

30
YEARS
1988-2018

SERVICE DEALER

Trailblazer
Apprenticeships
Workshop outlines new
standards

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY
SEP / OCT 18

Forestry
Machinery

APF Exhibition and new
equipment

Flashback

2004-2007 in review

OVER 50 YEARS AND GOING STRONG

Mark Smith of Ron Smith & Co says the company established by his father in 1967 is now finding success with battery and robotic products



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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the September/October 2018 edition of *Service Dealer*.

I'm writing this introduction in the midst of the UK experiencing one of the longest, hottest, driest spells the country has seen for many years. Will 2018 end up being spoken about in the same terms as 1976? Time will tell, but certainly the summer months this year will go down as an incredibly trying time for the dealer network.

Some of the comments which our *Business Confidence* survey generated recently (reported on page 34) do not make for pleasant reading. When dealers are saying things such as "No sales, minimal repair work – it's like December but with sunshine," or "I am not making enough money for me or my wife to take a wage" – you know something is seriously up.

Throw into this mix the distraction of the World Cup and continuing Brexit uncertainty and one can see how that famous dealer resilience really has been tested this season.

But as always, resilience is the name of the game. The rain will fall again and the grass will need cutting. It's a question of being able to tough it out until then. Some dealers talk of using this enforced quiet period as an opportunity to regroup and plan how to make the best of the opportunities when they do eventually come.

Hopefully the season will extend on further into the year, making it possible for dealers, many of whom tell us they actually had a great start to 2018, to make up for lost summer ground.



www.servicedealer.co.uk

OUR PEOPLE

PUBLISHER
DUNCAN MURRAY-CLARKE

EDITOR
STEVE GIBBS
steve@servicedealer.co.uk

FEATURES EDITOR
MARTIN RICKATSON
jmr.agriculture@gmail.com

CONSULTANT EDITOR
CHRIS BIDDLE
chris.biddle@btinternet.com

SME DIGEST EDITOR
ADAM BERNSTEIN
adam@adambernstein.co.uk

CONTRIBUTOR
LAURENCE GALE
laurence.gale@btinternet.com

PRODUCED BY
THE AD PLAIN LTD
*Pipe House, Lupton Road, Wallingford,
Oxfordshire,
OX10 9BS, UK
01491 837 117
www.theadplain.com
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The Ad Plain on behalf of Land Power
Publications LLP*

DESIGN & LAYOUT
ALEX FAULKNER

ADVERTISING SALES
SUSAN PALLETT
susan@theadplain.com
07973 507 174

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INDUSTRY

DUNCAN MARTIN RETIRES FROM STIGA UK

Gary Whitney takes over

Duncan Martin, Managing Director of STIGA UK Limited has said he is taking time out to develop his other interests, following his 44 years in the industry.

Georg Metz, STIGA Chairman and Group CEO announced that the role of Managing Director of STIGA in the UK is passing into the hands of Gary Whitney whose experience within the industry and at STIGA Limited ensures continuity and a seamless senior management transition.

Gary will be supported by the team in Plymouth as he continues to develop the STIGA business.

Duncan said, "I am pleased Georg has decided to hand the management of STIGA Limited to Gary. I have known and worked with Gary for more years than I care to remember. He has the ethos and commitment necessary to continue developing our business for the future.

"I can honestly say I've had a fabulous time during my tenure with this company and the industry as a whole. I've been lucky enough to work with great colleagues and develop our business. The current team at STIGA Limited are in my opinion the best team I've had the pleasure to work with. I've also met numerous great customers many of whom have become good friends.

"As I shift my focus onto new ventures, I wish Gary, as well as the staff and customers of STIGA Limited, continued success in the future."

Georg Metz, STIGA Chairman and Group CEO, said, "I would like to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that Duncan has made to our UK business, guiding the company over many years of continuous growth. He has an enviable reputation and success record which is something we know he is justifiably extremely proud of."



Duncan Martin



Gary Whitney

DEALERS

MST OPENS NEW SOMERSET DEALERSHIP

New premises in South Petherton

The brand new Massey Ferguson dealership for Somerset had its grand opening recently.

The new Somerset depot is the latest investment for MST which forms part of its ambitious long-term plans.

The company has opened its new premises in South Petherton where an experienced team are providing Massey Ferguson sales, parts and servicing support to new and established customers, as well as a wide range of complementary agricultural and ground-care products.

MST, which can trace its roots in the agricultural industry back to 1830, has partnered Massey Ferguson for

the entire 60 years since the tractor brand was launched.

With already well-established and successful depots in Lee Mill near Plymouth and Tiverton in mid-Devon, MST says it now runs the largest, most experienced Massey Ferguson dealership in the South West.

Nigel Godefroy, Director at MST, said, "We're proud to have been selling and servicing Massey Ferguson tractors and equipment for 60 years and are delighted to be able to bring our experience and expertise to Somerset.

"We look forward to providing our new and existing customers alike with outstanding customer service when they need it most."



The new South Petherton premises

APPOINTMENTS

NEW HOLLAND APPOINTS SENIOR ROLE FROM DEALER NETWORK

T H White's Pat Smith becomes Business Director UK & ROI

Pat Smith has joined New Holland as Business Director UK & ROI upon the retirement of Andrew Watson, after 31 years with the company.

Pat joined from T H White Ltd, one of New Holland's leading dealers, where he worked for the past 34 years. His most recent position at T H White was Divisional Director, looking after Agriculture and Construction, based in Tetbury, Gloucestershire. Pat will oversee sales, marketing and service for the New Holland brand in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Pat said, "I'm looking forward to the challenge of this new role and I'm lucky to be working with a great team of people both here at New Holland and throughout our dealer network. We, along with our dealers, will continue to build and invest in the brand to make the customer experience even better. We have already had a successful dealer meeting where we outlined our strategy and vision."

A dealer meeting was held in Basildon during June to welcome Pat in his new role and introduce him to the whole dealer network. Dealer principals attended, along with all New Holland UK staff, the Vice President of New Holland EMEA Alessandro Maritano and the Brand President Carlo Lambro.



APPOINTMENTS

ARIENS PROMOTES DARREN SPENCER

And announces changes to the international business organisation

Ariens Company has announced several organisational changes to the international business, which it says are aimed at “putting more focus on the specific needs of the international market in the long term.”

In a statement issued from its Brillion, Wisconsin HQ, Larry Weyers, President, Ariens Power Equipment said, “As we approach a new fiscal year we have an opportunity to assess our business structure and make adjustments as part of our continuous improvement process.”

In the United Kingdom, Darren Spencer has been promoted to Vice President – EMEA and Asia. Darren will have oversight and responsibility for all operations and business within Ariens UK and Ariens Scandinavia as

well as developing business within Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

Darren has been with Ariens Company (through the Countax acquisition) since 1990 and has held various positions within the company, most recently as European Managing Director.

The company has also said it is reorganising its international business to have “solid line reporting relationships directly to the businesses which they support”. Accordingly, this will see the leaders in areas such as the supply chain, HR, operations, sales and marketing report directly to Darren Spencer.

Additionally, John Horn has decided to announce his retirement at the end of the calendar year.



Darren Spencer

During this transition, John will still partner with the Ariens UK and Ariens Scandinavia team and lead sales efforts. “We congratulate John on his upcoming retirement,” says Larry Weyers, “and thank him for his dedication and years of service with Ariens Company.”

In the Americas, Ron Marcellus has been promoted to senior Vice President of sales – Americas.

“I’m confident that these organisational changes and promotions will continue to position us for global success for the next fiscal year and beyond,” said Larry Weyers.

INDUSTRY

EGO PUBLISH WHITEPAPER

On lithium-ion battery versus petrol-powered outdoor equipment

Cordless outdoor power equipment manufacturer EGO has published a new whitepaper that looks at the benefits of lithium-ion battery versus petrol-powered outdoor equipment.

Steve Roskell, Marketing Director (EMEA) of EGO said, “In the world of professional landscaping and grounds maintenance, petrol has been the fuel of choice for over 100 years, mainly because there has been no viable challenger. Recently, however, battery-powered cordless equipment has begun to gain worldwide popularity and increased market share, signalling the most significant shift in the sector for decades.”

EGO says there are four key factors driving this trend: health and safety, user comfort, the environment, and economics, all of which were outlined in a dedicated whitepaper commissioned by themselves, which looks at how to increase safety, productivity, sustainability and cost-effectiveness in commercial gardening.

EGO says its whitepaper provides “extensive evidence of the potential risks posed by petrol to user health and the environment and the benefits of battery-powered tools to company cashflow”.

Steve continues, “In each of these areas, the benefits of lithium-ion

batteries over petrol are overwhelming. Moreover, the emergence of new-generation batteries and equipment by global manufacturers such as EGO means that lithium-ion batteries can now match or even surpass the performance of petrol, without any of the drawbacks.”

To download the whitepaper via the EGO Power Plus website visit egopowerplus.co.uk/whitepaper



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AWARD FOR SERVICE DEALER'S MARTIN

Photography prize presented at Cereals event

Service Dealer's freelance Features Editor Martin Rickatson was awarded the British Guild of Agricultural Journalists' Arable Photography Award at the BGAJ reception held after the first day of Cereals 2018, the arable farming event held near Cambridge.

Taken in an early evening sunset last summer after a day spent not far from the event site visiting a combine operator to discover how his machine was performing, the winning picture was published in the German magazine *Profi*.

All at *Service Dealer* offer our wholehearted congratulations to Martin!



INDUSTRY

RADIO CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY GARDEN TRADER

Promoting signed-up dealers

Garden Trader recently launched two regional radio test campaigns to promote the dealers who have signed up to the site.

The two- and three-week test campaigns consisted of 20- and 10-second spot lengths and took place in the West Midlands through Sunshine Radio and in North West Yorkshire through Stray FM.

Garden Trader owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke, had previously announced that all revenue received will be reinvested into the site and used for promoting the dealers.

Duncan commented, "Despite the weather, site traffic levels are high, peaking at 50,000 impressions per month mainly through PPC, social media boosting and organic growth. We wanted to test radio as we know that this can be an effective medium for promoting dealers. The two regions chosen have a fair demographic as well as a good population of Garden Trader-listed dealers. What's more the ads that are running are no-nonsense and straight to the point about using a skilled dealer for a product purchase or service."

Garden Trader has over 185 subscribed dealers nationally with more joining every week. Duncan added, "Garden Trader is there to promote our skilled dealer base in the UK and we have more announcements to make in the coming weeks which will clearly demonstrate our commitment to the dealers who have subscribed."



DEALERS

BARTRAM MOWERS TAKES ON GRASSHOPPER

Latest dealer appointment by Scamblers

Scamblers of Bourn, Cambridge, has welcomed on board Bartram Mowers as its latest dealer to take on the Grasshopper franchise, covering the Suffolk area.

Adrian Kersey of Bartrams said, "We have dealt with Scamblers for many years and are pleased to be selling the Grasshopper range of diesel and petrol zero-turns and upfronts."

"We decided to take on the franchise after exhibiting at the Suffolk Show and receiving a very positive response from contractors and councils. We now look forward to promoting the products around the Suffolk area."



Adrian Kersey and Martyn Keeling of Bartram Mowers

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SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY
SINCE 1988

CONFERENCE + AWARDS

2018

THE DEALER OF THE YEAR TITLE COULD BE YOURS!

*Nominations open for 2018's competition
until 23rd September*

This year's prestigious Dealer Of The Year awards ceremony takes place at the Oxford Belfry Hotel on the evening of Thursday 15th November. As ever it will make a thrilling and enjoyable end to a day which will have earlier seen the *Service Dealer* Conference enthral our dealer delegates.

Following on from the day's events which this year are entitled, *To 2048: Insights for our Industry – Helping you to prosper over the next 30 years*, the awards ceremony has established itself as an important date in the industry diary. It gives an opportunity to network, share stories, discuss business challenges and most of all share a delightful evening with friends and colleagues.

There is still time to make sure your dealership is in the running for one of these highly regarded accolades which recognise excellence in the independent outdoor machinery dealer sector. We are taking nominations via our website at www.servicedealer.co.uk until 23rd September, so don't delay.

Our core dealer awards this year will be presented to the:

- GARDEN MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR
- PROFESSIONAL TURFCARE DEALER OF THE YEAR
- FARM MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR
- FORESTRY EQUIPMENT DEALER OF THE YEAR
- ATV/QUAD DEALER OF THE YEAR

There are two ways for a dealership to be in the running for these honours:

- 1. Manufacturers** – nominate your dealers that you feel best deserve this public recognition!
- 2. Dealers** – you know how good you are, so nominate your own dealership!

Once your dealership is in the running for the Dealer of the Year awards, assessment will be made via feedback from the most important people to your business – your customers. We will send you a link which you can email to your customers which will take them to a page on our website where they can submit comments in favour of your dealership. We will also provide you with a logo you can add to your own website and a Word document you can print off and hand out at your premises.

Winning one of the Dealer Of The Year titles would give you ample opportunity to gain PR in your local press and to promote yourselves to new and current customers. National industry recognition really is something to shout about.

INSIGHTS FOR OUR INDUSTRY

▶ 2048

HELPING YOU TO PROSPER OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS

Other awards

As well as the Dealer of the Year titles, which will include a prize for **Overall Dealer of the Year**, this year we shall once again be presenting two honours recognising key members of your dealership's team. These are:

2018 STAR OF THE DEALERSHIP AWARD

Dealers are asked to nominate a member of staff from the sales, parts, service or support team who has demonstrated exceptional skills, commitment to customer service or any other compelling reason during the 2018 season – and is deserving of industry recognition.

EARLYBIRD TICKET OFFER ENDING SOON

Take advantage of the special priced tickets for the Conference and Awards

Service Dealer hopes to see as many of our readers as possible at the Oxford Belfry Hotel on Thursday 15th November for our Annual Conference and Dealer Of The Year Awards evening dinner.

To make sure of your place at these not to be missed events you can take advantage of very special Earlybird priced tickets which are currently available from www.servicedealer.co.uk. However, make sure you act soon as the discounted tickets are limited.

The Conference is intended for dealers supplying and/or servicing the garden machinery, professional turfcare, farm machinery and outdoor power equipment industries – therefore registration for the conference is strictly for dealers only.

The Earlybird price for a dealer attending the Conference only is £120 (full price £195).

If a dealer wants to attend both the Conference and the Awards dinner the Earlybird price is £200 (full price £260).

Entry to just the Awards dinner is open to everyone (dealers, manufacturers and suppliers). Earlybird price for this is £85 (full price £99). Tables for 10 people are also available for £850. All of these mentioned prices exclude VAT.

There is also a special Conference Rate available for Bed & Breakfast at the Oxford Belfry Hotel. To claim this offer please call the central reservations team at the hotel on 0845 074 0060 and quote The Ad Plain – 15/11/2018.

2018 APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

Similarly, we wish to recognise an apprentice who, during the 2018 season has demonstrated the desire, willingness and ability to progress within the dealership and the industry.

You can nominate deserving candidates for both these awards on our website now.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The judging panel will once again this year be paying special honour to an individual who has made a significant contribution to our industry over the course of a distinguished career.

Please visit www.servicedealer.co.uk and head to the 2018 Conference and Awards section where you'll find all the information you need to get your dealership in the running for one of these major prizes.



OUR 2018 SPONSORS

The following organisations have confirmed their sponsorship of the 2018 *Service Dealer* Conference and Awards. We'd like to welcome them on board and thank them for their support and input.



Sponsorship correct at the time of print

TRAILBLAZER APPRENTICESHIPS EXPLAINED

Over 50 dealers and industry representatives attended a full-day workshop outlining the new Trailblazer Apprenticeship standards at Pershore College recently. CHRIS BIDDLE reports

The full-day workshop outlining the new Trailblazer Apprenticeship standards took place at Pershore College on Tuesday 10th July 2018.

Chaired by Alastair Taylor (CEO IAgRE), the event was organised by LE-TEC (Landbased Engineering Training and Education Committee Ltd), the umbrella organisation set up by the Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA), British Agricultural and Garden Machinery Association (BAGMA) and the Institution of Agricultural Engineers (IAgRE).

Industry Consultant David Kirschner set the scene by outlining the obstacles that the industry had encountered since the publication of the *Richard Report* in 2012 which set out changes to the Apprenticeship framework.

“Responsibility has passed through four different Government departments and five Ministers responsible for Apprenticeships,” he said. “Since 2013 when we first got involved, there have been numerous forced amendments and rewrites until we got final approval for industry specific standards this year – all at a cost of more than £60,000 to LE-TEC.

“There are now two Land-based Engineering approved Trailblazer apprenticeships, Level 2 LBSE Service Engineer Apprentice (18 – 24 months) and Level 3 LBSE Technician Apprentice (36 – 48 months). All you need to know about each Trailblazer is outlined in two documents, The Apprenticeship Standard and The Apprenticeship Assessment Plan. All Standards and Assessment Plans have had to be approved and published by the Institute For Apprenticeships (IfA) otherwise no apprenticeship.”

All Trailblazer apprenticeship documents can be viewed on the IfA website: www.instituteforapprenticeships.org

Presenting a practical view on the challenges that face dealers, Glen Nash, Service Support Manager at the Turney Group said, “There’s a lack of skilled people to recruit so we’ve gone the route of ‘grow your own’ not only in the industry but also in our way of doing things as well, to get the right culture and mindset. We try to take on apprentices most years but if there are no good candidates, we don’t. The art is to screen candidates very carefully, and far too often we find that basic understanding of maths and English is not as good as it should be.

“We often ask them to bring in photos and details of any engineering projects they have done at home or in their spare time, and that often provides a good indication of their natural talents. But sometimes it’s the simple things that hinder progress, for instance we like to send apprentices away to college on ‘block release courses’ but we’ve had cases where they are ‘home-birds’ and miss Mum’s cooking too much!

“We’ve no hesitation on sending apprentices on manufacturers’ courses, which are usually reserved for trained technicians, but if they’ve got potential then it’s a great way of furthering their education.”

Glen said that the pay rates offered at Turney Group were rarely a block to recruitment. “We’re in the Thames Valley, a region of high employment, but we’ve benchmarked our pay grades against other similar industries and we found that we compared very favourably, so money is rarely an issue.

“We also use the National Apprenticeship Service website to recruit, which has proved to be very useful from time to time.”

Finally, he said, “Accept apprentices will make mistakes, they will break things, but the important thing is to provide full support, and don’t send them home unhappy if you can help it!”

The meeting also featured presentations from Mark Eden, Interim Director of Workbased Learning for Warwickshire Colleges, that provided a trainer provider view; an explanation of End Point Assessments from Sally Green of City & Guilds, who was supported by Steve Walker from Ofqual on External Quality Assurance protocols.



More than 50 dealers and industry representatives attended the meeting at Pershore College

CITY & GUILDS MEDALS FOR EXCELLENCE AWARDED TO TWO INDUSTRY MEMBERS

Presented at the Trailblazer Apprentice event at Pershore College, writes CHRIS BIDDLE

Just 200 of the prestigious City & Guilds Medals for Excellence are awarded worldwide each year to students, lecturers and City & Guilds staff in recognition of exceptional work. They recognise not only excellent results but also reflect a true journey of progression throughout their qualification.

This year, two representatives of the landbased engineering sector, Luke Hill of Ernest Doe and Matt Davis of Kubota UK, have been

awarded Medals of Excellence. Both have gained Level 2 Diplomas in Work-based Landbased Engineering (Groundcare) at the same college, Evesham College (part of the Warwickshire Colleges Group).

The medals were presented at Pershore College during the Apprenticeship Standards in Landbased Engineering workshop.

Sally Green, City & Guilds Development Manager said, "It's very rare that two winners of our annual

Medals for Excellence should come from the same industry sector, let alone the same college."

Luke Hill joined Ernest Doe, Benington branch three years ago from school. Barry Prior, Groundscare Service Manager at Benington said, "This is a thoroughly well-deserved Award. Although quietly spoken, Luke is a popular member of our team, absorbs information very well and has shown a tremendous willingness to learn. He is sure to make a first-rate fully-qualified technician."

Matt Davis originally went to university to study criminology with a view to joining the police. However, during his course he became somewhat unconvinced by his career choice and decided to look at alternative options. His father, Neil, is Service Director at Kubota dealership Lister Wilder Reading, and he spent a few months in the dealership before taking up the offer of an apprenticeship in Kubota's Service and Training department.

Commenting, Matt said "I'm extremely proud to have won this award which recognises the hard work I've put into my Level 2 qualification. I've really enjoyed my experience as an apprentice and would like to express my thanks and gratitude to my tutor at Pershore, Darren Layton, for his expert guidance, teaching and passion for landbased service engineering.

"Being an apprentice has given me the foundation for a long and successful career – and the opportunity to be earning whilst learning."



Matt Davis (right) pictured with (l to r) Martin Tyler (Kubota), Sally Green (City & Guilds) and Mike Bywater (Kubota)



Luke Hill (second left) pictured with Sally Green (City & Guilds) and Mark Eden (Warwickshire Colleges)

DEALER'S TRACTOR SCHOLARSHIP RETURNS

Partnering Duchy College Rosewarne

A Cornish family-run machinery dealership is continuing to support the next generation of land-based engineers with the launch of the third year of its successful scholarship.

Vincent Tractors and Plant, based in Fraddon, has 52 years' experience in the agricultural engineering industry and is keen to share this knowledge by partnering Duchy College Rosewarne.

The successful applicant of the scholarship gets a work placement at Vincent Tractors & Plant as well as £1,500 worth of sponsorship in the form of tools, a laptop, a telehandler licence and travel to their training on Duchy College's Level 2 land-based engineering certificate.

According to Paul Vincent, Vincent Tractors and Plant MD, this unique opportunity in Cornwall offers an entry route into a sector that has great career opportunities due to the unique skills required.

"We're providing the scholarship as we want to encourage youngsters into the industry as it's vitally important that the next generation of engineers is trained to a high standard," he explained.

Last year's successful applicant, Morgan Gratrix, 17 from Camborne, explained what benefits the scholarship has provided him. "I spend two days a week at the depot on work placement and three days a week in college. At Vincent's I learn from a variety of team members about a wide range of machinery. I've received a tool voucher to help me towards equipment, I've completed my

telehandler test and they help me with my transport to college.

"The scholarship has broadened my horizons – I've learnt about not only ground care, but tractors, agricultural machinery and plant as well."

The scholarship ran for the first time in 2016 and since then has seen the student, Aidan Kent, 18 from Nanpean, progressing on to study an apprenticeship within the company.

The course at Duchy College provides students with all the skills and experience they need to forge a successful career in land-based service engineering or to branch out into other fields such as becoming a construction plant engineer or off-shore engineer.

Danny Sellors, Program Manager for land-based engineering at the College, said he was "thrilled" that Vincent Tractors and Plant has continued to offer the scholarship.

"It shows the close ties that the course has with industry," he continued.

"Land-based engineering is extremely diverse, it covers agriculture, forestry, construction plant equipment, horticulture and professional ground care. It's a rapidly evolving industry that's seeing technological advancements at an outstanding pace. Duchy College is a perfect setting to study for a career in this valuable and rewarding industry."



Brian Kessell (Land-based engineering tutor, Duchy College), Danny Sellors (Land-based engineering Program Manager), Aidan Kent (Scholarship 2016), Morgan Gratrix (Scholarship 2017), Nick Vincent (Vincent Tractors & Plant Construction Sales and Logistics) Ken Vincent, (Founder) and Paul Vincent (Vincent Tractors & Plant MD)

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REASEHEATH COLLEGE SECURES £15M FUNDING

To support expansion

One of the top specialist landbased colleges in the UK, Reaseheath College in Cheshire has secured a £15 million funding facility from the education division at Santander Corporate and Commercial, to continue its programme of expansion.

The new £15 million funding follows an initial refinancing package of £14.5 million provided by Santander in 2017.

Reaseheath is a national leader for industry training in areas such as agricultural engineering, horticulture, food technology, agriculture and animal management. Its facilities include a licensed food centre, an animal centre with zoo, a commercial farm and an equestrian centre.

The college is currently undergoing an £80 million redevelopment programme which includes an Advanced Engineering and Agri-Tech Centre, further on-site Halls of Residence, a Sports Science and Performance Academy and an upgrade to its University Centre.

The current investment into facilities and learning resources has also been supported by funding received

from the Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership.

Graeme Lavery, Reaseheath's Chief Finance Officer and Director of Resources, said, "We've been delighted with the support provided by Santander. The series of new capital developments that we have underway are important for the ongoing success of the college.

"Our aim is to provide the highest quality facilities both for our students and for our employer partners. This ensures that we can continue to achieve our main objective, which is to fully prepare our students for their future careers."

John Ramsay, Relationship Director in Santander's Education Team, commented, "We're delighted to support Reaseheath College with this funding and look forward to helping it achieve its goal of expanding nationally and internationally.

"Reaseheath has a strong reputation in a number of key areas and its relationship with local and national businesses has been a key driver in its growth."



Reaseheath College specialised in landbased engineering courses



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OVER 50 YEARS AND GOING STRONG

Mark Smith, who now runs the company that his father Ron and late mother Gina established in 1967, talks to Laurence Gale Msc, MBPR, about the history of the Ron Smith & Co dealership, the success they are finding with battery and robotic products and his thoughts on online selling.

Ron Smith & Co is a family-run business, with 50 years' experience in selling and servicing garden machinery. The company has grown, since being established by Ron Smith in 1967, to now boast over forty employees and branches in both Worcester and Hereford.

A recent trip to their Worcester branch enabled me the opportunity to meet Ron and his son Mark who now runs the business. Mark and I spoke about how the company has grown and adapted to the ongoing changes and challenges of the amenity grass sector industry.

Service Dealer: When did the company first start?

Mark Smith: My dad began his career in 1960 when he attended his first service course - this was at R.A. Lister, the historic Cotwolds-based agricultural machinery manufacturer, headquartered in Dursley, Gloucestershire. He then changed jobs and furthered his engineering experiences working for JC Bakers an agricultural engineering company in Worcester. However, an opportunity arose for him to set up his own mower repair business in 1967 - starting up looking after both

commercial and domestic customers. His wife Gina used to do all the bookwork for him and collected spare parts from suppliers, whilst bringing up myself and my sister.

As the business grew, the logical step was to offer mowers and tools for sale. One of his first customers was Worcester City County Cricket Ground, for whom he serviced and repaired their fleet of mowers. Word soon got around and before long he was inundated with a lot more local work. He even got a call from the famous Cadbury family to service their fleet of mowers.

With the business growing, he soon took the opportunity to buy his first premises In Newtown Road and before long was taking on sales staff and mechanics to help with the additional workload.

Some of the first products he sold in the early days were the Homelite range of mowers and chainsaws. He soon followed this with his first sale of a Toro ride-on lawnmower to Bromyard Cricket Club. The company then began stocking more and more equipment which included the Westwood range of ride-on mowers.

In 1989 I joined the company having learnt my management skills working for the Plumb Centre a part of Wolseley Hughes Group Company. I never had an interest





Mark Smith with his Dad and company Founder, Ron

in dad's business but once I had tasted success in business management I could see the potential for the company. As a lad I got the chance to help out and attend the many local shows we attended, including the Malvern Three Counties.

SD: What is your role in the company?

MS: My role is sales director and I have effectively taken over the reins of the company, although my dad still enjoys being involved and keeps me in check. I basically oversee the total running of the business and oversee the work of our 42 members of staff.

I really enjoy the day to day work required to keep both showrooms well stocked and able to meet our customers' needs. I also enjoy meeting and dealing with our suppliers and attending industry shows as well as showcasing our range of products at some local annual shows, such as Malvern.

SD: What products do you stock and sell in your stores?

MS: Our showrooms contain over 2,500 different machines and product lines with a large investment value. We stock a large range of well-known power tools, mowers, tractors and sundries. In no particular order we stock Stihl, Viking, Husqvarna, Westwood, Countax, Kubota, Cobra, Club Cadet, Honda, Etesia, ECHO, Lawnflite, Mountfield, Toro, Stiga, Etesia and Pellenc to name a few.

SD: Who is your customer base?

MS: We have most areas of the amenity sector covered, ranging from professional groundsmen to schools, universities, councils, contractors, estates, golf clubs and

small landowners. On the domestic front there seem to be no boundaries, more and more customers are happy to invest in better quality mowers and powered tools. The power of the internet is continuing to bring in new customers. However, like most well run, caring businesses you tend to get a lot of new trade from recommendations. If the customer gets a good service, they are more likely to stay loyal and we therefore enjoy a lot of repeat business.

SD: How has the 2018 season gone for you so far?

MS: Very well. Like most dealers we had a slow start due to the adverse spring weather. Currently, as we're speaking at the end of July, we're seeing a slowing down of mowing requirements due to the current spell of hot dry weather. However, once the rains come we have no doubt we'll get back into full swing.

The days are gone of seasonal trends - we tend to be busy all year round. We do focus a lot of our time and commit a fair amount of our resources on Pre Delivery Inspections (PDI). We use Aspen fuel for these. We advise customers to continue to use Aspen as we believe it has several advantages over 'pump' petrol, such as being cleaner and providing optimum protection for their machinery, while also being storage stable for five years.

We have found that by spending time undertaking PDI's and making sure the products are ready for use, we tend not to get many returns and it saves us a lot of wasted time and fuss for our customers.

SD: Are you happy to demo machines for customers?

MS: Yes, like most dealers up and down the country we are happy to do this to ensure our customers get the right machine for their needs. These demos tend to be related to larger cost items such as ride-on mowers, tractors and

utility vehicles.

MS: What do you do to market and promote your business?

SB: Like most dealers we rely heavily on retaining our customer base, keeping regular contact via emails, newsletters and following up calls and enquiries.

We still advertise in local papers and journals. We also attend at least four local shows every year culminating in the attendance of the Malvern Three Counties show that attracts a large audience for us.

SD: Do you attend trade shows and exhibitions?

MS: Yes, I and some of our staff regularly attend Saltex and BTME and other local shows. We also attend a number of manufacturer dealer days to keep up to date with product news. I believe networking is an important part of our industry.

SD: What new technologies do you see having an impact on our industry?

MS: For us battery technology and robotic mowers have come on in leaps and bounds in the last five years. We are selling more and more battery powered products mainly due to the fact more and more manufacturers are investing heavily and bringing out a wider choice of machines. This is coupled with the advent of more efficient batteries that are not only providing longer

running times but have speeded up recharging.

As for robotic mowers, we sold over 90 units last year and we are well on our way to doubling that number this year. We sell three makes of robotic mowers - Husqvarna, Honda and Viking. Again, these products are advancing all the time, they are becoming smarter and more efficient. We now can offer several models all with enhanced cutting technologies which can be controlled by an app on your phone. We have a team of three dedicated installers who are kept busy keeping up with our orders. They are not necessary a cheap mower, but once installed they save the customers a lot of time and money over several years. The cost of these mowers varies dependant on the size of the lawn and what terrain you need to manage. On top of the purchase price we charge an installation and setup fee and offer a repair and service package.

These mowers are getting very clever now and becoming more robust and able to cope with some challenging terrains and can mow on banks up to 45%.

We are also seeing a growing demand for lightweight battery powered hand tools such as pruners and saws. Most companies we deal with are offering a great range of professional grade hand tools.

SD: What are your thoughts regarding online selling?

MS: It is clearly here to stay, and we need to be mindful of its perils, in terms of low prices. We need to keep our own house in order and educate these online customers the reasons for buying from a reputable dealer. As dealers we need to emphasise how buying from us allows them to



Mark Smith in the Worcester branch



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“ I BELIEVE THAT SUCCESSFUL DEALERS SHOULD ENJOY WHAT THEY DO AND CONTINUE TO TREAT CUSTOMERS AS KING ”

benefit from all the after sales services we are offering.

We must also work more closely with our suppliers and obtain better margins where we can. We are here for the long term, with many of our products of course designed to last, and therefore benefit from regular after sales repairs and servicing.

However, I will say that it's one particular area of the business that is growing for us - we are now selling a fair amount of our own products via the internet.

SD: How do you see the future for your business?

MS: We shall carry on doing all the things we have done well over the last fifty years. We shall select and sell appropriate machinery, invest in new technologies, invest in good, reliable dedicated staff, develop and grow a culture within the business that all the employees buy into. I believe that successful dealers should enjoy what they do and continue to treat customers as king. As such we will continue to offer 1-2-year warranties on new products, offer a reliable back-up service and a quick turnaround on spare parts, repairs and servicing.

We should also not be afraid of new technologies. Customers' needs are constantly changing, and as a business we should embrace these. Battery powered

products and robotic tools are a reality which are here to stay. I have no doubt sales of these products will grow substantially. We need to adjust and cater for this demand in the coming years.

We also need to embrace the ongoing development of the internet and make greater use of the tools it affords, particularly in the realm of educating customers to understand the benefits from buying from reputable dealers.

It is imperative we retain effective pricing for these products. We all have to make a living and we need a margin of profit to pay for our existence and the ability to pay our dedicated staff - staff that have spent years honing their appropriate skills and knowledge to serve our customers.

Running a family run business has been a joy and a life changing experience. My dad is very proud of the journey we have taken over the last fifty years and has seen how well the business has prospered and grown. I am sure if we continue to embrace these ever-changing products and the requirements of our customers we will have ongoing sales opportunities for years to come.

SD: Thank you



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TRADING PLACES

The summer months of 2018 saw several high-profile acquisitions in the domestic, commercial and agricultural machinery sectors

BRIGGS & STRATTON BUY HURRICANE INC

Briggs & Stratton Corporation acquired certain assets of Hurricane, Inc. of Muskegon Heights, Michigan, a designer and manufacturer of stand-on leaf and debris blowers.

This was the company's second acquisition in eight months, which they said was designed to accelerate growth opportunities in the commercial lawn and turf market. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Harold L. Redman, Briggs & Stratton's senior vice president and group president - Turf & Consumer Products said, "Hurricane brings high-quality products with differentiated capabilities around air flow and

handling which make the lawn and turf care professional more productive.

"The acquisition brings Briggs & Stratton and its family of brands one step closer to its goal of filling a landscaper's trailer with everything needed to start and finish a job in as little time and with as little effort as possible to maximise their profitability."

Todd J. Teske, Briggs & Stratton's chairman, president and CEO, added, "Briggs & Stratton continues to generate strong growth serving commercial customers in lawn and turf care, job site, and on an OEM basis with an expanding line of

commercial engines.

"This investment follows our recent acquisition of the assets of Ground Logic, Inc. which produces stand-on commercial spreaders and spreader/sprayers for fertiliser and pesticide-herbicide lawn applications. Both have expanded our product line and will enable us to take advantage of synergies in manufacturing and supply chain.

"We will be able to leverage our broad base of dealers and distributors to accelerate growth of these products."



JOHN DEERE BUY PLA

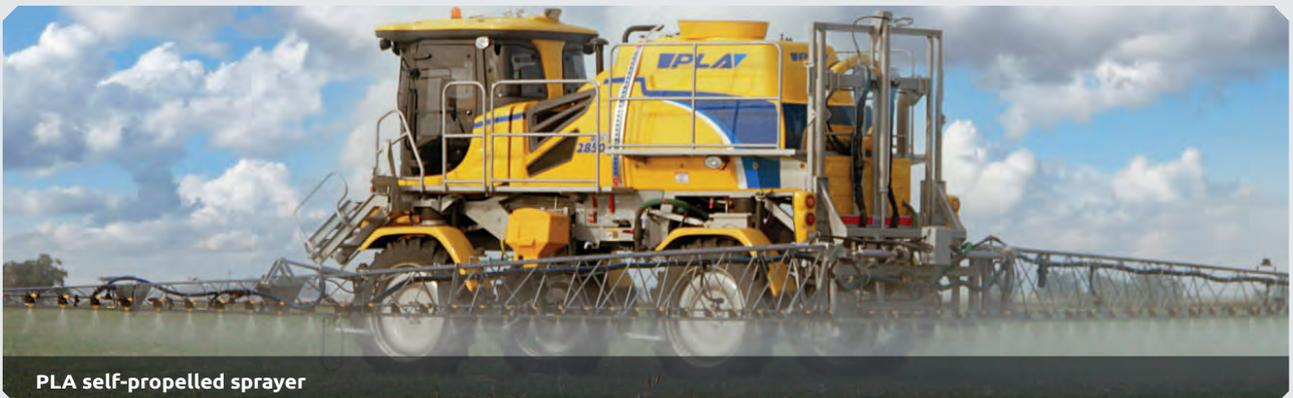
Deere & Company signed a definitive agreement to acquire PLA, a privately-held manufacturer of sprayers, planters, and specialty products for agriculture.

PLA is based in Argentina, with manufacturing facilities in Las Rosas, Argentina, and Canoas, Brazil.

John May, President, Agricultural Solutions & Chief Information Officer at Deere said, "The PLA acquisition enhances John Deere's commitment to customers

as we continue to provide innovative, cost-effective equipment, technology, and services to improve their productivity."

Founded in 1975, PLA was the first company to manufacture self-propelled sprayers in Latin America. The company has approximately 450 employees and currently markets products on four continents.



PLA self-propelled sprayer

AL-KO GARDENTECH BUY ROCHFORD GARDEN MACHINERY

Rochford Garden Machinery announced that the acquisition of their company, by German manufacturer AL-KO Gardentech, was completed on Wednesday 1st August 2018.

Rochford told Service Dealer that 100% of the company had been acquired, with all divisions, staff and product lines remaining unchanged.

Both parties agreed to confidentiality regarding the financial terms of the arrangement.

Rochford, based in Wincanton, Somerset, is one of UK's leading garden machinery suppliers, both in imports and sales of domestic and commercial garden machinery. The family run business founded in 1976 in Bruton, Somerset, has been an importer of AL-KO products for almost 15 years.

Elizabeth Rochford, wife of founder Peter Rochford said of the acquisition, "We are pleased to have AL-KO Gardentech, our long time partner, as our new owner, which helps us to take Rochford to a new level of profitability, sales and market penetration.

"With this merger, we have taken the necessary steps and passed our business on to experienced hands to ensure sustainable future development for employees and customers.

"We have every confidence in AL-KO Gardentech that our company will be led into a stable future and that Rochford will remain a professional home for our employees. Furthermore, the management team around managing director, Stewart Anderson, will stay the same." This management team includes Mark Rochford and sister Kerry Moore.

Managing director of Rochfords, Stewart Anderson told Service Dealer, "The exciting acquisition gives us the opportunity to take our business to the next level

and develop our portfolio of brands which include AL-KO, DR, Mitox, and Weibang. The company and its ranges will continue as they are, with the added benefit of developing new product categories from the AL-KO company in new channels.

"We are embarking on 10 dealer shows across the UK in September to showcase our new product ranges, technical updates, and competitive trade terms."

Dr. Wolfgang Hergeth, COO of AL-KO KOBBER SE, said, "We are pleased to be able to win Rochford, one of the strongest trading partners in the UK garden machinery market for the AL-KO KOBBER GROUP. Like the acquisition of the New Zealand garden equipment manufacturer Masport last year, this investment is a clear signal for a strong future of AL-KO Gardentech.

"The good economic situation of Rochford shows a well-established and managed company. Services such as customer services, repair offerings or spare parts management fully meet the AL-KO standard 'Quality for life'. Rochford will now be able to continue its development under the modern entrepreneurial AL-KO KOBBER GROUP and to provide customers with first-class and innovative products as well as service and support.

"The entry into the British market is a logical consequence of the great market potential in specialist trade and DIY, the British affinity to online trade as well as significantly increased interest in robotic garden machinery. Thanks to its strong customer relationships on all channels, Rochford provides direct customer access to AL-KO Gardentech, which gives further impetus for substantial growth in the UK.

"This acquisition offers a long term perspective for employees to work in a dynamic and fast growing business."



L-R: Dr Wolfgang Hergeth (President & COO, AL-KO Gardentech); Elizabeth Rochford; Mark Rochford; Sergio Tomaciello (senior vice president sales, AL-KO Gardentech); Kerry Morre; Stewart Anderson

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FROM A DEALER AXING TO A SURPRISE DEPARTURE

2004-2007

Continuing *Service Dealer's* 30th Anniversary year, we look back at the mid-2000s which saw the magazine finally take on the *Service Dealer* title, following the merging of the *LGE* and *Torque* publications.

We begin this edition with the shock news of a major manufacturer axing one of its top-performing dealers and finish with the sudden, surprise departure of a well known md

2004 SCOTTISH GRASS AXED BY RANSOMES

Scottish Grass Machinery, one of Ransomes Jacobsen's top three dealers in Europe in 2004, was sacked by the Textron-owned company in August of that year. SGM was given the shock news at a routine meeting at its Edinburgh headquarters.

David McNroy of the SGM Group, which included Scottish Grass Machinery, said: "Their decision came out of the blue and we are at a loss to understand the reasons.

"We had planned what we thought was a routine meeting with the Ransomes Jacobsen Sales Manager

and Territory Manager to talk about next year, when I was simply handed a termination letter signed by RJL Managing Director Steve Chicken, giving us three months' notice.

Ransomes Jacobsen subsequently announced that a newly-formed company, Fairways GM Ltd, based at Inchinnan near Paisley, would take over the distribution of Ransomes Jacobsen products in Scotland from 8th November 2004.

Commenting on the sacking of SGM, David Withers, RJL Sales and Marketing Director at the time,



said, "We made the decision on commercial grounds as being in the best interest of customers and shareholders of Ransomes Jacobsen."

BRIGGS & STATTON TAKES THE PETROL MESSAGE TO THE SHEDS

Briggs & Stratton announced in November 2004 that it would be starting an information programme with multiple retailers explaining how the US market had stemmed the downward spiral of prices in the sector.

Bryan Peachy, UK General Manager for B&S said, "In Britain we are now going through the pain the US suffered in the 90s. Based on our experiences there, we can learn lessons here much faster."

B&S's intention was to take the 'petrol message' to buyers in all the major multiples. Those stores accounted for more than 80% of all

UK lawnmower sales at the time.

Key to the plan was a reversal of the focus on electric machines. In 2004 Britain was the only European market where petrol was not the clear favourite.

Part of the message was a plan to encourage consumers to trade-up to a product that was both more suited to their gardening needs and offered "greater flexibility than use of electric machines".

"This is an ideal opportunity for a major in-store and external communications exercise," said Bryan Peachy. "As part of the campaign I will be unveiling our

plans to grab back market share for petrol."



2005

THE WAITING IS OVER FOR HAYTER

The news that all Hayter's staff were waiting for came on the afternoon of 9th February 2005.

After protracted negotiations, Toro emerged as the new owner of Hayter.

Hayter's MD at the time, Derek Boulton, told LGE, "It's wonderful news, we are all very bone-weary here at Spellbrook, but delighted that the future of the company has been resolved.

"It's like a cloud has been lifted from us and I must pay tribute to all

our staff and our dealers who have been supportive of us through these difficult times."

The problems for Hayter had begun the previous November when sister company Murray Inc in the United States filed for bankruptcy after the collapse of its Chinese holding company De Long Corporation.

In the intervening period Toro, Ariens and JCB were all said to be in the hunt for Hayter, but gradually the latter two dropped out leaving



Toro as the sole bidder.

MAJOR SUPPLIERS PLAN NEW APPROACH TO TURF SHOWS

A number of the leading turfcare machinery manufacturers signified their intention to exhibit at SALTEX and BTME during alternate years in July 2005.

The companies included Ransomes Jacobsen, Toro, Hayter, John Deere and Kubota.

Following 2005's SALTEX show at Windsor, they announced they planned to commit themselves to the IOG's 2007 SALTEX, and at BIGGA's BTME Harrogate the following January to sign up to the 2008 event.

Rumours of this move had been circulating for some while, but

it appeared that their intentions would be made clear after the IOG event.

The Sales Director for one of the companies involved told *Service Dealer*, "We have got to the stage where spending up to £100,000 on two shows each year is no longer viable – or makes sense."

All the companies were members of the AEA, whose Director General Jakes Vowles said, "We have been discussing this matter with BIGGA and the IOG for some while.

"We recognise how much the two associations rely on the funds generated by their respective



shows, and our members are keen."



2006

STIHL TAKES TOUGH ONLINE STANCE

In a policy that was being implemented worldwide, STIHL GB came out with one of the toughest stances yet seen from a manufacturer in a bid to control sales of its equipment over the internet.

In a letter to its dealer network during July 2006, Stihl GB MD Martyn Thomas said, "Whilst selling through the internet or via mail order catalogues is now common for many products, it is not appropriate for the distribution of STIHL or Viking products.

"It is our intention that our dealers will have personal contact with each and every customer."

He added, "We fully support

dealers who wish to advertise STIHL and Viking products on their own websites, but customers must buy our equipment from that dealer's own premises.

"For dealers who wish to offer an online purchasing facility, the only customers who can be supplied online are experienced and known customers to the dealer, for instance professional tree workers, who would be issued with a password – unrestricted public access is not acceptable."

Speaking to *Service Dealer*, Martyn Thomas said, "The internet is so widely used that we felt it imperative to set



our stance in unequivocal terms."

ALLEN CALLS IT A DAY

One of the oldest and best-known names in the garden machinery industry, Allen Power Equipment, called it a day on Monday 9th October 2006 after failing to find a buyer for the business.

Administrator Anthony Fanshawe told *Service Dealer*, "There is around £750,000 worth of Allen stock which we are actively selling off to provide some dividend for creditors.

"Otherwise, there is little of value in the company, as the directors will have discovered during their efforts to sell the company."

The future of the hover mower business was uncertain as it was owned jointly by Allen Power Equipment and APEL Holdings, the parent company, which also owned the freehold of the Didcot site.

The news came just a month after Allen used the SALTEX show in September that year to launch a new generation of hover mowers, the XR44.

The decision to put the company in administration could well have been also influenced by the news that Husqvarna had signed an agreement to buy the Komatsu



Zenoah power equipment business, one of its longest held distributorship arrangements.



2007

OPICO IN NEW HANDS

Farm machinery distributor OPICO was in new hands in June 2007. The company's previous owner, Jeremy Coleclough, had sold the company to its then Managing Director, James Woolway.

Commenting, Jeremy Coleclough said, "For five years we have been planning a major change in the ownership of OPICO, and this has now been achieved with James taking over full ownership.

"This is really good news for the company because James will give the company a whole new sense of drive and enthusiasm.

"The timing is excellent as the whole business of agriculture is going through major changes".

OPICO, at the time of the changeover, marketed HEVA cultivation equipment, portable grain dryers, Bush Hog cutters and Skidster units.



STIHL GB MD QUILTS POST

Speculation and general surprise greeted the news that Martyn Thomas, Managing Director of STIHL GB since 2000, had left his post.

His announcement that he was leaving on 30th June 2007 appeared to also take the German parent company, Andreas Stihl by surprise, because at the time of his leaving no arrangements had been put into place to seek a successor.

Dealers had been given no warning of his departure, but speaking to *Service Dealer* on the day he left his office

at the company's Camberley headquarters, he said, "It is something I have been privately considering for a while.

"I have simply decided to take a short break from the corporate life. There are many things I want to do at this stage of my life, and this will give me a chance to fulfil these whilst I can."

Day-to-day running of the company was put into the hands of Finance Director at the time, Robin Lennie.

A spokesman for STIHL said in July 2007 that the company was



in the process of appointing a permanent successor.



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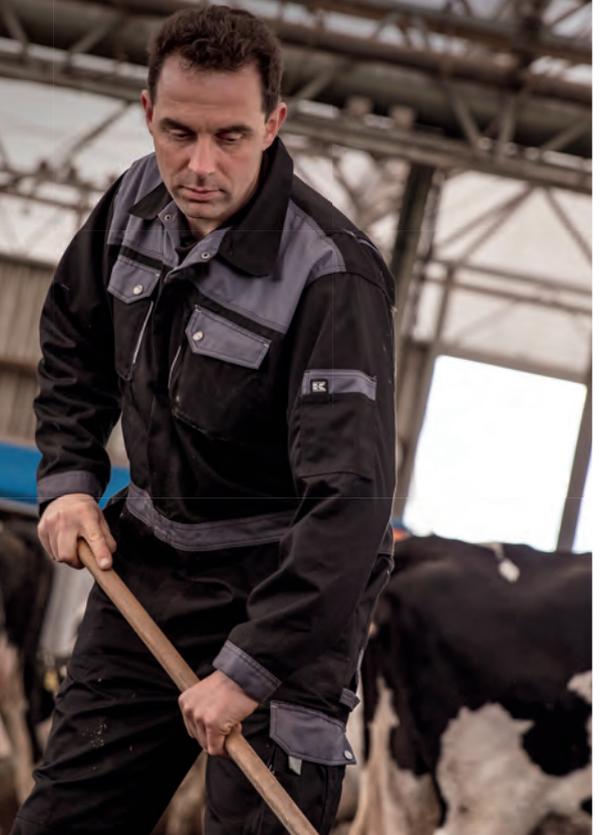
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BUSINESS CONFIDENCE 2018 SURVEY

Confidence just about holding up despite some very difficult trading conditions this summer

Judging by the results of our most recent survey, which asked our dealer readers to tell us how confident they are feeling for their businesses, the message we received back is that it's clearly very hard out there currently, but on the whole confidence is just about holding up.

The survey was undertaken during the summer just after the distraction of the World Cup, during the midst of one of the longest, hottest, driest spells the UK had experienced for many years – and of course as Brexit negotiations were on-going – with little in the way of clarity.

Therefore it was encouraging to hear that 56% of respondents describe themselves as 'confident' for their business – although it should be noted that barely anyone (3%) who responded described themselves as 'very confident', compared with 29% who did so this time last

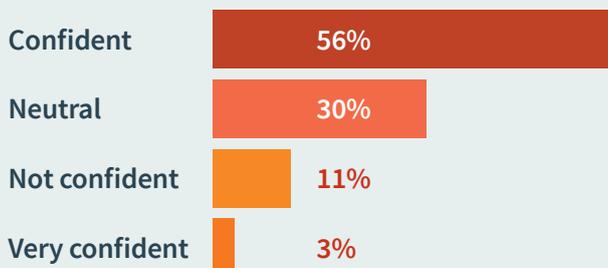
year. This is reflected by the fact that 37% said they had changed their feelings on how confident they were going forward over the past 12 months.

This mitigating of confidence is also echoed by 59% saying they have no plans to increase their staffing and 70% saying they don't intend to alter their premises in the coming months.

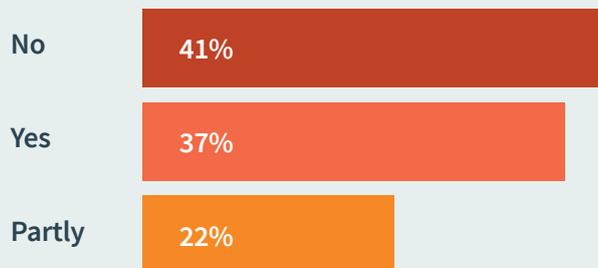
The survey also found that most respondents were content not to rock the boat too much, with 78% saying that they don't intend to alter the number of franchises they hold.

Once again, like last year, the most popular answer given to what factor most influences why a dealer stocks a particular brand, 'reliability of product' came top with 65%. Also 'word of mouth' was cited once again as the most effective method for winning new customers, with 69% mentioning this.

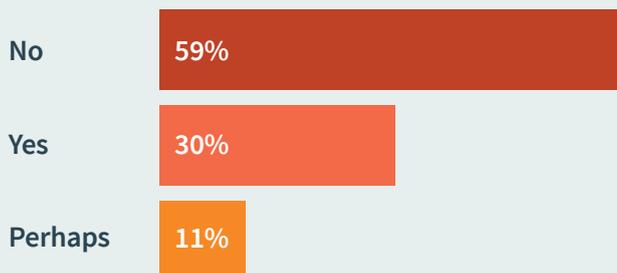
How confident are you for your business's prospects for the rest of the year?



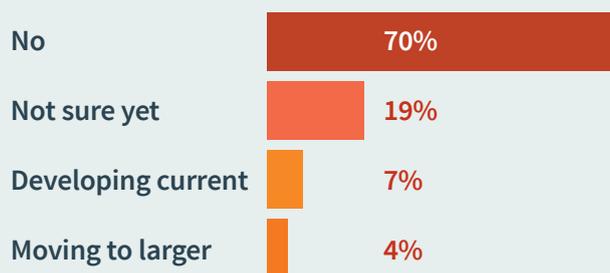
Has your level of business confidence changed over the past 12 months?



Are you considering taking on more staff in the next 12 months?



Are you considering changing your business premises over the next 12 months?



YOUR SAY

We asked you, considering the prolonged period of hot, dry weather, the distraction of the World Cup and a lack of clarity in the ongoing Brexit negotiations, how are you finding business currently? What is working well and not so well?

- Business is very slow. I used to do part-time service and repair only but this year we moved premises to sales, service and repair full-time and became a Mountfield/Stiga Universal dealer. Sales of new products have been very slow and it is the servicing and repair which keeps us going. That may be down to the fact that we are new to sales, or the weather or the World Cup or Brexit. Or all of it. But I am not making enough money for me or my wife to take a wage.
- Giving the lack of growing grass any mower sale is a bonus. Workshop work remains buoyant and sales of STIHL hand-held machinery remain strong. It's my opportunity to recover from the eight-week period of madness we had and give serious thought to 2019 which no doubt will bring lots of new products from all suppliers.
- The dry weather is just beginning to have an effect, however that gives us the opportunity to regroup and work out a plan to tackle the existing prospects and ways of attracting new ones when the grass eventually grows again. The World Cup did not seem to affect our business. Brexit continues to cause uncertainty and will continue to hold back future sales and investment.
- Very poor sales. Workshop slowing up every day.
- What business?! No sales, minimal repair work – it's like December but with sunshine!
- Business is good but slow due to the weather. Mower sales are slow but other products are strong. The workshop is getting caught up now. Parts supply seems to be an issue as we are waiting too long for delivery.
- Sales have slowed but are still coming, workshop still busy. It's the school holidays just now so this pattern is typical of any year. Fingers crossed the weather has extended the season until the end of October!
- Although there are several outside factors, it's always the climate/rainfall that has the largest effect on our business. If the grass grows, we are busy! I have to say, whilst we are now in a quiet period it is allowing us to do some much needed business housekeeping.
- It was busy between April and May and then started to get quiet once the sun and football started. Luckily we still have jobs to complete in the workshop and have had the odd sale of machines and parts. Brexit is also having an effect as you see more customers admiring the cheaper machinery in the big sheds or on the internet. I have had issues where you price machinery up for customers and then they head down to the local big store or purchase a cheaper one off the internet. We have also noticed an awful lot of properties for sale in the area with not many being actually sold for months.



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ARABLE EVENT SUGGESTS ARABLE FARMERS AREN'T SCARED OF BREXIT

Despite the country appearing to still be some way from a deal on departure terms from the EU, the UK's annual arable farming event, Cereals, was surprisingly buoyant, given its slimmed-down site and some absent names. Martin Rickatson details what was new

FENDT TRACKED TRACTORS AND SPRAYERS

Fendt gave a Cereals debut to its CVT-equipped 700MT crawlers of up to 431hp

Many visitors to January's LAMMA show had seen them there, and those who attended Agritechnica in November had witnessed their launch, but Fendt's new crawler and sprayer ranges were making their Cereals debut. While the trailed and self-propelled sprayer ranges and the large crawlers remain largely unchanged from the former Challenger models, the 'small' tracklayers are very different beasts.

Now based largely on Fendt tractor components – and made in Germany at the Hohenmolsen plant that also manufactures the Fendt Katana forage harvester – the biggest change to the way in which the machines are operated is in the transmission department. Here, as would be expected of a Fendt-branded tractor, lies the Vario CVT, marking the first time such a 'box' has been used in a twin-track crawler.

The Fendt sprayer range, meanwhile, is essentially a re-liveried version of that previously offered in Challenger yellow, but production of the machines – both trailed and self-propelled – has also moved to Germany, in this case from the Netherlands.



KONGSKILDE STILL HERE – WITH A NEW BODY

Kongskilde products continue to be offered independently, despite the CNHi takeover

Despite Kongskilde selling its farm implement lines to the New Holland business unit of CNH Industrial in order to focus on its grain drying and storage equipment, re-liveried Kongskilde-branded machinery is still available through the brand's dealers, and at Cereals this included a new slatted plough body aimed at farms on sticky organic or clay soils, or seeking a more broken furrow profile on tougher clay soils. The XSD body is based on the profile of the established XLD conventional type, and incorporates a patented helical design to improve furrow turning and fully bury residue. Suited to ploughing from 12-30cm deep at a working width of 35-55cm, it is designed for use with tractors on tyres up to 710mm wide.



BIG PLOUGH FROM AMAZONE

Amazone's six-eight furrow Hektor includes a new pivot system connecting headstock and beam

Despite the move towards minimum tillage systems – and, in some cases, direct drilling – the UK plough market continues to hold steady as some use weed seed burial as a min- or no-till 'reset button', and others plough to repair damaged soil surfaces or work land where roots, vegetables and other non-combinables are in the rotation. Figures suggest the market has fluctuated steadily in recent years between approximately 750 and 850 units/year, and although larger models grab the limelight, the bulk of sales remain centred around four- and five-furrow units.

But there were some much larger and more numerous-bodied models on show at Cereals, among them Amazone's Hektor. Marking the German firm's entry into the semi-mounted market, it is available in six-, seven- and eight-furrow versions, with six-plus-one and seven-plus-one options, and is said to be suited to use with tractors up to 350hp.

Amazone says simplicity of operation and robustness have been the key criteria behind the plough's design, which is an evolution of engineering by Vogel and Noot, whose plough business the firm purchased to run alongside the development of Amazone's own Cayros and Cayron ploughs. With the latter attribute in mind, the

150mm x 150mm beam is constructed from 12mm thick steel, while to meet the requirements of the former there is manual furrow width adjustment which works in steps from 36cm to 48cm per body. The ability to be able to cope with high trash levels is said to be aided by point-to-point clearance of 100cm and an 82cm beam height.

The plough is available with the complete range of Amazone bodies, including the firm's new WX400 PE plastic option, and comes as either the standard Hektor, with shearbolt overload protection or, on six- and seven-furrow models only, as the Hektor S, which features hydraulic auto reset, with accumulator pressure that can be set from the tractor seat either individually or centrally.

The design includes a new pivot system connecting headstock and beam, which aids accurate tracking behind the tractor and produces the optimum pull-line. Front furrow adjustment is hydraulic to enable the plough to be easily matched to the internal track width of the tractor wheels.

The design also features turnover cylinders with hydraulic stop position damping to control drop speed and cushion the plough when reversing the bodies, reducing shock loads on both plough and tractor.



VÄDERSTAD DISC DOES MORE FOR RESIDUE

Väderstad's CrossCutter disc has been designed for use especially in oilseed rape stubbles and cover crops

Among the new cultivation equipment on display at Cereals, while many items were designed for min-till situations, others were said to suit the flexibility required by those seeking versatility in their systems. These included a number of new stubble processors on display from firms suggesting usage ahead of either no- or min-till drilling, or where full burial of trash, regrown stubbles or cover crops needs a helping hand ahead of the plough.

Now available for 3.0-12.25m models of its Carrier disc cultivator, Väderstad's CrossCutter disc has been designed for use especially in oilseed rape stubbles and cover crops, says the firm, but is also likely to find favour among those looking to tackle cereal stubble regrowth and ploughed land, depending on soil type and desired results.

Working at around 30mm, the wavy profile is designed to provide intensive mixing and surface compaction removal for a relatively low horsepower input at speeds of up to 20km/hr. To ensure evenness of working depth across the implement regardless of width, each disc is individually mounted to its own rubber-suspended disc arm to aid contour following.

The 450mm-diameter discs are produced in-house by a Väderstad subsidiary, and are said to be suited to working on ploughed land as well as at 2-3cm directly onto stubbles or cover crops. They are now an option for Carrier 300-400, Carrier 420-820 and Carrier 925-1225 models.



HORSCH CULTIVATOR CAN BE CONFIGURED

The trailed Horsch Terrano GX can be had in three- or four-row configurations, with tine spacing of 28.5cm to 31.5cm

Horsch gave a Cereals debut to the trailed three- or four-row GX version of its Terrano, which complements the FX, MT and FM models. Available in 4.0-6.0m working widths, it can be specified with either a three- or four-row configuration, and tine spacing of 28.5cm to 31.5cm. Fitted with the firm's third-generation TerraGrip tines, frame-located springs have a 550kg release force and maintenance-free pivot points.

With four cultivation point options, the GX is said to be configurable for a number of possible soil types and scenarios, from loosening compaction to intensive mixing of trash and soil. There is a range of different single and double packer options.

Also from Horsch were new 5m and 6m Cruiser XL trailed cultivators, fitting between the current smaller mounted models and the 10m/12m trailed versions. The six-row design and 700mm frame height are designed for situations where thorough mixing of large amounts of trash is required, and a range of single and double packer types is available.

Four different point types means it can be used for stubble cultivation and straw distribution after combining, seedbed preparation, as a fine cultivator for mechanical weed control or for loosening and aerating soils in spring.



FIRST SINGULATION DRILL FOR COMBINABLES

Horsch's Express KR is claimed to be the first singulation drill on the market suited to establishment of wheat, barley, oilseed rape and peas

Horsch's Express KR, which features the firm's SingularSystem, is claimed to be the first singulation drill on the market suited to establishment of wheat, barley, OSR and peas, and is reckoned capable of full accuracy at speeds of around 12km/hr. A central volume metering unit draws seed from the hopper, the pre-metered seed is then transferred pneumatically to the respective seed row. Up to the coulters, seed supply is carried out conventionally. A new

TurboDisc coulters body includes the mounted metering unit necessary for seed singling and placement.

A forward speed of 10-12km/hr is recommended to maintain performance, with a new single grain metering unit sowing two grains each second, equating at 12km/hr to a seed density of 240 grains/sq m where a row spacing of 15cm is used.

Inside the metering unit the seed flow follows a circular path where the grains increase in speed and move to



the outer part of the metering disc. One is then selected for the fall tube, with the others transported back to the starting point.

The operator only has to enter the desired grains/sq m, thousand grain weight and germination level, the system then calculating the metering quantity.

SIMPLE DRILLS FROM SOLA

The Sola Ares drills incorporate a pressurised 1,800-litre hopper, and can be ordered as a solo drill or in a piggyback configuration for cultivator or power harrow mounting

UK firm KRM continues to find a strong market for the relatively simple tine drills it imports into the UK from Spanish firm Sola, and at Cereals launched its latest contender, the Ares. Featuring a pressurised 1,800-litre hopper, it can be ordered as a solo drill or in a piggyback configuration for cultivator or power harrow mounting, depending on tillage system. The 4.0-6.0m Ares design improvements include external pipework for easier cleaning, ISOBUS-controlled electric drive metering, and either tine or double disc coulters.



CROSS UNVEILS SMALLER BEET WASHER

Among the Irish exhibitors at Cereals was Cross, which unveiled its Moose beet washer

Among the Irish exhibitors at Cereals was Cross, which unveiled its Moose beet washer to the UK market. Not only is there a market here among stock farmers for livestock feed root washing, but the firm's Simon Cross says there is an increasing number of arable farmers seeking alternative crops to spread rotations and growing beet for use in anaerobic digesters. Designed as a lower-cost fixed version of the Rhino and Elephant models, it does away with a scraper floor, and features a destoner and auger underneath the wash cylinder to remove sludge and stones, which are then transferred to an elevator. Cost is reckoned to be two-thirds of the Rhino's for the same output.



MAKING THE PARTS, MANUFACTURING THE TRACTORS

It's one of the key cast component makers for many leading tractor names, and manufactures its own models too. Few in the UK, though, will be familiar with the name Hattat. MARTIN RICKATSON visits the Turkish firm to discover more about the business

High horsepower and high spec might grab the headlines, but dealers in many areas of the country tend to find more sales volume in smaller tractors with more diverse capabilities. With the wide breadth of tasks suited to sub-100hp models, from light and specialist arable jobs to mainstream livestock duties, and from equestrian jobs to grounds management, there is a more diverse range of sales targets for dealers to aim at. It's perhaps unexpected, though, that one of the key European manufacturers in this area is also a

primary manufacturer of components for much larger machines made by other makers. Already imported into Ireland, Hattat's tractors may soon come to the UK.

Hattat Holding comprises seven business units, of which four are based in Cerkezoy, Turkey. These comprise component manufacturing businesses for cars and for agricultural/industrial equipment, the Hema cast iron and aluminium foundry and the Hattat tractor manufacturing operation. A further manufacturing companies, making agricultural hydraulic and

driveline components, is based in India, while the firm also has energy and real estate businesses. The Hema business name comes from the initials of the Hattat brothers who started the company. Two subsequently sold their shares, leaving one as the sole owner.

The business's involvement in the tractor market began in 1973, and three years later it started production of models under licence from Ford. This deal continued until 10 series production stopped around 1990.

The current business incarnation, with its focus on tractors built largely



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from components manufactured in-house, was established in 1998. At first developed as a supplier business for other makers, by 2002 R&D and production works had been developed in Cerkezkoy, in the northern Turkish province of Tekirdag, for producing almost wholly locally-made tractors. Mass production of first fully in-house Hattat-branded tractors began in 2007.

The company's next move to develop its contract tractor manufacturing business came in 2003 when Hattat began a co-operation with Romania's Universal. However, this was short-lived, ending three years later when the latter firm hit financial trouble. The firm also purchased the rights to licensee designs based on Massey Ferguson's 200 and 300 series models when

Turkish agricultural machinery maker Uzel, a Massey Ferguson licensee, hit trouble. As a result, the firm's current 200 and 300 Classical series tractors have a familiar look that is traceable back to this. While AGCO still supplies some of the components, many, including the transaxle, are made by Hattat/Hema.

In 2007, the firm entered into a new partnership with AGCO's Valtra business unit, and this endures through to today, with Valtra A series-based designs making up the other half of the Hattat product line. That's no coincidence, because since that time the Turkish firm has also contract-built the Finnish business's A series entry-level tractor range, and its orchard models, for sale worldwide. In its home country, meanwhile, Hattat is also the distributor for Valtra's full range of tractors, and this makes up the

other half of the firm's offering, the Modern series, giving the firm access to bigger models of up to 400hp to suit arable farmers in the North of the country. Valtra remains one of the biggest Hattat tractor customers, while the firm also has an ongoing deal to build certain models for Ursus, which are produced in Turkey and finished in Poland.

Hattat's own product range now spans 50-110hp, being exported widely as well as sold in the firm's home market. The Hattat tractors' transmission, differential, rear axle, 4WD front axle, entire rear linkage unit, hydraulic pump, hydraulic valves, hydraulic brake master cylinder and all other hydraulic equipment are produced in the Cerkezkoy plants by Hattat Group, the only primary outsourced components being engines, sourced primarily from Perkins. Hattat reckons to



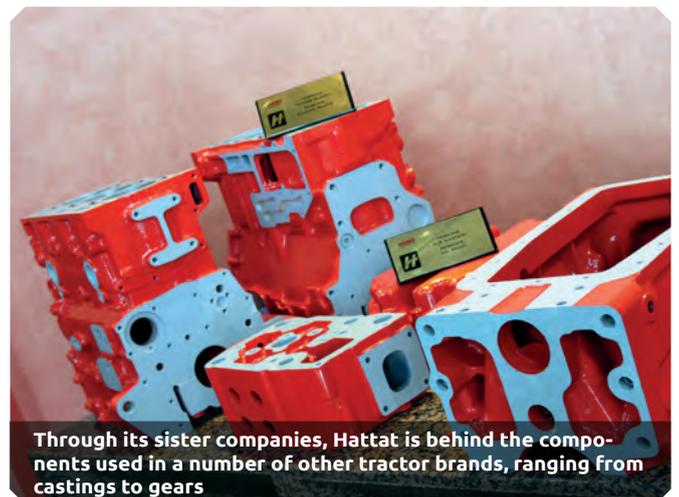
Hattat makes Valtra A standard and orchard models for AGCO's Finnish business unit, its own factory concentrating on N and T models



With the firm manufacturing its own castings, Hema's manufacturing output extends to complete transaxle units



The Hattat product range is based on Valtra A and Massey Ferguson designs, with the former sold in Ireland and other markets



Through its sister companies, Hattat is behind the components used in a number of other tractor brands, ranging from castings to gears

be the second largest agricultural customer in its power bracket for the Peterborough-based Caterpillar subsidiary's motors and says a key reason for sourcing its engines from the Peterborough builder is its widespread recognition, support and reputation. Hattat's sister firm Hema, coincidentally, also produces three-, four- and, more recently, six-cylinder blocks for Perkins/Caterpillar.

Today, with Hattat-branded tractors sold in more than 80 countries across five continents, Hattat says it is aiming to expand its global presence. Sited in the North of the country, it is close to major ports and to the Europe/Asia border. For almost a decade the firm has had an Irish importer, Billy O'Dwyer, who reports pleasing sales to all corners of the country across a range of markets. The company says it is

actively looking for a UK partner.

The Turkish market, which varies annually from 50-70,000 units, is reckoned to be the fourth biggest in the world after the US, India and China, and last year Hattat claimed a 9.2% share of this, taking second spot in the sales league after a dominant New Holland. Its parent company, CNH Industrial, also has Turkish manufacturing facilities, and Hattat also reckons to be second to CNHi in terms of tractor exports from Turkey.

Hattat says that for 2018 its sales target is for 5,200 units in the domestic market, with a further 1,300 sold into export markets. The EU accounts for 30% of the latter, and the firm's Valtra-based designs are EU emissions-compliant, with the MF/Uzel-type tractors sold into non-emissionised markets where low quality fuel can be an issue.

Factory shift production varies from one to three per day, depending on the season and the state of the market, with two shifts taking place at the time of our visit in early spring. That translates to one new tractor coming off the line every 15 minutes, with a single tractor taking two days to build. With a relatively small power bracket – most of the Turkish market is for 80-100hp machines, hence Hattat's focus in this area – and a simple design philosophy, the number of variations is relatively low.

So is there a market for more competition at the simple, low-hp end of the market in the UK? Hattat says it believes there is, based on the fact that many of its in-house-made components are well-proven across other manufacturers' products. It says it is keen to talk to potential importers and dealers.



The Hattat tractor manufacturing business began in the 1970s with models produced under licence from Ford

RANGE ON SHOW FROM GREENMECH AT APF

Including new Combi 200 wood and green waste processor 2018

GreenMech says it will have a vast range of machinery on display on stands 80-110, in the outside area, at this year's APF exhibition.

In addition, visitors will also have the opportunity to find out about a number of special deals and flexible finance options available exclusively at the show.

Next year sees the introduction of new, more stringent Stage V emissions standards covering diesel engines above 26hp, so GreenMech says a particular highlight of its stand will be the petrol-powered Arborist 130 and Arborist 150p models. The Arb 150p is fitted with a 37hp Briggs & Stratton petrol engine which can offer comparable performance to the higher horse-powered diesel engines, but at a reduced cost. For those users who prefer diesel power however, the company's Arborist 150, powered by a Kubota 26hp engine, remains in the range and is unaffected by the new regulations.

Also on show, for the first time in the UK, will be the new Combi 200 wood and green waste processor. Based on the Arborist 200, it features a robust conveyor and a

large in-feed chute to make loading safe and easy.

All of GreenMech's hydraulic machines come fitted with the company's patented disc-blade system as standard, which it says gives the operator up to three times the life of conventional straight blades before requiring re-sharpening. Its full British-designed and built range of pedestrian, road-tow, turntable, tracked and tractor-mounted machines are also supported by a three-year "no quibble" parts and labour warranty.



LISTEN UP, NEW CORDLESS ARBORIST SAW FROM STIHL

Company says MSA 161 T is so quiet that ear defenders are not required

STIHL has launched a new cordless arborist saw that it says offers professionals an enhanced cutting performance through the use of a higher chain speed and a more powerful motor.

Introduced to supersede the MSA 160 T, the new lightweight

saw boasts a 40% higher chain speed (16m/s) and a 15% increase in engine performance, making the MSA 161 T suitable for removing deadwood, crown maintenance and light reductions.

Designed with easy handling in mind, the new saw boasts improved response of hand guard during activation and releasing of the chain brake and utilises a precise cutting behaviour to ensure a clean and smooth cut. In addition, the operating system

has been enhanced with a sidelock for added safety and extended interlock for comfortable use.

The company says the cordless nature of the new saw means that it's so quiet in operation that ear defenders are not required while working, keeping any disruption to a minimum and ensuring the machine is usable in noise sensitive areas.

The new MSA 161 T is powered by the company's range of 36V AP batteries. Using the recommended AP 200 battery and AP 300 charger, the new saw affords professionals a run time of up to 35 minutes on a single charge. Using STIHL's AP 300 battery, users can benefit from a 50-minute run time.



VARIABLE TRACKED CHIPPER LAUNCHED

Timberwolf's new model tackles difficult ground conditions

Launched earlier this year at the Arb Show, new from Timberwolf is the TW 280TVGTR variable tracked chipper.

The company says the unit features Timberwolf's TW 280 performance with the ability to move the tracks in and out, raise the height of the machine off the ground and alter the angle, giving the ability to tackle difficult ground conditions.

The Wolftrack® variable tracking system features heavy-duty twin arms supporting each track, with dynamic control over track width, ground clearance and machine tilt angle, giving greater control and comfort, particularly whilst navigating uneven and sloping ground up to 35 degrees.

The extra-wide feed funnel and open top section combine to provide users with better visibility and ease of



feeding, while the 280mm x 210mm in-feed aperture can process over 6.5 tonnes per hour.

There is also Timberwolf's 'no-stress' auto-feed control for smooth operation, combined with a heavier rotor giving added inertia to get the job done quicker.

The TW 280TVGTR has a low vibration and ergonomically designed ride-on platform for comfort and safety. There are also additional safety controls, such as reverse feed rollers overriding the stop bar or the carefully positioned air filter intakes to draw in cool, dust-free air.

APF EXHIBITION RETURNS

Ragley Estate, Alcester, 20-22 September 2018

The bi-annual APF Exhibition return to the Ragley Estate, Alcester, Warwickshire from 20-22 September 2018, allowing visitors to experience all that is new in the world of forestry and forestry machinery.

The last APF took place in 2016 and was the 21st anniversary of the event. That show saw 315 exhibitors, 15% more than the show had ever had before and over 22,000 visitors attended. Those visitor numbers were an increase of 25% on the show's previous record set in 2014, a reflection of the importance the industry now regards the show as the place to come to inspect and buy new equipment. With new exhibitors from as far afield as Japan and America the APF Demo has truly become a major international event. A conservative estimate put the value of machines on show at around £60 million!

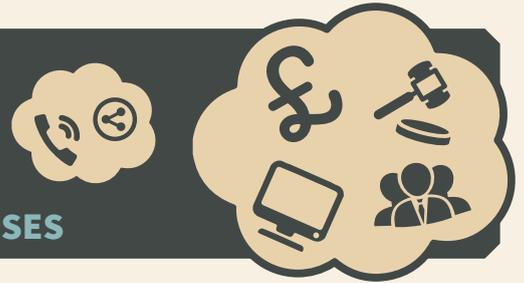
This year's show, as well as featuring a huge exhibition area of forestry machinery of all types, will also once again benefit from hosting the Husqvarna World 25m Poleclimbing Championships. There will be expert and tree surgeon classes, with heats on all three days of the show culminating in the finals on Saturday afternoon. Husqvarna will also be giving product demonstration of all their latest equipment including cordless technology and the UK Loggers Team will be giving daily displays of the 5 logging

disciplines.

Also to entertain the visitors, STIHL Timbersports returns to APF 2018, with the team demonstrating their speed and precision with axes and saws. The Roadshows will take place at 11am, 1pm and 3pm every day in the STIHL Arena, where the athletes will be warming up for the TIMBERSPORTS World Championship which takes place at the Echo Arena Liverpool on 19th and 20th October.

For full details of the show visit www.apfexhibition.co.uk





BUSINESS VEHICLES

LEASE OR BUY A VAN?



Edited by Adam Bernstein

When it comes to acquiring a vehicle, the route chosen is a matter of personal preference and, of course, the ability to pay, writes *Adam Bernstein, SME Digest Editor.*

Outright purchase, lease, hire purchase, there's no wrong or right answer, so, considering that we're talking about a key part of a tradesman's business – after all, no van means no work – what are the options?

The differences

Before we can move on it's important to note the differences between buying and leasing a van.

Buying

There are some

who like to own their assets, rather than pay to use them. For them outright purchase, either with cash held or a bank loan, is the way to go. They, however, will be responsible for maintenance, repair of any damage and will take the hit on the depreciation of the vehicle over time. That said, once bought the van cannot ordinarily be taken away – owners will be free of any contracts or regular payments (if bought with cash held).

Outright purchase means no contractual restrictions on what the owner can do with the van, either in use or aesthetic changes (such as wrapping or sign writing) or modifications (such as extra locks or racking). Also, and this may be important if there's a slowdown in work, the owner is entirely at liberty to sell

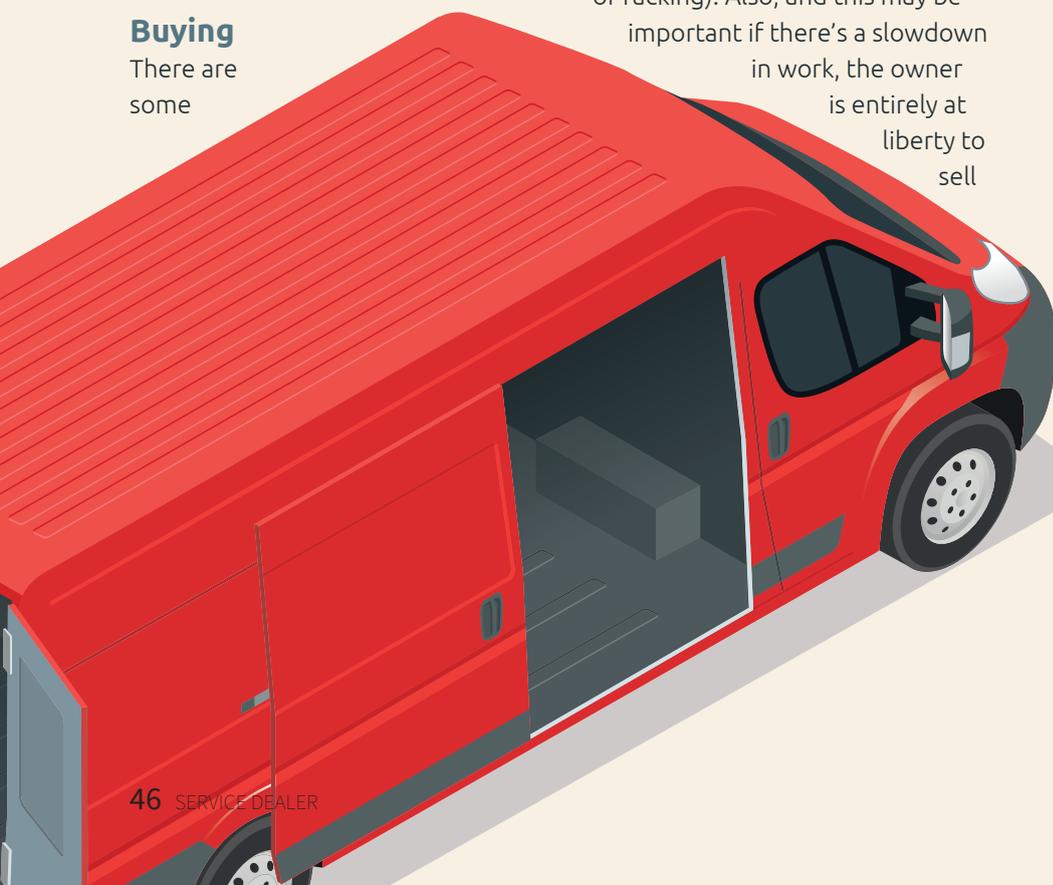
the vehicle as there are no contractual issues or payments to worry about.

But of course, there's a question over the cost of cash used to buy the van. Even though interest rates are low, it's possible to get a better return on the cash through other investments and savings accounts compared with buying a depreciating asset such as a vehicle.

Leasing

By definition, leasing is radically different to outright purchase as it's a contract to use rather than own a vehicle, in exchange for a regular, normally monthly, fee. And this monthly fee is the critical factor for some because it means that a van can be acquired without the need to tie up working cash that can be better employed elsewhere. The cost of usage – because ownership is not a consideration – is spread over the term of the agreement; all that is needed is a good credit reference and the deposit, which will invariably equate to three payments up front.

Most, but not all, leases include the cost of maintenance and servicing as well as the cost of exceeding a defined mileage, but this is something that needs the right agreement to be put in place.



But as with anything, leasing isn't straightforward because some leases (termed 'lease purchase') can give the user the option to buy the vehicle at the end of the agreement.

There are two options here. The first is called hire purchase. Here the contract requires a deposit followed by monthly payments. At the end of the agreement, the ownership of the van transfers to the user. Overall the cost will be, by definition, higher than for a pure 'use-only' lease.

Alternatively, it's possible to sign up to a balloon hire purchase agreement. With these agreements, smaller monthly payments are made and at the end of the agreement the user either hands back the keys or makes a larger 'balloon' payment to take ownership of the vehicle.

With both of these options, however, it's important to not lose sight of the overall cost of acquisition which will almost certainly be higher than an outright purchase.

Lastly, it's important to remember that a leasing agreement is just that – it's an agreement to take a vehicle for a given amount of time in exchange for agreed set of payments. Leases can be restrictive for those with possibly changing needs.

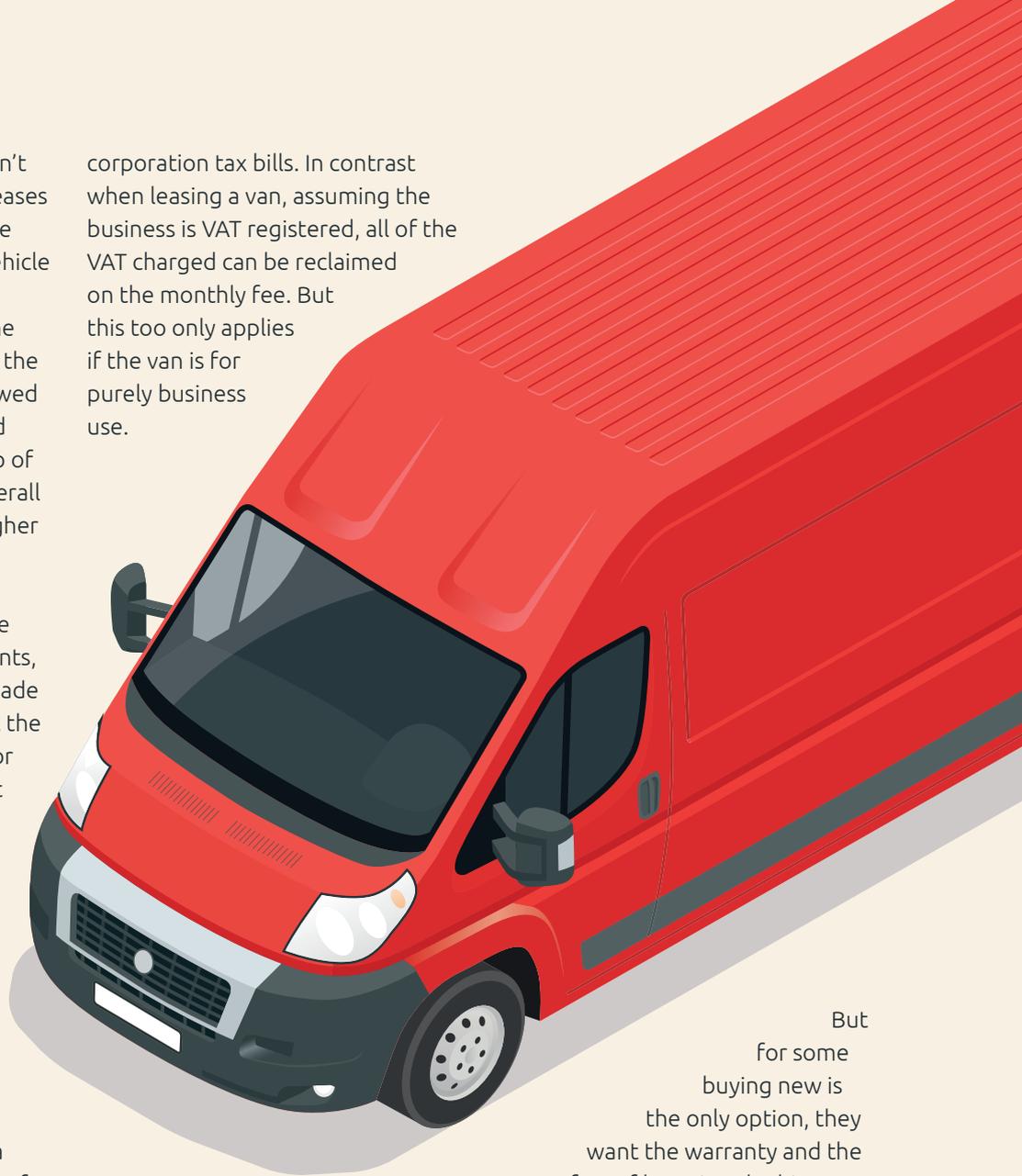
Tax advantages of...

Considering that the UK's tax system is as clear as mud it's perfectly reasonable to expect that buying and leasing follow different tax rules.

In essence, the cost of buying a van can be set against the business tax bill – income tax for the self-employed, corporation tax for those running a limited company. There are different rules for doing this depending on the accounting process used by the business. The VAT on the purchase can be reclaimed if the van is used solely for business purposes.

With leasing, as with outright purchase, the monthly payments can be set off against income or

corporation tax bills. In contrast when leasing a van, assuming the business is VAT registered, all of the VAT charged can be reclaimed on the monthly fee. But this too only applies if the van is for purely business use.



New or second-hand?

The next question to consider is new or used? Sure, a shiny new van is a thing of beauty and pride, but businesses shouldn't lose sight of the fact that it's a working tool and is bound to get mucky, scratched or dented. It's inevitable.

New vans come with a price premium and for many it's much better to buy a good used van that someone else has taken the depreciation hit on. As long as time is invested in researching vans – looking at price, reliability and running costs – it shouldn't be too hard to make a saving here. As long as the sales invoice notes the VAT paid and the seller's VAT number, the VAT can be reclaimed – but again, only if the van is used solely for business purposes.

But for some buying new is the only option, they want the warranty and the comfort of knowing the history of the vehicle. The same principles to research apply but remember one more thing: see if it's possible to time a purchase with when the dealership's quarter or year-end is close. The pressure to hit targets will be that much greater and it's entirely possible to find a dealer willing to sell a vehicle at almost no profit. How? Because if sales targets are hit they may get a manufacturer's bonus on everything it's sold to others.

To conclude

There's no perfect solution to acquiring a van as it's all down to personal preference and views on risk and business performance. No matter which route is taken, good advice from an accountant is key because the tax rules here are too complex to consider here.

HAVING WILL-POWER

Around 60% of the UK population has no will, says Angharad Lynn, Solicitor in the Private Client team at law firm VWV.

For a business owner, dying without a will can have a devastating effect.

If you die without a will your estate will be passed on according to the intestacy rules which changed in October 2014. Now if an individual dies leaving a spouse and children, the spouse will take the first £250,000 and the rest will be divided between the spouse and the children. If there are no children, the spouse inherits the whole estate.

The intestacy rules take no account of unmarried couples – if there are children they will inherit everything; if not, the estate will go to other blood relatives. The surviving partner receives nothing.

One of the reliefs from inheritance tax is Business Property Relief (BPR) which is available for a business or an interest in a business, as well as land, buildings, plant and machinery used for the purpose of the business and shares in unquoted trading

companies. BPR is currently awarded at 50% or 100%.

It's important to ensure the business qualifies for BPR – businesses must be trading to qualify, and if the proportion of assets held in investments is too high the business may not qualify.

Business owners often want flexibility after death and for this reason it can be useful to leave business assets in a discretionary trust in the will, with the surviving spouse and children as potential beneficiaries of the trust.

These very flexible arrangements allow decisions to be taken after death, rather than trying to predict the future at the time the will is made. After death the business interests can be kept in trust and income paid to the children, or shares can be transferred out to the children in appropriate proportions.

If uninvolved family members inherit shares directly they may want a say in the running of the business, even if they do not have the skills or experience to be involved. Using a trust can protect against this.

If you are including a trust in your will then you should also include a letter of wishes to give guidance to your trustees about how you envisage the trust being used after your death.

Also ensure that company documents, such as the articles of incorporation and shareholders' agreement accord with your will. Some family businesses may only allow shares to be passed to direct descendants of the founder. A spouse or stepchildren would not be included in this case. If your will leaves company shares to your spouse but the company's constitution does not allow this, the gift will fail. Alternatively, if the business is run as a partnership, in the absence of a partnership agreement, the Partnership Act 1890 will apply and on the death of a partner the partnership is dissolved; a surviving partner would have to wind up the business.

Finally, it's possible to leave instructions in your letter of wishes about the sale of the business and who may buy it.

SME NEWS

Pensions Advisory Service looks at maternity leave and pensions

The Pensions Advisory Service has published a *Maternity Leave Spotlight*, which outlines the impact on pensions where time is taken off work to have a baby. It also covers what happens on the return to work, and the impact on the state pension.

The rules applying to pension contributions during maternity leave are quite complex. They differ during "Ordinary Maternity Leave", the first 26 weeks, and "Additional Maternity Leave", the last 26 weeks.

The Pensions Advisory Service's *Maternity Leave Spotlight* gives further details of what to expect to receive while on maternity leave.

Visit tinyurl.com/y9537ss3

Report on simplifying tax relief for fixed assets

The Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) has published its report on whether tax simplification could be achieved for businesses by replacing capital allowances with accounting depreciation. The overall conclusion was that the disruptive effects of such a change would outweigh the benefits.

Instead, the report recommends improvements to the current system of capital allowances, including widening the scope of the annual investment allowance, or capital allowances more generally.

As an alternative, the OTS has proposed the introduction of accounts-based capital allowances.

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COMPLETE RELOCATION FOR GLEE THIS YEAR

Halls move within NEC will provide show with much bigger footprint

This year's Glee exhibition takes place at Birmingham's NEC from 10th-12th September and the show's organisers are promising visitors a bigger and better experience this year.

The exhibition is benefitting from a complete relocation into NEC halls 6, 7, 8, 19-20, providing the show with a much bigger footprint. Exhibitors will be relocating from their traditional spots, while visitors will be walking an updated floorplan, which the organisers say will mean they are discovering new products and companies at every turn.

Matthew Mein, Glee Event Director, says the overall effect of these changes will be a refreshed, revitalised event.

He says, "Glee has been growing at a significant rate – for example we had over 200 new brands join us at the 2017 event – and that means we've outgrown our previous home. Glee has successfully relocated before, and we believe that this move will be received with the same level of industry support.

"Not only will the exhibition be able to better accommodate more exhibitors and visitors, but its refreshed layout will breathe new life into the show. This move is inspired by the way that retailers keep their store interesting for customers by constantly revising the layout. This way customers discover more, and ultimately spend more – something we know our exhibitors and visitors want to replicate during their time at Glee."

Glee says that building more content to help support the continuous growth of gardening in the UK will be a key theme of this year's event. At Glee 2018, organisers say visitors will find more features,

seminar sessions and year-round information relating to trends, merchandising and practical advice on ways to build better business.

With over three quarters of Glee's audience coming to source new products, with many stating the importance of being able to touch and feel a product previously only seen in a catalogue, the event will see even more focus on new products, including the New Product Showcase – created in partnership with *Garden Trade News* – relocating to the main floorspace.

In terms of machinery exhibitors, **Handy Distribution** will once again enjoy a significant presence. The company will be promoting its extensive range of Webb mowers and garden tools, as well as the other brands it distributes.

Also attending the show this year will be **STIHL**, who made a return to the 2017 event after many years away, promoting its Compact Cordless System.

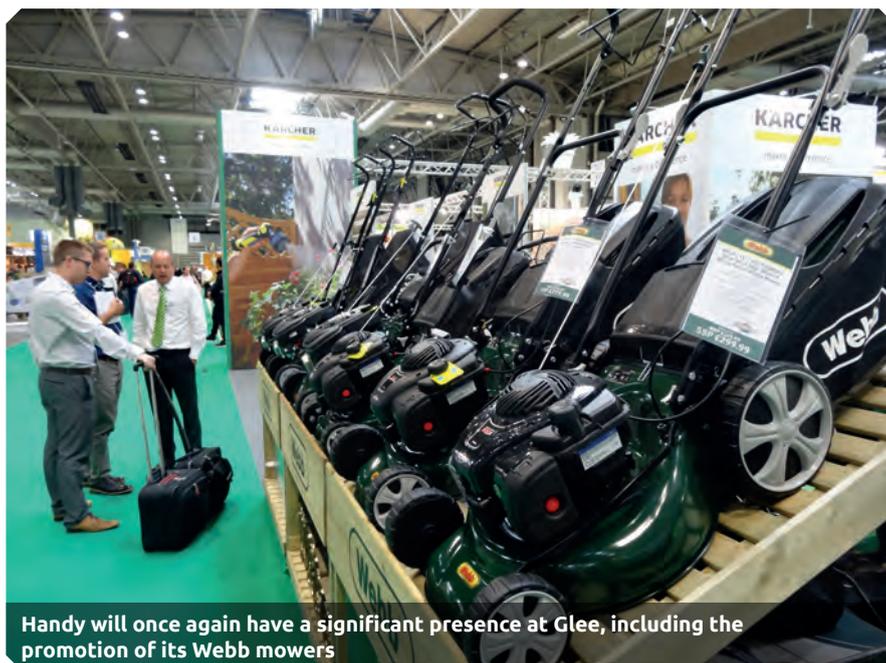
Glee's added value content, such as the Seminar Theatre, will also

be getting an upgrade, including a relocation to hall 8. Organisers promise the stage's content will focus around Inspiration, Garden Retail Trends and Business Skills.

Matthew Mein concludes, "We're excited about what Glee 2018 can achieve. We're coming off the back of an incredibly positive 2017 event, however we're not resting on our laurels. Retailing is a constantly evolving business, with garden retailing setting the standard. As the annual exhibition that represents this market, we have a responsibility to keep Glee fresh.

"By making changes, adding more content and focussing on areas of significant growth, we can create a show that continues to deliver. Our post-show research has been incredibly useful, and we thank our visitors and exhibitors for their continued support and honest feedback. We are confident that with this feedback Glee 2018 is set to be the best show yet."

For full details visit www.gleebirmingham.com



Handy will once again have a significant presence at Glee, including the promotion of its Webb mowers

RAIN DELAY

Emyr Jenkins, of Jenkins Garden Machinery, considers how the prolonged dry spell has impacted on his business and how independent dealers are able to react to difficult situations

Never in my life did I think Welsh people would be complaining that there's no rain! It has become a very dire situation across the country. Being a rural boy with friends and relatives who are farmers, I hear many reports of difficulty in the agri world; and as we need the same weather, we all know that if the farmers are suffering, the dealers are suffering.

One of my friends has shared a post on social media of a farmer who has started reducing their cattle herd in order to try to relieve the pressure. She has also had two cows abort due to the heat despite their best efforts to keep them cool. However, long-term her situation is worse as she is currently spending £210 a day on extra feed and dipping into the food that should see them through the winter.

But it isn't all doom and gloom. In our area we've started getting the odd half a day of rain, and although this isn't enough for the farmers, it has forced some green grass to fight its way through the yellow lawns. I've always said the main driver for our industry – before the economy – is the weather, and this proves it. With just a bit of rain, we see interest in machinery.

The other advantage (or disadvantage depending on how you look at it) is that this quieter spell has given the workshop a chance to catch up. Whereas before we were nearly four weeks behind with work, this has reduced to a more acceptable one-week wait. Having spoken to a good customer of mine who used to run the BMW franchise in the area, the car industry strives for a maximum four-day



period and I often think if we could get to that position (with all-year-round work guaranteed) it would make for a far more efficient workshop.

At a four-week turn around your storage facilities are at bursting point, and this is just one problem with that length of time. This coupled with the fact that customers are screaming for their machines and the added hassle of needing to pay overtime means that getting it to an even keel is every dealer's dream.

There's a lot of talk in the industry about the difficulties that the big internet sites are having too. This makes sense to me; as a smaller dealer we would be able to react and deal with a difficult season more easily. For us, what I would call a medium dealer, a challenging season allows us to scale purchases back, ask staff to use holidays, and use the time to plan for the future and do jobs that we've been putting off. However, the internet boys work on tighter margins and higher volumes, so when the volumes drop I can't see how they are able to react in the same way?

We as an industry are desperate for rain – poised on the brink of it – knowing that once it starts falling, the season will rally!



OUR CUSTOMERS ARE IN IT FOR THE LONG TERM

That's the view of Sam Mercer, General Manager at Reekie Ltd in Perth, who chatted with Editor Steve Gibbs earlier this year about the ups and downs of supplying agricultural machinery to a variety of farming disciplines

Reekie Ltd is a supplier of agricultural, groundcare and construction machinery and equipment across the Central Belt of Scotland. Now part of the Hamilton Ross Group, comprised of themselves, Hamilton Brothers and Ross of Lanark, the company proudly claim it can now offer the full product and service package to its wide range of customers.

With over 65 years' experience in sales, servicing, parts and hire of new and second-hand machinery, Reekie Ltd prides itself on providing what it describes as 'valued knowledge'. Its ethos is to help individuals and businesses meet modern demands with the best

machinery on the market and a responsive resource of engineers across Scotland.

Reekie Ltd now supplies the full AGCO portfolio of brands including Massey Ferguson, Valtra and Fendt from both its Cupar and Perth depots. It also stocks equipment from some of the big names in agriculture including Honda, Amazone, Logic, Foster, Bomford and Broughan.

I caught up with General Manager of the Perth branch, Sam Mercer, at its premises on the Inveralmond Industrial Estate earlier this year for an informal chat on how he was seeing the market for agricultural machinery.

SERVICE DEALER: How's business at the moment?

SAM MERCER: They just announced a wee while ago that Scottish farming income is the best that its ever been. Well they need to tell that to my customers, because they are not telling me that!

SD: You'll never find a happy farmer though?

SM: No, as you say, they'll often appear to be doom and gloom. However, we do have a lot of satisfied customers. I need to watch what I'm saying, but farmers can tend to be good buyers but terrible sellers. When they're buying from you they'll try to haggle you down on price. They'll say to me, 'the price of your tractors is too dear,' and I'll say, 'no they're not, it's the price of your grain, it's too cheap'. They need to get their prices up somewhere.

But in terms of farmers, I think the people that are involved are in it for the long term. Many we come across now have a plan of changing their tractor every five years. The days of reacting to circumstances and needing to spend money quick, those have gone.

I was pricing up a £76,000 tractor to a farmer of 300 acres who also has another business. He said to me, 'Sam, the farm cannot justify purchases like that anymore, it just isn't making the money – the other business will be paying for it'. And as a dealership, that's what we're hearing quite a lot of the time.

So farmers are having to diversify their businesses in order to be able to make these necessary purchases.





**“NEVER KNOCK THE SO-CALLED
OPPOSITION BRANDS WHICH YOU
DON'T STOCK BECAUSE YOU NEVER
KNOW WHAT CHANGES MIGHT BE
AROUND THE CORNER AND WHAT
YOU MIGHT BE SELLING NEXT YEAR”**

SD: Are contractors a big part of your sales?

SM: Mixed I would say. There's business there amongst those guys, but it's up and down.

SD: You've got an ATV side to your business as well – how's that faring?

SM: Yes, with Honda, that's doing well. We find our livestock customers are buying these. We had a better start to the year with those than we expected we would. I'd put that down to the better prices our customers were getting for their cattle and sheep. When those customers are making good money at the auctions, we like to think that we should get a good spin-off from that as well.

The good thing for us here in Perthshire is that we have a variety of farming operations. We have livestock, we have grain, we have a bit of potatoes and veg – we just don't have much dairy. However, we're pretty much covered for everything else. So hopefully at least some of those customers should always be doing well – meaning we'll always have a section of our customer base who'll be in the market for making purchases.

SD: Some changes have gone on with the set-up here in recent years – how has that affected things?

SM: Reekie is now part of the Hamilton-Ross Group and since we made that change, being part of the bigger group is definitely helping. One thing I always say is never knock the so-called opposition brands which you don't stock because you never know what changes might be around the corner and what you might be selling next year.

We stock AGCO Balers and Grass Equipment now but we were Vicon dealers for years. Circumstances change, so as a business what we've always done is stress the features and benefits of our own equipment, because you just never know nowadays – more-so than ever before.

But we're feeling good at the moment. We had a salesman retire at the end of last year and a couple of new salesmen started earlier this year, which always takes a bit of time to get going, but we're confident going forward. It's a fact of the way that business is going, that salesman nowadays just have to travel further afield, because there's fewer customers everywhere.

SD: Thank you

PRODUCTS

CONTACT:

07929 438213

steve@servicedealer.co.uk

AGRICULTURAL

COMPACT TRACKED TELESKID FOR AG

Launched by JCB

A tracked version of the Teleskid has been introduced by JCB to handle loading and re-handling tasks in farming and forestry where conditions underfoot are delicate or especially demanding.

JCB says the Teleskid 3TS-8T is unique among compact tracked loaders in having a telescopic boom that adds to the machine's capabilities.

It says it has all the benefits of the large platform compact tracked loader on which it is based but also the advantages that come with a telescopic boom, such as being able to load into higher-sided bulk trailers and spreaders, to stack and retrieve bales and vegetable boxes from a greater height, and to handle and push loose materials into deeper stockpiles.

JCB's Chief Innovation and Growth Officer, Tim Burnhope said, "This is the single most innovative development of the compact tracked loader since its launch 20 years ago. The machine lifts higher, reaches further and digs deeper than any tracked loader of this size."

The concept of a skid-steering compact loader equipped

with an extending boom is already proven on the wheeled Teleskid 3TS-8W, which has similar performance figures in terms of lift height and forward reach. However, the tracked machine manages to lift more within safe limits by dint of its greater weight – 5.7 tonnes for the 3TS-8T versus 4.4 tonnes.

Rated operating capacity (35% of the tipping load) for the JCB Teleskid 3TS-8T is 732kg when the purpose-engineered monoboam is at full extension, and maximum load-over height increases from 2.9m to 3.8m, with forward reach at ground level increasing from 1.1m to 2.25m.

The new telescopic tracked handler is powered by a 4.4-litre JCB EcoMAX engine developing 74hp (55kW) and has a hydraulics system generating 90-litres/min of oil flow as standard or 125-litres/min with the optional high-flow system.

Hydrostatic drive provides ground speeds of up to 12.6km/hr, running on 450mm wide rubber belts fitted to the rigidly-mounted track frames for a combination of traction and flotation over soft surfaces.



DOMESTIC

APP-Y NEWS FOR HUSQVARNA'S AUTOMOWER

Connect functionality for new X-Line models

NEW for 2018 for Husqvarna's Automower® is the X-Line range.

Manufactured in the UK, these models feature Automower® Connect which allows the product to be controlled from anywhere in the world via a Smartphone or Apple watch, giving users complete control. Pairing with the mower can be managed from multiple smart phones which allows both dealer and customer to have access to the product, making it possible for dealers to keep track of customers' products while they are away.

For added piece of mind the X-Line range also features GPS-assisted navigation with theft tracking which ensures even lawn coverage even in complex areas, as well as the



ability to see exactly where a mower is.

Automower® Connect is available as an accessory and can be retrofitted to all non X-Line models, excluding Automower® 105.

To add value and revenue to the Husqvarna Authorised dealer, the Husqvarna Automower® range, including the new X-Line range, can be offered with a three-year warranty. The product must be registered, installed and serviced annually by an authorised Husqvarna dealer for the extended warranty to apply.

DOMESTIC / COMMERCIAL

DYNAMIC EAR PROTECTION FROM STIHL

Bluetooth ear protectors with speakers

STIHL has added to its range of face and ear protective equipment with the introduction of its new bluetooth ear protectors with speakers.

The new Dynamic BT ear protectors come with built in speakers and are suitable for ground-based work such as mowing the lawn, grass trimming or hedge-cutting.

Compatible with most mobile phones and tablets, the new wireless ear protectors can be paired to the operator's device using either a Bluetooth 4.0 or AUX connection. To get connected even more quickly, the headset features a three-button interface. As well as being designed with high-quality speakers, there is also a microphone built in, allowing professionals to take calls while on the go.

Although robust, the headset has been designed to be lightweight to help lower fatigue and promote movement, and the 38-hour battery life gives professionals days of running time before requiring a charge.



EVENTS 2018

SEPTEMBER 2018

- 1 Alresford Show
www.alresfordshow.co.uk
- 1-2 Dorset County Show
www.dorsetcountyshow.co.uk
- 2-5 Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC
www.autumnfair.com
- 2-4 spoga-gafa 2018
www.spogagafa.com
- 8 Usk Show
www.uskshow.co.uk
- 8 Romsey Show
www.romseyshow.co.uk
- 10-12 Glee 2018
www.gleebirmingham.com
- 13 Westmoreland County Show
www.westmorlandshow.co.uk
- 20-22 APF Exhibition 2018,
Ragley Estate, Alcester
www.apfexhibition.co.uk

OCTOBER 2018

- 3 The Dairy Show,
Bath & West Showground
[www.bathandwest.com/
the-dairy-show](http://www.bathandwest.com/the-dairy-show)
- 17-19 Green Industry & Equipment
Expo, Louisville, USA
<https://gie-expo.com>
- 18 STIHL, Life Begins At 40 Dealer
Conference, Liverpool
www.stihl.co.uk
- 20-
21 Countryside Live, Harrogate
www.countrysidelive.co.uk
- 31-
1/11 IOG Saltex 2018,
Birmingham NEC
www.iogsaltex.com

NOVEMBER 2018

- 15 Service Dealer Conference
& Awards
www.servicedealer.co.uk
- 26-
27 Royal Welsh Winter Fair
www.rwas.wales/winter-fair



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The nylon cord concept has stood the test of time. Only the other day I was in a dealer's showroom when a man in his 80s walked in with his 39 year old Shikutani brushcutter fitted with a Kawasaki KT18 engine with bowl carb. Boy, did that bring back memories! More importantly he wished to purchase another one (a product long gone of course) as his trusted machine had finally given up the ghost! What he really wanted however, was the nylon cord head. Alas, the young salesman decided that the old boy would be better off with a battery powered model and the deal was done, But will his new machine survive the test of time to arrive in the dealer's showroom 39 years from now? Indeed, will the dealer even still be there?

Many millions of the petrol-powered machines have been purchased by home owners, local authorities and professional users throughout the UK and globally since their inception – and the important aspect is the dealer network won a sizeable share of this lucrative market.

However, there is a wind of change in our industry like we probably have never experienced. The product concepts are the same today but who sells them is now the question. Not only did we go through the trauma of dealing with the 'sheds', we are now contending with the continuing growth of the internet - and even more concerning, the ever-growing variance of retailers able to offer cordless and robots at prices to suit all pockets.

Like it or lump it, these lightweight but powerful products are the next generation of ingenuity - they are simple to operate, easy to sell, almost trouble free and more frighteningly, can be sold in a box. Typical FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) selling.

The question is, will our dealer network survive to tell the tale 40 years from now? Will they still be around to talk about the cordless and robotic garden machinery

revolution in our industry which has adopted the nylon cord concept as part of the deal?

There is no doubt every serious specialist dealer in this country needs to take stock, ask the questions; what are we doing, how do we do it and how can we do it better?

Is it a case that for the specialist, to survive is to specialise? By which I mean truly specialise, such as by cutting back on the number of brands in the showroom, knowing more about less and moving right up market where the so called 'imposters' can't get you. Or are opening price point products still needed to keep the punters coming in?

Can diesel disappear, can petrol disappear, can dealers disappear in the next 40 years?

Hard to contemplate? Is it a matter of service, service and more service – with whoever does that best surviving? Or is it a matter of moving with the times? Only time will tell!



JIM GREEN



LAST-MINUTE TRANSFER DEAL

DEALER COMES TO FOOTBALL CLUB'S RESCUE

Following theft of groundscre machinery

Even a crusty old dinosaur such as myself knows that perceptions are important – especially so for a small business. Everything that can be done to present a professional, modern, friendly and helpful local business should be embraced fully.

One tried and tested method for this is to take full advantage of any public relations opportunities which present themselves. I recently heard tale of a dealer putting themselves in their local spotlight in an incredibly positive manner.

Firstly a bit of background – during June, non-league football club Nantwich Town FC had been the victim of a break-in which saw thousands of pounds of groundscre equipment stolen. The club issued a statement at the time which said, “Thieves broke into the ground and took a ride-on John Deere mower and one of our Hayter mowers, plus other pieces of kit”.

This was apparently the second break-in that the club had suffered in two years. Chairman Tony Davison told the club's website, “This is devastating news for the club. The equipment stolen was nearly brand new. Some of it had been donated by supporters which makes the theft even more upsetting.”

Cut to the following week and I hear that local STIGA dealer Total Tools had stepped in to come to the club's rescue with the loan of a ride-on and a lawnmower. This was not only a fantastic gesture which genuinely helped out the struggling club, but the surrounding positive publicity which Total Tools received from this locally cannot be underestimated.

Included here is the picture which made the local press as well as the professional groundscre journals.

Following the arrival of the equipment, Chairman Tony Davison publicly thanked the dealer for its support, which was reported in the local paper, the *Nantwich News*.

He said, “It has been a difficult week for the club, following the break-in, so I was delighted to receive the

call from Dan Mellor at Total Tools with the offer of some equipment.

“Dan has worked with manufacturer STIGA to set up the loan and we are delighted that together they have come to our rescue. At Nantwich Town we greatly appreciate the support of all the local businesses we deal with and this is yet another magnificent example of the support we get across the town.”

What a fantastic, positive story this was – considering it came out of something so downbeat as a small club being robbed. Total Tools and STIGA really should be commended for stepping in to offer their help. Whilst, of course, it wasn't their primary motivation, the attendant positive feelings associated with the companies in the local area is invaluable.

Dealers can always be keeping an eye out for any potential PR opportunities which crop up within their business, or for events which they can get involved with locally. There will surely be many occurrences which could be of interest to local, national or specialist press. Plus with your own social media channels a constant feed of stories of what your dealership has been up to can be simple and low cost.



L-R: Paul Jones, General Manager, Total Tools (Nantwich) Ltd; Tony Davidson, Chairman, Nantwich Town FC; Dan Mellor, Managing Director, Total Tools (Nantwich) Ltd; Dave Cooke, 1st Team Manager, Nantwich Town FC; Pete Temmen, Head Groundsman, Nantwich Town FC



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