

30
YEARS
1988-2018

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

JAN / FEB 18

Agritechnica report

Impact on UK dealers

Dealer Q&A

Maintaining profit
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1988 - 1991 in review

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the January/February 2018 edition of *Service Dealer*.

You may notice a slight freshen-up around here with this first edition of the new year. Nothing too radical I hope you'd agree, just a few tweaks and improvements. It's the 30th Anniversary of the magazine this year and so the team felt when better to have a little facelift?

It was 1988 when Chris Biddle walked into Salisbury Printing with a pile of papers and the idea of making an independent magazine for the UK dealer trade. Looking through old editions to compile a new regular feature for this year called *Flashback*, it's easy to quickly dismiss haircuts, fashion, technology even, as seeming funny or antiquated. However, the heart of the magazine has remained the same. Providing a forum for the industry to come together and share news, views, ideas and information. As vitally important today as it was then, the magazine also strives to offer a platform for dealers' voices to be heard. Nowadays, of course, we have the *Weekly Update* where all readers can leave their feedback for our community to digest on any story instantly. We're very conscious, though, of making sure this magazine reflects readers' opinions too – hence the feedback survey we undertook last year. You can read the results of that on page 19.

One upshot from those findings is we are more determined than ever to make sure as many dealers as possible are featured in these pages in one way or another. One means of achieving this is that we're delighted to welcome back this month the return of a very popular feature from those earlier days of the magazine, *Diary Of A Season*. We hope you enjoy it and please keep us informed of anything you feel we need to know!



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DEALERS

DEALERS OF THE YEAR HONoured



Excellence recognised at the Service Dealer Awards

In a glittering ceremony at the Oxford Belfry Hotel on 16th November, the prestigious *Service Dealer Awards* were presented.

The Awards, organised by the team behind *Service Dealer* magazine, are now in their 14th year and recognise outstanding sales, service advice and support by dealers in the garden machinery, professional turfcare machinery, farm machinery, forestry equipment and ATV/Quad industry.

The awards were judged by an expert panel who were greatly aided in their unenviable task of separating the

very high standard of entries by both nominations from supplying manufacturers and from customer feedback.

Steve Gibbs, Editor of *Service Dealer* magazine, said, "The standard of all our winning dealerships has been extraordinary. An excellence which has been reflected in the quality of comments received from satisfied customers across the UK. These businesses are delivering a level of customer service which is only possible through a dedicated specialist."

The awards presented to dealerships and individuals on the night were:

GARDEN MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Husqvarna. Presenting Award: Ken Brewster, UK Sales & Marketing Director

Winner – Garlick Garden Machinery Ltd, Preston

Garlick Garden Machinery Ltd, a family-run garden machinery and service business based in Whitestake, Preston, won the Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year Award.

The judges said, "Garlick Garden Machinery was established in 2013 by Chris Garlick, then just 21 years old. The dealership is progressive and embraces new technologies like robotic mowers and cordless products. Garlick has good use of Social Media channels and the customer feedback was extremely strong."

High praise received from customers included, "Superb family-run business that is clearly held in high regard by the local community and surrounding areas. Extremely helpful and knowledgeable owner and equally helpful staff."

Finalists: Hertfordshire Garden Machinery Ltd, Bramfield; Green Stripe Garden Machinery Ltd, Market Rasen



Ken Brewster and Chris Garlick

FARM MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Kramp. Presenting Award: James Buchanan, Field Sales Manager

Winner – RVW Pugh Ltd, Powys

RVW Pugh, a family-run farm machinery and service business based in Churchstoke, Powys, won the Farm Machinery Dealer of the Year Award.

The judges said, "This family business established in 1978 has grown across its three branches. It is well documented that large machinery sales are still suffering and Pugh's has been very much bucking the tractor sales trends this year. Pugh's is a strong business that attracts sales in a not-so-typical ag area."

Customer feedback for Pugh's included, "Everyone will offer great deals, but RVW Pugh Ltd put themselves out once the purchase has been made. We can get hold of someone if we need advice out of hours and the service technicians carry out routine services to fit in with our business hours to minimise downtime, which is very important to us."

**Finalists: Burdens Group, Sutterton;
B&B Tractors, Warsop**



Emma Leah and Mary Evans receive their Award from James Buchanan

FORESTRY EQUIPMENT DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by STIHL GB. Presenting Award: Steve Parkin, National Sales Manager

Winner – Strathbogie Forest & Garden Limited, Aberdeenshire

Strathbogie Forest & Garden Limited, the forest and garden machinery and service business based in Huntly, Aberdeenshire, won the Forest Equipment Dealer of the Year Award.

The judges said, "Following on from a purpose-built new showroom and website in 2016, Strathbogie offers a variety of quality manufacturers. Pete and the team combine traditional knowledge whilst embracing change by leading the way in robotic mower sales. They stick to selling on quality and not on price, and to cap all that the customer feedback was superb."

Praise from customers included, "They always go above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done. Their customer service continues well after the purchase of a product."

**Finalists: Gustharts, Seaton Burn;
Forest and Arb, Winchester**



Pete and Emma McArthur with Steve Parkin

PROFESSIONAL TURFCARE DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by TurfPro. Presenting Award: Steve Gibbs, Editor of Service Dealer and TurfPro

Winner – George Browns Ltd, Leighton Buzzard

George Browns, the professional turfcare machinery and service business based in Leighton Buzzard, won the Professional Turfcare Machinery Dealer of the Year Award.

The judges said, "George Browns has demonstrated long-term consistency with regular improvements. They stock a great variety of products, message well through social media and have obtained some great customer feedback this year."

Customer comments in favour of George Browns included, "Good helpful advice. Took time to check my needs and sold me the right piece of equipment – even recommended a lower-priced charger after discussing my usage patterns."

Finalists: Balmers GM Ltd, Wakefield; Thomas Sherriff & Co Ltd, Jedburgh



Derrick Pratt, Andrew Brown, and Kevin McConnell with Steve Gibbs

ATV/QUAD DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Catalyst Computer Systems.

Presenting Award Mike Cameron, Systems Sales Manager

Winner – Stratton ATV Ltd, Perth

Stratton ATV Ltd, the ATV and utility vehicle and service business based in Perth won the ATV/Quad Dealer of the Year Award.

The judges said, "Stratton shows a good understanding of multiple markets and tailored solutions within the ATV sector. As a relatively new company it has a neat showroom, performs well and is respected locally."

Customer feedback for Statton included, "Stratton ATV offers exemplary customer service. They have a very firm understanding of the needs of the variety of customer groups which they serve locally and adjust their provisions accordingly."

Finalist: Congleton Garden Machinery Ltd, Congleton



Mike Cameron and Craig Wainwright-Fisher

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STAR OF THE DEALERSHIP

Sponsored by Garden Trader. Presenting Award: Ron Miller, Dealer Communications Manager

Winner – Tony Ralph, Ripon Farm Services Ltd, (Service Manager at the Ottringham branch)

Tony Ralph, Service Manager of the Ottringham branch of Ripon Farm Services won the Star Of The Dealership Award.

Phill Gregg, Group Operations Manager at Ripon Farm Services, said of Tony, "A year into his tenure at the age of 20, Tony became workshop supervisor, whilst still being a very productive technician. The following year he was made Service Manager, and since then has clearly demonstrated his abilities to run a team of motivated staff, whilst improving customer satisfaction scores."

The judges said, "As a Service Manager, Tony has a key role to play. His very quick career progression within such a well-respected dealership speaks volumes about his great customer service and sales skills. The customer feedback reinforces this and when he takes a well-earned holiday he is often asked after by customers. This is the type of service that separates our industry out from the cheaper alternatives."

Finalists: Brian Mitchell, Cyril Johnston & Co Ltd, (Head of Retail Sales); Justin Thomas, Arwel's Agri Services Ltd, (Parts Manager)



Ron Miller with Tony Ralph

APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by BAGMA. Presenting Award: Brian Sangster, President of BAGMA

Winner – Grant Roberts, Cornwall Farm Machinery Ltd

Grant Roberts, an apprentice at Cornwall Farm Machinery based in Ludgvan Leaze, Cornwall, won the Apprentice of the Year Award.

Dealer principal at Cornwall Farm Machinery, Ron Hattam, said of him, "Grant has won John Deere Apprentice of the Year and Cornwall Apprentice of the Year conquering through hard work and the death of his father."

The judges said, "When we think of apprentices, we think of the service side of the dealership, but Grant Roberts was the recipient of the John Deere Parts Tech Apprentice of the Year awarded by John Deere officials at their visitor centre in Mannheim, Germany, this summer. Grant is also a finalist in the 2017 Cornwall Apprenticeship Awards."

Finalists: Rhydian Davies, Arwel's Agri Services Ltd; Lewis Harrison, Russells Group



Brian Sangster with Andrew Herring, Account Manager at Kramp who accepted the award on behalf of the absent Grant Roberts

OVERALL DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Kramp. Presenting Award: Des Boyd, Managing Director

Winner –

Strathbogie Forest & Garden Limited

A new Award at the ceremony in November was the Overall Dealer of the Year Award, which was presented to Stathbogie Forest & Garden Ltd.

The judging panel marked all the entries and finalists on a range of qualities including, Quality of the Premises; Customer testimonials; Online presence; and Supplier endorsements

The marks given to each were totalled and on that basis, the winners were chosen.

In announcing the 'winner of the winners', Stathbogie scored very highly and achieved the highest total of the winning dealers.

The judges said, "Pete McArthur and his team are held in high regard by their principal suppliers and in offering an unrivalled back-up service they don't discount wildly to match online pricing. Their product knowledge is second-to-none and they support a top-notch website. In our view they are worthy winners."



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

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION AWARD

Sponsored and presented by Chris and Trish Biddle

Winner – David Kirschner

The *Service Dealer* Outstanding Contribution Award was presented to David Kirschner, who for a number of years has dedicated his time to ensuring that not only is our industry heard, and heeded, in the corridors of power, but has been instrumental in developing a training framework that has become the envy of many other much larger industries.

Chris Biddle said, "David has spent a lifetime in the landbased engineering industry, principally in service support. He was Service Manager at Renault Tractors, transferring to CLASS UK when the German company acquired the brand.

"In 2007, David was closely involved in the creation of the industry LTA Scheme (Landbased Technicians Accreditation) which was launched to a packed house at the Motor Heritage Museum.

"In recent years he has been a Consultant to our



Chris and Trish Biddle with David Kirschner

industry's Landbased Engineering Training and Education Committee (LE-TEC), and heavily involved in the implementation of the Government's new Trailblazer Apprenticeship Scheme.

"To say that this has been something of a tortuous journey understates the hours of writing, rewriting and more rewriting of standards to suit the whims of civil servants who would not know a combine from a cultivator.

"David himself is the embodiment of an engineering miracle, his heart controlled by sophisticated remote monitoring, but that has not held him back from being one of the most effective ambassadors this industry has ever seen.

"David, the whole industry thanks you for the work you have done, are doing and hopefully will do in the future."

DEALERS

MST EXPAND MF TERRITORY

Move into North Devon and Somerset

MST Group has announced an expansion of its Massey Ferguson territory which sees it move into new franchise areas covering North Devon and most of Somerset.

MST already has two large depots, one in Lee Mills near Plymouth and one in Tiverton, and is the biggest Massey Ferguson dealer in Devon, meaning the addition of North Devon and Somerset to its network makes it the manufacturer's largest dealer in the South West and one of the biggest in the UK.

In addition to its coverage in south and mid Devon, MST now has responsibility for the area from North Devon up through Bridgwater and into North Somerset, and from Yeovil in South Somerset all the way to the Mendips near Bristol Airport.

To support the two new franchises MST is finalising plans to open a new depot facility in south Somerset,

which should be ready early this year. Until then, Massey Ferguson customers in Somerset and North Devon will be supported by MST's mid Devon facility in Tiverton.

The move has inevitably impacted on neighbouring dealer Compass

Tractors who currently represent MF in North Devon and Cornwall. It is believed that Compass are now in a notice period for MF and will now focus on Fendt along with their other franchises in the future.



MST directors Nigel Godefroy and Simon Foster

APPOINTMENTS

NEW HEAD OF OPERATIONS FOR STIHL GB

To oversee its end-to-end supply chain

STIHL GB has appointed a new Head of Operations to oversee its end-to-end supply chain.

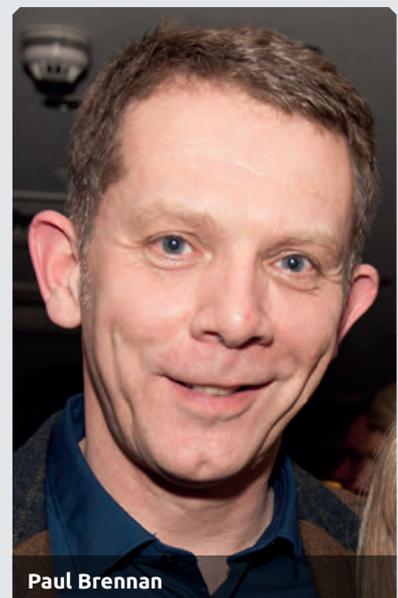
As a supply chain expert, Paul Brennan joins the company with a wealth of experience in leading supply chain and logistics projects in the UK and overseas in both fast-moving consumer goods and retail. During his career, Paul has held positions at organisations such as Quaker Oats, L'Oréal, Allied Bakeries, B&Q and Woolworths.

Paul has also worked with STIHL previously on a consultancy basis, project managing a £1.3m warehouse investment that

doubled throughput, as well as delivering a STIHL Group initiative into the GB business, implementing a new IT platform both internally and into the dealer network.

Paul has been Head of Operations on an interim basis for the past year.

Robin Lennie, Managing Director at STIHL GB, said: "With so many challenges ahead, such as the growth of battery technology, developing new routes to market and a new building project, this is a very exciting time to be joining the business and I wish Paul all the best as he begins his STIHL career."



Paul Brennan



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INDUSTRY

HI-LEVEL TO SUPPLY STENS PARTS IN THE UK

Taking over from Ariens UK

Hi-Level, based in Doncaster, has been announced the new source for replacement parts from Stens in the UK.

Previously Stens parts had been available through Ariens UK.

Kai Zissler, Commercial Director UK Operations at Hi-Level, said in a statement announcing the change, "The Stens brand has been built on the promise and passion of helping businesses run better. Businesses which sell and maintain equipment need partners who are parts experts and who understand how parts positively impact their bottom line. Stens helps businesses that sell, service or use power equipment find profit in their parts. Hi-Level is prepared to deliver on that same promise, same passion.

"Our new UK-specific catalogue is available and contains over 3,700 items. Our stock is in place and we're ready to demonstrate our first-rate service. Backed by a one-year

parts and labour warranty, we are certain that dealers will find competitive pricing and exceptional quality with the Stens product line."

Kai continued, "If you have previously purchased Stens product via Ariens Ltd, please note that your orders will now come from Stens via Hi-Level and not Ariens Ltd. Rest assured, the outstanding quality and exceptional service you have become accustomed to will not change."

To contact Hi-Level phone 01 302 892 248 or email orders@stens.co.uk



EXHIBITIONS

LAMMA TO MOVE TO NEC

Indoor show from next year

Briefing Media, organiser of the LAMMA show, has announced that the UK's largest agricultural machinery show will move to the NEC from January 2019.

Commenting on the move to the NEC, Elisabeth Mork-Eidem, Group Head of Events at Briefing Media, said: "We are excited by the opportunities that this new venue creates for the LAMMA show. LAMMA has a deserved reputation as the meeting place for the entire industry at a time of the year when key buying decisions are made. The move to the NEC will provide an entirely indoor environment, bringing it up to the professional standards that are expected of a market-leading event."

She added: "The NEC is the UK's leading exhibition venue and

provides unparalleled scale, facilities and transport links, and we are looking forward to working with the NEC to ensure that LAMMA grows and develops further to serve this important market. LAMMA will retain its focus on farm machinery, equipment and services and will build on the reputation earned over more than 30 years."

LAMMA will continue to be a

free-to-attend event and will remain on its proven and successful January timeline.

LAMMA '18 (17th-18th January) will be the last event to be held at the East of England Showground in Peterborough. You can find out more about this month's show on page 36 of this issue.

The first LAMMA show at the NEC will take place on Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th January 2019.



This month's event will be the final one to take place outdoors

GEORGE BROWNS WINS KUBOTA SKILLS CONTEST

Robert Adkins scoops top prize

Robert Adkins from George Browns has scooped the top award at the annual Kubota UK Agricultural Skills Contest, an event that tests the technical expertise of service engineers from the manufacturer's dealer network throughout the UK.

Now in its third year, the one-day event, held at Kubota's training academy at its head office in Oxfordshire, pushed the abilities of each contestant to their limits by the company's expert service engineers.

The manufacturer challenged contestants to complete a detailed written assessment followed by an intense 90-minute practical assessment, with competitors tasked with diagnosing and fixing five faults on an M5111 tractor.

The competitors were not only judged on their ability to remedy all five faults, but also being able to demonstrate the method behind their decision making process.

Robert Adkins, Service Engineer at George Browns, was crowned the overall winner with the judges citing his methodology and processes used to fixing all five faults set him apart from the other competitors.

Robert will now accompany Kubota UK to Japan to see its participation in the Kubota Global Skills Contest, where the very best Kubota engineers in the world compete.

Keith Miller, Service & Training Manager, said: "Robert was a deserving winner and this award is a testament to the hard work and dedication he puts into his role as a service engineer.

"This competition enables us to celebrate the hard work and meticulous nature engineers from our dealer network apply to their daily jobs, as well as raising their technical and customer skills to ensure Kubota machinery users receive the highest levels of aftercare."



L-R: Robert Adkins, Service Engineer at George Browns with Dave Roberts, Managing Director at Kubota UK

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

CONFERENCE + AWARDS

2017

CONFERENCE ADDRESSES THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

Now an established fixture, the third Service Dealer conference brought together speakers and delegates focused on embracing and adapting to a changing market. MARTIN RICKATSON reports

At the time of November's *Service Dealer* conference, Britain was more than halfway between the day of the EU referendum and the government's proposed Brexit start date of 29th March, 2019. It was this stark statistic, part of agricultural journalist and analyst Cedric Porter's presentation, that put the essence of this year's event sharply into context.

The Challenge of Change – Embracing and Adapting to a Changing Market was the conference's strapline, and there are few greater challenges facing the industry – whether from an agricultural, turfcare or homeowner point of view – than the uncertainty presented by the UK's looming departure from the European Union. Plenty of other changing and challenging areas of business also came under scrutiny, though, from the quickening pace of social media to the industry need to attract and retain staff.

The speakers

Opening speaker was **Caroline Drummond**, Chief Executive of LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), which helps farmers meet their environmental obligations. She pointed out that, with an increasingly urban population – currently 88% – the UK public is ever more disconnected from farming and gardening.

"As the world becomes more urban we face a challenge to maintain the connection with the rural environment," she suggested.

"But urban progress such as new housing developments should be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat. Most properties still have some form of garden, and you want their owners coming to you, not going to Argos, when seeking the tools to maintain it.

"The majority of people don't want a throwaway society – they want advice and service and the ability to have a machine repaired and maintained where necessary. That's

what sustainability is all about. Those you are selling to – and those who supply you – are concerned about their impact on the environment, and that should influence how you conduct your own business."

Turning to change in terms of the falling interest in land-based careers, and in food and farming knowledge, Mrs Drummond used the example of the Open Farm Sunday initiative – which seeks to educate the public about farming, and for which LEAF is an organiser – to show how the public can be encouraged to engage with agriculture and associated industries.

"After 12 years, Open Farm Sunday has grown hugely, with thousands visiting farms across the UK. I'm sure there's scope for dealers to get involved, to help provide an insight into how agriculture works and show the technology involved in modern farming. This helps to educate the public and catch the imagination of children – inspiring them early tends to capture their interest for life."



Caroline Drummond MBE



David Frieberg



Jim Wade



Cedric Porter



Edward Reisner



Simon Batty



Julio Romo

The topic of young minds connected neatly with the subject of the next speaker, **Jim Wade**, Principal of the JCB Academy, who described the construction and agricultural equipment maker's initiative in educating the engineers of tomorrow. The firm has sought to help develop the academic and practical skills of 14-19 year-olds by, in 2010, setting up its own academy school.

"This is about more than just training people who will ultimately work for JCB," he explained.

"Currently there are few people in schools promoting technical careers. That's why we set up our own school with a technical curriculum bias, aiming to encourage specialisation in engineering and business, and train engineering apprentices by giving them a purpose to their learning and an understanding of why basic skills subjects are necessary."

All students undertake maths, English and science GCSEs, with the most able taking physics, chemistry and biology. All also take Level 2 technical qualifications in principles in engineering, engineering design, engineering manufacture, business and finance, and a financial education certificate. Then there are additional options in GCSE languages, product design, ICT and further practical skills and study support.

"Beyond this, we work with educational establishments such as Harper Adams University and employers such as Rolls-Royce, Bosch, Bentley and Toyota to solve real-world engineering challenges and develop practical application of skills right up to degree level.

"Our aim is to sell a positive message about where engineering training can lead, and encourage the belief that 'this could be you' when it comes to rewarding careers."

Few subjects fit the theme of 'change' quite as well as the British weather, but next speaker **David Frieberg**, of weather intelligence firm Planalytics, suggested there are ways in which dealers can prepare and account for the purchasing pattern changes this can bring.

"Weather is a disruptor that directly impacts trading performance and adds error to future plans, shifting demand trends across sales, service and parts," he pointed out.

"De-weatherising this data can remove simple seasonal trends and identify exactly what can be done to limit weather's impact on demand, which repeats itself by about 20% from one year to the next. Remove this variation and it's possible to improve sales forecast accuracy by a similar percentage. More accurate weather forecasting can aid promotion timing and sales and service planning.

"Modelling processes can isolate the sales volatility directly attributable to weather changes, and the influence that factors such as pricing and promotions have on remaining sales. This has helped companies such as turf fertiliser firm Scotts and mower maker MTD to match production, supply and promotion to demand."

Turning to one of the biggest impending changes facing the industry, Britain's exit from the EU, agricultural journalist and consultant **Cedric Porter**, who edits *Brexit Food and Farming*, a specialist regular review of EU exit developments,



Simon Batty addresses the delegates



The day was rounded off with a panel debate featuring Edward Reisner, Julio Romo, Simon Batty, Cedric Porter, Caroline Drummond and Duncan Murray-Clarke

urged the industry to be positive in the face of uncertainty. He quoted Winston Churchill's saying that "a pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty".

"The impact on agriculture since the Brexit vote has been broadly positive for farm prices, largely due to the weakening of sterling against both the dollar and the euro," he acknowledged.

"That's been supported by the robust state of the economy and falling unemployment. But, of course, the process of actually leaving isn't yet underway. While a 'soft' Brexit would not, according to experts' calculations, fundamentally change farm profitability, a hard one, with tariffs on UK/EU trade, would impact particularly on the export-reliant cereal, beef and sheep sectors. However, those more reliant on imports – dairy, fruit and vegetables, pigs, potatoes – could actually benefit."

The government has committed to pay farm support at current levels until at least the 2022 general election, but this is likely to shift further from production support to focus on environmental payments, so dealers may have to adjust their focus here onto the relevant equipment, noted Mr Porter. In addition, concerns over labour availability could increase investment

in technology.

"There have also been some negatives since the Brexit vote, notably rising inflation – particularly with regard to food prices due to our reliance on imports – and the first interest rate rise in 10 years, plus slowing house sales. But with this latter pessimism comes opportunity – from a garden equipment point of view, people 'staying put' means more scope to sell them what they need to improve their homes. And the government's house-building pledges also open up new opportunities for equipment sales.

"Any kind of Brexit will impact on ag businesses – even a no-Brexit will do so, as the EU is reforming payments by 2020. A no-deal Brexit may make the UK stronger in the longer term – over 10 years – but there would be short-term pain. Assess how exposed you are to EU imports, what export opportunities exist and how Brexit will impact on every category of customer – and, of course, how it may affect the business's own staffing."

Breakout sessions

There followed a series of 'breakout sessions' from which delegates could select one to attend. The gathering led by social media consultant **Julio Romo** looked at engaging with prospects and clients, and heard how, before making dealer

enquiries, potential customers for all manner of products were now often turning not just to the internet to find information on a product, but to social media in particular to seek others' views on those products.

"But even among internet users there remains a broad spectrum of people who have vastly different levels of engagement with social media," he warned.

"Social and digital media are important, but don't forget traditional media altogether. Know your audience and the media they consume. Good content has to be relevant to your business, creative, engaging, shareable, timely and designed around the user.

"If you're not already using digital or social media, open an account and experiment, advertising your presence through traditional media. Showcase your products, build a narrative around each product line, and use your presence to provide help through tips and videos.

"Plan and timetable your story and posts. Don't just sell – amplify news your community can benefit from, providing help and support."

Edward Reisner, of Apple reseller/repairer Jigsaw 24, considered the potential for 'smart' devices such as tablet computers and smartphones to play a greater role in helping dealers make management systems more efficient.

PERFORMANCE BY HUSQVARNA



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“Before adopting them, identify the key quantifiable drivers for what you want to achieve, such as less paperwork, reduced logistics costs or better communication.

“When you adopt a new technology, start small but consider the bigger picture. Begin with a small team of people and consider a trial period. Think about including ‘technologically-resistant’ people earlier before including others, giving them more time to become accustomed and even become enthusiasts. Then compare results against your key driver and check feedback with your team. And don’t be afraid to admit if something doesn’t work and move on.

“There are some very relevant technologies for the dealer sector. The car trade, for example, now makes widespread use of selfie sticks and mobile video to allow service engineers to show customers and staff what has been done in a repair or service. Various apps offer the ability to improve cross-team communication, scheduling, holiday planning, shift-swapping and more. Mobile devices can be more than email, contacts and calendars.”

Plenary

Always an engaging and thought-provoking speaker, dealer development consultant **Simon Batty** addressed the two issues of

growing sales across the dealership portfolio, and recruiting and retaining the right staff to help do so.

“Even in quiet times, there’s more business out there than we can handle – it just needs to be found,” he suggested.

“Every time I ask a dealer to engage with a sales project on a development programme they find more business, and most commonly that’s with customers they haven’t dealt with before.

“Take each brand, product or service. Are any under-performers simply not being ‘sold’? Do your customers know what you sell, or just what they buy from you? And do you have the right portfolio? Identify your best, lowest-risk or simplest option to grow sales.

“Customers want speedy, knowledgeable response to their enquiries, good explanations and demonstrations, an efficient and simple sales process, installation or supply as promised, and reliable and prompt aftersales support. This should be your business’s bedrock. Remember – sales sell the first one, aftersales sell the rest, and all dealership staff, including those in service and parts, have a sales responsibility.

“Review your territory and customer base by identifying, classifying and mapping A, B and C customer accounts. Look for gaps – both sector

and geographical – and while not forgetting the Cs, focus on potential A high-value and B bread-and-butter prospects. Make direct contact, follow up and build relationships.”

Once a sale is made, send a personal welcome letter from the managing director, with a personal follow-up call made by sales and/or aftersales staff, he suggested.

“Send birthday cards for machines as a reminder of age and service needs, and ensure customers are personally invited to open days. All these things help to make customers feel wanted.”

Mr Batty also presented his thoughts on recruiting and retaining staff in a tough market, urging delegates to ask themselves whether they would leave a job to come and work for themselves.

“Money is important to most people, but it’s not everything. Few people are attracted to the same job with a different employer. They want to feel valued and valuable, be informed and occasionally consulted.

“Take a look at what your team looks like from the outside, and grow your own staff by building their capabilities and aiding personal development. While occasionally people have to be let go because they don’t fit or want something different, ensuring they are regularly given new challenges can help motivate and retain the best ones.”



SERVICE DEALER READER SURVEY RESULTS 'VERY POSITIVE'



Readership per issue higher than expected

Service Dealer would like to thank all our readers who responded both by mail and online to the magazine's request for feedback.

Owner Duncan Murray-Clarke said, "We redesigned the *Weekly Update* last year and we decided to conduct some quite extensive readership research to find out what our readers thought of our output across the board.

"The response to the research was a really good sample (well over 100 in total) and I'm delighted to say very positive. The aim was to find areas we can improve on from an editorial and layout perspective.

"With this research we conducted," continued Duncan, "I think it was the readership figure which took us most by surprise, with an average of over four readers per issue."

Other useful information gleaned from the research was that the average time spent reading an issue of the magazine was between 20-30 minutes, with most respondents saying they pick up each edition on average just over three times.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of readers who responded were male, although there was a good spread

of age ranges from 20s to 50+ represented.

The most common answer given to why do you read *Service Dealer* was 'to keep up with industry information'. In answer to what you'd like to see more or less of in the magazine, many respondents said they'd like to hear more dealer voices represented.

Service Dealer Editor Steve Gibbs said, "In this *Service Dealer's* 30th anniversary year, the magazine has every intention to include as many dealer voices as possible.

"In terms of other most common answers given to what readers would like to see, that seemed to depend on what machinery sector the individual dealer specialised in. Agricultural, turfcare and domestic machinery were all given as answers to both what dealers would like to see more and indeed less of! Our intention, as ever, is to strike a balance."

Congratulations to Fred Werring of South West Garden Machinery, based in Launceston, Cornwall, who was the lucky recipient of the £100 Amazon voucher offered in the prize-draw to all who responded.

Below you can read a selection of comments from the open-ended questions asked.

Why do you read *Service Dealer*?

- Keep up with developments from brands I do not stock. News of wider industry trends, events, legislation.
- To see what's new in the groundscare trade.
- Interesting and useful information for our speciality.
- It is not on a screen so is kind on the eyes, and there are no distractions.
- Most relevant industry publication, well written, easy to read, informative and free of bias!
- Industry news and interesting articles.
- Agricultural purposes.

What would you like to see more or less of?

- Prices of equipment featured.
- It is always good to see and hear what other dealers are doing to increase business.
- Market trends; consumer insight; market data.
- More focus on the future of industry from all sides – manufacturer, supplier, end user.
- More dealer input, dealer challenges, websites and social media.
- More business management tips.
- Exhibition mentions.

Any other comments

- Keep up the good work.
- Do you not see the irony of you giving out a voucher for Amazon, who's aim it is to replace conventional Service Dealers?
- Great publication, gives a valuable insight into the industry for business looking to move forward.
- Good informative magazine, well put together, not to be missed.
- Great way to keep in touch with the ground care market. The one single source of info that gives the complete picture.
- Look forward to Fridays for the *Update* email.
- Cannot get over how much the industry is changing.

STAYING FIRM ON PROFIT MARGINS

That's what Andrew Meek, Director of Congleton Garden Machinery believes all dealers need to do in order to thrive. Here he talks to Lawrence Gale Msc, MBPR, about his business and where he sees the trade heading



Andrew & Stuart Meek

A recent trip to Congleton, Cheshire, enabled me the chance to call in on Congleton Garden Machinery Ltd, a family-run business established by Stuart Meek.

Congleton Garden Machinery has grown substantially over the years since opening in 1989 and offers full servicing, repair and spares facilities for all the machines it sells, alongside new and used machinery sales, a hire department and online store. The business operates out of a showroom and 14,000sq ft warehouse on the local trading estate.

Stuart, with the help of his son Andrew, has worked hard to bring in a wide range of top-branded machinery into their portfolio. In 2016 at the *Service Dealer* conference awards ceremony, the company took the major accolade of ATV/Quad Dealer of the Year. Before this it received a number of awards such as regional business of the year from the local council, and numerous awards from Polaris UK.

History

Started in 1989 as a family-run, one-man business, operating from a small shop of 1,200sq ft, Congleton Garden Machinery has grown to be recognised as a quality dealership specialising in garden machinery, quad bikes, compact tractors and mini diggers.

Stuart purchased the existing business, together with

the premises, seeing it initially as a property development opportunity. Originally a small petrol station, with approximately 4ft from front window to rear wall, it didn't lend itself to being customer-friendly. It often saw hard working, surly tree surgeons and landscapers, inevitably rubbing shoulders with well-heeled ladies of the Cheshire Set. The answer was to extend the whole of the front of the premises by another 4ft.

Now with more room to display goods for selling, behind large modern plate-glass windows, fronting on to a main road, business became brisk. So much so, that the business was retained and in 1991 they opened another main road shop in Biddulph. More space to fill meant a larger stock requirement, giving more choice and increasing sales. They were now firmly on the business expansion merry-go-round. Fortunately, in 2001 Stuart's son, Andrew, joined the business to assist in progressing it further, as a member of the sales team. With a University background in product design, innovation and marketing, Andrew's skills complemented Stuart's, and brought a youthful exuberance to the business.

In 2004, keen to build the business further, a gamble was taken to take a giant leap into a 9,000sq ft site on Manchester Road, where they remained for nine years. Again, wanting and needing more space, a 14,000sq ft industrial unit, in need of complete renovation, was purchased at the beginning of

2013. With work being undertaken by themselves to transform the site from a bare shell into the smart shopping experience it is today, while still keeping wheels in motion within the existing business, the transfer to the new premises was then completed.

On my arrival at the current premises, I was greeted by Andrew who was keen to show me around and answer a number of questions.

Service Dealer: What is your role at the company?

Andrew Meek: Having joined the business from university, I experienced a diverse range of challenges within stock control, accounting, database management, marketing and service work. This all led to my current role as a Director.

Sales and negotiation are a real passion of mine and a key element of my role. I also have both a strategic and operational view of the business. My responsibilities are very varied, ranging from strategic decisions such as the move to our current premises and investment into a new holistic stock management system. Accurate and real-time management information has enabled us to make data-based decisions on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

Congleton Garden Machinery's employees are key to the success of our business and I take a lead role in the recruitment and development of the team. It's the quality and professional skill sets of these recent recruits that make all the difference to a positive team effort, contributing significantly to the success, culture and morale of the company.

SD: Which manufacturers do you represent?

AM: We represent a wide range of domestic and professional manufacturers that include Polaris, Honda, Hayter, John Deere, Stiga, Countax, Echo, Stihl, Solis, Tracmaster and a number of others; with Wolf and Draper on the accessory side, and Dickies for workwear.

The local topography can influence the type of product required. Being within the Cheshire plains, but just below the Pennines and the Derbyshire hills, we have to cater for a wide range of requirements. It's important to stock a selection of equipment and machinery to suit all needs. For example, farming and estate management is a core business opportunity for us, with the sale of ATVs, utility vehicles and attachments in stock to suit their needs.

We have certainly seen a change of buying habits this year, with a number of larger contractors and organisations completing even more of their own service work. They all appear to be attempting to keep old machines running as against investing in new. Quite positive in one way, in that the need for replacement machines should one day be forthcoming.

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

AM: We're a family-owned, busy, fast-paced business and we're aware that our environment isn't for everyone. We've had some great recruits in the last couple of years and we work really hard to ensure that we're realistic, setting the scene for what it's like to work here. Individuals who like a challenge, who are prepared to take ownership, work at pace, have a roll-your-sleeves-up attitude and an entrepreneurial mind set work very well here.

We would also like to attract more women into the business to help add diversity into the industry. We feel that would be beneficial, given that many of the sales we make are through women.

SD: What kind of clients do you supply?

AM: We supply a broad spectrum of domestic, contractors, councils, estates, farmers and local sports clubs. Alongside the wide selection of machinery, products and services we also offer machinery hire on some specific products, mainly chippers, compact tractors, ride-on mowers and diggers. We compliment this with a wide range of PPE, workwear, small hand tools and garden equipment.

We employ two fully trained service and repair engineers and two part-time, to cope with our servicing and repair requirements. We work proactively at keeping customers informed of their service schedule, either through social media or individual telephone calls. In order to service these machines, substantial stocks of fast-moving, original manufacturers' parts are maintained. This helps us to honour our commitment to customers to turn their machines around in a given period of time. Occasionally, the supply of parts outside the norm does create issues, but this is minimal, by selecting to work with the manufacturers that we have chosen.



Display of STIHL machinery in the store

SD: What do you think are your company's strengths?

AM: I believe one of our strengths comes from being a family-run business and the fact that we started small and have grown the business based on the customers' needs and requirements. We're prepared to listen and welcome constructive feedback, as it encourages us to stand back and look more closely at what we're doing. We

work towards building up good relationships with those area managers who have our best interests at heart and it is with the products offered by those area managers that we achieve most success. Our success is generally theirs too, or at the very least is of financial interest to the area managers, so it's beneficial to both work together.

Knowledge is power and plays a very important part in the sales process. On-going training pays dividends. However, unfortunately there are limits to this, due to the high cost against the smaller margins being retained within the industry. The in-house training conducted by a number of area managers has been a great success, especially where they have made an effort to talk about sales skills and ideas and not just the product – a big thank you to them all.

We are very goal orientated, with dates and times of achieving these goals set well in advance.

SD: Do you attend industry shows and exhibitions?

AM: We attend shows in person, mainly to engage with industry partners and keep abreast of any new potential business opportunities. As a company we also attend one or two of the major, local shows and exhibit a range of products.

We're more focused on our social media and website in general and our IT department is continually being creative and developing new ideas to enhance the progress of that side of our business. We're aiming to create a unique online presence and a more interactive website to engage with our customers. Through a good online experience our objective is to give customers quality information that will enable them to make an informed decision on the most suitable product for their needs.

SD: Do you feel Brexit is affecting our current economic climate?

AM: I do not believe Brexit alone is having a significant effect on dealers. Competition through websites and social media, where some dealers within our industry seem to be prepared to reduce margins to a minimum, is affecting the climate more in my opinion. This affects funds available for retention and on-going training of staff members that is vital for our success. Dealers need to stay firm on profit margins. Our margins, like most, are very tight as it is. Healthy, appropriate competition is good for any industry, but manufacturers need to work towards ensuring dealers retain realistic margins both online and in the sales room, so that funds are available to enable us to re-invest for the



Andrew Meek

“BE FLEXIBLE, ADAPT QUICKLY TO THE CHANGE, STAY POSITIVE AND ENJOY LIFE”

future development of our dealerships and the industry.

Manufacturers helping to create a level playing field would help from my perspective. Within a 13-mile radius of our business we have a minimum of 19 garden machinery dealers. The majority of these work from back yards, vans and sheds, do not pay VAT or work to HSE guidelines, are not investing in bricks and mortar, or supporting apprentices within our business, yet they are able to sell a number of machines at a lower price than ourselves. That, with much lower overhead costs and therefore servicing charges, means they have a significant effect on authorised dealers. This is just one area of the business that the manufacturers could address. To us that style of support would be far more beneficial, as with or without Brexit, life will still go on, customers need to be supported, and grass will continue to grow.

SD: How have you embraced new technologies, such as battery power etc?

AM: We are well aware of the opportunities now on offer, especially with a dramatic investment that we have seen over many years, by manufacturers introducing a wider choice of battery-powered machines.

Battery technology is moving on at such a pace, with battery longevity and recharging times becoming very commercially viable. We're now seeing running times between 30 and 60 minutes, with recharge times down to less than an hour. We're also seeing an interest in robotic mowers and have for some years stocked the Honda range – they do an amazing job at a reasonable price. Customers are still cautious, but with more options on the market and the rapid pace of development of these products, we see plenty of future growth.

SD: Where do you see the future of dealerships?

AM: As business leaders we tend to have a 'just do it' attitude, and tend not to worry too much about changes in the market, recessions, the climate or many other issues that can affect business. If these

things happen, where we have no control, we don't let them worry us – life's too short. Be flexible, adapt quickly to the change, stay positive and enjoy life.

Having said that, where dealers work together, great benefits are gained. Where area managers go above and beyond the call of duty to work with you, to help you succeed, there are also great benefits. We recognise the need for manufacturers to keep their production lines going, but feel to have in-depth discussion with dealers to understand their concerns and work out ways that we can help one another has to be a benefit as long as it results in action being taken and seen through. In many cases we feel they 'listen but do not hear' and/or are not prepared to be vocal on our behalf with the CEO's, voicing constructive criticism and presenting positive suggestions for change.

It's a great industry, but a daily challenge. The challenge for the future is to open up that communication further and start changing many of the policies and processes as quickly as we are seeing changes in product design. That way we will get with the times and the future will be amazing..

SD: Thank you



Daniel Shore on the shop counter

ROBOTS IN THE STREETS

Husqvarna's Silent City 3 conference considered how robotics will increasingly become a part of amenity grasscare. Editor Steve Gibbs reports

At its Silent City 3 Conference which took place in Edinburgh at the back end of last year, Husqvarna launched robotic mowers that step into the commercial mowing field.

Two robotic mowers developed specially for green space managers and landscaping companies were introduced to the delegates which included dealers, commercial mowing representatives and press. The company says the new machines aim to improve lawn quality and sustainability, while reducing costs and freeing up time.

Edinburgh was chosen as the venue of this third edition of Silent City partly as the city had been a key participant in trials of Automowers in public green spaces during May to October last year.

Graeme Craig, Horticulture Manager of the City of Edinburgh, addressed the delegates, confessing that before the trials of the robots began he and his colleagues had a natural scepticism of how the units would fair in practical application. Doubts were in their minds both

over how the machines would cope with the terrain which in areas like Edinburgh's famous Mound were both expansive and steep – as well as common perceptions that robots would be targets for thieves or vandals. Another worry they had pre-trial was that staff and public alike would be worried that machines were stealing jobs from actual humans!

Graeme revealed to the conference though that mowing standards were achieved. "In fact," he said, "in most areas standards were actually improved." He went on to say that the robots were able to work 24 hours a day with limited restrictions, cutting in all weather conditions.

"There was very limited interference with the mowers from the public," Graeme confirmed. "There was no vandalism, and none were stolen. Also very pleasing to the council was that our staff recognised that the robots mowing the grass allowed time to be freed up for themselves to concentrate on other, more complicated horticultural tasks which required their attention."

Husqvarna's UK Commercial Landscape &

Groundcare Manager Kevin Ashmore said, "Is there a future for robotic mowers in commercial applications? The answer to that is very much a resounding yes."

Automower 500 series

Launched at Silent City 3 was the Husqvarna Automower 500-series which the company said takes all the benefits of its robotic lawnmowers and adds more features specially catered for professional fleet use. These machines can tackle lawns of up to 5,000m², steep slopes of up to 45%, and an area capacity of up to 208m² an hour.

An ultra-silent drive in the robotic mower means a noise level of just 58dB(A), so the 500-series can cut silently both during the day and at night.

Standard on the new 500-series is Husqvarna Fleet Services, the company's cloud-based solution, which gives operators a complete overview of all robotic lawnmowers in the fleet, as well as full remote control from one unified system. An unlimited number of robotic mowers can be added to the fleet and be controlled by a single operator.

"Our objective is to allow landscaping teams to work smarter.

With the management system, one person can manage all the mowers in their fleet at one time, and still have time for other tasks," said Olle Markusson, Director of Product Management – Robotics, Husqvarna.



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THE RELUCTANT SALESMAN

Chris Biddle talks to Steve Parkin, STIHL GB National Sales Manager, who has just retired after 33 years with the company

"I never really considered myself a salesman," says Steve Parkin. Which means that he will have made a pretty good fist of the salesman's role when he stepped down as National Sales Manager of STIHL UK in December after a career lasting 33 years.

Sheffield-raised Steve started out in the furniture trade working for Great Universal Stores in the South Yorkshire city before moving to AEG Power Tools. It was the days when trade shows were 'two a penny' and he regularly found himself in the same aisle as STIHL. He struck up a friendship with STIHL's Norman Robinson, who one day told Steve that he was in line for promotion and would he be interested in taking over his STIHL 'patch' of northern England?

It was 1986, Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister and *EastEnders* aired its first episode – and eight years after STIHL UK was formed, having taken over from previous UK distributor Thomas Niven.

The company had assembled a strong sales team under the wing of legendary MD Peter Baker including Norman Robinson himself, Ian Gracewood, Andy Smith, Brian Champion and Barry Penny.

Norman told Steve to go the Royal Welsh Show and meet up with Peter Baker on the stand of local dealer Morris Bufton for a chat. Peter obviously saw Steve as a good 'fit' with the other STIHL area managers and immediately offered him the job to start the following September.



Steve Parkin (right) with Hans Peter Stihl (left), Wolfgang Simmer (Viking) and Robin Lennie (STIHL UK MD)

"It was an interesting time in the industry. Within two years came the infamous 'hurricane-that-never-was' which swept through the southern part of Britain and cleared out STIHL UK's chainsaw stock in a matter of hours – and that of northern Europe, which was diverted from across the Channel.

"Then probably one of the milestone moments in 1992 when B&Q marketed a walk-behind petrol rotary at £99. We weren't in the mower business at the time, but at a stroke it halved the public's perception of the cost of a petrol-powered product. That said, many of the sales were to dealers who couldn't believe they could buy a Briggs & Stratton engine so cheap!"

Steve says that STIHL's rapid growth in recent years has not been to the taste of all dealers. "However, I recently saw a very early STIHL UK brochure and price list whilst at Charles Hill (STIHL dealer in Suffolk) which ran to just three pages. Contrast that to today's catalogue with a huge range of equipment and you can see how our business has grown. However, it's interesting to note that when I started with STIHL we had 375 live dealer accounts – and that number is virtually the same today."

What is noticeable, says Steve, is the growth of professionalism across the dealer network in recent years.

"Dealers are much more selective about the brands they sell. Marketing and merchandising has improved greatly." However, there are warning signs he says. "When we developed our dealer merchandising packages a few years ago, we found that the STIHL display stands were often at odds with the rest of the dealer's showroom. We now try to ensure that the showroom has a uniform look, and reflects the dealer's complete brand portfolio."

Steve now intends to 'retire properly'. His role is being taken over by Wayne Stone, "and he will do things his way". Of course, he will miss the many friendships nurtured over the years, but will not miss the constant trek across the M62.

Any regrets? One, that after travelling the length and breadth of the country, clocking up over 35,000 miles a year, he was 'clocked' by a speed camera in a 30mph speed limit in the autumn at 35mph. "My first speeding ticket in over 30 years," he says.

Steve, from your many friends in the trade, best wishes for a well-earned retirement.



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FROM THE BEGINNING TO A MAJOR DISTRIBUTOR IN TROUBLE

1988 – 1991

As part of *Service Dealer's* 30th Anniversary year, we shall be taking a look back through the archives each issue, to the stories, the products and most importantly the people who have shaped the industry over the magazine's lifetime.

With enough material to fill many weighty tomes, due to space we shall have to restrict ourselves to looking at

a couple of key events from each year, as well as enjoying some vintage pictures.

We begin with the first four years of the publication, which saw it emerge in 1988 as *Garden Machinery Retailer* before morphing during '91 into *Lawn & Garden Equipment...*

1988

THE STORY BEGINS

Chris Biddle, who had spent over 20 years with a farm and garden machinery dealership, walked into a Salisbury-based printer, Salisbury Printing Company, with a pile of papers, odd photos, notes and scribbles and a rough idea of a magazine he wanted to publish.

"I would like you to turn this into a magazine," he said to the studio manager.

In a couple of days he got back yards and yards of typeset copy which he took home, cut into

columns and stuck to countless pieces of paper on the wall of his spare bedroom.

When he had 'designed' the individual pages, he took them back to Salisbury Printing and the studio manager arranged for the final design and plate making.

A pilot issue of *Garden Machinery Retailer* which appeared in April 1988 was received well by readers and advertisers and the first formal issue was published in July 1988.



MANUFACTURERS PLAN OWN SHOW

Following the IOG's announcement that it was to move its annual show from Windsor to the East of England Showground at Peterborough, a group of manufacturers and suppliers along with Show Organiser, Andry Montgomery announced plans to stage a brand-new outdoor powered equipment show at Kempton Park Racecourse in September 1990.

The show was scheduled for three days, 2nd-4th September, the last day clashing with the first day of the IOG Show at Peterborough.

Kempton Park was chosen from a short-list of venues which also included Hatfield House, Alexandra Palace and Sandown Park.



1989

SHUT OUT! IOG REFUSES STAND SPACE TO DEALER TRADE ASSOCIATION

The Institute of Groundsmanship firmly shut the door on the Garden Machinery Association, by refusing them stand space at 1989's Windsor exhibition – the last for the time being at the Thameside venue.

Spokesman for the IOG, Richard Frost said that the show committee felt it 'inappropriate' to allow the GMA space to promote its planned rival show at Kempton Park in 1990, when the IOG intended to move its exhibition to a new site on the East of England Showground, Peterborough.

The rejection to the GMA came when the IOG returned its cheque for advance payment for its stand space. The GMA tried another route by making an application through a show organising company, but this was also spotted and rejected.



WHICH? REPORT SLAMS MOWER SERVICING

Which? magazine said that lawnmower servicing in Britain was a lottery, with inconsistent standards at wildly varying prices.

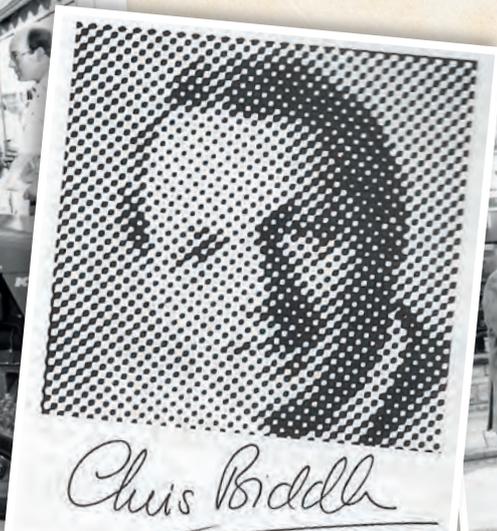
The report published in November 1989 said that getting a lawnmower serviced could be a 'very dodgy' business indeed. Its findings were based on a survey of 23 petrol-rotary mowers which were taken to different service agents for serving.

Which? said that 16 of the

service agents failed to put right common faults, while three actually introduced faults into the mowers.

The magazine was also concerned by the wide variation in prices as it paid from £20 up to £93 for similar services.

The national press got hold of the survey results and covered it extensively with headlines such as 'Scandal of killer repairs on lawn mowers'.



1990

GOVERNMENT MINISTER RIDLEY REFERS RANSOMES/WESTWOOD DEAL

In a last-minute move in March 1990, Trade and Industry Secretary Nicholas Ridley rejected the advice of the Office of Fair Trading and referred the previous August's £9m purchase by Ransomes of the Plymouth tractor maker, Westwood Engineering, to the Mergers and Monopolies Commission

The Department of Trade and Industry waited until the very last day of the six-month period before making the decision, a move that left Ransomes executives 'astounded'.

Chief Executive of Ransomes, Bob Dodsworth said, "How on earth

are we going to untangle the two companies at this stage if the ruling goes against us?"

One of the reasons given by Mr Ridley was his uncertainty about the actual size of the UK lawn and garden tractor market.

Mr Dodsworth said that he had given an undertaking to the OFT not to progress with any plans to merge the Mountfield and Westwood ranges until after the final decision which was due on 29th May 1990.

The MMC subsequently ruled on 13th July that there was no case to answer.



BAGMA AXES DIRECTOR GENERAL

In a move to stem massive losses, BAGMA announced that it had sacked its Director General, Alan Carver, and two members of staff.

BAGMA President Harry Barker confirmed that the trio had been made redundant and that "there are no plans to replace the top post".

Philip Corbett and Shannon

Craig remained as agricultural and garden machinery managers while Pat Hedger was appointed as Administration Manager.

Carver was previously Sales Manager of Technical Events for the Royal Show and was appointed to the BAGMA role in October 1989.



1991

SOUTH-WEST DISTRIBUTOR STANLEY WEST IN RECEIVERSHIP

One of the country's largest grass machinery distributors, Stanley West, went into receivership during June.

The company had its headquarters in Exeter, and operated depots in Truro, Ferndown and in two garden centres in the Bristol area.

Stanley West was the Ransomes distributor for Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Cornwall and had a turnover in excess of £2.5m.

The company was started in 1946 when Stanley West left the Army and set up in business with George White of Gravelly Overseas. In 1949, Stanley

bought out George White's shares, moved to Teignmouth and expanded the garden machinery business, gradually becoming more and more involved in distribution as the road network in the South-West improved.

At the time of going into receivership, the company employed 38 staff.

The Managing Director, David Bray, was previously the company's Finance Director, who took over from John Snell, a former Managing Director of Hayter.



VICTA MOVES TO BARRUS

Australian mower maker Victa closed its UK base at Basingstoke and transferred distribution of its products to E P Barrus at Bicester.

The move ended weeks of speculation as it emerged that at least two other companies were bidding to handle the Victa distribution.

Bill Brooks, General Manager of Victa UK, said that the company had been reviewing its options in the UK for some while.

In the event, only two Victa UK employees moved from Basingstoke to Barrus; they were Del Mirrams who became Product

Manager and Eric Crowther (Area Manager for the North).

They joined a new division created by Barrus which would distribute Victa, Cub Cadet, Tonda and Oleo-Mac.

Barrus Managing Director Robert Bennett said, "Victa will operate as a stand-alone franchise with a dedicated dealer network. Victa appointed dealers will not necessarily have access to Lawnflite and vice-versa".

Distribution in Scotland and Ireland remained with Frews and Brodericks respectively.



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BTME 2018 IS A SELL-OUT

Over 140 exhibitors of commercial equipment on show at Harrogate

The traditional start to the turf care year, this month's BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition (BTME) has completely sold out.

The organisers say that within two months of BTME 2017 last January, more than 65% of exhibitors booked their spot to return, and with three months to go every available space within the Harrogate Convention Centre was booked up.

Over 140 exhibitors have signed up for BTME 2018 with organisers boasting the event will feature the biggest names in the turf management industry.

BIGGA Business Development Manager Jill Rodham says: "Following the incredible success of BTME 2017, we have been delighted that so many companies signed up to return to the next exhibition.

"BTME continues to grow year on year and we're delighted to welcome so many new faces, who will be making their BTME debut in 2018.

"Each year we're thrilled at how the turf industry makes the pilgrimage to Harrogate to rekindle old friendships, build new relationships, and showcase the latest innovations and developments for the benefit of BIGGA members."

Multiple events

More than 4,500 attendees are expected through the doors of the Harrogate Convention Centre. Coupled with the Continue to Learn Education Programme, which features more than 250 hours of greenkeeper education, and the Golf Business & Industry Convention (GolfBIC), BIGGA believes that BTME 2018 is set to be one of the busiest ever.

Continue to Learn at BTME 2018 will take place at the Harrogate Convention Centre and The Majestic Hotel, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, from Sunday 21 to Wednesday 24 January 2018.

The Golf Business and Industry Convention (GolfBIC) will coincide with BTME and is being held in conjunction with the UKGCOA and OGRO. The one-day convention takes place on Wednesday 24 January and is aimed at golf course owners and operators and features sessions on Leadership and Management Challenges, the Power of Social Media to Drive Business to Your Golf Club and the Impact of Understanding your Market.

Tickets for BTME, Continue to Learn and GolfBIC can be booked online with links available on every BTME event page on the BTME and BIGGA websites.

www.btme.org.uk



Essential info

Opening times for BTME 2018:
 Tuesday 23 January 9am – 5pm
 Wednesday 24 January 9am – 5pm
 Thursday 25 January 9am – 2.30pm

Venue Location & Transport Links

Road: SAT NAV: King's Road, Harrogate, HG1 5LA.
 From the North and South on A1M, exit A59 to Harrogate (five miles from town centre).
 From M1: To Leeds – 15 miles from Harrogate (A61).
 From Manchester: M62 to Leeds – 15 miles from Harrogate (A61).

Rail

Main line services are to Leeds and York, then regional railways to Harrogate. The Exhibition Centre is 15 minutes walk from the station; taxi fare is approximately £3.50.

Website: <http://www.btme.org.uk/>

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FINAL OUTDOOR LAMMA SET FOR BIG SEND OFF

Hundreds of manufacturers and suppliers of farm machinery lined up

Dealers interested in agricultural machinery have their final opportunity to quiz hundreds of manufacturers and suppliers of equipment and services in an outdoor setting as the LAMMA show returns to Peterborough in January for the last time before its move to the Birmingham NEC next year.

Last year more than 850 exhibitors displayed equipment and expertise for over 40,000 visitors. Organisers of this January's event say exhibitor bookings are matching the pace of 2017.

Elisabeth Mork-Eidem, Group Head of Events at Briefing Media, which owns the LAMMA Show, says the event continues to grow in size and stature and remains a key diary event for the industry, in the UK and beyond.

"LAMMA is a highly informative event, while retaining its informal, friendly atmosphere. Last year we heard of many positive conversations that resulted in a significant amount of business, and we fully expect that to continue at LAMMA '18 as key decision makers across agriculture continue to gear up for the future. It's shaping up to be another excellent event."

What's on

Most leading manufacturers will be attending, many showing new tractors, combines, drills and cultivation equipment.

In addition, LAMMA's ethos of hosting smaller agricultural engineering and machinery

companies from across the UK continues, giving visitors access to a vast array of products.

The Workshop Area returns, offering supplies to suit simple repairs to sophisticated projects, as does The Dealers' Den, with its plethora of second-hand kit.

Although LAMMA's core business is machinery and equipment, other sectors including agronomy, business and farm management advice also feature.

A new Farm Safety Zone is being introduced to help reduce the high number of deaths and injuries on UK farms.

The zone will host a series of talks with specialists, enabling visitors to access the most current health and safety information and advice.

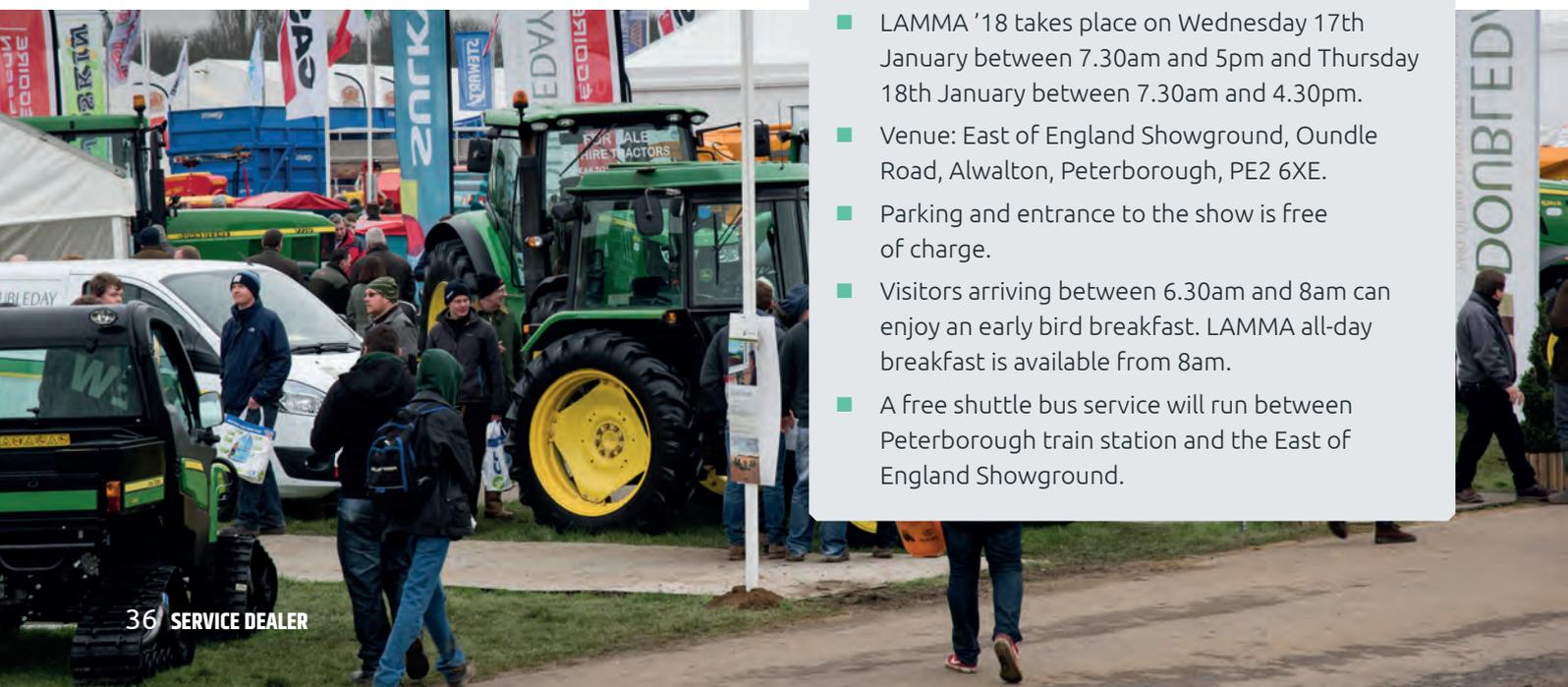
With so much going on, key sectors are zoned around the showground to help visitors find what they need with the minimum of fuss. Livestock supplies, forage machinery and associated equipment are grouped together as is post-harvest technology and roots machinery.

To help plan their trip to LAMMA, those intending to visit can sign up for the event newsletter to find out all the latest show news and exhibitor updates (go to www.lammashow.com and click on the newsletter sign-up sidebar).

Details of the new LAMMA '18 app will also be available on the website. Visitors have access to free Wi-Fi across the site at designated hotspots, to ensure they can use the app as well as browse the internet.

Essential info

- LAMMA '18 takes place on Wednesday 17th January between 7.30am and 5pm and Thursday 18th January between 7.30am and 4.30pm.
- Venue: East of England Showground, Oundle Road, Alwalton, Peterborough, PE2 6XE.
- Parking and entrance to the show is free of charge.
- Visitors arriving between 6.30am and 8am can enjoy an early bird breakfast. LAMMA all-day breakfast is available from 8am.
- A free shuttle bus service will run between Peterborough train station and the East of England Showground.



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SALTEX HITS ITS STRIDE

In its crunch third year as an indoor show, the IOG's SALTEX show provided a superb industry showcase. Editor Steve Gibbs reflects on a valuable couple of days at the NEC, with just a couple of small quibbles . . .

Myself and the Service Dealer team spent a very enjoyable and highly worthwhile two days at the Birmingham NEC for IOG SALTEX back in November.

The impression I overwhelmingly received from both exhibitors and visitors I spoke to was that the exhibition was truly working for them too.

The space the show now takes place in is a decent size, but compact enough to make it feel buzzy and busy most of the time. It's easy for visitors to get around and find who they are looking for, and once on a stand you can have long, productive conversations without being inhibited by whatever the British weather chooses to throw at you that particular day.

The first day of the show on Wednesday felt particularly well attended. The halls became very busy, very early. Large queues had formed waiting to gain entry by 9.30am.

Speaking to exhibitors, many told me they had started having their first serious business conversations with visitors on their stands by five past nine on Wednesday, and most said they didn't really stop to

catch their breath until around four that afternoon!

The second day took noticeably longer for the halls to fill. Perhaps this might have had something to do with the late night many of the groundsman visitors would have had the night before at the IOG Awards ceremony?! That event has grown to be huge, with around 700 visitors and a list of awards to be presented as long as your arm, so it's little surprise that proceedings were a little slower to get going on the Thursday.

But by lunchtime the halls did indeed feel pretty packed out once again.

And crucially, packed out with quality, decision-making visitors. Time and again stand holders told me how pleased they were with the calibre of contacts and leads they were making. The top people who are in positions to specify machinery at facilities and businesses across the country were making plenty of genuine enquiries.

The proof of how successful these leads will eventually prove to be will of course not be known until visits and demos are made after the show, but as the first step in the process, SALTEX is



Oregon won a SALTEX Innovation award for their Gator Speedload
Ubaid Shareef and Alex Mathieson



Howell, Emyr and Gareth Jenkins on their Excalibur stand were signing up dealers



Paul Chandler and Peter Dixon of Robomow said the show was a great opportunity to meet new dealers

certainly providing an excellent forum for business relationships to get underway and develop.

Mix of visitors

Plenty of dealers made the trip to the Birmingham. Various companies I spoke to were delighted by the number of specialists they had seen come through their stands.

There were plenty of franchises on show at SALTEX that were very interested in expanding their dealer networks. Of course, all were talking about finding the right partners in the right part of the country, but there is no doubt that there are opportunities out there at the moment for dealers to expand their offerings if they so desire.

There were also ample opportunities for the IOG's principal demographic, turf professionals, to expand their knowledge across the two days, with four seminar theatres offering a rolling programme of educational talks.

As is inevitable with these things, some appeared to be much better attended than others, but with an innovation this year of some panel debates being broadcast by the internal TV system, more will have heard the discussion than were sat in front of the speakers. This packed programme of talks contained enough quality content to encourage some visitors to attend the NEC on both days.

I genuinely believe that in its third year in the new format, which many would say would be the

crunch year for the show, SALTEX hit its stride. It seemed to achieve its two key obligations – to satisfy both exhibitors and visitors.

Future events

Was there anything which didn't work? I guess I've just got a couple of slight grumbles

Firstly, the 'outside area'. I'm not sure why they are still bothering with this? There were only about four companies on a small patch of grass on an island between a road and the disabled car park. I think the IOG should have the confidence in their show by this point to say 'we are 100% an indoors show now' and knock this on the head.

The other concern I have is not really anything to do with the show's organisers, more with a tiny minority of exhibitors who are still clinging on to outdated marketing techniques of yesteryear. Considering just how progressive and professional an image the show as a whole was projecting, for a couple of companies to still use scantily-clad young women to promote machinery doesn't really fit anymore. The industry has moved on.

But those thoughts aside, genuine congratulations to the IOG, the exhibition organisers and the exhibitors for putting on a fantastic couple of days.

Roll on Halloween when this year's edition spookily kicks off!



Ron Miller and Susan Pallett on the Service Dealer stand



Ed Scambler of Grasshopper UK and Trent Guyer from Grasshopper in the US



Lewis Anderson and Mark Rochford were constantly busy on the Rochfords stand meeting professional customers

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HANOVER

November's Agritechnica saw the unveiling of a number of developments likely to have a significant impact on agricultural dealers' businesses – some immediately and others in the longer term. MARTIN RICKATSON was there



Indian machinery giant Mahindra, which made its Agritechnica debut, underlined its expansion places. It now owns part of Finnish combine maker Sampo Rosenlew



Fendt displayed this battery-powered prototype tractor, plus its new crawler lines, round balers and forage wagon product, inherited from Challenger and from Lely

It's hard to pick a single theme from 2017's Agritechnica, the world's largest farm machinery exhibition, held in Hanover, Germany, back in November. From new product lines added by expanding 'full-line' firms to new manufacturers looking to make inroads into European markets, and new concepts likely to influence tomorrow's technology, all are likely, though, to have an impact on dealers' businesses, whether sooner or later and small or significant.

Among the 2,803 companies attending the show were a number doing so for the first time, some with impressive plans. As a \$19bn business operating in 20 industries, including agricultural equipment, India's **Mahindra** certainly has the resources to match its ambitions to tackle the European tractor market. In addition to being the world's largest tractor seller by unit volume, it's already a significant player up to 100hp in certain other western markets such as the USA. At an Agritechnica press conference the firm talked about plans to move further into Europe, and shared its stand with Finnish combine maker Sampo Rosenlew, in which it has purchased a 35% stake, and Turkish tractor firm Armatrac, which it has bought outright.

Also on the stand was a presence from Japan's Mitsubishi, which makes crawlers for Mahindra through a strategic partnership. Plans for Mahindra import arrangements and the recruitment of dealers for Europe, including the UK, were not

confirmed but appear likely soon.

Arbos, the Chinese-funded Italian newcomer, was again present at Agritechnica, two years after making its debut, and says it will be attending LAMMA 2018 in January, where it should be announcing UK import plans and talking to potential dealers. While larger machines are still at the prototype stage, its 100-130hp 5000 series tractors have now entered production, supplemented by a range of reliveried models up to 100hp from Goldoni, which Arbos parent Lovol recently purchased, and which now provides the factory base for all European market Arbos tractors.

It is also offering an implement line comprising drills, precision planters, twin-disc fertiliser spreaders and sprayers, with a new trailed range of the latter launched Agritechnica. Most implements are made in-house at the former factory fo Matermacc, which Lovol has also acquired.

While they have shown some innovative ideas at recent events, western farm machinery giants do not have the market to themselves when it comes to new concepts. Indian maker **Farmtrac** displayed a compact electric/battery-powered

tractor, the first of its type to be developed and built in India, the world's largest tractor market where annual demand for tractors is seeing double-digit growth. Although still in development, the full production version is expected during 2019.

Fendt also displayed a battery-powered prototype, incorporating a Vario CVT powertrain. In place of the engine, exhaust, air and fuel systems and radiator is a battery block, compact electric motor and electric control system. The 100kWh, high-

voltage battery is claimed to charge quickly and store enough power to work for four hours at an average workload.

Of more immediate relevance to Fendt dealers and customers, the company also showed its new crawler lines (the new Fendt tractor-based 900 Vario MT series machines and the for-now-unchanged 1100 MT series, a reliveried Challenger MT800E) plus the round balers and forage wagons it has inherited from parent AGCO's purchase of Lely's forage business –



Another Indian presence was from Farmtrac, which revealed this compact electric/battery-powered tractor, planned for full production in 2019.



New Holland says rebranded NH arable and grassland machinery will be offered to its dealer network, but none will be forced to take it. Kongskilde-branded machines are unaffected

“AMONG THE 2,803 COMPANIES ATTENDING THE SHOW WERE A NUMBER DOING SO FOR THE FIRST TIME, SOME WITH IMPRESSIVE PLANS”

Massey Ferguson will also market the balers but not the wagon. MF and Fendt also showed versions of the Ideal combine detailed in the previous issue of *Service Dealer*.

Fendt also displayed its MARS System, claimed to be the first marketable application of swarm technology in agricultural

engineering, and proposed as a future alternative to large tractors and other machines. The concept is based on the idea that, as precision application and fieldwork become ever more targeted, a number of small, auto-steered and electrically-driven units could be deployed into fields in place of tractors.

Designed in the first instance for crop establishment, the autonomous units are filled with seed by an operator, who monitors their operation. Working at very low noise levels and without lights at night, the units can, as such, operate at any time and in any location without causing disturbance, suggests



Arbos, which plans to be at LAMMA 2018 and has 100-130hp tractors in production, now has a trailed sprayer in its implement line

Fendt. Individual weight is 40kg, and swarms of the machines can be set to coordinate work in the field. They also log job data directly into the Cloud, and communicate with each other and the operator via wireless technology.

Another firm displaying a fuller line of equipment was CNH Industrial's **New Holland** arm, the division which will benefit from its parent's recent purchase of Danish firm Kongskilde's agricultural equipment business. On show was a plough in New Holland tractor blue and a yellow-liveried mower to match the brand's current harvesting line. At a press conference New Holland management suggested that rebranded NH arable and grassland machinery would be offered to its dealer network, but that none would be forced to take it, and that Kongskilde-branded machines would continue to be offered through that brand's present dealers. The new machinery was shown alongside New Holland's

second-generation methane-powered project tractor, which was originally unveiled back at August's Farm Progress show in Decatur, Illinois, with management suggesting development elements from this could be worked into new tractors in the near future.

Claas grabbed a lot of Agritechnica attention for two key reasons: its new telehandler and loading shovel marketing deal with Swiss construction specialist Liebherr, and the extension of its Terra Trac system to include usage on the front of its Jaguar forage harvesters and the rear of its Axiom 900 tractors. By combining a suspended front axle with suspended track units, the Axiom 900 Terra Trac models are said to be the first half-track tractors with full suspension, using individually-suspended rollers. Maximum road travel speed is 25mph. Meanwhile, alongside the new Liebherr-sourced telehandlers – which retain the Scorpion name – was a Claas Torion-

branded line of loading shovels, from smaller livestock unit-targeted machines to those designed for high-output silage, muck and grain work.

Claas also won a gold awards medal for CEMOS Auto Threshing. Depending on the strategy entered into the system by the operator, this sets drum/rotor speed and concave gap for optimum results in real-time harvest conditions.

Zetor dealers can now compete in the 40-70hp sector, following the launch at Agritechnica of two ranges of small tractors, resulting from a deal with South Korean manufacturer TYM. There are 43hp and 49hp Utilix models using three-cylinder engines, and a single 67hp four-cylinder Hortus tractor. Utilix machines have a three-speed hydrostatic transmission, while the Hortus gets a 24 forward/24 reverse mechanical gearbox, with a higher-spec Hortus HS incorporating a powershuttle. The addition of the new tractors gives Zetor a product range that now spans 40 to 160hp.



Thanks to the firm's agreement with Liebherr, alongside a new range of Scorpion telehandlers Claas dealers can now sell a complete range of Torion wheeled loaders.

NEW CLAAS ACADEMY OPENED AT SAXHAM

£1.2 million investment in training

As part of the redevelopment of its Saxham headquarters, CLAAS UK has opened a new purpose-built CLAAS Academy, designed to provide training for dealer sales, service and parts staff, but also customer operator training.

The new CLAAS Academy is the seventh on the Saxham site since the first was opened in 1954, employing just one trainer. Advanced Master Mechanic training was first introduced 20 years ago and highest Master Technician level in 2002. Today, the new CLAAS Academy employs a total of 11 staff and has the capacity to offer over 5,000 training days a year.

In addition to customer operator and dealer sales, service and parts staff training, the CLAAS Academy plays an integral role in the industry-leading four-step training pathway that young apprentices and service mechanics follow.

Currently there are 85 students in the CLAAS UK service and parts apprenticeship scheme. Once they

have completed their formal training at either Reaseheath College or SRUC Barony in Scotland, they will then follow a training pathway of ongoing training, initially as young service mechanics with the opportunity for further training to the higher Master Mechanic or specialist Master Technician levels.

The new CLAAS Academy features extensive classrooms, break-out areas and five workshop areas capable of accommodating the largest CLAAS combines and forage harvesters, and the new facilities will enable trainers to fully demonstrate all the features of the machines to customers and dealer staff.

In all, the new facility contains around £6 million worth of machinery. In addition to formal classroom training, the Academy is developing a new eLearning facility using videos and animations, with two staff dedicated to this new facility which is expected within three years to offer over 20 eLearning programmes.

The company says the Academy is

also setting new standards in the use of bar and QR codes to support self-discovery training, in addition to the introduction of 3D printed training aids.

The number of training programmes has also been increased. A new Sales training programme has been introduced, which mirrors the current Service and Parts training. Full in-house training to OEM level on the full range of third-party engines used within the CLAAS machinery range is to also be offered, using a dedicated workshop.

The new CLAAS Academy was officially opened by Lothar Kriszun, who has recently retired after 36 years with the CLAAS Group, most recently serving on the CLAAS Executive Board, where he was both the official Speaker for the Group and responsible for the CLAAS Tractor division.

“Today, more than ever, training is crucial for the success of CLAAS as a company,” he said. “Trained people in sales and service are the backbone of our reputation.”



Cutting the ribbon on the CLAAS Academy. Front row L-R: Hattie Fletcher, Trevor Tyrrell, CEO CLAAS UK; Bernd Ludewig, Member of the CLAAS Group Executive Board; Terry Clements, Mayor for St Edmundsbury; Vivienne Clements, Mayoress Lothar Kriszun, CLAAS; Thomas Spiering, CFO CLAAS UK; Temi Animasaun

LOOKING FORWARD TO A BUSY WINTER

As part of Service Dealer's 30th Anniversary year we are making a welcome return to a popular feature from years gone by

Emyr Jenkins of Jenkins Garden Machinery has agreed to keep us informed each issue about the ups and downs of the season, as experienced by his family's dealership.

He begins by looking back to the end of last year when, as ever, the weather was dictating the business in the parts and servicing departments . . .

I've always considered September and October to be a strange time of year for our industry.

It's that time of year that follows on from a typically quiet August due to summer holidays and, heading in to autumn, one would think that would be way the trend should continue.

Over the past few years we've seen some mild Septembers which, added together with the quieter month of August, has seen some positive sales figures. This year has been no exception, with sales figures on a par with last year.

The mild early winter has caused one particular problem which seems to occur more and more as the years pass by – people will not allow us to collect their machines for servicing.

The question of "Hello Mr Jones, your machine is due for a winter service, can we collect this week?", is almost always met with the response, "Could we leave it another week or so, I'd like to try to get the last cut done?"



Not having the machines come in had a bit of a knock-on effect on the parts department and the workshop, although a sudden drop in the temperature in October seemed to cure this. We were then inundated with work. As I wrote this at the end of November, our computer system told me we had 172 jobs booked. Although not all of these were here waiting. 59 of them were in the transport section waiting to be collected over the coming weeks.

The drop in temperature also had a positive effect on chainsaw sales and more so on chainsaw accessories. Chainsaw chains and chain oil are sold several times on a daily basis, as are accessories such as files and safety clothing etc.

So, I think I'm on the same page as most garden machinery dealers. I blame the weather for being both too mild and then too cold, but most importantly I'm looking forward to a busy winter on the servicing side.



I'm Emyr and I work at Jenkins Garden Machinery. We're a family-run garden machinery dealership based in South Wales. The business was started in 2010 and we sell, service and repair all manner of garden machinery. I'm married with two children and in my spare time I enjoy playing guitar and bass.

SME DIGEST

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EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS

MONITORING OF STAFF

A recent decision by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights has brought the question of employee monitoring to the forefront of employers' minds once again, says Mark Stevens, Associate at Veale Wasbrough Vizards.

The Grand Chamber in *Barbulescu v Romania* examined the ability of employers to monitor their employees' work email accounts and in particular, the extent to which employers can check whether employees are using email accounts for solely work-related purposes.

The Grand Chamber decision in *Barbulescu v Romania* highlights the fine balance between an employee's

reasonable expectation of privacy and an employer's right to check the activities of those working for them. It was not sufficient for the employer to simply inform the employee that there was an internet usage policy in place but instead, the Grand Chamber found, the employee should also have been made aware of the extent and nature of the monitoring activities that the employer was putting in place.

In the UK, the monitoring of employees is heavily regulated by existing legislation, which places limitations on the powers of employers to monitor their employees' private communications, including the Data Protection Act 1998. The decision reinforced that



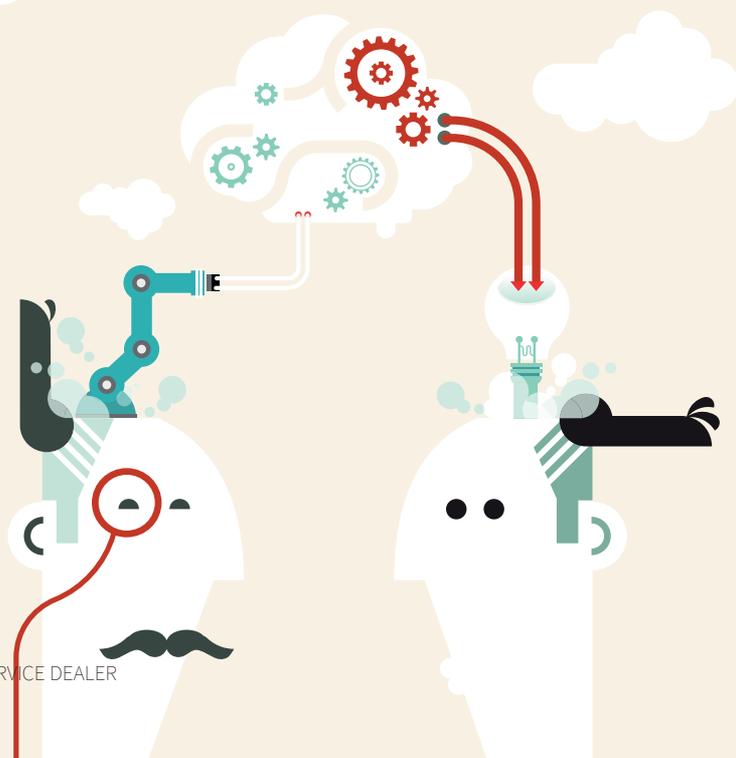
Edited by Adam Bernstein

employers must provide a legitimate reason to justify the monitoring of an employee's communications. This requires some form of assessment to be in place in order to decide whether legitimate reasons are in place.

The importance of an assessment can also be found in the Information Commissioner's Employment Practices Code in the UK. The Code recommends that employers carry out an impact assessment, taking into account factors such as the purpose behind the monitoring and any benefits or adverse effects that arise from this monitoring.

Ultimately employers must be satisfied that they have achieved the correct balance between protecting workers' privacy and the interests of the business. Carrying out an impact assessment in relation to communications monitoring is one way in which employers can demonstrate that they have achieved this. Employers should also ensure they have a communications monitoring policy in place and where possible this should be backed up with specific training on the use of IT and email systems.

Further reading www.nytimes.com/2017/09/05/business/european-court-employers-workers-email.html



PAYMENT OPTIONS

SHUFFLING THE CARDS

Some are wondering if cash is on its way out, writes *Adam Bernstein, SME Digest Editor*.

According to a survey from UK Finance published in August 2017, 10% of adults aged between 25 and 34 shun cash and rely instead on cards and digital payments for their day-to-day spending.

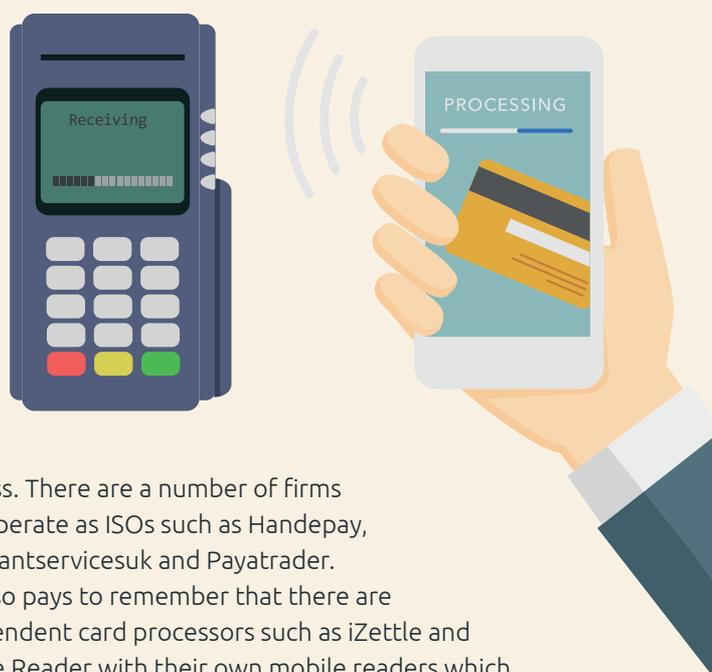
Most firms think of the banks as being the acquirer that processes card transactions. They don't – they resell services offered by others. Santander, for example, sells on behalf of First Data, while Lloyds uses Cardnet. The point is that while the banks are thought of as the experts that own the acquirer services, the reality is much different and it may be possible to get a better deal by going direct.

It's almost impossible to give a charges benchmark as there are so many imponderables such as risk, market power, transaction volume and so on. However, there are options for getting a better deal.

The first is obvious: play hardball and negotiate as long as possible.

The next option is to use what is termed an 'independent sales organisation' (ISO). Officially licensed and approved by the card processors, these firms resell a provider's service en masse – they buy a block of 'service' and through economy of scale get a better deal which is, in theory, passed on.

The advantage here for retailers is that they aren't buying a cheapened look-a-like product; they're buying the same thing that the banks are selling. Even better, because ISOs have the power of many they can, to an extent, insulate their customers from price increases and they also can help with the application



process. There are a number of firms that operate as ISOs such as Handepay, Merchantservicesuk and Payatrader.

It also pays to remember that there are independent card processors such as iZettle and Square Reader with their own mobile readers which are used in conjunction with smartphones.

Online comparison websites such as Cardswitcher and Merchantmachine are helpful. Filling in an online form should garner a comparison of the best deals. Merchantmachine has a long, 93-entry list of the various providers at <https://merchantmachine.co.uk/providers/>.

For the business wanting to switch it's just a question of finding the right deal as subscribing to a new card acquirer boils down to price – the services and terminals are virtually identical and are made by just three firms.

As with any contract, firms should remember to benchmark service and price. They should never accept the first offer as prices can vary by 40%. It's important to consider not just the headline transaction charges but instead the overall cost including terminals, authorisation, non-chip and PIN transactions as well anything else that may be hidden.

From January 2018 firms will no longer be able to charge for accepting cards. This makes it even more important to keep processing costs in check and it's precisely because the web has made prices very transparent that it's very hard to hide the costs of taking cards.



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FIRE SAFETY FACTS

Fire safety is not often uppermost in the mind of many, but when fire strikes it can be utterly destructive, writes *Adam Bernstein, SME Digest Editor*.

The governing legislation for fire safety is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Order applies throughout England and Wales and it covers general fire precautions and other fire safety duties. The Order requires fire precautions to be put in place “where necessary” and to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances.

The responsibility for complying with the Order rests with the ‘responsible person’, and in a workplace, this is the employer and any other person who may have control of any part of the premises, for example an occupier or an owner. The responsible person must carry out a fire risk assessment which must focus on the safety of all relevant people who may be affected by a fire. It should pay particular attention to those at particular risk and must include consideration of any dangerous substances on the premises which may act as an accelerant or explosive (such as gas bottles).

In simple terms, the fire risk assessment is intended to help identify risks that can be removed or reduced and to enable decisions on the fire precautions that need to be taken to reduce risk so far as possible.

It’s clearly important that the responsible person for the premises is fully aware of the need to manage

the premises to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those on site at all times. Staff must be trained to prevent or limit the risk of fire, recognise and neutralise potential fire hazards and to know how to respond to an emergency both individually and collectively, and what actions and communications must be undertaken.

To achieve this, it is not only critical to have good and regularly updated staff training, but also to have robust procedures to avoid fires occurring, to ensure the maintenance of installed fire safety systems, to ensure that emergency escape routes are accessible, and to have clear emergency plans in place so that everyone knows how to respond to a fire if one were to occur.

The responsible person must appoint one or more ‘competent persons’ to assist in undertaking any of the preventative and protective measures required by the Order.

As part of this process, employees must be provided with comprehensive information on the risks to them identified by the fire risk assessment, details of the measures taken to prevent fires, and how these measures will protect them if a fire breaks out.

Finally, fire detection and warning or emergency routes and exits must be regularly maintained by a competent person to ensure they are in good working order.

Further reading

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/fire.htm>

SME NEWS

New data protection advice service

The Information Commissioner’s Office has a new dedicated advice to help small organisations prepare for a new data protection law.

The phone service is aimed at those running small businesses and recognises the particular problems they face getting ready for the new law, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The GDPR replaces the current Data Protection Act and comes into force on 25 May 2018.

There are already resources on the ICO website to help organisations employing fewer than 250 people to prepare for the GDPR, but the new phone line – 0303 123 1113 – will offer additional, personal advice to small organisations that still have questions.

Visit bit.ly/1LTVv2t

Small business and five simple steps to thrive online

UK small businesses can shield themselves from potential online attacks if they follow the steps outlined in a new guide from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).

The *NCSC Small Business Guide* includes five simple steps organisations can follow to improve their cyber security and better protect themselves from loss online. The advice comes in categories focused on backing-up data, using strong passwords, protecting against malware, keeping devices safe and avoiding phishing attacks.

Traders looking to improve their cyber security further can also seek certification under the Cyber Essentials scheme, which helps to protect against common internet threats.

<http://bit.ly/2yELpDN> and bit.ly/2dQH0j2

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COMMERCIAL

ARIENS REACHES THE APEX

New zero-turn mower introduced to UK

The Ariens Company has recently introduced the new APEX zero-turn mower to the UK, which it says is designed and built with the professional in mind.

The company says the machine features well-crafted components, Hydro-Gear transaxles and a robust four-point cutting deck. The unit's frame design comprises large formed tubular rails serving as the backbone to support the loads of the machine.

The 10-gauge steel deck is 14cm deep with a reinforced leading edge providing the airflow needed to tackle tough mowing conditions. It boasts 15 cutting positions in 0.6cm increments. These are selected using a foot-operated deck lift and vertical pin system. There is a

Constant Belt Tension System to ensure the belt is always at the right tension to minimise wear and heat, while providing enhanced belt life with minimal adjustments necessary. The company boasts that large tyres provide superior traction and ride quality.

The mower also benefits from an adjustable high-back seat with padded arm rests helping to reduce operator fatigue. The frame on the APEX can also be fitted with a Rollover Protection System (ROPS) for added protection. It is powered by a Kawasaki V-Twin (726cc) engine.

The APEX zero-turn is available in two models: APEX 48 with a 122cm (48") cutter deck and the APEX 52 with a 132cm (52") cutter deck.



COMMERCIAL

MEGA LAUNCH FROM ELIET

Green waste shredder

PSD Groundscare in association with Eliet have launched the Eliet Mega Prof Shredder.

Featuring a 35hp turbocharged diesel engine and a capacity of up to 16cm, this machine is described by the company as the new flagship of the Eliet range.

Like all the other Eliet shredders, the company says the new machine has the DNA of a real green waste shredder. It features a spacious opening feeding chute and large feed roller, designed to make feeding voluminous green waste more convenient. The unique Axelero discharge system also creates a vacuum effect that assists the entry of fine, bulky and leafy green material.

The patented Eliet chopping principle is a feature of the Mega Prof ensuring the material is cut in the direction of the wood fibres which means there is less power needed to achieve the shredder's top performance.

The unit is also equipped with the Eco Eye as standard. This technology analyses the permanent operation of the shredder and when the machine is non-productive, the speed of the 35hp diesel motor is set to idle. This will result in a lower fuel consumption where over a year the

company claims a saving of up to 200 litres can be achieved.

The Mega Prof has a weight of <750kg, therefore there is no requirement for a special driver's licence to take this machine where required.



DOMESTIC

4-IN-1 OFFERED BY CUB CADET

Options for disposing of grass clippings

Cub Cadet offers a range of mowers with a 4-in-1 grass clippings discharge solution.

A grass bag can be attached to collect the grass clippings at the back, which can then be used to compost or to be applied to borders as a mulch.

Alternatively, the bag can be removed so that the clippings are simply discharged in a fine layer out of the back.



Thirdly, a side deflector (supplied as standard) can be attached to convert the mower into a side discharge machine. The cuttings are dispersed into rows which can either be raked up, or left to dry out in the sun.

The fourth function is the mulching option. When converted into mulching machines, mowers benefit lawns by recycling grass clippings, cutting and re-cutting them into tiny particles, which are then blown downwards into the sward.

Cub Cadet say they have four 4-in-1 lawnmowers within its Force Series; the LM3 CR46s, LM3 CR53s, LM3 DR53es and the LM3 ER53. All of these models feature high wheels for manoeuvrability and to allow them to drive over lush grass and uneven terrain with ease.

When using the collect option, three of the mowers have hard top bags with fill indicators, whilst the LM3 ER53 has a 70l soft bag.

STRAUTMANN COLLECTS AND CARRIES MORE EFFICIENTLY

Wider pick-up and new rotor design

A wider pick-up and a new rotor design have improved the efficiency with which Strautmann's Giga Vitesse CFS 3602 forage wagon collects and carries cut grass.

The wider 2.25m pick-up means that in fields where grass has been poorly raked and left in wide swathes, and around headlands and corners, drivers will find efficient pick-up much easier.

The new rotor design further enhances the action of the CFS by ensuring an even grass density at the outside of the chopper rotor which in turn densely fills the full width of the wagon.

In this new model range, the conveying unit has been completely

revised. The camless pick-up with six V-shaped tine rows is equipped with plastic strippers preventing early tine wear and improving smooth running.

The guide wheels have also been modified; they can remain in position during road travel and do not need to be retracted.

Furthermore, their height adjustment has been made easier, and hence the operating height of the pick-up is now also more easily adjusted.

Unique to Strautmann forage wagons is the CFS roller which is situated between the pick-up and the rotor. It ensures grass is presented evenly and spread across the full width of the chopper rotor.

The new chopper rotor features eight helical rows of feeder tines which convey the material into the cargo space, across a width of 1,600mm. Side augers, 250mm in width, have been incorporated at either end of the rotor. They convey the material from the outsides of the pick-up inwards to the rotor tines. Thus, the working width of the rotor reaches an overall width of 2,100mm.

The rotor drive has also been revised; on the right-hand side, an oil-bath gearbox transmits the tractor power to a planetary gear set integrated in the rotor. Thus, the speed is only reduced at the rotor, which prevents high torques in the power train.



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The Power Behind The Brands



TIMBERWOLF LAUNCHES NEW PETROL RANGE

Professional wood chippers

Timberwolf is extending its low-emission petrol product family, developing further its professional wood chippers, with the launch of a new range.

Impending changes to engine legislation will affect many machines regularly used by arborists, landscapers and estate managers, including chippers.

An ongoing legislation programme to limit emissions from diesel engines is progressing with the next step coming into force on 1st January 2019.

Current diesel engines can continue to be used after this date to power existing equipment, but only Stage V diesel, or alternative fuelled engines, can be supplied on new machines.

The new extended Timberwolf petrol range builds on the equivalent diesel-powered wood chipper series and, says the company, offers all the features that industry professionals demand

At entry level, the TW 160PH is a strong and fast hydraulic chipper that is powered by a 22hp Honda engine. It offers 152mm capacity and features hydraulic feed with auto feed control for easy loading.

It is mounted on an unbraked chassis and has a towing weight of 608kg, allowing transport behind smaller commercial vehicles.

The sub 750kg 6in chipper is now available in petrol and with two engine variants. The TW 230PAHB and TW 230PWHB are high capacity machines suitable to handle large volumes of material, with hydraulic feed and a braked chassis.

With the choice of a 37hp B&S Vanguard V Twin or 32.5hp Kubota WG972 petrol engine, these machines feature 230mm X 160mm feed opening. Quad-force rollers offer crushing power which along with the wide feed opening reduce the need for time-consuming snedding.

Flagship of the new range is the TW 280PHB, which is powered by a Kubota 57hp WG1605 four-cylinder petrol engine. It offers 210mm cutting performance for serious arboriculture and forestry tasks.

With an output of 6.5 tonnes/hour, coupled with a 280mm x 210mm infeed opening with Quad Force rollers, this chipper's 280-degree adjustable discharge allows average size, 18.5mm chips, to be directed precisely to either side of the machine as required.



Guy Marshlain, Timberwolf Sales and Marketing Director says, "Any concerns about the suitability of petrol power for chippers will be instantly allayed by these powerful, economical machines which we believe will offer arborists, landscapers and estate managers outstanding service for many years to come."

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AGRICULTURAL

VIP ENTRANCE

New entry level roller from HE-VA

The new VIP Roller introduces an entry level model to the HE-VA range of rolls, offering high output rolling, while retaining many of the features of the larger models.

Key to the new range is the option to use a larger 620mm ring. The whole frame has been redesigned and has been strengthened to take either 510mm, 560mm or 620mm Cambridge and Breaker rings, which are mounted on 60mm axles to take the extra weight, while ensuring longevity.

Available in working widths from 4.5m to 8.2m, the company says the hydraulic folding rolls preserve the quality HE-VA build but are made to a simpler specification to provide a cost-effective option.

The rolls can be folded and unfolded from the seat of the tractor cab, taking seconds, saving the operator time and hassle. They fold down to 2.45m ensuring straightforward transport. In the completely folded position the weight of the wings is carried between the tractor and transport wheels, improving stability. The



draw bar height is easily adjusted to suit different tractors with a stop bolt.

The HE-VA Special Active Transfer (SAT) system can be factory fitted as an optional extra and is recommended for uneven ground as the system hydraulically spreads the weight across the full width of the rolls giving more even consolidation across all sections of the machine.

The 4.5m VIP roller, with 510mm Cambridge and Breaker rings and road lights fitted as standard, retails at £6,972 + VAT. The SAT system (factory fitted only) is an additional £242+VAT.

DOMESTIC

BOSCH TAKE IT EASYCUT

All-purpose compact and cordless multi-saw launched

Bosch Home and Garden have launched the EasyCut 12, an all-purpose compact and cordless multi-saw.

The company says the product, which was a finalist in this year's RHS Chelsea Garden Product of the Year competition, can cut through branches, and wood with ultimate precision.

The tool runs with minimal vibration. It features a NanoBlade which benefits from a self-tensioning chain, that requires no oil lubrication. This unique technology is a tiny saw blade with a revolving micro-chain, which boasts 44 teeth for a 65mm cutting depth.

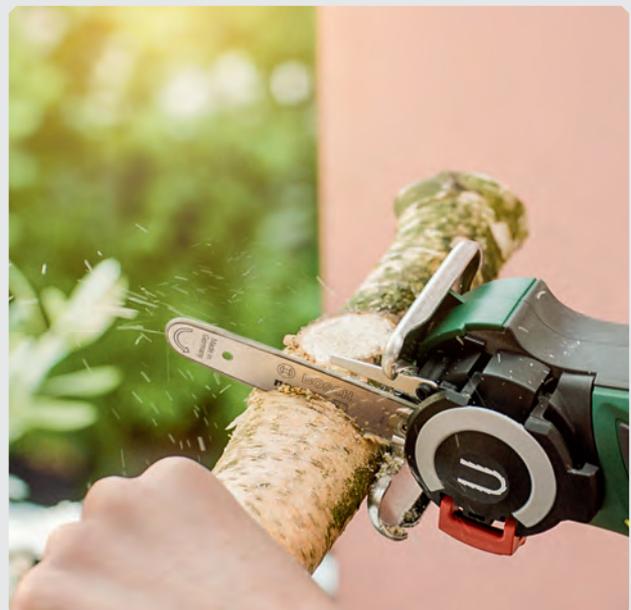
Andrew Booth, Brand Director DIY at Bosch said, "It's the world's first saw of its kind, with over 40 patents on the blade alone. This clearly demonstrates Bosch's continued commitment to innovation, and constantly pushing the boundaries of technology in its Home and Garden products.

"Weighing only 900 grams, we are really proud to launch this portable and versatile mini saw."

Equipped with Lithium-ion technology, the EasyCut 12 is the latest addition to the 12V 'Power for ALL'

family meaning that its 12V battery can be used on a range of 12V Bosch Home and Garden tools.

The EasyCut 12 is priced at £129.99 RRP.



EVENTS 2018

JANUARY 2018

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

FEBRUARY 2018

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

MARCH 2018

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

APRIL 2018

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

MAY 2018

- 7 North Somerset Show, Wraxall, Bristol
www.nsas.org.uk
- 12- Nottinghamshire County Show, Newark Showground
www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com
- 13 Balmoral Show, Belfast
www.balmoralshow.co.uk
- 17 FTMTA Grass & Muck Event, Gurteen Ag College, County Tipperary
<https://ftmta.ie/>
- 17-19 Devon County Show, Westpoint, Clyst St Mary, Exeter
www.devoncountyshow.co.uk
- 22-26 Chelsea Flower Show, London
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 28 Surrey County Show
www.surreycountyshow.co.uk/surrey-county-show
- 30-31 Staffordshire County Show, Staffordshire County Showground
staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show
- 30-31 Suffolk County Show
<http://suffolkshow.co.uk/>
- 30-2/6 Royal Bath & West Show The Showground, Shepton Mallet
www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/

JUNE 2018

- 1-3 Gardening Scotland, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh
www.gardeningscotland.com
- 3 Rutland Show, Rutland Showground
www.rutlandcountyshow.com
- 7-9 Royal Cornwall Show, Royal Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge
www.royalcornwallshow.org
- 7-9 South of England Show, Ardingly, West Sussex
www.seas.org.uk/south-of-england-show
- 13-14 Cereals 2018, Chrishall Grange Duxford, Cambridgeshire
www.cerealsevent.co.uk
- 14-17 BBC Gardeners' World Live - Birmingham NEC
www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com
- 15-17 Royal Three Counties Show, Malvern, Worcestershire
www.royalthreecounties.co.uk
- 19-20 Royal Cheshire County Show, Tabley, near Knutsford
www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 19-21 Salon du Végétal, Nantes, France
www.salonduvegetal.com/pro/en/
- 20-21 Lincolnshire Show, Lincolnshire Showground, Grange-de-Lings, Lincoln
<https://lincolnshireshow.co.uk/>
- 21-24 Royal Highland Show, Royal Highland centre, Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org
- 24 Derbyshire County Show, derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 27-28 Royal Norfolk Show Norfolk Showground, Norwich
www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk

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ARE WE SEEN AS AN 'INDUSTRY' BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC?

Or still simply as a nation of shopkeepers?

This magazine some time ago was dubbed the 'voice of the industry'; but to whom and what is 'the industry'?

There is no question the *Service Dealer* magazine and *Weekly Update* is the place where dealers can keep up to date with what's going on in our business. It's good for the dealer network to feel a part of an overall trade and not feel isolated in their own local parochial cocoon.

But what of the consumer? How do we get our message over to the public regarding what the service dealer network is all about? Are dealers seen as part of Churchill's 'nation of shopkeepers' or are they taken seriously as part of a multi-billion pound worldwide 'industry'?

When the customer walks through the showroom door, very few really know how a lawnmower gets from cad-cam to grass. They don't realise the costs and skills involved, what a dealer does to make sure the grass is well kept, the hedges trim and the trees felled and lopped. The cynical dealer will tell you that the consumer will always find you when they have a technical problem. Well that's good – at least they're finding you. But isn't it time that the dealer network had its own 'voice of the industry'? A point of reference for consumers to learn how service dealers operate? Perhaps a place where we can build a healthy respect for our industry. A voice that can persuade them they don't have to go anywhere else but their local dealer and that garden machinery is a serious industry that needs qualified specialist service!

55 years I've been in the lawnmower business and I want to give something back. The industry-media, manufacturers, distributors, dealers, anybody to do with our network, we all have a duty of care towards those establishing their careers in dealerships.

Then there is the concern about not being able to attract new blood. When there is interest what guarantees are given that there is a long-term 'industry' career in it for them? There's lots of excellent talent around and more emerging, but will that talent still be in the business years from now?

The young 23 year-old man who won the 2017 Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year Award is a bright prospect –talented business head, articulate, savvy and more. I know, because I sat beside him at the recent *Service Dealer* awards ceremony and he is impressive. The industry needs to make sure he's not lost to it and that his young company flourishes and grows.

We all know there are lots of changes going

on, a shift in the type of products being offered, the threats dealerships feel. Dealers can adapt. There is a future if we make sure we broadcast our message clearly and forcefully to the public that we are a force, that we are an 'industry'.

I am going to use this moment to say I truly believe the vehicle to start portraying the dealer network to the public as an 'industry' is the *Garden Trader* website. Yes, we want to use it to persuade customers through individual dealer doors, but surely the main thrust of the site is to name you the dealer as the expert where service comes first. For them to recognise and respect you for what you really are, professional, customer-oriented, educated, trained, trustworthy, available and easy to do business with.

Given the right support from manufacturers and the dealer network, *Garden Trader* can become the true dealer 'Voice of the Industry' to the consumer.

Having spoken to a few dealers on the subject recently, they agree, dealers are not seen as an industry by the public. Do you really want to remain as one of Churchill's nation of shopkeepers?

You can be an independent, non-corporate and still be part of the bigger picture!



JIM GREEN



A VIBRANT INDUSTRY

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

A great to end to last year sets this new one up nicely

The back end of 2017 offered up some excellent opportunities for the industry to come together and celebrate what a thriving, forward thinking and vibrant sector this is.

The *Service Dealer* Conference and Awards in November once again proved to be a marvellous opportunity to both share ideas and expertise and to celebrate excellence. The Conference at the Oxford Belfry struck a hopeful, positive note, choosing not to dwell on the doom and gloom which had pervaded the media so much last year.

The tone was set by *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke, who opened the day by telling the assembled dealers, "Businesses like yours are the engine room of the UK economy. Despite all this general uncertainty and negativity, our sector, like the majority of SME's in the UK, is more than surviving.

"We mustn't lose sight of the fact that we do some things very well in the UK and if we can deal with the rapidly changing landscape and technologies, then things might not be too bad after all."

Throughout the day dealers contributed to the discussions proving how companies around the UK are finding innovative ways to make valuable contributions to their local communities – and in so doing cause their businesses to thrive.

Dealers were telling stories of how social media use

had led to them, not necessarily making a direct sale immediately, but rather raising their profile amongst the community. They were getting themselves known as the local experts, the local independent good guys. Twitter, Facebook and the like were giving dealers another tool to get themselves a reputation as a genuine alternative to the corporate behemoths up the roads. The stories were inspiring.

SALTEX also proved to be a very positive couple of days. In its third year at the NEC, the IOG hit the near perfect mix of making the show satisfying for both visitors and exhibitors.

The show reflected this forward-thinking, modern industry which both dealers and suppliers are trying so hard to promote. Well, that most are trying to promote. Some still seem to think that underwear-clad young women draped over machinery is normal! Cough...no it isn't...cough.

But that aside, going into this year, which is the 30th I've been associated with this esteemed publication, I'm as hopeful as I've ever been!



DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

MIXING IT UP

Man turns old mower into a giant blender!

In a strangely mesmerising video which clocked up over 100K views online, a man who no longer needs his lawnmower, filmed himself converting it into a giant blender and dropping things into it – in super slow motion!

The chap is an undeniably talented engineer as he makes a very good job of his, utterly pointless, conversion.

Giacco Whatever (possibly not his real name) said, "I could have sold it [the mower] for a couple hundred



dollars but then I had the idea of making a mega blender. Of course, I made the mega blender!"

You can watch the video at tinyurl.com/yqc5homt



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