

# SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

NOV / DEC 2016

# ZERO HOUR

*We talk to one distributor who says dealers are seeing real progress with zero-turn mowers*



**X-CUT  
INNOVATION**

PAVEL HAJMAN  
HUSQVARNA

- ❖ Conference & Awards 2016
- ❖ Kioti UK's new operation
- ❖ APF report
- ❖ Krone & Lemken demo days

- ❖ SME digest
- ❖ GLEE review
- ❖ Business Monitor
- ❖ New products



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# EDITOR'S MESSAGE

**W**elcome to the November/December 2016 issue of *Service Dealer*.

There are a couple of significant dates for your diary in November. First, SALTEX will be upon us at the beginning of the month. The void which its moving left behind in September was acutely felt this year, with the month seemingly overrun with dealer days and demonstration events across the country. It can't be helped, of course, as that's the perfect time of the year for manufacturers to be showing new products to dealers and stocking decisions to be made. But it certainly meant significant time away from the business and miles clocked up.

Not that a visit to the IOG's show is without merit for dealers at this time of year. It's just that for our sector, its primary function has shifted somewhat. Now it's more of a meeting place to discuss the issues of the day – the value of which shouldn't be underestimated.

Significant benefit for dealers this month will also come from attending the *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards on 17th November at the Oxford Belfry. Bigger and better this year, I do hope to see as many of you as

possible at what's shaping up to be a truly valuable and enjoyable day.

With our new Breakout Sessions this year, allowing dealers to shape the day to their own wants and needs, we believe the event is set to deliver outstanding benefit to all who attend.



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## INDUSTRY

# HUSQVARNA TO INCREASE ROBOTICS PRODUCTION

## *Additional investment for Newton Aycliffe*

To strengthen the ability to serve the growing robotic mower market, Husqvarna Group has announced it will increase the capacity for its Newton Aycliffe factory in the North of England.

At the same time the Group will expand and build up capacity at the Husqvarna Group site in Vrbno, in the Czech Republic.

“We expect the overall robotics market to continue to be a fast-growing segment in the coming years,” said Kai Wärn, President and CEO for the Husqvarna Group.

“Our aim is to maintain our leadership position by providing the most reliable and efficient products, giving the end users a great result. Beyond the current success with Husqvarna and Gardena, we also plan to introduce robotic mowers for the McCulloch brand for the 2017 season.”

Additional investments are planned for the Newton Aycliffe factory in order to increase robotic manufacturing capacity. In parallel, Husqvarna Group will expand and build manufacturing capability and capacity of robotics at the Husqvarna Group site in Vrbno, to be a complement from the 2018 season.

“Due to the strategic importance of this product, we see the need to manufacture robotic mowers in more than one site to meet the growing market and limit the risk with only one factory. In order to leverage the many years of knowledge and experience, the Newton Aycliffe factory will take on a lead manufacturing engineering role for robotics in the Group,” said Kai Wärn.



Husqvarna Automower

## DEALERS

## RIVERLEA MERGES TWO BRANCHES

### *‘Business as usual’ as Crymych depot closes*

CLAAS dealer, Riverlea, has merged its two main depots in Crymych and Whitland, with the Crymych branch closing.

In a video posted to the dealership’s website company owner, David Hill, said that its two main



depots were joining together to form one major centre. However, he pledged that all the staff from both of those branches will continue exactly as before and that the transition “will take place over a slow period of time over the coming months”.

He also said the company is exploring the possibility of satellite sites to provide further coverage, but essentially it is “business as usual”.

As well as the Crymych and Whitland branches, Riverlea has another depot in Llandow in the Vale of Glamorgan.

David went on to say that, “All of our customers can rest assured that we will continue to offer the very best service – whether this is through our parts department, our service department or our sales team.”

## DEALERS

# GODFREYS SELLS PROFESSIONAL TURF BUSINESS *To Burden Bros Agri Ltd and Farol Ltd*

Godfreys (Sevenoaks) Ltd has sold its professional turf business to fellow dealers Burden Bros Agri Ltd and Farol Ltd.

Terms have not been disclosed, but the decision by Godfreys' directors has the full agreement and approval of John Deere Limited, and is supported by the other dealers involved.

The deal means that the Godfreys business based at Hailsham in East Sussex has transferred to Burden Bros, and that located at Wokingham in Berkshire has transferred to Farol.

Godfreys continues to trade as a main homeowner dealer from its premises at Otford Road, Sevenoaks in Kent, along with the Tylers garden equipment trade business that was

acquired in June 2015. Godfreys retains its John Deere homeowner dealer franchise at Sevenoaks.

The majority of Godfreys staff from the Wokingham and Hailsham branches and those directly involved in the John Deere professional turf business have transferred to the new dealerships.

Farol retains the Wokingham premises, while Burden Bros has relocated the Hailsham business to its outlets in East Sussex and Kent.

"I am extremely proud of what we, as a team at Godfreys, have achieved over the past few years," said Director Peter Bateman.

"We have built a strong turf business throughout the South-East of England. In order to continue building on this success, I and my

fellow directors believe that it's necessary to operate as a combined John Deere agricultural and turf dealership, as both Burden Bros Agri and Farol are able to do.

"Equally, the Godfreys homeowner and Tylers trade businesses are very much aligned and have many opportunities to develop and grow together.

"All our homeowner, commercial and trade customers can be confident that this deal will continue to deliver the best possible sales, service and parts support.

"We believe this decision is the right one for our people and the company as a whole."



Peter Bateman

## INDUSTRY

# GEORGE BROWNS TO IMPORT AGRIMETAL BLOWERS

## *Taken over from John Shaw Machinery*

Dealers George Browns Ltd, who operate from branches in Chesham, Leighton Buzzard, Haddenham, Dunmow, Buckingham and Daventry are now officially the UK distributors of AgriMetal Blowers.

Steve Brown, Groundcare Sales Representative at George Browns, told *Service Dealer*, "We used to deal with John Shaw Machinery, which was the UK distributor. We've had massive success with these machines for the past six years, as they require very little aftercare due to being built sturdily and simply.



"Since John Shaw machinery has been bought by TORO/Reesink, it has stopped importing AgriMetal blowers, which put us in a tricky situation. We believe the product can do well in the market so we want to continue supplying it – and we have a duty to our long-standing customers to look after the machines we've supplied.

"We did bring a few in by air freight but it became quite a costly exercise. Thus, we've been in contact with AgriMetal, based in Canada, and it's agreed to continue distribution directly through us by shipping in container loads, saving the transport costs."

Steve continued, "We would like dealers who are interested in supplying the machine, to contact Peter Hopkinson, Branch Manager at Chesham on 01494 782334, so that we can create a small dealer network.

"We're very aware that dealers like to protect their own areas, just as we protect ours, so enquiries which come in to us will be distributed to the most appropriate dealer."

## APPOINTMENTS

# RON MILLER JOINS HAYES GM

## 'Retiree' joins North Devon dealership

Well-known industry figure Ron Miller, has joined Dealer of the Year winner James Hayes' garden machinery dealership.

With branches in South Molton and Barnstaple, Hayes Garden Machinery won the Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year title at last year's *Service Dealer Awards*.

Ron Miller, who won *Service Dealer's* Lifetime Achievement Award last year, has had a long career in the industry, 'retiring' recently from GGP.

Ron, who has relocated to North Devon, said that following his retirement he had been approached by two manufacturers who felt he may be of help to them in various forms. "Of course, I was flattered by the interest," he said, "and it was difficult to refuse either challenge as the fire had returned to my belly and ego. I realised I definitely wasn't ready for retirement but would it be ethical to join another manufacturer after a successful and enjoyable tenure at GGP? Also I had to remember my promise to Mrs Miller to be away from home less.

"Then I heard from James Hayes, whom I'd met for the first time last year. Having had talks previously, James offered me a part-time job. It just seemed to fit. I was going back to my roots in retail and James mentioned there'd be other projects he'd like me to get involved in.

"So, here I am, aged 69 and enjoying the involvement – apart from the electronic point of sale 'till' system which drives me mental! Whatever

happened to good old-fashioned duplicate invoice books or paragon machines?!"

### Specialist dealer network

Ron continued, "It's a good young team at Hayes Garden Machinery led by a talented entrepreneur in James Hayes and it's confirmed my long-held belief in the importance of specialist dealers and that we should do everything in our power to preserve the dealer network in whichever way possible.

"Many of the public don't know it or understand how vital good dealerships are to them in the sales and after sales process. It's time to fly the flag much higher than ever and blow the specialist trumpet much louder.

"We need to tell the public all the good reasons why they should visit their local dealer and why they should use them for their machinery needs and service back-up. We need to big-up our products, our people, our service and back-up and most of all our industry must start really believing in itself.

"We have many excellent dealers who are investing in the future, new premises, training staff, computerised systems and revitalised attitude towards the business. This isn't a 'quick buck' industry and never will be; there's only room for serious players who are in it for the long run. These are the 'specialists' who need the support of each other.

"Working together for the long-term good of the industry is paramount."



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## INDUSTRY

# LELY TURFCARE ACQUISITION COMPLETE

*Now known as Reesink Turfcare in the UK*

Royal Reesink NV has completed the acquisition of the turfcare activities of Lely in the UK, Ireland and Denmark.

These activities mainly comprise the distribution of Toro machines for the maintenance of golf courses and public green spaces and TYM compact tractors (UK, IRE).

Gerrit van der Scheer, CEO of Royal Reesink, commented, "This acquisition adds the UK, Ireland and

Denmark to the geographical spread of our activities and strengthens our position in the market for machines for the maintenance of golf courses and of public green spaces (turfcare). Going forward, the activities will continue under the name Reesink Turfcare."

Alexander van der Lely, CEO of Lely Holding, said: "The sale of our turfcare activities in the UK, Ireland and Denmark is another step in our



Gerrit van der Scheer, CEO of Royal Reesink, left, shakes hands with CEO of Lely Holding, Alexander van der Lely

strategy of focusing exclusively on our core activity, milking systems and raw feed production. The distribution of Toro machines and TYM compact tractors is in good hands at Royal Reesink."

## DEALERS

# KRAMP AND RIPON FARM SERVICES NEW AGREEMENT

*For Rock Oil supply*

Kramp UK Ltd, Ripon Farm Services and Rock Oil have announced a new supply agreement for the Ripon Farm Services group.

Kramp will supply all Ripon Farm Services branches with Rock Oil products as part of the extended and growing partnership between the two companies.

Rock Oil, established in 1928, is a strategic supplier for Kramp UK Ltd, and produces 250 million litres of oil per year. Although Rock Oil is well known for its motorcycle products, it is less well known that 20% of its production is for the agricultural market. Kramp says this means it is expert at producing high quality

agricultural oil and lubrication products.

Group Parts Manager at Ripon Farm Services, Tim Petfield, said, "We can now offer top quality oil from a genuine A quality brand to sit alongside our fantastic range of John Deere lubrication products. Our partnership with Kramp means we can sell with the confidence that we have the logistics and technical support necessary to maintain our high service standards."

Ripon Farm Services has seven locations across Yorkshire. It has represented the John Deere brand since 1982 and now has 182 employees.



"L-R: Phil Gregg, Aftersales Director Ripon Farm Services, Stephen Falcus, Kramp Account Manager, Tim Petfield, Group Parts Manager, Ripon Farm Services, Richard Charnley, Rock Oil

## APPOINTMENTS

# BARRUS ADDS TO TEAM

## *New social media and PR coordinator*

E P Barrus has announced the appointment of Francesca Toman as Social Media and PR Coordinator for the Marketing Services Department.

Fancesca has recently graduated from the University of Manchester achieving a 2:1 in Management and Marketing of Fashion Textiles. Prior to joining Barrus, Francesca had been developing her social media and PR skills within the charity and promotional clothing sectors.

Francesca is keen to progress a career in digital marketing and she is enthusiastic about her new position at Barrus, commenting, "The position at Barrus offered a great opportunity to develop my experience in social marketing and PR, and I'm delighted to be joining a company with such strong brands and company culture."

Francesca will be responsible for building the social following for the Marine, Garden, Industrial and Powered Products divisions to increase brand awareness and customer engagement.



Francesca Toman

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## DEALERS

# KUBOTA APPOINTS CC POWELL

## *New dealer for North-East Scotland*

Kubota has appointed dealer CC Powell to cover North-East Scotland, stocking the company's range of tractors and utility vehicles.

Chris Powell, who set the company up in 2010, told local paper *The Press & Journal*, "We are established in the root crop machinery market, so the addition of Kubota's agricultural range will now allow us to diversify and knock on farm doors that we previously couldn't."

Chris also said the company, which employed nine members of staff, would expand its workforce by two to cater for the new Kubota partnership.

In addition, a new premises will be established in due course so that a dedicated Kubota showroom facility can be created.

"Farmers here know that the Kubota brand stands for quality and reliability, predominantly in a groundcare capacity, so if they can replicate these product features across its agricultural range, then it's something the market is going to get very excited about," added Chris.

Kubota Agriculture's Business Development Manager, Rob Edwards, said, "By joining forces with Chris and his team at CC Powell, it not only gives us the ideal platform to target farmers in North-East Scotland, but it also strengthens and expands our agricultural network across the UK."



## APPOINTMENTS

# NEW FACE FOR PUGH'S MARKETING

## *Mary Evans joins dealer*



RW Pugh has announced that Mary Evans has joined its team as Marketing and Events Executive.

Originally from Ruthin, North Wales, Mary has kept herself busy since graduating from Harper Adams University in 2015.

Mary's experience in agriculture and business stemmed from a young age when she lived on the family sheep farm and later working for the family holiday business. Growing up around farming she felt like Harper Adams University was a good step towards a career in agriculture.

Mary completed a year's placement for John Deere at its UK branch as a Strategic and Key Account Management Intern, where she really found her passion for the machinery sector, specifically in Events Management and building customer relationships through Marketing.

She decided to head to New Zealand where she drove grape harvesters for a contractor, increasing her knowledge of machine operation and maintenance.

Mary will be based at Pugh's Churchstoke depot, where she hopes to take a hands-on approach to the role and plans to get involved with the local area as much as possible. ●



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# THE DEALER EVENT OF THE YEAR IS UPON US

*Your final chance to make sure you don't miss out*

**B**y the time this issue hits your desk we will only be a couple of weeks away from the 2016 Service Dealer Conference and Awards. Entitled *The Customer Is King – And Always Will Be*, the event takes place again at the Oxford Belfry Hotel, on Thursday 17th November 2016.

Expanding and improving on last year's event, attendees this year will be able to shape the day to suit their needs by choosing which of the three Breakout Sessions best fulfils their requirements. This is on top of a packed programme of insight, knowledge and tips from a series of industry experts.

Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke says, "How to attract, sell to and retain customers will be the

day's main focus and this year we have key industry professionals discussing techniques that will enable delegates to maximise service and revenues.

"As well as this, our ever popular awards will take place in the evening and again we have placed more emphasis on the customer – with customer feedback having played a key part in the judging process in the run-up to the big reveals on the night."

The final remaining tickets for the Conference and Awards are available via [www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk) – just head to the 2016 Conference and Awards section where you will find all the details.

We very much hope to see as many of you there as possible.

## OUR SPONSORS



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## WINNERS TO BE REVEALED ON THE NIGHT

*Who will triumph this year?*

The nominations are in and the winners of the Dealer of the Year Awards are soon to be revealed!

Our core awards will once again recognise Dealers of the Year across the Garden, Professional Turfcare, Farm Machinery, Forestry Equipment, and ATV/Quad sectors.

This year the finalists for the Dealer of the Year awards have been assessed via feedback from the most important people to your business – your customers.

An expert panel has been assessing all the feedback we've had in from customers up and down the UK. It's been a very tricky task this year as the standard of entries has been extremely high. However, a shortlist has now been reached with the winning dealers in each category being announced 'Oscars style' at the Oxford Belfrey Hotel on the evening of 17th November.

Also to be celebrated on the night will be two new honours this year, recognising key members of your dealership's team. These are:

### 2016 STAR OF THE DEALERSHIP AWARD

Dealers have been nominating members of staff from the Sales, Parts, Service or Support team who have demonstrated exceptional skills, commitment to customer service or any other compelling reason during the 2016 season – and who are deserving of industry recognition.

### 2016 APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

Similarly, we will be recognising an Apprentice who, during the 2016 season has demonstrated the desire, willingness and ability to progress within the dealership and the industry.

# AGENDA OF THE DAY

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

*John Timpson, Chairman of Timpson*

What good customer service looks like; Employee Engagement; Leadership; Service Excellence & Social Innovation.

## CONFERENCE PANEL:

**Chris Biddle:** Moderator.

**David Ayres:** Arun Mowers (Garden Machinery Sales and Service)

**Tim Lane:** T H White Group (Professional Turfcare)

**Ian Nutt:** Lister Wilder (Farm, Professional Turfcare and Garden Machinery)

**Ben Turner:** Ben Burgess Ltd (Farm Machinery, Professional and Garden Machinery)

**Simon Batty:** MD of Maple Associates.

## FORMAT:

After introductions from the moderator, each panel member will present their opening remarks:

- Summary of their business today
- The importance and effectiveness of Customer Service
- What are customers looking for?
- What initiatives have proved to have worked?
- What improvements are still needed?
- What are likely to be the defining challenges in the future (new technology)?

Once each panel member has spoken, the Moderator will summarise and open out to the floor for views, responses and questions to panel members.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS x 3

*How to Effectively Communicate with Your Customers.*

The panels for the three Breakout Sessions will be populated by dealer experts from outlets large and small across the UK, who will be sharing their experiences and knowledge. Find out more about the contributors at [www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk) You can choose from the three sessions outlined below:

### BREAKOUT SESSION A – SOCIAL MEDIA

20 Ideas in 20 Minutes! With *Julio Romo, Social Media Specialist from TAP* ([www.theadplain.com](http://www.theadplain.com))

Dealer panel sharing their positive experiences

#### Q&A

*Key points – Untangling the myths and mystery*

- Role of social media in generating footfall, sales and customer service
- Content & Targeting - How to create great content
- Talking to your target customer
- Engaging with Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and others
- How to get the best results month after month

- Techniques to get remembered
- Social media (no longer just enough on its own)
- How the Social media landscape has changed

### BREAKOUT SESSION B – DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY – (WEBSITES AND TECHNOLOGY)

*Facilitator: Libby Langley, Social Media and Digital Marketing Strategist* ([www.libbylangley.com](http://www.libbylangley.com) and [www.zestcomms.co.uk](http://www.zestcomms.co.uk))

How can websites and technology generate business and work for you?

*Key points – A sales engine or an aside for your business.*

- What is digital marketing?
- Why should you be doing this? What's it for?
- Who are you talking to and what do they want to hear?
- What's the best way to reach your target customers?
- What results do you want?
- How will you measure results and know it's a success?

### BREAKOUT SESSION C – EFFECTIVE MERCHANDISING AND POS

*Key points – What does good look like?*

*Facilitator: David Ashcroft, Marketing Consultant.*

*Panel will include an expert and successful dealers*

Making a rewarding customer experience

- How much overall control does a dealer want?
- Is the customer buying me or the brands I sell?
- Asserting your own identity?
- Taking advantage of manufacturers' merchandising and displays?
- How competing franchises can fit?
- Individual manufacturer ranges or product groups?

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ALL 3 BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Each of the Moderators will summarise the most important points from their session. You will not miss out on any of the gems!

### PLENARY – SALES, AFTERSALES & DEALERSHIP PERFORMANCE

Moderator: Simon Batty, MD of Maple Associates

*Key points –*

- Growing sales in a very competitive market
- Improving aftersales profitability & cash flow
- The competitive dealership

### QUESTION & ANSWER TIME

### CLOSING REMARKS

### POST CONFERENCE NETWORKING DRINKS



## APF EXHIBITION RALLIES AFTER TRAGIC START

*RECORD NUMBER OF EXHIBITORS AND CROWDS ATTEND FORESTRY SHOW, STEVE GIBBS REPORTS*

**T**he APF Forestry Machinery exhibition took place across three days at Ragley Estate, Warwickshire in September. Despite a tragedy befalling the organisers during its set-up, the show went ahead as planned and attracted record crowds to its vast site.

The terrible accident occurred on the Tuesday afternoon before the show opened on the Thursday. A member of the show's staff was involved in a fatal incident.

A statement from the show's organisers said the worker received immediate First Aid treatment by the on-site St John Ambulance staff and was subsequently flown to Birmingham Hospital for further treatment. Tragically, despite the best efforts of the doctors, he died on the Tuesday evening around 9pm.

Police attended the incident and an investigation into the full causes of the accident commenced, along with the Health & Safety Executive being informed. As this is still an ongoing investigation the organisers of APF have been unable to comment further at this stage.

The statement from the organisers at the time concluded, "The APF Demo Team's thoughts are very much with the family at this time and it is their wish that APF 2016 continues."

And continue the show did, to good weather

and large crowds who came along in their droves for what is a significant bi-annual date in the professional forestry machinery calendar.

Obviously the majority of what was on display was not the most relevant to our sector, but there were stands of interest, including:

### **Husqvarna**

Husqvarna had a significant presence at the show, sponsoring a large demonstration arena close to the main entrance. Here the company staged a crowd-pulling pole-climbing competition over the three days, as well as regular chainsaw carving demonstrations, plus showcasing its latest products.

I spoke to the company's UK Sales and Marketing Director Ken Brewster, who told me how important the show was to Husqvarna. With such a targeted audience of forestry professionals attending, it was an ideal opportunity for the company to show off its battery-powered range of tools – alongside its traditional petrol-powered machines.

Demonstrated by its professional logging ambassadors, large crowds gathered to see battery machines in action including hedge-trimmers, chainsaws and pole saws.

## Stihl

STIHL showcased its forestry fleet via two sites. The first site, located close to the main arena, housed the company's STIHL on Tour mobile showroom and its Technical Tent, where a team of professionals were on hand to answer show-goers' queries. Visitors stopped by for information on STIHL products, PPE gear and the new Compact Cordless System.

The second site, located in the demo circuit, was the company's large Demo Plot. From chopping to felling small trees, live demonstrations were performed throughout the show alongside a display of its collection of chainsaws including the MS 201 TC-M, the cordless MSA 160T and the new FR 460 TC-EM professional brushcutter.



Stihl had a display area and a demo plot

## GreenMech

Greenmech Ltd announced specification enhancements to its chipper range. With immediate effect, the company is introducing new, folding in-feed hoppers and bottom bar safety mechanisms to products including Arborist 130, 150, 190 and QuadChip 160. Likewise, these same features will be adopted on the Arbtrak 150 and 190 models. These in-feed changes have improved material flow and consequently enhanced machine throughput.

In addition, on 'road-tow' specifications throughout most of the product range, LED lighting will come fitted as standard, as will lockable tow hitches and detachable lighting cable connectors. Robust buttons and side controls for the feed rollers replace previous mushroom buttons and provide greater operator comfort and ease of machine control.

To differentiate the updated specifications of these new machines, GreenMech chippers will now come in a new livery styling adopting a blend of the traditional green, together with a grey chassis, in-feed chute, outlet flap and control panels, plus red feed rollers. ●



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# ROBOTICS TO THE FORE AT GLEE

**FLYING THE FLAG FOR MACHINERY, HANDY DISTRIBUTION SHOWED CONSUMER INNOVATIONS, STEVE GIBBS REPORTS.**

Once the great meeting point of the garden machinery industry, GLEE, which took place at the NEC in mid-September, now pretty much just has Handy Distribution representing the sector.

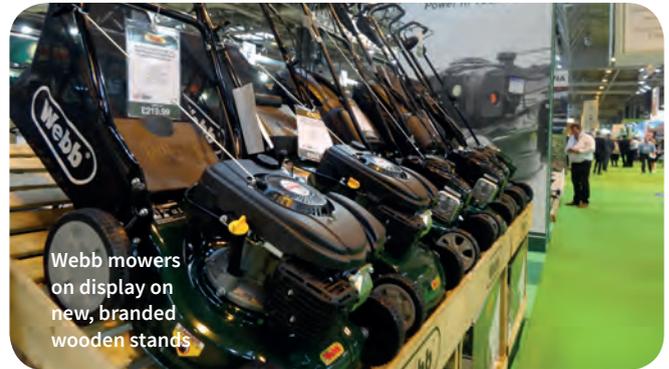
Its imposing stand gave a presence to the variety of brands that the Swindon-based company represents, including Webb, Flymo, McCulloch, GreenWorks, Karcher and Gardena.

The company's MD, Simon Belcher, still sees great value in the exhibition for his company, but not so much for selling into the specialist dealer sector anymore. He uses the show to meet purchasers from garden centres and DIY stores who still attend GLEE in their droves. Simon said, "Coming here is a fantastic opportunity to meet that side of the trade. Now the show has shifted from its Sunday opening of a few years ago, you don't get any members of the public finding their way in nowadays. It's purely trade buyers – and for us we do tremendous business here."

Illustrating how the show still holds great significance to the consumer brands that Handy distributes, the company was visited by the top brass from Flymo, McCulloch and Gardena owner, Husqvarna. The President and CEO of the company, Kai Warn was in attendance, as was the new Vice President & General Manager, Consumer Brands Europe and Asia Pacific, Katja von Raven, who since July has been based at Newton Aycliffe.

## Robots

Taking about the news that Husqvarna is investing further into robotic mower production, Katja said, "Robotics is a more than growing market – it's



Webb mowers on display on new, branded wooden stands

exploding." And to prove her point there were new robot mowers on the stand from McCulloch and Gardena. The Gardena robot was part of a new advanced Smart System which linked the mower, a watering system and a soil moisture sensor all to a smart-device control app.

The new McCulloch automated mower, nicknamed 'Rob', made up part of the brand's targeted theme of appealing to the 'manly-man' gardener. The bold black and yellow styling across the rugged range, is intended to be bought by the guy who wants to get his garden tidy quickly, before getting on to the barbecue and beer.

To group this range in-store a new point of sale display stand was on show that can be bespoke with whichever products the retailer chooses. There was also a similar stand available for Flymo.

Elsewhere, new from Webb was its first dedicated rear-roller battery-powered mower, while GreenWorks' eye-catching display was promoting the power that 60 volts have over petrol. ●



The new McCulloch Rob 600



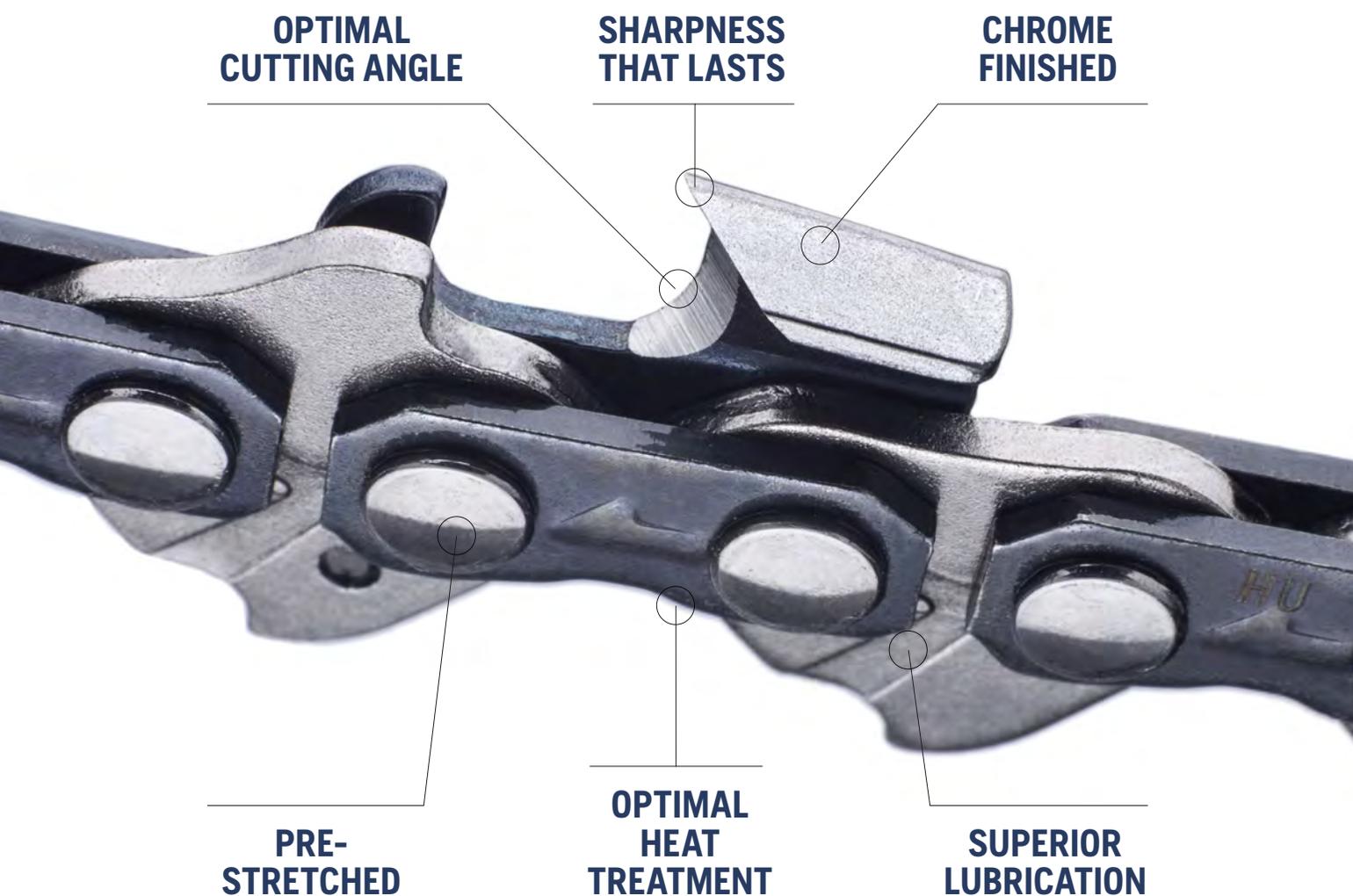
New point-of-sale stands for both Flymo and McCulloch were on show

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# ALISTAIR SHEACH

Henry Sheach Lawnmower Services,  
Managing Director

Henry Sheach Lawnmower Services, based in Kirkcaldy, was established in 1945 and deals and services most major brands of grass cutting machinery. The company's Commercial Division imports the Bobcat range of zero-turn mowers including ride on, walk-behind and stand-on models and is looking to expand its reach in the UK

## **SERVICE DEALER: You are a dealer and an importer?**

**ALISTAIR SHEACH:** We've been involved in commercial mower repair since the 1950s. The company was started by my father just after the war.

Henry Sheach Lawnmower Services is a quite large lawnmower dealership, which offers a comprehensive range of brands doing over 2,500 services a year.

We also have an import company which means we are basically wholesalers of the Bobcat zero-turn line and the Convertible Mower from Indiana. We've been doing the Bobcat range for around seven years now.

Our history with commercial machines such as these began in the 1980s with the Agria range and then in the 90s we were very successful Scag dealers. We then had a period of around 18 years importing the Great Dane mowers including the Super Surfer stand-on machine. Now for the last seven years I've been importing the Bobcat range.

## **SD: Do these Bobcats have anything to do with the Bobcat that specialises in loaders and skid-steers?**

**AS:** There's no connection at all. We share the same name and a similar logo, but there's a legally-binding agreement that stipulates that they will not cut grass and we will not shovel earth. So we're utterly different companies that people shouldn't mix up.

## **SD: Who are zero-turn mowers appealing to?**

**AS:** When a lot of people refer to zero-turn mowers, they're referring to stick-steer riding machines.

I take these Bobcat machines around the country every year, to county shows across the UK, exposing them to a million people annually. When we're out showing them off so many people ask me 'can they cut a paddock?' And while, of course, they can, I believe that's too simple for these machines.

If you take that paddock and put a hundred caravans in it, or plant a hundred trees and turn it into an arboretum, or convert it with plant beds and fountains into an ornamental garden, you're introducing obstacles. I love obstacles – they're our forté.

## **SD: What makes these machines so special?**

**AS:** Manoeuvrability and vision. When these machines were first designed they were intended to cut more grass in an hour than anything else.

When I'm doing presentations to local authorities and contractors one of the questions I ask operators is 'is manoeuvrability important to you? Do you need to cut into corners, right up to edges, along long wall and fence lines?' And the answers have got to be yes.

If you can do that you then strim a lot less, you finish off a lot less, lowering costs. Also never having to reverse a machine is really important. You don't get paid for cutting the same bit of grass twice, so you've got to get more productive.

## **SD: Do you face a perception that they are an American-specific machine?**

**AS:** What we did three years ago to challenge that perception was take zero-turn riders to the masses by doing all these county shows. Not just with static displays either. We were finding that people just weren't familiar with the machines and didn't know what they could achieve with them. Having the units just sitting on a stand among other mowers doesn't help. They need to see them in action.

Groups like local authorities and contractors are pretty aware of them now. They're well versed in the value of a stick-steer rider's productivity.

Where we're finding new market penetration is taking the zero-turn rider to people who are spending say three to six hours a week sitting on a steering wheel



The Bobcat CRZ is adept at tackling areas with lots of obstacles

## SINCE 2013 OUR SALES HAVE TRIPLED

mower to cut their grass. Once you can get people to sit on one of these units and give it a spin, you can ask them what they're currently using and how long does it take them to cut their grass? If the answer is a conventional garden tractor and it takes three hours, I can say to them 'would you like to do it in one hour?'

**SD:** So you are finding a market among high-end domestic users as well as professionals?

**AS:** The thing all our customers have in common is that they've got loads of grass to cut. Whether the customer I'm talking to has a mansion, a stately home, an arboretum, stables or whatever, the deciding factor when he buys a zero-turn rider is primarily that he's taking far too long with the product he's got now. Which is the same as the professional who wants to get into the site, cut the grass as quickly as possible, with as little strimming as possible, and move on to the next location.

**SD:** There is also a thought that zero-turn riders are less popular here in the UK because you can't drive them on the road?

**AS:** Again that's one of people's perceptions. Some people seem to believe that because it hasn't got a steering wheel you can't drive it on the road. But

there's no legislation that states that a vehicle must have a steering wheel to make it road legal.

The riders with a seat, if you want to put them on the road you need a flashing beacon, it needs to be registered for the road, it has to be taxed for the road at least once, but it's not a continuing obligation, and then you can put road lighting on if you want. That makes it road legal.

Also the other notion that the zero-turn riders' steering is too sensitive to drive on the road, I do not agree with. I can train an 85-year-old to drive a zero-turn rider in 10 or 15 minutes. The key is that you have to introduce it to the user properly.

That's what I believe is holding things back for these machines in this country. There's a lot of good quality zero-turn machines out there, but I always say are there enough good-quality zero-turn salesmen?

Unless there's a salesforce out there prepared to really get to grips with the machines, therefore be able to introduce them to the customer properly, it's always going to hold its progress back.

**SD:** Can you see that changing? Are you seeing more dealers getting interested in them?

**AS:** We've proved it in the past three years, as we've found increased market penetration with the CRZ range.



The Bobcat QuickCat stand-on zero turn

We've managed to bring their prices down by removing certain items from the build that aren't required by money-making users. They only have one fuel tank now for instance, instead of two, which still gives it seven hours of cutting.

We've kept the basics the same plus have introduced appealing guarantees of five- and six-year warranties on these models, which all makes for a very good offering for the dealer. But as I keep saying, you've got to expose the product. People buy things because they see them.

**SD: How many dealers do you have?**

**AS:** We've currently got commercial dealers in most areas of the country, some with multi depots, who regularly buy from us. We've been on a recruiting programme these past three years for Dealers who are non-commercial, promoting the Utility CRZ range.

**SD: Are you looking for more?**

**AS:** Certainly. If you go back five years we were traditionally talking to dealers who were mostly looking to sell into the local authority and contractor markets and we had to give those guys

a large, exclusive area. What has changed now though is the fact with the CRZ product we are also selling to people who've purely got a large garden. Therefore the number of retail outlets to which we're able to supply can expand dramatically.

As far as the CRZ range is concerned we will talk to lawnmower dealers interested in exposing that product to a much more limited area.

But we do stress the product requires a higher level of exposure.

**SD: What do you do to convince dealers that they should be stocking this range?**

**AS:** I take my sales spreadsheet with me! Since 2013 our sales have tripled. Keeping up with the growth is the tricky part.

All this sales success has come from the fact that the product has been properly exposed – that's the critical aspect. I tell my team and dealers that it's the product that is the star.

We have dealers who have been with Henry Sheach for many years, such as Devon Garden Machinery, as well as new recruits like AMP down in Brighton, who have all been finding great success with showing off the products at local shows.

I say to these guys 'we're going to do 15 shows a

year with full-on Bobcat branded stands, working on your behalf. With Steve Dommatt at Devon Garden Machinery for example, after our first Cornwall Show we followed it up with 13 visits and sold 14 machines!

**SD:** As well as the county shows which have proved so useful, we have trade shows coming up such as SALTEX – do these still hold an appeal for you?

**AS:** The SALTEX show is invaluable for exposing the brand to commercial end-users. It is also a major draw for people in the trade like other dealers, so it's a good meeting place too.

Last year at the NEC we thought was a great experience, it was certainly the busiest I'd been at a show for a great number of years. We came away with a shed-load of enquiries, but the problem where SALTEX is falling down is that when you've got a potential sale on the hook in November, you can't really do anything for them until March and April – and they can go off the boil.

That's not to say it isn't a good show – I wouldn't do it if I thought otherwise. It's just that we're highly unlikely to come away with the level of sales to different people as we will from county shows.

**SD:** Do you pick up many dealer enquires at a show like that?

**AS:** Yes, it's always good to see the ones we know and the new contacts which we don't. Established dealers will come along to see what new products we're offering. And we tend to see smaller dealers who are thinking about expanding their range.

**SD:** Finally, how can dealers make a success of zero-turn riders?

**AS:** If dealers want to get involved and make a success of these Bobcat mowers the first thing the dealer principal has got to do is ensure that they themselves can drive the machine competently to show it off to its very best.

Then they have to ensure that their staff can do that too. The dealership's confidence in the machine then grows tenfold.

We've made a terrific living out of these machines and have seen an unbelievable amount of growth. I don't have people coming to me saying 'I want a green mower that spins round'. They're saying, 'I've got grass to cut which is taking me four hours'. I can then say to them 'do you want to do it in two?' That should be anybody's starting point. ●

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# GERMAN FIRMS SHOWCASE STRAW KIT OPPORTUNITIES

*Straw's contribution to arable farm incomes is being re-examined, whether it's incorporated to boost soil organic matter/cut fertiliser bills or baled for sale/on-farm use. A recent joint Lemken/Krone launch in Germany suggests that opens more dealer opportunities, reports Martin Rickatson*

**W**ith a soil nutrient content reckoned to be worth around £70/ha, and a harder-to-calculate soil structural value that comes from the fibrous organic matter content as it breaks down, helping boost soil's water absorption and air pore formation, the incorporation of straw back into the ground has a significant value to arable farms.

Yet equally, baled straw remains a valuable source of income to some businesses, with markets not only in the livestock sector but also among industries such as power generation. Some agronomists suggest 50% of straw volume can be taken each year without detriment to soil, and once stubble length is factored in, that's roughly the volume of straw that passes through the combine.

These were some of the facts promoted by Krone and Lemken at their joint European product launch meeting for 2016-17, held during the summer in Hungary. Coming at the issue from different angles – one as a maker of balers to remove straw, and the other as a manufacturer of cultivation equipment to incorporate it – they both have a vested interest in how

straw is handled as part of the harvest process, and the event provided a good chance to hear the thoughts of their development teams and see some of their newest products in action, giving dealers plenty of new ideas for marketing straw baling and incorporation kit.

## NEW PELLETER AND BALER CHOPPER FROM KRONE

Rising farm demand for short straw for use in poultry houses, dairy cow cubicles and pig housing, as well as adding roughage to cattle mixed rations, has been a key driver behind the development of Krone's new VariCut big baler chopping option for its BiG Pack 1270 VC and BiG Pack 1290 HDP VC. The 51-blade VariCut (VC) system can be used with 51, 26, 25, 12, 5 or 0 blades engaged, for a broad span of chop lengths. Drive for the VariCut rotor cutter and the pick-up is transferred via a poly V-belt, which is shut off automatically if a blockage is sensed in the cutting system or on the packer.

There is also a new PreChop option for Krone balers, for those requiring a particularly short chop for industries such as mushroom compost. This consists of a 96-blade unit mounted ahead of the pick-up. Once the straw has been through the main chopping unit, theoretical length can then be as little as 22mm.

Meanwhile, away from traditional baling, Krone also sees another new market for straw. It chose its summer field days to demonstrate its Premos 5000 pelleter, designed to compress straw, grass and other materials into dense pellets to cut transport costs and boost efficiency.

Material is conveyed by the 2.35m pick-up to a rotor which feeds it to an 800mm conveyor, before it passes through two 800mm-wide/800mm/diameter rollers. These act as ring dies, with rows of teeth pressing the material into rows of 16mm diameter extrusion moulds. The finished pellets are then transferred to a belt which conveys them to an integral 9.0 cu m hopper. Krone

**Krone's Premos, likely to be a contractor machine, could create a new straw and grass pellet market**



claims output is up to 5.0t/hr, three to five times the output of most traditional 'fixed' pelleting systems.

Pelleting pressure is up to 2,000 bar, generating temperatures of 80°C, which largely destroys any bacteria and produces solid pellets with a moisture content of 12-15%. In low-moisture material, an applicator can be used to apply water or molasses to encourage effective bonding, while an integral intelligent wetting system, which maintains an optimum moisture level, is optional.

Markets for pellets include energy (burning), feed and bedding – 0.25kg of straw pellets absorb about a litre of water, cutting manure volumes by about 40%, and having been heated to 80°C they are virtually germ-free. At a 600-700kg/cu m bulk density (three to four times the density of straw bales), 2.5kg of straw pellets substitutes for about 1.0kg of heating oil.

### LEMKEN FOCUSES ON PLOUGH TECHNOLOGY

Lemken's view on straw, unsurprisingly, continues to focus on its value when incorporated back into the soil, and it chose the summer event to launch a number of products designed to make the task easier, faster and more effective across a range of soils, whether under conventional or min-till cultivation.

The firm's new Optiline adjustment system for



New Gigant Heliodor 9 compact disc flagship is the world's largest implement of its type, at 16m

semi-mounted ploughs is designed to improve lateral plough guidance and thus reduce fuel consumption, via an additional hydraulic cylinder at the headstock. Lateral pull is unavoidable in semi-mounted reversible ploughs, points out Lemken, with the traction points of tractor and plough being fixed, but its new system uses a pressure-controlled cylinder to transfer additional torque to the tractor. This shifts the tractor/plough traction line further towards the centre of the rear axle and thus reduces lateral pull of the tractor. Lemken claims tests indicate potential fuel savings



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Lemken's Optiline semi-mounted plough system is said to improve lateral plough guidance and cut fuel consumption

of up to 10%, while pointing out that ploughing without lateral pull cuts operator strain, eliminating the need to counter-steer. Operators are able to optimally adjust the plough's landside pressure and the tractor's lateral pull via Optiline's hydraulic adjustment, also aiding consistent front furrow widths.

Lemken is now offering ISOBUS plough control for its Juwel 8 mounted reversible ploughs, with the introduction of TurnControl Pro. The system can be operated through Lemken's own CCI 200 terminal or any tractor equipped with its own ISOBUS terminal, with both providing full plough adjustment, while functions can also be assigned to tractor multifunction or hydraulic joysticks.

TurnControl Pro allows operating functions to be combined, saved and activated for up to four different scenarios. It operates plough turnover and settings for working angle, width and depth via the hydraulic support wheel, plus GPS-controlled working width adjustment. Additional functions including front furrow width adjustment, packer operation or settings for the Hydromatik overload protection are optional.

Meanwhile, Lemken has extended its mounted reversible plough range with two new 3-7 furrow Juwel 8M series machines. Featuring mechanical pitch adjustment, the M and MV ploughs feature a hydraulic reversing mechanism with mechanical pitch adjustment. Standard equipment includes DuraMaxx full or slatted steel, plastic or hybrid bodies, with slats/mouldboards made from special wear-resistant tool steel without drill or punch holes, offering a claimed 150% longer service life over conventional bodies. Being clipped to the base body makes for quicker, easier replacement, says Lemken.

Both the skimmers, which can be adjusted without tools, and the pendulum and uni-wheels – a new feature of the Juwel 8 – are also available in the Juwel 8M. The standard damping rams provide shock-free swivelling of the wheel during turnover.

The mechanical mechanism allows four working widths to be set, while the hydraulic version provides infinitely-variable adjustment. Hydromatic automatic overload protection is standard.

Away from ploughs, Lemken has extended its Gigant Heliodor 9 compact disc range to include what's claimed to be the world's largest implement of its type, with a 16m working width. On all Heliodor 9 models disc diameter has been enlarged to 510mm, allowing working depths up to 14cm. The two 4m sections of the Heliodor 9, which combine to form 8m units, are attached to the two three-point linkages of the Gigant system carrier, with self-levelling lower links meaning the two 8m sections independently follow contours. The three-point linkages are connected to double-acting control units to ensure weight can be transferred from the system carrier to the Heliodor sections. Transport width is 3.5m.

The more conventional standard Heliodor 9 compact disc harrow – now also available in new 4.5m and 7.0m widths – now features 510mm discs, up 45mm on previous units, for a 20mm increase in maximum working depth to 140mm. Hydraulic depth adjustment for mounted, folding and folding semi-mounted models is now optional.

Developed for both shallow and deep cultivation up to 30cm deep, especially in heavier soils, the new 4-7m semi-mounted Karat 12 features four rows of tines with a 23cm inter-tine distance. Eight point types and an optional quick-change system are available.

Underframe clearance is 80cm and interbody clearance 90cm. The tines are able to deflect vertically by up to 20cm, for work in stony soils, with trigger forces of over 550kg. Depth control is via the rear rollers, while hydraulic traction enhancement is optional, as is ContourTrack, which provides electro-hydraulic adaption to surface contours via depth control wheels. ●

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Tony – Second City Lawn Services

# THE X-CUT FILES

## EDITOR STEVE GIBBS VISITED HUSKVARNA, SWEDEN FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE COMPANY'S FIRST EVER SELF-PRODUCED SAW CHAIN – AND FOUND A COMPANY CONSTANTLY INNOVATING

“This is a historical moment,” Pavel Hajman, President of the Husqvarna Division told the assembled worldwide trade press. “A landmark day in our history.”

Quite a grand introduction no doubt, but one which the company felt was warranted for such a significant development. For the launch of its first ever self-produced saw chain, the X-CUT, the Swedish manufacturer was very keen to impress what a turning point this was in its history.

Speaking at the company's worldwide headquarters in Huskvarna, Sweden, Pavel went on to explain why the company has spent a very considerable amount of time and resources bringing the new chain to market.

“We have taken the decision to develop our own chain to lift the performance of our whole chainsaw one step further,” he said. “With the new chain combined with our saws we feel we can improve performance, improve productivity and improve efficiency for the users.”

Significantly Husqvarna also believes the development gives it a very good opportunity to raise its market share to where it believes it should be.

To facilitate the production of the X-CUT the company has developed a brand new factory from scratch within its present complex. Housed in an old

building, the state-of-the-art facility is the result of a one billion SEK investment. The factory is strategically located beside the chainsaw R&D centre and factory, with all parts of the saw chain manufactured on-site.

“We made the announcement of this new chainsaw factory in 2013,” said Pavel, “and it has been quite a challenge for us. Not only to design a new chain but to also build a factory to produce it.

“The scale of the challenge delayed us a little bit but we were determined to get everything right so we could produce the chain we desired without compromise.

“We produce the whole chain fully in our factory from raw steel material, all the way through to the finished product. We have no dependency on external suppliers, except for the raw material, which really enables us to completely control the quality of the chain.”

The factory is designed to be environmental impact neutral, and uses innovative technology to recycle chemicals and energy.

Pavel continued, “This chain has been developed by our engineers together with our professional forestry ambassadors, along with input from a group of professional loggers.

“This has allowed us to optimise the chain and really provide it with good sharpness, good durability and

good stretch, enabling the loggers maximum efficiency to cut as much wood in a day as they are able.

“Therefore its development has been a true cooperation between ourselves and our partners.”

### **X-CUT SP33G**

The first new chain produced is called the X-CUT SP33G. This will replace the current H30 chain.

The .325", 1.3mm narrow kerf chain is used widely in the UK by occasional users such as landowners and farmers and this, Husqvarna said, will be the target user group for the new chain. The SP33G will be fitted on all 400 series saws as standard, with the exception of the 455.

This size of narrow kerf chain is the best-selling chain in Sweden and other Baltic countries where it's used as a professional chain due to the softer wood. This, we were told, is the reason why this particular chain was selected to be the first in the X-Cut series to be manufactured in-house. More chain types are promised for release in the future.

The company boasts that the 'optimised micro-structured steel and chrome composition' of the pre-stretched chain offers extended sharpness and high durability to enhance the performance of its chainsaws.

To explain the chain's benefits further, speaking at the launch, was Mattias Karlson, Director of Product Management for Bar & Chain. Mattias seemed to be delighted to be finally able to discuss the chain following several years of secrecy during its development. He said, "It's great to be able to take a moment to just enjoy this launch. This development has been something which quite a lot of us have lived with for several years."

He went to explain that while the chain looks deceptively simple, there is a considerable amount of high-level technology and knowledge that goes into its manufacture.

“We invested significantly in the factory, the production processes and in the product,” he said. “We did this with a target of producing premium chains. Our aim is to have chains that are second-to-none.

“The reason for us doing that is we want to make sure that we control the complete package. We have the power unit, we have the chain and we have the bar. To ensure we have the best performance we need to make sure we control everything.

“There is no crash-course for dummies in how to make chains, so we needed build all the processes, all the equipment from scratch. That's the reason why it's taken since 2013 to get this up and running.

“Within all of the processes the basis we had to get right was to create a chain which was durable and high quality. Once we have that correct we can start to focus on the performance.

“Yes, we're new to chain production – but we've proved in our tests, both in the lab and with professional loggers in the field, that it works. Our tests prove we're at least on a par with our competitors, if not in some cases, ahead of them.

“Our feedback from users is that it cuts fast, it cuts smoothly and you don't have to push it. Overall it adds up to an excellent cutting performance.

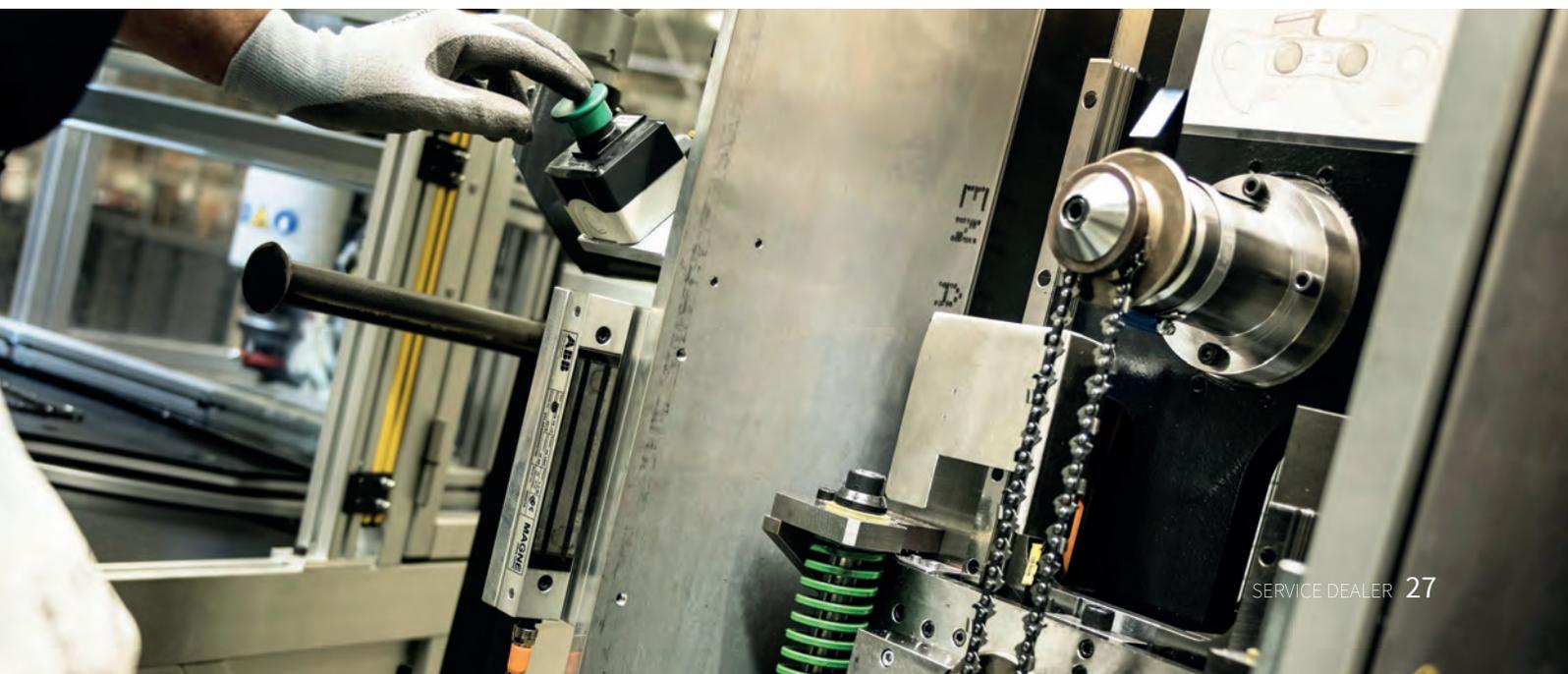
“The overall objective for us is to give the user more output.”

### **Key characteristics**

Husqvarna says there are four key elements to the new chain which will make a logger's life easier.

The X-CUT SP33G is made of five parts (cutter, tie strap, bumper drive link, drive link and rivet), carefully linked together to become a low-vibration, pixel saw chain that cuts a narrow kerf, and requires less power from the saw than standard cutting systems.

Husqvarna says the output which the chain results in offers four key benefits to users, that reduce downtime and maximise cutting efficiency. These are:



# “WE HAVE NO DEPENDENCY ON EXTERNAL SUPPLIERS, EXCEPT FOR THE RAW MATERIAL”

1. Long-lasting sharpness – The design of the cutters and the micro-structure of the steel and the chrome layers have been refined to give the X-CUT chain a sharpness out of the box which the company says lasts considerably longer before filing is needed.

In lab conditions, the chain’s sharpness lasts 10% longer than a comparable Husqvarna H30 chain.

2. Low stretch – The X-CUT chain is pre-stretched at the factory, which increases the amount of time the chain can be used before re-tensioning is needed, hence reducing downtime. This reduced need for adjustments decreases the risk of damaging the cutting system due to a slacking chain.

3. High durability – The balanced combination of construction, materials and processes have resulted in a dynamic durability. Husqvarna has developed a unique combination of state-of-the-art processes including tumbling, heat treatment, induction hardening, and shot peening. High durability reduces wear on the cutting system of the chainsaw, and consequently the need for service and downtime.

4. High cutting efficiency – To maximise cutting efficiency, the X-CUT chain is engineered to cut faster and more smoothly, and with a well-balanced cutter angle. The company says that compared

with relevant competition, X-CUT SP33G cuts faster and more efficiently. Lab results measure up to a 10% higher efficiency than the previously mentioned H30 chain.

## Mower innovation

As with all companies of the size and ambition of Husqvarna, it is constantly developing fresh ideas and it turned out that the new chain wouldn’t be the only development I’d be seeing in Huskvarna.

When Pavel Hajman found out that many readers of this publication are very interested in mower developments, he



arranged for me to have exclusive preview of a new machine the company is very excited about.

Being shown for the first time at trade shows in France and Germany this autumn will be a prototype of the first ever out-front-rider collector.

The genuine innovation here is that the RC 318T has an auger which runs from the front deck, allowing the grass to flow up into a 300l collector at the rear. This is a unique design which has never been attempted before.

The enthusiasm of the heads of development who talked me through the machine was palpable.

The patented design which they had been working on for many years, was clearly a labour of love for them – one for which they were justifiably very proud.

It was a genuine pleasure to see such excitement from these guys, and indeed to witness such a clever and new idea.

The machine is still a way off from hitting dealers’ showrooms. The company is unveiling it at these European shows this year, and then hopefully at some UK shows next year. It isn’t expected to be on sale in the UK until 2018 though.

The new development that is available now though, the X-CUT SP33G chain, will be sold by the Husqvarna global network of servicing dealers. It has already started its worldwide roll-out with dealers in the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Nordics and the Baltics receiving stock in September. The chain will then be available in all remaining European markets during 2017, with other markets to follow.

The recommended price for the X-CUT SP33G saw chain in UK is £24.00 for 13 inches, £27.00 for 15 inches and £29.00 for 18 inches. ●



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# BUSINESS MONITOR

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## DEALERS SEE BUSINESS IMPROVE IN 2016

*Respondents positive about all aspects of the season*

The results of our autumn 2016 Dealer Survey saw a very positive response from dealers regarding all aspects of their business during the season. Compared with the results we saw to similar questions this time in 2015, the impression is certainly given that an upturn of sorts was experienced this year for a majority of dealers.

The key question of whether your overall business improved over that experienced in 2015 was answered in the positive by more than half of respondents – 56% in fact. This compares with just 33% giving the

same answer last year.

In terms of breaking down where this overall success came from, the facet of a dealership which most responders indicated had achieved the biggest improvement this year was their service departments; 62% of dealers who responded said their service work had increased on where it was last year.

Both machine sales as well as parts and accessories also saw encouraging performance this year with 50% telling us whole goods sales were up and 51% saying the same for parts. Although to temper

this slightly, a not insignificant figure of 35% said machine sales were actually down in 2016.

Interestingly in terms of labour charge rates, these numbers have barely shifted from last year when around half who responded said again that rates remain between £30-£40 per hour.

While business on the whole may have improved this has not led many dealers to increase staffing levels with 77% staying at the same levels and only 14% saying they had increased (which is 3% more than had done so in 2015).

## YOUR SAY

### WE ASKED YOU 'WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR DISAPPOINTMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS OF 2016 FOR YOUR DEALERSHIP?'

#### DISAPPOINTMENTS

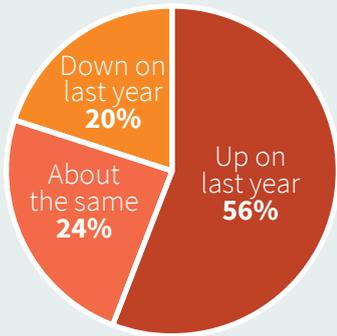
- A slow start meant that the season was very late getting started. A good middle quarter was very encouraging, only let down by poor availability of product from suppliers that is still giving us cause for concern even now. I think they cancelled forward orders thinking the season was not going to pick up, and when it did it caught most of them out. Such a shame as I think we could have done better if we had had the product through the peak periods.
- We have experienced problems with distributors not keeping up parts and machine supply.
- Losing previously loyal customers to internet sales.
- Brexit has forced prices up and they will take much longer to come down when the currency sorts itself out.

- We're having to do more to achieve the same levels of sales – ie increase discounts. Therefore, our margin is decreasing.
- Margins are being squeezed further on new machinery. Also product lines are being forced on to us which we have to take or we lose even more margin.
- Lack of stock from two of the major suppliers hurt our sales.
- The levels that customers expect you to work, and what they expect to pay!

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- Weibang mowers from Rochfords – great product with good margin retention.
- Aspen Fuel sales increased by a major percentage and education is working.
- Winning the Driffield Show's best stand award again.
- Great weekly *Service Dealer* newsletter! ●

How has your overall business compared with 2015?



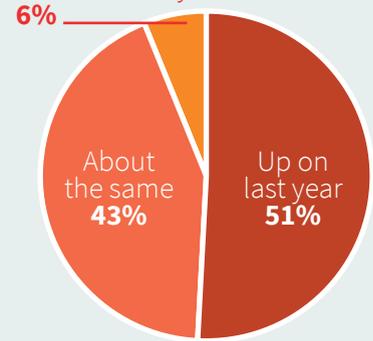
How have your machine sales (whole goods) performed this year against 2015?

About the same



How have your parts and accessories sales performed this year compared with 2015?

Down on last year



How has your service department/workshop performed this year compared with 2015?

Up on last year – 62%

About the same – 35%

Down on last year – 3%



What is your current retail labour charge rate per hour?

£30-£40 – 53%

£40-£50 – 32%

£50-£60 – 9%

Less than £30 – 6%



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How have your staffing levels been this year compared with 2015?

Stayed the same – 77%

Increased – 14%

Decreased – 9%



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# BOLD PLANS HERALD NEW ERA FOR FAMILIAR NAME

*Well-established in the compact tractor market through former importer RECO before that business was wound down, South Korean tractor maker Kioti now has new UK import arrangements through Dutch firm Pols Group. There are some familiar faces on board, as Martin Rickatson discovered*

**W**ith over 2,000 units reckoned to be at work across the UK, the Kioti tractor brand has become well-established in the decade and a half its products have been available in the UK. Huntingdon firm RECO introduced Kioti into the UK in 2000-01, and was one of the first firms in Europe to import the South Korean 35-50hp machines.

Today, following the Ruston family's decision to wind down RECO, there is a new importer for the UK to build on that early success, plus an expanding product line that has stretched to 26-115hp, and a growing number of new dealers.

At first glance, though, there's a sense of familiarity about the new operation, which will provide a good deal of reassurance to customers and dealers.

But before explaining all that, it's worth recapping on some history. Kioti is a brand – the brand – of Daedong, a South Korean machinery firm founded in 1947. It manufactured its first engine in 1956 and its first tractor just a few years later. Fast forward to the mid-1980s and the firm began selling tractors in the USA, but it was in 1993, when Daedong not only established a full US operation but also decided to reinvent its branding as Kioti (pronounced as in coyote, the North American wild dog). From then on the ISO 9001-accredited firm rapidly gained ground in the region's sub-50hp tractor market, earning and maintaining a strong third place behind John Deere and Kubota.

The firm's main factory is in the city of Daegu, where it established a new plant and HQ in 1984. Far from



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The new Kioti UK operation offers tractors from 26-110hp. It's currently based in the former RECO premises until a new base is found

being only a designer and assembler, it manufactures its own steel, and owns its own foundries and gear factory. Its main site covers 58 acres, of which 23ac is roofed, and includes a comprehensive R&D facility opened in 1997. Tractor production capacity is 29,000 units/year, with two lines for 26-35hp models and 40-115hp machines, while the firm also makes small combines, with a capacity of 2,300 units annually, plus power tillers and up to 36,000 of its own engines.

“Daedong is number one in its domestic tractor market, where we compete with fellow South Korean makers Branson, TYM and LS,” says Claire Lee, who formerly worked with Daedong in South Korea before moving to Daedong Kioti Europe as Sales Manager.

“Kioti is the brand name used in all world markets outside of the domestic one, and half of production is exported. But the current Kioti line covers 30-35% of European hp market requirements, which is why we are gradually introducing larger models. The UK offering is now topped by the PX30 range, with four-cylinder 93, 103 and 110hp models that have 32F/32R power shift/power shuttle transmissions.”

The full product range now also includes not only 26-110hp tractors and the Mechron UTV, but also a 1.23m, 26hp diesel professional ride-on mower and 1.35/1.50m out-front mowers with a 900-litre collection hopper option, giving dealers further market options.

### Development of Kioti UK

Since 2002, Dutch firm Pols Group has been responsible for importing Kioti into the Netherlands, and over the past 14 years has expanded its business to become the importer for France, Belgium, Switzerland and Romania, taking the brand to strong market positions. Now it has added the UK to that list, founding a new Kioti UK operation and recruiting former RECO Sales Manager Patrick Desmond as UK General Manager.

Working alongside his son, Piet, Managing Director Cees van de Pols has seen his family business gradually expand since 1960, when it was formed from the family’s horticultural concern. That year they began selling orchard machinery and have grown from there. Today, key businesses are the import and support of tractors, turf care and recycling equipment – Pols Group is the Ransomes Jacobsen importer for the Netherlands, and brings in Doppstadt recycling equipment and Keestrack stone crushing and recycling machinery. Its headquarters includes a service centre, training facility, central parts warehouse, 16 mechanics, 10 service trucks and two delivery trucks.

“I know Richard Ruston through our mutual Kioti relationship, and when he decided to close his company I talked to the Daedong management and we agreed that the UK business would be a good fit,” explains Cees van de Pols.

**“WE CURRENTLY HAVE A NETWORK OF 60 ACTIVE DEALERS, AND ARE STILL LOOKING TO ADD TO THAT”**

“With RECO still winding down and looking to sell its premises, we decided we’d begin slowly, by renting part of those premises from 1st February until we find a permanent base nearby, with an office and an area for demonstration stock and fast-moving parts.

“We were pleased to be able to recruit Patrick and benefit from his 32 years of experience, plus Laurie Mills as Sales and Service Manager, Ian Brown as Northern Area Manager and Tim Pinney as Southern Area Manager, all of whom were long-time RECO employees very familiar with the Kioti products.”

Patrick Desmond says the company was also pleased to retain the vast majority of Kioti dealers under the new import arrangement. “We currently have a network of 60 active dealers, and are still looking to add to that, particularly where we have gaps in places



1.23m-cut, 26hp diesel-engined twin-blade professional ride-on mower

such as North Wales and East Anglia. Dealers are fully supported marketing-wise through advertising, brochures and online means, and financially through an arrangement with DLL (De Lage Landen). In addition, support includes product training, technical support/after-sales care and demonstration/show tractors. Spares stocks are held at our facility in the Netherlands and can be shipped overnight – staff there speak excellent English. And while previously there were some issues with online parts ordering, this is now up and running, while a new Parts Stream system is in development, to be released next year following test feedback. There will also be a web shop available to registered Kioti UK dealers.”

Tractors come from the factory to the Netherlands, and are then subject to any necessary final assembly and a PDI before final shipping directly to dealers in the UK. Mechron units are shipped directly from

South Korea to UK dealers although, where required, assembly is carried out here by a third party. The Kioti warranty remains unchanged: two years’ parts and labour for tractors, and a 750hrs/one-year guarantee for the Mechron plus a second year of drivetrain cover.

“Dealers are an essential part of our business plan, and are our key to the future, representing our path to customers and our eyes and ears in each sales territory, while also helping us feed product information from customers to the factory,” says Cees van de Pols.

“The aim with the product is not to compete on price but on value for money and standard specification, with Kioti tractors including features such as 24F/24R transmissions and heavy-duty alternators.

“I’d like to see us become at least number three in the UK market around 100hp and under, as we are in some other countries, and with these new models I think we could do that.” ●



General Manager  
Patrick Desmond



Cees van  
de Pols



Laurie Mills (right) – Sales and  
Service Manager and Ian Brown  
(left) – Northern Area Manager



Claire Lee



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# OUTDOOR DEMONSTRATIONS RETURN TO SALTEX

## *IOG responds to feedback for sophomore year at NEC*

**A**fter all that was said and written in advance of the Institute Of Groundsmanship (IOG) moving its annual grounds care show last year from outside at Windsor in September to inside at Birmingham in November, on the whole it seemed to go down pretty well.

Exhibitors who were willing to give it a try found a well attended show with plenty of footfall from key decision makers, while visitors encountered a buzzy atmosphere, in two well laid-out halls across a much more convenient two-day format – albeit with some grumbles about car parking fees.

The only real elephants in the room were the timing of the show and the lack of outdoor demonstrations.

Clearly the first of these issues is the same this year, but at least the IOG has attempted to address the other major gripe, with the announcement that outdoor working demonstrations will be returning to the 2016 exhibition, which will be held on 2nd and 3rd November at the NEC.

The IOG says the return of this feature will once again provide exhibitors with the opportunity to showcase their products in an outdoor setting and the decision to bring back outdoor working demonstrations was made based on post-show feedback surveys from last year.

### **Survey response**

IOG CEO Geoff Webb said, “We are totally committed to the success of SALTEX, which is why we make sure that we listen to every single piece of feedback and implement tangible changes that will make the experience even better each year.

“SALTEX 2015 was a huge success but there is always room for improvement. What we must do in order to keep growing the event is listen carefully to the people that make everything possible – the exhibitors and the visitors.

“Both the post-show exhibitor and visitor surveys indicated that outdoor demonstrations would be a much welcome return to the show, so we listened and made it happen.”

The outdoor demonstrations will take place this year on a grass area directly outside the SALTEX halls 6, 7 and 8, and a number of exhibitors have reserved a plot.

One of these exhibitors is Rigby Taylor. Commentating on its decision to support the new feature, Richard Fry, the company’s Marketing Director said, “This new initiative we believe will offer a further exciting dimension to

the show as it offers visitors the opportunity to discuss product features and benefits on the stand and then see machines put through their paces on the demonstration areas.”

The addition of outdoor working demonstrations signals one of a number of new features coming to SALTEX 2016. Recently, show organisers announced the SALTEX College Cup sponsored by Ransomes and there is a comprehensive educational programme called LEARNING LIVE planned, which will see a number of industry experts from all over the world focusing on a variety of key topics.

So in this sophomore year, a trip to the NEC should be a fascinating experience to see just how the show is evolving and whether the goodwill encountered from its inaugural year continues to flourish.



## **ESSENTIAL INFO**

**SALTEX will take place at the NEC Birmingham in Halls 6, 7 and 8**

**2nd November: 9.00am – 5.00pm**

**3rd November: 9.00am – 4.00pm**

**For full details of how to get to the show, who’s exhibiting, and to pre-register for free, visit [www.iogsaltex.com](http://www.iogsaltex.com)**

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# WHAT TO SEE

## HOW DEALER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ARE CHANGING

### *Evopos to demonstrate its software*

Evopos says there are software systems designed for dealerships that do a pretty good job in producing the paperwork, controlling the stock, and helping users to be more efficient.

However, the company believes software needs to do more. It is becoming essential for a dealership to have the very best tools in every area of its business to enable it to be truly successful.

Evopos is celebrating its 30th year supporting Automotive and Power Equipment dealers with its Dealer Management Systems.

The company say it knows how beneficial it is to provide dealers with a total solution, so in addition to working closely with its dealers, it also likes to work with its suppliers and integrate with online sales sites and services.

“Customers seem to expect more from dealers nowadays,” says Denis Bullen, Evopos MD. “They expect displayed stock to be clearly priced and the sales process to be efficient. Customers normally appreciate reminders when a service is due, and a text when it’s ready to pick up. Also it’s nice to get personal notifications when specially ordered items are available, maybe a VIP invite to a sale preview, or even just birthday greetings.

“It’s also great if you can attract customers you would not normally get. Evopos can automatically create and populate your own mobile-friendly on-line e-commerce store, and integrate with eBay, Amazon, Magento, etc.”

Denis continued, “Most systems store data reasonably well, but it’s the management (often automated) of the right information at the right time that enables the best service and allows the best decisions to be made.

“Another big advantage of Evopos is the price. You only pay a low monthly fee that includes support and updates. This means you see much more of the savings and increased revenue on the bottom line.”

**Stand H193.**



Denis Bullen

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# NEW MOWERS FROM HAYTER/TORO

*To be unveiled at dealer meetings alongside the show*

## Hayter

Hayter dealers will be able to enjoy the first opportunity to see two new mower ranges at dealer meetings at SALTEX.

Marketing Manager Julie Dommett says, "As Hayter celebrates 70 years of manufacturing fine lawnmowers, we're thrilled to be able to show the latest evolution in the iconic Harrier rear-roller range, by launching the new Harrier 41 platform.

"In addition, we're also delighted to be able to launch a brand new range in our four-wheel category. The Osprey range will feature both a push and self-propelled model and will be a great choice for maintaining family lawns."



Toro 20943



## Toro

Alongside this, the new season will bring a host of new mower launches from Toro as the manufacturer has confirmed that a range of new and updated mowers for the coming year will be shown to dealers for the first time at the dealer meetings.

For spring 2017, Toro will release a number of new walk behind mowers including a 46cm high-wheel self-propelled mower, a 48cm electric-start cast-deck mower and an updated version of the Smartstow model. New Ride-on ranges will also be launched at the event.

Designed for small to medium-sized gardens, the 20943 steel-deck high-wheel mower is intended to introduce new customers to the Toro brand. Easy to manoeuvre, even over tough ground, it offers three-in-one capabilities so owners can collect, mulch or rear discharge as they wish.

An updated Smartstow model 20961 is due for the spring and will now feature rear-wheel drive and Toro's Automatic Drive System as standard. Fitted with the new Briggs and Stratton EXi Mow n Stow engine, you can still store the mower vertically without having to drain oil or fuel, but now there's also no need to change the oil, just top up as required.

**Stand K020**

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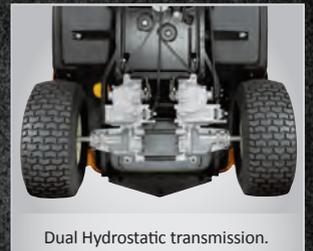
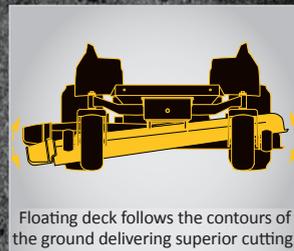
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# ECHO TORQUE AT NEC

## *New brushcutters and lithium-ion products*

ECHO will display its latest range of High Torque brushcutters and will

launch a new range of lithium-ion battery products.

The range of High Torque brushcutters with a 1:2 gear reduction ratio, deliver up to 50% more torque at the cutting head compared with previous models. What this means is a High Torque brushcutter can provide the same cutting performance as a considerably larger machine but with a smaller, lighter engine.

SALTEX will also see the official launch of the new ECHO range of lithium-ion 50v battery products, which includes a power blower, hedge trimmer and brushcutter. .

The advanced motor control maintains a high performance, with reduced energy consumption, to ensure longer intervals between charging periods.

**Stand C090**



## A SELECTION FROM THE UK'S LARGEST RANGE OF POWERED MOWERS

### *Henton & Chattell to feature Cobra machines*

Henton & Chattell will be showcasing products across many of its ranges.

A predominant focus of the stand will be on its Cobra brand which since its 2014 launch has grown to become the UK's largest range of powered lawnmowers with over 50 machines, including petrol, electric, lithium-ion, rear rollers, self-propelled options and professional models. Cobra will also be exhibiting its newest products which include the ranges of 24v and 40v lithium-ion products; the new hand-push mower and the new T40B petrol cultivator.

The stand will also be home to Billy Goat Industries' products, including the powerful range of vacuums and blowers.

Briggs & Stratton Power Products will also be on the stand and the team will be on hand to talk visitors through the new range of products which includes generators and pressure washers.

**Stand J062**



**Cobra T40B petrol cultivator**

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## EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

### WHERE EMPLOYERS GO WRONG

Employees are a firm's greatest asset and they're probably the most expensive too, writes *Lee Ashwood*, Senior Associate in the employment department of law firm Eversheds.

So why is it that some employers and managers seem hell-bent on treating their staff so poorly? Why do they create 'them and us' divisions without a care?

Having a unified and happy work force is critical to success. Employees can make or break an organisation: staff don't have to go the extra mile, they can upset a customer base, and they will leave for other opportunities taking both knowledge and customers with them. Any manager worth their salt knows that recruitment of replacements is expensive and disruptive.

There are five common causes of employee malcontent and they follow in no particular order. The first is company sick pay being withheld in situations

where the employer has a discretion over the payment. This can appear arbitrary.

Next come sometimes bitter disputes over pay in relation to hours worked, what constitutes overtime and, of course, workers feeling that they are simply not being paid enough. The issue at hand is that the web has made salary and pay more transparent and staff consider it their right to be paid the market rate.

Thirdly, and this can be a big problem, is inconsistency in treatment. Lawyers see on many occasions situations where an employee feels that they are always given the worst tasks to complete, have not been allowed time off at short notice when others have in the past, or have not had the perks that others have been given in similar circumstances.

Fourth on the list is an employee thinking their workload is too much or that work has not been distributed evenly.

Finally, there is what some term bullying by managers and colleagues.

So, why do employers make mistakes?

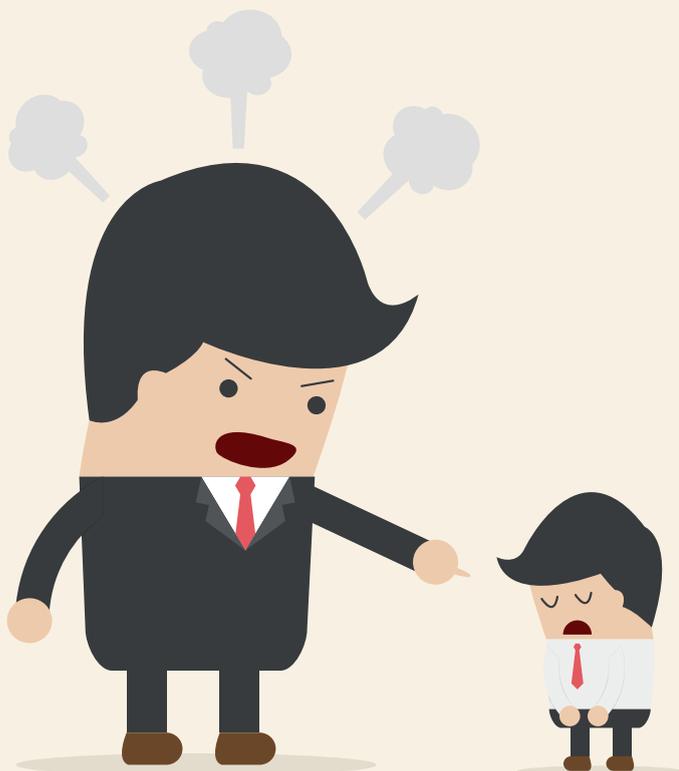
The greatest generator of employee malcontent comes from employers not following what the law requires. It's understandable as it is often complex and not well-known. However, if you treat staff with empathy and respect, you rarely give them a reason to check to see if you are treating them in accordance with the law. It is not appreciating this point that leads to very common mistakes which in turn leads to disgruntled staff, grievances being raised or, worse, employment tribunal claims.

The most obvious solution to counter discontent is for employers to take time to consider the impact of a decision on an employee, explain the reasons for the decision, and listen to any objection the employee may have about the decision.

Firms that consider all of the above will see greater harmony and fewer claims.



Edited by Adam Bernstein



# DON'T PAY FOR DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Mark Stevens, solicitor at Veale Wasbrough Vizards writes: Defending a discrimination claim can be time consuming. Not only that, but in the event that a claim succeeds there is no limit on the amount of compensation that can be awarded.

A couple of cases illustrate the risk. In 2014 Group Captain Wendy Williams was passed over for promotion in favour of a male colleague who had served three-and-a-half years fewer than her. She took the Ministry of Defence to an employment tribunal accusing the RAF of favouring men. Williams won and was awarded £560,000. Recently, Eva Carneiro, the former Chelsea FC doctor, settled her dismissal claim against the club for a reported £5m. Her claim included an allegation of sexual discrimination after she went onto the pitch to help a player in August 2015.

It surprises many that discrimination law covers a wide range of individuals including job applicants, agency workers, employees and contractors. Even former employees are protected. Further, employers can be found responsible for their employees' discriminatory conduct.

Workers are protected against suffering discrimination in relation to a number of different protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

There are different types of discrimination that employers should be aware of. The first, direct discrimination, occurs when a worker is treated less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic.

The second is indirect discrimination. This can occur when an employer does something,

or puts in place a policy, which has the effect of disadvantaging a particular group of people with one of the protected characteristics.

The saving grace for employers is that unlike direct discrimination, they can seek to justify indirect discrimination by showing that their actions were a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. This means a careful and written analysis of the business reasons behind the decision or policy – saving costs will, on its own, be unlikely to be acceptable.

Then there's harassment, which is defined as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of either violating an individual's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Here the perpetrator's intention is irrelevant and it is the victim's perception that is important.

Employers should note that unwanted conduct of a sexual nature can also be caught by harassment protections. A recent TUC survey reckoned that more than half of women suffer harassment.

Workers are also protected against suffering victimisation in the workplace which can arise in circumstances where an employee alleges that they have suffered from discrimination and then suffers a detriment or less favourable treatment as a result. Employers can also be caught out by the positive duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.

To minimise the risk of a claim employers need to follow an equal opportunities policy.

See [www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-guidance](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-guidance)



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## THE GDPR IS COMING OVER THE HILL (IS IT A MONSTER?)

Data protection law has recently been updated by Europe and will be in place from May 2018, says *SME Digest* Editor, *Adam Bernstein*.

Called the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) it will directly affect all EU member states and it will still matter when the UK leaves the EU because it will be in the UK's interest to have something equivalent to the GDPR for trading reasons.

Andrew Gallie, a Senior Associate at Veale Wasbrough Vizards specialising in information and data protection law, says the GDPR needs to be taken seriously. "Changes will be required, and if the required changes are not made then firms risk considerable fines and reputational damage. Indeed, under the GDPR, those organisations that breach the law could face a fine of up to 4% of annual worldwide turnover or €20m (whichever is the greater)."

The present data protection regime, under the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA), protects a person's rights in respect of their personal data and is built upon eight data protection principles. These require that personal data is processed fairly and lawfully; obtained and used for specified and lawful purposes only; adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to their purposes; accurate and up-to-date; not kept for longer than is necessary; processed in accordance with the individual's rights; kept secure; and not transferred outside of the EEA without adequate protection.

Individuals have a right via a Subject Access Request (SAR) to find out what information is held about them.

## SME NEWS

### Responsibilities around managing waste

Every establishment or business, no matter how small, that produces waste in the UK has the responsibility to manage it properly. A new website, [Rightwasterightplace.com](http://Rightwasterightplace.com), helps businesses to know what to do to comply with the law when disposing of waste. The website has a Simple Guide to Duty of Care and other information that can help firms check whether they are already managing their waste in a compliant way and, if not, what changes they need to make.

See [www.rightwasterightplace.com/what-is-duty-of-care/#simple-guide-to-duty-of-care](http://www.rightwasterightplace.com/what-is-duty-of-care/#simple-guide-to-duty-of-care)

### New bank chooser website

A new Business Banking Insight (BBI) website aims to help businesses to identify which bank is best for them. Based on survey data, it aims to improve competition and choice in the banking sector for small and

### The GDPR confers new rights.

Mr Gallie says that under the GDPR there is additional information which must be provided: "Firms will need to tell data subjects – users – the legal basis for processing their data, the data retention period, and of their right to complain to the Information Commissioner. There is also a requirement that the privacy notice is concise, easy to understand and in clear language."

The GDPR offers new rights for having inaccuracies corrected, to have information erased, preventing direct marketing and a right to data portability.

For many the most challenging area under the DPA is that of "consent" and Mr Gallie says that consent to use personal data cannot be inferred from silence, pre-ticked boxes or inactivity. "The GDPR requires that consent must be freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous."

There is presently no general obligation to report any data breaches but the GDPR radically changes this and creates an obligation to report data protection breaches which could cause an individual harm within 72 hours. Mr Gallie suggests firms appoint someone with the responsibility for ensuring that the obligations are met.

The GDPR is a real and present threat to firms and organisations of all sizes and the financial consequences for ignoring the new rules are severe.

See <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/overview-of-the-gdpr/>

medium-sized businesses.

The website was launched at the end of July and offers bank ratings based on elements such as service, communication and transparency of charges.

See [www.businessbankinginsight.co.uk](http://www.businessbankinginsight.co.uk)

### Ofgem commits to published tariffs and an end to auto-rollovers

Energy market regulator Ofgem has announced a commitment to energy reforms set out by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) earlier this year. This means energy suppliers will no longer be able to lock microbusiness customers into restrictive auto-rollovers. They will also have to publish clear, comparable tariffs. This is a big win for the Federation of Small Businesses as it has been campaigning for a fairer and more transparent energy market.

See [www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications-and-updates/remedy-implementation-strategy](http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications-and-updates/remedy-implementation-strategy) ●

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# NEW CHAPTER FOR WRITTLE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

## *New name and identity for land-based course provider*

Writtle University College has officially launched its new name and brand identity to mark the start of a new chapter in its 123-year history.

Having achieved university college status earlier this year, Writtle University College (formerly Writtle College) launched its new brand identity with a logo that brings together its values and heritage – having been founded in 1893 – with its vision of enabling positive global change through inspiring education.

Writtle University College gained Taught Degree Awarding Powers in 2015 and will be awarding its own degrees from 2017.

Dr Stephen Waite, Vice-Chancellor of Writtle University College, said at the launch: “This change emphasises the ambition of Writtle and this ambitious nature is reflected in our students who go on to achieve fantastic careers having studied with us. We are very proud of the heritage and reputation we have in our specialist areas.

“Our portfolio, which includes land-based courses, environmental, sport, design and animal courses continues to attract students from across the globe.

“Today is a landmark moment in the history of Writtle, and of education in the South-East region altogether, as we become a university college.

“We have set a clear and ambitious vision; we are a specialist institution, nationally acclaimed and internationally recognised for the quality of our students, graduates and staff. These are exciting times for everyone associated with Writtle.”



### **New identity**

Speaking about the new branding, Craig Emery, Head of Marketing at Writtle University College, added: “We have developed the new branding in consultation with a range of stakeholders including staff, students, alumni and our Board of Governors. We believe it really tells a story, embraces the subjects we offer and speaks confidently about us as a high-quality provider of specialist education with a global appeal.

“We wanted an identity that acknowledged and respected our history, but also presented us in a modern way to reflect how current and relevant our teaching is. Our new campaign asks our audiences if they’re ready – ready to learn, ready to achieve, and ready to be part of Writtle during this exciting period in our long and proud history. People are sometimes surprised

about the scope of courses we offer at Writtle and we would always encourage prospective students to visit our campus to find out what opportunities we have waiting for them.”

Writtle’s new launch campaign utilises the strapline “We’re ready. Are you?” and the hashtag #writtleready which is a message that students, staff and industry will be able to get behind.

Staff from Writtle University College chatted to Essex residents and visitors in Chelmsford High Street from 9am to 5pm on Tuesday 23rd and Wednesday 24th of August to promote Writtle’s courses and raise awareness about the college’s new name.

There is also a fully redeveloped website, [www.writtle.ac.uk](http://www.writtle.ac.uk), and an advertising campaign being conducted on buses, bus stops and social media.

# FÖRST PARTNER CAPEL MANOR

## *Donates woodchipper to college*



Först, the woodchipper supplier, is helping to support the next generation of arborists through its partnership with Capel Manor College.

The Middlesex-based college, which has more than 3,000 students, offers a wide range of land-based courses including Arboriculture & Countryside, Saddlery & Leatherwork and Horticulture & Landscaping.

Först donated an ST6 woodchipper to the college for its Arboriculture & Countryside courses after meeting with the college lecturers and students last summer.

With more than 200 students spread across Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Professional Short Courses and Apprenticeships, the wheeled machine plays a vital role in providing practical training for the wood chipping and felling courses.

Predominantly used by apprentices and Professional Short Course students, the machine enables students to achieve their required Certification of Competence, allowing them to begin their career in their chosen arborist sector.

Speaking of the partnership, Derek McFarland, Deputy Head of the School of Arboriculture & Countryside at Capel Manor College,

said, “The donation of the Först ST6 woodchipper has genuinely been a real benefit for students, allowing future tree surgeons access to quality equipment.

“When training our students, their safety is always of the upmost importance and Först machines are, in my opinion, the industry leader for safety innovations.

“In addition, they are the quietest machines I’ve encountered, which is another fantastic safety feature for the students, ensuring they can hear their course mates and lecturers at all times.”

Derek continued: “As many of our students are apprentices, it is extremely important that they receive the correct training and receive their accreditation to allow them to progress with their career. It is such a benefit that the students can be trained and assessed on this machine.”

## BRIGGS & STRATTON DEALER TRAINING HITS THE ROAD

*Technical update seminars*



Briggs & Stratton says it is a firm believer in the importance of training and strongly believes that keeping knowledge current and up-to-date is the best way to stay ahead of competitors.

With this in mind the company has arranged a series of training dates for dealers to attend.

It is holding technical update seminars at venues nationwide with the first three dates having kicked off at the end of October in Ireland. The remaining dates are listed to the right.

For further details and enquiries regarding training, contact the UK office on 01606 862182

or email [info.uk@basco.com](mailto:info.uk@basco.com).

### November 2016

- 8th Perth Racecourse – Scone Palace Park, Park Place, Perth PH2 6BB.
- 9th Barony College – Parkgate, Dumfries, DG1 3NE.
- 10th The Bridge Hotel – Walshford, Wetherby, Yorkshire, LS22 5HS.
- 22nd Riseholme College – Showground Campus, Horncastle Ln, Scampton, Lincoln LN1 2ZR.
- 23rd Briggs and Stratton UK – Road Four, Winsford Industrial Estate, Cheshire, CW7 3QN.
- 24th Evesham College –

- Davies Rd, Evesham WR11 1LP.
- 29th Launceston Rugby Club – Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 9QT.
- 30th Wincanton Racecourse – Wincanton, Somerset, BA9 8BJ.

### December 2016

- 1st Bridgend Rugby Club – Ford Brewery Field, Tondy Rd, Bridgend, CF31 4JE.
- 6th Plumpton College – Ditchling Road, Plumpton BN7 3AE.
- 7th Hertford Rugby Club – Highfields, 62 Hoe Lane, Ware, Herts, SG12 9NZ.
- 8th Heath Court Hotel – Moulton Road, Newmarket, CB8 8DY.

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## COMMERCIAL

# NEW DIMENSION IN WIDE AREA MOWING

## *World's first batwing mower with a 4.27m cutting width*

Ransomes Jacobsen has launched the latest machine in its MP Series of wide-area mowers.

The Ransomes MP653 XC is the world's first and only wide area rotary mower with a 4.27m cutting width, increasing productivity by up to 25% (up to one hectare per hour more) over traditional 3.4m mowers.

Designed and manufactured at Ransomes Jacobsen's European headquarters in Ipswich, the MP Series is primarily targeted at the municipal sector and provides multiple options from a single design platform.

The MP653 XC is the largest in the MP Series of wide-area rotary mowers and is powered by a 65hp Kubota diesel engine. Using the same powertrain, hydraulics and platform, the decks and cutting systems have been upgraded to achieve this new 4.27m cutting width. The company says it will deliver a zero uncut circle for effortless back-and-forth mowing and manoeuvring around tight obstacles.

The use of lightweight, high-strength steel results in a

significant reduction in gross weight, which contributes to greater fuel savings, a reduction in trailer weight requirements and reduced ground pressure.

The machine again features the AdaptiCut system, which automatically adjusts the mow speed to ensure consistent cut performance, even when mowing through thick grass.

The outer decks fold up for transportation, which while still providing sideways visibility for the operator when driving on the road, also distributes weight for improved stability and ride quality. The ergonomic design provides a transport width of 1.67 metres. All units are held in place for transport

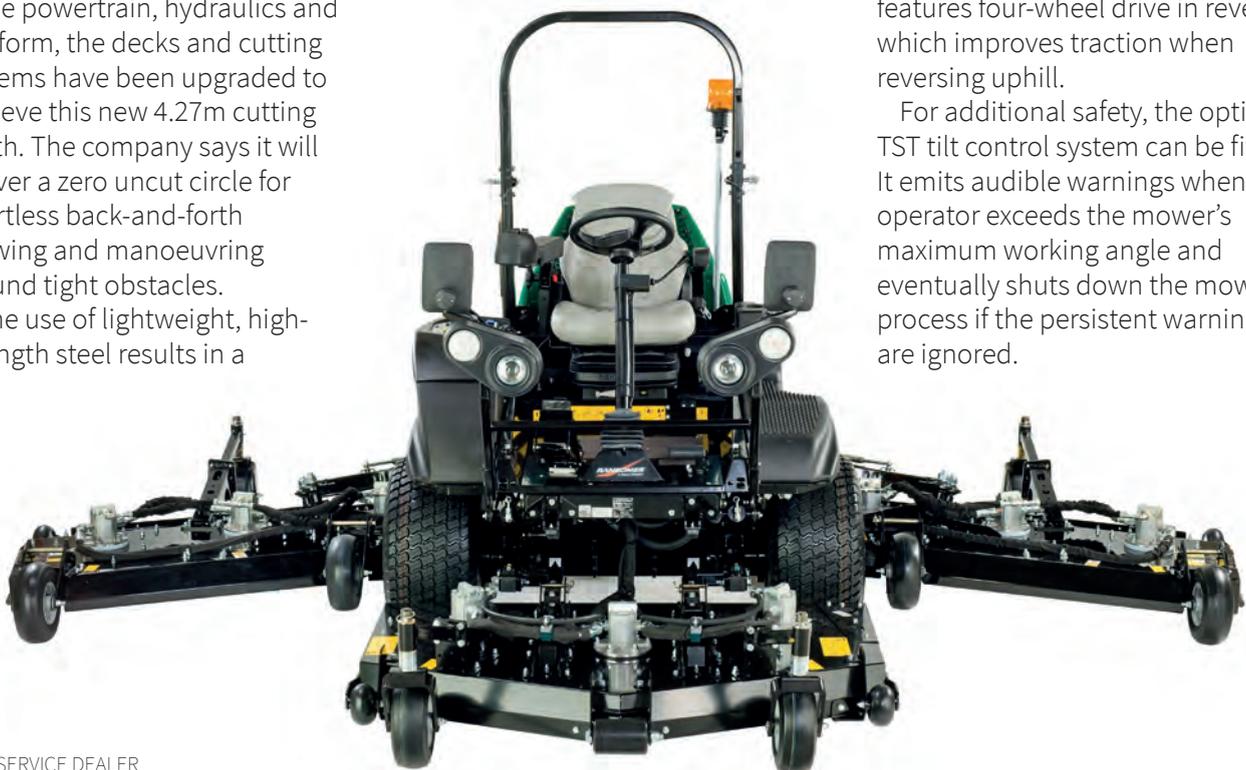
with an electrically-operated fail-safe locking system.

### Safe use

The InCommand control system provides on-board diagnostics for quick and easy troubleshooting and displays maintenance reminders on-screen to ensure that service schedules are adhered to. Mowing speed and transport speeds can also be adjusted and set using a password code.

As with all of the MP series, the MP653 XC features the SureTrac traction control system, which automatically transfers power from a slipping front wheel to the opposite rear wheel, ensuring superior control when hill climbing or working on side slopes. It also features four-wheel drive in reverse, which improves traction when reversing uphill.

For additional safety, the optional TST tilt control system can be fitted. It emits audible warnings when an operator exceeds the mower's maximum working angle and eventually shuts down the mowing process if the persistent warnings are ignored.



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## DOMESTIC

# FGM SNAPPER UP BATTERY POWER

## *New range of B&S powered equipment*

FGM Claymore has added to its range the Snapper XD 82-volt Lawn and Garden System powered by Briggs & Stratton.

Offering powerful, durable and reliable battery powered tools, the complete system includes a leaf blower, string trimmer, hedge trimmer and chainsaw.

All are compatible with a 2Ah or 4Ah Briggs & Stratton lithium-ion battery.

Dealers had a chance to get hands-on with these new products at the company's recent Dealer Demo Days.



## AGRICULTURAL

# HYBRID DRILLING

## *New Claydon can deliver seed or combination of seed & fertiliser*

The new Claydon Hybrid T4 builds on the success of the company's 6m Hybrid T6 and 8m Hybrid T8 trailed drills.

Delivering seed only or a combination of seed and fertiliser, it will sow directly into stubble, in min-till situations or on ploughed/cultivated land, across a wide range of soils, conditions and crops.

The Hybrid T4 can be adapted to whatever the customer requires. They can specify the standard tine set-up, have a twin-tine option instead of the rear seeding tine, choose to have fertiliser placed down the front or rear tine, can replace the leading tine with a cutting disc, or alternatively replace the seeding tine with the twin-tine kit and the leading tine with a twin cutting disc. This enables them to handle any establishment situation with just one drill and at a much lower level of capital investment.

The unit incorporates 13 individually-adjustable tungsten carbide leading tines which eliminate compaction, aerate the soil, optimise drainage and

create tilth for the seeding zone. The following seeding tines create additional tilth and place the seed at exactly the required depth, above the drainage channel. This highly-effective system encourages very deep, complex rooting structures to develop quickly, which minimises soil erosion and ultimately produces stronger, healthier crops with improved yield potential.

Folding to 3m, the Hybrid T4 weighs 6,000kg and features single-point depth control, a stainless steel Accord metering system and an RDS Artemis control system for variable-rate seeding. The specification also includes an oil cooler, hydraulically-driven fan, Claydon-designed metering heads for improved flow and seeding accuracy, together with a tramline kit.

The front of the chassis is guided by the optional press wheels, simple depth wheels or shouldered cutting discs, while the double rear toolbar can be equipped with a range of press wheel and harrow configurations to fully cover the seed and leave the soil smooth and level.



## DOMESTIC

# VERTICAL STORAGE FIRST FOR PETROL ENGINES

## Innovation from Briggs & Stratton

Briggs & Stratton has announced its new Mow & Stow engine which allows petrol lawnmowers to be stored vertically for the first time, while saving up to 70% of space.

Lawnmowers featuring the Mow & Stow engine can be stored upright, at a 110° angle, without the risk of petrol or oil leaks – something which the company says was not previously possible for petrol engines.

The engine is the result of extensive research and significant design changes that allow the engine to be tilted without causing problems or leaks. By using the handle and its rotating rear wheels,

the Mow & Stow is easy to lift and move. This also enables easier cleaning of the underneath and blade to ensure smoother running and a precise cut.

Ian Small, Sales and Marketing Manager for Briggs & Stratton UK, comments, “Briggs & Stratton has always been the forerunner of petrol engine technology and innovation and the Mow & Stow is our latest step in doing this.

Until now, it hasn't been possible to safely store petrol lawnmowers vertically but our latest product developments have overcome this.”



## AGRICULTURAL

# TELEHANDLERS – THE NEXT GENERATION

Launched by Massey Ferguson at Innovagri 2016

Massey Ferguson has introduced its new MF TH Telehandler Series. **The range features:**

- Tier Stage IV/tier 4 final engines now up to 130hp
- No requirement for a variable geometry turbocharger, diesel particulate filter, regeneration or exhaust gas recirculation
- Up to 3,800kg lift capacity
- High capacity hydraulic system offering up to 190 litres/min flow
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# NEW HOLLAND SHOWS OFF NEW NARROW BODY

## New CR8.80 rotary combine range

New Holland has launched its narrow-bodied CR8.80, the latest model in its rotary combine line-up.

Featuring a new engine which meets Tier 4B emissions criteria and adjustable vanes for superior grain separation, the company says the new model is highly efficient and responsive, even under full load.

The CR8.80's new FPT Cursor 11 engine brings it in line with the rest of the CR range with ECOBlue HI-eSCR emissions technology to meet Tier4B criteria. No requirements for engine gas recirculation (EGR) means it maintains the high efficiency expected of a CR combine while remaining responsive when running under full load for long periods.

Redesigned adjustable vanes have been added and help improve power efficiency and increase grain separation. Already in use on larger CR models, the vanes sit on the top section of the rotor cage helping to keep the crop on the rotor for longer.

Improved centrifugal threshing removes more grain from the straw mat, which is particularly useful when working with damper straw more common in UK and Irish crops.

When shod with tall 710/70 R42 tyres or 24" tracks the CR8.80 treads a narrower path through traffic and gateways at 3.24m wide, while high-capacity headers ensure optimum productivity in the field. The CR8.80 is capable of harvesting in excess of 50 tonnes of wheat per hour when fitted with a 9.1m Varifeed table.

It also features the same Twin Pitch Rotor technology and Dynamic Feed Roll module as can be found in the range topping CR10.90.



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**Mountfield**

# ARION 2 BLOWS INTO TOWN

## *New generation of hand-held blower from Pellenc*

Five years after the release of the first generation battery-powered hand-held blower Airion 1, Pellenc has launched the Airion 2.

The company says this new generation hand-held blower is more powerful, more accurate and more comfortable, based on customer experience feedback.

As with the older version, the Airion 2 can be used near noise-sensitive areas. It is also suitable as a cleaning tool for roads alongside sweepers at any time of the day and Pellenc say it works just as effectively as a replacement for the traditional sweeper in towns as it does in parks and gardens.

Weighing 2.55kgs, the power of the unit has been enhanced by 30% compared with the first version and features a thrust of 17.5 newtons and low noise of 79 decibels. It is also waterproof to IP54 standards.

As with all other Pellenc products, the Airion 2 uses the ultra-high capacity technology of the Pellenc lithium battery and the company says it guarantees non-polluting, odourless operation with quick

start-up and up to one day battery life.

The Pellenc ULB battery range is designed for professional tool use.



# 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



Twinclip Technology

**Mountfield**

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

## NOVEMBER 2016

- 2-3 IOG Saltex 2016, Birmingham NEC  
[www.iogsaltex.com](http://www.iogsaltex.com)
- 17 Service Dealer Conference & Awards  
[www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk)
- 16 AgriScot  
[www.agriscot.co.uk](http://www.agriscot.co.uk)
- 23-24 Midlands Machinery Show, Newark Showground  
[www.midlandsmachineryshow.com](http://www.midlandsmachineryshow.com)
- 28-29 Royal Welsh Winter Fair  
[www.rwas.wales/winter-fair/](http://www.rwas.wales/winter-fair/)

## 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)
- 14-16 World Ag Expo, Tulare, California  
[www.worldagexpo.com](http://www.worldagexpo.com)
- 14-15 Totally Tools, Rioch Arena, Coventry  
[www.totallydiy.co.uk/content](http://www.totallydiy.co.uk/content)

## MARCH 2017

- 24-9/4 Ideal Home Show, Olympia, London  
[www.idealhomeshow.co.uk](http://www.idealhomeshow.co.uk)
- 18-19 West of England Game Fair, Shepton Mallet, Somerset  
[www.westcountrygamefair.co.uk](http://www.westcountrygamefair.co.uk)

## APRIL 2017

- 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  
<http://suffolkshow.co.uk/>
- 31-3/6 Royal Bath & West Show  
[www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/](http://www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/)

## 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, Angers, 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®

# HOW'S RECEPTION IN YOUR AREA?

*Stand back and look at your business through the eyes of a customer*

**M**y wife's car is feeling its age (I know the symptoms) which has resulted in more and more visits to a local repair garage. It's not one of the slick main franchises, but a family-run outfit with a good reputation and facilities. But what marks this service-only operation is a welcoming reception desk staffed usually by very presentable female receptionists. Now I realise this could enter 'treading on egg shell territory' so I'll confine my observation to saying that the first point of contact with a company, whether face-to-face or indeed on the phone is crucial. And that is particularly true when women customers are placed in normally male-dominated businesses.

So the old adage of "You never get a second chance to make a first impression" remains as relevant today, even in this internet age.

At a *Service Dealer Conference* we staged in London during the 1990s, the founder of Kwik-Fit, Tom (now Sir Tom) Farmer talked about how he turned the mundane, unglamorous and often unplanned and unwelcome visit to have a new exhaust fitted or the car 're-shod' into a much more comfortable and welcoming experience. He was one of the first to tart-up the reception area and to humanise his technicians. "You can't get better than a Kwik-Fit fitter" ran the press and TV campaign.

Let's face it, your lifeblood, your future prosperity depends as much on new customers as it does on the old faithful. For many, buying a new mower or piece of expensive garden kit is alien territory. If they get clued-up (supposedly) online before they venture into your showroom, they still want either (a) reassurance that they have indeed selected wisely, or (b) to be gently advised that in no way will their preference tackle the jungle at the bottom of their garden.

This is where you or your staff have to become receptionists first and foremost. You are the front-line, the problem solver. You have the responsibility of managing the customer, and taking his or her interest or requirement to the next stage as seamlessly as possible.

The reasons why people buy online are many and various. Convenience and price are among them. But there's also the worry, the concern, the apprehension of stepping into a showroom and becoming

bamboozled and confused by the choice available.

Very few dealers have the luxury of a staffed sales desk in the showroom, but a first point of contact is essential. It needs to be visible, well-marked and welcoming. That's easy for a parts or workshop reception, less so for customers browsing the showroom.

There is fortunately not a standard identikit layout for dealers' showrooms, given the multi-franchise nature of our business. Each layout, each premises, each dealership will have different issues to face. But the challenge remains to ensure that customers, particularly new customers, are made to feel at home.

With that in mind, take off your business hat and be a customer (we all are). Do two things: stand outside your premises (during the day, and at night) and ask yourself, "Would I be tempted through the door?" Next, step over the threshold. Look ahead, to the left and to the right. First impressions? And if I want to know more, where do I head for? And if you don't feel that you can be objective, ask a friend to report on his or her 'first impressions'.

Supermarkets are past masters at shunting us around their shops, exposing us to products that they want to sell us, rather than what we had intended to buy.

Thinking of yourself as a receptionist might indicate a downgrade. The definition, however, is of "one who greets and deals with clients or customers". Says it all, really. ●



# JIM GREEN



## MOW-RORA BOREALIS

### MOWER SPARKS NORTHERN LIGHTS FALSE ALARM!

#### *Scientific instruments disturbed*

An alert that the Northern Lights would be visible across all of Great Britain recently was wrongly issued because a ride-on lawnmower disturbed scientific instruments.



According to a report on *The Register* subscribers to the AuroraWatch UK mailing list were sent a “Red Alert” informing them that it would be possible to view the aurora borealis from anywhere in the UK.

Unfortunately, this extraordinary alert was withdrawn just four hours later when it was discovered that a groundsman driving a ride-on lawnmower had disturbed the readings of a local magnetometer.

AuroraWatch UK, which is operated from Lancaster University, collects geomagnetic activity measurements from magnetometers across the UK, the Faroe Islands, and even Russia, to detect when the aurora borealis is

likely to be visible from the UK and other locations.

The Aurorawatch UK statement said: “Unfortunately, the readings were spurious and not related to geomagnetic activity. It, instead, appears that some local interference set off a massive spike in the data.”

They also told *The Register*, “Auroras (Northern Lights) aren’t the only thing that can cause such changes to the measured magnetic field. In this instance, the ride-on lawnmower’s electric motor created its own local magnetic field and, because it was driven near to our magnetometer, we recorded this disturbance and sent out an alert.”

## LAWN ENFORCEMENT

### COPS MOW WOMAN’S YARD

#### *Rather than give her a ticket*

Two Gaston County police officers in North Carolina, took their motto “to protect and serve” to a new level recently when they ended up mowing the lawn of a woman who was due a citation for letting her grass get knee-high, reports the *Gaston Gazette*.

Property owner Sonya Champion, 55, told the paper she expected to be fined when Sgt Bob Battle and Officer Kevin Murphy showed up at her home in response to a series of complaints about the condition of the yard. In some places, the grass was three feet tall.

However, after the officers heard of her broken mower, ongoing battle with cancer and mounting

healthcare bills, the two men decided to go and get a lawn mower and cut the grass for her.

Murphy, a 20-year-veteran of the force, changed out of his uniform and retrieved his own mower to do the work. He also refused Ms Champion’s offer to pay \$5 for gas, the newspaper said.

“I couldn’t do anything but cry because they were so good,” Ms Champion told the *Gazette*. “It’s nice to know that there’re still people in this world that can care for a stranger...I don’t even know how to say thank you. It meant that much to me.” ●



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