

# SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

JAN / FEB 2017

# SERVICE DEALER CONFERENCE

*High-street retailer John Timpson tells dealers simply do a great job and keep customers returning*



**DEALER OF THE YEAR**

*HONOURS PRESENTED*

- ❖ EIMA report
- ❖ Future Parks
- ❖ GGP Conference
- ❖ Lamma Preview
- ❖ Saltex Review
- ❖ BTME Preview
- ❖ SME Digest
- ❖ Training & Education



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# EDITOR'S MESSAGE

**W**elcome to this first issue of *Service Dealer* for 2017. I know a lot of people will be pleased to see the back of 2016 and the shocks and surprises it brought – but for our industry, the signs are that it wasn't a bad year at all. Certainly, the atmosphere at a couple of major industry events at the back-end of last year, amongst both manufacturers and dealers, seemed to be very positive.

At SALTEX the manufacturers I spoke to were pleased with the quality of decision-making visitors they had coming through their stands - whilst at the *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards dealers were keen to talk about how the hard work that they are putting in to keep their businesses profitable is paying off.

The Conference was a great success, with the tweaks made to the format improving the value of the event for all delegates. The tone for the day was set by the wonderful keynote speech delivered by maverick high-street retailer John Timpson. The bottom line with John's business is that his independent way of doing things has allowed his company to thrive, through providing customers with a level of satisfaction which sees them returning time after time. It was something which the dealers in the room could relate to and draw inspiration from.

Talking of inspirations, many congratulations to all our Dealer of the Year award winners. We were overwhelmed at the volume and quality of customer testimonials we received for all our nominated dealers – which significantly influenced the awarding of the titles. It certainly proved that your dedication isn't going unnoticed by the people who matter the most.



## OUR PEOPLE

[www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk)

## EDITOR

STEVE GIBBS

[@ steve@servicedealer.co.uk](mailto:steve@servicedealer.co.uk)

## FEATURES EDITOR

MARTIN RICKATSON

[@ jmr.agriculture@gmail.com](mailto:jmr.agriculture@gmail.com)

## PRODUCED BY

THE AD PLAIN LTD

 Pipe House, Lupton Road,  
Wallingford, Oxfordshire,  
OX10 9BT, UK

01491 837 117

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## CONSULTANT EDITOR

CHRIS BIDDLE

[@ chris@servicedealer.co.uk](mailto:chris@servicedealer.co.uk)

## SME DIGEST EDITOR

ADAM BERNSTEIN

[@ adam@adambernstein.co.uk](mailto:adam@adambernstein.co.uk)

## MANAGING DIRECTOR

DUNCAN MURRAY-CLARKE

## DESIGN &amp; LAYOUT

ALEX FAULKNER

## ADVERTISING SALES

SUSAN PALLETT

[@ susan@theadplain.com](mailto:susan@theadplain.com)

07937 837 117

# DEALERS OF THE YEAR HONoured

## At the Service Dealer Awards



In a glittering ceremony at the Oxford Belfry Hotel on 17th November 2016, the prestigious *Service Dealer Awards* were presented.

The Awards are now in their 13th year and recognise outstanding sales and service advice and support by dealers in the garden machinery, sportsground machinery, farm machinery, forestry equipment and ATV/Quad industry.

Tying in with the *Service Dealer Conference* theme of the 'Customer Is King', an integral part of the judging process for the Awards this time was customer feedback. **The categories and winners were...**

### GARDEN MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Briggs & Stratton

#### JOINT WINNERS:

Hertfordshire Garden Machinery Ltd, Welwyn Garden City and  
Cyril Johnston & Co Ltd, Belfast

#### FINALISTS

Ron Smith & Co, Worcester  
Strathbogie Saw Service, Aberdeenshire

Cyril Johnston & Co Ltd, which specialises in the distribution and supply of garden machinery and equipment to customers throughout the UK and Republic of Ireland, and Hertfordshire Garden Machinery, which supplies garden machinery from Welwyn Garden City to all towns in the county, could not be separated by the judges and were jointly awarded the Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year title.

Customer praise for Cyril Johnstons included: "I was amazed with the patience and time that was spent with me in the showroom before I bought my lawnmower. I was made to feel important and nothing seemed like too much trouble. I would recommend them to anyone."

The judges said, "Cyril Johnston is a large, long established family-owned business with a fantastic new showroom displaying a diverse product range and offering initiatives such as a customer loyalty scheme." High customer praise for Hertfordshire Garden Machinery included: "I have found HGM to be both extremely helpful and informative, whilst at the same time you never feel rushed. I would highly recommend this company and will not be going anywhere else in the future."

The judges said, "Hertfordshire Garden Machinery is barely four years old. The husband and wife team of Tim and Lyndsey have in a short time built up an impressive array of leading franchises and a very loyal customer following."



Tim Wall of Hertfordshire Garden Machinery with Mark Kerr, UK OEM Sales Manager of sponsor Briggs & Stratton



L-R: Conor Magee, Stephen Egerton, Brian Mitchell and Tom Black of Cyril Johnston celebrate with their Award

## FARM MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Kramp

### WINNER:

Arwel Agri Services, Carmarthenshire

### FINALISTS

Russells Ltd, Yorkshire

Ripon Farm Services, Yorkshire

Arwel Agri Services, a family-run farm machinery and service business based in Harford, Carmarthenshire, West Wales won the Farm Machinery Dealer of the Year Award.

High customer praise for Arwel Agri Services included: "Arwel's is an enthusiastic and energetic young company that always goes the extra to make sure my needs are fully met. Nothing is too much trouble for the friendly team."

The judges said, "Arwels was one of the smaller dealers nominated this year. They really struck the judging panel as up-and-coming with a tailored



Georgina and Arwel Evans receive their Award from Julian Thompson (centre), managing director of sponsor Kramp UK Ltd

approach to their part of the world with a good range of livestock equipment. Despite their size, they are embracing technology with initiatives such as a GPS Awareness Day for customers and good customer service with Saturday parts ordering."

## FORESTRY EQUIPMENT DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Stihl

### WINNER:

F R Jones & Son, South-East London

### FINALISTS:

Honey Bros, Godalming

Buxtons, Staffordshire

F R Jones and Son, a family-run business based in South-East London, specialising in horticultural and arboricultural equipment, supplies and service won the Forestry Equipment Dealer of the Year Award.

High customer praise for F R Jones and Son included: "All staff are very friendly, professional and efficient. Work is completed to a high standard at an affordable price and I always recommend F R Jones to those in the business and domestic users."

The award's judges commented, "FR Jones & Son has clearly built up a loyal customer base. The judges were very impressed by the sheer volume of positive customer feedback received. Over 80 customers spent time to submit feedback and support their local dealer for these awards. Quite clearly FR Jones & Son is still a good operator in the sector after more than 50 years." in business."



Eileen and Justin Jones receive their Award from Robin Lennie of sponsors Stihl UK (centre)

## ATV/QUAD DEALER OF THE YEAR

Presented by *Service Dealer* magazine

### WINNER:

**Congleton Garden Machinery, Cheshire**

### FINALISTS

**Stratton ATV, Perth**

**Mike Hope of Wooler, Northumberland**

Congleton Garden Machinery, the ATV/Quad specialist and garden machinery dealer won the ATV/Quad Dealer of the Year Award.

Ringling customer praise for Congleton Garden Machinery included: "It's great to have such a reliable outfit on our doorstep. We would highly recommend them as their after-care service is second to none. We wouldn't entertain going anywhere else."

The judges said, "Formed in 1989 by Stuart Meek, who was new to the industry, Congleton has established a successful ATV division to complement its garden machinery operation. It encourages customer feedback, as demonstrated by the more than 80 supporting testimonials."



Andrew Meek receives his Award from Steve Gibbs, Editor of *Service Dealer* magazine

## PROFESSIONAL TURFCARE DEALER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by BAGMA

### WINNER:

**Lister Wilder Ltd, Oxfordshire & branches**

### FINALISTS

**Cyril Johnston & Co Ltd, Belfast**

**Broderick Grass Machinery (NI) Ltd, Newtownabbey**

Lister Wilder Ltd, a family owned business who specialise in supplying and maintaining machinery for the Agriculture, Groundcare, Construction and Arboriculture markets won the Professional

Turfcare Dealer of the Year Award.

High customer praise for Lister Wilder included, "Always friendly with exceptional levels of skill throughout the entire dealership from parts, service and sales. I am always left feeling our custom is important to them."

Whilst the judges said "As a larger more traditionally Ag based dealer (and indeed a recent winner of the Farm Machinery Dealer Award), Lister Wilder has demonstrated their entrepreneurial edge and ability to change over the last few years by broadening their remit to cover more groundcare. This has enabled them to continue trading successfully in what have been very difficult times for large tractor and ag machinery dealers. Lister Wilder has also been recognised with awards from Trimax and Kubota in 2016."



Ian Nutt (pictured 2nd from right) and the team from Lister Wilder Ltd receive their Award from BAGMA President Brian Sangster (centre)

Steve Gibbs, Editor of *Service Dealer* magazine, said, “We were overwhelmed by the volume and standard of comments we received for all our winning dealers this year. What is common among these dealerships of all sizes is their utter commitment to giving their

customers exemplary service – service levels which only independent specialists are able to provide.”

It wasn't just dealerships who were singled out for recognition at the ceremony though. Three very special awards for individuals were also presented...

## APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Briggs & Stratton

### WINNER:

**Max Evans, BS Mowers Ltd**

This is a very important new award considering how the sector is changing through technology and thus attracting good young people into the industry is vital.

Max had some very strong support from his colleagues for this entry. His employer, B & S Mowers said, “Max joined us with no mechanical knowledge, but has since proved a fast learner. He is hardworking, loyal and popular with staff and customers. There is no doubt he will go far in this industry.”



Max Evans (left) was presented with his award by Ian Talboys, Area Sales Manager of sponsor Briggs & Stratton



Julie Domett of Hayter / Toro presents the award to Tom Black (centre) and Brian Mitchell of Johnstons, with Gary Tully on Skype!

## STAR OF THE DEALERSHIP

Sponsored by Hayter/Toro

### WINNER

**Gary Tully, Cyril Johnston & Co**

Star Of The Dealership is all about recognising that stand-out person (whether front of house or workshop based) who makes a real difference to the business.

The judges said, “Gary Tully is one of those who lives and breathes the industry. He has wide experience in both retailing and distribution, but above all is a ‘people-person’ with an engaging ability to connect with dealers and consumers alike.”

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Sponsored by Chris Biddle, Founder *Service Dealer* magazine

**Graham Dale**, who retired during 2016 from Lely Turfcare after 33 years working with the Lely organisation and 36 years associated with Toro, was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement award.

Throughout his time at Lely, Graham saw the company grow exponentially. When he first began with it in 1983 the company had a turnover of £10 million; today, it is over £50 million.

Chris Biddle paid tribute to him saying, “Graham leaves a very real legacy at Lely having achieved so much throughout his career, making many true friends along the way. “One of the milestones of his career was seeing the launch of the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards – the first joint educational initiative undertaken by BIGGA – which is just as important now, 27 years later.” Graham said, “I have been fortunate to work with a great group of people and I'd like to thank everyone I've worked with over the years.”



Chris & Trish Biddle present the Award to Debbie & Graham Dale

# T H WHITE TAKES ON SPIDERS

## *New UK & Republic of Ireland distributor for remote-controlled slope mowers*

Remote-controlled Spider mowers are now being distributed in the UK and Republic of Ireland exclusively by T H WHITE Machinery Imports.

Specially developed for mowing in challenging, high slope

environments, Spider remote-controlled mowers were previously distributed in the UK through Jacobsen on behalf of manufacturer Dvorak. Now, they have been added to the line-up of

niche products for the professional groundcare market from T H WHITE Machinery Imports.

Spider slope mowers are described by T H White as being suitable for a wide range of applications involving steep, uneven or sometimes dangerous terrain. Operators can maintain a safe distance from any dangers and these lightweight machines are able to operate on inclines of up to 40 degrees. Add the integrated hydraulic winch and this increases to 55 degrees.

The two standard models are the Spider ILD 01 and Spider ILD 02. Both feature patented 360-degree unlimited steering, forward and reverse four-wheel drive, an integral mulching kit, low fuel consumption and are highly manoeuvrable. These units are also compact and easily loaded into vans for transportation.

The remote control technology can operate from a safe viewing distance of 150 feet and a Spider can tackle grass as long as two inches. Spider also offers a third semi-commercial model – the Mini, giving mower hobbyists the chance to try out this technology in large gardens and private estates. The Spider ILD 02 can be purchased with an optional snow plough, widening its usage even further.

The company boasts that these safety and comfort features are complemented with a non-aggressive treatment of the grass resulting in a quality cut.

Divisional Director of the Machinery Imports business Tim Lane said, "This new brand will further strengthen T H WHITE's offering to its groundcare dealer network and will be managed from our Stockbridge branch."



L-R: - Pavlina Novakova, Marketing Manager, Spider Nick Penn, Territory Sales Manager, Spider, Lubomir Dvorak, Managing Director, Spider Alexander Scott, Managing Director, T H WHITE Group, Tim Lane, Director, Machinery Imports and Lubor Hladik, Product & Customer Care Specialist, Spider

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## INDUSTRY

# KRAMP EXTENDS SDF PARTNERSHIP

*For the next five years*

SDF and Kramp have announced that their strategic business cooperation has been renewed for the next five years, until 2021.

Thanks to this agreement, SDF dealers and importers, in addition to the SDF genuine parts trade supplied directly by SDF, will have access to the extended product range available by Kramp, via the Agricenter-branded web shop.

The product range is composed of over 500,000 parts and accessories for agricultural, forestry and gardening machinery. Almost all products ordered can be delivered in the night or the next day to most of the customers in Europe.

Kramp is also supporting SDF in further developing its network of Agricenter retail outlets, made available to all SDF dealers to provide an attractive retail store for end users.

Moreover, the renewed partnership includes the complete merchandising business for DEUTZ-FAHR, SAME and the other SDF brands, which products have been developed to reflect the quality, image and

design of SDF commercial brands.

“It gives me great pleasure that we have renewed the agreement with SDF,” said Eddie Perdok, CEO of Kramp Groep. “The last years have proven that this cooperation is beneficial for both Kramp and SDF as well as for our customers.”

Lodovico Bussolati, CEO of SDF added, “We believe that this agreement will help us to further grow our parts business, reaching our goal to offer a complete range of parts and accessories to our network and our final customers.”



L-R: Eddie Perdok and Lodovico Bussolati

## INDUSTRY

# ETESIA TAKES ON OELIATEC

*Environmentally-friendly weed control*



Etesia UK has taken on the distribution of the Oeliatec environmentally-friendly weed control range in the UK and Ireland.

The Oeliatec Company, based in Brittany, France, has developed machines for weed control, without the use of any chemicals.

Thermal weed control, or killing weeds with hot water, causes the explosion of plant cells and the breakdown of proteins. Etesia says hot water weed control requires fewer treatments compared with traditional chemical treatments and costs significantly less in comparison to other alternatives.

With five models available,

customers will be able to control weeds, moss and algae, and remove graffiti and chewing gum from streets, paths and walkways.

Commenting, Les Malin, Operations Director said, “We’re extremely excited and look forward to working with Oeliatec to develop the business together in the coming months and years, further expanding the Etesia UK market place.”

Etesia UK has a comprehensive dealer network throughout the UK and Ireland where the Oeliatec products will be available from. However, specialist cleansing partners will also be recruited. ●

## INDUSTRY

# CORDLESS SEES SIGNIFICANT SALES INCREASE

*Ego Power+ proud of its role in surge*

Figures released by the AEA in October show that sales of battery powered gardening equipment in the first six months of 2016 were up 133% on the same period in 2015.

One company that says it has played a key role in causing this spike is EGO Power+.

Peter Melrose, President of EGO Europe, said, "It's undeniable that battery-powered gardening equipment is the future. The benefits of battery over petrol are endless; it's hassle and fume free, with lower vibration, less noise and fewer health issues caused by long-term petrol usage, and these figures reaffirm that.

"2016 was a great year for EGO and we're incredibly proud to be involved in causing this surge

in sales! We look forward to seeing the figures continue to rise into 2017."

The EGO Power+ range is exclusively distributed to the nationwide dealer network by Henton & Chattell.



## APPOINTMENTS

# KAWASAKI ENGINES STRENGTHENS TEAM

*Parts & Technical role*



Kawasaki Engines Europe has announced the appointment of Przemyslaw Bachara as Technical and Aftersales Specialist within the Parts & Technical Department.

Reporting to Parts & Technical Manager, Andrew Squires, Przemyslaw will be responsible for technical distributor support, warranty queries, product improvement initiatives and systems development.

He comes to the role with seven years of engineering work experience from his native Poland, most recently undertaking an apprenticeship at the Automotive Research & Development Institute BOSMAL Ltd. He also holds a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering from AGH University of Science and Technology in Cracow, where he was awarded a scholarship for his outstanding work.

Przemyslaw is delighted to be putting his academic and practical background to use, commenting, "My role at Kawasaki will give me the opportunity to use the skills I have gained in engine development, testing and design. I am looking forward to putting these skills to use to support Kawasaki's Distributor network."

# RISE AND RISE OF THE ROBOTS



**HUSQVARNA AIMS TO INCREASE ROBOTIC MOWING USE IN THE PARKS AND URBAN SPACES OF THE FUTURE. EDITOR STEVE GIBBS ATTENDED THE COMPANY'S SECOND SILENT CITY CONFERENCE IN STOCKHOLM TO FIND OUT MORE**

It was my privilege back in October to attend Husqvarna's second Silent City conference in Stockholm, Sweden.

Presenting to representatives of local authorities and landscape contracting companies from around the world, Husqvarna was revealing its plans for future maintenance of parks and open spaces. The company has ambitious plans for utilising modern and developing

technology for the upkeep of the public spaces of the future.

It used the event to launch a global report on what the urban park of 2030 will look like. Entitled *Future Urban Parks Report*, the survey that it commissioned is based on the responses of landscaping architecture students in 15 countries and theorises on the growth of green spaces in our urban centres. The report offers thoughts on how these new parks of the future will look, their importance in the public's lives, and how they will be maintained by the support of sensors, robotics, drones and citizens.

Husqvarna asked these students, representing 60 different universities, that given urbanisation, sustainability and the rapid development of technology, what will the future urban park look like, what functions will it perform and how will it be looked after? The company is using the responses it gathered to influence the development of its future

grounds maintenance products, and inevitably this will mean greater usage of robotic mowers in commercial applications.

## **Commercial robotic mowing**

Pavel Hajman, President of the Husqvarna Division, told the assembled guests, "In our quest to explore new opportunities to drive this industry forward, I am excited to announce that Husqvarna will conduct an urban robotic park pilot in Stockholm to put the findings of the report to the test, learning more about the possibility to increase sustainability and productivity in professional landscaping in urban areas."

The company went on to announce that it won't just be Stockholm where robot mowers in commercial applications will be tested. It put out a call to the assembled representatives of local authorities from around the world to help them try out robotic mowing in their cities. One major UK city took it up on the



Battery backpack's are crucial to Husqvarna's Silent City vision



Andreas Kallming gave a presentation on commercial robotic mowing alongside a Husqvarna branded drone to illustrate where future development could go

that mowers across a town are all performing at peak efficiency.

### A future reality?

Delegates discussed how theft may be an issue for mowers left alone in public spaces, but it was hoped that with some advanced publicity that the machines would be rendered useless when away from their base station and perimeter wire, this may be discouraged. Mindless vandalism appears to be more of a potential problem, perhaps?

As well as cutting the grass these robots will be performing another function: equipped with sensors, they will be collecting data on air quality, light, sound and rainwater. The data will be analysed by the non-profit organisation Quantified Planet, to support research for sustainability.

All exciting stuff really – which will mean, at least according to Husqvarna, that it will become inevitable that dealers will be stocking ever increasing numbers of robotic mowers. And if they do indeed take off in commercial applications in a big way, every manufacturer will surely want in on the action?

offer. I have subsequently been told that the process is in effect for this UK trial to kick off soon.

It's significant that the company is wanting to not just encourage robotic mowing commercially in Sweden, where every third mower sold is a robot, but in territories where it hasn't taken off in such a big way yet too. Andreas Kallming, Product Manager for Robotic Mowers, confirmed it's the company's intention to see this branch of Husqvarna increase worldwide, saying, "It's time to go commercial with robotic mowing."

Andreas said the company sees the benefits of commercial robotic mowing as being fourfold. These being improvements to costs, to the environment, to health and safety, and to the cutting result.

A neatly comprehensible example the company gave to illustrate how effective a robot could be in a commercial cutting application is that of one being deployed on a busy roundabout. In a scenario such as this it could be difficult and dangerous for an operative to drive a ride-on across several lanes of busy traffic. Not only is it hazardous but it could take some considerable time. All the time a person is not using their mower

to cut they are, of course, costing the contracting company or local authority money and decreasing the efficiency of the fleet.

The robot, and other ones dotted around strategic areas within a locality, can all be controlled and performance analysed remotely via Husqvarna's Fleet Service application. Using on-board GPS a single person at a control station can make sure



A trailer containing Husqvarna battery powered commercial machinery

# SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE REFLECTS A SUCCESSFUL YEAR

*GGP THANKS ITS DEALERS FOR BEST EVER FINANCIAL ACHIEVEMENT, REPORTS EDITOR STEVE GIBBS*

**G**GP UK staged its annual three-day conference at the National Motorcycle Museum, near to the Birmingham NEC, back in the autumn, with large numbers of dealers attending – around 180 each day.

The first two days of the conference concentrated on the Stiga and Mountfield brands, while on the final day Atco and Alpina were discussed.

National Sales Manager, Gary Whitney, opened the conference, welcoming dealers who he said would benefit from continued business with GGP due to the company's "exciting new products and reassuringly stable policies".

Gary also told the crowd how pleased the company had been with dealer attendance across the three days of the conference – with three-quarters of GGP's dealer accounts being represented.

## State of the Nation

Managing Director, Duncan Martin, then took to the stage to deliver his annual State of the Nation address. He said the company and its dealer network had enjoyed a great year. This was off the back of a very late start to the season, which Duncan described as "having taken an age to warm up".

He said, however, that our industry is one that is more dependent on weather than on economic conditions. Monthly sales records were, in fact, broken throughout the season. Therefore there was now great confidence out there, which had contributed to the company having its most successful financial year ever.

"GGP UK broke the £50 million barrier this year," he said, "which is a 14.5% improvement on last year.

"I really am proud of our dealer network and I'm really proud of our

team within GGP who helped us achieve this remarkable result."

Duncan spoke of rises in sales of petrol push mowers, petrol self-propelled mowers, ride-on mowers, petrol rotaries and particularly in hand-held multi-tools.

While he wanted to keep detailed GGP sales figures close to his chest in order to not become a target for rivals, he did say the company was the market leader for petrol rotaries and ride-ons. He told the assembled dealers: "If we're market leaders in these sectors, that means you're the market leaders, taking sales away from your local competition. It's a healthy place to be."

## Looking ahead

Duncan looked ahead to the forthcoming season, saying, "To continue our growth we need to continue to invest in our whole



The National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham provided ample space for the dealers to test out and inspect new machinery from GGP

goods stock to meet the ever increasing customer expectations.”

He also pledged to increase service levels to dealers and to the customers who are buying Atco products online.

To this end Duncan announced a new online endeavour called GGP Connect. Expected to go live in January 2017, this was described as a comprehensive B-to-B system. He said the system would do much for GGP dealers as he believed it was “truly groundbreaking”.

One of its innovations, of which Duncan was particularly proud, and said dealers would benefit from, is that all of the company’s stock levels will be live on the system. “We’re upping our game in our communication with you,” he said.

Continuing to look ahead at potential trends for the upcoming season, he believed we would see more of the mass channels trying to sell their own branded products – typically at the lowest price points. “Their suppliers,” said Duncan, “will be the cheapest of the Chinese manufacturers.”

The biggest retailer in the mass channel will now be importing its MacAllister brand directly from China, to fill its stores and website



with low priced products.

Duncan confirmed that GGP has chosen to no longer produce MacAllister lawnmowers for that retailer. The new MacAllister mowers for next season will be entirely own built from China. He also confirmed that GGP won’t be providing service and back-up for these products.

He said he expected next season to see some aggressive pricing from the sheds on their Chinese-built equipment ranges, particularly at the entry points. “And what one mass retailer does,” Duncan said,

“the others always need to follow.

“What I will say to these retailers though, is good luck in trying to deliver the service level, the warranty, the support and meeting the customers’ expectation for the parts supply for the useful life of the product.”

Duncan concluded by telling the dealers, “We will continue to invest in you, our customers – so please continue to invest in us.

“We encourage you to invest more of your space and money into GGP stock. We continue to deliver really good, stable marketing policies, from which we can all make some money.”

## New equipment

There then followed presentations on new products across the brands, including many new entry-level products.

Ample opportunity was also given for the dealers to get outside and get hands-on with the new equipment.

Gary Whitney rounded off the conference by saying how GGP’s business with trade dealers is up by 75% in the last five years – but how the company only wanted this to increase.

“Making our dealers more profit,” said Gary, “is at the heart of all our decisions.” ●





# COBRA

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**HONDA**



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

# SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

CONFERENCE

2016

## KEEPING THE CUSTOMER SATISFIED

*The theme of 2016's Service Dealer conference, 'The Customer is King', saw speakers focus on the subject of connecting with consumers, whether farmers, turfcare professionals or the gardening public. MARTIN RICKATSON reports*

**M**aking sales and retaining regular customers are very different things – that was the common theme running through November's *Service Dealer* conference. From showroom strategies to sales techniques and service planning to ideas for online marketing, the role of clear communication in achieving this, between dealers and customers and

within dealerships' staff, was the focus of almost all the day's proceedings.

First, though, came a fascinating keynote talk from a man whose business, while far removed from that of the attendees, proved to have many parallels in terms of staff and branch management, and customer service.



*Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke opens the conference

## Keynote address

Having started working for the company in 1960, John Timpson is today Chairman of the business founded as a shoemakers in the 1860s by his great-grandfather.

Never afraid to diversify, the family survived British shoe manufacturing's decline to restructure their company as a repair specialist, on the basis that repair costs a third or less of the price of comparable new shoes made for a sound business model.

To help sustain company growth as shoes became cheaper and repairs declined, Timpson diversified into key cutting in the late 1960s as traditional ironmongers began to disappear, later adding engraving, watch repairs and multiple other niche but essential services.

"We were initially unsure of leaving our traditional industry, but we'd identified an opportunity, and the decision proved the right one," explained John.

"Put simply, we transferred to a new trade our ethos to simply do a great job and keep customers returning – and it worked."

Since then the company has continually expanded and diversified its activities, acquiring ailing complementary businesses and turning them around by integrating them into its own, while adding dry cleaning, photo processing, trophies, locksmithing and security to its repertoire.

Much of the business's success John attributed to his 'upside down' management style, on which he has written a number of books.

"You can't create great customer service by rigidly enforcing rules. Select the right staff and trust them to do things the best way they know how. Some years ago I decided that at store level we should have only two rules: look and be smart, and put the money in the till.

"Staff can spend up to £500

without consultation to settle a customer complaint, use our price list only as a guide, and use their intuition with new ideas. We've been working like this for 20 years now, and it's proved very successful."

Engaging the right people is crucial to making this style of management work, he suggested, and people with personality rise to the top of interview lists.

"They can then be taught the necessary skills for our business. Grumpy people with skills will still be grumpy. We don't conduct formal interviews, but chat and discover candidates' personalities. And we run an 'introduce a friend' scheme, on the basis of gaining others with similar personalities.

"But we also make a point of looking after our staff so they're motivated and not distracted. For example, home troubles often lie

behind work troubles, and for those in debt we have a hardship loan fund. We also have our own holiday homes available to staff, while deserving colleagues nominated by others are taken on trips abroad. We've found this really motivates them.

"Target branch turnover is based on staff wages paid, and national sales minus the national target x 15% equals the bonus paid nationally. That's a weekly, no-limit scheme."

As with any business, though, staff management can have its challenges, he acknowledged.

"A lot of time can be spent managing bad staff. Get rid of people who are no good ASAP – they will affect your good staff as well as your customers. We lose 15% within the first year, which in retail store terms is very low, and most of those leave very quickly."

**“YOU CAN'T CREATE GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE BY RIGIDLY ENFORCING RULES”**



## Panel debate

Kicking off the panel discussion element of the day, moderator and former *Service Dealer* Owner/Editor Chris Biddle asked the speaker line-up to reveal some of the challenges they were currently facing, and how they were tackling them.

Ian Nutt, MD of southern ag/turf/construction dealership Lister Wilder, pointed to the recent agricultural downturn as a key issue, and suggested differentiation was key to tackling it – but only after some thought-through planning.

“Whatever the business or customer type, their expectations are the same, but we need to understand their individual businesses, anticipate their needs and predict future ones. But as John Timpson said, the basics are essential. Customers should be greeted with a smile and be made to feel important. Give them more than they expect, be truthful about purchases and their capabilities, and apologise when things go wrong. Ask for feedback and don’t be afraid to respond to criticisms and then address them.”

Ben Turner, MD of East Anglian John Deere dealer Ben Burgess, pointed to the benefits of a vision/mission/core values statement

# “WE NEED TO EDUCATE CUSTOMERS ABOUT WHAT CUSTOMER SERVICE CAN BE”

to help staff and customers understand the dealership’s aims, and suggested service contracts and telematics were two ways in which agricultural and professional grasscare equipment dealers could boost their customer offering.

“We’re aiming to have 80% of our supplied machines on service contracts, and are trying to educate customers on the value of remote monitoring through telematics to allow examination of how a machine is used and how it could be improved,” he said.

On the homeowner side, Arun Mowers’ David Ayres highlighted the challenge of new housing with smaller gardens, an older population and making service income from battery-powered machines.

“Customers are demanding low prices and instant availability. We must show them we can offer

things they can’t get online or in the big shed stores: experience, character, trust, advice, ideas, something thrown in, servicing, demo and hire machines. We need to educate customers about what customer service can be.”

TH White’s Tim Lane suggested ‘taking ownership’ of customer problems was a sound way to impress upon them your commitment.

“Problems happen, but it’s easy to let them damage your brand as a dealer. Treat the customer the way you’d want to be treated, and gain their trust and confidence. Remember, it isn’t always best to rush and respond – plan and organise effectively, and be proactive about future needs. And seek feedback afterwards – that’s something that’s not done enough in this industry.”



# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

*New for this year's conference was a series of three 'breakout sessions' from which delegates could pick to brush up on their knowledge of a subject by listening to and interacting with an expert as part of a smaller group*

## Websites & digital strategy

Social Media Consultant and Digital Marketing Strategist Libby Langley hosted a particularly lively breakout session looking at how to get the most from websites, communication and social media.

"Don't immediately just build a website or Facebook page," she urged those present.

"First, identify what you want to do and why. Is it to simply provide details of your business, to provide news, to display your wares, or to sell online?"

"Identify why you're doing this, who for, what they want to hear, how you should do it, what results you expect, and where you want to get people to.

"Ensure you are using an email system such as MailChimp for queries through the site, allowing analytics such as tracking of whether emails have been opened. Similarly, Google Analytics can be used as a tool to provide information on website visits.

"If you're using Facebook as a primary means of communication, ensure your page is updated regularly, and remember that Facebook has its faults – it's a little like building a house on rented land, in that it's not yours to fully own and control in the manner of a website."

Libby stressed the need to identify the type of customer the business wants to target, and then communicate appropriately.



**Libby Langley leads the Digital Strategy breakout**



**Joanne Balmer-Smith of dealer Balmers contributes to the Merchandising breakout**

## Merchandising and POS

The second breakout session, led by Marketing Consultant David Ashcroft, focused on merchandising and point of sale.

"Some dealers feel they are losing identity with the emphasis on wholesaler showroom branding," he suggested.

"But there's been a big improvement in merchandising quality. It must be backed with the goods – keeping a reasonable stock is important even in the age of 24-hour delivery. Touching and trying can't be beaten.

"Ensure also that your showroom works for you all year round, and that you're stocking and displaying prominently goods that are applicable to each month of the year."

## Social media

Social Media Consultant Julio Romo ran the third session, focusing on his specialist subject, and urged dealers to consider their audience, story, content and narrative when communicating via Facebook, Twitter or other social media.

"Social media are excellent for raising awareness, so use them to communicate, but don't forget to listen to and learn from what's being said – opportunities may arise to invite a potential customer to try a machine, for example.

"Studies show that 4% of those who've a bad experience make it public, and negative news is shared 11 times more often than positive news. Don't be afraid of negative comments – ensure you respond quickly, and take a raised issue private ASAP if it can't be immediately rectified with a response."



**Lewis Anderson of Rochford Garden Machinery and James Hayes of Hayes Garden Machinery, join Julio Romo for the Social Media breakout**



Simon Batty leads the interactive plenary session

## Plenary

In a further presentation, Dealership Consultant Simon Batty stressed that simple, basic, people-based improvements are key to improving businesses little-by-little in tough times.

“Define what ‘good’ looks like and tell your staff what you expect from them to achieve it. Identify and use simple key performance indicators that people understand and can be improved. Catch staff doing things right and acknowledge and praise their actions.

“From the customer side, find every excuse to talk to them, to build trust and loyalty, and make it clear they’re not just dealing with your franchise, but your dealership

and what it stands for. And take every opportunity to get them to handle, feel and use the product.”

To raise warranty and retail income, Simon suggested dealers make incremental steps.

“Say there are 50 engineers in a big dealer group, each working 2,080 hours annually. Raise warranty and retail income by just £1.40/hr and you have £145,000 extra profit in year one alone.

“The best time to gain new customers is often in bad times. To grow sales in a competitive market, ask sales staff to present their own results in monthly meetings, target prospects for specific brands and sectors, and focus on key performance indicators for

input activity, sales revenue and gross profit. Protect your existing relationships, but also identify and target new prospects – make three new calls a week. And make team and company performance visible to all so they can see where they stand.

“Adopting this approach led one dealer I work with to grow turnover by 200% and profit by 250%. Parts and service departments can be similarly motivated. Introduce service plans at point of sale, and use targeted promotions, following up with a phone call to ask what more you can do for the customer.”

Lewis Anderson of Rochford Garden Machinery suggested this could be enhanced with a practice RGM has adopted, offering a ‘rapid-fit’ service to sort small there-and-then issues in half an hour.

“We provide an agreed price and time before commencing the work, and can also offer a clean/check/service on this basis,” he explained.

“We’re also trying to invoice daily rather than at month-ends, cross and up-sell products, eliminate discounting and turn around trade-ins faster.

“And by making more use of customer relationship management information, we’re making continual contact with people who buy on after-sales rather than price, aiming to ensure they’re retained as customers.”



Phil Gregg from Ripon Farm Services offers feedback



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# NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEALERS AMONG EIMA HIGHLIGHTS

*Its profile isn't as high as that of France's SIMA or Germany's Agritechnica, but EIMA, the Italian international farm machinery show held every other November, is almost their equal in size and scale. MARTIN RICKATSON details some of the new opportunities for dealers at the 2016 event*



While it might not attract the headlines in the way of Agritechnica or SIMA, an attendance of 285,000 visitors from 140 countries and a number of launches from new and old names in the farm machinery industry suggests Italy's EIMA deserves a far higher profile than it receives. The country is home to some significant manufacturers with strong Italian roots, including CNH – in particular through its New Holland brand – McCormick and Landini parent ARGO, Same/Lamborghini/Deutz-Fahr owner SDF, Merlo, Maschio and many more.

Despite the agricultural downturn, attendance rose 21% over the 2014 show, while the proportion of business/trade visitors was up by 18%. They were able to view the wares of some 1,900 exhibitors spanning not just mainstream products such as tractors and

field equipment, but also Italian engineering specialities ranging from fruit machinery to power harrows and irrigation equipment to pto shafts – component halls form a significant part of EIMA. Among all this there was plenty for dealers and importers looking for new opportunities.

The next EIMA takes place in Bologna from 7th-11th November, 2018. Falling in a non-Agritechnica/SIMA year, it's well worth a visit – direct flights to Bologna are available from Stansted and other UK airports.

## 1 – Arbos

Founded and funded by Lovol Heavy Industry of China, the Arbos brand reappeared a year ago, over two decades after it was last seen on a range of Italian-built combines. Lovol acquired the name of the defunct firm that made those machines and is using it to market a new line of farm

equipment to be sold in Italy, in China, and beyond. Prototypes of 100-260hp tractors were shown at Agritechnica 2015, and production of the smaller 100-130hp four-cylinder 5000 series is now underway, produced both in China for the Chinese and Far Eastern markets and in Italy for Europe.

Lovol recently purchased Italian compact tractor specialist Goldoni, and while continuing to manufacture the latter's machines at the Modena plant it also acquired, is also using it to produce Arbos 5000 tractors. Larger 140-200hp 6000 and 220-260hp 7000 series tractors, featuring Deutz engines, are still prototypes, but production is anticipated within three years. Goldoni compact tractors continue to be manufactured in both Goldoni and now Arbos livery.

Arbos also has straw walker combines on the drawing board, but is yet to confirm details. However, it's already developing an implement line, resulting largely from Lovol's purchase of another Italian firm, precision drill specialist Matermacc, which also produces conventional air drills, twin-disc fertiliser spreaders and a line of sprayers. Relivered versions of these were on the Arbos stand. Also in development are ploughs, power harrows and cultivators, plus precision farming equipment.

The new operation is being managed from Italy by a team headed by CEO Andrea Bedosti, formerly with Same Deutz-Fahr, Landini/McCormick parent ARGO and Merlo. With tractor production underway and an

Italian dealer network appointed, next on the ambitious agenda is creating subsidiaries or appointing importers for other European countries, and in turn creating dealer networks for those countries, including the UK.

## 2 – Preet

Indian tractor makers seeking a slice of the sub-100hp sector were out in force at EIMA, and while some of them – see Solis and Captain – are carving out a niche in the lower end of the UK market, others are still seeking to make inroads into Europe.

One popular way of testing the water is for a manufacturer to focus initially on ensuring one or two models in its ranges are suitable for the region, with emissions regulation-compliant engines and sound and safety levels that meet EU standards. Manufacturing combines since 1985 and tractors since 2002, Delhi-based Preet offers a line of the latter spanning 35-90hp and including 2wd and 4wd versions, plus cabbed and open-station variants. On 4wd models, transmissions and axles are from Carraro, while engines are from Preet's own design and engineering departments. The firm recently entered the conventional baler market, and has further projects in the pipeline, including a backhoe loader. Currently, though, it has no UK presence.

## 3 – Solis

With Italy's agriculture spanning a wide range of types, it has a strong market for simple, low-cost tractors that suit cropping farms in the dry climate of the South as well as tougher livestock and arable work in the (relatively) wetter North.

Indian maker Sonalika, whose Solis-branded tractors come into the UK through Lincoln-based JJ Cook Farm Machinery, chose EIMA to reveal its first Stage 4 tractor, its largest model to date. Powered by Sonalika's own four-cylinder

engine, the 90hp machine has a revised cab and styling, 4,400kg lift capacity and 540/540E rpm PTO. Solis, which also manufactures a line of combines and implements for its home and selected other markets, has reinforced its intention to become a bigger player in small tractors across Europe by recently opening a new European parts centre in the Czech Republic. JJ Cook, meanwhile, says it is seeking to fill gaps in its UK dealer network.

## 4 – Landini

Of the two ARGO brands, Landini continues to be strongest in specialist tractors, and chose EIMA to launch a new line of 70-111hp Rex models suiting livestock and specialist crop farmers as well as fruit growers. With Stage 4 Deutz four-cyl/2.9-litre engines, the tractors come with 2wd and 4wd options and a new four-speed/three-range transmission with mechanical or hydraulic reverse shuttle, two- or three-speed powershift and creep options.

Hydraulic packages comprise 55 + 30 l/min double pump (60 + 30 l/min in GT versions) or 25 + 55 + 30 l/min triple pump for cabbed models. Cabbed tractors for fruit spraying can be equipped with Class 4 filtration, providing pressurised operator protection sufficient to filter out spray mist.

## 5 – Captain

Also from India is Captain, which manufactures a complete range of compact tractors from 10-30hp for its home market, but currently focuses its efforts in Europe on this EU-homologated 25hp model, aiming for horticultural and equine markets. The Captain 260 features an 8F/2R synchromesh transmission and ground-speed PTO, plus some unexpectedly luxurious features such as a mobile phone charging point and holder.

Importers and dealers are being sought for countries across northern Europe, including

the UK, says the firm.

## 6 – Massey Ferguson

Among the more mainstream makers, Massey Ferguson's new 6700 S range is headed by what's claimed to be the industry's first 200hp four-cylinder tractor. That's the maximum output with engine power management (PTO/transport boost) on the 6718 S, the flagship of a six-strong range powered by a 4.9-litre, four-cylinder AGCO Power engine.

The 6718 S develops maximum power at 2,000rpm and maximum torque at 1,500rpm. New spec includes active mechanical cab suspension and one-tonne greater rear linkage capacity on Dyna-VT models, which now lift 9.600kg.

MF also used EIMA to unveil a new line of TH telehandlers, powered by Doosan engines, and says it wants to encourage its dealers to focus on these machines rather than supplementary handler franchises.

## 7 – Case IH

From next year, Case IH dealers will have access to improved 85-115hp Farmall C tractors. Key upgrade is a version of the Multicontroller concept, using a simpler design than that found on larger Case IH tractors, with a right-hand console-mounted gear lever that selects the four main gears and incorporates a series of buttons controlling forward/reverse shuttle, two-speed powershift, powerclutch button and linkage raise/lower operation. Powershuttle response can be adjusted to one of three levels according to the work in hand, while a further button on the rear of the lever allows operation of the linkage buttons to be diverted to the rear or, where fitted, the front linkage.

A new constant engine rpm feature makes it possible to set and store two engine speeds.

Other new features include 540/540E/1000rpm PTO, optional second assister ram to increase lift

1

4

7

capacity from 3,700kg to 4,400kg, and a 'loader-ready' option.

## 8 – New Holland

New Holland also used EIMA to unveil an S tractor, its new T7.165 S being a stripped-down economy version of the standard model, equipped with the entry-level Range Command semi-powershift transmission, simpler seating and a basic worklight package. New Holland's stand, meanwhile, was replete with Kongskilde tillage and grass implements, following the recent purchase of the equipment firm by CNH Industrial.

At a press conference, New Holland Brand President Carlo Lambro revealed the Kongskilde brand and dealer arrangements

will continue for the foreseeable future, but New Holland will also benefit from reliveried implements being added to its line in the near future. There was also a suggestion that some franchise restructuring is likely as a result.

## 9 – Deutz-Fahr

Deutz-Fahr continues to grow its UK dealer network, making a number of recent appointments in light of restructuring by other manufacturers. The latest updates to its 5 series models mean it has now revised all of its core agricultural product line to meet Stage 4 emissions regulations, in this case using a diesel oxidation catalyst and selective catalytic reduction. Power is up 5% on

average per model, gear selection has been improved, and these two upgrades combine to create claimed reductions of up to 40% in both in-cab noise and vibration.

Other enhancements for the three 110-126hp models include updated Hydro Silent-Block cab suspension, a new design of suspended front axle, and a new lighting package front and rear.

Meanwhile, the three-model 295-336hp (max) 9 series range is now in production at SDF's recently-extended factory in Lauingen, Germany. Production versions of the 11 series tractors (up to 440hp) first shown as a prototype at Agritechnica 2015 will receive their full launch at the November 2017 edition of the same show.



# BUMPER LAMMA EXPECTED

*Record number of exhibitors have rebooked for 2017*

Organisers say LAMMA is set to underline its position as the UK's largest farming machinery, equipment and services show when it returns this month, thanks to the record pace at which exhibitors rebooked stands.

As far back as six months ago, more than 650 businesses that had exhibited at the East of England Showground, Peterborough last January, were already signed up for LAMMA '17. That is 75% of the 2016 total, which helped to attract more than 40,000 visitors.

"The figures reflect the continuing importance and appeal of LAMMA across the agricultural industry, despite the economic pressure being felt across all sectors," commented Elisabeth Mork-Eidem, Group Head of Events at Briefing Media, which owns LAMMA.

"Our exhibitors value LAMMA for the quality face-to-face time it provides with current and prospective clients, no matter what uncertainty is in the market.

"Their fantastic support means LAMMA '17 is going to be another excellent event, providing visitors

with unrivalled access to a vast array of machinery, equipment and services, which could help improve their farm productivity and bottom line."

## Improvements this year

Organisers say visitors can expect an even better experience this year following significant investment by the East of England Agricultural Society to the showground.

The society has developed an extensive plan to improve grass and soil, following feedback from many LAMMA exhibitors.

Jeremy Staples, East of England Society Chief Executive, said: "After a conversation with Ian Robertson of Sustainable Soil Management at LAMMA '16, we have conducted a soil survey.

"With Ian's advice we're going to treat the soil with a physical, chemical and biological approach to correct imbalances and improve the resilience of our soils.

"We're working hard to get the site back in order and improved for all the events we host on the

showground throughout the year. LAMMA is an event that we're proud to host and we look forward to working with the show and enjoying the improvements on site."

## Travel difficulties eased

Improvements have also been made which should make visitors' journeys to the show's venue less arduous.

After considerable negotiations with the highways agency, local authorities, the East of England showground, police and LAMMA's traffic management supplier, the show has announced that they have approval to utilise an additional entry to the site directly off the A1 South bound. The organisers say this will complement their improved traffic management plan, which will now provide the show with three entrances and three exits.

Also to help with the movement of people to and from the showground there will be a free shuttle bus service that will run between Peterborough train station and the East of England Showground. The service starts at 7am on both days, with the final bus leaving the showground at 5pm to return to the station, subject to local traffic conditions.

For early risers who beat the traffic an 'early bird' breakfast is available each day from 6.30am to 8.00am. But if you miss that don't worry, the LAMMA 'All-day breakfast' will be available from 8.00am.

**LAMMA '17 takes place on Wednesday 18th January between 7.30am and 5pm and Thursday 19th January between 7.30am and 4.30pm.**



# JCB TO UNVEIL NEW FASTRAC 8000 SERIES TRACTORS

*Featuring a fully hydrostatic steering system first*

Increased power and performance, a new cab providing class-leading levels of comfort and all-round visibility, and a fully hydrostatic steering system – a first for a high-speed tractor – are among the key features of the new JCB Fastrac 8290 and 8330 that make their public debut in Peterborough.

The new-look machines share their styling and a number of features with the 175-235hp Fastrac 4000 Series tractors but, according to the company, are in a different performance league. The Fastrac 8290 is powered by an 8.4-litre six-cylinder engine developing peak output of 306hp, while in the

Fastrac 8330 this twin turbo engine is tuned for 348hp.

That is 42hp or 14% up on its predecessor, with 1,440Nm of torque (10% more) at just 1,500rpm enabling the tractor to ‘hang on’ when faced with an increasing load or an incline, whether on the road or in the field.

A unique dual-circuit hydrostatic steering system and transmission-driven emergency pump provide essential fail-safe protection in light of the tractor’s 70kph top speed.

In normal use, the new steering arrangement requires less effort at the wheel during low-speed manoeuvres without diminishing

the precision required for high speed road travel, while the four-wheel external disc brakes give secure anti-lock braking performance.



## NEW 3M TRAILED DRILL TO DEBUT

### *First public showing from Claydon*

Claydon Drills will launch a brand new 3m Hybrid T3 trailed drill at LAMMA.

“An increasing number of customers, both in the UK and overseas, have requested a trailed version of our popular 3m mounted Hybrid drill,” said Spencer Claydon, Commercial Director.

“We believe that the new Claydon Hybrid T3 will provide exactly what they’ve been looking for by offering flexibility to tackle any crop establishment situation.

“We will also offer a kit to enable farmers who already own a 3m Hybrid M3 mounted drill to convert it to the new trailed specification, which will further increase its versatility.”

Based on the Claydon System of crop establishment, the T3 extends the company’s range of Hybrid trailed drills to four models, the 3m T3, 4m T4, 6m T6 and 8m T8.

The company is also developing a new 4.8m T4.8 model which will be launched during 2017.

Like all other models in the range,

the Hybrid T3 can be used to deliver seed only or a combination of seed and fertiliser.



# HARROGATE KICKS OFF THE TURFCARE YEAR

*Four halls of commercial equipment on show at BTME*

As ever the traditional start to the turf care industry's year, the BIGGA-organised BTME exhibition and accompanying education programme, takes place at the Harrogate International Centre this January.

Running for two and half days, the show combines four halls of exhibitors with additional attractions for the organisers' greenkeeper members including Continue to Learn, the Turf Managers' Conference, GolfBIC and partner events.

Over 120 exhibitors – including the major commercial machinery players such as John Deere, Ransomes and Toro – will be putting on a diverse show, featuring everything from irrigation systems,

golf buggies and machinery, through to artificial turf, workwear and wild flowers.

Jill Rodham, BIGGA's Business Development Manager, says, "BTME is the premier place to get up-to-date with all the latest developments in the turf management industry.

"There will be four halls showcasing all manner of new products, innovations and more and we're confident it will be a hugely successful show with plenty of business done during the week."

## New smartphone app

New for visitors to the show this year is a useful application that can be downloaded to smartphones.

BIGGA's CEO Jim Croxton says, "BTME is such a diverse event, featuring a comprehensive exhibition and filling four halls, along with an education conference, various special events and networking opportunities, so it's important to bring all the information in to one easy to understand application.

"The BTME app includes details of events, a calendar and information about exhibitors and sponsors."

A new feature of the app for 2017 is the introduction of a map of exhibition halls and tailored alerts, ensuring visitors don't miss out on any of the events or sessions. The app will also allow delegates to plan their own schedule and keep BTME attendees up to date with information about Continue to Learn sessions, accommodation and where to eat.

Once you've downloaded the app you don't need wi-fi to use it. You can also use the app to keep up to date if you are unable to attend the exhibition. To download it head to the store on your Android or Apple device and search for BTME 2017.

## Opening times for BTME 2017.

- Tuesday 17th January 9am-5pm
- Wednesday 18th January 9am-5pm
- Thursday 19th January 9am-2.30pm

More info at [www.btme.org.uk](http://www.btme.org.uk)



## JOHN DEERE TO LAUNCH NEW FAIRWAY MOWER

### 8900A PrecisionCut

John Deere's new 8900A PrecisionCut fairway mower, the latest addition to the company's A Model family of fairway, rough, trim and surrounds mowers, will make its European debut at Harrogate.

The widest Deere fairway mower yet, the unit offers a choice of 26- or 30in-wide cutting units, both 7in in diameter, which provide an overall cutting width of 114 or 130in, together with exceptional contour following. Both units offer an optional verticutter attachment.

The 26in cutting units are available in five-, eight- or 10-blade versions, with optional fairway tender conditioners and rear-roller power brushes.

The larger 30in cutting units have five or eight blades and allow higher capacity mowing. Precision adjustment of both these units is a simple task due to the established SpeedLink system.



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## BUSINESS PROSPECTS 2017

### *Cautious optimism appears to be the mood among dealers*

The results of our 2017 Business Prospects survey, which we conducted at the end of November, appear to be tinged with slightly more caution than we saw this time last year – however, the mood among dealers still seems to be positive overall.

In answer to the key question ‘In general, how confident do you feel for your business heading into 2017?’ 69% of respondents were either Confident or Very Confident. This is up slightly from 61% who answered similarly for 2016.

When we get into how dealers see the different aspects of their business performing, this is where we’ve seen a tad more caution than we did going into 2016. Dealers are

far from pessimistic about forecasts, they are just mostly seeing this year not offering many increases on last. Both Machinery Sales and Parts & Accessories Sales are predicted to stay the same by most of our respondents (52% and 62% respectively). Both areas last year were expected to see increases.

Service Work however, has again been viewed as an area likely to increase sales this coming year; 52% of dealers who took the survey thought this would see improvements in 2017.

In terms of increasing the workforce within dealerships, like last year, most respondents do not have firm plans to do so. The most popular answers to the question of

‘Are you looking to employ...’ were Possibly (45%) or Unlikely (24%), with similar feelings towards new Apprentices within the business – Possibly (41%) and Unlikely (38%).

One very notable difference in this year’s survey though, is what the respondents cited as the biggest challenge they felt their business is facing. Last year those old perennials the internet (35%) and the weather (29%) came out top. Seemingly following on from a most tumultuous 2016 and fearing what its repercussions will bring, this year the majority of dealers (45%) who replied to the survey said it was the Economy which was going to exert the biggest influence on their success or otherwise.

#### In general, how confident for your business do you feel going into 2017?



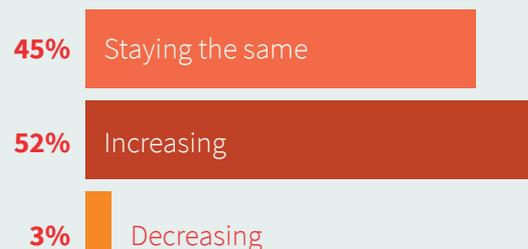
#### Do you see your machinery sales for 2017...



#### Do you see your parts & accessories sales for 2017...



#### Do you see your service work for 2017...

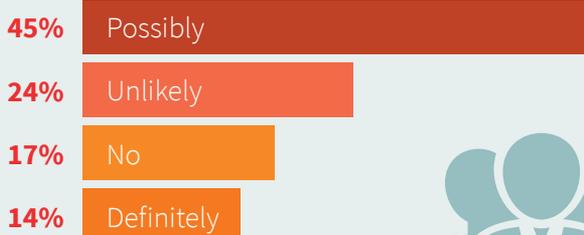


# YOUR SAY

## WE ASKED WHAT WAS GIVING YOU CAUSE FOR CONCERN GOING INTO 2017...

- The increasing amount of cheap imported machinery, especially to the sheds, gives a lot of tedious and time wasting effort sourcing parts. This is not cost effective and is a concern for the small dealer. Large manufacturers have made numerous problems by making it difficult to continue purchasing stock/spares etc. Various take-overs and mergers have not helped us; this and Brexit makes 2017 another challenge – bring back the 1980s!
- Some manufacturers are able to discourage internet sales with registration incentives etc, whereas other manufacturers aren't and seem unwilling to try such initiatives.
- EPOS machine charges are a concern.
- Pessimism itself is a negative factor – so called 'important' people stating how the economy is going to suffer following the Brexit vote. I feel this is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Yes the economy will downturn in the short term, inevitable in my opinion, but public optimism for the future will make people feel positive, spend more and minimise the long-term effects.
- The internet giving big discounts is still a matter of great concern.
- Quite a lot of the suppliers are hiking up the price of their machines – I hope we can sell them!
- Margin erosion on new machinery has a knock-on effect for repair service work – it is reducing the point where a repair is cost effective. Some input inflation gives hope that a reversal of the steady margin erosion seen will be reversed into the medium term. ●

## Do you anticipate having to take on more staff in 2017?



## Are you looking to take on any new apprentices in 2017?



## What do you anticipate as being the biggest challenges to your business in 2017?



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\*Patent pending

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# AN ESSENTIAL FIXTURE

*SALTEX felt like it belonged at the NEC, says Editor STEVE GIBBS*

**W**hen the second SALTEX at the Birmingham NEC closed its doors in November, probably the biggest compliment one could pay it was to say that it felt normal and that the show belonged there.

The show was bigger in terms of floor space this year and I honestly felt it had an upbeat and optimistic atmosphere.

Clearly though, there will be some who still yearn for the 'good old days' of Windsor and who aren't happy with this new incarnation.

An area of displeasure that kept cropping up in online comments I saw post-show was the £12 car parking fee charged by the NEC – which I must say, I genuinely find a bit perplexing.

First, the IOG made sure this fee was waived for its own members. Second, the idea of £12 once a year to attend your industry's major trade show, within which there are ample opportunities to make connections, communicate with peers, learn from others, as well as being able to view the latest machinery and service developments – well it doesn't sound that bad to me

for working professionals.

OK, there's petrol to account for as well and overpriced coffee and sandwiches, but isn't that the same wherever one goes? And I would assume that a good majority of people don't come in their car alone, so fees can be split?

Times are, of course, hard for everyone; I just think this car-parking issue is somewhat overblown.

Anyway, other than that the show did seem to be working as organisers, exhibitors and visitors would like it to.

Well that said, the inside halls did. The outside area... not so much.

## Outdoor demonstration area

It wouldn't surprise me if this experiment was quietly dropped for the next edition.

It was a tiny area and pretty well hidden. I didn't see any signposting for it within the main exhibition halls and precious little in the atrium you had to walk through to get out to it. Once found, it could barely be described as a demonstration area. Nothing was really being cut or dug or chopped.

It was more like some machines were parked up outside as opposed to being parked up inside.

I pity the poor reps who had to spend a couple of days standing outside in the cold November chill, but at least it stayed dry for them. When I went out there, despite the halls being very busy, there were few visitors to keep those reps company.

I, of course, admire the IOG for responding to visitor feedback and trying something new, but it just feels like the NEC isn't geared up for this sort of thing. Hopefully now the show has established itself as an indoor exhibition, the organisers can be confident enough in its success to just leave it at that. I would suspect that feedback on this outside area will mostly be along the lines of 'thanks, but no thanks'.

## Positive vibe

But not to dwell on the slight negative, the show without a doubt felt buzzy and vibrant with business being carried out across the stands.

Paul Errington of GroundsCare Products told *Service Dealer* after the show, "Initially in 2015





we were against the move from Windsor because it meant we would be unable to demonstrate our TurfTeq machines. However, having now exhibited at NEC for two years, we're all for it."

I spoke to many exhibitors who were happy with Birmingham with a common theme becoming apparent: the show in its new format is attracting a high calibre of visitor.

It was, in the main, decision makers and purchasers who were coming through their stands, often in their droves. Windsor might have seen a greater volume of attendees in the past, but it was often used as a day-out, tyre-kicking event for the whole team. Now it very much appears that it's the top guys from their place of work attending, which is fabulous news for the companies that pay to exhibit.

Also significantly, these quality visitors are now attending from across the country, not just the South-East. The travel links really are a big tick in favour of the NEC (despite an accident on the motorway on day two that seemed to delay the halls filling up until about 11.30).

## Dealer attendance

Dealers were also at the show in great numbers. This must have been helped in part by Hayter holding a couple of very well attended meetings where it launched its new Harrier 41 Pro mowers. A number of manufacturers remarked to me how pleased they were with the number of dealers who had come by their stands.

However, not all dealers who attended found the show quite to their liking. One dealer in particular, who wanted to remain anonymous, contacted me to say, "Following our difficult journey to Birmingham we ran into some other dealers whilst wandering around and the general feeling seemed to be what an unproductive day it was.

"I know Hayter mentioned perhaps this would be a good place to have the dealer meetings, but I for one would not bother again and I know two other dealers who were not happy that it would be the main dealer meeting.

"I guess figures will speak for themselves, but between the eight people we know and us, it was not something we would go to again."

Another dealer contacted our *Weekly Update* to comment on the lack of relevant products on show for their dealership. They said, "I would like to see more new associated products being offered for specialist garden machinery dealers."

Perhaps the IOG is not pitching the show quite where some specialist dealers would like it to be, but it must be remembered that dealers are not their primary audience – their groundsmen members are.

I would still argue, however, that a trip to the NEC is worthwhile for dealers, especially if manufacturers are going to continue to hold their meetings there. But beyond this, a major trade event where everybody in the industry gets together is important. Ideas and knowledge can be shared, handshakes on deals can be made and relationships created.

In my opinion congratulations are in order for the IOG team for organising and establishing this new version of SALTEX. Next year it should feel even more like a normal, valued fixture in the calendar.

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# SEEN AROUND THE SHOW

*Service Dealer caught up with many industry figures at the NEC.*



Axel Hindebrand of Aspen Fuels said what a successful past year the company had enjoyed with a very much expanded specialist dealer network. He said dealers were achieving significant sales when they used Aspen as part of their workshop routine.



MD of Branson Tractors, Nathan Walker, cut a cake to celebrate the company's first year of trading, which saw it break its target of appointed dealers. The plan was for 25 in the first 12 months, but Nathan announced at the show that the company had achieved 29 (22 stocking, seven non-stocking).



Dealers Gareth and Emyr Jenkins from Jenkins Garden Machinery were promoting their Excalibur computer software package for specialist dealers. They had moved stands to a more prominent position on day two of the show, following a mix-up with their location on the first day.



Dave Roberts, MD of Kubota UK, said business had been very good for the company this past year. The move into larger agricultural equipment is proving to outperform the manufacturer's expectations.



Briggs & Stratton's UK Sales Manager Ian Small (centre) with *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and *Service Dealer* Advertising Sales Manager Susan Pallett.



A sporting star-filled panel. L-R: cricketer Darren Gough, rugby league's Barrie McDermott and talkSPORT's Mark Sagers.



Hayter's Julie Domett and Christopher Cooper with the new Harrier 41 Pro mowers which were introduced to dealers at two well attended dealer meetings. Julie said feedback from dealers had been very positive towards these smaller, professional machines, which you can out find more about in the Product section of this edition.



Mark Rochford of Rochford Garden Machinery was very pleased to be displaying new machines from the AL-KO, Mitox and Weibang ranges. The AL-KO mower range has been refined down in terms of numbers and significant design changes have been implemented based on UK dealer feedback to the manufacturer.



Husqvarna's UK Commercial Landscape & Groundcare Manager Kevin Ashmore (left) talking to *Service Dealer* Editor Steve Gibbs.



L-R: Alexandre Gueguen who was visiting the show from VIKING, Austria; Duncan Murray-Clarke, *Service Dealer* owner; and Robbin Lennie, MD STIHL UK.

# NEW AT SALTEX

## STIHL SHOWS PRO TOOLS

*Including powerful new blower and Viking mowers*

STIHL presented SALTEX visitors with its premium grounds care and professional products, including the BR 700 blower and 7 series VIKING lawn mowers.

The company's most powerful backpack blower, the BR 700 is designed

for contractors, local authorities and professional gardeners. The blower tube is easy to adjust to suit the user and maintain blower force at all times. It also features a powerful 4-MIX engine and STIHL's anti-vibration system.

Also on show were VIKING's range of mowers including the MB 756 YC, a robust pro-mower with an 80L fabric grass-catcher bag. This model features high torque hydrostatic drive for variable speed control and an ergonomically shaped mono-comfort handlebar for easy emptying.

Also displayed on the stand was the MB 756 GS, equipped with a dual-comfort handlebar, professional three-speed gearbox and a powerful Kawasaki engine.

Anti-vibration elements allow for longer working periods, making this mower suitable for cutting lawns of up to 3,000m<sup>2</sup>.



## BRUSHLESS LINE TRIMMER FROM MAKITA

*Cordless, 18v, two-speed model*

The new Makita DUR184LZ, cordless 18v, two-speed line trimmer seen at the NEC features the latest Brushless motor technology for long run times and extended life, and in high gear will run up to 6,000rpm.

The motor is housed in the drive head and with the battery and electronics housed at the top of the bent shaft, the balance of this trimmer is ideal. The conveniently placed trigger switch has a lock-off lever, two-speed selector and constant speed control.

If the trimmer is not used for one minute the power switch automatically shuts off the system. The curved shaft keeps the cutting head parallel to the ground for accuracy and the ergonomic loop handle gives excellent control.

The small line protector provides an excellent view of the cutting area and the shaft can be extended by 4" for extra comfort and control.

This line trimmer is supplied as a body only model.



# Mountfield Premium Roller Mowers

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**“It’s a fantastic mower and I would definitely recommend it to anybody. I’ve used a lot of mowers from different brands in my time doing grounds maintenance and so far it is absolutely above the rest.”**

Andy – AW Grounds Maintenance



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[www.mountfieldlawnmowers.co.uk](http://www.mountfieldlawnmowers.co.uk)

## ‘The Finest Cut of All’

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*...from ATCO's latest premium roller mowers fitted with Twinclip technology*

The patent pending Twinclip blade cuts the grass twice, leaving a superb finish and the extra fine clippings mean that even more grass is packed into the large 85 litre grass collector.

The hybrid chassis provides optimum stiffness and strength where it is needed, along with maximum airflow to deliver superb cutting and collecting performance.

A heavy duty variable speed transmission provides drive to the large diameter single piece rear roller.

*Twinclip – the latest development in mowing technology*



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*The Finest Cut of All*

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Demanding contractors that have been testing the machines with thousands of hours of use over the past few months:

***“I would definitely buy one of these machines.”***  
GR Dawson – Grounds Maintenance

***“I love this mower. I prefer it over the H\*\*\*\*s all the time.”***  
Groundsman – Premiere League Football Club

***“Really enjoying the mower. It’s faster than the roller mower that I use at the moment, it’s knocking around an hour and a half off my day.”***

Tony – Second City Lawn Services

# LONGER GRASS TACKLED BY JOHN DEERE

*Commercial PRO 53MV mower shown for first time*



John Deere expanded its range of commercial walk-behind mowers with the launch of the PRO 53MV model, which was shown in public for the first time at the NEC.

Featuring a steel deck, this rotary mulching mower is designed for use by local authorities and larger landscaping businesses, and the company says it addresses the need for reliable machines to cut longer grass less often. Equipped with a Briggs & Stratton engine rated at a nominal 3.2kW at 2,800rpm and variable speed drive, the mower can tackle a range of conditions in grass areas of up to 5,000m<sup>2</sup>.

Weighing 45kg, the mower has a cutting width of 53cm and cutting height of 30 to 95mm. It has a good weight balance and wheel profile, while the cutting angle is adjustable on each axle.

The operator can also work longer hours without tiring due to the mower's anti-vibration system handlebar, which reduces the level of exposure to hand-arm vibration. Also, a strong crankshaft protection system ensures that the machine can be kept running in tough conditions.

## RANSOMES INTRODUCES VENTRAC PRODUCTS

*Including a compact tractor and optional attachments*

Ransomes introduced its offering of Ventrac equipment at SALTEX, which includes a compact tractor and many optional attachments.

The Ventrac 4500 diesel-powered tractor features a 25hp Kubota liquid-cooled three-cylinder diesel engine and a hydrostatic all-wheel drive. The machine also features a centre-pivoting articulating frame, integrated weight transfer traction control, 16 available front-mounted attachments and patented hand controls.

With the optional dual wheel kit, the 4500 can operate on slopes of up to 30 degrees.

Ergonomically-friendly controls have been developed which include an easy-to-reach automotive-style parking brake and a relocated weight transfer lever that allows operators to easily adjust for increased stability on slopes and

for increased lift capacity.

The optional digital slope indicator with warning light integrates into the dash, providing easy visibility, and allows operators to continuously monitor the degree of slope operation.



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# SME DIGEST

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## COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

# ALL CHANGE ON BUSINESS RATES

**W**ith the 2017 business rate revaluation looming, rateable values are likely to increase substantially throughout the country, writes SME Digest Editor, *Adam Bernstein*.

According to Richard New, a real estate litigation partner at Eversheds LLP, ratepayers pay roughly half of what the Valuation Office assesses to be the market rental value for each commercial property they occupy, whether or not they own the freehold or the leasehold of that property.

The last rating list was based on 2008 rental values and the revaluation comes into effect on 1st April 2017, with rental values being assessed as at April 2015.

Mr New says the 2008-15 period was an especially volatile time for the property market. "However," he adds, "many cities were over the worst of the downturn and had started to accelerate by 2015 so are gearing up for sizeable increases in their rateable values. Certain areas of London are expected to increase by nearly 100%."

The Valuation Office recently published the new rateable values in draft and is currently inviting representations from ratepayers as to any factual or other substantial errors. Mr New advises ratepayers to instruct their rating surveyors to see whether there is any scope for challenge. "When the list goes live on 1st April 2017, ratepayers will be able to appeal their assessments formally, but a new system is coming into effect which will influence which battles ratepayers wish to pick."

He says that the Valuation Office is hoping that the introduction of the Check Challenge Appeal process

will reduce the number of frivolous claims.

The final details of Check Challenge Appeal places greater emphasis on the ratepayer ensuring that the appeal is well-founded. "Ratepayers will need to 'frontload' more than they currently do for the appeal process, both in terms of assessing opportunities and accumulating evidence," says Mr New. The ratepayer will only get one bite of the cherry.

Under the first step of the new regime, Check, the parties will agree factual evidence regarding the property concerned. "The ratepayer will be responsible for the accurate presentation of information regarding the property and the Valuation Office will reassess whether an amendment is merited," says Mr New. He warns though, if ratepayers lie they may find themselves fined.

Challenge follows if Check leads to no amendment. Mr New says that here ratepayers should expect to state the detailed grounds for the alteration and provide evidence in support.

With Appeal, it is likely that limited evidence can be brought in front of the Tribunal except for that disclosed during the Challenge phase. A fee will also be payable to take the appeal to a hearing.

The process comes with a distinct warning: if ratepayers fail to submit evidence by certain deadlines, then their appeals will be terminated instantly.



Edited by Adam Bernstein

See [tinyurl.com/zdhdad7](http://tinyurl.com/zdhdad7)



# THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE TESTED

SME Digest Editor *Adam Bernstein* writes: Every few months HMRC publishes a list of those employers it finds underpaying employees the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The most recent list was the largest ever and named 197 employers who collectively owed £465,291 to workers.

NMW, the National Living Wage for those who are 25 or older, was introduced in 1999. It is a specified minimum hourly rate of pay to which anyone aged 16 or older is entitled. NMW is presently:

- £7.20 an hour for anyone aged 25 or over;
- £6.95 an hour for anyone aged 21-24;
- £5.55 an hour for anyone aged 18-20;
- £4.00 an hour for anyone aged 16-17; and
- £3.40 an hour for an apprentice (under age 19 or in their first year).

## “THE MOST RECENT LIST WAS THE LARGEST EVER”

Lee Ashwood, a senior associate in the employment department of Eversheds says, “to most the calculation would be total pay divided by the number of hours worked. Unfortunately, it’s not that simple.”

The first step, he says, is to note that the calculation must be based on the relevant “pay reference period”. But not all pay in the reference period counts. Mr Ashwood goes into detail: “A pay reference period is the period for which an employee receives pay (assuming they are paid regularly and at least once a month). For

example, if someone is paid weekly, their pay reference period is one week. Employers then need to look at the total employees were paid before deductions for income tax and National Insurance contributions in the period in question, and then remove any payments and deductions that do not count.”

Basic salary, bonus, commission and other incentive payments based on performance, all count towards NMW, as does any accommodation allowance. But there are a number of elements of pay that do not count including pension payments or benefits in kind such as private medical insurance or other benefits; any extra pay for overtime or shift work. Only the basic rate of pay is taken into consideration for overtime worked; expenses; and any allowances or payments that are not attributable to their performance and is not part of their basic salary, for example an additional element of pay that is for London-weighting or an on-call allowance.

Establishing how many hours the employee worked is not simple either and Mr Ashwood says employers need to consider the time spent actually working, but not any rest or meal breaks during which the employee is not required to work. “It’s also important to note standby or on-call time, but only if they are required to be available at or near their place of work should they be needed; any travel time for business during normal working hours, but not commuting to and from work; and time the employee spends receiving training, whether at work or anywhere else during normal working hours.”

See [tinyurl.com/9tr2369](http://tinyurl.com/9tr2369)



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# RECRUITING WITHOUT FEAR



A recent European Court of Justice (ECJ) case involved a German who applied for jobs in which he was not really interested, writes Lee Ashwood, Senior Associate in the employment department of Eversheds. He was only after rejections which gave him an excuse to launch a discrimination claim that sought compensation. The ECJ subsequently ruled that discrimination law protection only applies where an individual has a genuine interest in the job they are applying for.

UK discrimination law provides protection to all job applicants from less favourable or unfavourable treatment because of any of the following, their: age; disability; gender reassignment; marital status or civil partnership; pregnancy or maternity; race, colour, nationality or ethnicity; religion or philosophical beliefs; gender; sexual orientation.

When recruiting, firms need a job description, an important document that may help to protect against the risk of future disputes. It should be objective, identify the main purpose of the job and set out the specific tasks that need to be completed. Allied to this is a person specification. It defines the person being sought and is where businesses commonly fall foul of discrimination laws.

When preparing an advertisement, referring to the job description and person specification will help to reduce the risk of discriminatory language being used. Have someone review the wording for you to gauge what their first impression of the job advertisement is. If you use a recruitment agency, you should ensure that your instructions to the agency are clear and non-discriminatory as you are liable for the agency's actions.

When considering applications to reduce the chances of discrimination, objective assessments should be made based on the applicant's CV or application form, with the same criteria being applied to each application.

When arranging the interview, you should ask applicants in advance whether they have any special requirements, for example to assist them with any physical impairments. Once notified of any disabilities, you will be under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to assist the applicant so that they are not put at a disadvantage when interviewed.

Where possible, interview questions should be structured and based on the application form, job description and person specification.

See [tinyurl.com/nhkpoqq](http://tinyurl.com/nhkpoqq)



## SME NEWS

### Helping businesses switch vans and trucks to electric

The Government is committing an additional £4 million to the Plug-In Van grant scheme extending the eligibility to larger electric vehicles.

Under the scheme, electric trucks above 3.5 tonnes will be eligible for grants of up to £20,000. The Plug-In Van grant has been available to small commercial vehicles of up to 3.5 tonnes since 2012, but sales of new electric vans have remained limited.

The scheme will be reviewed once 5,000 grants have been processed, or in March 2018, whichever is earlier. The grant amount is automatically deducted from the price of the vehicle by the dealer when it is purchased, and the dealership also completes all the necessary paperwork.

[tinyurl.com/bsrb5ed](http://tinyurl.com/bsrb5ed)



### Businesses urged to get ready for new £1 coin

A new campaign to support retailers and other businesses to prepare for the new £1 coin has been launched.

As part of the campaign, a new website – <http://www.thenewpoundcoin.com> – provides businesses with materials aimed to support them in their preparation for the new 12-sided coin, which comes into circulation in March 2017.

The new pound coin will be the most secure of its kind in the world, to combat counterfeiters who have around 45 million counterfeit £1 coins currently in circulation.

Businesses should train their staff on the features of the new £1 coin while also making arrangements with their bank or cash in transit provider to return

the current £1 coin and new £1 coin in separate packaging.

### Autism and employment

National Autistic Society (NAS) has launched a new campaign offering free information and tips to businesses of all sizes on employing autistic people and how they can champion their talent.

NAS research indicates that just 16% of autistic people are in full-time work, and this has stagnated over the past decade. With understanding from their employer and colleagues, as well as reasonable adjustments to the interview process and workplace, many autistic people can be a real asset to businesses.

[www.autism.org.uk/employers](http://www.autism.org.uk/employers)

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

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# CHANGES TO LTA SCHEME

*Improvements to reduce administration and encourage registration*

A number of changes to the LTA (Landbased Technician Accreditation) scheme have been announced by the Landbased Engineering, Training and Education Committee (LE-TEC).

The LTA scheme was launched to a gathering of manufacturers and dealers at the Heritage Motor Museum, in Gaydon, in December 2007. The LTA's objective is to provide a common and recognisable grading of technicians to industry-approved standards, thus supporting individual career progression and benchmarking the skill sets of service staff to the benefit of manufacturers, dealers and customers.

The initial momentum generated by the LTA launch has slowed, however, in recent years. There are estimated to be in excess of 10,500 service staff working at dealerships in the UK across farm machinery and outdoor power equipment sectors.

Currently, around 3,000 technicians are registered within the four grades of the LTA scheme which comprise Entry Level, Intermediate, Advanced and Master Technician qualification with 60 technicians registered at the top grade.

An equivalent accreditation scheme, Parlour Safe, has been developed by the Milking Equipment Association and is available for dairy equipment dealers and installers.

Arguably, the biggest challenge for the LTA scheme is to ensure compatibility between the Approved (manufacturers) schemes and those independent (mostly non-franchised) dealers who wish to enrol their staff in the LTA scheme.

The changes announced include:

- **Fast-track applications for technicians in Approved schemes;**
- **Technicians proving prior qualifications or experience can be fast-tracked to an appropriate level rather than work through the LTA registration sequence;**
- **Simplification of registration fees and staged payments;**
- **EngTech registration now only mandatory at Master level;**
- **External training sourced from multiple providers by independent dealers now accepted by LTA;**
- **Retention of non-active LTA registration allowable when a technician leaves the industry for a period.**



Perhaps the biggest change is that manufacturers or suppliers with an Approved LTA scheme will now pay a licence fee. The revenue raised will be ploughed back into the LTA for the promotion of career opportunities and recognition of excellence within the industry.

LE-TEC is a cross industry group representing AEA, BAGMA and IAgRE, the licensed body of the Engineering Council. It has responsibility for developing industry apprenticeships, promoting career opportunities and establishing career paths for technicians and parts staff.

LTA was promoted by AEA/BAGMA at SALTEX in November, by LE-TEC at the Ag Careers Live Event in Coventry, also in November, and will be promoted at the upcoming LAMMA exhibition.

## WIEDENMANN DEALERS VISIT GERMANY

*Training event in Grassau*

Wiedemann UK recently took 54 dealer representatives on a training mission to Grassau, in southern Germany, to see new machines and developments in its fleet.

Taking centre stage were the company's latest additions: the Terra Spike SL is for fine turf and tractors from 20hp. Weighing 470kg, it tines down to 210mms.

Dealer staff from across Britain and Ireland were welcomed by Wiedemann's elite team of engineers and developers before receiving detailed briefings on all the machines.



**Wiedemann dealers get up close in Grassau**

# SALES SKILLS SUCCESS FOR ARIENS

## *Dealer training event tour completed*

Ariens Company took its Sales Skills event on tour in the autumn with great success.

Led by John Horn, Ariens Company Senior Vice President for International Sales and Marketing, Sales Skills is designed to assist dealers in creating the right conditions for selling, selling techniques, and helping dealers forge long-lasting relationships with their customers. Each event also provided dealers with the opportunity to share ideas on how to improve the customer experience at the dealership, across the Ariens, Countax, ECHO and Westwood brands.

“This is the first time we’ve hosted an event of this kind in the UK and we’ve been delighted with the positive feedback we’ve had from dealers,” says John Horn. “We’re already planning Sales Skills Level 2 for next year, which will build upon the themes of Level 1 along with helping dealers deliver structured marketing campaigns in their local area. We found that the dealers really valued the informal tone of these events which encouraged more participation.”

Notably, dealers learned how to engage with customers and address their needs effectively, rather than just relying on the ‘hard-sell’ techniques often used, and in turn helping to differentiate themselves from the competition. Emphasis on highlighting the value that ‘bricks and mortar’ dealerships can deliver became the focus of the event.

## **Dealer feedback**

Dealer Adam Bennett of Albany Farm and Garden Machinery Ltd, who attended, said, “It was a very informative day and certainly thought-provoking. When I drove back into the yard I immediately commissioned both of our vans to be re-decaled and the shop front has been painted this week, a job that had been put off for too long!”

Michael Adamson of F G Adamson & Son said, “The Ariens Sales Skills course was very informative and served as a very useful reminder that today’s customers expect the highest of standards. In today’s retail environment a dealer needs to not only meet but endeavour to exceed customer expectations. John’s presentation was packed full of reminders of how to do just that. John Horn is an excellent presenter and it was very refreshing to see someone so senior in an organisation giving this type of presentation, especially as it wasn’t in any way biased towards the Ariens family of products. Many other firms would use external presenters who really don’t understand the lawn and garden industry, so the day was both informative and relevant.”

The Sales Skills events were well attended at five locations across the UK, from Countax House, to RAF Cosford in Shropshire, Chepstow Racecourse, Kinross in Perthshire and Ripley Castle in North Yorkshire.



The event included classroom learning and outdoor machinery demos

## 28 NEW CLAAS APPRENTICES

### *Training begun at Reaseheath and SRUC Barony*

Twenty eight students recently made their first step towards a career as agricultural machinery technicians, at Induction Days held at Reaseheath College in Cheshire and SRUC Barony near Dumfries, for the latest group of apprentices to join the CLAAS Agricultural Technician Apprenticeship scheme.

The new intake of students come from CLAAS dealerships throughout the UK and Ireland. It is in order to meet the high demand for places on its Apprenticeship scheme that CLAAS is the only major machinery manufacturer to offer apprenticeship courses both in England and Scotland.

Of the 16 students at Reaseheath and 12 Barony students, over the next four years one will be studying on the specific Part Apprenticeship course created two years ago and the remainder will work towards achieving an Extended Diploma in Landbased Technology.

These are high-level vocational qualifications that are provided by IMI Awards, which specialises in providing qualifications and accreditations for the automotive and related industries. It has worked closely with CLAAS to ensure that the courses meet its rigorous training requirements.

Over the course of their apprenticeships, the students will be continuously assessed for their competence and skills, using both work-based evidence and e-portfolios.

For the first three years, the apprentices will receive comprehensive training while at college, as well as CLAAS product and general technical training while working with their dealership. They will also spend time training at the CLAAS UK headquarters in Saxham, Suffolk, and for those selected, may have the opportunity to visit the CLAAS Group headquarters in



Harsewinkel, Germany.

In their final, fourth year, the Technician Apprentices will also undertake additional advanced technical and industry training, so that by the time they qualify they will be eligible for LTA 2 status.

This is just the start of their training with CLAAS. Having qualified, the young technicians will then have access to ongoing training and development aligned to the Landbased Technician Accreditation (LTA) scheme.

Having gained LTA 2 status, with further training and dealer experience, they will have the opportunity to reach product specific LTA 3 (Master Mechanic) status, before going on to the highest LTA 4 (Master Technician) level.

## APPRENTICES HELPED BY MAKITA

### *Supporting rural Lake District scheme*

Makita is providing support for an innovative apprenticeship scheme that will provide a comprehensive grounding in rural maintenance techniques to six young people in the Lake District.

Organised by the Rusland Valley and Fells Landscape Partnership, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the three-year apprenticeship is designed to develop vital practical skills and the knowledge required for a career in the rural sector. With additional support from Makita UK, Electricity North West and local hardware distributor, Thomas Graham, the six new apprentices will be working throughout the South Lakeland landscape assisting with woodland restoration, wildlife conservation and heritage projects.

The team are fully equipped with Makita machines including brush-cutters, chainsaws, safety equipment and accessories.

“Makita is proud to be the preferred brand of machinery for the six new apprentices in the Rusland Horizons project and importantly we will provide on-site safety and operator training

whenever it is required,” says Mark Earles, Makita UK Contracts and OPE Manager.

Claire Green, Rusland Horizon’s Skills and Training Coordinator says, “It’s fabulous to have this opportunity to provide skills and training to local young people who are so enthusiastic and passionate about protecting this local landscape. Everyone involved with the scheme is very excited to welcome our new apprentice team and grateful to Makita, Thomas Graham and Electricity North West for their support and involvement.”



# PRODUCTS

## CONTACT:

07929 438213

@ [steve@servicedealer.co.uk](mailto:steve@servicedealer.co.uk)

## COMMERCIAL

### HAYTER LAUNCHES ALL-NEW HARRIER PRO 41

*Dedicated 41cm Professional rear-roller mower for smaller areas*

Hayter has launched the new Harrier 41 Pro. The machine is the only dedicated 41cm professional rear-roller mower, making it suitable for commercial gardeners and landscapers maintaining smaller gardens and difficult to access areas. Available from spring 2017 the Harrier 41 Pro joins the larger Harrier 48 Pro and 56 Pro models.

Based on the latest generation Harrier 41, Hayter says all aspects of the design and construction are focused on durability, cutting efficiency, and the ability to provide the classic striped finish on any lawn.

The die cast aluminum construction, designed to withstand the pressures of professional mowing, is powered by a Honda GCV-160 OHC engine. The heavy-duty front wheels are specifically designed for professional use and a front bumper protects the wheels as well as the deck. Additional handle bar supports on the cutter deck further increase rigidity and strength.

A high-performance cut and collection system, designed using aerospace technology, ensures

performance in a variety of different environments all year round. The Harrier 41's new patent pending Vari-Pitch technology varies the angle of the mower as the user changes the height of cut, increasing airflow and improving collection in challenging cutting situations.

The Trim Side enables users to mow around borders, retaining walls and raised flower beds with ease. The unit also has a new split rear-roller which counter rotates so it is easier to make tighter turns without leaving any turf markings.

The mower can be used to cut and collect or rear discharge grass clippings, and is equipped with a 60-litre grass bag with integrated cover which drafts dust and debris away from the operator.

The mower has an RRP of £855 and comes with a two-year commercial warranty.



## DOMESTIC / COMMERCIAL

### EGO EXPANDS OFFERING WITH MULTI-TOOL

*Five-head unit*

As part of its new product line-up for the 2017 season, EGO has announced new products that are more suited for professional and municipal applications, while also offering something for domestic gardeners.

Until now the EGO Power+

range has consisted of five key product groups (mowers, line trimmers, chainsaws, blowers and hedgetrimmers) but for 2017 the company has announced something completely new with its multi-tool, which features five heads that are easy to attach and change. The five heads consist of:

- A 38cm brushless line trimmer, with a new rapid reload bump head that makes replacing the line quick and easy;
- A 30cm brush cutter with a three-sided reversible blade

for cutting tough brush;

- A hedgetrimmer with a maximum length of 160cm that folds down to 99cm. It has 12 cutting angles with a quick release handle that allows locking into position without having to remove pins;
- A pole saw with a 10" guide bar and chain, and a hook for pulling down loose branches;
- An edging tool which has an adjustable depth wheel and skip plate to go between concrete slabs and the grass to protect the blade.



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[www.mountfieldlawnmowers.co.uk](http://www.mountfieldlawnmowers.co.uk)

**Mountfield**

# NEW GENERATION OF KUBOTA TRACTORS

## 95 to 113hp M5001 Series

Kubota Corporation has launched its new M5001 Series, a range of 95hp to 113hp tractors, powered by a four-cylinder V3800 Kubota engine.

The M5001 Series has been introduced to replace and succeed the company's previous M8540 and M9960 models.

When designing this tractor, the company focused on four fundamental aspects of the tractor that would enable it to successfully carry out any daily job in the field. These were driving convenience, the ease of use, the versatility of the tractor and its manoeuvrability.

The launch of the M5001 Series completes the renewal of the M Series, which started with the introduction of the Flagship M7001 Series, introduced to target the 130HP to 170HP sector.

The M5001 Series is the first to incorporate a CRS (Common Rail System) equipped with a urea catalyst (SCR), a system to recirculate exhaust gases with water



refrigeration (EGR), a diesel particulate filter (DPF) and a diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC). The company says the combination of these technologies optimises the individual operation of each one of them and reduces power consumption. In addition, this 16-valve engine meets strict emission control requirements imposed by Europe in the last stage of emissions known as Phase 4.

### Manoeuvrability and operability

The tractor has been specifically designed for jobs that demand excellent manoeuvrability and a demanding operability in jobs with power take-off. The use of the two programmable revolution memories, coupled with the electronic management of speed, allow the working speed to be kept constant.

In addition, the 40-ECO transmission with six synchronised gears, with dual speed High-Lo technology, allows farmers and contractors to change gear directly, gently and quickly. The electro-hydraulic reverser, which avoids using the clutch, provides a fast and gradual change in direction.

The Ultra Grand Cab II offers vision of almost 360°. This panoramic visibility is increased thanks to the sunroof with a sliding sun visor. This, together with a large range of equipment, ensures maximum comfort and high levels of productivity throughout the year.

The tractor also features high-power lights that allow working at night, and the storage spaces and doors have been optimised, with continuous glass and with the possibility of entering from both sides safely.

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# FOLLOW THE CONTOURS

## HE-VA updates Disc Rollers

HE-VA has updated its disc roller range to improve contour following and allow more precise cultivation.

Originally launched in 2003, the HE-VA Disc Roller is a shallow disc cultivator on UK farms. While the new Disc Roller Contour uses the same proven disc elements, it also now incorporates the company's tried and tested Special Active Transfer (SAT) system from its Roller range. This allows the machine to follow field contours and ensures even consolidation across the full working width of the machine.

Precise depth control and uniform soil movement across the operational width are vital if employing reduced tillage or creating stale seedbeds for blackgrass control. The new SAT system on the 2017 Disc Roller Contour makes this possible, even on undulating fields.

The model sizes available in the new Contour range have changed to allow machines to tie in with guidance and Controlled Traffic Farming (CTF) systems. Disc section working widths of 3.25, 4.25, 5.25, 6.25 and 7.75m are available, with each machine utilising a press roller 0.25m wider than the disc section to ensure an



even, consolidated finish.

The Disc roller also incorporates hydraulic depth adjustment and an automatic angle adjustment system, to ensure optimum disc angle for different working depths.

To ensure the machines are equally effective across a variety of weather conditions, 75mm more clearance has also been added between each row of discs and the roller, to stop blockages even in damp conditions.

# SULKY SPREADS ITS OPTIONS

## New additions for X40+ and X50+ fertiliser spreaders

Sulky UK showcased two new options for its X40+ and X50+ fertiliser spreaders at the CropTec exhibition: a remotely operated rolling cover which simplifies loading operations; and a hydraulically operated border deflector that gives added



protection to field margins.

The new hydraulically-operated rolling action cover can be deployed remotely from the tractor cab, simplifying loading operations, which is particularly useful when working without assistance.

The new border deflector supports spreading from the very edge of the field, with the flow shutter closed on the border side. The deflector improves border-controlled spreading, and enhances Sulky's TRIBORD 3D border device which allows remote changes to fertiliser rates

when spreading up to and onto headlands.

The company has also improved the compatibility of its ISOBUS-controlled equipment to include universal terminals from Case IH (AFS), New Holland Agriculture (Intelliview IV) and Trimble (CFX).

All X40+ and X50+ spreaders are available with ISOBUS, so section control and rate adjustment functions will now be compatible with most terminals, improving efficiency and reducing the number of screens that are required in-cab.

## COMMERCIAL

# SMART MANAGEMENT FROM PELLENC

*Charge up to 10 batteries simultaneously*



Pellenc has announced the launch of an intelligent smart Battery Park Management (BMS) system, which will allow users to charge up to 10 batteries simultaneously.

Etesia UK – the official UK and Ireland distributor – has found that users are now using multiple Pellenc batteries that require recharging overnight, as Les Malin, operations director explains:

“When operators previously used multiple batteries, it meant having a series of chargers all requiring individual 13-amp sockets on a bench taking up valuable space, but also using unsafe extension leads or adaptors. The BMS centralises battery management of all Pellenc batteries allowing a maximum of 10 chargers, two of which can be rapid chargers, to be housed in one secure and safe metal cabinet with only one mains plug required.”

On the front of the cabinet is a user-friendly touch pad that allows the operator to individually control all of the batteries’ charging input. You can choose from standard pre-programmed or maintenance charges, and enter into the system, the cost of electricity and cost of petrol.

Over the following weeks and months, the system will calculate the savings made, both in fuel and electricity, while also showing the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that has been offset.

## COMMERCIAL

# CARRY TOOLS, KEEP EMISSIONS LOW

*Avant launches single-speed unit*

Avant Tecno has announced the introduction of a new, low-emission model within its 7 Series of compact tool carriers to meet a demand for a cost-effective equivalent to the 760.

The 755 is powered by the same Tier 4 compliant Kohler direct injection diesel engine as fitted to the company’s top-of-the-range 760i machine. The company says this engine not only ensures quiet running but also uses 20% less fuel than the 750 model.

The low emissions have been achieved by the fitment of a diesel oxidation catalyst which, in combination with the use of ultra-low-sulphur fuel, eliminates the need for serviceable parts in the exhaust system.

In addition, the first oil change is only required after 400 hours and, due to the design of the engine, there is no requirement for oil top-ups between services. The engine is also equipped with CAN bus technology and an electronic control unit.

This new machine, which rides on slightly smaller tyres than the 760, develops maximum torque at 1,200rpm which ensures powerful performance and an ability to operate attachments at low rpm.



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# EVENTS 2017

## JANUARY 2017

- 3-5 Oxford Farming Conference  
[www.ofc.org.uk](http://www.ofc.org.uk)
- 17-19 BTME 2017, Harrogate International Centre  
[www.btme.org.uk](http://www.btme.org.uk)
- 18-19 LAMMA 2017, East of England Showground  
[www.lammashow.co.uk](http://www.lammashow.co.uk)

## FEBRUARY 2017

- 4-9 Golf Industry Show, Orlando, Florida  
[www.golfindustryshow.com](http://www.golfindustryshow.com)
- 5-9 Spring Fair 2017, Birmingham NEC  
[www.springfair.com](http://www.springfair.com)
- 7-9 Doe Show 2017, Ulting, Essex  
[www.ernestdoe.com](http://www.ernestdoe.com)
- 8-9 Executive Hire Show, Ricoh Arena, Coventry  
[www.executivehireshow.co.uk](http://www.executivehireshow.co.uk)
- 9-11 FTMTA Farm Machinery Show, Naas, Co Kildare  
[fimt.ie](http://fimt.ie)
- 14-16 World Ag Expo, Tulare, California  
[www.worldagexpo.com](http://www.worldagexpo.com)
- 14-15 Totally Tools, Ricoh Arena, Coventry  
[www.totallydiy.co.uk/content](http://www.totallydiy.co.uk/content)

## MARCH 2017

- 15-17 Agritechnica Asia, Bangkok, Thailand  
[www.agritechnica-asia.com/](http://www.agritechnica-asia.com/)
- 18-19 West of England Game Fair, Shepton Mallet, Somerset  
[www.westcountrygamefair.co.uk](http://www.westcountrygamefair.co.uk)
- 24-9/4 Ideal Home Show, Olympia, London  
[www.idealhomeshow.co.uk](http://www.idealhomeshow.co.uk)
- 26-02/3 SIMA, Paris Nord Villepinte, France  
[en.simaonline.com](http://en.simaonline.com)

## APRIL 2017

- 11 AEA AGM Conference & Luncheon, London  
[www.aea.uk.com](http://www.aea.uk.com)
- 13 CountryTastic, Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire  
[www.threecounties.co.uk/countrytastic](http://www.threecounties.co.uk/countrytastic)
- 25-27 The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC  
[www.cvshow.com](http://www.cvshow.com)
- 20-23 Harrogate Spring Flower Show, Harrogate, North Yorkshire  
[www.flowershow.org.uk/spring-show-2017](http://www.flowershow.org.uk/spring-show-2017)

## MAY 2017

- 1 North Somerset Show, Wraxall, North Somerset  
[www.nsas.org.uk](http://www.nsas.org.uk)
- 10-13 Balmoral Show, Belfast  
[www.balmoralshow.co.uk](http://www.balmoralshow.co.uk)
- 13-14 Nottinghamshire County Show, Newark, Nottinghamshire  
[www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com/](http://www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com/)
- 23-27 Chelsea Flower Show, London  
[www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events)
- 18-20 Devon County Show, Clyst St Mary, Exeter, Devon  
[www.devoncountyshow.co.uk](http://www.devoncountyshow.co.uk)
- 24-25 Grassland & Muck, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire  
[www.grasslandevent.co.uk](http://www.grasslandevent.co.uk)
- 27-28 Hertfordshire County Show, Redbourn, Hertfordshire  
[www.hertsshow.com](http://www.hertsshow.com)
- 29 Surrey County Show, Guildford, Surrey  
[www.surreycountyshow.co.uk/surrey-county-show/](http://www.surreycountyshow.co.uk/surrey-county-show/)
- 31-1/6 Staffordshire County Show, Stafford, Staffordshire  
[www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show/](http://www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show/)
- 31-1/6 Suffolk County Show  
[www.suffolkshow.co.uk/](http://www.suffolkshow.co.uk/)
- 31-3/6 Royal Bath & West Show  
[www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show](http://www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show)

## JUNE 2017

- 2-4 Gardening Scotland, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh  
[www.gardeningscotland.com](http://www.gardeningscotland.com)
- 4 Rutland Show, Oakham, Rutland  
[www.rutlandcountyshow.com](http://www.rutlandcountyshow.com)
- 8-10 Royal Cornwall Show, Wadebridge, Cornwall  
[www.royalcornwallshow.org](http://www.royalcornwallshow.org)
- 8-10 South of England Show, Ardingly, West Sussex  
[www.seas.org.uk/south-of-england-show](http://www.seas.org.uk/south-of-england-show)
- 14-15 Cereals 2017, Boothby Graffoe, Nr Lincoln, Lincolnshire  
[www.cerealsevent.co.uk](http://www.cerealsevent.co.uk)
- 15-18 BBC Gardeners' World Live, Birmingham NEC  
[www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com](http://www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com)
- 16-18 Three Counties Show, Malvern, Worcestershire  
[www.threecounties.co.uk/threecounties](http://www.threecounties.co.uk/threecounties)
- 20-21 Royal Cheshire County Show, Knutsford, Cheshire  
[www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk](http://www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk)
- 20-22 Salon du Végétal, Nantes, France  
[www.salonduvegetal.com](http://www.salonduvegetal.com)
- 21-22 Lincolnshire Show, Grange-de-Lings, Lincolnshire  
[www.lincolnshireshowground.co.uk/whats-on/event/lincolnshire-show-2017](http://www.lincolnshireshowground.co.uk/whats-on/event/lincolnshire-show-2017)
- 22-25 Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh  
[www.royalhighlandshow.org](http://www.royalhighlandshow.org)
- 25 Derbyshire County Show, Elvaston, Nr Derby, Derbyshire  
[www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk](http://www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk)
- 25 Royal Isle of Wight County Show, Newport, Isle of Wight  
[www.riwas.org.uk/](http://www.riwas.org.uk/)
- 28-29 Royal Norfolk Show, Costessey, Norwich, Norfolk  
[www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk](http://www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk)



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# STIHL®

# THE DISAPPEARING DEALERSHIP

## *Lessons from a curious tale*

**R**eid Teaney is not happy. Mr Teaney is, or rather was, a customer of Young's KC Mower Centre, a family-run garden machinery dealer in Kansas City, MO where he had been a loyal customer for over 40 years.

In the autumn (or fall as we should call it), he dropped his snow-blower off for its annual service at the Toro sales and service dealer that had been serving the local community since 1968. Puzzled when he heard no more after a few weeks, and unable to get a reply on the phone, he drove out to Young's main road site in the Willow Creek district of KC.

"The building was empty. All signage had been removed. A note saying 'Closed for renovation' was fixed to the door. But what was shocking, was all the equipment had gone, not only the new stuff but all the repair machines.

"Everything had vanished and the building was totally vacant," he said. "I wouldn't have minded if they'd contacted me to say they were going out of business and asked me to pick up my machine."

An investigation by the local Fox News channel has proved fruitless. The owners have gone to ground, it appears.

A resigned Mr Teaney says, "People go out of business all the time. I'm not terribly happy about the way I've been treated."

This curious tale, which may hide facts unknown, nonetheless does highlight the fragility of the relationship between retailer and customer. In short, the actions of one rogue dealer can impact on the reputation of the rest.

Customer review sites for Young's speak of "awesome staff", "exceptional service" and "a long-time family business which I prefer to support as opposed to the 'big box' chains".

For family-run businesses, particularly those long-established, their most valuable 'currency' is reputation – something that's built up in layers over time. Good service often goes unnoticed, but the moment something goes wrong – then, boy oh boy, the fan can get hit by the nasty stuff.

Imagine a new dealer taking over the old Young's premises? The company would be hit by an immediate 'points-deduction' when they opened 'the season'. Whatever they said and did, their reputation would have to be earned over-time – especially in the light of what had gone before.

Nobody needs reminding that today customer feedback can be both instantaneous and often unfair. In the days of old we would either get a phone call or a letter, usually written in green, with the opening gambit 'Dear Sir. I am a retired engineer...'. Both the phone call and the letter would have been relatively private – and would have been sorted. Today those 'letters' are up there for all to see. Our 'dirty washing' is now well and truly visible.

Against that, customer reviews can bolster and reinforce reputations in a way not possible 10 or 20 years ago. Review sites like Checkatrade can provide information to a public unsure of who to mend their mower, lay a patio or put up a new fence. Many, many people want to do business with small outfits; they're fed up with the high-pressure salesmen, call-centres in foreign lands and interminable waits to speak to a real person. They want personal service they can trust, at a cost that is fair.

But perception often gets in the way. As they say, 'perception is everything', so anything that can knock down perceptions, particularly of the negative kind, has to be welcomed.

What happened across the pond to Mr Teaney and the customers of Young's is the stuff of *Rogue Traders*. However, what the recent *Service Dealer* conference proved once again is that independent dealers are more than able to hold their own in this rapidly changing retail climate. They are resourceful, aware and in-tune with customer needs – which is all you can ask.



# JIM GREEN



MOW-VED ON!

## 100 MOWERS REMOVED FROM OHIO MAN'S YARD

*Local 'lawnmower man' cited for improper storage of combustibles*

More than 100 pedestrian and ride-on lawnmowers were removed from the front yard of a property in Lorain, Ohio recently. Owned by Daniel Esterle, also known locally as the "lawnmower man," he was cited by authorities with having combustible vehicles improperly stored.

"It's good that this is finally getting cleaned up," Building, Housing and Planning Director Leon Mason told local paper *The Chronicle*. "It really shouldn't get to this point, but he refused to comply with the ordinances and abate the issues, so we had to come in and

remove these mowers."

Several truckloads of items were taken to storage. Mr Esterle had a limited amount of time to claim them before they were scrapped.

He said he kept the mowers as part of an ongoing argument with the city.

"My back yard and basement flood because of faulty work they did back in the late 1980s," he told *The Chronicle*. "I had these mowers in my back yard in complete accordance with any rules and then they got flooded real bad one time, so I moved them to the front yard and that was it."

Mr Esterle said an ordinance City Council passed recently meant he couldn't keep the mowers on his property anymore, but he didn't see what was wrong with them.

Local Mayor, Chase Ritenauer, said, however, that removing the mowers was a good call for the whole community. "It shows that the legislation passed does make a difference."



WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

## SUSAN SETTLES IN AT SERVICE DEALER

*New Sales Manager takes up role*

The Ad Plain, owner of *Service Dealer* and *TurfPro*, is delighted that Susan Pallett has joined the team as Sales Manager.

Susan is in charge of advertising sales across *Service Dealer* magazine and the *Weekly Update*, as well as on our sister *TurfPro Digital Weekly Briefing*.

Susan has previously worked in outdoor advertising for 12 years, based in London, selling giant posters to blue-chip advertisers. She has wide media experience of working in radio, TV, music and book publishing.

Susan took up her role in the autumn so many of you will have met her at Saltex and the *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards.

Susan says, "I'm really enjoying the challenge of working on *Service Dealer* and *TurfPro*. It's been fantastic to be thrown in at the deep end with these major industry events coming so soon after I joined!"

Susan can be contacted on 07973 507174 or [Susan@theadplain.com](mailto:Susan@theadplain.com)

Owner of *Service Dealer*, Duncan Murray-Clarke says, "We're delighted that Susan has strengthened our team here at The Ad Plain. It's currently a very exciting time at *Service Dealer*. We have really invested in the magazine's database and as a result have added 57% onto the circulation over the past two years, meaning we're reaching pretty much (if not all) of the nation's dealers (groundcare and agricultural).

"We thank all our readers and advertisers for their continued support and we look forward to an exciting future as your Voice of the Industry."



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