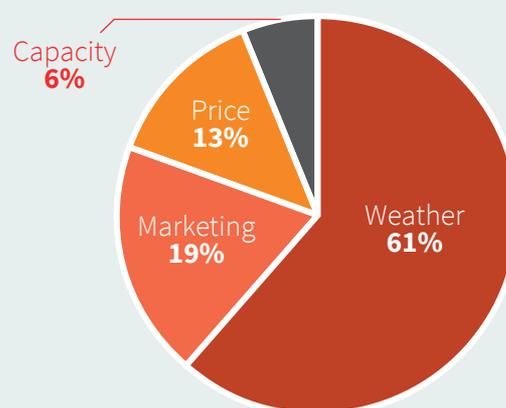
Staffing for the service department still appears to be problematic, with this year a staggering 94% describing it as fairly or extremely difficult to recruit the right person – with only about a third of respondents having actually employed someone new during the past year. This is pretty much in line with how people responded last year.

In terms of the training available for their service staff, most dealers appeared to be happy with the courses on offer, with almost half describing the provision as 'good'.

### How are servicing levels this winter compared with last?



### Which factors most influence your winter servicing levels?

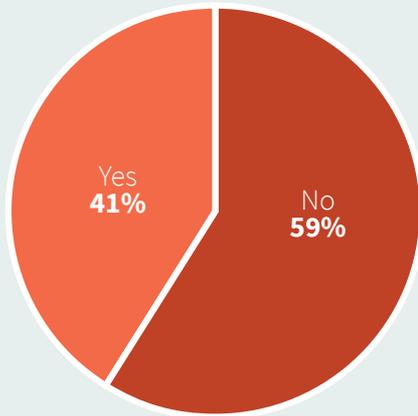


## How do you monitor the Pulse of your Business? by **FACT** or **GUESSWORK**?

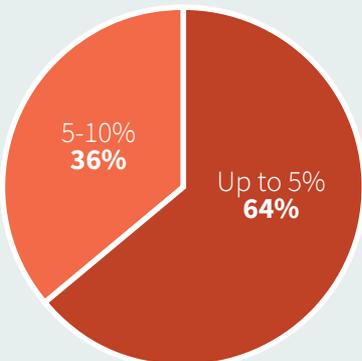
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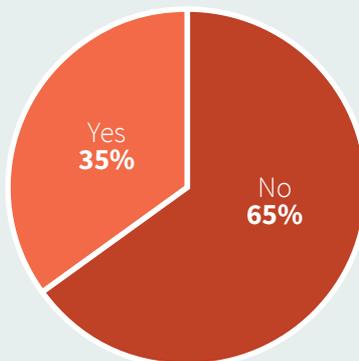
## Have you increased your labour rates in the past year?



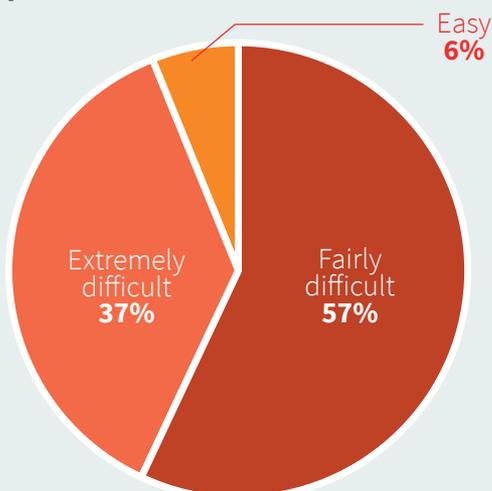
## If you have increased your labour rates this past year, by how much?



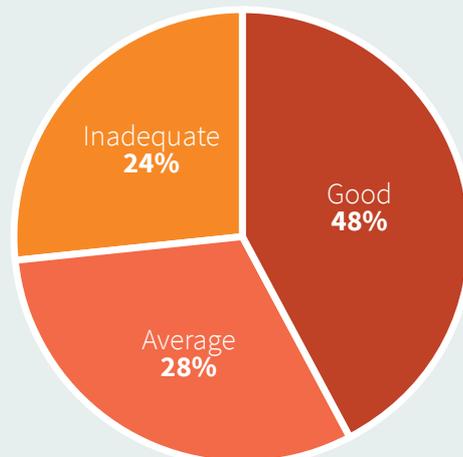
## Have you increased your service staffing levels this past year?



## When you do want to increase service staffing levels, do you find the process...



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



## YOUR SAY

### WE ASKED YOU: ARE THERE ANY KEY ISSUES WHICH REALLY IMPACT ON THE SERVICE SIDE OF YOUR DEALERSHIP?

- I could say the standard of training courses available to your service staff is INAPPROPRIATE. Too much is geared to Dealer/ Brand specifics without an understanding of the basic principals of mechanics. There is too much 'city-boy' stuff being manufactured and catered for. The real world does not find time and revenue growing on trees. I could write a book about it . .
- The influx of Chinese equipment. If I hear, "How much?! I can get a new one for that," after a service estimate again . . .
- No key issues. We just get on with it.
- Customers are still not aware of fuel issues and the impact that ethanol has in fuel.
- Slow payment of invoices from account customers.
- The rarity of getting a good fitter.

# OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIMISM

**FARM EQUIPMENT DEALERS IN SEARCH OF BOTH OF THE ABOVE DESCENDED ON PETERBOROUGH IN MID-JANUARY TO SEEK OUT NEW IDEAS AND GAUGE THE INDUSTRY'S MOOD. MARTIN RICKATSON REPORTS**

One of the things about a free-entry show is that it's hard to measure exactly how many people have come through the gates. Without ticket sales, there's no easy way to measure the exact number of attendees. But while there was no doubt it seemed a little quieter than usual – not unexpectedly, given the continuation of low commodity prices across agriculture – there were still plenty of visitors to January's LAMMA, and they were provided with plenty to see.

The former Lincs Agricultural Machinery Manufacturers' Association exhibition, which has grown to become the premier all-encompassing national farm equipment show, still attracted decent crowds and, according to the manufacturers, importers and dealers present, a fair level



Deutz-Fahr's UK management says it continues to benefit from the dealer shake-up among bigger brands and make new appointments

of enquiries. And from long-established tractor makers looking to fill gaps in their coverage areas to new importers seeking to create dealer networks, there was plenty to interest farm machinery dealers.

For many of the multinational tractor makers, this was the first chance to show a UK audience the new models they launched internationally at November's Agritechnica. That list included the 270/300hp Optum from Case IH, the New Holland T7.290 and T7.315, the Claas Axion 870 and John Deere's four-tracked, articulated 470-620hp 9RX.



In addition to giving a first UK showing to its new 270/300hp Optum tractors, Case IH celebrated 20 years of its Quadtrac tractors at LAMMA.

## Seeking new dealers

But among other tractor importers were those looking not just to show off new wares, but also seek out new dealers to broaden their coverage. That included JPM Agricultural, which was showing a Versatile 260hp conventional tractor alongside the Canadian maker's Delta-Track four-tracked articulated tractor and its Russian-

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built RT490 rotary combine. The Compact Tractor Centre of Bidford on Avon, which recently announced its deal to become importer for the range of South Korean-made Branson tractors, showed a number of the 21-74hp models. Meanwhile, having tentatively entered the UK market in 2013 by directly appointing a small handful of dealers, Turkish maker Armatrac now has an official UK and Ireland importer for its range of 50-110hp machines, which are powered by Perkins and – in the larger models – Deutz engines. The new firm, Stoke-on-Trent-based AS Tractor, is now seeking to appoint further dealers.

Among the more established tractor makers looking to fill holes in their networks was Deutz-Fahr, the predominant UK brand for the Warwickshire-based subsidiary of Italian-German group SDF. The UK arm continues to pick up strong dealers, often as a result of other manufacturers choosing to restructure their networks, reports SDF UK Managing Director, Mark Ormond. Recent appointments include Kent former John Deere dealer Bell Agricultural, and SDF UK is continuing to look for dealers in other areas where it is lacking coverage. The Deutz-Fahr line now consists of tractors from 35-336hp (models up to 440hp are

Among the surprise LAMMA launches was this Knight Farm Machinery forward-control version of the recently-introduced JCB Fastrac 4000 series



imminent), plus five- and six-walker combines and 6m-7m telehandlers.

One tractor maker not present was Kioti, the South Korean brand formerly brought in by Reco, the Cambs-based importer of multiple agricultural and turf machinery lines that is in the process of winding down its business. However, a return next year could be on the cards following the announcement that a Kioti UK business is being formed by a team of former Reco employees headed by former General Sales

Manager Patrick Desmond. The new operation is owned by the Dutch Pols Group, already the Kioti importer for the Netherlands, France and Belgium, and a number of Kioti dealers under Reco have re-signed with the franchise, while others are being sought. Products include the Mechron side-by-side UTV, line of out-front mowers and a range of tractors from 26-73hp, which will be expanded to include models up to 110hp by the end of 2016, with models up to 145hp in development.

Lincs-based JPM Agricultural, UK importer for the Versatile range of Canadian-made articulated crawlers, now has conventional tractors and a combine in its line-up





Zetor UK is making available to its dealers a line of implements from Polish manufacturer Metal-Fach, including muck spreaders, ploughs, round balers and diet feeders

dealer appointments have begun.

“We’ve got off to a good start, retailing nine ploughs in our first 25 days’ trading,” revealed Philip Halse, the company’s Managing Director, who said the company would also be present at June’s Cereals event.

“We’ve purchased Reco’s stocks, including spares, and are looking for dealers in a number of areas.”

While its new 144 and 160hp Crystal tractors were attracting a lot of attention on Zetor UK’s stand, there was also a good deal of interest in the expanding line of equipment it is offering its dealers, sourced through Polish manufacturer Metal-Fach. On show was a reversible plough, a rear-discharge muck spreader and a compact disc harrow, but the line includes fixed and variable chamber round balers, bale wrappers, vertical auger mixer wagons, trailers, rakes, and disc, drum and flail mowers.

Maros Karabinos, Zetor Sales and Marketing Manager, said the company was continuing to look for dealers in certain areas, while pursuing

## New distribution agreements

LAMMA provided the launchpad for new distribution arrangements and dealer signings for other former Reco franchises, including Sulky Burel UK, headed by former Reco Regional Sales Manager David Parsons. The new business shares premises and some staff and other resources with Gregoire Besson’s UK operation. On the Opico stand, meanwhile, the Lincs firm displayed its newly-acquired franchise for Strautmann forage

wagons, diet feeders and muck spreaders, while it also showed off its new UK franchise for Sky min-till and direct drills from France.

A more unexpected announcement came from Devon-based farm machinery dealer Halse of Honiton, which revealed it has signed to become the UK importer for the Ovlac range of ploughs and tillage equipment which had been imported by Reco since 2012. The firm has also taken on former Reco Area Sales Manager Nick Clark to oversee National Sales, and



New from Claydon, which is continuing to appoint dealers after many years selling directly, is this TerraStar cultivator, for those looking for a little more movement than is possible with a straw rake



Halse of Honiton is the new UK importer for the range of Ovlac ploughs and cultivation equipment formerly brought into the UK by Reco. The firm says it is looking to make dealer appointments

its policy of directly selling only where appointments were proving difficult to make.

“In these areas we’re supporting machines through appointed service agents,” he said. “But we’re keenest to work with dealers where possible, and can offer this full range of machinery alongside Zetor tractors from 60-160hp.”

Also looking to make further dealer appointments was direct drill specialist Claydon, which unveiled a new Terrastar stubble cultivator. Until recently, the Suffolk firm concentrated on selling directly, but in recent years has started to build a retail network.

“We still have areas where we would like to make appointments, and are keen to talk to potential dealers,” said Spencer Claydon, the firm’s Commercial Director.



The sixth completely revised edition of *Farm Machinery*, the standard textbook on the subject, has been launched by author Brian Bell and publisher Old Pond Publishing



The result of a joint initiative between Lynx Engineering and Warks engineers Colecraft, this Puma one-pass cultivator offers GPS variable working depth capability. Pete Homer is looking for UK dealers

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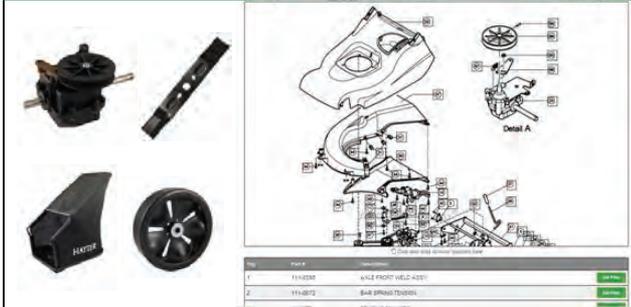
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# LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

*A successful dispersal sale held recently by dealer Mill Engineers in Gloucestershire shows distinct signs of life in the second-hand machinery market among both the trade and farmers*

**W**ith the pound staying strong against the euro, falling commodity prices and an increase in import duties in certain countries, 2015 was a challenging year for the second-hand machinery market.

Political uncertainty in Eastern Europe and diminishing confidence in the industry as a whole also contributed to the problem.

But a recent dispersal sale at long-standing West Country dealership Mill Engineers, at

Old Walls, Ablington, Bibury, in Gloucestershire, created plenty of interest – and suggested there may be light at the end of the tunnel.

### New premises

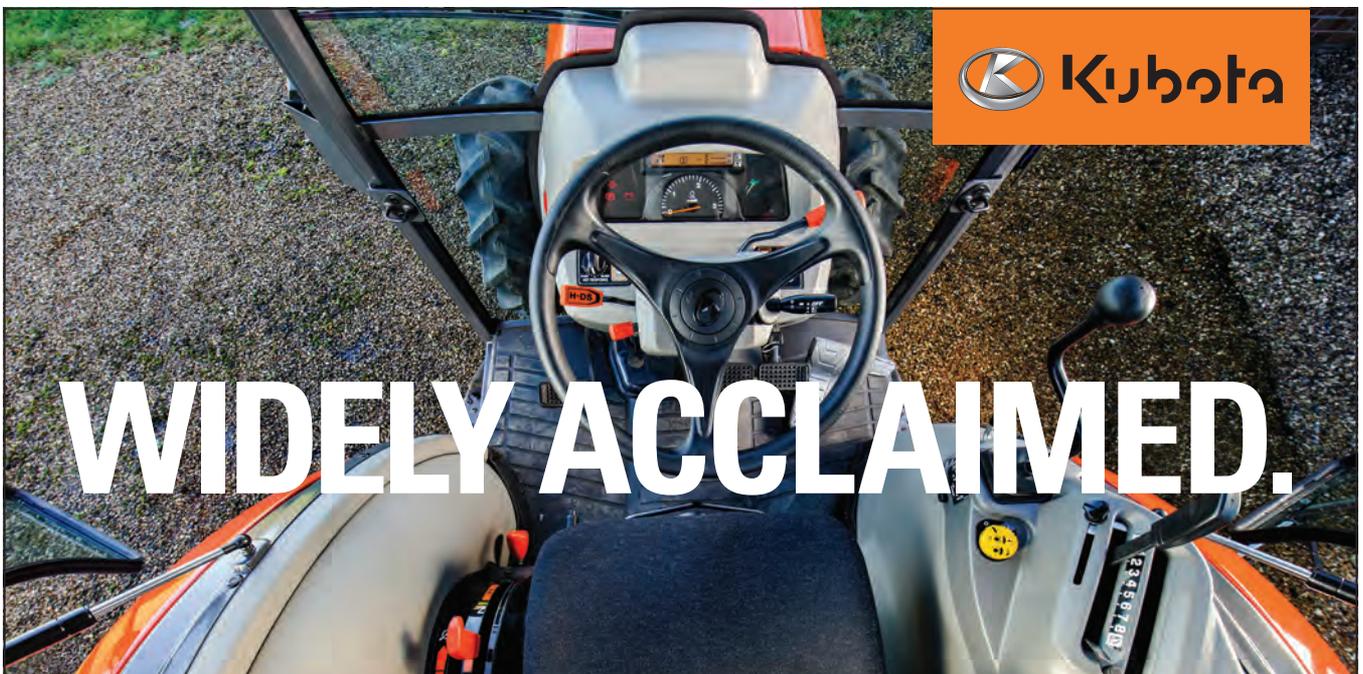
The company – which is part of the Claas dealer network and has been running for more than 40 years – has moved to new premises at the Cotswold Agricultural Centre, opposite Cirencester Livestock Market.

Ahead of the relocation it held

a dispersal sale, organised by East Anglian-based machinery auctioneer Cheffins.

Scores of potential buyers turned out for the sale, which featured more than 500 lots including tractors, combines, forage harvesters, material handlers, implements and spares from manufacturers such as Claas, Krone, Richard Western and JCB.

There was interest from buyers in several European countries as well as those throughout the UK.



# WIDELY ACCLAIMED.

The Grand L40-II further enhances Kubota's position as the market leading tractor and groundcare equipment solutions provider. With its spacious integrated cab offering 140mm extra width internally and externally, the L40 offers more operator comfort and greater visibility than ever before to help boost productivity. Another innovation designed to make life easier for the operator are the fender mounted main hydraulic and PTO controls.

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**For Earth, For Life**  


Mill Engineers enjoyed a successful auction



Will Greenway, Sales Director with CLAAS Western, said it was delighted with the success of the sale – with more than 85% of lots sold.

Commenting on the change of premises, he added, “The new state-of-the art £2m site is significantly larger and has excellent access. It also offers significantly improved internet connection, increased footfall with Countrywide and the livestock market adjacent, as well as providing a far better working environment for our staff. Most importantly, it offers our customers an increased whole goods selection and parts stocks, together with a more efficient and modern workshop facility.”

### High demand

Top price of the day went to a 2009 Claas 960 forage harvester with 2,700 hours, sold to a West Country buyer for £64,000.

In the tractor section it was two Case machines that led the way, with a 2010 Puma 210 at £27,000 and a 2008 Magnum 310 at £25,500.

Other makes were also in demand with a 2009 Deutz Fahr M260 topping out at £19,700, a 2011 Landini hitting £22,000 and a 2002 New Holland TS115 selling for £11,900.

Grassland equipment was in strong demand with farmers competing with the trade for a huge selection of rakes, tedders, mowers, balers and pick-up headers.

Top price went to a 2010 Claas Quadrant 3200 baler at £25,500, closely followed by the £24,000 paid for a 2011 Claas 520 wholecrop header, both being sold to contractors.

A large and varied selection of rakes and tedders included a 2009 Claas Volto 1320 at £6,000 and a 2011 Liner 3100 at £6,700. Mowers to suit all sizes of farms and pockets were headed by

a 2010 Kverneland triple front and rear mower at £7,100.

### Fierce bidding

Cheffins’ auctioneer Oliver Godfrey said they were delighted with the result of the sale and that the prices achieved showed that demand for good quality, low houred kit was still high among farmers and dealers alike.

“We’re delighted that we’ve been able to help Mill Engineers in its move to a new premises,” he said.

“Over the course of 2015, there was a near perfect storm. Adverse currency exchange rates, poor commodity prices across just about every farming sector, the ripple effect from the Russian/Ukrainian conflict and diminishing confidence in the industry. They all battered the second-hand machinery trade.

“However, there now looks to be light at the end of the tunnel. This sale in particular was very well attended and there was

# AUCTION

some fierce bidding from farmers and dealers.

“With interest from Spain, Germany, Poland and Ireland, as well as the UK, there is clear pent-up demand for good quality, low worked second-hand machinery as an alternative to buying new.

“It’s a trend that we’ve seen continuing – particularly at our monthly Cambridge Machinery Sales.

Despite the on-going strength of the pound and a lack of exports, trade was particularly buoyant in December. There’s every reason to believe it will strengthen even further as we head into this year.”



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# SME DIGEST

ADVICE FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES

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**W**elcome to *Service Dealer's* new *SME Digest* section.

Each issue we'll be looking at topics that affect all small, independent businesses – subjects such as technology, finances, legislation, planning, staffing and everything that running a successful small company involves.

We're delighted to welcome back to the magazine to oversee this section, **ADAM BERNSTEIN**, who some readers may remember from *Service Dealer's InBusiness* section from a number of years ago.

Adam is a freelance business writer who has more

than 25 years experience of running a small business. With a keen eye for new and topical stories, he follows and has links with a number of national and international professional firms and closely watches the work of government as it affects SMEs.

Adam also sources stories from professional accountants, lawyers and other business experts.



## PENSIONS

### AUTO-ENROLMENT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

We are all living longer. That is the good news. The bad news is that with great expectations of pensions yet poorer returns, we may well be very disappointed with life in old age.

The Government has for some time been concerned that people are not saving enough for their retirement. Since October 2012, larger businesses have been required to automatically enroll eligible employees into a pension scheme and pay a minimum level of pension contributions for each employee. By February 2018, every employer, no matter how small, will be subject to the same obligations.

Generally speaking, employers with between 50 and 249 employees had staging dates (to join auto-enrolment) between April 2014 and April 2015. Employers with fewer than 50 employees will be subject to the requirements between April 2015 and April 2017. New businesses have staging dates at the end of the timetable.

The Pensions Regulator will notify every business of its staging dates.

Following their staging date, they must register with the Regulator.

Those covered by the auto-enrolment legislation include permanent, fixed-term and temporary employees, as well as agency workers. Self-employed individuals will not be subject to the requirements. Auto-enrolment doesn't apply to employees already enrolled into a qualifying scheme. Only those whom trade as a sole trader and who do not employ anybody else are unaffected by the changes.

#### Eligible jobholders

Employees between age 22 and state pension age, who earn over the income tax threshold (£10,000 in the 2015-16 tax year), are 'eligible jobholders' who must be automatically enrolled into a scheme. The employer is required to pay contributions into the pension scheme in respect of these employees.

Those earning below the income tax threshold but above the lower earnings limit, and those earning

above the lower earnings limit but who do not meet the age criteria, will be able to opt into the scheme should they wish.

Employers must make minimum contributions into the scheme in respect of each employee. These minimum contributions are being phased in gradually but by 2018 a total of 8% of an employee's qualifying earnings over a 12-month period must be paid in, at least 3% of which must come from the employer and 1% from tax relief.

The Pensions Regulator will work with businesses to ensure compliance. Ignorance of the regime is no defence and can result in a statutory notice directing businesses to comply. There is a fixed penalty of £400 for non-compliance with the statutory notice and there are other financial penalties, including escalating penalty notices of £50 to £10,000 a day, depending on employee numbers. Visit

[www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk](http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk)

## IS IT EASIER TO RAISE PRICES OR THE TITANIC?

While we live and work in a low inflation economy, its real impact will depend on what you buy. Fuel and food may be falling in price, but business rates and rent are certainly keeping pace with, or even exceeding, inflation.

Add to that the Chancellor's summer budget announcement of a move to the National Living Wage, so that by 2020 those over 25 will be paid £9 per hour, and businesses are going to face some very stark choices – either raise prices or cut costs and jobs.

Cutting jobs is hard, but even harder is the prospect of raising prices. After all, the web has increased transparency for consumers. But can prices be revised upwards? The answer, predictably, is maybe.

It's worth noting that the right price doesn't always have to be the lowest price. The reality is more akin to the right amount of value that the consumer feels happy to pay for – and that can be higher than competitors if the offering is right.

people. To some it could mean great customer service or a no-quibble returns policy; to others it may mean convenient shopping such as good hours with easy and free parking, or an online or telephone chat system.

Moving on, step two, according to Mr Shpanya, is the use of inexpensive or even free shipping as a way to increase prices. The basic idea is to engender some form of loyalty and value through the free shipping option. Here higher prices can be offset by the perception of enhanced value.

The third element of Mr Shpanya's three-point plan is the use of product bundles as a sales tool – upselling in other words. As he puts it: "You know what's great? Getting more stuff at a better price."

The essence of what he is saying means offering similar or complementary products together, giving the customer a better deal than before.

Bundling works because consumers know the cost of what they're buying, but not the real cost of the products to the retailer. An extension of this

**“WHEN YOU INCREASE THE PRICES OF PRODUCTS, YOU NEED TO MAKE UP FOR IT IN SOME WAY”**

### Three point-plan

Arie Shpanya, CEO of WisePricer, an online dynamic pricing site, reckons that retailers should avoid at all costs margins that are razor thin. He suggests a three-point plan of attack when pricing or when considering raising prices.

First, he says retailers should add value: "When you increase the prices of products, you need to make up for it in some way."

Of course, value can mean different things to different

is to offer consumers (say) a £10 voucher back following a £50 spend. Ostensibly it's a 20% discount for spending more. The reality is much lower because of the wholesale cost of the products.

It goes without saying that there is no "one size fits all" method to raising prices. What suits you and what suits a competitor will depend on your product mix, location, passing trade, competitors and naturally, the influence of the web.

Either way, tread carefully.



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## BULLYING AT WORK DOESN'T REALLY HAPPEN DOES IT?

Lee Ashwood, employment law solicitor at law firm Eversheds LLP writes, according to a 2015 report by ACAS, workplace bullying is on the rise, with around 20,000 calls relating to bullying each year being made to the organisation.

Employers should be aware of what 'bullying' is and the most helpful, concise and easiest to understand definition comes from ACAS, which says that bullying is "offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient".

Bullied employees who feel unsupported by their employer can resign and bring an Employment Tribunal claim for constructive dismissal. If the employee succeeds, their employer may be ordered to pay the employee compensation up to the value of the employee's annual gross salary (to a maximum of £78,335).

The employee may also bring an Employment Tribunal claim

for discrimination, irrespective of whether or not they have resigned, if they believe that the reason they were subjected to bullying was because of their gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, race or religion. If the Employment Tribunal finds that the bullying was discriminatory, it can order the employer to pay the employee compensation for the injury to their feelings of up to £33,000.

### What to do?

Addressing bullying in the workplace is no easy task. Having a well-publicised grievance procedure or dignity at work policy in place certainly helps as it means that employees will know what to do if they think they are being bullied which, in most instances, is to bring it to the attention of their managers.

Good practice, and certainly what ACAS advocates, is that the allegations of bullying are investigated thoroughly and impartially to establish what has

gone on. The investigation should include interviewing the employee who has raised the allegations, the alleged perpetrator and any possible witnesses to the alleged events. Having done so, the employer should report back to the employee on their findings, what they believed happened. Most importantly, the employer should establish with the employee what can be done in the future to ensure that the employee is supported and comfortable at work. Of course, if someone is found to have bullied a colleague, you should consider disciplinary action and retraining. Visit [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)



## BUSINESS NEWS DIGEST

### Ofcom launches Wi-Fi checker to improve broadband

Firms and individuals can now check whether their Wi-Fi is giving them the best service by using a simple new app launched by Ofcom. Called The Ofcom Wi-Fi Checker, it runs on smartphones and tablets and offers practical steps to get the best from a connection.

The app tests the Wi-Fi set-up and, if it finds a problem, provides some troubleshooting tips to help improve broadband. It is free to download from Apple's App Store and Google Play.

In a similar move, Ofcom has recently enhanced its Mobile Coverage Checker (<http://bit.ly/1JnQ4Ke>), to let users zoom to any location on the UK map to receive coverage data for each mobile network, down to 100 square metres.

### Be prepared to pay new National Living Wage

Britain's firms are urged to take four steps to be better prepared for the introduction of the National Living Wage (NLW).

Businesses are being advised to prepare early for the changes taking place on 1st April 2016, when the new wage will become law. The advised steps are knowing the correct rate of pay – £7.20 per hour for staff aged 25 and over; finding out which staff are eligible for the new rate; updating the company payroll in time for 1st April 2016; and communicating the changes to staff as soon as possible.

Employers can find out more by visiting [www.livingwage.gov.uk](http://www.livingwage.gov.uk).

### Pensions Regulator releases new guide to automatic enrolment

The Pensions Regulator has launched a new guide to automatic enrolment to help businesses. It is a clear and straightforward booklet that helps firms to work out whether or not they need to provide a pension, and which steps they need to follow. All employers should receive this alongside the reminder letter they receive 12 months before their staging date. It can also be downloaded from <http://bit.ly/1NtbDIO>.

*Please take proper advice before acting on anything written here.*

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# LELY INTRODUCES MST PROGRAMME

## *For dealers and service centres*

Lely UK, which says it is dedicated to continuously developing and improving the training it provides for its extensive network of machinery dealers and service centres across the country, has announced a Master Service Technician programme, that will be introduced this year.

The programme, which is backed by leading manufacturers and award bodies throughout the land-based turfcare and agricultural industries, provides a strategic career pathway for those who work for dealers and service centres that are part of Lely's Service Level Agreement (SLA), launched in 2015.

It is, says David Cole, Lely's Turf Division Senior Manager, a move that will ultimately drive customer support standards forward. "Just as the SLA benefits the end user by providing a strong standard of service commitment, we wanted to develop a career continuation pathway to benefit the technicians within the dealer network, who will deliver on those commitments," he says.

"We have been working with third party training providers designing modules for our Master Service Technician programme to provide a seamless career path that follows on from level three of the LTA training pathway. Now we can offer a robust career path with Lely acting as a base for all training and assessment."

### LTA award

This announcement coincides with the news that the company has been awarded LTA training to level two and three for five years, which, says Neil Adams, Lely's Head of Turfcare Training, is a "fine achievement" by the Lely training team. "Lely previously represented the scheme as a participating dealer," he says.

"Now, because of the recognition of our training and standards by the Institution of Agricultural Engineers, which supports the accredited LTA scheme, we have been awarded assessment centre status."

Neil continues by explaining what this means to the dealers and service centres that have committed to the SLA programme: "Ensuring that staff are appropriately registered demonstrates to the customer the honesty and integrity of our service network technicians and promotes professionalism of the individual and the dealer itself. It's a win/win situation."



### Positive impact

Mike Taylor Machinery (MTM) adopted the Lely SLA and has a promising technician in Lucy Naylor, who joined the company in September 2014 and is studying Land Based Service Engineering at South Worcestershire College.

MTM's Will Stops says: "Lucy is an outstanding student and employee and we have high hopes for her. She is just about to complete her first year at college and the plan is for her to move through the LTA pathway and onto the Master Service Technician programme at Lely when she finishes. We're delighted to be supporting, through Lucy, the next generation of technicians and to be able to now, thanks to Lely, integrate Lucy's future training so it incorporates Toro, which will have a positive impact on our business."

# RECORD NUMBER OF TECHNICIANS GRADUATE

## *From John Deere's Ag Tech, Parts Tech and Turf Tech programmes*

A record total of 35 young service technicians have graduated from the latest John Deere Ag Tech, Parts Tech and Turf Tech advanced apprenticeship programmes, newly run by national training provider ProVQ.

Charlie Phipps from dealer Farol at Milton Common in Oxfordshire was named Ag and Turf Apprentice of the Year for 2015, while Parts Apprentice of the Year is Grant Stearman of Ben Burgess Beeston in Norfolk. Charlie Phipps also won a Service Technician Apprentice of the Year Award earlier in the year from John Deere's previous training provider Babcock, in a national competition designed to identify the

best and brightest apprentices across the industry.

The group of third-year students received their certificates at the John Deere Forum visitor centre in Mannheim, Germany during the annual graduation visit to the company's tractor and cab factories and European Parts Distribution Centre (EPDC) in December. The presentations were made by Deere & Company's Region 2 Marketing Director Helmut Korthoeber and John Deere Limited Training Centre Manager Richard Halsall.

### Outstanding

Charlie Phipps received a crystal plaque, a certificate and vouchers for workshop tools worth £250.

His ProVQ Regional Assessor Roger Hawlor and Technical Trainer Richard Jenkins said: "Charlie has been a first-class student since the beginning of his apprenticeship. His application, effort and motivation throughout have been outstanding, and he has been an excellent ambassador for both the apprenticeship programme and the Farol dealership."

Grant Stearman received a certificate and shopping vouchers worth £250. "Grant has worked very hard throughout his apprenticeship and thoroughly deserves this recognition for his efforts," said his ProVQ Assessor/Trainer Amanda White. Ben Burgess & Co Service Director Jimmy Lockhart added: "Grant is an important member of our parts team at Beeston and we look

forward to helping him continue to develop in his role."

The John Deere three-year apprenticeships currently lead to the BAGMA/City & Guilds of London Institute 4025 agricultural/groundcare service engineers' NVQ Level 2 and 3 certificates and Level 3 IMI Diploma in vehicle parts competence. All future Ag and Turf Tech apprentices will qualify with the IMI Level 2 and 3 Diploma in Landbased Engineering.

Apprentices can also choose to complete their education with a fourth year to gain the John Deere Diploma and register at LTA2 level in the industry's Landbased Technician Accreditation scheme, while starting their adult training within the John Deere University.



John Deere Ag and Turf Apprentice of the Year 2015 Charlie Phipps with John Deere Training Centre Manager Richard Halsall



John Deere Parts Apprentice of the Year 2015 Grant Stearman with John Deere Training Centre Manager Richard Halsall





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# ACCOLADE FOR OUTSTANDING APPRENTICE *At Suzuki ATV dealership*

A 19-year-old ATV apprentice with a Scottish Suzuki dealership has won a prestigious national award for his “outstanding” performance during training.

Dillan Macaskill from Dingwall, in North Scotland, who has worked at the Frank Nicol Suzuki Dealership for two years, beat rivals from across Britain to the title of Outstanding 2nd Year Apprentice of the Year after completing Suzuki’s rigorous ATV training programme with flying colours.

Suzuki’s three-year Motorcycle Apprenticeship Programme, which has included the ATV network since 2006, is a nationally recognised qualification for technicians coming into the industry.

Dillan is one of around 100 apprentices currently training with Suzuki across all its products and specialisms. Each year, outstanding apprentices are recognised for the dedication and exceptional standards they display while training.

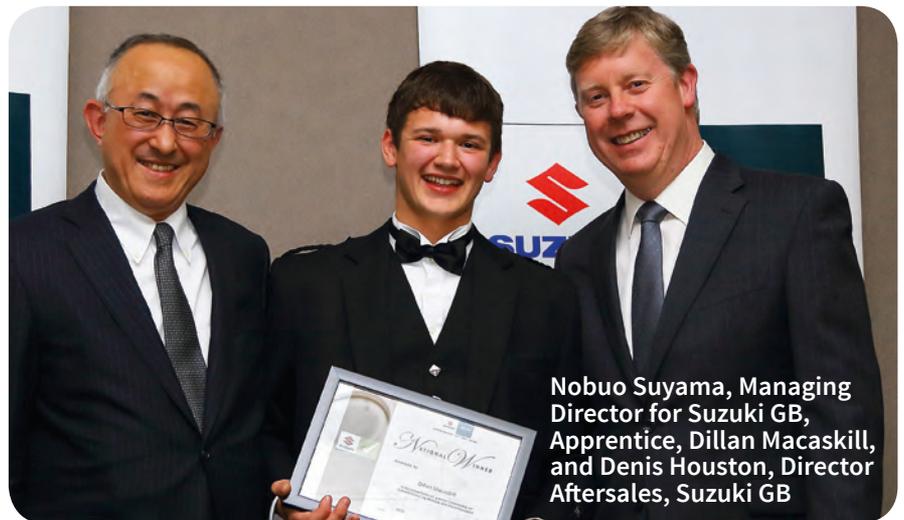
Dillan said, “It was great to know

that all my hard work has paid off! My apprenticeship combines work at the dealership with travelling to the Suzuki college in Doncaster for training, followed by tests based on what I have learned while training and the work I have undertaken at the dealership.

“I literally started from the ground up – sweeping floors and getting to know about all the machines and what technicians were dealing with. I moved onto shadowing

someone with experience and then began working on a variety of machines while being supervised, before specialising in ATVs.

“To be now named as ‘outstanding’ is great. The training I have received during my apprenticeship has been great along with getting loads of experience at the dealership, and this award gives me even more of a good starting point for a career in the industry.”



**Nobuo Suyama, Managing Director for Suzuki GB, Apprentice, Dillan Macaskill, and Denis Houston, Director Aftersales, Suzuki GB**

## ARIENS KNOWLEDGEBASE LAUNCHED

### *New online support*

Ariens Company has launched KnowledgeBase, an online customer and dealer support system.

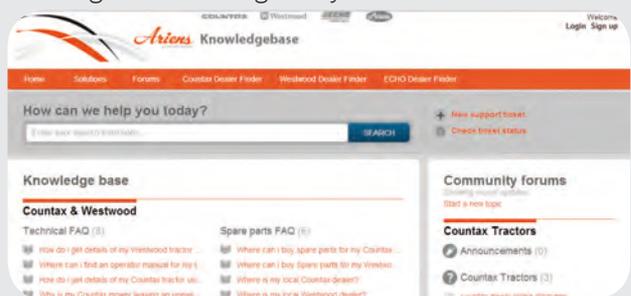
Using specially designed software the company is able to provide both dealers and end-users with 24-hour access to support materials.

The customer-facing part of the system, accessed through support.ariens-uk.com provides customers of Countax, Westwood, ECHO and Ariens with a whole range of product and service Frequently Asked Questions as well as basic maintenance and servicing information. Customers can use the system to download operator manuals, raise ‘support tickets’ for specific issues or find their nearest authorised servicing dealer.

For the dealer, a secure ‘dealer area’ at dealerknowledge.ariens-uk.com provides a similar

function for authorised dealers with the security of a login and password. Dealers can link to the Ariens parts and marketing materials systems while the FAQs and technical information are specific to servicing dealers, supporting those who already have a deep working knowledge of the company’s machinery.

There is also a facility for dealers to book service training courses using the system.





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## COMMERCIAL

# ECHO REDUCES FATIGUE

## *Backpack PB-580 for professionals*

ECHO has introduced a new backpack power blower available for professionals. It says its new PB-580 is the company's most comfortable to date with a host of new features that enhance operator comfort and help to reduce fatigue.

A new, ventilated backpack pad is designed to keep the operator cool, even when the Stage 2 compliant 58.2cc engine is running at maximum revs. Four anti-vibration springs and padded shoulder straps provide increased support for the operator's back to make this blower more comfortable to use for longer periods, in turn increasing productivity and seeing faster clearance of leaves and debris.

The blower's handle has a newly designed palm rest and hand stop, to reduce the chances of the operator's hand slipping down the handle and losing control. The blower also has a longer trigger for increased throttle precision.

The unit has an air filter cover that can be removed without the need for tools, allowing the pleated automotive-style air filter to be easily replaced if



needed. There is also easier access for tightening of the throttle cable.

The PB-580 has a leaf guard to eliminate clogging of the fan and filter. It also benefits from a metal ring at the end of the straight or curved pipe which helps to prevent damage from general wear and tear.

ECHO's professional backpack blowers come with a two-year professional warranty.

## COMMERCIAL

# STIHL'S HIGHEST BLOWING FORCE

## *BGA 100 backpack blower*

Stihl has launched the BGA 100 backpack blower which boasts the highest blowing force of all of the company's hand-held blowers, blowing 14N at its most powerful; approximately 70% higher than the popular BGA 85 model.

The innovative new machine is extremely light at 2.5kg (excluding battery) and incredibly quiet thanks to a sound power level of 90dB (A), a 10dB (A) sound power reduction from the BGA 85.

Other key features of the blower include a powerful EC motor for optimum blowing performance, three distinct power stages plus a 'power boost' feature and 36V lithium-Ion PRO battery technology.

The BGA 100 can be partnered with the AR 3000 backpack battery to ensure running time of up to 160 minutes from a single charge and 25% more capacity than its predecessor, the AR 900 backpack battery.

With comfortable, ergonomic back support and an AP adapter with plug socket for easy charging, Stihl says the AR 3000 and BGA 100 are an ideal combination for professional users in need of premium tools that they can rely on.



## DOMESTIC & COMMERCIAL

# TOP OF THE CLASSEN

## *New hydrostatic overseeder*



Classen has introduced a new hydrostatic overseeder to the Classen range of turf care equipment.

Self-propelled, with hydrostatic drive for smooth, consistent power flow, the Classen HTS-20H features a unique 18kg floating seed box which follows the contours of bumpy, undulating terrain. It can also lock in place in any of 10 depth settings for seeding on hills and slopes – aiding germination.

The company says more blades equal better

germination and this new overseeder offers more seed rows placed closer together to produce thicker turf, faster. There are 13 double-bladed shafts, making 26 blades in all, spaced 3.8cm apart to give carpet-like seed coverage, even on the bumpiest terrain.

There is a single lever for forward and reverse gear, with the Honda GX270 engine providing speeds up to 3mph going forward and 1.5mph in reverse.

A speed dial and onboard instruction chart allows users to set the exact seed size to achieve precision seeding without seed waste.

Fitted with turf tread flotation tyres to produce less pressure per square inch, the company boasts that the HTS-20H gives balance and stability on slopes and in straight lines, with reduced soil compaction and tyre ruts.

Another feature is that the 26 heat-treated blades have cutting edges on both ends, which when rotated through 180° doubles the blade life. The handle can also fold down for easy transportation and storage.

The new Classen overseeder comes with a two-year warranty.

## ALL TERRAIN VEHICLE

# SPORTSMAN 450 HO IS POLARIS' NEW STAR

## *Entry level, 400cc vehicle*

Featuring the power and performance Polaris' ProStar engine delivering 31hp, the new Sportsman 450 HO is the company's new full-size capability, entry-level priced, 400cc ATV.

The unit features Polaris' automatic 4x4 system with On-Demand, True All-Wheel Drive which engages all four wheels when traction is required and reverts back to 2WD it isn't.

For a smoother ride there is the MacPherson Strut front suspension with 20.8cm of travel and Independent Rear Suspension (IRS) with softer suspension springs for a better ride.

Manoeuvring over obstacles is made easier with 26.6cm of ground clearance and the Sportsman 450 HO benefits from a new style seat with more foam and a durable base for a comfortable ride.

In terms of storage, the new vehicle has an 81.6kg capacity rear steel rack and 40.8kg front rack that is Lock & Ride compatible along with 557.7kg of towing



capacity. The front storage capacity allows users to stow away gear and still have access to it, even with items tied to the deck.

To run more electrical accessories, the vehicle has a 660-watt output and comes with integrated plough and winch mounts.

For working in high dust areas a high-flow, high-capacity air filter provides better dust filtration, while electronic fuel injection provides starting and smooth running in varied temperatures and altitude.

Braking is made easy with a single-lever hydraulic disc system for all-wheel braking and a foot brake for rear-wheel braking.

Also a key feature is the Polaris PVT automatic transmission which allows easy shifts between high, low, neutral, reverse and park.

The new Sportsman 450 HO comes in sage green.

# NEW 200 SERIES CARRIERS AVAILABLE FROM AVANT

*Now offer more power and options*

The new 200 Series compact tool carriers are now available from Avant Tecno (UK).

The company says the outgoing models have proved popular with a wide variety of end users requiring a super compact machine capable of tackling many jobs using a comprehensive choice of attachments.

The new machines are also very compact but according to Avant now offer more power, more options and greater user friendliness. The company says this latter point was a particular consideration during the design process because this class of machine is often used in the DIY and non-professional markets.

The latest 200 Series consists of four models, powered by either a 20hp or 25hp Kohler petrol engine, with an auxiliary hydraulics oil flow of up to 50 l/min in the case of the high-powered 225 model.

The machines are 20mm wider and 60mm longer

than the previous units for improved stability and an increase in leg room. In addition, the fuel tank, battery and storage space have all been increased in size.

Another major change is the attachment coupling system which is now the same as that fitted to all other Avant models, where the hydraulic hoses of the attachments are equipped with a simple, multi-connector for easy and positive connection to the machine.

The new models are also fitted as standard with a multi-function display unit and, on the options list, are road lights, cab, heated suspension seat, six-function joystick and LED work lights.

Following the introduction of the 220 and 225 models, Avant will add the 225 Park, a cab-equipped unit suitable for property maintenance tasks and the 225 LPG for indoor applications where a low un-laden weight machine is required.



## AGRICULTURAL

# INCREASED SOWING CAPACITY

## *With new Kuhn TT trailed seed drill*

Kuhn Farm Machinery has launched a trailed seed drill tank to give arable growers the option of increased hopper capacity.

The new TT trailed seed drill is available in two sizes: the TT 3500 with a 3,500-litre capacity, and the TT 6500 with a 6,500-litre capacity. Both versions feature a stainless steel volumetric metering unit and are equipped with a standard Category-3 rear attachment for connecting to a Kuhn seeding bar: the TT can be used with a folding BSDR coulter bar or with a KUHN precision seeding drill bar – both versions are available in 6m to 9m working widths.

The new TT is ISOBUS compatible, with or without Kuhn's CCI 200 terminal, and uses an accurate radar system to detect forward speed. The TT 3500 uses a single electrically driven metering unit while the TT 6500 is equipped with twin metering units: on both machines the metering units allow application rates to be accurately adjusted on the move.



The trailed hopper is fitted with large dimension floatation wheels as standard (600/55 – 26.5 wheels on the TT 3500, 710/50 – 30.5 wheels on the TT 6500) and is also available in a twin-wheel format. Hydraulic brakes are standard equipment.

The TT's seed hopper has a large loading opening and low-loading height for quick and easy filling, and is fitted with a filtering sieve to protect the metering unit(s) from foreign objects.

An access ladder and platform are fitted for operator convenience and safety, and a quick emptying hatch makes changing seed part-way through a load a quick and easy operation.

An optional Vario seed blower makes the TT compatible with all tractors – even those with insufficient hydraulic capacity to drive the standard, pneumatically blown hopper.

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# EVENTS 2016

## MARCH 2016

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

## APRIL 2016

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

## MAY 2016

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

## JUNE 2016

- 1-2 Staffordshire County Show  
[www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show/](http://www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show/)
- 1-2 Suffolk County Show  
[www.suffolkshow.co.uk/](http://www.suffolkshow.co.uk/)
- 1-4 Royal Bath & West Show  
[www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/](http://www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/)

- 3-5 Gardening Scotland, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh  
[www.gardeningscotland.com](http://www.gardeningscotland.com)

- 5 Rutland Show  
[www.rutlandcountyshow.com/](http://www.rutlandcountyshow.com/)

- 9-11 Royal Cornwall Show  
[www.royalcornwallshow.org](http://www.royalcornwallshow.org)

- 9-11 South of England Show  
[www.seas.org.uk/shows.asp?ID=2](http://www.seas.org.uk/shows.asp?ID=2)

- 15-16 Cereals 2016, Boothby Graffoe, Nr Lincoln, Lincolnshire  
[www.cerealseven.co.uk](http://www.cerealseven.co.uk)

- 16-19 BBC Gardeners' World Live - Birmingham NEC  
[www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com](http://www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com)

- 17-19 Three Counties Show, Malvern  
[www.threecounties.co.uk/threecounties](http://www.threecounties.co.uk/threecounties)

- 19 Cranleigh Show  
[www.cranleighshow.co.uk/](http://www.cranleighshow.co.uk/)

- 21-22 Cheshire County Show  
[www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk](http://www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk)

- 22-23 Lincolnshire Show  
[www.lincolnshireshowground.co.uk/whats-on/event/the-lincolnshire-show](http://www.lincolnshireshowground.co.uk/whats-on/event/the-lincolnshire-show)

- 23-26 Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh  
[www.royalhighlandshow.org](http://www.royalhighlandshow.org)

- 26 Derbyshire County Show  
[www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk](http://www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk)

- 26 Royal Isle of Wight County Show  
[www.riwas.org.uk/](http://www.riwas.org.uk/)

- 29-30 Royal Norfolk Show  
[www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk](http://www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk)

## JULY 2016

- 2-3 Smallholders' Show, South of England Showground, Ardingly  
[www.smallholdersshows.co.uk](http://www.smallholdersshows.co.uk)

- 5-10 Hampton Court Flower Show  
[www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events)

- 6-7 Livestock Event, Birmingham NEC  
[www.livestockevent.co.uk](http://www.livestockevent.co.uk)

- 8-10 Kent County Show  
[www.kentshowground.co.uk](http://www.kentshowground.co.uk)

- 9 Newport Show  
[www.newportshow.org/](http://www.newportshow.org/)

- 12-14 Great Yorkshire Show  
[www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk](http://www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk)

- 16 Camborne Show  
[www.camborne-show.org.uk](http://www.camborne-show.org.uk)

- 18-21 Royal Welsh Show  
[www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show/](http://www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show/)

- 20-24 RHS Flower Show - Tatton Park  
[www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events)

- 22-24 UK Game Fair, NAEC Stoneleigh Park  
[www.ukgamefair.com/](http://www.ukgamefair.com/)

- 23 Mid Devon Show  
[www.middevonshow.co.uk](http://www.middevonshow.co.uk)

- 26-28 New Forest & Hampshire County Show  
[www.newforestshow.co.uk](http://www.newforestshow.co.uk)

- 29-30 Border Union Show  
[www.buas.org/show/](http://www.buas.org/show/)

## AUGUST 2016

- 3 North Devon Show  
[www.northdevonshow.com](http://www.northdevonshow.com)

- 3-4 Bakewell Show  
[www.bakewellshow.org](http://www.bakewellshow.org)

- 4 Honiton Agricultural Show  
[www.honitonshow.co.uk](http://www.honitonshow.co.uk)

- 4-7 Countryfile Live, Blenheim Palace  
[www.countryfilelive.com](http://www.countryfilelive.com)

- 6 Garstang Show  
[www.garstangshow.org](http://www.garstangshow.org)

- 6 Emley Show  
[www.emleyshow.com](http://www.emleyshow.com)

- 6 Dumfries Agricultural Show  
[www.dumfriesshow.co.uk](http://www.dumfriesshow.co.uk)

- 9-10 Anglesey County Show  
[www.angleseyshow.org.uk/anglesey-show.html](http://www.angleseyshow.org.uk/anglesey-show.html)

- 10 Vale of Glamorgan Ag Show  
[www.valeofglamorganshow.co.uk](http://www.valeofglamorganshow.co.uk)

- 12-13 Shrewsbury Flower Show  
[www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk](http://www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk)

- 14 Ripley Show  
[www.ripleyshow.co.uk](http://www.ripleyshow.co.uk)

- 16-18 Pembrokeshire County Show  
[www.pembsshow.org](http://www.pembsshow.org)

- 17 Gillingham & Shaftesbury Show  
[www.gillshaftshow.co.uk](http://www.gillshaftshow.co.uk)

- 21 Mid-Somerset Ag Show  
[www.midsomersetshow.org.uk](http://www.midsomersetshow.org.uk)

- 25 Monmouthshire Show  
[www.monmouthshow.co.uk](http://www.monmouthshow.co.uk)



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# STIHL®

# GRIN AND BEAR IT?

*Handling complaints can be an art-form, particularly for proud business owners*

**T**rip Advisor – a force for good or a source of unreliable feedback? I bet most of you use it to suss out hotels, holidays or unfamiliar eating places. You also probably try to read between the lines. One minute a gushing review (from the owner’s brother-in-law?), the next a damning account of damp or unfinished premises, bad service, or inedible food.

Small businesses know that word of mouth can be the most powerful advertising medium. It’s also true that news of bad service travels much faster and more potently than the times when everything goes right (expected, the norm and so no story).

Customers, bless ‘em, can be unpredictable, unreasonable, demanding, fickle, uncomprehending, friendly, nasty, loyal. . . oh the list goes on and on. And yes, customers are also you and me.

When things don’t go to plan, or when faced with an irate or unreasonable customer, how do you react? Do you take it on the chin, even though the complaint may be unwarranted -- or do you ‘fight back’?

Returning to Trip Advisor, a lady recently posted a damning review about a bistro in York where she and some friends had gone for afternoon tea. “I was on a tight budget, so I ordered a glass of hot water with a slice of lemon,” she wrote, “and was astounded to be charged £2.00.”

You are probably starting to get the picture. “Do you know how much a lemon costs?” asked the waiter. Probably not the most diplomatic response, which hardly defused the situation and inspired the customer to post her review headed “Awful Place, Overpriced and Rude Staff”.

The owner decided to respond with a detailed breakdown of his overheads and staff costs which he calculated at £40 per hour, or 67 pence per minute. “To service your order alone took five or six minutes, and it should be obvious that the provision of facilities cost the money, rather more than the ingredients.”

He added: “My perceived rudeness was triggered by your presumption that you could use our facilities and be waited upon free.”

Their online spat went viral and prompted interesting comments that ranged from “The customer was a plonker,” to “Whatever the circumstances, she was a customer and they are the lifeblood of your business”.

Truth surely in both statements, but despite

the hurt felt by the bistro owner, handling such confrontations should always be tactful and mindful of the truism that the Customer is King.

Explaining price differentials between yourself and other non-service outlets, dissecting the breakdown of service charges or the cost of rare spare parts, often requires careful and calm responses, but the customer should never, ever feel demeaned or put down. And that’s quite a skill!

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# JIM GREEN



## MOW-VELLOUS PUBLICITY

### LAWNMOWER MUSEUM FEATURES ON FIFTEEN-TO-ONE

#### Question in celebrity special

Brian Radam is an old-hand at getting innovative publicity for his British Lawnmower Museum in Southport – and recently his establishment gained another national shout-out via a surprising source.

A special celebrity edition of the Channel 4 quiz show *Fifteen-To-One* aired recently, which saw the host Adam Hills ask comedian Jenny Eclair: “A museum in Southport on Merseyside is dedicated to which item of garden machinery. Patented in 1830 by engineer Edwin Beard Budding?”

Jenny Eclair replied with the answer “lawnmowers”.

Jenny Eclair, along with other comedians featured on the programme, raised thousands for charity.

Brian is no stranger to television appearances. In the past he and his museum have featured on *Epic Win*, have been visited by Robbie Coltrane and Danny Wallace as part of TV travelogues and have been joked about by celebrity donator to the collection Lee Mack on *Would I Lie To You?*

Most recently, Brian has been

filmed with Monty Don for the BBC2 TV programme *Secret History of the British Garden*, the *Southport Visitor* reports.



Brian also once found publicity for the British Lawnmower Museum via a special tin of biscuits!

## MOWING ROUND THE MOUNTAIN

### LAWNMOWER RACE AROUND MOUNT RUAPEHU, NZ

#### Charity run achieved in 26 hours

Erin Hampson-Tindale and Terry Davis recently undertook a gruelling 26-hour journey around Mt Ruapehu in New Zealand to raise money for two-year-old leukemia sufferer, Reef Smith, reports *Stuff.co.nz*

But this was no ordinary charity run – Erin carried a 20kg lawnmower in an A-Frame backpack around the mountain’s base while Terry pushed and pulled one.

The weight of the mowers, supplied by local dealer Four Seasons of Cambridge, was similar to that of Reef who Erin heard about through a local school newsletter.

Setting off in the early hours of a Tuesday morning the men completed the 70km trip in 26 hours.

“It was awesome but hellish,” Erin told *Stuff.co.nz*.

“We hadn’t slept in a long time and at one point I considered lying down in the scrub, but

I knew I couldn’t because I would get cold and it would be hard to get going again,” he said.

In addition to the lawnmowers, the two men were also carrying clothes and water in their packs, bringing their total weight to well over 30kg.



Erin Hampson-Tindale

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