

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

MAR / APR 19

TAYLOR MADE

Despite the challenging trading conditions, 2018 saw professional turfcare dealers RT Machinery presented with the Royal Warrant, picking up a Service Dealer award and enjoying their best year yet.

Core business
Husqvarna's worldwide
50cc chainsaw launch

LAMMA '19

New dawn for ag show at NEC

Lost in Harrogate

Plenty to see at rejigged BTME



DOE SHOW
REPORT FROM EASTERN
ENGLAND DEALER'S
THREE-DAY EVENT

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to March/April 2019's edition of Service Dealer magazine.

It was an interesting beginning to the year with two established trade shows, taking risks by changing up their formats. You can read how successful both LAMMA and BTME were with that, with reports from both shows in this issue. No spoilers, but one received almost universal praise and the other had a few issues which will want ironing out before next year – but was still a positive event.

It was good to start off the year with a couple of vibrant industry get-togethers, coming off the back of 2018's less than perfect season. The hangover from that is still being felt by dealers, according to the results of our Winter Servicing survey which we also feature this issue. By no means a disaster, it does however appear that with many customers not using their machinery much last summer, many are not scheduling them in for an overhaul during the first cold months of this year. Most dealers are reporting a levelling out of service jobs in their workshops – as opposed to the past couple of seasons where many have seen busyness increasing. You can read the stats and fellow dealers' thoughts on these issues on page 34

Also this issue, we say farewell to Ron Miller who will no longer be writing the In My View column for Service Dealer as he's taken up a new position with a machinery importer. I'd like to thank Ron for all his fascinating contributions to the magazine over the past two years, which have always provoked thought, debate and great interest. Good luck Ron and I'm sure we'll all see you around!



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DEALERS

TOP CLAAS DEALERS AWARDED

Excellence recognised at ceremony

The high level of sales, service and support offered by Claas dealers in the UK and Ireland has been recognised by Claas UK in its annual Dealer Awards.

Announced at the recent Dealer Council meeting held at the Claas Tractor factory in Le Mans, France, the awards recognise overall dealer performance for both Claas products in general and specifically for tractors.

The highest Platinum Dealer Excellence Award was presented to Claas Eastern, which has headquarters at Sleaford, and a total of seven branches, covering Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. For a dealership with so many branches and more than 100 employees, to win this highest level award is a considerable achievement. Each of the dealership branches would have been individually evaluated as part of the overall assessment, and would have been

assessed as reaching the highest standards required to win this award.

Two dealers, Hamblys and Rickerby, were presented with Gold Dealer Excellence Awards. With a total of six and eight branches respectively, again each of these dealerships and the sales, service and parts support that they offer through all of their branches, would have been appraised as part of the overall dealership assessment.

The Tractor Sales Performance Award was won by a dealer from Ireland for the third year running. Ashfied & Wilson, a single-branch family dealership based in Dungannon Co Tyrone, was announced overall winner. This Award recognises the dealership that has achieved the highest level of tractor sales per branch in 12 months.

The second tractor award, the Tractor Sales Growth Award, recognises the dealer that has

achieved the highest growth in Claas tractor sales in the UK and Ireland.

This year, this has been awarded to Riverlea, again a family-run dealership, operating from three branches across South Wales.

"This year's Claas Dealer Awards again highlight the professionalism within our dealer network throughout the UK and Ireland," stated Trevor Tyrrell, Claas UK CEO.

"That three of our largest multi-branch dealerships in the UK should achieve such high appraisal ratings across the whole of their businesses to win their Platinum and Gold Dealer Excellence Awards is evidence of the commitment these dealers have made in their businesses.

"It is also encouraging to see so many family-run dealerships receiving awards, as it reflects the obvious loyalty that these businesses have within their local farming community, and the success that this has brought them."



Colin Blow of Claas Eastern (right) receives the Platinum Dealer Excellence Award from Christian Radons, President Western Europe, Claas Service & Sales

KRAMP UK RETURNS AS PRINCIPAL SPONSOR

Service Dealer Conference & Awards confirms 2019's date

Returning to the Oxford Belfrey Hotel this November, the *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards will once again benefit from Kramp UK as Principal Sponsor.

The date of this year's event has been confirmed as Thursday 21st November.

Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke commented, "We are delighted to announce Kramp UK as Principal Sponsor once again for *Service Dealer's* Conference & Awards.

"Kramp has worked alongside us

for several editions of the Conference and Awards now and we couldn't be more pleased that it is returning this year for what will be a very special day."

Des Boyd, Sales Director at Kramp UK, said the company was once again very pleased to be sponsoring an event designed specifically for the independent dealer trade.

He said, "We believe in relationship building and our customers attend the *Service Dealer* Conference, so it's the best place for us to be. We can celebrate their successes, talk about

the issues and innovations of the day and discuss what's happening in our industry."

More details about this year's *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards will be announced in due course – keep an eye on the *Weekly Update* and this magazine.

In the meantime, you can watch an interview with Des Boyd from last year's *Service Dealer* Conference, as well as with other sponsors and speakers from 2018 at the *Service Dealer* website at www.servicedealer.co.uk/2018-awards-videos



Des Boyd, Sales Director of Kramp UK presents Gayways with its Overall Dealer of the Year Award at 2018's *Service Dealer* Awards, with *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke (left) and comedian Charlie Baker (right)

INDUSTRY

STIHL SETS UP IN-HOUSE BATTERY PRODUCTION

At Waiblingen facility

The STIHL Group has announced that it is setting up an in-house production line for battery products at its headquarters in Germany.

Backpack batteries for professional applications will be produced at a highly automated high-tech manufacturing facility in Waiblingen-Hohenacker.

“Entering into battery pack manufacturing is the logical continuation of the STIHL battery strategy,” Dr Bertram Kandziora, Chairman of the executive board of STIHL, said. “In just 10 years, we have expanded our range of battery products from a hedge trimmer to three product lines featuring a wide selection of different tools.”

The company launched its line of battery products for professional and high-end private use in 2009. In 2016, the company opened a competence centre for battery and electronics development at its headquarters in Waiblingen by expanding its development facility. Today, more than 300 employees work there.

“We’ve been able to fill many vacant positions in recent months, especially in the fields of batteries, electronics, connected products and IT. This is essential to further growth in this promising segment,” Dr Kandziora said.



Increasingly powerful batteries have made the products popular among more than just private users. The quieter, emissions-free products offer many advantages, especially for municipal customers, says STIHL.

The battery production line was built with in-house expertise within the space of just 18 months. The first trial run at the new building in Waiblingen commenced in September 2018. The first batteries produced in-house are slated to hit the market in autumn 2019. Most batteries will be destined for European dealers.

DEALERS

JENKINS JOINS WITH ISEKI

Latest dealership to join up

Jenkins Garden Machinery, based near Llanelli, in Wales, has become the latest garden machinery dealer to take on the Iseki franchise, joining the growing number of dealers for the manufacturer across the UK.

Dealer Principal, Howell Jenkins, commented, “Our business has changed dramatically in the last few years with customers seeking more commercial machinery. This partnership with Iseki will help us serve those customers better.”

Emyr Jenkins, Managing Director, added, “Iseki has a long-standing reputation for quality of product and service in the UK which is

exactly what we strive to deliver to our customers on a daily basis.

“Additionally the amazing performance of the cut and collect machines is really a big deal for us in South Wales, where the grass grows so strongly.”

David Withers, Managing Director of Iseki UK, says he was pleased to

add Jenkins Garden Machinery to its family and commented, “We enjoy working with companies that have the same focus we have on customer service and long-term relationships. As such we are excited to add Emz (as Emyr is usually know) and the team to the family.”



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PEOPLE

RON MILLER JOINS SWIFT

Moves on from Service Dealer role

Industry stalwart, Ron Miller, who for the past two years has been providing the In My View column for Service Dealer magazine, has joined battery machinery importer, Swift.

Swift, who are owned by the NGP Group, import a range of cordless garden machinery including mowers, trimmers, blowers and chainsaws.

Ron said, "An opportunity recently arose for me to use my experience and passion for the industry to become involved in building a dealer network for an excellent quality range of UK designed, battery powered products and robots under the specially chosen Swift brand.

"Throughout my time in this industry, I have stuck to my principles and have become established as a 'dealer man' through and through. My philosophy has never changed; there needs to be a level playing field and we need to make it easy to do business.

"And that is exactly the case with my new role. I'm sticking to my same philosophy and my same policies. Alongside this, my new company is offering some great benefits, that fit nicely into today's turbulent trading conditions."

Ron says Swift are taking a different slant on the way they go to market, bringing "modern retailing" to dealer showrooms, with an on-loan free-standing display stand manned with products acting as a silent sales vending machine.

"Just sell a machine from the initial loan stock provided,



then replace it and pay on monthly account," explained Ron.

"Our parent company is NGP, a well-established manufacturer who understands the needs of the UK market, having had the products designed and tested here. The aim of the company is clear, to build a customer base ready to face up to the challenges of change in the market, with long-term future technology in mind.

"I have said it enough in my 'In My View' columns over the past couple of years, as a trade we need to take ownership of the robot and cordless market to make sure there is a place for specialist dealers for many years to come.

"To be a truly flexible trade we need to capture back some of the 1.2 million mains electric mower sales, plus the sales of hundreds of thousands mains electric hand-held products. We must remember gardens are becoming smaller and the householder profile and aspirations are changing.

"Our trade needs to recognise every customer is welcome. They are no longer all mass retailer customers!"

EVENTS

TILLAGE-LIVE '19 ANNOUNCED

Heading to Northamptonshire

Tillage-Live is heading to Northamptonshire in 2019 with the event being held at Deenethorpe Airfield by permission of Brudenell Estates.

The event, which is being held on Wednesday 4th September 2019, will include working demonstrations, a static machinery

display, and a knowledge trail which offers in-depth information on areas such as cultivation and soil structure.

Kayleigh Holden, Event Organiser, explained, "The AEA is extremely pleased that Tillage-Live will be taking place in Northamptonshire in 2019. The site near Corby offers

excellent facilities for manufacturers to showcase their machinery to potential customers and visitors. We would like to thank Brudenell Estates for hosting the 2019 event."

Tillage-Live is organised by the AEA on behalf of industry exhibitors and has been held since 1992.

OBITUARY

CLIVE PINNOCK

Reesink pays its respects

Clive Pinnock, Reesink's Training Ambassador who worked for the company for 34 years before retiring in Spring 2018, has sadly passed away following a short battle with cancer

Clive will be remembered for achieving a level 4 in the Landbased Technician Accreditation scheme (LTA) in 2016, one of the highest training accolades there is, and growing and shaping the company's training department into what it is today.

Fondly referred to as a 'training trailblazer', he will be much missed says turf equipment Aftermarket Manager at Reesink, David Jackman.

"It was very sad news to hear that Clive had passed away following a short battle with cancer. Clive played a big part in helping the training department grow to the size it is today and he always got on well with our dealers and customers, helping them achieve the very best from the machinery that he knew so much about."

He continues, "When Clive turned 65, he still had passion and a love of the product and the people that he worked with, so he became more involved in training, he had a genuine interest in cutting-edge technology and helping to train others. Anyone who attended a technical training course at St Neots would have come across Clive and his enthusiasm for the products. He will be sorely missed by all, especially those at Reesink Turfcare."

Over the years, Clive left a big impression on those he worked with, inspiring others with his passion for learning and sharing his knowledge. This enthusiasm is remembered by Reesink Managing Director, David Cole.

"I have known and worked with Clive off and on since the early '90s,

and over that time have always fed off his infectious enthusiasm for engineering and the opportunities in agriculture and turfcare," David says.

"Over his career he channelled that enthusiasm into giving generously of his knowledge to everyone he came across and in doing so improved the technical ability and understanding of many greenkeepers, groundsman and technicians, as well as influencing the career path of some. That

generosity, with his experience and sharing what he knew, was a real loss to Reesink, the Toro brand and the wider industry when Clive retired last year and should be reflected upon with the sad news of his passing."

Having made such an impact in the industry and those around him, Clive is truly irreplaceable. However, his legacy remains in the form of all those he's trained. Reesink's condolences are with Clive's family.



DEALERS

DOUBLEDAY APPOINTED BY SULKY-BUREL UK

For Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and mid-Lincolnshire



Sulky-Burel UK has appointed Doubleday Group to distribute its range of fertiliser spreaders, seed drills and cultivation equipment in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and mid-Lincolnshire.

Rob Thurkettle, Sulky UK Managing Director said, "We're delighted to welcome the Doubleday Group to the Sulky UK dealer network. This appointment allows us to

expand our coverage to new customers in parts of East Anglia and Lincolnshire and provides increased customer service coverage for existing Sulky customers.

"The area covered by the Doubleday Group includes a variety of farm sizes and types. This will allow Sulky UK products to be offered to a wide range of potential customers, including small family farms, mixed farms, large arable operations with root crops and sugar beet, and vegetable growers."

Alex Child, Group Sales Manager at The Doubleday Group said, "We're pleased to have been appointed as a Sulky UK dealer. It provides us with an opportunity to talk to customers about this exciting range, which they may not be aware of. We've been impressed with the build quality of Sulky's machines and, in particular, the unique design features of its power harrows, which we believe will be ideal for many of our customers."

Sulky sales, service and parts will be available from the three Doubleday Group depots in Swineshead, Holbeach and Kings Lynn.

INDUSTRY

EVOPOS ADDING MAKING TAX DIGITAL FEATURE

At no cost to dealers

This April all companies that are VAT registered must submit their VAT returns electronically using HMRC compliant software.

Evopos UK says it is working closely with HMRC to make sure that its dealer management software is Making Tax Digital (MTD) compliant.

In a statement, the company said that its development team is on target to meet the MTD requirements.

Evopos has been providing dealers with dealer management software successfully for over 30 years, focusing on the agricultural, horticultural and automotive markets.

Managing Director Denis Bullen explained that making Evopos MTD compliant is an important step forward for both itself and dealers.

"This great new feature will enable dealers who are

using the Evopos accounting package to seamlessly upload their VAT returns directly to HMRC," he commented.

"Because of the importance of this, our team have decided that there will be no additional charge for this feature and it will be included in an Evopos upgrade free of charge, within the accounting package."



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DEALERS

JENSEN ADDS NEW SOUTH-WEST DEALER

Elmstar Machinery based in Newton Abbot

Jensen has appointed a new dealer for South-West England.

Elmstar Machinery, based in Newton Abbot, will be responsible for sales, service, parts and hire of Jensen woodchippers throughout the entire county of Devon.

Elmstar has been trading for 10 years in 2019, celebrating its 10-year anniversary in January. With dedicated and well-stocked workshops, and coverage across all of Devon, Jensen believes Elmstar Machinery is an excellent addition to its network.

Jason Wignall, Elmstar Machinery Co-owner, says he is extremely pleased with the new partnership and is excited to have the opportunity to work with the brand.

"We do sell a range of domestic and professional groundcare machinery, as well as chainsaws, but the adoption of a woodchipper brand opens up new and exciting potential for us in the arboriculture sector across Devon," said Jason.

"We're delighted to be able to add this established brand to our portfolio."

This latest appointment follows two other new dealership appointments in the UK, with Field and Forest Machinery, Scotland and P Tuckwells in East England both joining the Jensen dealer line-up in November 2018, and another in Kent reported to be coming soon.

In only the second year of trading as part of the TH WHITE Machinery Imports division, led by Business Manager Bill Johnston, Jensen wood chippers are now available to buy, hire, service and obtain spare parts from 19 dealer locations across the whole of the UK.

Bill says he is excited with the continued expansion of the Jensen dealer network. "2018 was an excellent year for Jensen, with a growing network of dealers across the country, a series of successful events in the Arb Show, APF and SALTEX, and increasing awareness across the industry.

"2019 is already looking like another exciting year, with even more high-calibre dealers set to join the Jensen line-up, and we're delighted to welcome Elmstar Machinery into our Jensen family."



L-R: Jason Wignall, Elmstar Machinery Director with Bill Johnston of Jensen

DEALERS

TH WHITE TAKES OVER JG PLANT'S HEREFORD DEPOT

Following administration

New Holland dealer TH White has expanded its coverage in the South-West of England with a new branch in Hereford, following the acquisition of part of the JG Plant Ltd business which entered administration on 12th December 2018.

JG Plant Ltd had depots in Hereford and Bridgend.

TH White has undertaken to run the depot at The Beech Business Park, Tillington, Hereford, ensuring a smooth transition for customers. All 16 employees at JG Plant's Hereford depot have transferred to TH White and they remain committed to

providing continuity and quality of service.

New Holland's Business Director for UK & Ireland, Pat Smith, said, "TH White is one of our longest-standing dealers and it's great to see them growing in this way. Their long history and experience with the New Holland brand will bring new stability and confidence to the Hereford dealership."

TH White Managing Director Alex Scott commented, "Adding the Hereford area to our agricultural machinery trading territory brings great opportunities. We're delighted



to welcome the new staff and will be working hard to maintain and grow the relationships with farmers and businesses throughout the region."

The JG Plant Bridgend depot has closed and New Holland customers are advised to contact an alternative dealer for service and sales assistance.

PEOPLE

HORSCH APPOINTS NEW SALES MANAGER

Taking over from retiring Jimmie Carver

Horsch has appointed Alastair Orr as its Regional Sales Manager for Scotland, Ireland and Northern England.

Alastair is taking over from Jimmie Carver, who is retiring at the end of March after supporting dealers in the area for more than 15 years.

"Jimmie is very well respected and I've been working closely with him during this transition. He's provided amazing support to dealers and customers and I look forward to carrying on his good work," said Alastair.

Raised in a farming family, Alastair worked as a sprayer and potato harvester driver at Meikleour Estate in Perthshire for five years before joining Scanstone potato systems. Based out of Forfar, Alastair was responsible for Scanstone's sales and demonstrations across Scotland.

"Having worked for a farming estate and for a machinery manufacturer, I can fully appreciate the pressures and requirements on both customers and dealers," said Alastair.

"Horsch has an amazing range of products and I look

forward to supporting their dealers and the region's highly productive farming operations."



Alastair Orr

DEALER DAYS DRAW THE CROWDS

With such events becoming ever-more popular, SERVICE DEALER plans to report from a number of dealer open days this year. Martin Rickatson kicks off with our regular visit to eastern England dealer Ernest Doe's three-day show.

As agricultural machinery dealer businesses and their branch networks grow larger, communicating common messages to potential and existing customer audiences becomes more challenging. While open days and events are now commonplace ways of connecting with business customers, leaving county shows and country fairs primarily for displaying garden machinery to homeowners, it's increasingly difficult for bigger dealer businesses to bring to one venue a large number of visitors and a full display of product offerings.

East Anglian and south-eastern England dealer Ernest Doe has had more practice than most, though, having held its first event 59 years ago. Despite its network having grown beyond its Essex heartland to include 19 branches from Norfolk down to Kent and across to Hertfordshire, it continues to draw crowds from across its area and well beyond to the three-day show it holds in the first week of February.

"It's a timing we continue to use, as it's probably one of the quietest times of the year for our key customers in the agricultural, turf and construction sectors," says Colin Doe, the firm's managing director.

"At our headquarters in Ulting, we have plenty of hardstanding, buildings and space for displaying new and used equipment, and we are supported by all of our key franchises, who take stands in the main display area and are able to talk directly to customers alongside our own staff.

"We are also able to use our own farmland surrounding the site for conducting working demonstrations of equipment ranging from ploughing to chainsaws. The weather can go against us, but we are on light land, and most years we are able to show machines working, alongside ploughing demonstrations of vintage and classic tractors from our past, including our own Doe tractors."

Visitors are catered for with free tea, coffee and soup, while further hot food catering is available outside, and the permanent and temporary main buildings used for the show are all heated. It's a recipe that keeps customers, judging by the numbers that populated the event from first thing until late afternoon.

In addition to new machine displays and demonstrations, used equipment promotions are a





“WE’VE CREATED A MACHINE THAT’S BEEN BEEFED UP IN A NUMBER OF KEY AREAS, RANGING FROM THE AXLES TO THE TUB DESIGN AND FROM THE FEED-OUT CONVEYOR TO THE GEARBOX”

big part of the show, and used machinery areas for agricultural, construction and turf equipment, are a prominent element of the event. The opportunity is also taken to move on old parts stock, with a large marquee set up to house tables and a cash desk to allow visitors to look among obsolete items. Meanwhile, visitors are welcomed into the showroom and stores at Ulting, the largest depot in the Ernest Doe network, and promotions are available on items ranging from boots and safety gear to spare parts.

The show also provides a good barometer of the state of the industry segments in which the Doe business is involved. With annual visitor numbers topping 10,000 – and appearing this year to be well up on recent years, if the first day’s attendance was anything to go by – it would appear that was no significant caution in those key agricultural, construction and turf segments at the time of the event, despite a looming Brexit date and little clarity about how those industries may be impacted.

In agricultural equipment, the business remains one of the largest UK dealers for CNH Industrial’s two main brands, New Holland and Case IH, retailing them via distinct Ernest Doe and Ernest Doe Power-branded networks. Ernest Doe was the first UK dealer to sign up to sell both brands, rebranding certain outlets as Ernest Doe Power branches back in 2002 and announcing at that year’s show that it would be selling Case IH equipment – with its distinctive product offerings such as Quadtrac tracked tractors and Axial-Flow single-rotor combines – alongside its long-established New Holland offering, following the bringing-together of the two businesses under fiat ownership. The result is that both marques

are sold through the one organisation, with competing branch networks. While some may have initially expressed doubts, Ernest Doe has clearly made the model work, with all of its branches, split evenly between the two marques, continuing to trade successfully 17 years on. In addition, the business expanded further by acquiring Case IH dealers Framlingham Tractors and Harper and Eede in 2001 and 2004 respectively. The branches of these former businesses remain today, now operating under the Ernest Doe Power banner.

At the show, separate display buildings house large displays from core franchises New Holland and Case IH. The former included displays of the latest T6 tractors with Dynamic Command eight-step semi-powershift transmission, while in the Case IH building was one of the latest Case IH Axial-Flow 250 series combines, launched last summer in Europe and, because of the maker’s absence from January’s LAMMA, making one of its first major UK appearances.

With New Holland also having been absent from LAMMA, outside the New Holland building visitors could get their first look at the new line of telescopic handlers launched by the marque at last autumn’s EIMA show. As a major construction equipment dealer, Ernest Doe sells primarily Manitou telehandlers, but also New Holland products including backhoe loaders, skid-steer loaders, wheel loaders and mini 360-degree excavators. With a new yellow livery, the latest revision of the marque’s telehandlers brings these products into the same fold. Built in-house in Italy, the six-model 6-9m TH range is available in four specifications, and features new electronic transmission control to improve shifting

and shuttling, plus slight increases in lift capacities and automatic steering alignment and automatic lubrication options.

Making its first appearance since its LAMMA launch was a representative of the new 24 and 30 cu m Powermix Plus models in the Shelbourne Reynolds Powermix diet feeder range, which incorporates key features including replaceable lower tub liner sections, and is designed for businesses that may be mixing up to 150t/day of feed,

“We’ve created a machine that’s been beefed up in a

number of key areas, ranging from the axles to the tub design and from the feed-out conveyor to the gearbox,” said Neil Smith, the firm’s sales and marketing director.

“However, dimensions have been kept compact, with the 24 cu m model only 3.0m tall and 2.8m wide at the top of the tub.”

“The key wear area and the point which often determines length of life of many diet feeders is the lower tub wall, where the mix comes into closest contact with the steel,” points out Mr Smith.



The outdoor format and late winter timing of the Doe Show is part of the reason for its success, belies Neil Smith of Shelbourne Reynolds.



New Holland showed off a number of new products at the event, including the T6 tractors with Dynamic Command eight-step semi-powershift.



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“By designing the Powermix Plus with a bolted-in lower liner which can be replaced relatively quickly on farm, the aim is to help users maximise the life of their machine and the value of their initial investment, while minimising operating cost over its lifetime.

“This isn’t a big livestock area, but we’ve had a good deal of interest in the machine, alongside our hedgetrimmer range and our Powerspread muckspreaders. This is always a good show for us, and the format works well.”

On the outdoor power equipment and professional

grasscare sides of the business, opportunities for product demonstrations are more limited, particularly in the latter area, but both Husqvarna and Stihl continue to support the event with professional demonstrators. On the grasscare side, there was a strong presence from franchises including Ransomes Jacobsen, plus an off-road demonstration track featuring Kawasaki.

Nest year’s Doe Show will take place on February 4-6 at the same venue. More details on the event can be found at www.ernestdoe.com



While this combine was already sold before the event, branch sales representatives were taking and completing a number of deals on the show days.



Visitors were among the first in the UK to see an example from the new line of New Holland telehandlers.



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TAYLOR MADE

2018 was significant for RT Machinery. Despite the challenging trading conditions, the professional turfcare dealership was presented with the Royal Warrant, picked up a Service Dealer award and enjoyed its best year yet. Richard Taylor talks to Lawrence Gale Msc, MBPR, about why he's optimistic for what the future holds

Having attended a very successful 2018 *Service Dealer Awards* back in November, I was on hand to meet several of last year's winners. These included Richard Taylor of RT Machinery, who celebrated his company winning the Professional Turfcare Dealer of the Year Award.

I have met Richard several times, generally at many of our industry shows. Like all the award winners, Richard's company was recognised for all the effort, time and devotion it provides in helping to support and serve its local customers.

As always, I was keen to gain an invitation to visit him and his staff at their premises to conduct an in-depth interview about their success and find out more about the company.



Richard Taylor, 'governor' of RT Machinery

Service Dealer: When did you start the company?

Richard Taylor: January 2001. However, I began my career at WJ Coopers, a Ford and Claas tractor dealer, where my father, Robin, was General Manager. As an A assistant in the parts department, I quickly progressed to Parts Manager, winning a prestigious Topper Club award from Ford as the top Parts Manager in the UK, as well as a trip to Athens.

From there I left the turfgrass industry for a while, and followed my passion and hobby working in the motorcycle industry for several years before returning to manage grasscare machinery clients at Risborough Turf. After several years I found myself becoming the Sales Director of the business, securing a number of opportunities for the firm to become the main dealer for Jacobsen, Hayter, Iseki, John Deere and the first dealer in the South of England for Etesia. In fact, Risborough Turf was the top Etesia UK dealer for a number of years.

When the owner of Risborough Turf decided to sell the business in 2001, I opted to continue in the industry and started RT Machinery Ltd. We had very humble beginnings, working from a summer house office at the bottom of my garden and a basic workshop headed up by Technical Director Stephen Palmer.

Starting with products such as Etesia, Danarm and other quality ranges, including good used equipment, I used my experience and knowledge of the industry to grow the new business. I was also delighted that my previous customer base was loyal, with many following us into our new venture.

In 2013-14 we moved to our current premises situated on the Brackwell Farm Estate, near Winchendon, Aylesbury. This move has allowed us to develop the business further. We now have more facilities and buildings that we utilise for office, showroom, training and workshops areas.

The past 17 years have gone by very quickly and the business has progressed a vast amount in that time, with over 24 staff now employed.

SD: What is your role in the company?

RT: Managing Director evolving into CEO as the business

grows and the modern corporate world embraces our efforts. Governor will also do!

I spend every working day working closely with my staff and we are continually looking at how we can keep evolving our business model. We assess our strengths and weakness at every opportunity, receiving feedback from customers and clients.

SD: What products do you specialise in?

RT: Quality respected brands and products that do what they say on the tin. We've established valued business relationships with some of the most revered manufacturers and suppliers in the world with a good British, European, Japanese and North American mix. These include the likes of Ransomes Jacobsen, Iseki, Scag, Walker, Dennis & SISIS, Ferris, Kioti, Ventrac, Wessex and Husqvarna to name a few.

Like most dealers, we need to stock a wide range of products to serve an ever-changing, diverse industry. With battery and robotic technologies coming to the fore, we also need to embrace these new technologies and move with the times.

We are currently increasing our battery and robotic servicing department with the aim to promote and increase sales in these new products. We will also be having a robotic demonstration area built ready for the new grass growing season.

SD: Do you see these technologies as the future of this industry?

RT: We all know and respect the benefits of cordless and robotic technologies. There's no doubt that they will have a huge impact on what customers demand from us. However, I also believe communications and shared technologies will have an important place and an impact.

The customer's route to source products is changing, as are demands for click-to-order as needed, hire rather than buy, use and return. Technologies that allow the simple movement, tracking and sharing of products could revolutionise the hire and contractor market, introducing the Uber concept to mowing, for example.

The manufacturing base could get closer to the customer too, as recycling and sustainability becomes as important as price and alternative power sources.

SD: What is your customer base?

RT: Professional grounds maintenance businesses and operators from contractors to councils, schools to estates and cricket pitches to playing fields. If it's a playing surface, recreational space, lawn or park, we have

CUSTOMERS ONLY NEED TO GET CAUGHT OUT ONCE OR TWICE AND THEY BECOME MORE SAVVY IN HOW THEY BUY

customers that depend upon our service and know how. We are fortunate to have built up many loyal customers who continue to support us year after year.

We have even recently provided a set of gang mowers for the Mongolia Cricket Association. It provides year-round coaching and kit to state schools and orphanages, focusing on the difficult areas of Ulaanbaatar where around half of the city's 1.5m population live.

SD: Did you find last season's trading conditions particularly difficult?

RT: 2018 was a year of extremes in more ways than one. It was hot and dry with no grass followed by a late flourish and reestablishment. All in all, a tough one but the best year yet for RTM. I was extremely pleased with our results and achievements. It was a case of listening to our customer's needs and being both proactive and reactive. Having such a diverse range of products and services to sell no doubt helped keep the business going in the right direction. Like most dealerships we must move with the times. Gone are the days when we had very demarked traditional seasonal trends – all that has changed. Selling, servicing and repairing mowers is now an all year-round operation.

Customers' expectations have changed. They expect instant service. We need to change our ways too and move with the times. We need to embrace and manage the internet and utilise it to our advantage.

We also need to convince suppliers and manufacturers to work with us, to help retain decent margins and help us increase sales of turf-related machinery.

SD: What methods do you use to market and promote your business?

RT: Number one, we do the job well and stick to our principals. The best advertising and marketing is to receive referrals from satisfied customers. Our investment in modern methods and our website help too, as does building our own brand, plus creating brand recognition in ourselves.

We also embrace social media sites to help promote our business. It's always surprising where the next sale will come from.

Listening to our customers is key; we always like to hear what they've got to say. We regularly invite customers to bespoke demo days throughout the year, along with holding our own annual RTM Show in September featuring outdoor demonstrations of a wide range of products. It's become quite popular since SALTEX moved to the NEC. The IOG even comes and has a stand at our show!

SD: Do you still see value in attending the big trade shows?

RT: Yes, when it's relevant to our core business and at a time of year we can spare the time to go. They are invaluable from a networking and negotiating point of view as well as for keeping up with the times.

SD: Are you happy to demo machines for clients?

RT: It's all about the demonstration really. We're at our best when we can advise and match the right product to

the task in hand. It costs us in time and resources but it is by far the best way to satisfy both ourselves and the client.

Like most of us, it's a case of giving your customers the right information and getting them to understand the benefits of buying from a reputable dealer. In most scenarios the demo is the icing on the cake. Nine times out of 10 it cements the sale.

SD: What training do you offer your staff to help them in their roles?

RT: We train in-house mostly. We believe in our company methods and principals, which include dedicated mentoring and stewardship, respecting ages at both ends of the team, and developing knowledge through experience and teamwork. BAGMA and LANTRA training also keep us up to standard and legal requirements.

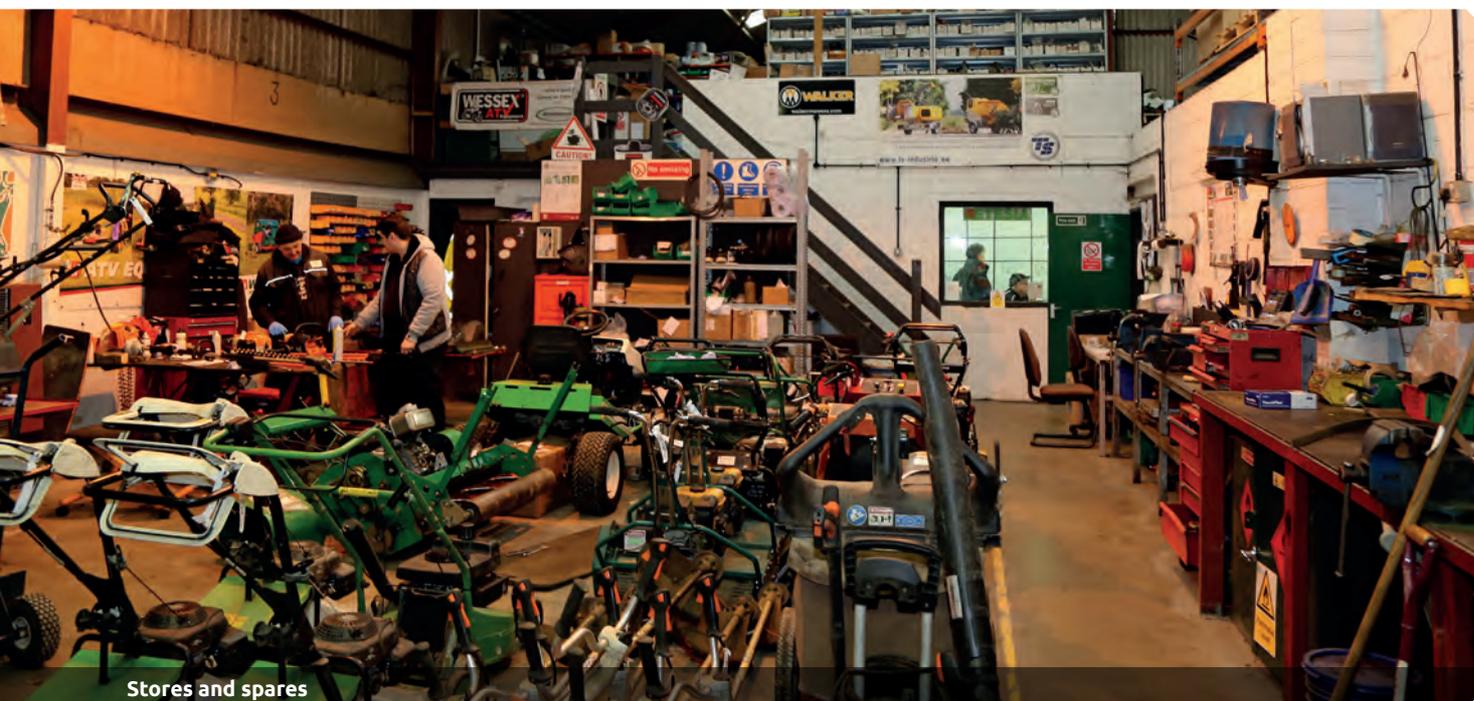
I believe in-house staff training is essential to build up confidence and help develop new skills and, of course, product knowledge is key when selling machinery.

Effective aftersales training helps the end user get a better understanding of their product and how to maximise its performance over time, while also ensuring they understand the benefits of after sales service plans.

SD: What are your thoughts regarding online selling?

RT: It's a preferred way of buying for many customers and the selling is part and parcel of that. We therefore embrace it and sell online responsibly.

I don't, however, respect any of the shoddy, cheap merchandising and trading that it has encouraged, but I can't see that lasting. It's time for better standards



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surrounding online selling. The warranties and support structures of some are well below what they should be considering consumer rights.

Customers only need to get caught out once or twice and they become more savvy in how they buy. Therefore, I think that the time is up for online sales that fall below par.

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

DRT: Rosy and with exciting prospects. We have a committed and diverse workforce who are knowledgeable and focused on the job in hand. We're currently expanding our workshop and storage areas and revamping our office space to accommodate some new customer experience areas. This will include enhanced training and showroom areas.

2018 was a fantastic year for us in terms of recognition. Receiving a Royal Warrant for the "Supply and Service of Ground Care Equipment by Appointment to Her Majesty the Queen" last year was truly astounding! Followed by being honoured to be named Professional Turfcare Dealer of the Year at the *Service Dealer Awards*.

We now have, and are continuing to bring, a very diverse range of machinery and equipment to market. This, coupled with our excellent aftersales service, puts us in a strong position to meet the expectations and demands of our customers.

I hope for all dealers' sakes, that this year the weather is far more forgiving than last and that with a better growing season we shall all benefit.

SD: Thank you.



Steve Palmer in the workshop



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JOHNSTON GILPIN CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Over 4,000 current and potential customers came to support the popular Northern Irish dealership when it held a special two-day exhibition to mark its significant milestone

2018 marked a special milestone for the Johnston Gilpin & Co Ltd John Deere agricultural and turf equipment dealership, based near Lisburn in Northern Ireland, as it celebrated 50 years in business.

In honour of the occasion the dealership team organised a two-day exhibition in November at the nearby Eikon Centre, showcasing current John Deere tractors and machinery, as well as some historic – and iconic – favourites. Over

4,000 current and potential John Deere customers came to support this popular business and view the latest equipment on offer from the manufacturer.

Johnston Gilpin & Co Ltd dates back to 1968 when it was started by Donn McConnell on Waterloo Road, close to the location of the present dealership at Lisnoe Road. Donn's son Randal McConnell is now Managing Director of the business, while Randal's brother Neale runs the domestic groundscape division at

another site just a few miles away.

"It was a superb event and we're very pleased with how it all went," said Randal.

"To see so many people come and support us was really encouraging and there were a few deals initiated that we will be following up!"

Company Founder Donn McConnell also attended the show, along with a number of VIPs including John Deere Limited's Divisional Sales Manager Chris Meacock.

"My father is still involved in the

business and comes in every day,” Randal added. “He’s taken a back seat over the last 10 years but still keeps an eye on things. He turned 80 this year, so it’s been a big year for us all round.”

Tractors of all shapes and sizes were a dominant part of the John Deere display at the anniversary event, alongside self-propelled forage harvesters, combines and a special new airless radial tyre.

“We had almost the full current agricultural tractor range from John Deere on display, right up to the monster 9RX four-track machine,” said Randal. “We also launched the new 9900i self-propelled forage harvester in Northern Ireland. Among the other machines on display were combines, drills, compact tractors and the new X Tweel Turf puncture-proof tyres from Michelin, as featured on John Deere’s ZTrak 900 Series commercial zero-turn rotary mower range.”

The turfcare department also showed a full line of commercial, domestic, golf and turf machinery as well as large displays from the dealership’s other suppliers. In addition, the E-Zone featured demonstrations of electric powered

“WE ARE VERY PROUD AS A FAMILY AND AS A COMPANY TO BE ONE OF THE OLDEST JOHN DEERE DEALERS IN THE UK”

wheel loaders from Kramer, Mean Green Mowers and Cramer hand tools.

John Deere’s oldest tractor, the 100 year-old Waterloo Boy, made an appearance, lent by local man Graham Crymble. Another of the vintage and classic tractors on display was a 1951 John Deere Model B that belongs to the McConnell family and was restored around 15 years ago.

“This has been an important milestone for us as a company to reach,” said Randal. “For us to be trading successfully and indeed expanding in today’s volatile business

climate is a magnificent achievement. We see this special anniversary event as a show of strength, a sign of our professionalism and the culmination of my father’s hard work and dedication to the John Deere brand over the last 50 years.

“We are very proud as a family and as a company to be one of the oldest John Deere dealers in the UK and the oldest in Ireland. This show was probably the largest single indoor dealer exhibition of its kind in the country and was an indication of our enthusiasm to grow the business even further.”



John Deere UK & Ireland Divisional Sales Manager Chris Meacock (left) with local farmers attending the anniversary event



NEW DAWN FOR LAMMA

The first LAMMA show to be held indoors at the NEC in Birmingham saw strong crowds and an enthusiastic reception to the new venue and format from visitors and exhibitors alike. MARTIN RICKATSON toured the halls for new product news

With the 11 show halls almost full with exhibitors, and crowds thronging the entrance doors as the event opened on 8th January for its two-day run, the uncertainty that may have surrounded the move of LAMMA from its largely outdoor venue at Peterborough's East of England Showground to Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre was soon dissipated once the show got underway.

What was once an event organised by the Lincolnshire Agricultural Machinery Manufacturers' Association for locally-made equipment has come a long way in recent years, particularly since national and international manufacturers began just over a decade ago to seek a low-cost alternative to major national shows such as the Royal and Royal Smithfield, leading ultimately to their demise. Coupled with LAMMA's acquisition by magazine publisher AgriBriefing, the result has been a rapid increase in the event's promotion, importance and size.

While the idea of a show held mostly outside to keep costs low, at a time of year designed to coincide with farmers' quieter period, has generally worked well, there have been times when wet, cold and windy weather has played havoc with the event. That has been behind the decision to move indoors to a more suitable venue – but with that has come significantly increased cost. Major manufacturers who chose not to attend, such as John Deere, Claas, Case IH, New Holland and Kverneland, mostly cited this as their key reason, and some suggest they are instead putting more money into supporting direct customer contact events such as demonstrations and dealer days instead.

But will the success of the first LAMMA at the NEC draw them back? The presence of staff from absentee

manufacturers taking time to look around the show was notable, but whether they were sufficiently convinced by the event's success to change their stance – which appears broadly to be that the cost of stand space, staffing, accommodation and suchlike does not justify the return in terms of serious enquiries leading to demonstrations and orders – remains to be seen. A number of visitors were heard to remark on their absence, but in the meantime the firms that were present benefited from being able to get visitors to look over machines they had perhaps never before considered. Equally, many were heard to comment that they would gladly pay to enter the show, but the complexities of handling payment and the associated staffing and other costs, plus the fact this would likely mean the loss of the farm data that visitors currently provide in exchange for their free entry tickets, makes this prospect seem unlikely.

For now, though, an attendance calculated at around 40,000 viewing the products and services of 650 exhibitors marks the first 'new' LAMMA as a definite success. Dates for next year's show have been confirmed as Tuesday 7th and Wednesday 8th January.

HANDLING EQUIPMENT

One of the largest LAMMA stands was occupied by JCB (**pic 1*), which chose the event to unveil an all-new Command Plus cab design for revised Series III Agri Loadall telescopic handlers. The launch followed an announcement that construction work on the firm's new £50m cab factory at Rugeley is on track for a summer opening. Key features of the new cab include 12% greater overall volume and a single-piece curved windscreen design that does away with a separate roof window. The restyled interior includes a new instrument display,

while noise levels been reduced from 78 to 69 decibels, and the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems have been redesigned to boost airflow and defrosting performance. Lift capacities are up across the range from 100-200kg, with the 532-70, 542-70, 538-60 and 536-95 replacing the 531-70, 541-70, 536-60 and 535-95. The other machine to gain the new cab, the 560-80, retains the same lifting performance.

Manitou (**pic 2*) has now integrated the Mustang skid-steer loader line, which it acquired when it bought the Gehl materials handling business in 2008, fully into the Manitou range, and on display for the first time at LAMMA was a model from the new line. While there are no physical changes apart from livery and badging, the new line is designed to offer Manitou dealers a more integrated range of loading equipment solutions, says the firm. The pictured 2700V model has a rated lift capacity of 1,225kg and a maximum lift height of 3.31m. Gehl-branded models remain in the line.

The firm also revealed a 1.6t/4.9m articulated telescopic loader. Driving through a two-speed 20km/hr or three-speed 30km/hr transmission, and powered by a 74hp Deutz engine, the new MLA-T 516-75H joins the 3.3t/5.2m MLA-T 533-145V model launched at last year's show.

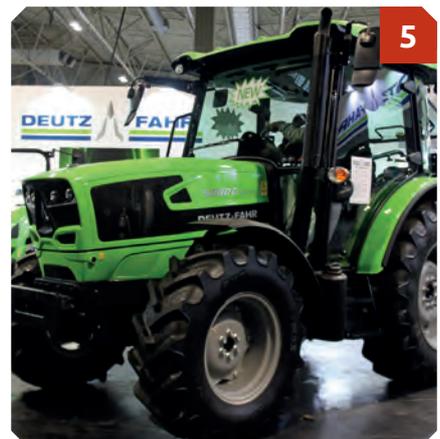
TRACTORS

With a network of 13 dealerships appointed to date, Turkish manufacturer ArmaTrac (**pic 3*) continues to

steadily build a UK dealer network, and invest heavily in marketing, particularly at LAMMA. AS Tractors, which runs the ArmaTrac UK and Ireland business, chose the show to launch a new flagship tractor, the 125hp 1254. Powered by a Stage IV Deutz four-cylinder engine driving through a 16F/16R ZF transmission with power shuttle, options include cab suspension and front linkage plus PTO. A two-year warranty is standard.

Zetor's UK operation, now headed on the sales side by Nigel Wilson, revealed a new flagship tractor at LAMMA. At 171hp, the Crystal 170 HD (**pic 4*) is the largest model the firm has offered to date, and replaces the Crystal 160, with the 150 model remaining unchanged. Transmission is a 30F/30R capable of 40km/hr at 1,700rpm, and benefits from a revised linkage for smoother changes. The cab has been raised by 100mm, which has helped to reduce transmission noise, while inside there is a new dash and upgraded, swivelling seat. Front axle and cab suspension are standard. Zetor UK says it continues to seek new dealers in certain areas, particularly south-west Scotland and south-east England.

Deutz-Fahr now has a new economy tractor line to offer livestock farmers and others wanting a simple specification in the under 100hp bracket, with the launch of new models in its 5 series. There are four variants in the 5D Keyline range (**pic 5*), covering a power band from 65 to 97hp, with two mechanical five-speed shuttle transmissions: a 15 forward/15 reverse or a 30F/15R.



Maximum speed of 40km/h can be reached at 1,870 engine rpm on all models, and all are equipped as standard with four-wheel drive and four-wheel braking. Four-wheel drive operation and the differential lock can be electro-hydraulically operated as an option.

A 42l/min open-centre hydraulic system supplies up to three mechanically-controlled remote valves at the rear, while rear linkage lift capacity is 3,500kg, and there is a three-speed 540/540E/1,000rpm power take-off.

LIVESTOCK EQUIPMENT

Ireland's Abbey Machinery (**pic 6*) showed a new VF2450 Plus mixer wagon, with upgrades said to include 50% thicker auger steel, a reworked gearbox mounting, safety platform and door wedge for rapid emptying. Meanwhile, new 24 and 30 cu m Powermix Plus models (**left hand side of pic 7*) now complement the Powermix Pro machines of up to 25 cu m in the Shelbourne Reynolds mixer range. Designed to offer higher capacities without greatly-increased dimensions – the 24 cu m model stands 3.0m tall and 2.8m wide at the tub top – key features include higher replaceable lower tub liner sections, aimed at helping maximise machine life and minimise lifetime running costs.

New heavy-duty 2,800mm diameter augers are powered by a planetary gearbox offering auger speeds of 13, 24 and 43rpm, selectable via Shelbourne's wireless

electric control system. A new 800mm-wide webbing conveyor system, coupled with a larger door, is said to result in significantly faster feed-out rates, particularly when feeding fresh grass in zero grazing systems.

There were at least two new bale processors at the show. Kidd's 475 TC (**pic 8*) meets demand for a machine that can process straw, hay, silage or haylage with little or no adjustment for feeding, chopping or bedding, says the maker. It can handle two round or big square bales (80x120cm) side by side. Chop length is infinitely variable from 30-60mm. Meanwhile, Spread-a-Bale's Midi Lite is claimed to be the first side-mounted, self-loading machine designed for rectangular bales weighing up to 500kg. It is suited to most tractor loader and materials handler types with at least 1,000kg lift capacity.

TILLAGE AND DRILLING EQUIPMENT

Ovlac's UK importer, Devon-based Halse, showed a new range of Xperience ploughs (**pic 9*), available in four-, five- and six-furrow versions. Key design upgrades include a new 220-300hp-rated headstock incorporating hollow shaft hydraulic pipe routing and a parallelogram-based variable furrow width adjustment from 30-50cm (12-20in). A new-style leg provides greater underbody clearance, at 78cm.

Opico hewed a new plough, from its partner Maschio. Extending its range beyond the established Unico models



6



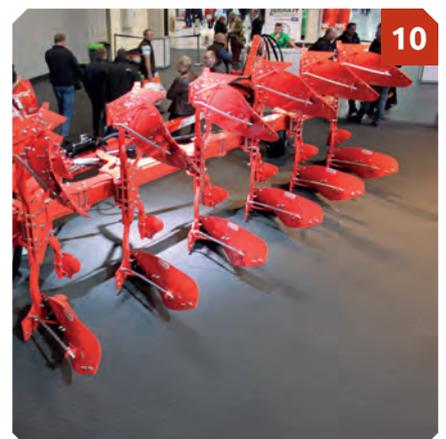
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into the six-nine furrow class, the semi-mounted Mirco line (***pic 10**) has a simple remove pin/operate ram switching process when changing between on-land and in-furrow work, and a 100-degree headstock pivot for tight headland turns.

Weaving Machinery's new GD6001T (***pic 11**) drill is based on the GD8000T launched at Cereals 2018, but with a more compact design to match its smaller working width, says the firm. Key to this is a change to the coulter weight distribution, with the hopper sited over the coulters, bringing the whole outfit closer to the tractor for easier operator monitoring.

Claydon's T6c (***pic 12**) is a new compact 6m version of its T-series trailed drill, claimed to be over 20% lighter and more compact than the previous T6, to offer a 6m machine with the manoeuvrability of the 4m T4. The coulters are mounted on a fully-floating contour-following chassis, while above is a 3,500-litre hopper.

Recognising that not all soils have natural restructuring capabilities, fellow min/no-till drill maker Dale Drills announced its new Meir soil conditioner (***pic 13**). It uses opening discs followed by a point design said to create uplift over a short distance, shattering the ground before the winged main part of the point is reached. A ringed press follows. Shown on a standalone cultivator, Dale says it may consider offering the new point/leg design as a leading toolbar for its drills.

MAINTENANCE MACHINERY

On display from Shelbourne Reynolds was a new HC1600 flail head option (***pic 14**) for its HD700 and HD800 hedge trimmers, which is said to offer a single- rather than twin-rotor option for producing a one-pass finish on three-year growth. The 1.6m head is centrally-mounted and incorporates a new 150mm-diameter double-ended rotor tube which is 25% bigger than that on standard Shelbourne heads, fitted with 30 T or competition drop-forged flails that work in conjunction with a shear bar. The 3.0mm-thick steel hood with double-skinned nose can optionally be hydraulically opened/closed, to enable users dealing with three-year growth to open the front of the head and allow more material to enter for processing in one pass, and then close it when working on lighter growth.

SPRAYERS

Knight (***pic 15**) has upgraded self-propelled and Trailblazer II trailed sprayers in its range, with options including a new Mueller Elektronik Touch 1200 control terminal in addition to the standard 800, offering auto tank fill facility according to programmed field size and overlap percentage.

SP upgrades include a new cab surround with redesigned access and storage, and greater boom options.



CORE BUSINESS

Husqvarna is launching two new 50cc chainsaws globally on 15th March. Service Dealer's Editor Steve Gibbs visited its headquarters in Huskvara, Sweden to hear why these machines are core to its business, in this the 60th year of chainsaw production for the company

Husqvarna used its base in an extremely cold Huskvara, Sweden in January to launch two 50cc chainsaws – the 550 XP Mark II and the 545 Mark II.

These saws are released in a year which sees the manufacturer celebrating three significant anniversaries. First, 2019 sees 330 years since the company was established; it's been 100 years since it produced its first lawnmower, and significantly for these new launches, it's been 60 years since the company made its first chainsaw.

Before the assembled European trade press got a chance to view the new saws, Sasha Menges, President, Husqvarna Division, said a few words. He explained why the company considers the 50cc segment as a particularly

important, core segment for themselves and to their customers worldwide.

He said of 50cc, "It's an application which is relevant in multiple areas. Whether working on the ground, or in the forests or in urban tree-care, it's a saw which, largely, every professional has in their equipment. For arborists and loggers alike, it's a go-to piece of kit – and that's globally."

As an indication of how the company places worldwide importance on these releases, it is taking the quite unusual step of simultaneously launching the products around the world on the same day – 15th March.

Gent Simmons, Director of Product Management, Forestry, also spoke at the launch event, explaining how the new saws are core products for Husqvarna. He said, "[The saws] will support our customers and allow them to get the job done in an efficient way. We're redefining the 50cc segment by setting a new standard for performance, durability and manoeuvrability."

It was explained that the 550XP Mark II and the 545 Mark II have been redesigned from scratch. Gent Simmons said, "It's not just a new chainsaw, it's a new generation of chainsaws in which all vital parts are new. The 550 XP Mark II has superior cutting capacity and has been proven through the most extreme testing to assure it meets expectations of our most demanding forestry and tree care professionals."

This notion of cutting capacity is what Husqvarna describes as the true measure of the performance of the saw. It is the speed at which the entire system of the bar, chain and powerhead works together to cut wood at optimal RPM. Through a series of internal tests, Husqvarna claims it has shown that the 550 XP Mark II provides best-in-class cutting capacity when compared with the closest competitor in the 50cc segment.

The three guiding principals for the ground-up redesign of these two saws, which was emphasised at the launch event, was that they should offer the user durability, manoeuvrability and performance.

For the purpose of endurance in tough conditions, we were told that the cooling capacity of the two saws has been improved by 13%, compared with the previous generation of 50cc chainsaws the company produced. This was made possible by three key improvements:

1) an optimised airflow;



Service Dealer editor Steve Gibbs tries out the new saw

2) the addition of more cooling fins in critical areas that contribute to more effective cylinder heat dissipation; 3) an insulating heat shield, specifically developed for the new chainsaws, which provide sealing against the cylinder area and minimises heat leakage. This helps to keep the carburetor compartment cool to improve starting in hot conditions. In addition, a completely new muffler keeps temperatures down.

For further endurance, the 50cc chainsaws have a new air filter design. The new design comes from the combination of a redesigned air filter with higher capacity and improved sealing and an upgrade of the Air Injection. This, in turn, means the saws are equipped with a new optimised version of AutoTune, Husqvarna's ignition module software and carburetor calibration.

Also explained was how the design of the products was intended to make use of machines as comfortable as possible for users. The company said the well-balanced

saw body with low gyroscopic forces aids maneuverability and handling, enabling users to work longer without tiring. The ergonomically designed handles provide a safe, comfortable grip. In addition, both saws are equipped with heated handles.

Following the theory, attendees at the launch event were bussed out to a nearby woods to watch demonstrations of the new saws and get hands-on to try them out.

Impressive displays of forestry skills were on show from members of the company's H-Team squad of professional ambassadors. Felling, limbing and aerial work were all exhibited with much aplomb.

I personally cannot claim to be anything other than an utterly inexperienced novice when it comes to chainsaw use. However, even when I tried one of the Mark II models in comparison to the preceding version, I couldn't help but notice the difference. It felt faster and smoother.



One of the new saws in action at the launch event in Sweden

545 Mark II/ 545G Mark II:

- Low Vib®
- Smart Start
- Air Injection®
- X-Torq®
- AutoTune™
- Heated handles and carburetor (only 545 G Mark II)
- Engine displacement 50.1cm³
- Power output 2.7kW
- Max chain speed 25.4m/s
- Recommended bar length 33-50cm/13"-20"
- Weight 5.3/5.5kg (excluding cutting equipment)

550 XP® Mark II/ 550 XP® G Mark II:

- Low Vib®
- Air Injection®
- X-Torq®
- AutoTune™
- Heated handles and carburetor (only 550 XP® G Mark II)
- Engine displacement 50.1cm³
- Power output 3.0kW
- Chain speed at 133% of peak power rpm26.1m/s
- Recommended bar length 33-50cm/13"-20"
- Weight 5.3/5.5kg (excluding cutting equipment)

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WINTER SERVICING SURVEY 2019

Consistency in workshop levels for most

We had a very healthy response to our Winter Servicing Survey this year, which overall implied that dealers' workshops have maintained their levels recently.

Considering the past two years when we've run a similar survey, levels were said to be markedly up, this can't be too bad. This year a majority who responded (49%) said their winter servicing levels had remained the same, with 20% saying they were up and 20% saying down.

Unsurprisingly, once again the weather was cited by most respondents as the single greatest factor which affects their workshop levels; 68% of dealers who responded listed that as the number-one decider this year, which is almost double the number who did previously.

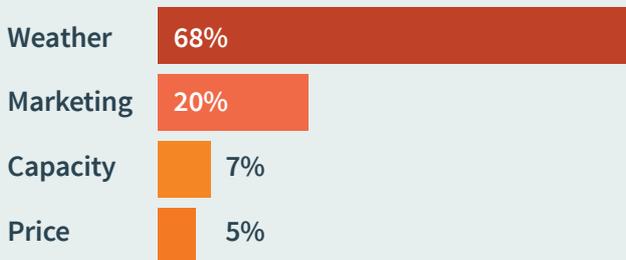
Like last year, most respondents (79%) had not raised their labour rates this past 12 months – those that had, had mostly only done so by up to 5%.

Also all too familiar is dealers telling us they have great difficulty with the recruitment process for new workshop staff; 76% said they hadn't employed any new people during the past year.

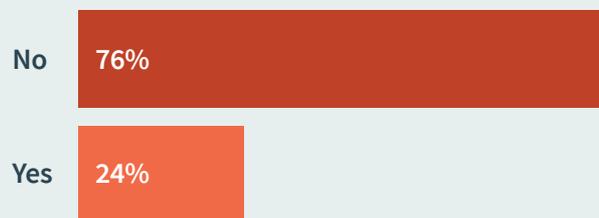
Not a single respondent described the process of finding staff as easy. In fact, an overwhelming majority of 85% described it as difficult.

Finally, most dealers (53%) who responded to our survey said they found training courses for their staff adequate – although a slightly worrying 28% thought they were inadequate.

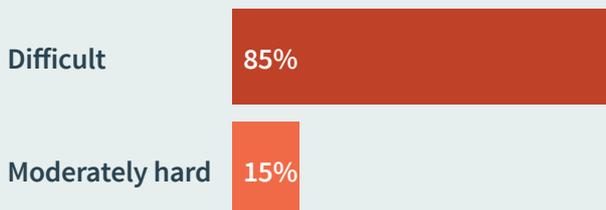
What most influences your winter servicing levels?



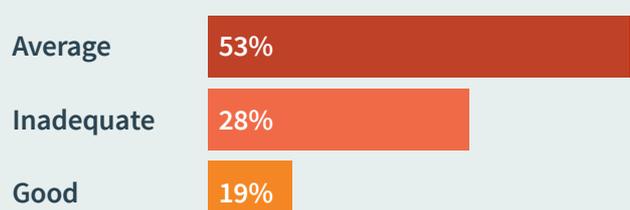
Have you increased your service staffing levels this past year?



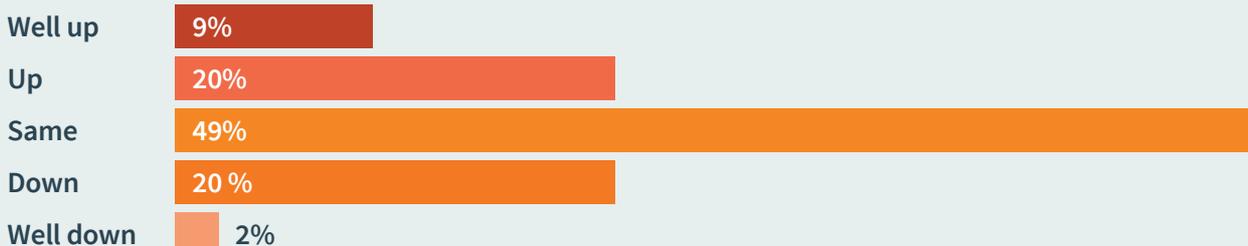
When you do want to increase service staffing levels, do you find the process...



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



How are servicing levels this winter compared with last?



YOUR SAY

We asked you: are there any key issues which are currently impacting on the service side of your business?

- Finding good service technicians is desperately difficult. For too long our education system has side-lined the STEM subjects and there are very few school leavers with any mechanical interest. What few there are, are attracted by the higher wages other industries can offer. For several years we have felt that we are relying on the experience of our older staff but they are now struggling with modern technology and the younger generation don't seem interested. What we can charge for service work is inherently limited by the price of new product. The low prices we have on new machinery sales keep down what we can charge for service/repair work – which in turn keeps wages lower than we'd like to pay to attract good staff. Margin retention needs to be addressed, combined with an industry-wide training programme to attract good youngsters to the lawn and garden industry.
- Currently trying to find an apprenticeship for a keen young trainee but there is nothing available in the local colleges (North Wales).
- Finding the right part for 'Chinese rubbish' is extremely difficult. Also the prices and time it takes for delivery of genuine parts is a concern.
- +20% VAT against cash competition from Facebook operators is a problem. As long as supermarket types sell cheaply then there is no incentive for customers to choose to repair.
- The issues we face are a lack of experienced staff and manufacturer service courses (some only focus on sales). Also, customers' expectations on service and repair prices in comparison to the price of cheap internet/DIY store bargain machinery. We are attempting to combat this with estimate forms comparing repair costs to new machinery.
- Agricultural winter servicing is slightly up. Horticultural is about same. We expect to have a drop in levels as last cutting season was very easy on mowers.
- Equipment has not been used much due to last year's hot summer, so customers are not putting machines in for service. Domestic customers are also trying to save money as they are worried about Brexit.
- Very quiet this year compared with the last few years and nothing has changed with us – so it must be either the weather or the economy?
- The weather will always be the dictator in this industry, and I think after the drought last season most dealers are well up to date with their service work. Hopefully we will see a gradual and balanced start to the season. Fingers crossed.
- Most common objection from a customer is they "can buy a new mower for that price" when told the service on an average walk behind mower is £100–£120.



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HIGHEST ATTENDANCE FOR ARIENSCO SALES SKILLS

Took place at end of 2018

Due to demand from the dealer network, AriensCo took its Sales Skills events on tour at the end of 2018 with great success.

Sales Skills 1 and 2 took place at Countax House, Oxfordshire and Ripley Castle in North Yorkshire. Both events achieved the highest attendance at all four sessions since Sales Skills launched in 2016. The company says dealers were very enthusiastic and comments were highly complimentary.

"We learnt a lot over the last two days, we definitely have lots of things to implement when we get back which will help us build a better business. It's definitely worth taking the time to attend a Sales Skills event as you learn so much!" were the comments from Tom Sissions and Karl Terry of Country Machinery.

Sales Skills 1 focused on creating the right conditions for selling and selling techniques – helping dealers to forge long-lasting relationships with their customers, as well as developing product knowledge. The aim here was to help increase showroom footfall and build a more profitable business, highlighting the 'value-added' service and using the techniques they learned to promote it. The event also gave dealers the opportunity to share ideas on improving customer experience in their showrooms, such as access to the dealership, customer facilities and product displays.

"The course was very informative. It's clarified a lot of things in my mind that when I leave here I'm going to

implement," said Charlie Kirk of CW Kirk Lawnmowers Ltd. "I want to get my showroom looking tip-top, as first impressions do count. Even if you're not an AriensCo dealer I think you should still attend one of these Sales Skills events."

Sales Skills 2 focused on marketing practices, providing dealers with practical advice to attract customers into their showrooms. This in-depth coverage comprised marketing communication theory and practice including segmentation, targeting and positioning, and building an effective marketing strategy. The dealers were introduced to practical examples and application of The Promotional Mix. They were then encouraged to write their own boilerplate, after learning about the importance of a company having a vision, mission and values statement.

"We learnt a lot about how to better promote ourselves to our customers and make ourselves more available to meeting their needs. We need to think about everything from a customer's perspective, what they see when they walk through our front door and how we can make the experience even better for them!" said Alex Matthews, of Cheltenham Garden Machinery.

"We want to be positive and inspiring," said AriensCo's John Horn. "We want to convey the message that if you attend a Sales Skills event you will be able to implement what you have learnt with almost instant results. I think above all that's what the dealers have taken away with them after these."



HUSQVARNA LAUNCHES DIGITAL EDUCATION PLATFORM

Chainsaw Academy for end users

Husqvarna has launched an online educational resource entitled Husqvarna Chainsaw Academy.

This is the digitised version of its book *How to Work with a Chainsaw* and contains step-by-step guides, animations, videos and more – all accessible through a computer or smartphone.

For many years the company has provided instructional books used widely in forestry schools and courses on handling a chainsaw. Now, through a worldwide digital release, parts of this educational material have become accessible for everyone, everywhere through smartphones and computers. Husqvarna Chainsaw Academy was developed with a mobile-first approach which means it can be used as a companion when out in the forest, helping professionals and amateurs get more out of their equipment.

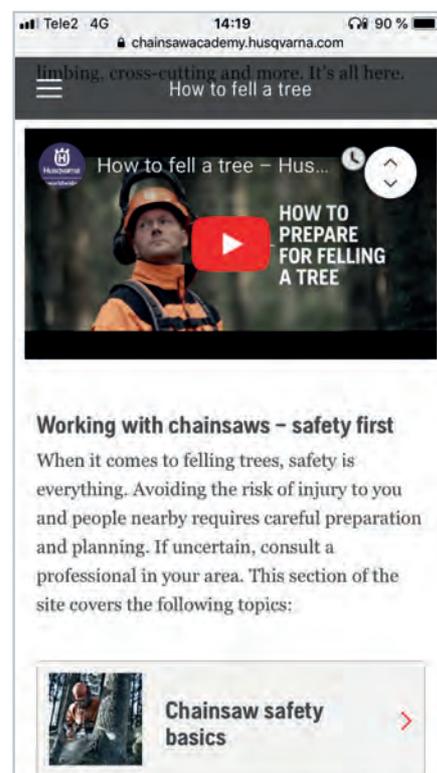
The service contains basic guidelines on a variety of subjects relating to forestry work and chainsaw usage, focusing on how to fell a tree. The website offers an introduction to the important things one needs to know in order to fell trees safely, with step-by-step guides, easy-to-understand animations, videos, checklists and recommendations. Through this material, says Husqvarna, the user gets a fundamental overview of all the main aspects of felling a tree from preparation and safety to felling, limbing and crosscutting.

By sharing knowledge accumulated over 60 years of chainsaw manufacturing, the service increases awareness of the safety aspects of chainsaw use.

“With the Husqvarna Chainsaw Academy we are digitising our knowledge on chainsaw use and making it accessible for anyone who wants to know more about safety and performance when using a chainsaw,” says

Hanna Nordquist, Global Brand & Communication Manager. “We know end-customer behaviour continues to shift towards mobile, which is why we developed the content for smartphones, so that it is easily accessible whenever, wherever. However, it is still essential to go through proper chainsaw safety training with a qualified instructor and check what rules and regulations may apply in your country.”

Husqvarna Chainsaw Academy is now available in English with more languages to follow during 2019. Visit <https://chainsawacademy.husqvarna.com>



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BALMERS GM MADE BIGGA EDUCATION SUPPORTER

Helping greenkeepers across the North

The British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) has announced that Balmers GM has become an Education Supporter of the association.

Balmers GM has been established in the turf machinery industry since 1979. Now, nearly 40 years later, the company has depots in Burnley, Lancashire and a second depot in Wakefield, serving the West and South Yorkshire areas.

In becoming a BIGGA Education Supporter, Balmers GM will support the members of the association and the wider greenkeeping industry, and provide a number of educational opportunities across the North of England through the BIGGA framework.

In addition to John Deere's full line of professional and domestic turf equipment, Balmers GM supplies and services machinery from other manufacturers, including Etesia, GreenMech, Scag, Stihl, Weidenmann and GKB.

The dealership employs approximately 50 people across all departments, providing new and used equipment sales, service, parts and commercial hire to a wide range of customers including golf and sports clubs, local

authorities, contractors, the leisure industry, equestrian centres and smallholders.

Lauren Frazer, BIGGA Business Development Manager, said, "Balmers GM has a fantastic reputation across the North of England and we're delighted that the company has come on board as an education supporter for the association.

"The growing number of companies signing up to support BIGGA shows how respected our members are in the wider industry.

"BIGGA members are leading the way when it comes to innovation, technology and embracing new ideas out on the golf course and it is brilliant that Balmers GM and our other Education Supporters are keen to be a part of that success.

"Thank you to Balmers GM for your valuable support of BIGGA members. BIGGA is hugely grateful to all Partners and Education supporters – and the many individual contributors – as the funding they provide goes a long way to underpinning our Continuing Professional Development programme and all educational activity."



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LOST IN HARROGATE

There was plenty of interest specialist dealers at this year's rejigged BTME exhibition, says Service Dealer Editor Steve Gibbs. You just had to find it first

The newly reconfigured BTME took place at the Harrogate International Centre from 22nd to 24th January and whilst the aisles were buzzy, with tons of great stands featuring plenty of new kit to check out, many conversations were dominated by the slightly confusing new hall layout.

Whether it was simply the shock of the new that was giving visitors and exhibitors alike something to chunter about, it's hard to say. Certainly, I think it's fair comment that initially finding one's way around the labyrinthine configuration was a bit of an issue. What it certainly meant was that it was taking a while for visitors to filter through to the halls furthest away from the entrance. The Red and Blue Zones suffered the most from this.

My initial thoughts were that the show wasn't feeling particularly cohesive. The individual halls, or Zones as they were called, felt like their own separate exhibitions. Moving between them meant going

up stairs, round corners, down escalators, through doorways – which to be fair to organiser BIGGA, it had signposted extensively – but it did have the feeling of splitting the show up, and certain areas of a couple of halls did appear to suffer from reduced footfall.

Post-event BIGGA released a statement on the numbers who attended, which sounded healthy. It said that on the Tuesday, the opening day of the event, it had welcomed 3,400 people into the halls, including exhibitors. This was followed by 3,967 visitors on Wednesday, including 1,609 new visitors, and a further 1,159, including 345 new visitors, on Thursday.

Jim Croxton, CEO of BIGGA, whilst expressing delight at the exhibitor numbers and the visitor figures, did however acknowledge that everything wasn't quite perfect when he spoke to the press.

Discussing the figures first Jim said, "It's been a vibrant, busy three days and I'm delighted to say that on the whole the changes we implemented

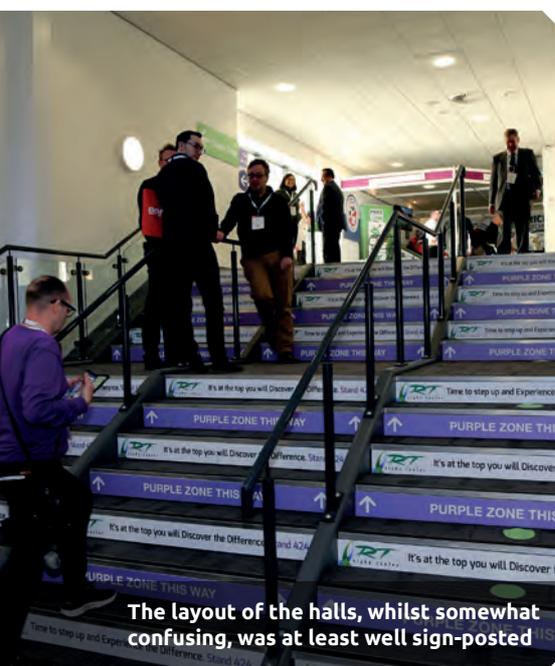
for 2019 have paid off.

"It also went very well for us in terms of exhibition stand numbers. We're really pleased that we filled all the space and a bit more than we anticipated.

"I'm pleased the way many of the exhibitors have embraced the opportunity to do different things on their stands. Those exhibitors who chose to return this year have on average taken 14% more space.

Moving on to address the navigation issues, Jim said, "Everyone I saw at the show said they're lost and confused – and that's kind of what we wanted. That was actually part of the plan because people used to visit BTME and just do it on auto-pilot; they'd walk past stands just to see the one they wanted to go to. We wanted to make sure that visitors walked around and engaged with everybody.

"I'm really proud of what we've achieved and how it's worked, but I don't think that it's perfect. I think there's a couple of areas which haven't functioned quite as we'd



The layout of the halls, whilst somewhat confusing, was at least well sign-posted



Discussions on the Ransomes stand

have liked in terms of footfall. Going forward we'll be working on ways to drive people into those spaces."

Jim admitted there had been "some challenges" at the far end of the Red Zone and talked of how it isn't just about people walking through doors that counts, it's how they engage with stands. He said their priority over the next few weeks, when they speak with their exhibitors, will be to discover what worked and what didn't.

The issue of the show being a three-day event was also brought up. Currently BTME is open until 2.30pm on the Thursday, it's third and final day, with some feeling this is perhaps a tad unnecessary and that two full days would do. Jim explained that for the time being at least they are sticking with this format.

He said, "We have a strong belief that every show has a 'last day' which sort of peters out. The third exhibition day allows attendees to have two evenings to engage with clients and colleagues on a social basis. So, we're holding firm for another year at least with three days. It will be on the agenda to look at in the future though."

Around the stands

Speaking with exhibitors around

the halls, the reactions to the new set-up were indeed somewhat mixed – although one positive comment which I did keep hearing was that lots of dealers were coming through their stands. It seems many specialists made the trip to Harrogate to chat with their suppliers or potential suppliers.

Also what came out of these conversations is that plenty of manufacturers are actively looking to expand their networks.

On the Yamaha stand for example,

Dan Palmer, Manager of golf cars, said to me it was looking to recruit. The company is keen on finding the right dealerships for sales and service in various parts of the country.

Similarly, Patrick Desmond, General Manager of Kioti, told me the company is always interested in talking to new dealers, so long as they are in the right areas.

Price Turfcare is also looking for the right dealers in the right places for its Ventrac machines. The company itself was certainly in the right place at Harrogate, with its stand in the corner of one of the walkways between halls. Rupert Price told me that many visitors had asked him if he was late to book with the unusual position, but far from it. It was a deliberate decision which paid off handsomely; the stand was constantly one of the busiest I saw all show.

David Hart on the Kubota stand told me many dealers had come to talk to them. He also said that with the firm's expansion into the agricultural sector they are looking to expand their network in that regard.

Another tractor supplier who is taking on dealers at the moment is Iseki UK. David Withers said the

“BTME IS AN UNDENIABLY GREAT SHOW. A SHOW HELD IN REAL REGARD AND AFFECTION BY THOSE THAT VISIT”



David Hart on the Kubota stand

company is interested in talking to dealers who want to increase their diesel offering. He said that smaller garden machinery dealers are seeing the value in stocking their machines, giving them the opportunity to offer their customers a larger, diesel tractor, whereas before they would have had to turn away those customers looking for something more powerful.

An obvious trend amongst the machinery manufacturers at the show, was once again battery and robotic technology. On the Ransomes stand for example, Richard Comely told me its new lithium-powered utility vehicle, the Hauler 800, was generating a lot of interest amongst visitors.

Husqvarna's stand was geared to get greenkeepers to start thinking about the use of robotic mowers on their courses, with the new, articulated Automower taking pride of place. Ken Brewster said a good show for them would see them

generate some quality contacts amongst the sector.

And making its debut at BTME was STIHL. Steven Greenup said he felt it needed to be there to promote its range to the professional golf guys who they know use their tools. He said they'd had some great conversations and it was a superb opportunity to promote their battery range and robotic offerings, which are now fully orange.

Surprisingly though, for a show aimed at the professional golf trade, several exhibitors did say to me they had been disappointed with the number of new end-user contacts they had seen coming onto their stands.

I suppose this could be to do with the number of distractions for the visiting greenkeepers which Harrogate affords. The Continue To Learn educational offering for those guys goes from strength to strength with more hours available each year. And with a plethora of great pubs

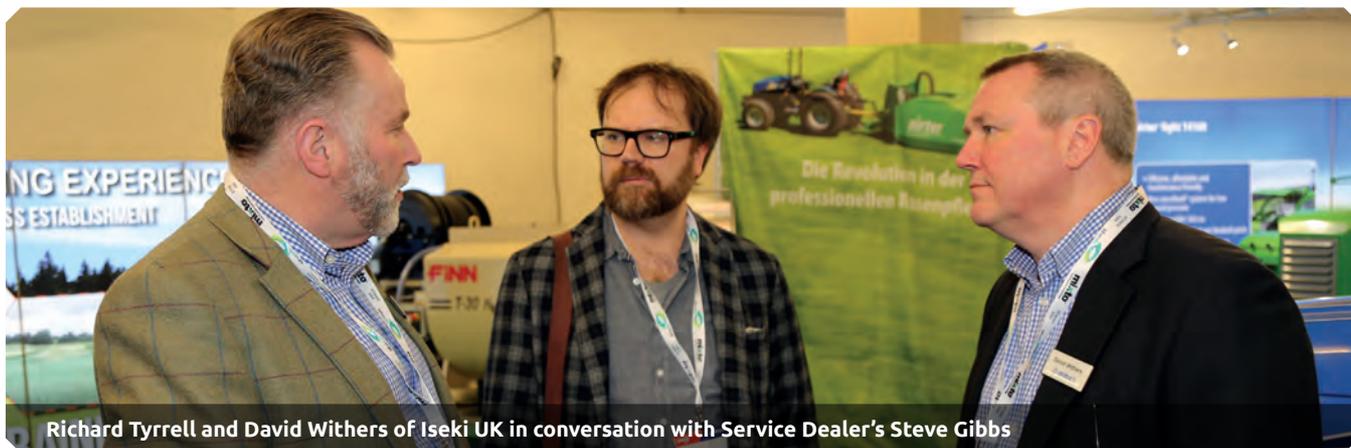
and restaurants mere steps outside the International Centre's doors, getting everyone back in after lunch, or away from an early finish, is always going to be a battle.

But hopefully over the duration of the show, everybody got around to everyone they wanted to see. Because for all these quibbles, BTME is undeniably, a great show. A show held in real regard and affection by those that visit – and I think exhibit.

Next year I'm sure the layout won't seem so much of an issue now that we're all used to it.

So, whilst not a flawless relaunch, BIGGA should nevertheless be applauded for putting on a show which increasing numbers of exhibitors want to be a part of. Of course, to accommodate this and to attempt to make the visitor experience more rewarding, the organisers had to take a calculated risk by changing up the format – which pretty much paid off.

Here's to next year!



Richard Tyrrell and David Withers of Iseki UK in conversation with Service Dealer's Steve Gibbs



Steven Greenup on STIHL's BTME debut stand



L-R: Andrew Lees, Jonathan Snowball and Ken Brewster of Husqvarna

NEW AT THE SHOW

STIHL EXPANDS PETROL MOWER RANGE

RM 655 RS rear-roller mower suitable for professional landscapers

STIHL expanded its range of high-performance mowers at BTME with the introduction of the RM 655 RS rear-roller mower, suitable for professional landscapers.

The new mower includes a single speed, split, driven rear metal roller for a striping effect, as well as making manoeuvring around borders easier. The rear roller features high quality bearings and stainless steel build.

The mono-comfort handlebar, with super-soft grip, is adjustable to three different heights allowing users to find the most suitable setting and to access the grass catcher box more easily.

Designed with ease of use in mind, the Briggs and Stratton engine is started by the auto-choke mechanism.

Offering full flexibility, the desired cutting height can be precisely adjusted via a single, sprung-loaded lever on the left-hand side of the housing, whilst the Blade Brake Clutch stops the blade when the mower is stationary.

Meanwhile, the high-lift blades combined with the aerodynamic housing produce a strong air current that effectively lifts the grass, cuts it efficiently and blows the grass cuttings into the grass catcher box.

Thanks to the optimised design shape and air guide, the 70-litre box can be 100%

filled, while the two-part design ensures easy opening and emptying. Additionally, to reduce time between emptying, the catcher box features an integral level indicator to show when its full.

The company says it has also taken careful consideration when it comes to storage and maintenance, providing professionals with a durable and convenient solution. The body design, for example, allows for easy access and maintenance of working parts, such as drive cables, pulleys and the drive belt.

Designed with a foldable handlebar, the STIHL RM 655 RS lawn mower is described as easy for landscapers to transport and convenient to store. The new petrol mower utilises large wheels with ball bearings for easy running, while the tread pattern

provides better traction, as well as allowing for easy cleaning. Additionally, the bumper strips offer additional protection when mowing next to walls and edges.



IMPRESSIVE SPECIAL FX ON SHOW FROM INFINICUT

New fixed head mower from Cub Cadet

Cub Cadet launched a fixed head Infinicut mower at Harrogate.

Following on from the FL floating head mower, the Infinicut FX incorporates many of the key features in a simpler, more affordable package.

Available in 22", 26", 30" and 34" cutting widths, cut quality remains at the heart of the new machine. Key attributes such as lightweight design, Lithium battery power and quiet operation come as standard, while transport wheel and other bespoke options are available. The cassettes are 'bottom mounted', bolted in place, which the company says reduces the risk of the unit oscillating

when in use. The FX also offers the ability to parallel the whole machine on the rear traction roller which keeps the machine cutting well and true.

As with the Infinicut FL, the new fixed head machine can utilise the interchangeable ATT TMSsystem cassettes. In addition to the accurate cut achieved with the SMARTCut cassette, the operator can easily switch this out for another cassette from the range to aerate, brush, de-thatch, scarify, top-dress, groom, level or mow, all with a single machine.

Commenting on its launch at the show, Sales Manager Vinny Tarbox



said, "Much of the design of the new Infinicut FX has been motivated by the requirements of our industry professionals, to provide them with the mechanical maintenance tools and techniques that can assist in the creation of a strong, healthy plant."

QUIETER GREENS MOWING FROM TORO

Greensmaster eTriFlex responds to customer demand

Toro's new hydraulics-free Greensmaster eTriFlex with a lithium-ion battery, which was launched in the UK at the show, boasts it cuts noise by 50% for quiet, leak-free, clean cutting.

The eTriFlex is described as an example of Toro responding to customer demand by creating a machine which significantly reduces noise.

Alongside the lithium-ion battery is a Kawasaki twin-cylinder 14hp air-cooled engine with a reduced speed of 2,400rpm, shrouded in venting. It is this design that the company says ensures perceived bystander noise level is reduced by half.

Jeff Anguige, National Sales Manager at Reesink, said, "The eTriFlex ticks the green credentials box with its all-electric components and brings an estimated 22% saving

in fuel, in comparison to say the Greensmaster 3320, thanks to its efficient power supply."

The company also says the cut is consistent with this mower from the first to the last green, as it is no longer dependent on changing oil temperatures.

Jeff concluded, "With the familiar feel of its series counterparts such as the Greensmaster 3320, we have no doubt the eTriFlex will create a great deal of interest with UK greenkeepers and course managers keen to lower noise pollution and up their green credentials."



BTME FIRST FOR 1ST PRODUCTS

AERA-Vator and the VC Verti-Cutter shown

Shown in Harrogate for the first time since Reesink Turfcare secured the exclusive distribution rights were two of 1st Products' specialist range of tractor-mounted attachments: the AERA-Vator and the VC Verti-Cutter.

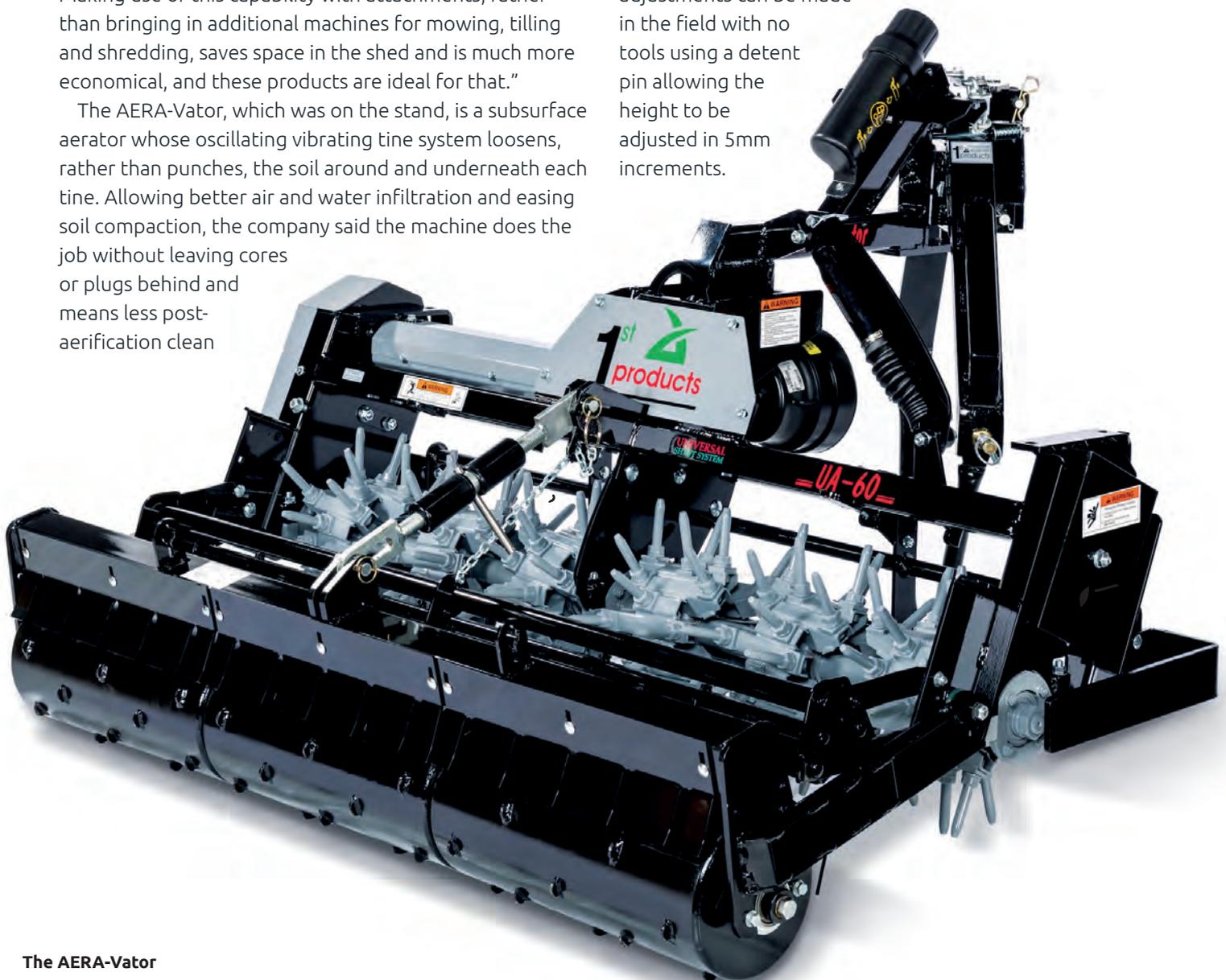
A complementary fit with TYM, which Reesink also distributes, the company said this newly introduced capsule range increases the options customers get from their tractor.

"This range from 1st Products was chosen to give customers even more value from their tractor investment," said Steven Haynes, TYM Sales Manager. "Tractors are, of course, designed as implement carriers. Making use of this capability with attachments, rather than bringing in additional machines for mowing, tilling and shredding, saves space in the shed and is much more economical, and these products are ideal for that."

The AERA-Vator, which was on the stand, is a subsurface aerator whose oscillating vibrating tine system loosens, rather than punches, the soil around and underneath each tine. Allowing better air and water infiltration and easing soil compaction, the company said the machine does the job without leaving cores or plugs behind and means less post-aerification clean

up. The AERA-Vator is also claimed to be able to aerate dry soil to reduce the expense of pre-irrigating; in fact, the harder the soil, the better the AERA-Vator is said to perform. It can also be equipped with a seeding box, allowing the customer to aerate and seed in one pass.

Joining the AERA-Vator at the show was the VC Verti-Cutter. The biggest advantage the VC was said to have over its competitors are speed and depth adjustment. It has a unique swing-hitch allowing for speedier manoeuvrability around obstacles without the need for the operator to lift the unit off the pivot point, allowing the unit to turn easily and float over the terrain. Depth adjustments can be made in the field with no tools using a detent pin allowing the height to be adjusted in 5mm increments.



The AERA-Vator



STAFF UNIFORMS & TAX

DRESSING FOR THE OCCASION

There are many reasons why employers want to give staff a uniform, writes *Helen Thornley, Technical Officer at the Association of Taxation Technicians*. But no matter the thinking, the provision of a uniform carries costs which, if HMRC's rules are followed, can be offset against the business's tax bill.

According to HMRC, for a garment to qualify as a uniform either the individual wearing it should be recognisable as belonging to a particular occupation (such as the police) or the garments should carry a conspicuous badge or logo. Importantly, the badge or logo should be permanently attached. If it is removable, then there is a real risk that HMRC will argue that the garment is not really a uniform.

Items of clothing are considered individually by HMRC. If an employer supplies a branded top and ordinary trousers, while it might be what the employer considers the overall 'uniform', from HMRC's perspective only the top will qualify for tax purposes. The provision of the trousers would create a benefit in kind on which tax is payable by the employee.

Other items that employers might commonly supply to employees could include protective clothing such as gloves, helmets and goggles. Here an employer can claim full tax relief for the cost where genuine protective clothing is needed and there is no taxable benefit to the employee.

If the item has been accepted as a uniform or protective clothing then it follows that the employer can claim tax relief for the costs of maintaining and/or cleaning these items; this will not create a benefit in kind for the employee.

However, where an employer provides

non-exempt items then there may be tax consequences.

These depend on whether or not the employer has loaned the employee the items or given them.

If the employer gives the employee clothing that they can keep, then the employer must report this on a P11D as a benefit. The amount to report will be the higher of the initial cost of the clothing to the employer or the value of the clothing when it is given. The employee will pay tax on the benefit, and the employer will pay Class 1A National Insurance.

If the employer loans the employee clothing then the benefit is assessed on the higher of 20% of the market value of the clothing, or the annual rental paid for the clothing. Again, this would go on a P11D and Class 1A National Insurance should be paid by the employer.

If an employee is required to supply their own uniform, or they have to buy branded items of clothing from the employer to wear, they will be entitled to claim tax relief for the cost of the uniform. Again, this relief applies strictly to qualifying uniform items only.

For example, if a member of staff is required to wear black trousers and buy a branded top, then relief only applies to the cost of the branded top. There is no tax relief where clothing can be worn both for work and casually.

If the employee incurs costs cleaning or maintaining their uniform or protective clothing, they can claim tax relief for the reasonable cost of doing so. There are various flat-rate expenses that can be claimed details of which can be found on HMRC's website – www.gov.uk/guidance/job-expenses-for-uniforms-work-clothing-and-tools.

Lastly, employers who require their employees to purchase specific items of clothing need to take care that this doesn't result in the employee being paid less than the National Minimum/Living Wage.



Edited by Adam Bernstein



UNMET DEMAND

CATCHING UP ON MISSED SALES

Have you ever asked for something in a shop and been told “we don’t stock it because there’s not enough demand”? It’s a surprisingly frequent occurrence, says *SME Digest Editor, Adam Bernstein*.

To a consumer it is just a nuisance, but for a retailer, it represents a loss of business. Obviously, a consumer can’t buy what isn’t there; but worse, shoppers may decide to look elsewhere and may never return.

The problem for traders is that accounts systems only ever record sales that are made, not sales that are lost. Unmet demand is lost business.

Create a log

The easiest way to start recording unmet demand is simply to start a logbook of every instance when a customer asks for something the business doesn’t have. A month’s worth of data might show one or two significant areas of demand.

If three people actually ask for something, it’s likely that at least as many again have looked round and either been too embarrassed or not had enough time to ask. It’s also quite likely that some paying customers will have walked out with something they didn’t really want – the ‘next best thing’.

Better still, ask staff to record what action they took about the query, as well as the query itself. Could they order in items which are not economic to stock in bulk? Can they refer customers to a friendly rival? A customer who has been referred on, or who has had something ordered specially, will always remember the service given and will probably come back.

Don’t forget, either, that although the business may have the right product, the price may be wrong. If the logbook shows that customers refused to buy on the grounds that the product was too expensive, it’s time to start scouring suppliers for a cheaper source, or even cut margins. There might even be room to stock two products, a basic and a more expensive version.

If customers’ requests are logged it may be possible to expand the business in a new direction. There is an oft-used phrase that the customer is king. The reality is that it is the non-customer who is king because there will always be more people who walk past the business than those who actually come in the door. Those customers walking past represent a demand not met.

The four Ps

Three of the four Ps involve **product, price and people**. The fourth is **place**. You may think that in a small business, place – where items are located – is

obvious. But some customers will go further out of their way than others to find what they want. Some will take one look, then walk out with their desires not met – despite the fact that the product was in stock. Make sure that for quick purchases those goods are easily accessible and visible – it’s exactly what the supermarkets do as they put sandwiches and drinks close to the door and the tills. By knowing what some customers shoot in and out for you could do the same.

One final point: sometimes a shop will have a product but when a customer comes in and has found the product (in the right place), there’s still no sale. It’s important that as with every retailer, your staff are always ready to help – a queue for the till or chatting staff... customers will get fed up and will leave.

Remember that unmet demand represents an available source of profitable business. A customer asking for something is a potential source of revenue. Don’t ignore it.



TO FINANCE OR NOT FINANCE?

Consumers expect to be offered credit terms when they make expensive purchases, writes *Jeanette Burgess, Head of Regulatory & Compliance at Walker Morris LLP* – if they aren't, they can always turn to their credit card or apply for a personal loan, but if you can offer a 'one-stop shop' by selling them the credit alongside their new purchase, you are likely to increase sales.

But consumer credit is a highly regulated business and before you can offer credit to your customers there are a number of legal and compliance standards that you will need to meet.

Becoming regulated

Most retailers do not provide credit terms themselves, they partner with specialist lenders. Here the retailer is a 'credit broker'. To operate this way, they must either be authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) or be an Appointed Representative (AR) of another business (usually the lender to which you refer business) which is so regulated.

Getting regulated as an AR is quicker and cheaper than applying to

be directly authorised, which requires the completion of detailed forms, the provision of considerable amounts of information and payment of a fee. In both cases you will need to agree a contract with the lender, setting out your respective legal roles and responsibilities, and this is likely to include provisions under which you are obliged to compensate the lender for losses they suffer because of your acts and omissions outside the scope of the agreed activities.

Your regulatory responsibilities as a credit broker

Whichever route you choose, however, your role as a credit broker will mean you are subject to a wide range of FCA rules. You must be assessed as 'fit and proper' by the FCA to undertake regulated activities. You may receive compliance visits from the regulator and will need to report details about the business you write every year. A failure to comply can result in FCA disciplinary action, including fines, and in some cases may mean the loan agreements you introduce are unenforceable without a court order.

Advertising – any 'invitation or inducement' you make to a customer to take out a credit agreement is subject to strict rules; certain adverts must include a Representative APR or a Representative Example of the loan product you are offering.

Sales process – as a broker you have to explain the key features of the loan to the customer and take reasonable steps to ensure that it is not unsuitable for the customer's needs/situation. You need to give them time to read the terms and

conditions and must not pressurise them to take out the credit.

Your fees – if you are charging the customer for providing the credit you need their express consent to pay you and if you receive a commission for the introduction, you need to disclose this too.

Complaints – you must have a customer complaints policy and you are subject to the jurisdiction of the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). When a customer complains about your credit broking services you have to consider their complaint and issue a final response within eight weeks, failing which they can complain to the FOS, which has the power to award compensation up to £150,000.

Key risks you may not have considered

Section 75 rights

When a customer uses credit to pay for goods and services, the lender is jointly liable with the seller for claims arising from misrepresentation or breach of contract.

If sellers go out of business, the lender will be liable for any claims from your customers, which is why lenders build in contractual protections to seek to claw back from you any payments they have to make. Sometimes this may extend to requiring personal guarantees from directors.

Rules governing staff and agent remuneration

The FCA has now introduced new rules which require retail credit brokers to put policies in place to ensure that their pay structures don't risk consumer detriment.



uni-power

ENGINES • TRANSMISSIONS • PARTS

Free Carriage Offer - New Website Shopping Cart



Free Carriage until 31st May 2019
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ENGINES



TRANSMISSIONS



MACHINERY PARTS



WHEN TO SPEND MONEY TO CREATE MORE SALES

Sara Hey, Vice President of Operations and Development at Bob Clements Inc, the dealership development company based in Missouri, shares the insights she offers US dealers with Service Dealer's UK readership every time. This issue, when to effectively spend your marketing budget . . .

I was recently working with one of our Dealer Success Group members when they asked the question "How do I know WHEN to spend our marketing money?" That is a great question because the seasonality of a dealership can dramatically affect when you spend your marketing money. Here are three important factors to keep in mind.

Have a good understanding of your room for growth

This is a process we call forecasting, which in simple terms is looking to the past to understand our trends and our room for growth. When we understand the combination of our capacity and customer demand we can make informed decisions on where to spend our marketing money. By getting a grasp of your dealership's capacity and understanding where you can grow, you can focus your marketing money and smooth out the vitality of your season and produce cash in times that are slower.

Plan ahead

After we understand our room for growth, we need to plan on marketing money to be spent six weeks in advance. Here is how this works: let's say we know that we will have capacity in our shop in December; your expenses stay the same, but you don't have any cash flow. So, as an owner or service manager, you would set marketing money aside to spend on a winter service special mailer at the end of October. This timing would bring the business in during December. I see so many dealers fall into the trap of spending their marketing money right when they need work flowing in. Doing this is just wasting money! By spending your marketing money six weeks before you need the revenue, you are truly making the most of the money that you are spending.

Make sure your marketing plan matches your goals

Finally, remember that your marketing plan is unique to you. You should determine your goals for the year and



make sure your plan lines up with them!

For example: do you want to maintain your current business? If so, you need to plan to bring in about 30% more customers in every year, and your marketing plan needs to reflect that. Statistically, three out of every 10 customers move every year. Perhaps, you are in a place where you are wanting to scale down your business. Then, your marketing focus should be: "How do I reach and maintain the best possible care of the customers that I currently have?" Or maybe, you are you wanting to see significant growth. Then you need to consider an aggressive, well-timed marketing plan that takes into account how to maintain your current level of business and reach new customers or expand your market share.

If you are serious about getting the highest return for you marketing cash investment, take time to forecast, plan and set goals. Then, you'll be ready to implement your plan and take your dealership to the next level.

A FLOOD OF SERVICE WORK

General Manager of Briants of Risbough, Chris Starling, reports on a brisk start to 2019, additional investment in the business and the importance of team building

2019 has kicked off to a flying start. Mild conditions throughout December and early January have led to a flood of servicing work coming through the door. By mid-January both mower and Stihl two-stroke servicing were out beyond 14-day lead times – with every likelihood that it will extend further as we approach Spring, but we'll look to pull resources in if required to keep it within a 21-28 day window. The initial surge was eased slightly by the late January cold snap and flurries of snow, the technicians probably breathing a small sigh of relief having watched their work load swelling.

The three Briants technicians work a system whereby one is full-time Stihl/two-stroke, the second pedestrian lawnmower/four-stroke and the third (our workshop supervisor) is highly skilled in both areas. He absorbs the overflow and frankly takes care of anything obscure, urgent or antiquated!

On the sales front, the branding changeover from Viking to Stihl had an almost instant impact. Models which would have previously been overlooked suddenly gained traction, even if the machines themselves are identical in all but colour! Possibly five years late to the party but better late than never and a promising glimmer of things to come.

With robotic mowers being a target growth area, we're making improvements to our demonstration



Chris Starling, General Manager of Briants Of Risborough with Rebecca Briant, Managing Director

lawn in a bid to highlight the products. The customer seeing a live lawn being cut is a very helpful sales tool. We stock both Stihl iMow and Honda Miimo in store as the two rival robotic brands feature very different benefits. A single loop buried in the ground is able to carry signal from either; we simply swap out the docking stations based on the customer's lawn, then run a tailored demo.

In February/March we've opted to invest in additional vehicles, infrastructure, security and staff. Ordering a new van will allow us to further improve on technical support and assist our sales team in demonstrating at customers' sites. One of our fleet of delivery vehicles will be retired from service and replaced by a new model; because we carry everything from fence panels to chainsaws, the majority of the fleet has to be very versatile.

We've signed off on a pair of outdoor canopies, one for the expansion of our PDI and customer handover area and the second to provide additional dry storage for incoming mowers. The PDI/handover area is seeing an ever-increasing level

of domestic customer activity. We've recognised it's a part of the premises requiring development, partly to provide more cover all year round so that the handover process isn't rushed unnecessarily.

From a staff perspective, at Easter we say a fond farewell to Andy who retires from our showroom after 26 years' service. On the flip side we welcome a new part-time showroom sales person and a new trainee who will take up a floating role between the Parts and Warehouse departments. As is so often the case these days, both are from outside the industry, so a steep learning curve of product and technical training is underway.

Staff wellbeing is more relevant than ever, in an industry where the hours can be long, and retaining staff is key. We spent the back end of 2018 strengthening our team's working dynamic, culminating in one of the finest Christmas parties in recent memory. Keen to keep up the momentum and buoyancy within the staff, an end of quarter team shindig has been booked so we can let our hair down, literally ... it's a *BeeGees* tribute night!

PRODUCTS

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DOMESTIC/COMMERCIAL



POWERLOAD GETS EGO ACROSS THE LINE

Industry's first line trimmer tool with a fully automatic line re-loading system

EGO says it has tackled the problem of reloading line with its new ST1510E - Power+ Line Trimmer featuring award-winning Powerload technology.

The product, which scooped an Innovation Medal at GaLaBau in October last year and a Technology Innovation Award at Bologne's EIMA exhibition, is the industry's first line trimmer tool with a fully automatic line re-loading system.

To load the ST1510E, users simply insert the trimmer line through the head of the tool. After a push on its green activation button, the

Powerload system then perfectly winds the line onto the spool in less than five seconds.

The company says the quick-adjust handle offers optimum balance and control with a 38cm cutting swathe. In addition, the line trimmer's soft-start function and constant speed control ensures consistent trimming.

As with all EGO Power+ products, the ST1510E is powered by the company's 56V Arc lithium battery.

The machine is available as a bare tool with a RRP of £199 or as a kit which includes a 2.5Ah battery and

charger as standard with an RRP of £279.

Steve Roskell, Marketing Director (EMEA) at EGO, commented, "This groundbreaking feature was specifically designed to resolve consumers' number-one pain point with line trimmers: replacing line when it runs out. With this world first innovation, Powerload has finally put an end to those frustrations."

For customers who are unsure about the power of battery technology, EGO offers a 30-day money back guarantee for all domestic users.

5R SERIES UPDATED FOR 2019

Several changes to John Deere tractors from 90 to 125hp

John Deere has announced several updates to its 5R Series tractors from 90hp to 125hp, designed to increase their versatility and suitability for small and medium-sized livestock and arable farms.

To improve their connectivity for precision farming operations, from spring 2019 the tractors will be available AutoTrac and ISOBus-ready. JDLink telematics will also be available ex-factory, together with a remote display access (RDA) five-year subscription.

Other new features include an extendable pick-up hitch with hydraulic push-back through the rear SCVs to improve rear visibility, and variable ratio steering (VRS). This requires AutoTrac for operation and is selectable through a dedicated switch on the tractor cab's B-post.

The 5090R, 5100R, 5115R and

5125R tractors are equipped with fuel-efficient, Stage IIIB compliant 4.5-litre John Deere PWX engines. These diesel-only four-cylinder engines deliver 10 extra hp for transport applications via their transport power management (TPM) system.

Three transmission options start with the entry level 16/16 CommandQuad Manual featuring four ranges and four powershiftable gears within each range.

Also available are a 16/16 CommandQuad and a 32/16 Command8 transmission, which has eight powershiftable gears and an ECO mode that enables a top speed of 40kph at only 1,759 engine rpm.

All three transmissions offer a fully automatic clutch, individual start-up gears, individually settable speeds and an electric park lock.

Automatic shifting is standard on the premium Command8 and optional on the 16/16 CommandQuad.

Front axle suspension and an optional maintenance-free mechanical cab suspension system are available, while the air-suspended Grammer seat from the 6R Series features up to 15 degrees of swivel, lumbar adjustment and an optional heating system.

The 5R Series combines a one-piece curved frame design with a low centre of gravity and has a turning radius of 3.75m for manoeuvrability, even when fitted with a front loader.

In addition, and designed for use in narrow row crops, other specialist crops and vineyards, 5RN Series tractors feature a minimum width of 1.7m, a narrow cab and mechanical front-wheel drive.



DOMESTIC/COMMERCIAL

ECHO CUTS IT WITH BATTERY POWER

New 58V battery chainsaw

ECHO has introduced an all-new 58V battery chainsaw to its growing range of lithium-ion outdoor power equipment.

The company says the CS-58V4AH has the cutting performance of its petrol counterparts, with the additional benefits of battery power.

The chainsaw uses a 4Ah battery which Echo says offers the user plenty of run time for logging and felling small trees, and the quick charger will have it rapidly charged to reduce downtime. The lithium-ion battery also fits other 58V battery products in the range so users can run a trimmer, hedge trimmer, lawnmower and power blower using the same battery. Additional batteries can be purchased as a back-up.

The company say the 0.043 gauge cutting bar gives a sharp and smooth cut and the automatic oiler gives the chain optimum oiling for longer life. There is side access to the chain tensioner to allow quick chain adjustment,



and the oil tank is translucent for easy level checks. The power comes from the brushless motor which Echo says requires minimal maintenance due to non-wearing parts.

The chainsaw comes with a two-year domestic or one-year professional warranty and the 58V battery carries a two-year warranty

AGRICULTURAL

KNIGHT GIVES THE LOW DOWN

New 1800 series



Knight Farm Machinery is introducing a new model to its self-propelled range, which includes a number of equipment up-grades that are designed to make operation and maintenance of the machine easier for operators.

This will also give buyers the option of a lower positioned cab which will lower the centre of gravity of the machine and additionally allow Knight to offer a greater range of booms with the machine.

The redesign includes repositioning the Ad-Blue tank from the front to the side of the machine, where it is

located near the main sprayer controls, and near the new tool box and storage area which are being added to the range.

David Main, Knight's Sales Manager, says the changes continue the company's policy of continuous improvement, designed to help operators achieve accurate applications and trouble-free maintenance of the machine.

"The new tool box and storage area will enable operators to carry all the tools and spare/replacement parts they need into the field with them, which will make in-field maintenance much simpler and quicker," explained David.

"Everything will be protected inside robust panels which will keep all the controls clean and dry.

"With the conventional cab position the current 1800 series can only be fitted with wider booms of the tri-fold design.

"The lower cab position opens up the option of fitting wider two-fold booms, which will speed up unfolding and folding time and reduce the machine's overall weight – an important consideration for some customers."

NEW GREENSMaster OFFERS CONSISTENCY

Toro's new fixed-head pedestrian greens mower

Toro claim their new Greensmaster 1021 brings a new level of consistency to pedestrian mowing with patent-pending features to improve the operator's experience without affecting the quality of cut.

Part of a new series of fixed-head pedestrian greens mowers, the 21-inch mower benefits from several features designed to take performance cutting to the next level, according to the company. The handle and suspension have all received upgrades and together mean operation is simpler, cut is more consistent and adjustment is easier.

The most significant design development comes from the new telescoping loop handle which can be easily adjusted to comfortably accommodate operators of all heights and skill levels, while handle isolation mounts give the cutting unit constant contact with the ground throughout the mowing process.

Jeff Anguige, national sales manager for Reesink

Turfcare said, "Even the slightest variability in the height of cut due to handle pressure or different operator movements can affect the consistency of cut. These design improvements eliminate that, while the constant contact with the ground and the inclusion of the new EdgeSeries cylinders guarantees a crisp, close and precise cut."

New operator controls in conjunction with a shorter distance between the roller and the drum also means handling is more precise in turns and on undulating ground say Reesink.

Maintenance is now quicker, only taking minutes to replace an entire cutting unit or engine assembly. The modular design allows for easy repair and replacement of key components and each unit's ability to backlap directly using the transport wheels means the entire maintenance process is streamlined.



EVENTS 2019

MARCH 2019

- 22-7/4 Ideal Home Exhibition, Olympia, London
www.idealhomeshow.co.uk
- 16-17 West of England Game Fair, Bath & West Showground
westofenglandgamefair.co.uk

APRIL 2019

- 18 CountryTastic, Three Counties Showground, Malvern
www.countrytastic.co.uk
- 25-28 Harrogate Spring Flower Show
www.flowershow.org.uk/spring-show-2019
- 30-2/5 The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC
www.cvshow.com

MAY 2019

- 6 North Somerset Show
www.nsas.org.uk
- 11-12 Nottinghamshire County Show
nottinghamshirecountyshow.com
- 15 Scotgrass, Dumfries
www.scotgrass.co.uk
- 15-18 Balmoral Show, Belfast
www.balmoralshow.co.uk
- 16-18 Devon County Show
www.devoncountyshow.co.uk
- 21-25 Chelsea Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 25-26 Herts County Show
www.hertsshow.com
- 27 Surrey County Show
www.surreycountyshow.co.uk
- 29-30 Staffordshire County Show
www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show
- 29-30 Suffolk County Show
<http://suffolkshow.co.uk/>
- 29-1/6 Royal Bath & West Show
www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show
- 31-2/6 Gardening Scotland, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh
www.gardeningscotland.com

JUNE 2019

- 2 Rutland Show
www.rutlandcountyshow.com
- 6-8 Royal Cornwall Show
www.royalcornwallshow.org
- 6-8 South of England Show
www.seas.org.uk/south-of-england-show
- 12-13 Cereals 2018, Boothby Graffoe, Nr Lincoln, Lincs
www.cerealsevent.co.uk
- 13-16 BBC Gardeners' World Live – Birmingham NEC
bbcgardenersworldlive.com
- 14-16 Three Counties Show, Malvern
www.royalthreecounties.co.uk
- 18-19 Cheshire County Show
www.royalcheshireshow.org
- 19-20 Lincolnshire Show
<https://lincolnshireshow.co.uk/>
- 20-23 Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org
- 23 Derbyshire County Show
derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 26-27 Royal Norfolk Show
royalnorfolkshow.rnaa.org.uk
- 30 Cranleigh Show
www.cranleighshow.co.uk
- 30 Royal Isle of Wight County Show
www.riwas.org.uk



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CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT

Brexit will force all our businesses to change and evolve over the coming years

The first time I heard that phrase was in my time with Barrus, on a visit to one of the MTD factories in the USA.

It's lovely the way the Americans coin a phrase. Sometimes they can be very corny but most times they have an inner meaning which brings out the innocence in how they express themselves as they go to market.

Us Brits tend to be a little more serious and conservative in our outlook. We don't whoop and holler at meetings, screeching at the most simple things. No, we want to be convinced, properly convinced. We want any statement made to us that can change our lives proven before the fact. Of course, that is not possible, but that is in our DNA.

So, why-oh-why did we ever allow ourselves to be put in the position of a Brexit referendum; does anybody understand why?

Why would any politician of any nomination go to the general public and ask for their vote on something they were voted into power to make decisions on, on our behalf, in the first place. Did we ever ask ourselves that question? Were we sucked in on a wave of emotion created to point the finger back at us, however the result turned out? Three years of political turmoil giving our wonderful MPs licence to do nothing but position for power and very little positive movement in togetherness towards making sure our country is in good shape.

Shame on them!

And what about the talk of a second referendum? Are they mad? Would that end up as a 'best of three' in the year 2030? Meanwhile, will the Europeans be laughing their socks off at us, all the way to the bank with the money they will suck out of us through all sorts of sanctions? Whatever happens, what are the changes going to be?

It's too late now. All of us that voted are to blame. Did we get too cocky, too big for our own boots, too emotional? And now Brussels has got us where it wants us!

Whatever the outcome, by the time this edition arrives

with you, will we really know how our lives and businesses are going to be affected over the next 10 to 20 years?

Will we all learn from this experience? Can we, will we, rise to the challenges ahead? Is it not true that the British spirit is very much alive? The underdog mentality will make us knuckle down and face the constant of change. Do we have a choice? Yes! Sink or swim!

As I make changes in my own future, may I take this opportunity to thank all of you who have read my articles over the past two-plus years and to everybody at the magazine for their support.

Now I'm working for a manufacturer it is only fair that I give up the *In My View* column. Hopefully, anybody who has read my views has benefited and enjoyed the content as much as I have enjoyed writing them. Sorry my last piece had to be political, but let's remain positive and go forward!

Thank you and good luck with the constant changes that will happen every day.



JIM GREEN



NO SUCH THING AS BAD PUBLICITY?

UNEXPECTED TALKING POINTS

The start of the year saw two revamped trade shows each prove successful, but each got people talking for unexpected reasons

Last issue I looked ahead to the two trade shows that were coming up at the start of the year and wondered if their revamps would be successful?

With each having been and gone it's fair to say that they did indeed achieve what they set out to do. They were buzzy and confident starts to the industry's year.

However, both did end up with an unexpected talking point.

BTME's was essentially that people found the new hall layout a tad confusing. I even saw one member of the trade press screw up their floorplan map on Day 2 and throw it on the floor in frustration.

At LAMMA though, the talking point was a little more contentious. The inaugural show indoors at the NEC became the focus of some high-profile coverage over something quite apart from innovations in precision farming technology. No, it was a somewhat more archaic issue which gained considerable traction for the show – namely, skimpily dressed women!

Blowing up as bit of a social media kerfuffle initially, manufacturer Agrifac's decision to employ young ladies, in white boots and short, tight red dresses with its logo emblazoned across them, to draw attention to its brand at the show, soon made national news.

On day two of the show, the BBC online coverage of the resulting Twitter row was in its Most Read

news stories for a large proportion of the day. It also got discussed on a Radio 4 phone-in the next morning. As well as this, hugely-read industry journal, *Farmer's Weekly*, felt compelled to run a poll on its website to ask their readers if the use of models was appropriate to promote agricultural machinery?

The debate basically boiled down to one side taking the view of: what's wrong with a pretty lady brightening up a stand?

This was then countered by others saying that this is a crass, 1970s form of marketing – sending messages to young women in the industry that what matters is only that you can appear decorative.

Added into this potent mix were some clever media-cloggs commentators, saying regardless of whether it is or it isn't appropriate, all that matters is that it's got people talking.

After a considerable amount of back and forth, bluster and the inherent pointlessness of arguing with strangers on the internet, it seemed that as quick as the fuss had blown up it had gone away again. Attentions of the Twitters soon turned elsewhere.

However, an interesting post-script was that the BBC's initial news story was updated after the show had closed, with a quote from event organiser AgriBriefing. It was quoted as saying, "Our terms and conditions are specific that our exhibitors must

ensure that nothing on their stand should objectify their staff (be they men or women), and that clothing should be appropriate for a business event.

"When the clothing of some of the promotional staff on one stand was brought to our attention at the end of the first day we raised this directly with the standholder.

"Following further discussions, the activities on the stand were altered and it has been agreed with that standholder that such activity and clothing will not be repeated at future events."

So that's a perfectly sensible end to that. A quiet word from the organisers and everyone can move on. Thank goodness.

That *Farmer's Weekly* poll, by the way? At the time of writing, 985 votes had been cast, with the answer 'Yes, it's just harmless fun' gaining 78% of the votes.



This pic from @AgrifacUKLtd Twitter account caused a bit of a stir

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