

# SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

JULY/AUGUST 2020

# THE FRANCHISE JIGSAW

Which comes first, the product or the dealer?

## Keeping it in the family

Q&A with family-run dealer Masseys

## Adding more brain to the brawn

Case IH on a dealer recruitment drive with connected tractors

## Dealer Toolkit launched

Digital support for dealers

## EASING OUT OF LOCKDOWN

HOW DEALERS HAVE BEEN COPING AND WHAT HAS CUSTOMER REACTION BEEN?



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## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

**W**elcome to July/August 2020's edition of *Service Dealer* magazine. Hopefully most, if not all, of *Service Dealer's* readers are now open again in some capacity or another and are trading. What is certain is that business will have changed – and most likely, not just for the short-term.

These past few months have undeniably altered both how work will be carried out by the dealer network and what customers' expectations will be going forward. Via our regular video conference calls with a panel of dealers and representatives of manufacturers, suppliers and trade bodies, we're hearing about the myriad ways that Covid-19 has forced the network to react and adapt.

Two major shifts which appear to be taking hold include the increased number of staff who will continue to work remotely from the business after this – if not all the time, at least on a semi-regular basis. Plus, the ever-greater reliance on the use of digital tools to both sell and to keep in contact with the customer base. While neither of these measures are brand new, of course, from what we're hearing anecdotally, both are quickly gaining in usage and popularity across the network.

A more traditional industry practice, which unfortunately we won't really be seeing this year, is manufacturer-organised dealer demo days, which have always formed part of the dealers' calendar. Add to this no SALTEX in November and there's going to be a huge gap of new product introductions to dealers which will need filling.

It certainly feels like no one will be getting away from those group video meetings any time soon!



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## INDUSTRY

## TANAKA CEASES PRODUCTION

*UK distributor FGM Claymore announces Maruyama replacement*

Koki Holdings, the producer of Tanaka products, has made the decision to cease production of all engine-driven outdoor power equipment with immediate effect, saying it is focussing development on its power tool and pneumatic lines.

As a consequence, distributor FGM Claymore moved swiftly to announce its new distribution of the Maruyama line of machinery in the UK.

FGM has represented Tanaka for 45 years and in a statement described the decision by Koki Holdings as “unfortunate” and “completely out of our control”.

Managing Director of FGM Claymore, Paul Butterly, said, “We have, and will endeavour to maintain a supply of Tanaka machines in the short term while stocks last. Koki Holdings has committed to the on-going supply of parts and customer care to ensure that all our loyal customers have continued



FGM's Paul Butterly and daughter Rachel pictured with the Maruyama export team at their factory just outside Tokyo, earlier this year

support for their machines.

“In recent years we have witnessed many changes at Tanaka with a reduced line of products,” continued Paul. “This has made it very challenging to compete in the marketplace without a full product offering.”

Discussing taking on the Maruyama products, Paul told *Service Dealer*, “We have had this arrangement in the pipeline, with myself and my daughter Rachel visiting the factory in Japan earlier this year to arrange the deal”.

Maruyama has a 125-year history of producing many products, such as high-pressure pumps, disaster prevention equipment, sprayers and a full line-up of commercial grade two-stroke, hand-held outdoor power equipment.

Paul explained, “Following our

research and in-depth meetings, we are delighted that we can once again offer a reliable and affordable line-up of products that are of Japanese quality with the retention of attractive dealer margins.

“We will be in contact with our dealer network over the summer months with our marketing package and product introductions on our existing and new range of products. We will outline our exclusive product range ensuring that our dealers will maintain good market value and reliability.

“While the loss of Tanaka is regrettable as we have been long associated with it as an independent distributor, we believe that our new range meets the standards that have long been associated with our products.”

## INDUSTRY

## STIGA UK'S DEALER CONFERENCE POSTPONED

*Was due to take place in September*

Stiga UK has taken the decision not to run its popular dealer conference, scheduled to take place in September.

Managing Director Gary Whitney said, “Every year, we look forward to connecting with our dealers and sharing our vision for the future. As a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the government's advice to limit social contact and avoid large gatherings, we've made the difficult decision to cancel the Stiga Dealer Conference planned to take place in September 2020.

“This was a very tough call to make. We all really enjoy the conference and it's an incredibly important event in the Stiga UK calendar, but we need to prioritise the health and safety of our dealers, that of our employees and everyone else involved in putting the conference on.

“2021 will be full of exciting new products for Atco, Mountfield and Stiga, and our task now is to find a safe way to showcase these to our dealerships. We will be sharing details as our plans develop.”



2019's Stiga conference

## EXHIBITIONS

# SALTEX 2020 POSTPONED

*Rescheduled to March 2021*

The Grounds Management Association's (GMA) Board of Directors has taken the unanimous decision to move this year's SALTEX to early spring 2021.

In a statement, the association said the decision had been reached “in light of continued restrictions surrounding mass gatherings, combined with the unprecedented impact on all of us from Covid-19”. It went on to say that this outcome has been guided by discussions with key industry bodies, as well as exhibitors.

The GMA said it has continued to follow Government guidance and the science involved to guide its business during this time. Despite early optimism, a decision has been made to move the exhibition to March 2021, taking into account the best interests of all parties involved.

The GMA believes that by acting now, it gives the sector an opportunity to regroup and recover ahead of the next trade show. SALTEX will now be held on 3-4 March 2021, and the GMA is also realigning the following year so that SALTEX runs in spring 2022.

Speaking about the announcement, David Carpenter, Independent Chair of the GMA stated, “We would like to reassure our community that personal wellbeing remains our top priority. It's a case of mixed concerns at the moment, but I'm hugely optimistic because I believe that the rescheduling of SALTEX in

November 2020 will result in a much stronger show in spring 2021.”

Geoff Webb, CEO at the GMA said, “This has been a difficult decision to make, and I hope all our exhibitors join forces with us to mark a return to more ordinary working conditions in the not too distant future. Professional and personal lives have been placed on hold, and that in turn will have a knock-on effect. We want to help ease that load at the moment.

“We've seen the grounds community come together and adapt during this challenging period, and we hope that exhibitors help us to host something beyond a trade show – a celebration of what our industry can overcome when working together.”

The GMA also believes that holding the 75th SALTEX on 3-4 March 2021 will help all companies get the respite required to readjust to changing professional and personal circumstances.

Geoff Webb continued, “Next year, the event will provide a huge opportunity for our sector to regroup, reunite and celebrate. After this difficult period, the show will help to rekindle the economic activity of the industry.”

**The GMA says it will honour all existing bookings and has also secured the same halls at the NEC to minimise disruption for exhibitors.**



## DEALERS



## SHARMANS JOINS CASE IH NETWORK

### Part of manufacturer's ambitious growth plans

Lincolnshire-based Sharmans Agricultural Limited has been appointed as a Case IH dealer.

This announcement comes after Sharmans was informed by John Deere late last year that it was not to be part of the manufacturer's future Growth Strategy.

The family-run machinery dealership has a head office in Grantham, Lincolnshire, and operates four further depots in Nottinghamshire (Lowdham), Lincolnshire (Stamford), Leicestershire (Melton Mowbray) and Northamptonshire (Pytchley, Kettering).

Commenting on the development, Paul Harrison, Case IH Business Director UK & ROI, said, "Case IH has ambitious growth plans in the UK, building on our growing market share in recent years.

"Our dealer network must evolve to ensure we serve the changing needs of our growing customer base effectively, and we're delighted to be adding Sharmans to cover a key geographic area. It is an extremely strong, dynamic and professional business and I'm confident that it will deliver a professional service to existing and new customers in the area.

"We look forward to working with the Barclay family and their team to

grow Case IH sales in the years ahead."

Sharmans has been run by the Barclay family since 1981, with Managing Director, Scott Barclay, currently heading up the business.

Commenting on the news, Scott said, "We're absolutely thrilled to be joining the Case IH family. We wanted to partner with a new tractor franchise that would complement our current portfolio of products as well as match the quality that we currently offer; Case IH met these requirements perfectly and coupled with the fact it was extremely keen to work with us and our clients, this meant a lot: we both have the same goals.

"We look forward to working together with Case IH and to the new opportunities this partnership will bring, and we would like to welcome both our existing and potential new customers to join us on this exciting new journey. Once the country has beaten this terrible Covid-19 virus our doors will be wide open for business, but in the meanwhile we have some Case IH stock available now and some cracking deals to get us going."

*To read more on the Sharmans' deal and franchise changes see the feature beginning on page 20.*

## DEALERS



## MKM TAKES ON UK & IRELAND DISTRIBUTION OF RAMMY

### Front-mounted ATV products

MKM Agriculture Ltd, the Bedford-based dealers, have announced they have taken on the UK and Ireland distribution for the range of Finnish-built Rammy front-mounted ATV products.

Managing Director, Anthony Deacon, told *Service Dealer*, "We will actively be supplying their front-mounted flail mower and rotary brushcutter/mower and will also be able to supply their snow blowers.

"We believe the front-mounted machines offer many benefits to trailed machines. The rotary brushcutter/mower, for example, is unique as it can cut through trees up to 4" in diameter, making it a very useful all round machine for the forestry, agricultural and hunting sectors."

MKM says it is looking to set up a specialist dealer network across the UK and Ireland.

*Interested dealers can contact Anthony on 01234 768889 or info@mkmagri.com.*

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## PEOPLE

# AWARD FOR CHRIS BIDDLE

*Outstanding contribution to landbased industries*

Chris Biddle, the founder of *Service Dealer* and *Turf Pro*, has been announced as the recipient of the 2020 IAgRE (Institution of Agricultural Engineers) Award for Contribution to the Landbased Sector.

The Award was due to have been presented at the IAgRE AGM and Awards to be held at the headquarters of Amazone UK on 30 April. The event has been provisionally rescheduled for October, but may now be included with the 2021 Awards next April.

Chris, a Fellow of the Institution of Agricultural Engineers, had edited *Landwards*, IAgRE's professional journal for 12 years before stepping down from the role last December.

He was proposed for the award by Alastair Taylor, former Chief Executive of IAgRE who retired last summer, who said "This award is made to those who have made a sustained contribution to the landbased industry throughout their career".

"Editing *Landwards* is a challenging role. It demands a keen eye on the shifting sands of the Agricultural Engineering and allied industries. Chris was always keen to keep the journal ahead of the curve in terms of content and editorial and as such, it pushed at the boundaries and is viewed by members as a useful account of the developments of the IAgRE community."



He added, "IAgRE's association with Chris has been highly beneficial and opened doors to new people and new themes. His work has enhanced the reputation of the institution and introduced us to new audiences.

"Chris has spent his career within landbased industries, and was able to draw on his wide experience and contacts across Agricultural Engineering, which allowed for an interesting range of articles and editorial, linking his experience with modern-day and innovative thinking."

The Institution of Agricultural Engineers, based on the campus of Cranfield University, was founded in 1938. It is a registered charity, working to promote professionalism among academic, practitioner and industry members from across the landbased sector. It also provides professional qualifications through the Engineering Council and the Society for the Environment.

Chris Biddle was succeeded as Editor of *Landwards* by Andy Newbold, of Cumbria-based FarmSmart Events, a former President of IAgRE.

## PEOPLE

## SENIOR ROLE AT STIGA *Gary Tully joins company*



Gary Tully, former Head of Trade Sales and Product Development of Cyril Johnston's Gardencare has been appointed Sales and Marketing Director of Stiga UK.

Stiga says Gary has considerable experience in the garden machinery sector, having worked closely throughout his career with dealers and manufacturers. As well as sales and marketing, his own brand experience involves identifying market trends, specifying, sourcing, and bringing new products to market.

"I'm looking forward to joining the Stiga team," said Gary. "As one of Stiga's distribution partners in Ireland, I've worked closely with the company for 20 years. I've always admired the company's approach, its culture and determination to succeed.

"When anyone takes over a new position with a company it's always a challenge. The times we're living in pose an extraordinary challenge that will require a new flexible approach. I know with Stiga we can face and overcome these problems."

## DEALERS

## ETESIA APPOINTS NORTHERN IRELAND DEALER

*RD Mechanical Services*

Etesia UK has announced the appointment of RD Mechanical Services, which will be distributing the full product range throughout various areas in Northern Ireland.

RD Mechanical Services, based in Belfast, was established in 1998 and specialises in equipment related to the waste industry. In 2019 the company opened a dedicated division for grass and grounds equipment. Since then, the company has been building its portfolio



Etesia RDM

to offer a complete service to its groundcare customers.

With immediate effect, RD Mechanical Services will now supply the full range of Etesia grounds care equipment.

Sales Director Alastair Calderwood said: "We're delighted to have recently been appointed as distributors for the widely respected Etesia range of grass and grounds maintenance equipment. We look forward to a long and successful relationship together."

## DEALERS

## GGM PARTNERS WITH ROBERINE

*Takes on commercial franchise*

GGM Groundscare has announced a new partnership with Roberine, the Dutch manufacturer of self-propelled mowing machines.

GGM said it has a rich heritage in the ride-on commercial mower sector and as the business prepares to celebrate its 20th anniversary at its headquarters in Colne, Lancashire, the move sees it return to its roots.

Managing Director Chris Gibson said, "When the business was relocated to Colne back in 2000, we were suppliers of Kubota and Hayter Professional, which was subsequently bought out by Toro. We described the brands as the right and left legs of the business – the absolute cornerstones of everything we did. Over time, we've explored and been extremely successful in other sectors. Now, through Roberine, we have found the perfect partner, at the forefront of the development of commercial mowing machines for local authorities and commercial landscapers".

GGM is now the supplier across the North-West region as well as South and West Yorkshire.



Pictured earlier this year, (L-R) Andrew Melville (Commercial Director, GGM); Maarten Ponne (Sales Area Manager, Roberine); Ian Burden (Group Vice President Vegetation Control, Alamo Group Inc); Chris Gibson (MD, GGM)

Chris continued, "We're extremely excited about adding the Roberine franchise to our portfolio, it's the perfect addition as we continue to grow in the commercial sectors".

As part of this agreement GGM will take over the responsibility for the continued service and warranty of all machines supplied by the former dealers.

Chris added, "We've already been investing in training our after-sales team and parts inventory to ensure all Roberine customers old and new receive the award-winning service GGM customers have become used to."

Maarten Ponne at Roberine added, "We're delighted to have GGM Groundscare on board to represent the Roberine brand. Changing dealership representation is never an easy decision but we believe that, in GGM, we have a partner with a clear shared vision of how best to support our brand throughout the region. They have a proven track record for working closely with commercial customers and are keen to continue to invest and develop their business, even in these challenging times."

DEALERS



L-R: John Forrest, Susan Metcalf, Raymond Metcalf and Dave Bennet

# KRONE APPOINTS 2 NEW DEALERS

*To strengthen distribution and support network*

Krone UK has appointed Lancashire-based Metcalf Ag Engineers and Essex-based Adcock Agri Ltd as main dealers, to strengthen its distribution and support network.

Managing Director of Metcalf Ag Engineers, Raymond Metcalf, said, "This opportunity represents a new chapter for our family business, and

to improve our service we have appointed well-respected local contractor John Forrest (Fez) to boost our sales team.

"We were Lely dealers until the company was bought by AGCO, which left a gap in our portfolio. We're very excited by the Krone appointment and proud to represent such a quality brand in the area."

Adcock Agri Ltd Managing Director Tim Adcock said, "We're very pleased to be covering Essex as Krone's new dealer. The brand fits well within our franchise portfolio.

"The Krone brand is well established in our area, but there is a great opportunity to build market share with new and our current customers."

PEOPLE



TH White's Simon Holmes

## SIMON HOLMES JOINS TH WHITE

*As Group Service Manager*

Simon Holmes has joined TH White as Group Service Manager for agriculture and construction reporting to Operations Director, Adrian Lovegrove.

Based at Marlborough, Simon has worked with agricultural machinery ever since completing his education and brings more than 30 years of career experience to his new role.

Throughout his working life Simon has had strong links with the CNHi franchise, starting with a Leicestershire Case IH dealer in 1989, followed by more than a decade with New Holland dealer Platts Harris – punctuated by a sabbatical in

Australia where he worked on a number of farms, at one point being responsible for 1,000 sheep!

In 2002 Simon joined CNHi UK in Basildon, providing technical training and support on harvester products. From 2012 he worked at the CNHi combine plant in Belgium where he became Global Product Quality Specialist for New Holland rotary combines built in Zedelgem.

Adrian Lovegrove welcomed Simon to the business saying, "Simon's technical product knowledge makes him an experienced and valuable addition to our team".

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## DEALERS



Bobcat flail

# CHANGES TO BOBCAT DEALER NETWORK

## In South-West England

Bobcat has announced important changes to the company's dealer network for South-West England.

TVE Hire & Sales Ltd (TVE), the authorised Bobcat dealer based in Abingdon in Oxfordshire, has been awarded an expanded territory. With the addition of the counties of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire to its current area, TVE will now be responsible for customers in seven counties, including Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

John Christofides, Regional Sales Director, UK/Ireland, Nordics and Baltics for Bobcat EMEA, said, "Following the excellent results delivered by TVE in its first three years as a Bobcat dealer, with market share increases of up to 15% in its area, we are delighted to recognise this with the addition of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire to its existing area."

TVE has also taken on a caretaker role providing continuity for sales, service and parts for new and current Bobcat products in the counties of Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, in anticipation of new announcements to be made by Bobcat regarding these counties.

In addition, Bobcat, as part of the company's mission to expand its presence in the agricultural sector, has appointed Cheltenham-based JJ Farm Services Ltd as the authorised dealer for its range of telescopic loaders for the agricultural market in Gloucestershire.

Ewen Gilchrist, Network Development Manager UK & Nordics for Doosan Bobcat EMEA, said, "I would like to welcome JJ Farm Services to the fold. We look forward to many years of working together with them in the agricultural market."

## INDUSTRY



# MITSUBISHI TRACTORS EXPANDING UK DEALER NETWORK

## Launch of Tier 5 compact model

The Mitsubishi brand has announced that they are currently seeking dealers in the UK, to add to their network already in place.

UK sales manager Simon Shepherd said, "Any potential dealer should contact myself to discuss the opportunity to become part of the Mitsubishi compact tractor family in the UK."

The company say they are currently offering a "low introductory price" on the Mitsubishi MTU 26.

The first batch of their tractors arrived in the UK on the May 5th and the company confirmed all of the first shipment have all been sent out to the dealer network. "Already a substantial number have been sold to end users," said Simon Shepherd. "It would appear that if you have the right product at the right price - people will buy and opt for the quality product every time."

"We are starting with the MTU 26hp model - which is the first Tier 5

engine compact tractor I know of - and I think excitingly it will be for a while."

The 26hp hydrostatic engine Japanese-built, machine is new to the range and is available on both agricultural and turf tyres. It features a 780kg lifting capacity with 540 rpm PTO.

**Dealers can contact Simon Shepherd on 0121 740 0194 or [simon@mstractors.com](mailto:simon@mstractors.com)**

## PEOPLE



# IAGRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE DEPARTS

## Leaves post after 8 months

The Institution of Agricultural Engineers (IAGrE) has announced the departure of its CEO, Ed Hansom, "with immediate effect".

In thanking Mr Hansom for the work he had done during his relatively short time with the Institution, IAGrE President Paul Hemingway said, "In view of the times in which we find ourselves and the changing work practices forced upon us, I am recommending to the IAGrE Executive Committee that we take some time to reprise the situation before seeking a replacement CEO."

Mr Hansom was appointed during last summer to replace the retiring CEO, Alastair Taylor, and took up his post on 2 September 2019.

Prior to joining IAGrE, Mr Hansom spent eight years in the navy where he was a marine engineer officer on various ships and saw active service in the Gulf, before taking a shore post at the Defence Research Agency at West Drayton.

In 2008, he joined the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) as a professional development adviser, prior to his appointment as IAGrE CEO.



# EASING OUT OF LOCKDOWN

*Dealers who specialise across all machinery sectors have had to adapt their ways of doing business as we've progressed through this period of lockdown. Service Dealer spoke to a selection to find out how they've been coping and what their customers' reactions have been. Editor STEVE GIBBS reports*

Since the Prime Minister announced the lockdown restrictions on 23 March, *Service Dealer* has been conducting regular video conference calls with dealers based across the country.

During the confusing initial weeks and through the first stages of the

restrictions being eased, we heard from agricultural, commercial grounds care and domestic garden machinery dealers regarding how they had been coping.

Some, of course, chose to close when Boris made that first televised address. As the weeks ticked by though, tough decisions had to be made

as to when and how business could start again.

Post 13 May, when parts of the country were making their first, tentative steps back to work, it was clear we were at the beginning of a slow process. It was obvious that the network would emerge into a strange and changed business landscape.

## ADAPTING PREMISES

One of the key elements to a successful progression that needed to be put in place as any form of reopening began was the physical transformation dealers needed to orchestrate in their premises. Showrooms, especially, need to comply with social distancing guidelines for the safety of staff and customers alike.

From our panel, we heard varying reports that some manufacturers and suppliers were offering their dealers, at a charge, branded signage and floor stickers etc, to kit out their showrooms – but some were not.

Some dealers were preferring to do things for themselves anyway, setting up their stores so they could work safely, with methods appropriate to their set-ups.

James Hayes, owner of Hayes Garden Machinery in South Molton, in North Devon, explained to *Service Dealer* the measures it took in order to reopen.

James said, "When customers arrive now, they are greeted by a sign asking them to wait outside if another is already in the shop's safe zone. They are then requested to use the hand sanitiser provided.

When entering the showroom they arrive in what we have named 'the sheep-pen' as we have created a safe area out of crowd-control barriers so that we are in control of social distancing rather than leaving it up to our customers."

James continued, "As we all know, it's easy to forget when in the moment of the sale, not to just reach across and explain how a certain lever or control works. This way those boundaries can't accidentally be crossed, and we don't have customers walking around the showroom touching all the machines."

James said that during the earlier days of the lockdown they ran a back-door system which he described as an "absolute nightmare to control". The new improved system was introduced by Hayes GM before it advertised the fact that it was open again. "This gave us time to test and make sure all staff were happy and that customers would stick to the rules," explained James. "We've increased awareness gradually and have updated the website and social media one by one, as the last thing we wanted was an influx of customers all at once, which has worked well."

Commercial machinery dealer, Chris Gibson of GGM Groundscare in

Colne, Lancashire, told us the company had undertaken a complete risk assessment by the end of May and was reviewing the results before allowing customers back on site.

Speaking as *Service Dealer* went to press, Chris said, "Our plan is that we want to open our showrooms on the first of June. We'll have all the proper signage etc in place, but we're not going to open the whole of the building. We will have certain areas clearly marked off and restricted from public access."

## REMOTE WORKING

A way of further restricting public access is, of course, to conduct as much trade as possible remotely. Many dealers under lockdown found themselves offering more online sales than ever before, combined with an increase in services such as click and collect and local drop-offs.

Simon Holmes, Group Groundcare and Lawncare Sales Manager of Lloyd Ltd, which has branches across the North of England and South of Scotland, providing machinery for the groundcare and agricultural sectors, was pleased with how this means of trading had worked for them.

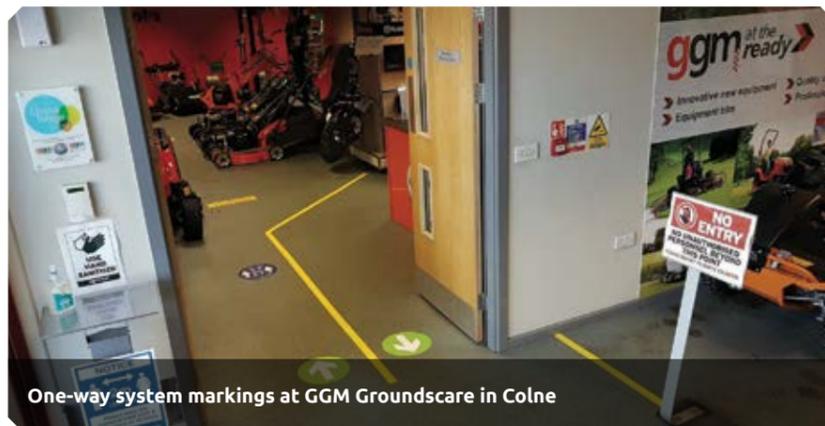
"While some customers would



Hayes Garden Machinery is in control of its social distancing



The safe zone at Hayes Garden Machinery has been nicknamed the 'sheep-pen'



One-way system markings at GGM Groundscare in Colne



Safety measures in place at GGM's counter

prefer some face-to-face interaction, we've found that our sales specialists' advice over the phone has proved sufficient for many of them," he told *Service Dealer*. "We've also added a 'live chat' facility to our Lloyd Lawncare website, as well as taking enquiries via Facebook. It has clearly been important to offer our customers whatever means of communication they feel most comfortable with."

With no contact and social distancing procedures in place, Lloyd Ltd is able to deliver the machine to the customer or they can collect it from their local branch, whatever suits them best.

"As lockdown eases," Simon explained, "we will continue with this approach, but adapt to our customers' requirements. If it's clear that they would prefer to come into the showroom we will make sure we have suitable safety processes in place."

Pete McArthur, of Strathbogie Forest & Garden in Aberdeenshire, who is currently providing the *Diary*

*of a Season* column for *Service Dealer*, said initially he had slight issues with some customers underestimating the seriousness of the virus. "I would now say that view has changed though," Pete confirmed.

"Customers are now happy for us to come out to them as long as we can maintain our social distancing. It's tricky, obviously, with a demo of a machine, so what we try to do is leave the machine with the customer, having explained the controls, then get them to phone us back if they've got any issues or questions. That seems to work for us.

"With the Automowers we deal with, those have just been flying recently, and thankfully with those we don't have to get involved that closely with the customers anyway."

As interactions with customers being conducted more remotely, work within the dealership itself is adapting to reflect on-going social distancing. Many dealers *Service Dealer* has spoken to have told us they are now changing their views on

their own staff working from home. Clearly this is more with regard to administrative staff, with roles such as accounts, HR or general admin duties, which had home-working enforced upon them as lockdown kicked off, now proven to work more than adequately.

Where some may never have considered home working as a viable option for their dealership before, these past months have opened the eyes of many to its potential.

Going forward, perhaps all that office space might be used differently in the future – maybe as more showroom space or increased storage areas for example? Video meetings connecting the world have meant that these roles are continuing to be performed perfectly well. It might offer staff a working life that fits in better with their personal circumstances and it could mean savings for the business.

Teams will, of course, always benefit from meeting up for face-to-face interactions, but there is a blend to be struck which can afford the best of both worlds for dealers.



The yard at MKM is clearly marked off



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# “WE’LL JUST GRADUALLY EVOLVE BACK TO NORMALITY, ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE COUNTRY”

## AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

During lockdown, dealers whose customers are primarily involved in agriculture faced a different reality to those in the commercial and domestic sectors. There was no question that agriculture was an essential industry which needed back-up support throughout. Therefore, ag dealers had to balance a great demand from their customers at a busy time of the year, alongside complying with the important safety measures.

Anthony Deacon, MD of ATV dealer MKM Agriculture Ltd, based in Bedford, told us that they didn't really stop trading throughout the whole process. "We've always been open," Anthony said, "although we did officially close the showrooms.

"We then allowed customers to visit by appointment only, where we could wheel the ATV and lawnmower products outside into the yard to be viewed.

"Throughout this we've relied on our customers' common sense – allowing them to visit us if they really need to – and if they do come in, they need to act responsibly. That seems to have worked, I haven't felt the need to enforce anything. People have understood the situation and been sensible."

Looking ahead, Anthony told us his dealership was still planning on not encouraging customers to come into the premises too much. "I can sell a lot more from my desk and they can take up far less of my time by dealing with them over the phone, than over a coffee in person in the showroom," Anthony commented.

"We've been offered all the appropriate safety materials, such as signage and floor stickers, to

encourage social distancing from our suppliers. We had to pay a contribution towards it, but I looked at four offers and picked the best one for us.

"I think we'll just gradually evolve back to normality, along with the rest of the country."

Georgina Carnock-Evans, Director of Arwels Agri Services in Carmarthenshire, West Wales, confirmed that it too had remained open all the time, but was obviously taking into consideration the safety of the staff and customers.

"We've got signage outside," said Georgina, "so when people arrive, they just come to the door and a member of staff goes out, at a safe distance, to deal with the customer.

"We're in the season of silage and harvesting, so we're working flat-out demonstrating. It's challenging to maintain social distancing when you have breakdowns etc to attend to, but we have been doing so."

It was interesting to hear from Georgina that in terms of parts supplies, at the beginning they had no issues with Germany or Italy at all.

"All our parts have been coming within two to three days," she said. "However, as time goes on and factories have been closed it is noticeable and going to be difficult to get component parts as everyone is fighting for them in the market."

## THE INCREASE OF DIGITAL

If issues like supply of parts do start to raise their head in any significant way, keeping in touch with customers regularly, via all means at a dealer's disposal, will become vital. Social media channels during this lockdown period have played an especially important role in keeping customers

informed about what's going on with their local dealership. Gone are the days when dealers needed a huge advertising budget to get their message out to their local communities.

Digital tools of every description have been playing their part in this – video in particular. Ripon Farm Services for example produced a professionally made film which magnificently told the story of how they were running their business during these unprecedented times.

The intention of their short film was for it to be shared with their customers and local communities to explain what measures they were undertaking.

James Daysh, Marketing and Operations at Ripon said, "The video helps showcase what some local businesses are doing to keep the nation's farming going and to keep food on the nation's table.

"The clip explains some of the changes our business has put in place and reinforces the importance of UK farming and how we, as well as many others, recognise this and have worked to ensure they can keep going.



Clear instructions greet customers arriving at MKM Agriculture

"Our primary goal was to reach audiences with a message that we understand the importance of farming but steps must be taken to ensure safety during this period for all concerned."

Examples such as Ripon were important for dealers in the earlier days of the lockdown, to get the information out there to customers that dealers were there for them – albeit in a modified fashion.

As the weeks ticked by though, this messaging via all digital means, shifted emphasis to more tactical marketing. When it became time to push, and with sales reps unable to just turn up at the farm gate or golf club for a cold call, electronic contact with customers came into its own.

With all manner of communication tools at their disposal, savvy dealers realised that they had to work differently, work smarter.

## CUSTOMER RESPONSE

The positive news for those who were trading during lockdown or began to ramp things up again as things began to ease towards the end of May and beginning of June, was that business was reported as brisk. Especially so for dealers in the agricultural and domestic sectors. Commercial machinery dealers were clearly harder hit with the shutdown of golf and professional sport. However, as the courses and parks started to come back to life, we heard reports that commercial dealers had also seen enquiries emerging.

Chris Gibson of GGM Groundscare told us, "With our professional customers, we've certainly had more of an uptake of people asking if we're able to do demonstrations again. Local authorities are starting to think about how they might be able to do demos, as are the reopened golf clubs.

"We're starting to return to whatever this 'new normal' is I suppose. We're assessing what level of sales staff we need back working – and working out what our customers require from us at this time."

*Service Dealer* was told that dealers who had been doing their best to serve their customers during an incredibly difficult period, had been receiving great feedback.

James Hayes said, "Our customers have been good to be quite honest. They are a lot more understanding now than they were to begin with.

"We even had a customer the other day nominate us to the local council for being a Local Business Hero! A nice gesture, but I wouldn't call us heroes. The customers just seem really happy that we can do stuff for them.

"Since we started advertising that we were open again, we've had emails from customers saying 'well done for doing the right thing' and suchlike. It's actually been quite pleasant, the customer interactions we've had."

Simon Holmes, from Lloyds, shared similar experiences, saying, "Our customers have been very understanding about the limitations of the current situation and have adapted

to our new way of working. We've had some really good feedback from our customers who've been pleased that we've been there for them. For example, if they've been self-isolating, we've managed to help them out with what they've required in whatever way we can.

"Hopefully, throughout this challenging situation, we will have built some long-term relationships."

As we move through this unparalleled situation, dealers have felt comfortable and ready to open their doors to their customers at differing times, some sooner than others. When *Service Dealer* spoke with Pete McArthur at the end of May, his showroom was not yet open to the public.

Pete explained, "People now know they need to maintain social distance. This will be how things are, certainly for the rest of the year, so that's why we're taking a little bit longer to reopen the showroom – we want to get it right. It's not just going to be like this for the next few weeks, it's going to be the way for the foreseeable future.

"It's important for us that we do it correctly now, so we don't have issues going forward."

As ever, the independent network is showing adaptability, resilience, and business acumen, making sure that whatever steps are taken, they are made at the correct time and in the right manner for their own dealerships and their customers.



Ripon Farm Services produced a video explaining to customers their new ways of working

# THE FRANCHISE JIGSAW

*How will the rise of super-dealers and the on-going changes in franchise-holding impact on brand loyalty? Which comes first, the product or the dealer? CHRIS BIDDLE reports*

**M**anufacturers sack dealers – and dealers sack manufacturers. All of which raises the perennial question, does the customer buy the brand, or buy the dealer?

Since 2011, US trade magazine *Farm Equipment* has surveyed farmers on attitudes to brand loyalty every three years. Asked whether they considered themselves brand loyal, 75% answered yes in 2017, but that has dropped to 63% in the 2020 survey.

When that question was posed on the UK Farming Forum recently, the overwhelming response was that a reliable and professional back-up service from a dealer often 'sealed the deal'.

Farm equipment dealers are mostly family concerns that work hard to establish a personal and close rapport with their customers. They also sell a heck of a lot of different kit, other than tractors. One five-branch dealership lists 42 leading brands across ag, turfcare, forestry, off-road and automotive.

The mantra to dealers over the years was that they should strive to increase 'the park' of tractors in their territory. No matter the pitiful retained profit – that would flow from resulting parts and service business. But service in the technical sense has changed – the quality and reliability of tractors today is of a universally high standard, so service intervals are longer. Whole components are changed rather than individual parts, and remote diagnostics are becoming the norm.

The role and economics of a dealer's service department has evolved, but it still underpins the dealer's reputation in the eyes of its customers.

Our industry has been built from the ground up, often by visionary engineers, two men in particular, John Deere and Harry Ferguson. Both had 'eureka' moments that transformed mechanised farming.

John Deere, already an iconic brand in the US, arrived in the UK in 1966 as the 'new kid on the block'. The tractor market at the time was dominated by Ford and Massey Ferguson. When the company opened its Langar offices, it had no dealer network. In the first year, it had appointed five dealers; two, Ben Burgess and P Tuckwell remain; three are no longer in business.

Gradually, however, Deere gained a significant toehold as the market started to dilute. Ford had purchased Sperry New Holland in 1986 and five years later sold out to Fiat, with the Ford name disappearing. Meanwhile, the AGCO corporation was formed in 1990 after the initial purchase of Allis-Chalmers from Deutz. Four years later it added Massey Ferguson to its fold, to be followed by Fendt, Challenger and Valtra.

This consolidation of brands almost certainly worked to Deere's advantage. By 1998 it had appointed around 115 outlets in the UK and become market leader with a share of 21%, a position it stills holds today.

## SUPER-DEALERS

With franchise 'churn' more evident among competitive brands, John Deere set out to strengthen its presence in the UK by seeking to appoint larger dealerships. In 2002, the company told a series of US dealer meetings that they should plan for a future in which they would either be a buyer or a seller.

In 2004, Oxfordshire-based dealer Farol swapped its Case-IH franchise for John Deere, a move which resulted in a 'domino' effect with three adjoining dealers losing their long-held Deere franchises.

"For years, we talked about Deere as a family," former Deere CEO Robert Lane told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2007. "The fact is, we are not a family; we are a high-performance team."

It was a statement that fired up some ambitious dealers. In the North-West of England, Stuart Cornthwaite's family had run a John Deere dealership, and he had learned the business thoroughly. After a



Dick Spencer and Andy Coles of C&O switched to Massey Ferguson in 2017

family division over future direction, he opened his own Deere dealership in 2007 along with finance Director John Ashe – and with ambitious plans. "Our ambition was to operate five branches running up the M6 motorway and have a turnover of £100 million in 10 years," he told the *Farmers Guardian* in 2019. "Shortly after we started out, we travelled to John Deere to present our vision, and it's fair to say that they were quite shocked!"

Today it is mission accomplished. The Cornthwaite Group operates five branches stretching from Nantwich in Cheshire to Dumfries in Scotland.

In 2011, Deere fleshed out its Dealer of Tomorrow strategy. A network of world-class dealerships growing significantly in scale and specialisation with a turnover of £25m or more. This, it told dealers, could be achieved through investment or by merging with other dealers in the market.

One of the first to be impacted was Lincolnshire-based Burdens Group, which lost the Deere franchise to neighbouring dealer Doubleday when it took on expanded territory. Burdens was subsequently appointed as a New Holland dealer and has recently

expanded its operating territory to five branches by the acquisition of Lincolnshire Motors.

Then, at Agritechnica in 2019, Deere further upped the ante by announcing to its 350 European dealers that it intended to further reduce the number of dealer groups "by up to a third". Furthermore, it set out the parameters for those companies who should meet their intended criteria of a doubling of territory (wherever possible), a turnover of 100 million euros (£90m) and sales of 30 combines and 15 foragers annually.

There is little doubt that the 'Deere Effect' has influenced much of the franchise churn in recent years. According to BAGMA there are currently around 700 ag dealer outlets in the UK operated by an estimated 500 businesses. With up to 15 different tractor brands available in the UK, this should still provide scope and flexibility.

But it remains a complicated jigsaw as the fitting of one extra piece often entails the displacement of one or two other pieces.

## SHARMANS AGRICULTURAL

At the end of 2019, Sharmans, a 5 branch dealership, who had held the



Scott Barclay of Sharmans believes it's the dealer that makes the difference

acted like they did. There are many products on the market today, many manufactured to a high standard - and we believe it's the dealer that can make the difference, by offering high levels of service and support, as well as expertise in sales of new and used equipment."

**C&O TRACTORS**

Between them, A Brewer and Company of Wilton and Stanley Pond Ltd, of Blandford had a history of selling Ford/CNH tractors to farmers in Wiltshire and Dorset since the 1950s. The companies were acquired by C&O Tractors in 2000 and added further branches in Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Sussex.

In 2016, C&O Tractors won the New Holland Dealer of the Year Award.

The following year, the company decided to switch from New Holland to Massey Ferguson.

C&O, under the leadership of MD Andy Coles, was anxious to expand its territory, much of which runs along the coastal counties. "That wasn't possible while we were with CNH," he says.

It was also clear that the company was not happy with some of the service levels provided by CNH.

With some irony, in 2015 Andy had

Deere franchise since 1990 were served notice that their Deere franchise would be terminated in October 2020, a decision they described as brutal.

Reflecting on the initial shock, MD Scott Barclay says, "It all happened so quickly. JD's dealer of tomorrow strategy was now in full swing, wanting large super dealers, with less depots, selling purely JD equipment.

"But Sharmans' approach is opposite to that and we are not a one-trick pony. We will always supply the most appropriate and best equipment to farmers in our area and try to have local depots.

"We hold a number of market leading franchises, including the fantastic JCB handlers and Fastracs and we were fortunate that we soon had other tractor manufacturers knocking on our door. It was really good to know that we were wanted!"

Barely, four months later, Sharmans were appointed as a Case-IH dealers. To illustrate the jigsaw effect, it resulted in a neighbouring Case-IH dealer, Colling Brothers, losing the franchise.

Scott Barclay says that the change has been fully embraced by the staff and it has been a breath of fresh air. With new slogans, "The Dealer

Makes the Difference" & "We're Here for You" being adopted, many of Sharmans' customers have expressed their full support.

"The Case-IH franchise fits well with JCB," he says, "and we are experiencing an early bounce in business. There is a really positive attitude flowing through the company.

"It is Sharmans' name over the door, something that JD seemed to forget. They did not own us, but



Vincent Tractors & Plant was started by Ken Vincent and is now run by son Paul with his sons, Nick and Alec, also joining the family firm



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**Kubota**  
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Kubota UK's MD, David Hart, says the concept of super dealers is never a one-size-fits-all idea

says the concept of super-dealers is never a one-size-fits-all solution, "particularly in a mixed farming environment such as we have in the UK". Nor is he surprised by the drop in brand loyalty, as illustrated by the *Farm Equipment* survey in the US. "The major food production companies, particularly in the eastern counties of the UK, regard the tractor as a commodity; they're less concerned with the personal contact that dealerships provided in the past.

"You can almost draw a line down the middle of England, and you see a different pattern emerging to the West of that line – there are more mixed farms and our industry is more about the people."

David will have experienced the emotional aspects of dealers losing long-held franchises. "A corporate policy such as that announced by Deere is tough on those who have to enact it. Decisions to terminate franchises are often taken well-above the pay grade of manufacturer staff on the ground. They will have nurtured many of those dealers over the years, become friends to families, and will not enjoy having to impart bad news.

"But, dealer rationalisation provides companies like Kubota with new opportunities. It's clear that the number of dealer outlets will remain fairly stable in the UK, and there's plenty of room for smaller, focussed dealers. My aim is to create a more touchy-feely network, where our dealers and customers don't feel they are merely a number."

In Cornwall, Vincent Tractors & Plant is in no doubt about the importance of the dealer. Started by Ken Vincent over 55 years ago, and today run by son Paul, the company has held main franchises for Zetor, Deutz-Fahr, Massey-Ferguson and today is a Kubota main dealer for ag, groundcare and construction equipment, serviced from its three branches. An accomplished mechanic in his early days, when Ken started in business he took on the Zetor franchise.

Selling an unknown brand, Ken's sales pitch was simple, "You ain't just buying a Zetor tractor, you're buying Ken Vincent!"

## FUTURE

As the companies running dealerships expand and open new branches, they need considerable financial underpinning. Many of the leading multi-branch dealer groups have grown organically over many years. However, the bigger the dealer, the bigger the territory they cover, the bigger the risk to the manufacturer should there be a financial hit or a falling out. Which begs the question: is a main tractor franchise an essential element of a dealer's business?

David Kanicki, editor of *Ag Equipment Intelligence* in the US, says "Over recent years we've carried a number of stories about dealers who have ditched a main tractor franchise. Most were fed up with the restrictions placed on them by major brands". He refers to Flaman Agriculture, which operates nine branches across Western Canada

without a tractor franchise. The company majors on grain handling and storage, cultivation and livestock equipment.

Could we see more dealer groups operating internationally?

One of the bigger dealer groups in the US, Titan Machinery, operates over 70 branches in the US and 20 across mainland Europe, offering sales and support to the CNH product range. Founded in 1980, the NASDAQ quoted company recently announced full-year revenues of \$1.3bn to the end of January 2020.

What about manufacturer- or distributor-owned dealerships? Dutch company and distributor, Royal Reesink, who many will know as a Toro distributor in the UK, have bought ag dealerships 'across the pond'. These include North America's largest Claas dealership, Tingleys Harvest, a three-branch dealer in Canada, and Hepson Equipment, a Claas and Kubota dealer in Manitoba.

The saying 'the only constant is change' will never be truer. Even without the inevitable impact of the current pandemic, change is all

around. Ways of doing business, our industry infrastructure, customer behaviour, financial strictures – and yes, the weather – will all dictate how we move forward.

The demands of full-line suppliers will always be a contentious issue, particularly as mergers and acquisitions add to their portfolios. Dealers, again, will have some tricky decisions to make.

Dealer numbers will almost certainly continue to fall, but as gaps in the market open, as territories become vacant, so new enterprises will spring up.

Last word to Ken Vincent: in a terrific video, *On Solid Ground* (YouTube) made in 2016 to celebrate Vincent Tractors' 50 years in business, he describes a successful dealer as: "A man of vision, and a man of ambition. An after-dinner speaker, and before-dinner guzzler. A night owl, who will work all day. A good driver, expert on most subjects, diplomat, traveller, capitalist, financier, forecaster, weatherman, have a long cheque book – and a ready supply of alibis!"

appointed Richard (Dick) Spencer as Sales Director. Dick had started his career with Ford Tractors in 1984, worked in several senior roles and had been Dealer Business Development Manager for New Holland UK prior to his move.

"You can imagine the decision to move to Massey Ferguson was emotional for me personally, but also for the dealership, given the company's 'blue' heritage," Andy says.

"The first year we experienced a bounce in business, mainly due to the tremendous support we received from customers who wanted to demonstrate that they were fully behind the change." During the following two years, however, "we had to work hard to convert 'blue to red'. This entailed embarking on a substantial programme of demonstrations to prove the suitability of the MF brand.

"An important element of the franchise transition was employing two experienced and fully trained Massey Ferguson technicians to support our service staff as they got used to the new brand."

Three years on, Dick Spencer says the company "has absolutely no

regrets" at making this major strategic move. "Just as we see the trust placed in our service by customers as being central to our continued success, so the relationship with our suppliers is critical; we need to have trust in them, and with AGCO we have that crucial and close bond."

## BUYING THE DEALER

David Hart is another with long manufacturer credentials – this time with John Deere. He joined a John Deere dealership in 1985 before moving to the John Deere company in 1990, where he held a number of senior roles in the UK and regionally, before joining Kubota UK as Managing Director in 2018.

Like Deere, Kubota has had to ease its way into a crowded market. Initially establishing its brand name in the compact tractor sector, the Japanese firm has moved into the high-horsepower tractor market and acquired equipment manufacturers Kverneland, Vicon and Great Plains. Kubota clearly intends to become a major player, in time.

David fully understands the strategy Deere is adopting, but



John Deere announced at Agritechnica last year that it intended to further reduce the number of dealer groups by up to a third



L-R: Peter and Robert Massey

# KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

*It's a common trait among many dealerships that they are family-run businesses. One such company is Maseys, based in Swadlincote, near Derby. Service Dealer's Laurence Gale Msc, MBPR visited in February to speak to Peter Massey, grandson of the founder, about the secrets of their success*

**M**aseys was founded in 1947 by Reginald Massey who was a painter and decorator. He started the business by decanting five-gallon drums of paint into treacle tins and then selling the treacle tins to the public.

Within five years, Reginald Massey had started the Maseys DIY store, selling tools, ironmongery and of course paints. The shop then passed on to Brian Massey whose sons now run the business.

In recent years Maseys has received several national retail awards, including in 2011, a silver at the DIY Week Awards. This was awarded for continued high level of customer service and ambitious plans for expansion with the development of the new Swadlincote Road Store. The company won another DIY silver award in 2015,

following the opening of the new store.

When I visited, I could sense that like all great dealerships, they are totally dedicated to providing the best customer service they can and clearly work very hard to deliver a wide range of products and services. I personally thought the store was a bit like an Aladdin's cave, full of gems and jewels in terms of machinery and products for both the DIY and gardening customers. The staff were warm and friendly and I enjoyed the fact that the store had a very relaxed atmosphere with a most accommodating café.

The range of STIHL, Husqvarna, Bosch, Cobra, Stiga and Mountfield machinery and equipment was staggering to say the least. Such a wide choice of products to suit all budgets, it's perhaps not surprising they have it right after

over 70 years of successful trading.

The current directors, Peter and Robert Massey, are both trained accountants and have been directors of the business for 30 and 27 years respectively, with their sons Andrew and James (fourth-generation Maseys) now involved in the business.

Andrew Massey studied economics at Durham University before working for Ernst & Young in corporate restructuring. He joined the business in 2008. With Robert's son James also working for the company.

I was fortunate to meet up with Peter, the grandson of the founder, at last year's *Service Dealer* Conference in Oxford and duly invited myself to go and visit the premises in Swadlincote.

## DEALING THROUGH LOCKDOWN

I made the trip to Derbyshire back in February this year, before the world shifted on its axis!

During the lockdown the dealership has been taking orders for home delivery or via collection from its car park. At its peak the company was receiving around 600 phone calls and 300 emails per day, with only a skeleton staff to process them.

Peter Massey told me over the phone at the end of April, "We're fortunate that we don't rely just on garden machinery because that's taken a downturn compared with last year – particularly STIHL, Husqvarna, Honda and Hayter. The one shining star though is Mountfield, which is flying, and to a certain extent Bosch. The other winner has been pressure washers, although supply of Mountfield and washers did start to become difficult."

Peter explained how they were coping by trading from the car park on an 'Argos'-type operation, with orders either coming in online or by phone. "We then pick the order, confirm payment, and the goods are in the foyer within five minutes for collection. It's hard work, but we've been keeping the tills ticking over nicely. Actually, very nicely because we're running at 105% of last April."

"The good thing for us is that we also deal in decorating and gardening sundries, which have both been selling well. Crucially, the profit margin is huge compared with the 10% gross margin on a lot of the machinery that we stock."

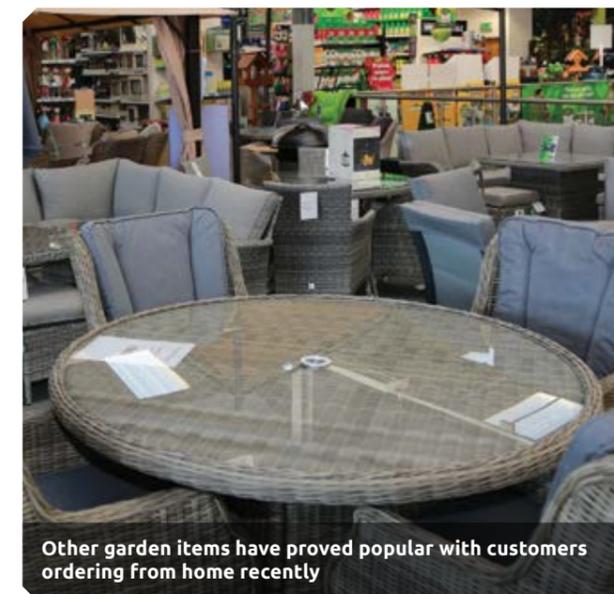
Like many dealers during this period, Maseys took the decision to furlough some staff. Peter told me around 60% of the staff were on the government scheme, some for medical and social reasons and some to protect the business. "The remaining 40%," Peter said, "have worked their socks off for the past six weeks. I'm so proud of them."

As a consequence of all this, Maseys was on reduced hours of 8.30am-4.00pm and was closed on Sunday so the staff could have chance to get a bit of a rest.

"We try our best to socially distance in the shop," Peter



During the pandemic Maseys's car park has been used for customers to pick up orders



Other garden items have proved popular with customers ordering from home recently



Peter cited Mountfield mowers as selling well during lockdown



Peter, centre, with two long-serving staff members: Shirley Hicklin, 28 years in sales, and Karl Slater, a sales assistant for 20 years

explained, “but even without customers it’s sometimes difficult – and the difficulty will grow further when we open up again. We’re currently trying tills and shields in various configurations to see what works best to protect the till operator.

“It’s certainly been worrying times.” I hope, like all dealers, Peter finds a way through this pandemic that can work for his dealership, because when I visited and conducted the following Q&A back in February, it was a thriving business...

**SERVICE DEALER: When did the company begin trading?**

**Peter Massey:** My grandfather started the company in 1947. He used to buy paint in larger drums and was always asked for small quantities so he used to collect treacle tins, wash them out and decant the paint into smaller quantities. He and my father then developed the firm into a *Two Ronnies*-type hardware store. I joined in 1973, having qualified as an accountant, with my brother Robert joining the business in 1976.

At the time we were trading from a small premises at 29 Swadlicote Road, before moving to a larger 10,000ft unit further up the road in 1988. Business was booming. We took on some notable mower brands, namely Hayter, Mountfield and Atco, and at that time began stocking a lot more gardening products to complement our DIY trade.

We continued to grow the business and in March of

2014 we moved again to our present location at 129 Swadlicote Road, moving into a two-tier purpose-built 30,000ft unit store with a 60-space car park. We also kept on our old premises for storage and repairs.

**SD: What is your role in the company?**

**PM:** I’m Managing Director, mainly looking after the welfare of the business and ensuring we continue to grow the brand. My brother Robert is a Director and tends to manage the DIY side of the business.

**SD: What products are you specialising in?**

**PM:** We deal in power tools, hand tools, car products, painting and decorating equipment, ironmongery, timber, electrical, bathroom products, houseware and cookshop. In terms of gardening tools, we specialise in a range of pedestrian and ride-on mowers and stock a complete range of STIHL, Husqvarna and Cobra hand tools – plus we have a coffee shop. We also have a decent range of high-value second-hand mowers for sale.

**SD: What area do you cover?**

**PM:** South Derbyshire, East Staffs and North Leicestershire, and our shop is open seven days a week.

**SD: Who are your customers?**

**PM:** I’d say we have a mix of 70% retail, 30% trade customers. All ages but predominantly what you’d

describe as Baby Boomers and Gen X. We have a wide demographic range of customers from domestic homeowners, large estates, caravan parks, and some professional customers such as landscape contractors and jobbing gardeners. We have also supplied some professional sports clubs that have included the likes of Leicester Tigers and St George’s Park. However, the bulk of sales comes from customers visiting the shop.

We’ve designed the shop around promoting a wide range of consumer goods along with essential DIY tools and materials that exceeds some 35,000 lines.

**SD: What are your most popular products?**

**PM:** By value mowers, by volume paint, screws and nails. We stock a wide and sizable range of pedestrian mowers, giving our customers a choice between petrol- and battery-powered equipment and machinery. This is backed up with what we like to think is an enviable range of other garden-related products, DIY materials and tools.

**SD: How has trading been recently considering the variable weather conditions we’ve experienced?**

**PM:** Business is very weather dependant, but in over 70 years of trading we’ve only been down on sales in one single year. This is probably due to the fact that we stock and sell a lot of other indoor products.

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

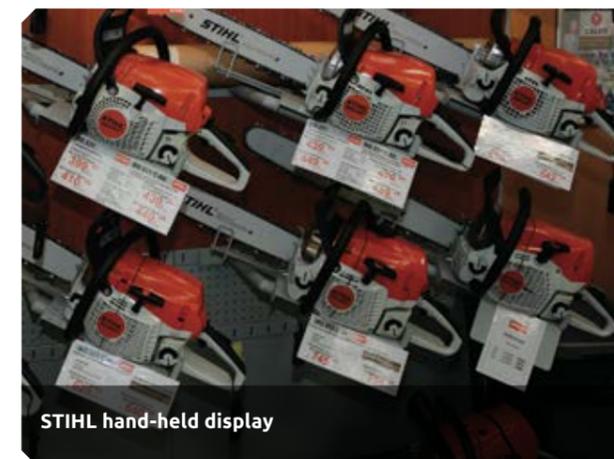
**PM:** Quite simply, bricks and mortar. The ambience, style and customer-friendliness of our shopping experience brings in a great number of customers, which we back up with a click and collect facility promoted by our website. We do get a small amount of sales via the internet, but we tried that experience and it didn’t work particularly well for us. Our profit margins were negligible, so we’ve stopped going down that route

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

**PM:** Not so much these days. We may, if appropriate, send some staff to Glee and other retail shows, but really, we tend to rely on company reps to keep us informed of new products and services. We do still always attend the Ashby Show though, a local summer event that we’ve been supporting for many years.

**SD: Are you happy to demo machines to customers?**

**PM:** Yes, we still demo some of the higher-value mowers, but generally only if we’re sure of the sale. We generally do this using the machine we’re going to sell to the customer, mainly because we don’t stock dedicated demo machines.



STIHL hand-held display

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

**PM:** Mainly sales and product training which is offered by the manufacturers. We also tend to undertake most of our sales-related training in house.

**SD: Do you find it difficult to recruit staff?**

**PM:** Not really, we tend to employ local people or get recommendations via friends and relatives. We have over 35 staff working full and part-time for Maseys and a great number of them have been with the company for many years. In recent times it’s become difficult though, to recruit qualified mechanical technicians. We currently employ three members of staff who solely work on repairing and installing robotic mowers, we have two delivery drivers and the rest of the staff work in the shop.

**SD: Are you seeing a new demand for robotic and battery-driven products?**

**PM:** Yes, over the last two years we’ve seen a dramatic increase in sales of battery-powered products. Well over 50% of hand-held sales are now battery-powered. As for robotic mowers, last year we sold over 50 of the units and forecast this to double this year. Robotics are truly growing exponentially.

We have one customer who was so pleased with the performance of the mower and our aftercare service, he has ordered another two automated mowers.

There’s no doubt in the coming years we will see a significant rise in sales of these type of products, mainly due to the competition between manufacturers to deliver more efficient state-of-the-art technologies.

**SD: What are your thoughts now regarding online selling?**

**PM:** We won’t go there again in a big way. It’s a pain in the elbow really, as we’re now competing against the cheapest in the country rather than our immediate area. We can generally upsell to customers who come into us.



Massey offers a choice of petrol and battery machinery



Inside the multi-level showroom, which was built in 2012

**SD: What recent investments have you made to improve the shopping experience at your premises?**

**PM:** In 2012 we built a modern £2.2m store, offering us a large 30,000ft, two-story shop, enabling us to stock a wider range of products, which also includes a fabulous café for refreshments that will rival any large garden centre. It probably compares to a John Lewis shopping experience, rather than a corner store.

**SD: Have you suffered from theft at all?**

**PM:** Unfortunately, yes. Recently we lost £1,200 of Dewalt drills. We have CCTV but by that stage it's often too late. If they're determined, they'll find a way.

We train our staff to be vigilant and be mindful and report any unusual behaviour. However, in the main, theft of large-value items is rare.

**SD: How do you see the future for your dealership?**

**PM:** Healthy. We've a tried and tested strategy of customer is king and we like to ensure that people who enter our facility are met with a large choice of products, sold at competitive prices, which are on show.

Like most dealers, the trick is having a gut feeling on what products will sell well and fit in with the overall shopping experience that our customers can enjoy when shopping at Masseys.

**SD: Thank you.**



Masseys enjoys a mix of professional and domestic customers



Peter and Robert Massey

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# PLENTY TO SEE FROM STIHL

*Late last summer, STIHL's regular international press day saw the unveiling of a host of new battery and petrol-powered products. MARTIN RICKATSON travelled to Germany to look at the latest the maker's dealers have to offer their customers*



STIHL petrol chainsaw developments for 2020 include the third generation of its 50cc MS 261 C-M, with multiple engine enhancements

**T**owards the end of last year, before most of the world had heard of – or had its activities curtailed by – the Covid-19 strain of coronavirus, STIHL's German headquarters hosted the press launch of its latest upgrades and product introductions, against a backdrop of market challenges – weather, global politics, changing customer requirements – that seemed plenty tough enough. Who knew then that things were about to get a whole lot more challenging? But in an industry dominated by the fact things keep growing whatever else happens, the arboricultural, horticultural and turfcare machine developments revealed by the firm gave dealers plenty of potential to drive sales of new and improved methods of cutting wood, grass and other plant material.

STIHL reported a Jan-Aug 2019

turnover up 6.1% year-on-year – or 4.8% when taking into account exchange rate fluctuations – attributable mainly to stronger demand for higher-priced products, explained Dr Bertram Kandziora, STIHL Executive Board Chairman.

"Cordless garden tool unit sales saw double-digit growth, but petrol-powered product demand dipped slightly, although we increased market share in the latter segment. We remain firmly committed to both sectors."

He went on to talk about the influence of digital transformation, the increasing significance of cordless battery products and new customer requirements in online trade as key influences on STIHL's business. Internal preparations included investments in staff training, battery technology, electronics and robotics, plus distribution and product policy changes – including direct on-line

ordering and reinforcing the dealer network's role in remaining the customer contact point for advice, instruction and service.

## CHAINSAWS

**The main STIHL petrol chainsaw development for 2020 is the third generation of its 50cc MS 261 C-M.**

Engine enhancements include a tin-plated piston, nickel-plated throttle shaft and new solenoid carburettor valve, plus M-Tronic engine management.

Mounted on a new guide bar, the standard chain is STIHL's new narrow-cut .325in Pro, which is largely responsible for the claimed 20% increase in cutting performance and 20% reduction in vibration.

Weight is 5.8kg, further reducible by 100g by specifying the company's new slim Light 04 guide bar.

Lateral chain tensioning and captive nuts are said to ease chain-changing.

**In battery-powered chainsaws, primary news is the MSA 220 C-B,** the most powerful model yet in STIHL's cordless portfolio, targeted at users felling and processing small-diameter timber and those seeking a tool for wood maintenance and working with wood for construction. The 35cm guide features as standard STIHL's 3/8in Picco Super 3 full chisel chain, claimed to produce a low kick-back risk and create a wide cut for simplifying work with a felling wedge. This is said to help achieve up to 30% more cuts per battery charge compared with a corresponding semi-chisel chain. A quick chain tensioner enables retightening without tools, while a semi-transparent oil tank helps gauge chain oil levels.

Power is supplied by a 36V lithium-ion battery from STIHL's PRO cordless system, with the AP 300 S battery – also new, with 25% more capacity and compatible

with all other tools of STIHL's modular battery system – being recommended. This supplies power to an electronically-controlled brushless electric motor, propelling the chain at up to 24m/sec. Run time on one charge is up to 45 minutes.

Beyond the lack of need for petrol, STIHL points to other advantages of battery-powered chainsaws, including the fact that they can be used indoors.

## BLOWERS

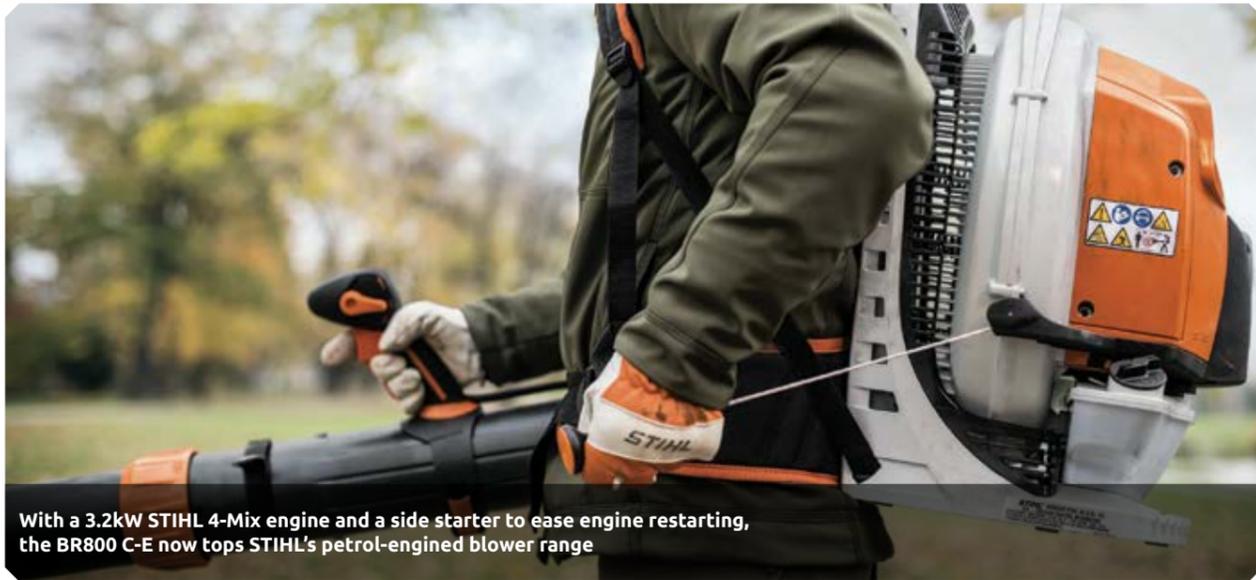
Other battery developments include **two new handheld blowers, the BGA 200 and BGA 86.** Using the AP300 battery – but compatible with all STIHL AP batteries – the BGA 86, with 15 Newton blowing force and up to 780 m<sup>3</sup>/hr air flow rate, is 50% more powerful than the BGA 85 it replaces, yet is lighter and quieter, with a 91 dB(A) sound level at maximum power and weight without battery of 2.8kg, a reduction of



The MSA 220 C-B is the most powerful model yet in STIHL's cordless chainsaw portfolio



New head of STIHL's blower range is the BGA 200, with 20% more blowing force than the BGA 100 former flagship



With a 3.2kW STIHL 4-Mix engine and a side starter to ease engine restarting, the BR800 C-E now tops STIHL's petrol-engined blower range

0.4kg. Blow pipe length is adjustable by approximately 16cm via a quick-release adjustment mechanism, and a flat blow pipe option can be specified where higher air velocity is required.

New head of STIHL's blower range is the BGA 200, with 21 Newton blowing force, 20% greater than the BGA 100 former flagship, producing a maximum 84m/sec air speed and 941 m<sup>3</sup>/hr air throughput.

A newly-developed comfort carrying system plus additional handle allow hand-held usage in confined working areas or suspension via the carrying system for larger-scale cleaning work.

Low noise levels mean the unit can be used in noise-sensitive areas, says STIHL. A selector switch allows a choice of three blowing force levels, with an additional boost function for maximum power, while a quick adjustment button allows alteration of blowpipe length.

Power is supplied by a 36V lithium-ion battery from STIHL's PRO cordless system, carried either by a belt bag or a backpack system (AP series) or the company's AR series backpack batteries for longer usage. Connection is via a connecting cable and a socket on the blowing unit.

Meanwhile, there is a new model, the **BR800 C-E, at the helm of the firm's petrol-engined blower range.** It features a 3.2kW STIHL 4-Mix

engine, a side starter to ease engine restarting after short breaks without having to put down the machine, and an electronic diagnosis system for dealer analysis of any engine fault.

Maximum blowing force is 41 Newtons, and the machine incorporates STIHL's infinitely-variable quick-adjust blower tube.

Weight is 11.7kg, which can be carried via STIHL's ergonomic carrying system with hip belt, while other features include an anti-vibration system and quick-release fastener for handle position adjustment.

## PRUNERS, SHEARS AND WEEDERS

Battery power developments also extend to the **GTA 26 garden pruner**, a new cutting tool for professional and homeowner gardeners. With a 10cm guide bar and 0.25in PM3 saw chain, it is designed for pruning small diameter branches and cutting timber.

Powered by a replaceable STIHL AS 2 10.8V rechargeable lithium-ion battery that propels the chain at up to 8m/sec, the tool is said to be suitable not only for tree/shrub pruning, but also for woodworking and fencing tasks. Example capacity on a single charge is eighty 4.0cm diameter logs. If a chain change becomes necessary, it can be done without tools via a wing nut-secured chain sprocket.

The GTA 26 is part of STIHL's new



The GTA 26 garden pruner has a 10cm guide bar and 0.25in PM3 saw chain for pruning small diameter branches and cutting timber



The HSA 26 shrub shears are equipped with two quick-change blades, with a shrub blade for decorative/topiary work and 12cm grass blade for lawn edging

AS cordless system for property and garden maintenance, which includes the new HSA 26 cordless shrub shears and will be further expanded.

The **HSA 26 shrub shears** are equipped with two high-quality blades said to be quick to change without tools when necessary. The shrub blade cuts on both sides and is claimed particularly effective for decorative/topiary work due to the drop shape of the blades, while the 12cm grass blade is suited to lawn edging tasks.

STIHL also launched the **RG weeder**, an interchangeable brushcutter attachment for low-impact removal of weeds, with two contra-rotating, oscillating blades said to reduce the risk of property/object damage from whipped-up stones.



The RG weeder is available for a number of STIHL clearing saws/brushcutters and as the RG-KM KombiTool in the STIHL KombiSystem

## MOWER NEWS

**Owners of STIHL's iMow C and PC robot mowers can already access their machines using a smartphone/ tablet via the iMOW app,** and can

now also do so via smartwatch and via the Innogy SmartHome app. Based on the Livisi open Internet of Things (IoT) platform, this means it fits with tools which can be integrated directly into intelligent building technology. For example, the mower can automatically return to the charging station when a child opens a door and enters the garden to play. Amazon Alexa voice control is also in development, and STIHL says work is continuing to connect iMOW to further smart platforms and systems.

Meanwhile, battery-powered professional lawnmower developments include the RMA 765 V, with 63cm cut and die-cast aluminum housing with polymer insert. Specification includes zero-turn front wheels and electronically-adjustable Vario drive. A mono comfort handlebar allows side access to the grassbox. Power again comes courtesy of a 36V lithium-ion battery, with AP and higher-energy backpack AR options, and a mowing time of up to 70 minutes.



Battery-powered professional lawnmower developments include the 63cm-cut RMA 765 V

Integration into STIHL's Connect Pro fleet management system is possible via an integrated Bluetooth interface. The machine is recommended for cutting lawns of up to 3,100m<sup>2</sup> at heights of 25-100mm, and features individual wheel height adjustment.

## BRAND SHOP DEVELOPMENTS

To further build brand awareness and increase its presence beyond the use of its tools, STIHL has established in its German homeland a 'brand shop' offering high-quality lifestyle articles under seven distinct themes developed for respective target groups. The products are available in the specialised trade as well as online, and while previously available only in Germany and Austria, the online offering is now being extended to other countries.

"We want to reach new target groups beyond our traditional customers – the next generation of STIHL customers and fans," explained Paul Sumalowitsch, STIHL's Brand Department Head.

"We're therefore targeting different groups with lifestyle products tailored to their personal preferences, and meeting STIHL's quality standards. We've created 'theme worlds' – Heritage, Home, Urban, Wild Kids, Nature, Timbersports Fan and Enthusiast – with group offerings including specially-made toys, models and collector's items.

"These are already available in Germany from specialist dealers and STIHL's online partners, plus an online shop, helping to strengthen the brand and increase awareness of and demand for our tools, primarily sold through service-oriented specialised dealers.

"Over the past three years, group sales of brand shop products have almost doubled. We plan to now start building the concept in other countries."

# ADDING MORE BRAIN TO THE BRAWN



*Coupled to a complete cab revision, Case IH has added AFS Connect telematics to its latest Magnum tractors, allowing data transfer between the machines, their owners and the dealers supporting them. With the marque on a dealer recruitment drive, MARTIN RICKATSON last year visited the US factory where they are made*

**W**hile it is traits such as horsepower of tractors and working width and carrying capacity of implements that offer large farms and contracting businesses the ability to maximise the timeliness of operations, precision of operation is increasingly the factor by which customers are looking to their machines to gain additional margins. The development of telematics has allowed factors such as lost minutes in the field, wasted litres of fuel and unnecessary travel to be documented

and addressed, moving precision farming to a new level. It is against this backdrop that manufacturers are increasingly incorporating telematics capability into their tractors and other self-propelled equipment, one recent example being Case IH. The red brand of CNH Industrial last year launched the new AFS Connect incarnation of its 350-435hp Magnum tractor line, the new Magnum 280, 310, 340 and 380 models. While they retain the familiar 8.7-litre FPT Industrial Cursor 9 engines, PowerDrive 18 or 19F/4R full

powershift and CVXDrive continuously-variable transmission option (standard on the 380), plus rear-tracked Rowtrac option for the 340/380, there are a number of key upgrades.

External changes are relatively minor – new nose styling inherited from Case IH’s Autonomous Concept Vehicle, optional LED lighting and optional cameras that can be fitted in various places, including the nose for enhanced road junction/front implement vision. The most obvious update is a new full-length door with a remote automatic locking/unlocking key fob.

Inside, there are more significant changes, with upgraded upholstery and updated Case IH concepts including the new VIS2 pillar-mounted smartscreen that replaces the former pillar displays.

Other familiar Case IH features such as the Multicontroller and armrest controls have been redesigned to enhance operation and minimise/make simpler repetitive tasks, says the maker. There are four configurable buttons on the new Multicontroller joystick and four on the armrest, while the remote valve toggle switches can be configured to match each rear remote as desired. A new turn-and-press encoder dial duplicates the functions on the new, larger AFS 1200 touchscreen terminal, for choice of use.

Targeted at Rowtrac rear-tracked

models in particular, but also available for wheeled Magnum tractors, a new brake-assisted steering option is said to help minimise headland turning time and soil damage, automatically applying the relevant independent brake to the inside rear track or wheel when a steering movement is made in that direction. Variable-rate steering, established on the brand’s Optum tractors, allows response rates to be altered between those required for making swift field turns and those for precise on-road steering, while a new option is tyre pressure monitoring.

## AFS CONNECT TELEMATICS

One of the bigger developments, though, is the introduction of AFS Connect technology, to help users make better-informed farm management decisions based not just on historic data, but also on real-time figures via the automation of data recording and transfer, while also allowing remote monitoring of activities and machine function by owners and dealers.

A subscription-based telemetry package, AFS Connect continuously records field, machine and activity data and links the MyCaseIH.com web platform, AFS telematics portal, AFS Connect Mobile iOS/Android app and the new AFS 1200 terminal, allowing remote monitoring and

management from smartphones, tablets and office computers.

With permission, Case IH dealers can also remotely monitor machines for identification of any issues and to help ensure effective operation. Advisers such as agronomists can also monitor activities and supply prescription seed/nutrient maps, for example.

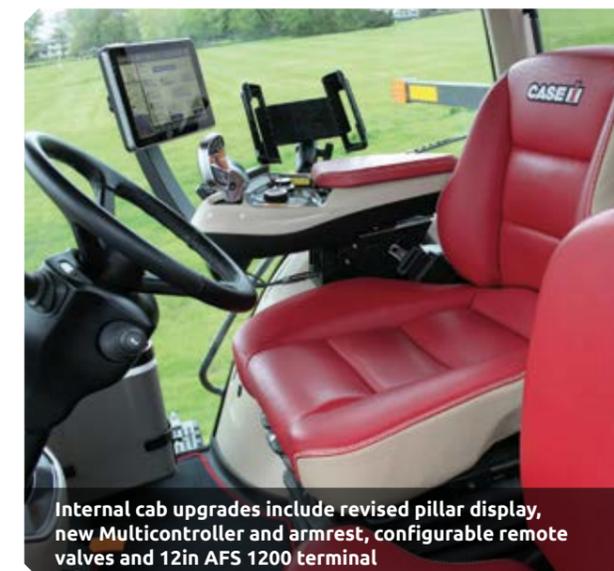
AFS Connect allows field operations to be planned from an office PC or smart device, with data such as A-B lines and prescription maps then sent remotely to the tractor and operator. If plans change, operators can be supplied remotely with updated field and task information such as re-drawn field boundaries or alterations to prescription maps. Data can be sent not just to one machine, but to multiple units in a farm’s fleet if equipped with AFS Connect. Once fieldwork is underway, operating data can be observed instantly, as can live maps indicating machine location and



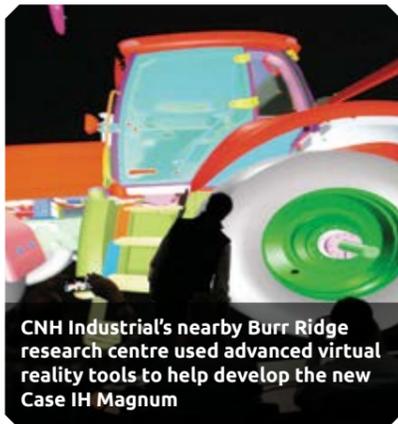
**AFS Connect allows A-B lines and other data to be planned on a farm PC and transferred wirelessly to the tractor. Owner and dealer monitoring is also possible**



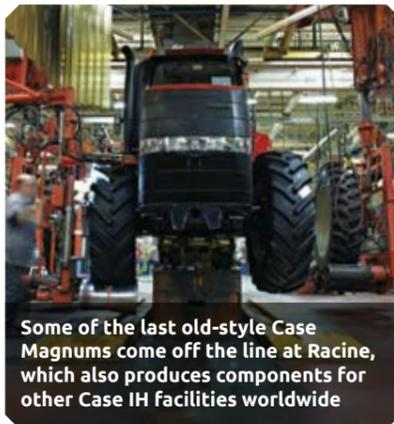
**External changes are relatively minor, but include a new nose styling, optional LED lighting and cameras, plus a full-length door with a remote locking/unlocking key fob**



**Internal cab upgrades include revised pillar display, new Multicontroller and armrest, configurable remote valves and 12in AFS 1200 terminal**



CNH Industrial's nearby Burr Ridge research centre used advanced virtual reality tools to help develop the new Case IH Magnum



Some of the last old-style Case Magnums come off the line at Racine, which also produces components for other Case IH facilities worldwide



The new Magnum range takes some of its styling and technology cues from the Autonomous Concept Vehicle (ACV)

work completed.

The Fleet Management portal enables machine data monitoring and recording via the web portal, app or AFS 1200 in-cab terminal. Customisable phone text alerts can be set if pre-set values, such as a certain operating temperature, are exceeded, while remote fuel level monitoring allows for timed field deliveries.

Data monitoring from multiple machines equipped with AFS Connect is possible, says Case IH, collation of data then allowing comparison to aid management, while cross-referencing of maps with field history can help identify problem areas and possible solutions. In addition to new Magnum tractors, AFS Connect will be available on Maxxum, Puma, Optum, Steiger and Quadtrac tractors, and Axial-Flow combines.

## NEW MAGNUM DEVELOPMENT

Case IH says it worked closely with farmers and dealers worldwide, including the UK, to gather feedback to help develop the new Magnum. The tractors are built in Racine, Wisconsin, near where Case was founded in 1842, and where the original 150-250hp Magnum models, the first tractors to come from the combined tractor design teams of JI Case and International Harvester, were first produced in late 1987, following the late 1984 merger of the two makes. Over the past three decades there has been a wholesale redesign in 1998 and then gradual

development of the range since then to include CVX transmission – Case IH's in-house continuously variable technology – and Rowtrac rear track drive unit options, plus an increase in maximum power to 435hp.

The 35ha manufacturing site at Racine produces Magnum models for worldwide sale, with 52% of production exported, and has produced over 150,000 Magnums. In addition to tractor assembly, the plant includes management offices and training facilities plus a new visitor centre, and manufactures components for other Case IH facilities worldwide, including transmissions for Magnum tractors built in Curitiba, Brazil, for the South American market; drivelines for Case IH Axial-Flow combines built in Grand Island, Nebraska, Curitiba, Brazil, and Harbin, China; axles and auxiliary valves for Steiger tractors built in Fargo, North Dakota; auxiliary valves for North American market Puma tractors built in Basildon, UK; and cabs for Case IH Patriot sprayers built in Benson, Minnesota. There is also an element of manufacturing for other agricultural brands within parent firm CNH Industrial. The site employs 500 staff.

Racine is both a manufacturing and an assembly facility, with some of the key castings and gears for the Magnum models and other CNH Industrial vehicles machined on site, and then induction hardened for abrasion and fatigue resistance. Output currently spans 189 different parts, manufactured across 180 machining tools, with

each operator working across approximately four machines.

During the past five years, considerable sums have been invested in areas such as cutting system enhancement and factory environment improvements to benefit component machining, assembly quality and the staff themselves.

There is also an annual output of around 330,000 valves machined for use in Magnum tractors and others. Further manufacturing stations include dedicated areas for assembly of components for hydraulic systems, axles, powershift and CVT transmissions, and the cab line.

Tractor assembly begins with a transaxle barcoded according to the tractor's individual build/order specifications, with key components then progressively brought together. Chassis assembly is followed by washing, coating with zinc chromate and robot painting. With a machine produced approximately three days after its construction commences, there is potential for up to 35 whole tractors to roll off the factory line each day, with one to two of those being Rowtrac models, designed and engineered specifically as semi-tracked machines, and fitted with dummy rear wheels before having rear track units installed after leaving the line. Formerly sourced from Dana Spicer, front axles are now manufactured in-house.

The Racine plant is the first of CNH Industrial's North American production facilities to receive ISO 14001 for environmental impact management, ISO 18001 for occupational health and

safety management and ISO 50001 for energy management. Racine has also been awarded ISO 9001:2008 for its quality management processes, and the Bronze Level in the World Class Manufacturing program co-developed by Fiat Group in 2005 and used across its constituent companies

Paul Freeman, Case IH UK/ROI high-horsepower tractor product specialist, points out that with the size of farm enterprises growing worldwide, tractors in the Magnum bracket have become as important in regions like Europe as they have long been in areas such as North America, and that there remains a place for this style of machine here.

"There are obviously key differences in requirements between global regions, due to factors like soil types, topography, climate and crop establishment systems, with North American farmers tending to work soil shallowly, usually on dual wheels and often with wheel equipment

spaced wide to fit row-grown crops. Here in Western Europe, where deeper working is more common to alleviate compaction, bury weed seed and establish root crops, performance on single wheels is more important. Our smaller fields and roads obviously make manoeuvrability and road performance more important too

"We've sought to cater for these different requirements in two ways. One is through development of the lighter 250-300hp European-designed Optum tractor range that can be ballasted when required for heavier draft work, offering a more compact alternative to the heavier Magnum 250-300hp models. The other is by making Magnum configurable to suit the demands of different regions."

That's why, Paul explains, there is a wider Magnum model power band in the tractors' home market. In much of Western Europe, the smallest variant is the 250hp

Magnum 250 or 280hp Magnum 280, while in North America and other markets the entry-level model is the 180hp Magnum 180.

"While horsepower requirements keep growing in Western Europe, the main demand for models up to 300hp is for the more compact universal type, the reason we developed Optum at our St Valentin factory in Austria. Beyond this, though, in the 300-400hp sector, European demand for Magnum remains strong, and recent introductions such the CVX alternative to the standard powershift, and the factory-fitted Rowtrac rear track unit option, have helped here. The integration of AFS Connect adds to these tractors' refinement and abilities, contributing to that development of precision farming and helping users seeking those additional margins, while also helping dealers enhance customer support in areas such as remote diagnosis," he concludes.

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# AVOIDING COMMON SALES MISTAKES

*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 issue. This issue, under the current circumstances it's more important than ever to hone sales techniques*

In spite of the various stay at home orders across the States, most of our dealers are finding their year is either just slightly off their projections or on target with what they were hoping for.

While that is good news for the industry, no one knows exactly what the late spring and early summer might bring. That's why every customer that comes into your dealership or speaks to you on the phone is more valuable than ever. As we work with dealers' salespeople to help them improve their closing ratio, we encourage them to make sure they are focussed on sales basics and not making the common mistakes that far too many salespeople make every time they interact with a potential buyer.

*Here are the four common mistakes to avoid in order to close the sale:*

**1** The first mistake we find that many salespeople struggle with is just asking for the order. There is nothing more frustrating than to listen to a salesperson who has done a great job of qualifying, did a perfect walk around on a piece of equipment, has a buyer who is asking the right questions, and then the salesperson never asks the buyer to buy. Far too many salespeople fail at selling because they just don't ask for the order.

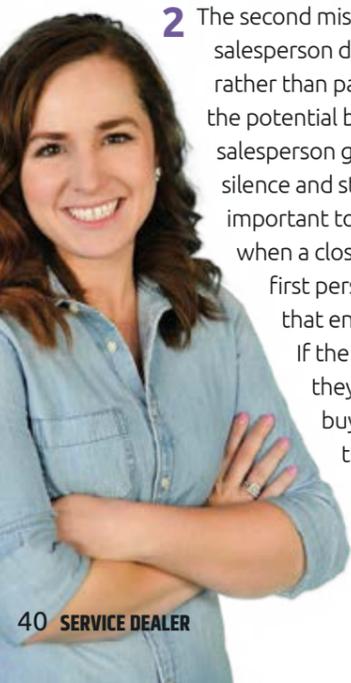
**2** The second mistake we find is that if the salesperson does ask for the business, rather than pausing and waiting until the potential buyer responds, the salesperson gets nervous with the silence and starts talking again. It's important to understand that, in sales, when a closing question is asked, the first person who talks is the one that ends up with the equipment. If the potential buyer talks first, they will, in most cases, end up buying. On the other hand, if the salesperson can't stand the momentary silence and starts talking, they will end up with the

equipment themselves. In sales the rule is simple: ask the closing question, and then shut up!

**3** When it comes to mistakes, number three destroys a lot of sales. The mistake is the salesperson talking too much instead of asking questions and getting the customer talking. One of the challenges with most manufacturer training is that there is a lot of focus on product knowledge and very little on actual selling skills. Now there is nothing wrong with knowing every aspect of what separates your equipment from your competitor's, but the buyer is seldom interested in every feature and benefit your products have, just the two or three that they actually want, which a sales person would find out if they are doing a good job during the discovery/qualification process. While product knowledge is important, it's just as important to know when to stop and listen to what your potential buyer is saying.

**4** As I round out the top four common mistakes, I find that far too many salespeople prejudge what a potential buyer might be able to afford. Growing up around farms, I learned that many of the farmers who drove old trucks and cars were some of the wealthiest farmers in the area, and those that bought a new truck every couple of years owed everything to the bank – while on the outside they looked successful, the truth was they were not. Don't prejudge what a person can buy or afford. Far too many salespeople in dealerships try to determine a potential buyer's ability and willingness to purchase by making unfounded assumptions from the moment they meet the prospect. The only way you will know what a person wants to buy and what they can afford is to walk them through your discovery process and from there you can determine what will be best for them.

**All professionals are constantly working on improving their skills, a true sales professional is no different. Focus on eliminating these four common mistakes and watch your sales explode.**



# SURVIVAL SEEMED TO BE THE KEY WORD AT THE START OF THIS...

*But was it really, asks Pete McArthur of Strathbogie Forest & Garden*

As we entered something that we had practically no experience of, apart from the news articles from around the world painting the most horrific picture, our mindset changed dramatically on how best to weather the storm.

Now that we are exiting lockdown and reopening the store, we suddenly ask 'where did the last 11 weeks go?!' Something of a whirlwind in many ways, with customer loyalty coming out on top. We really were surprised at how patient (not all!) our customers were at understanding that turnaround times would be significantly slower.

Our website has been working a treat. With Click & Collect or delivery options utilising zero contact, we soon realised that this could work, and it felt very much like a new enterprise had begun. You can't underestimate the power of the internet and peoples' shopping habits – who on earth would buy a hedge trimmer and a sappie at 11:24pm?!

I really think we've evolved from a 9-5 business to a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week business, where our customers are always shopping. We had several issues initially, but all are sorted now and we're looking to develop this side of the business much more.

I always thought that internet sales were like the bargain basement, where everything had to be priced at shockingly low prices to gain traction. However, we've found that if you make it like a physical shop environment, with a little discount to show you are giving, the chances are

they will buy more than one item.

With the internet doing its thing, the telephone being red hot and email enquiries going great, my mindset was beginning to change rapidly. The workshop was back in operation under a closed-door policy, which was working great. We took the decision about 10 years ago that we would limit the products coming into the workshop to only Husqvarna, STIHL, Viking or a product that we have sold over the years. It seemed a drastic measure, but this made the service work more manageable and stock of spare parts realistic. Personally, to call yourself a specialist dealer can be a very broad term, therefore we opted for just two manufacturers. I feel that we made the right decision, with customer feedback and recommendations selling our business.

Another area that has accelerated in the lockdown is Automower, which has now really turned into a business itself and with social distancing being kept throughout the install and handover, this has gone unaffected, with new leads daily. Installs this year have been wide and varied but what we are seeing recurring is the replacement of other robot mowers that have been installed by others as they were cheaper! People are sold on this concept, but we're now starting to see the real differences in manufacturer capabilities, reliability and complexity. Setting out the showroom with a new layout and signage, to hopefully guide people through to reduce the risk of contamination, is a challenge. There is always that customer that

doesn't sanitise, doesn't understand the 2m rule and thinks this whole Covid-19 was purely nothing more than a cold. When you speak with someone you trust who has unfortunately had first-hand experience of it, you realise just how devastating this disease is.

Another issue we're currently experiencing is something that I think will be here for the next six months or possibly longer: backorders.

It looks like some industries are returning to work but with very restrictive measures in place. I really do wonder how long it will last – this year, next year, life?

Speaking with our customers, it has been great to get a more in-depth look into their industries and how they are coping. Many are now looking at homeworking and reducing office sizes. One customer told me how their company had saved a six-figure sum on flights and hotels over the past nine weeks, just by using Zoom for meetings!

Looking back, it certainly hasn't been stress-free, but over the next few months we can hopefully see the long-term plan and arrange socially distant gatherings.



Pete McArthur

# DEALER TOOLKIT

[servicedealer.co.uk/dealer-digital-toolkit](http://servicedealer.co.uk/dealer-digital-toolkit)

## IS IT TIME YOUR COMMUNICATIONS WENT DIGITAL?

*New toolkit launches to give dealers the confidence and tools to take advantage of the digital opportunity, writes KATE GODBER, Account Manager for The Ad Plain*

It is completely clear that dealerships now need to have digital communications at the top of their list of priorities and for some dealerships, we realise that this might be a very daunting prospect," says *Service Dealer* owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke.

This magazine's industry think tanks with manufacturers and dealers, held over recent months, discussed a disparity between those dealerships that do digital and those that don't. Of those that don't, there appeared to be a reluctance due to the time that it takes and

undoubtedly a lack of confidence in what to do.

In June, *Service Dealer* launched a (free to the industry) Dealer Digital Toolkit. The toolkit has been created by content, social and web specialists The Ad Plain (TAP), with support from across the industry, to share practical tools and tips for dealers who are looking for support with their digital activity.

The toolkit launched initially with five modules and new modules are being added on a weekly basis.

With modules covering everything from getting the basics right when

setting up your social media channels, to tips on improving the Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) of your website, The Ad Plain has worked with dealers to ensure the guidance is relevant, useful and easy to follow.

A key module for any dealership to read is *The Importance Of Social Media*, which shares facts and figures about why social media matters.

Dealers James Hayes from Hayes Garden Machinery, Chris Gibson from GGM Groundscare, Pete McArthur from Strathbogie Forest & Garden and Jason Nettle from Winchester



Left to right: Chris Gibson of GGM Groundscare, Pete McArthur of Strathbogie, James Hayes of Hayes Garden Machinery and Jason Nettle of Winchester Garden Machinery have all contributed to the Dealer Toolkit



Garden Machinery have all contributed to the toolkit and have shared their top tips and expertise throughout.

James Hayes says, "Social media is such an important part of our business. It keeps our customers and prospects up to date with what we are doing, our special offers, our machinery reviews and even aids our used equipment sales.

"If you are new to social media, start today, you won't regret it."

It was crucial that the toolkit was led by dealers, in particular those that have had success with social media and felt justified in the time and energy it requires.

### GIVING DEALERS CONFIDENCE

Duncan Murray-Clarke, owner of *Service Dealer* and The Ad Plain says: "With dealer support and direction we have created this toolkit to give dealers the confidence to invest their time and money in digital activity.

"After several particularly hard years and with ever-increasing pressures on running a business, there are ways that dealers can use social media and other digital marketing platforms to improve their bottom line and regain some ground

from the online zero value giants, those same online retailers that have, quite frankly, been cleaning up over the past few months.

"The toolkit has been designed to support entry level upwards and with topics including how to increase your followers, using Pay-Per-Click and setting up Twitter and Facebook ads, we feel that every dealer will be able to take something from it – whether complete beginners or those wanting to take their digital activity to the next level."

The tips and video tutorials are in an easy-to-follow structure, allowing dealers to dip in and out of each section or bypass the ones that they already feel secure in.

While many of the topics don't involve any investment, other than time, there is a section on why and how to spend your budget.

Duncan adds: "It's important to get the basics right first, but dealers looking to expand their reach should consider putting some budget behind their digital activity. This may well be an unknown area for some dealers, so we've got videos and support to help them through this."

The Dealer Digital Toolkit has been incredibly well supported by the industry.

*Service Dealer* would like to thank Keith Christian, Director of BAGMA, for his support in its creation, and social media guru Teresa Heath-Wareing for her contribution. But above all, thank you to the award-winning dealers – James, Chris, Pete and Jason – who gave their time and expertise.

With thanks to our sponsors:



Dealers can access the toolkit after registering for free at: [servicedealer.co.uk/dealer-digital-toolkit](http://servicedealer.co.uk/dealer-digital-toolkit)

# BUSINESS MONITOR

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## LACK OF SUPPORT FOR AUTUMN MANUFACTURER DEALER DAYS

*Too soon for our survey respondents*

**S**ervice Dealer ran a survey on our *Weekly Update* in mid-May gauging what level of support there might be amongst the network for the traditional early autumn, manufacturer-organised dealer demonstration days. The message received back, from those who responded, was this autumn seems too soon to be thinking about attending events such as this.

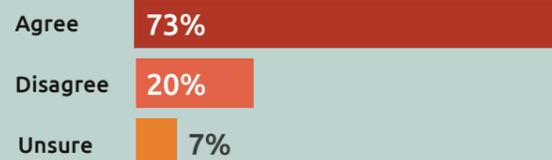
When presented with the statement 'I'm unlikely to attend any manufacturer demo days this autumn', an overwhelming majority of 73% who responded said they agreed; 60% of those who responded also confirmed they agreed with the statement 'I'm more likely to attend digital/virtual events than face-to-face events'.

When asked what Covid-19 safety measures should be in place were a demo day to take place this autumn, each method cited – physical distancing, availability of hand sanitiser, face coverings, use of screens and human temperature checks – were all ranked as very important by a winning margin by those who answered the survey.

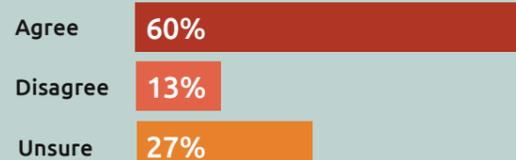
There certainly appeared to be a good level of interest in alternative methods of interacting with the wider industry though. Statements advocating digital delivery of information received positive responses: 88% of respondents said they would be interested in 'online product demonstrations by individual manufacturers', while an emphatic 100% said they would be interested in a 'free digital learning hub offering training modules'.

In better news for suppliers looking to interact with their dealer network this autumn, 62% who responded to the survey said they would be happy to welcome sales reps to their premises in the coming months.

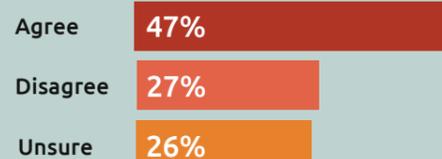
I'm unlikely to attend any manufacturer demo days this autumn



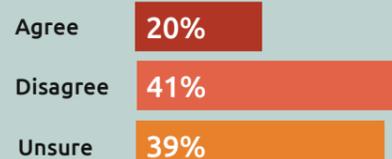
I'm more likely to attend digital/virtual events than face-to-face events



Digital interaction will become more important than face-to-face by year end with manufacturers



Digital interaction will become more important than face-to-face by year end with customers



*Are you interested in...*



## YOUR SAY...

**We asked you: what do you believe the autumn holds for manufacturer-organised, dealer demo days and face-to-face interactions with your suppliers?**

- I think it all depends if dealerships have been trading during the season. I can see a lot of dealers won't be taking winter stock if they have a lot left over due to not opening or at the worst closing their doors and finishing all together! We all need to stay safe even if this slows down later in the year. Are dealer days really a must in this day and age? Some take more time travelling to them than the meetings themselves. Yes, it's nice to meet up with old friends, but the content of meetings can be sent by email now.
- Digital communication will become more important *per se*, but not at the expense of face-to-face, or face-to-face at distance. We'll still have meetings and demonstrations, but just done in a slightly different way to be safe. What measures required will be entirely dictated by the situation at the time – no point prejudging now. We'll all just be more conscious as to how we move around and interact, but we'll still meet.
- I don't expect these to happen any time this year and possibly not even for the start of 2021. It's not looking good at the moment. I would still like to see manufacturers' representatives visiting us though, just to keep us informed of what's going on in the industry. That cannot be done via video conferencing regarding what's happening locally. Very sad times and the world is in a mess at the moment.
- In reality, with dealer days you spend more time getting there and back than the time actually receiving the 'real' information you went for. Dealer days are a good way to get dealers together and very valuable, but for one year I think we can give them a miss for the greater good.
- Our shop is closed. What is the point of looking at demo days when we have lots of stock? All we want is to come out of this healthy with money in the bank. Let's get through this and hope for a good time ahead. Family and friends come first. It's at times like that this that you appreciate them.
- Too much uncertainty. There would be a need for robust protocols plus a respect to all those associated industries and support services who will be only just starting to return to any form of normality by September. These things should not be rushed or forced upon the client or the community.
- I personally can't see anything happening regarding dealer days – which is a great shame. Nobody knows where we are going to be regarding Covid-19, so it's too early to say.
- We are in a fast-changing environment and likely to remain in unusual times for the foreseeable future. Therefore, I would be more comfortable if manufacturers arranged virtual demo days for this year, because these things require a lot of planning and if dealers are unsure they will not attend.
- I suggest we say no now to any for this year and plan for a better 2021.

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Edited by Adam Bernstein

BE AWARE!

BE AWARE!

## THE SMALL MATTER OF FRAUD

According to PwC's 2018 *Global Economic Crime and Fraud Survey*, only 49% of organisations said they've been a victim of fraud, writes *SME Digest* Editor, Adam Bernstein. More probably have suffered

**P**hilippa Dempster, Managing Partner of law firm Freeths, believes fraud is widespread, and notes that "the 2019 England and Wales Crime survey estimated that there are more than 3.9 million fraud cases a year".

As the PwC report highlights, while the authorities, firms and staff are more acutely aware of the risks of fraud, the biggest problem is that few recognise that the fraud that goes unseen is just as damaging as the fraud that is found.

Andrew Northage, a Partner at Walker Morris LLP, has seen awareness of fraud rise: "It is certainly the case that companies are now more mindful of the policies and procedures they must have in place to raise employee awareness of fraud and to deal with it if it occurs."

Is there a typical fraud that firms should look out for? None really, but Dempster lists a number of examples that she's seen which include requests to pay a 'fake' bank account, fictitious invoices, invoices paid in one currency

but posted in another, finance employees abusing a system, ex-employees abusing a system, and the overstating of accounts.

### ADVICE ON PREVENTION

Prevention is invariably better than the cure. It's for this reason that Dempster recommends organisations "create an open culture with regular awareness training and vigilance – sending examples around of latest scams, ensuring good cyber security and basic IT hygiene with regular password changes. To this list she adds watching for unusual behaviour, such as an individual living beyond their means, and having CCTV and suitable stock control systems in warehouses.

Dempster would also most definitely enforce holidays – "often this is the time when things are discovered... especially in accounts teams".

But there are other tell-tale signs to look for, says Northage – "domineering or bullying management, obsessive secrecy and close or closed

relationships with suppliers; there may be an unwillingness to delegate menial tasks, or you may notice a significant change in an employee's lifestyle".

Northage thinks that "different kinds of fraud warrant different approaches. For instance, if facing push payment fraud, email must be closely monitored". He suggests that when dealing with payments, it is prudent to confirm payment details by telephone before transferring money, particularly if account details have changed at the last minute. One suggestion from Northage to guard against similar frauds from inside a business is to "consider introducing checks beyond emails from supervisors before payments can be authorised; email chains can be easily edited to make it look as though the payment has been authorised".

Major events usually involve senior management, especially those with the authority to override controls. However, employee fraud schemes often involve theft by exploiting systemic weaknesses, such as stealing cash before it has been recorded, fictitious

expense reimbursement claims and/or stealing company property.

It shouldn't be a surprise that employees are the key to detection. On one hand, those that see solid policies will be deterred from engaging in criminal acts. On the other, honest employees will become critical allies in the fight who, with suppliers, can become key sources of tips and information.

Another suggestion is to have systems and processes that cross check each other. One specific test, for example, could look for duplicate invoices and payments.

On this tack, Northage is keen to highlight overly complex corporate relationships or autonomous branches. "Firms may have a lack of clear reporting lines or areas of responsibility, opaque management accounts, a high volume of transactions or excessive profits in peripheral functions. These and aggressive accounting policies and forecasts with reward schemes linked to results may indirectly encourage achievement through more mendacious means." He warns to look for results that may be always at or just above budget, or oddly exceeding market trends.

### WARNING FOR MANAGEMENT

Even if directors are not directly involved in fraud that occurs on their watch, this does not mean they will be unaffected. Any reputational damage to the firm may, by extension, mark their reputation.

Depending on the circumstances of the fraud, its occurrence may indicate that a director could be in breach of their duties, even if they were not the perpetrator. In certain circumstances, a director may face disqualification or personal liability for any financial losses the company sustains.

### IN SUMMARY

**Fraud is everywhere, often hiding in plain sight. It's impossible to stop it but firms can take steps to keep the risk of an incident occurring to the minimum. Considering that fraud can be so destructive, it's an issue that cannot be ignored.**

### CREDIT CHECKING



## SCORING A LINE OF CREDIT

Access to cash can be restricted or carry a burdensome cost if a borrower is seen as risky, says Adam Bernstein, *SME Digest* Editor

We're credit checked and either approved or rejected or have it granted, but on expensive terms. Credit checking ties an individual's record to publicly available information and that which is shared by financial organisations with credit reference agencies.

But not everyone appreciates that the process applies to businesses too.

A credit score is a measure of creditworthiness, which is made up from a number of different factors to understand financial position and level of financial risk. This information is combined to create a score which influences whether companies are seen to be a repayment risk. Experian, for example, uses a system that gives a credit score that can range from 0 to 100, with 0 representing a high risk and 100 representing a low risk.

Business information is held by a number of credit reference agencies and comes from multiple sources, including creditors, such as banks, credit card companies and building societies, as well as publicly available records such as Companies House or the main Gazettes. It is collated with data on payment performance, County Court Judgments (CCJs) and bankruptcies. Credit reference agencies look at this data in a number of ways and apply analytical methodologies to build a score.

Agencies use databases that have been built up over time to understand how businesses that were created historically have performed through an extended period.

Because of these processes, businesses should try to maintain a good report as it influences their ability to make purchases.

It is of note that business credit ratings are not as ubiquitous as

personal credit ratings, however they are more prevalent when dealing with larger purchases or lending decisions.

The problem for businesses with little to no financial history – known as 'thin file' businesses – is that they may struggle to be accepted or get the best rates. In these circumstances, a business owner's or director's personal credit scores can be considered to help with the decision.

Where information held is inaccurate or plainly wrong, steps should be taken to correct it. The only option is to dispute the business credit report by contacting the relevant credit reference agencies. Not only can they correct data that can be shown to be inaccurate, but they also have services to review company reports.

The wonder of information is that it invariably has more than one purpose. Just as a credit report allows a lender a window into the world of a (potential) borrower, so the process can be reversed by a business looking to check on its suppliers and its customers to ensure they can pay for their services. It'll also help set credit terms granted to customers.

The costs associated with credit information aren't as horrific as might be expected. For example, Experian's Business Express allows the checking of clients and costs from £25 per month. Alternatively, to check a business's own credit score, Experian offers My Business Profile at a cost of £24.99 per month.

Like it or not, credit information exists and is here to stay. Whether it is to borrow or to seek terms with a supplier, having a whiter than white report is going to put a business head and shoulders above its rivals.

ONLINE GUIDANCE

# SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

How employees use social media in the course of their employment is particularly important for businesses, writes Jasnoop Cheema, a solicitor in the commercial department of Moore Blatch.

Under UK law, employers are liable for the acts carried out by their employees. It is therefore important that businesses have a well thought out social media policy to deal with employees using social media, including outside office hours.

Inappropriate use of social media by employees can carry risks for any business, the main one being reputational damage to the business. Other dangers of social media exist, such as potential liability where employees post defamatory or discriminatory work-related comments on social media; disclosure of confidential information which may include commercially sensitive information belonging to the business; and infringing third party intellectual property rights.

In order to tackle the dangers, businesses often make use of social media policies as the first line of managing risks internally within the company. Case law has helpfully highlighted the importance of having a well thought out social media policy in place.

## EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES

The case of *Crisp v Apple Retail (UK) Ltd* is a good example of how having a well-constructed policy can help a business tackle misuse of social media. In this case Apple had made it clear in its policy and training materials that protecting its image was a "core value" and had stated that making derogatory comments on social media would have serious consequences and be likely to lead to dismissal. In this case an employee had posted several negative comments on Facebook concerning the company and its products while at home. The employee was dismissed, and it was found that Apple's policy was clear on the consequences of misuse of social media.

In contrast, in the case of *Walters v Asda Stores*, the employment tribunal found that comments made by an Asda manager on Facebook, that it would make her happy to hit customers on the back of the head with a pickaxe, constituted misconduct. However, the comments were not enough to warrant dismissal. It is worthwhile noting that in addition to factors such as how dismissal was carried out, the tribunal also paid particular attention to Asda's policy as the employee's actions fell under the "misconduct" category within the examples given in the policy, rather than examples which lead to dismissal.

Similarly, the case of *Blue v Food Standards Agency* demonstrates the need to have a policy which clearly sets

out how employees should use their personal social media accounts to participate in work-related conversations online. In this case, a hygiene inspector for the Food Standards Agency was dismissed after taking part in a Facebook conversation with two employees who had been dismissed from an abattoir he inspected; the contribution to the conversation was liking a comment about his manager being attacked with a chair. The Food Standards Agency claimed, among other things, that the employee's participation in the conversation had brought the Agency into serious disrepute, and dismissed the employee. The dismissal was found to be unfair for several reasons, however as with the *Walters* case it is interesting to note that one factor taken into the decision was the Agency's policies. The policies set out several scenarios which allowed for disciplinary actions but despite the serious nature of the examples provided, these still did not allow for dismissal.

In contrast to the findings in *Walters and Blue*, the case of *Preece v Wetherspoons* shows how having a clearly-worded policy which explains when the business may dismiss an employee can be helpful when dealing with comments posted by employees online. Following an incident at work in which two customers were abusive to a pub manager, the manager made comments about the customers on Facebook while at work. The employee thought her privacy settings were restricted to only friends, however the comments could be viewed more widely, including by family members of the customers in question. *Wetherspoons* had a clearly-worded policy which reserved the right to take disciplinary action should the contents of any Facebook page "be found to lower the reputation of the organisation, staff or customers and/or contravene the company's equal opportunity policy". Unlike *Walters and Blue*, in this case the employee's dismissal was found to be fair.

As with these scenarios, the outcome depends on the facts of each case, however the Employment Appeal Tribunal has set out a few guidelines for businesses to follow in social media cases. One highlights the importance of looking at whether the business has implemented a social media policy.

## IN SUMMARY

While having an appropriate social media policy in place is paramount, a business should also take appropriate steps to communicate its social media policy to employees, implement appropriate training and take steps to monitor compliance with it.



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## COMMERCIAL

### A CUT ABOVE ON THE GROUND BELOW

#### Professional-X RotoCut from Ego

With two sets of counter-rotating blades to minimise the scattering of debris, Ego says its new Professional-X RotoCut attachment (RTX2300) means professional gardeners can clear weeds and grass safely, even on hard and challenging surfaces.

Developed to meet the demands of the commercial market, the new attachment has dual sharpened blades made of high-strength alloy steel and a cutting width of 23cm. Combined with an integrated guard, it is designed to cut close to the ground, quickly and safely in areas where scattering debris could be damaging.

Weighing 1.9kg, it's powered by 56-volt Arc lithium-ion technology. With low vibration rates (1.1/1.5m/s<sup>2</sup>) and a LpA noise level of 79.3dB(A), it is suitable for prolonged professional use, especially in built-up areas.

The product is a compatible attachment for Ego's commercial line



trimmers and brush cutter (BCX3800, STX3800, ST1530E and BC3800E).

Vince Brauns, Group Product Manager at EGO, said, "We were keen to meet the demands of the market with a solution for flying debris causing damage and our

RotoCut attachment means professional gardeners and landscapers can now clear weeds and cut grass safely with ease and speed. In addition, environmentally-minded businesses can complete the same tasks but without using plastic line."

## AGRICULTURAL

### MID-MOUNTED SEED HOPPER

#### For Optima TF Profi SX

Kverneland has developed a drawbar-mounted seed hopper for its Optima TF Profi SX high-speed precision drill.

Driven by short weather windows, the company says the pressurised, large-capacity seed hopper compliments the SX seeding units to improve output, making the most of the seeder's high-speed planting capability of up to 18km/h.

Currently available on the eight-row Optima TF Profi SX, the drawbar-mounted seed hopper features an 870-litre capacity – an increase of 390-litres over the eight, 60-litre hoppers traditionally used with each row.

"Filling individual seed hoppers on a precision seed drill can be a time-consuming task," explains Kverneland UK Product Manager Graham Owen. "By replacing those individual hoppers with a large capacity, mid-mounted seed hopper, this latest development focusses on simplifying and reducing fill-up times, with the emphasis on increasing productivity."

Seed transport from the hopper to the sowing units is free from electronics and mechanical moving parts, and relies on air flow from the Optima's fan.



"One seed injector per row is located at the bottom of the seed hopper, and air is used from the fan to transport seed to the sowing units at the back of the drill," he says. "Seeds carried in the airstream collect in a buffer area directly above each sowing heart, where a 1.5-litre seed tank holds a ready-supply of seed for each unit."

As each buffer tank is filled, airflow is interrupted and seed transport stops immediately. As the seed level in each buffer reduces, air automatically flows again and seed transport continues. The 870-litre seed tank sits ahead of the Optima TF Profi SX's optional 2,000-litre fertiliser hopper.

## AGRICULTURAL/COMMERCIAL

### KIOTI INTRODUCES ENHANCED WARRANTY

#### For Mechron K9 utility vehicles and tractors

Kioti UK has announced that all new Kioti tractors sold from 1 April 2020 are now covered by a five-year, 3,000-hours warranty.

The first two years of the warranty covers the tractors for an unlimited number of hours.

To give assurances to the smaller professional or private users, the tractors have an engine and transmission parts and labour warranty extension to include



Mechron K9 utility vehicle

years three to five. This cover is up to a maximum of 3,000 hours, whichever comes first.

The warranty for new Kioti Mechron K9 utility vehicles sold after 1 April 2020 is also enhanced as this is now a full two years with unlimited hours.

Kioti UK General Manager,

Patrick Desmond, said, "The purpose of these new terms is to give our dealers additional support and the end-user customers extra confidence during the buying process.

"We emphasise that this is a manufacturer's warranty with no additional fees."

**COMMERCIAL**

## JOHN DEERE FRONT LOADS VERSATILITY

*M Series attachments for tractors up to 155hp*

John Deere M Series front loader

John Deere has launched its M Series front loaders for tractors up to 155hp.

Following the R Series announced in 2015, the extended range now includes an additional four models covering a variety of applications, from standard loader tasks to operations requiring premium performance and comfort. The manufacturer says the M Series has been specifically designed for customers who need a versatile, lighter loader at an attractive price.

For tighter working areas often found on mixed or livestock farms, the slim boom profile results in good front visibility to the bucket, attachment points and around the tractor. All models come with a strong mechanical self-levelling (MSL) system, which provides extra breakout force to completely fill the bucket.

With 20% less rear ballast required and 20% less weight

than the R Series models, Deere says the M Series loaders are quick and manoeuvrable in work, with the 603M model, for example, capable of raising a bucket in four seconds.

All M Series loaders can be fitted with an optional suspension system, while the hydraulic components are routed internally to protect them from any potential impact. The loaders can use the same mounting frames as the established R Series, thus avoiding the need for fleet owners to adapt their tractors.

The M Series models are also fully compatible with John Deere's front hitches, allowing full front axle oscillation and maximum steering angles while also leaving room to access the main tractor service points.

Available since May, the new John Deere M Series front loaders fit 5M, 5R, 6M and 6R Series tractors up to the 6155M/R models.

**WORKSHOP**

## MAKITA TAKES THE PRESSURE

*18V cordless inflator*



Makita has added an 18V cordless inflator to its system of LXT battery-powered products. The DMP180 inflator has a motor delivering up to

120psi/0.83MPa capability, powered by the company's 18V LXT lithium-ion battery technology.

The tool is ergonomically designed, in a lightweight and compact body with a rubberised soft-grip handle and trigger switch, similar to the design of a drill, and has a 25½" (65cm) hose length for better reach.

A high-visibility digital pressure gauge allows users to set the air pressure, as well as see the current air pressure, while its back-light provides improved visibility after dark. For additional convenience and maximum accuracy, the auto-stop function stops inflation when required air pressure is reached, preventing potential overfill. The tool includes an LED light to

illuminate the work area, so users can use the tool in dark spaces or at night.

The 18V DMP180 comes with sports ball needle adaptor, tapered adaptor, English valve adaptor, American valve adaptor and French valve adaptor accessories as standard, which can all be housed in the built-in storage compartment.

Kevin Brannigan, Marketing Manager at Makita said: "The battery protection system provides over-discharge, temperature and circuit protection for enhanced performance, battery cycle life and overall battery life, while enabling users to easily switch between Makita LXT tools."

**WORKSHOP**

## DOUBLE-SIDED TRIMS FROM ECHO

*Three new models*

Echo has introduced a new range of three domestic and semi-professional use double-sided hedgetrimmers: the HC-2020, the HC-2020R and the HC-2320.

These hedgetrimmers, which replace previous models, are lighter and feature a reduced emissions engine. The HC-2020 replaces the company's HC-1501. Featuring a new engine design for lower emissions and 534mm-long cutting blades, the company claims improved ergonomics and better precision for tackling small to medium-sized jobs. The Japanese double-edged cutter blades offer sharpness and durability, while overall the hedgetrimmer is balanced and lightweight at 4.5kg dry weight.

The HC-2020R replaces the Echo HCR-1501, offering



Echo HC-2020

a rotatable handled version of the HC-2020 double-sided hedgetrimmer.

The five-position handle allows the user to find the most comfortable position for cutting at different angles. It weighs 4.6kg dry weight with an even distribution for optimal comfort and performance. The Japanese blades are said to offer super sharpness for precise and clean trimming.

Replacing the HC-156, the new HC-2320 is described as a lightweight, double-sided hedgetrimmer with an extra-long 639mm blade for tackling larger, taller hedges.

All the new hedgetrimmers come with company's latest low-emission engine, for cleaner operation.

**AGRICULTURAL**

## TRAILBLAZING AN ENTRY LEVEL

*Knight Farm Machinery extends range*



Knight's entry-level Trailblazer

Knight Farm Machinery has extended its Trailblazer range of trailed sprayers with the introduction of an entry-level model.

The new model features a 3,600-litre spray tank and 24-metre gull-wing boom, fitted with single nozzle bodies on a stainless steel spray line. A chemical induction hopper, clean water tank, hand wash and PPE locker are also included in the standard specification.

Other standard features include a Muller Smart 430 control box that manages the main sprayer functions including boom hydraulics, automatic steering axle and application rate control, via a single terminal, which removes the need for multiple control boxes in the tractor cab.

The sprayer has air suspension with automatic ride height control and automatic hillside correction via a steering axle, so it rides smoothly, maintains even boom height and tracks to the tractor accurately across all slopes, with the steering axle also ensuring it makes neat headland turns.

It also features Knight's MAXImiser plumbing system with pressurised circulation, which primes the spray line prior to spraying and purges it with clean water afterwards.

Additionally, this system reduces the volume of liquid in the pipework, aiding effective and complete cleaning with any spray solution remaining at the end of work being simple to dispose of on the crop.

ATV

# CAN-AM'S KEY TO TACKLING VEHICLE THEFT

## DESS technology

To combat the issue of theft and provide additional security for ATVs and SSVs, Can-Am has introduced the Digitally Encoded Security System (DESS).

The system works via each 'key' being fitted with a microchip. For the vehicle to work properly, the vehicle's ECU (Engine Control Unit) needs to recognise the chip.



OUTLANDER MAX XT 570

The key must be programmed or reprogrammed by an authorised dealer with licensed software which the manufacturer says makes it an extremely effective anti-theft feature. Dealers can also see if a unit has been stolen and will not reprogramme keys without a variety of verification criteria being met beforehand.

Can-Am is using its second-generation DESS in the UK. With this version, it now uses radio frequency technology to connect the 'key' with the vehicle. The advantage of this system is that it is a lot more robust – no 'switch' is needed. The key can also be programmed to have a maximum speed and one key can also be used with multiple units, which eliminates having to carry multiple keys.

*The Can-Am MY20 ATV models equipped with the RF DESS key as standard are:*

- OUTLANDER 450 BASE INT NRMM
- OUTLANDER 570 DPS INT NRMM
- OUTLANDER 450 PRO INT NRMM
- OUTLANDER 570 PRO INT NRMM
- OUTLANDER 650 PRO INT NRMM
- OUTLANDER MAX 570 DPS INT NRMM
- OUTLANDER MAX 650 XT INT NRMM

FORESTRY

# FASTER CUTTING PERFORMANCE FROM STIHL

## With bar and chain upgrades

STIHL says its newly-designed guide bar and saw chains offer 20% faster cutting performance, with less weight.

Standard fitment on the MS 261 C-M forestry and MS 271 agriculture chainsaws, the Light 04 chainsaw bar features a new slim contour design that means it weighs up to 200g less than the previous Rollomatic E bar, which the company claims ensures forestry and agriculture workers can benefit from easier manoeuvrability, improved balance, and less fatigue when cutting. The new guide bars weigh 10% (40cm bars) to 20% (50cm bars) less than previous versions, while the slimmer profile and bar tip allows for faster plunge cutting.

As part of the new chainsaw upgrades, the MS 261 C-M will now come fitted with .325" RS PRO and the MS 271



STIHL MS 261 C-M

with the RM3 PRO saw chain as standard. The 1.3mm gauge chain, which matches the 1.3mm bar groove, offers up to 20% greater cutting performance when compared to .325 RS saw chains, which are 1.6mm thick. The faster cutting comes from the thickness of the cutter tooth that is reduced from 7.7mm to 6.8mm, meaning less wood is removed from the cut for more efficiency.

The MS 261 C-M and MS 271 have been available since May with the new Light 04 and new RS saw chains.

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## USER FRIENDLY

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## DURABLE

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## RELIABLE

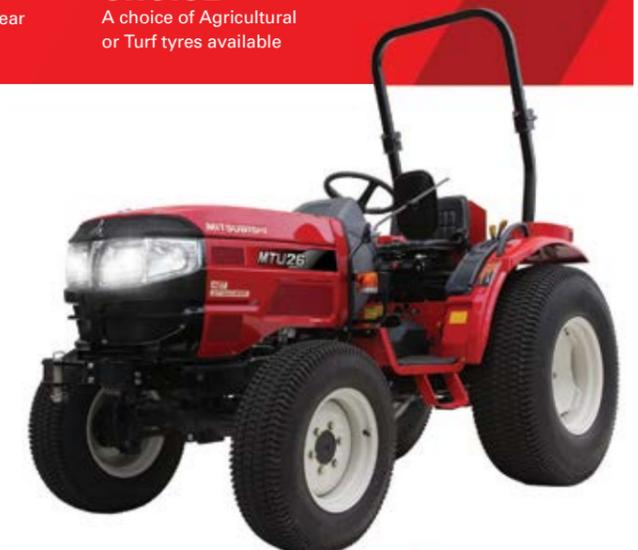
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## Announcing the introduction of Mitsubishi compact tractors into the UK.

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Status of the events listed below was correct at the time of going to press, but due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we advise checking with organisers' websites and social media channels

## JULY 2020

- 1-2 **Royal Norfolk Show**  
[www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk](http://www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk)  
**CANCELLED**
- 10-11 **Kent County Show**  
<http://kentshowground.co.uk>  
**CANCELLED**
- 11 **Newport Show**  
<http://www.newportshow.co.uk/>  
**CANCELLED**
- 14-16 **Great Yorkshire Show**  
<https://greatyorkshireshow.co.uk/>  
**CANCELLED**
- 20-23 **Royal Welsh Show**  
[www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show/](http://www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show/)  
**CANCELLED**
- 22-26 **RHS Flower Show – Tatton Park**  
[www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-flower-show-tatton-park](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-flower-show-tatton-park)  
**CANCELLED**
- 24-25 **Border Union Show**  
<http://www.buas.org/>  
**CANCELLED**
- 25 **Mid Devon Show**  
[www.middevonshow.co.uk](http://www.middevonshow.co.uk)  
**CANCELLED**
- 28-30 **New Forest & Hampshire County Show**  
[www.newforestshow.co.uk](http://www.newforestshow.co.uk)  
**CANCELLED**
- 31-2 **Royal Bath & West Show**  
[www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show](http://www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show)  
**CANCELLED**

## AUGUST 2020

- 1 **Dumfries Agricultural Show**  
[www.dumfriesshow.co.uk](http://www.dumfriesshow.co.uk)  
**CANCELLED**
- 5 **North Devon Show**  
[www.northdevonshow.com](http://www.northdevonshow.com)  
**CANCELLED**
- 6-9 **BBC Countryfile Live, Castle Howard**  
[www.countryfilelive.com](http://www.countryfilelive.com)  
**CANCELLED**
- 9 **Ripley Show**  
[www.ripleyshow.co.uk](http://www.ripleyshow.co.uk)  
**CANCELLED**
- 14-15 **Shrewsbury Flower Show**  
[www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk](http://www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk)  
**CANCELLED**
- 18-20 **Pembrokeshire County Show**  
[www.pembshow.org](http://www.pembshow.org)  
**CANCELLED**
- 20-23 **BBC Countryfile Live, Windsor Great Park**  
[www.countryfilelive.com](http://www.countryfilelive.com)  
**CANCELLED**
- 30 **Royal Isle of Wight County Show**  
<https://iwcountyshow.co.uk/>

## SEPTEMBER 2020

- 6-8 **spoga-gafa 2020, Cologne**  
[www.spogagafa.com](http://www.spogagafa.com)
- 5 **Alresford Show**  
[www.alresfordshow.co.uk](http://www.alresfordshow.co.uk)  
**CANCELLED**
- 6-9 **Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC**  
[www.autumnfair.com](http://www.autumnfair.com)
- 9-15 **Hampton Court Garden Festival**  
[www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-hampton-court-palace-garden-festival](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-hampton-court-palace-garden-festival)  
**CANCELLED**
- 12 **Usk Show**  
[www.uskshow.co.uk](http://www.uskshow.co.uk)  
**CANCELLED**
- 12 **Romsey Show**  
[www.romseyshow.co.uk](http://www.romseyshow.co.uk)  
**CANCELLED**
- 15-17 **Glee 2020**  
[www.gleebirmingham.com](http://www.gleebirmingham.com)
- 18-20 **The Game Fair, Hatfield House, Hertfordshire**  
[www.thegamefair.org](http://www.thegamefair.org)
- 24-26 **APF Exhibition 2020, Ragely Estate**  
[www.apfexhibition.co.uk](http://www.apfexhibition.co.uk)  
**POSTPONED**
- 30 **Cranleigh Show**  
[www.cranleighshow.co.uk](http://www.cranleighshow.co.uk)  
**CANCELLED**

## OCTOBER 2020

- 7 **The Dairy Show, Bath & West Showground**  
[www.bathandwest.com/the-dairy-show](http://www.bathandwest.com/the-dairy-show)
- 24-25 **Countryside Live, Harrogate**  
[www.countrysidelive.co.uk](http://www.countrysidelive.co.uk)
- 21-23 **Green Industry & Equipment Expo 2020, Louisville, USA**  
<http://gie-expo.com>



# END OF MONDEO MAN?

*Deskwork rather than legwork will be the new normal*

Sales reps have to live with unfortunate stereotyping. Out on the road, just achieving the requisite calls per day, lunching in laybys, always on the lookout for a Little Chef, sneered at by the parts and service staff jealous of the company car, they have often been regarded as a breed apart. They even had their own nickname during the 1990s: Mondeo Man

But that was then. Over recent years their role has evolved. Company cars are no longer the perk they were. Reps have technology at their finger-tips, sophisticated communications, vehicles more appropriate for the countryside than the motorway – and the Little Chefs are thinning on the ground.

Over the years, the sales team has had an important role to play for the dealership: making sure they cover their 'patch' efficiently, leaving no stone unturned, no farm-gate passed, keeping their ear to the ground, mixing, socialising, following up leads, advising, consulting, doing the essential maths to seal the deal – with the ultimate goal of shifting tractors and machinery (at a profit).

Today, we are in a different place. Farm visits are only by appointment, cold canvassing is a no-no, follow-

up leads from shows non-existent, open days have been cancelled, markets and auctions are off the agenda, and social events organised by dealers have been put on hold.

In time, there will be a return to life as we knew it, but not yet.

We are having to cope with a new vocabulary. Social distancing, furloughing, lockdown, track, test and trace, Zoom – and we all nod our heads knowingly when discussing the latest findings of the new breed of celebrities, virologists or epidemiologists. And don't get me started on what the 'new normal' actually means!

Every dealership is reassessing its operating structure. Do we need the amount of office space? What cost savings can be saved in tough times ahead? Working from home has not only become a realistic option, but also a welcome change for many admin and finance staff, rather than simply an instruction from the Government.

## STIMULATE SALES

How should the sales staff now spend their days? I generalise, but our industry has never been very good at tracking and recording sales, logging leads, updating customers' contacts, analysing sales patterns – and being highly proactive in selling. We have a lot to

learn from other industries.

Historically, much of our heritage lies in the ways of the farming community. Handshakes to seal the deal. A nod and a wink. Wheeling and dealing. Estimates on the back of a fag packet.

But for those dealers who do keep records of customers, current and potential, this is the time to go through them in detail – they are a gold-mine. Use or invest in CRM (customer relationship management) software to analyse, plan, forecast and use the unearthed information as an effective prospecting tool to give the sales team something to work with. Far better than driving up tracks to farms, only to be told to 'bugger-off'!

Such information, if used in conjunction with new technology, social media, online presentations, virtual demos, etc, should stimulate those involved, rather than the same old, same old.

Some dealers believe that it could make them even more efficient. Even when things get back to normal, much of what we've learned, and how we've adapted over the past months, will be adopted as the 'new normal' (there, I've succumbed).

And perhaps, it will form the bedrock of OUR track, test and trace.

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# JIM GREEN



Dan Ashelby with the vintage Greensmaster he bought on eBay

## MEMORY LANE

# DIVING HEADLONG INTO NOSTALGIA

*With the outside world being what it is, let's wallow in the past!*

won by the dad of a recent Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award winner called Dan Ashelby. His lucky old man, Mark from Mark Ashelby Grounds, has spent 25 years in sports turf management and says he knows a good deal when he sees one.

Dan was quoted, saying of his Dad's win:

*"We couldn't believe it when we saw the listing. The machine was bought new by a cricket club in the early 1970s but never used. It's in mint condition with no wear anywhere. It came with the original user manual and the original stickers on the engine. The red paint is still freshly painted like new on the cutting reels!"*

*"It was bought as a collectible and is too good to use, but we couldn't resist setting it up and giving it a quick one-off outing on a bowling green. And she cut like a dream."*

Ahh . . . this is precisely the news I want to be reading at the moment!

The other story on the *Weekly Update* recently, which also got me all warm and fuzzy, was my old mucker Chris Biddle's piece, reminiscing on the outdoor power industry staging its own show at Kempton Park, back in 1990.

If you missed it, it's well worth a read as it's a really evocative snapshot of that unique moment in our industry's history, when a consortium of manufacturers set up their own

exhibition in direct competition to the established trade shows – actually overlapping with that year's IOG SALTEX. If you missed it, you could catch up with it at [tinyurl.com/ycf5zf9m](https://tinyurl.com/ycf5zf9m)

An inescapable irony of that show is that it was organised under the auspices of the Garden Machinery Association, or GMA for short, which is, of course, what the IOG has recently rebranded itself as (this time standing for Grounds Management Association).

For nostalgia heaped on top of nostalgia, the postponement of 2020's SALTEX show until next March has reignited the old chestnut that the industry has debated *ad infinitum*: should there just be one single, annual show for the grounds care machinery industry?

I won't get into it here, but with my woolly, fence-sitting hat on I can see the arguments for both sides. I think what we'll find emerging out of this thing though, is that the market will decide what it wants.

Going back to that vintage mower, I respect what Dan and Mark have in mind for its remaining days. Reminding me very much of how I would like to be treated in my advancing years, Dan said, *"The rest of its life will be much like that of a classic car, enjoying the occasional run out on a nice sunny day!"*

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Three arborists in green t-shirts and safety gear stand in a forest, each holding a STIHL chainsaw. The t-shirts have 'Westonbirt Arboretum' and 'The National Arboretum' logos. The STIHL logo is in the top right corner.

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**2,500 SPECIES  
OF TREE.**  
**600 ACRES  
OF LAND.**  
**5 NATIONAL TREE  
COLLECTIONS.**  
**8 SPECIALISTS.**  
**1 CHAINSAW  
RANGE.**  
**STIHL LIFE.**

When you work with numbers like this, you need a chainsaw range that makes light work of the task at hand. The Pro Tree Team at Westonbirt Arboretum use the STIHL range of petrol and battery-powered chainsaws.

The facts are in the felling, with 200 trees felled or taken down each year plus the everyday tree maintenance at Westonbirt, using just 11 arboriculture and forestry STIHL chainsaws. And with 300 trees planted each year there's no sign of the operation slowing down. Robust, reliable and ready for anything, the STIHL chainsaw range is up to the challenge.

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