

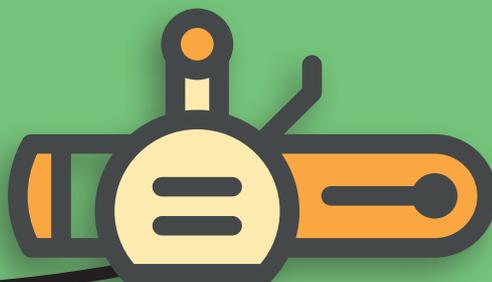
SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

MAY / JUN 2016

ON A CHARGE

Is there genuine momentum behind cordless machinery?



❖ Conference & Awards 2016

❖ AL-KO R&D

❖ Dealer Profile

❖ Focus on Grizzly

❖ New Sulky operation

❖ SME Digest

❖ Q&A Jacobsen president

❖ Business Monitor



**FACE
to
FACE**

PETER CHALONER
HENTON & CHATTELL

 **NEW**

LM46SPR

The LM46SPR self propelled mower is the first within the Gardencare range to feature a rear roller for that desirable striped finish. It also comes equipped with a 140cc B&S 500 Series engine and a large 65ltr grass bag.

LM51SPIS

The new LM51SPIS self-propelled 51cm mower will feature a Briggs & Stratton 675is lithium-ion InStart engine, which is one of the most innovative and easy starting engines on the market. The machine will also come equipped with a 65 ltr grass bag and 4-in-1 cutting system.

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His view from the edge

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the May/June 2016 issue of *Service Dealer*. This edition we take a look at the subject which is certainly stirring up some debate within the industry currently – cordless machinery.

Talking to manufacturers and distributors, there's no doubt it's the future. There are new products on their way almost monthly, with new players regularly getting in on the scene with their own products (albeit sometimes with 'borrowed' technology!). Terms such as 'watershed moment' and 'revolution' are being bandied about quite freely.

However, going on the feelings conveyed by many dealers in response to our recent survey on the matter, there are still some legitimate concerns out there. One comment which certainly stood out for me was that "distributors are pushing it a lot harder than consumers are seeking it".

Whether this is the case across the board or just this one dealer's experience is of course debatable. Where there does appear to be somewhat of a consensus among dealers though is their genuine fears over service work.

Reactions such as 'death knell' and 'end of the servicing dealership' maybe somewhat over the top, but hopefully manufacturers and distributors are at least aware of the depth of feeling among dealers and are prepared to address their concerns.

Steve Gibbs, Editor



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INDUSTRY

HUSQVARNA LAUNCHES FLEET SERVICES

Technology that can optimise operations in the landscaping industry

Husqvarna has developed a technology that can optimise operations in the landscaping industry: Husqvarna Fleet Services.

Finalised and ready for launch (with selected customers), the company says Fleet Services can help increase coordination and productivity, so landscaping businesses can fully achieve their aims and potential.

Wireless sensors are fitted to outdoor machines which can give the manager statistics such as engine run time, operator ID's, rpm distribution and machine temperature. Information regarding vibration levels teams are exposed to can be obtained, plus servicing dates/times and suggestions on how to optimise operations. This is achieved by using Cloud-based technology, uploaded onto the Cloud via the Base Station, which transmits the data, that can be then accessed via a computer.



Fitted sensor

The Husqvarna Fleet Services' package consists of: a wireless sensor for each machine, a base station to transmit data to the cloud and an optional operator

card (OpTag). The package can be used on petrol and battery powered machines, so entire fleets are covered.

Data on each machine's usage and operator status is sorted into four main categories that are easily accessible:

- Workday Log
- Interactive Maintenance System
- Machine Handling
- Vibration Reports

Kevin Ashmore, Husqvarna's UK Commercial Landscape & Groundcare Manager said, "To illustrate how the Cloud works, here's a quick example: imagine the wireless sensor is mounted to a Husqvarna front mower. When the machine is in need of a service (for example, after 25 hours usage time) a message will be sent to the user and their preferred Husqvarna dealer. This gives them a notification, in advance, if some parts need to be ordered, or if they need to book time for a machine service. In effect, it gives both parties a 'heads-up' so the user can not only plan ahead, but also organise their maintenance regime to efficiently accommodate any off-road time.

"Making the switch to a paperless, Cloud-based system has never been as simple and accessible. Husqvarna Fleet Services will change businesses forever and ensure fleets are running smoothly throughout the year."

INDUSTRY

RECO'S DEMISE LEADS TO FORMATION OF KIOTI UK

Owned by the Pols Group from Holland

The distribution of all Kioti products, which includes compact tractors, utility vehicles, mid-mounted and out front mowers, for the UK has been taken over by the Pols Group, which is based in Holland.

RECO, which had distributed the Kioti product range since 2001, discontinued its operations in the UK as from 31st January this year.

The Pols Group operates as the importer for the Kioti business in Benelux, Holland, France and Romania and has built a strong and reliable after sales service team and reputation.

An experienced Kioti UK team has been formed, with all staff members transferring directly from RECO to Kioti UK.

Spare parts supply will be handled from the Pols Group headquarters in Holland, which has already been supplying Kioti spare parts throughout Europe since 2006.

Kioti UK is currently working from the RECO premises, however it says it is actively looking for its own HQ in the St Neots, Cambridgeshire area.

Piet Van der Pols, CEO of the Pols Group, said, "The launch of Kioti UK is an exciting venture that promises to do extremely well. We are looking forward to working with the present UK Kioti dealer network and developing the brand in areas where it is not yet fully represented.

"The Kioti range of products is at a dynamic stage. New models and ranges have already been added over the last 12 months with further improvements and additional models to be introduced over the coming months."



INDUSTRY

40 JOBS GO AT GREAT PLAINS UK

Most losses in fabrication and welding

Agricultural machinery manufacturer, Great Plains UK, has made around 40 workers redundant at its Sleaford, Lincolnshire, premises as part of reorganising its business.

The majority of those who have lost their jobs worked in the welding and fabrication departments. However, the company says that product development and other key operations will continue at the Sleaford site.

David Holmes, UK Sales Director at Great Plains UK Ltd, was quoted by *The Lincolnshire Echo* as saying: "The company has reorganised to a practice of sourcing fabrications and weldments from markets with favourable currency exchange rates, which has unfortunately led to a reduction in the staffing in relevant departments.

"Product development, preparation, assembly, parts, service, sales and marketing will continue to be the cornerstone of the Sleaford operations enabling the company to fulfil its long-term strategy for growth within the agricultural equipment market."

The local paper said that the firm blames a combination of currency issues, along with current slow overall agricultural market conditions as forcing it to reorganise the manufacturing process



and other operations at Sleaford.

It is reported that some workers have taken voluntary redundancy while some agency employees have also been axed as part of the company's restructuring process.

Great Plains purchased Sleaford-based Simba International in 2010. Following the buyout significant investment was made in the facility in order to transform it into the Great Plains UK Ltd headquarters for Western Europe. An additional 34,000 square feet of factory space was added, as well as offices and stores being substantially extended and refurbished.

BEN BURGESS GARDEN EQUIPMENT REBRANDS

Becomes Ben Burgess GroundsCare Equipment

Ben Burgess, the agricultural, construction and grounds care machinery dealer in East Anglia, has announced the appointment of Ben B Turner as Group Grounds Care Equipment Manager.

Ben has been with the company for four and a half years, leading the dealership's John Deere sales and marketing, having previously worked for John Deere in Germany for three years.

Ben said, "I'm looking forward to the challenges that my new role will bring and ultimately my aim is to take the grounds care business forward by building on its current success.

"By strengthening our processes internally, I can work with the teams at each of our depots to ensure our sales, hire, parts and workshop departments are doing everything

they can to meet customer expectations."

The change in role came as the company also announced that Ben Burgess Garden Equipment has undergone a complete rebrand to become Ben Burgess GroundsCare Equipment, to recognise the level of commercial, golf and arboricultural equipment that it provides specialist sales and aftercare support for.

Ben added, "We've been an established garden equipment provider since 1962, but we've welcomed a growing number of brands into our showrooms over recent years in order to offer a diverse range of products.

"We still offer an excellent range of domestic products, however our commercial equipment, golf machinery and arboriculture brands have increased significantly and we

therefore needed a brand name that complemented our varied customer base."

Ben Burgess expanded its grounds care business in January by taking on the John Deere franchise around the Peterborough area. A sales and service team is now fully operational from the company's Coates depot in order to support customers in the new area, and future plans include a hire department and extensive parts stock.

Ben will be working closely with Nigel Mills, who continues his role as Commercial Manager.

Dan Clark has also recently become Workshop Manager and Jason Plummer has taken on the role of Hire Coordinator.

Ben will continue to support the agricultural sales team as he has done since joining the company.



L - R: Ben B Turner, Dan Clark and Jason Plummer

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APPOINTMENTS

**NEW OEM SALES
MANAGER AT
B&S***Mark Kerr takes on role*

Briggs & Stratton has promoted Mark Kerr to the position of Sales Manager – OEM Engines. In his new role he will be responsible for the UK and Ireland.

Mark, who has been with the company for 11 years and has worked in the industry for 26 years, will be responsible for a wide variety of customers ranging from large global OEM's to smaller, independent manufacturers.

"Their common demand is for modern, reliable and environmentally friendly petrol powered engines for the commercial and domestic markets," says Mark, who is confident that recent significant innovations from Briggs & Stratton places the business in a very strong position in the market place.

He specifically identifies the EFI, EXi and InStart products that were all recently introduced and which are already proving popular with original equipment manufacturers, the UK and Ireland dealer network and end consumers.

APPOINTMENTS

**GGP APPOINTS IRISH
ATCO DISTRIBUTOR***Exclusive deal with Cyril Johnson*

The ATCO lawnmower brand is making a return to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, following GGP UK Ltd's appointment of Cyril Johnston & Co, Ltd, as the exclusive distributor for ATCO garden machinery in Ireland.

The brand has a long history across Ireland. Despite being absent from the market for several years, Cyril Johnston's Mark Mallon says residual customer loyalty remains strong.

Mark says, "ATCO machines enjoy a great reputation and a strong customer following in Ireland – North and South. Despite being away from the Irish market for a number of years, ATCO continues to resonate with Irish gardeners, many of whom grew up with the brand.

"Having now returned to the Irish market, the reaction from dealers has been overwhelmingly positive. The combination of a positive brand legacy, an extensive range, attractive stocking terms, clearly defined dealer territories, together with the support and commitment of a local distributor have combined to make ATCO a compelling proposition for independent garden machinery dealers in Ireland."

Spearheading the development of the brand across Ireland is Mark's colleague Gareth McMurray. An experienced sales professional, Gareth is focused exclusively upon developing the company's presence in Ireland.

Gareth says, "We've developed a strong proposition to underpin the development of ATCO in Ireland. Its dealers benefit from extended credit terms on their initial order, same day dispatch on all orders received before 3pm, together with a special allowance for demo machines.

"However, the ATCO proposition is about much more than simply selling mowers or shifting boxes. It's about developing dealer partnerships to underpin the long-term development and growth of the brand across Ireland. During the year, we'll be rolling out a series of marketing initiatives to communicate the ATCO brand message and values to consumers."



Cyril Johnston's Head of Sales, Mark Mallon

DEALERS

JAMES PRYCE TRACTORS JOIN HORSCH NETWORK

Serving farmers in Devon and Somerset

As Horsch's dealer network continues to expand, James Pryce Tractors is the latest dealer to be appointed and will provide Horsch's range of drills and cultivators to farmers and contractors in Devon and Somerset.

Andy Pryce, Managing Director of James Pryce Tractors, believes the brand is a natural fit with its other premium machinery brands.

"Horsch has a reputation for quality. We're confident its products will sell well to customers looking for no-nonsense low-maintenance machines that offer great performance," he said.

James Pryce Tractors held an open day at its Tiverton branch on

26th April to showcase the drills and cultivators, which add a new line of business to the dealer's two depots at Tiverton and South Molton in Devon.

"We have a highly experienced team across the two branches. We

have nearly 40 years' experience providing agricultural machinery to farmers in the South-West, so we have a clear understanding of their requirements and the kit required to get the job done properly," added Andy.



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SERVICE DEALER CONFERENCE & AWARDS 2016

Service Dealer will be holding its unique and highly successful one-day conference and evening awards ceremony at the Oxford Belfry Hotel on Thursday 17th November 2016

JOHN TIMPSON TO HEADLINE CONFERENCE

No nonsense views of 'fiercely independent' high street retailer

We are delighted to announce that the keynote speaker at the *Service Dealer* conference will be John Timpson, Chairman of Timpson, the family owned, fiercely independent and proudly maverick high street retailer.

The conference's theme is 'The Customer is King!' and John will talk about what good customer service looks like.

For nearly 140 years, the company has made, sold or repaired shoes. Today it offers cobbling, key cutting, engraving and watch repairs through its 850 stores. John is renowned for his Upside Down Management philosophy that pushes as much control as possible to the guys running the shops. He has championed a culture in which store managers set prices, order the stock, and have huge scope to provide excellent customer service.

A best-selling author, *Daily Telegraph* columnist and sought-after speaker, John is a no nonsense man, his insights rooted in many years at the sharp end of retailing.

John talks with great insight and humour about leadership, achieving and sustaining service excellence and how to create a level of employee engagement that has made Timpson officially one of the best

companies to work for again and again.

John is a renowned philanthropist and has aligned the business's drive for profitability and excellence with its social mission.



GET INVOLVED!

Make sure your dealership is in the running for a Dealer of the Year award

We are running our Dealer of the Year awards again this year, with the presentation ceremony taking place during the evening following the conference.

The entry process for the core categories is now open for dealers to enter themselves for a chance of taking one of the titles, or you could also be nominated by one of your suppliers.

The core categories comprise:

- **Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year** – sponsored by Briggs & Stratton
- **Professional Turfcare Dealer of the Year**
- **Farm Machinery Dealer of the Year** – sponsored by Kramp

- **Forestry Equipment Dealer of the Year** – sponsored by Stihl
- **ATV/Quad Dealer of the Year**

This year we will be slightly tweaking the judging format of these awards to fit in with our Customer Is King theme by inviting your customers to have their say. Once you are in the running we will want your customers to get involved by sending us their comments, telling us about what great service they received in your store. We will send a customer feedback form/link when you have entered.

We also have a couple of additional categories this year, the nominations for which will open once the

season is well underway. These are for:

- **Star Of The Dealership** – sponsored by Hayter/Toro
- **Apprentice Of The Year** – sponsored by Briggs & Stratton

The Star Of The Dealership is a new prize for which we are looking for dealers to nominate a member of their staff from the sales, parts, service or support team who has demonstrated exceptional skills, commitment

to customer service or who has gone above and beyond this season. Who in your team is deserving of industry recognition?

Nominations for this category, as well as for the Apprentice of the Year prize, will open at the end of June. Judging for all awards will take place during the first week of October.

All the details you need and the entry forms can be found on our website – www.servicedealer.co.uk

WELCOME TO OUR SPONSORS

Our thanks to this year's sponsors, who tell us why they are involved in this year's conference and awards

Briggs & Stratton – Principal sponsor

Ian Small, UK Briggs & Stratton Sales Manager says: “Retail in the UK is changing rapidly and it's important for dealers to be able to come together, discuss their concerns, share their experiences and collectively work towards tangible solutions. We're delighted to be the principal sponsor of the 2016 *Service Dealer* awards and conference. Dealers are the heartbeat of the Briggs & Stratton business and it's vital that they have the support they need to move their businesses forward successfully in the future.”

Kramp – Platinum Plus sponsor

Richard Kendrick, UK Marketing Manager says: “Creating and maintaining a relationship with a customer is the most important part of building a successful brand. The second *Service Dealer* conference will build on the excellent work of the first, by providing dealers with another platform, to discuss issues facing the industry and together find solutions.”

Hayter/Toro – Platinum sponsor

Hayter/Toro says: “We are delighted to be Platinum sponsor of the *Service Dealer* conference, in this Hayter's platinum year. Dealers are central to our on-going mission to offer customers great quality products with excellent service, hence why we are again delighted to support this unique forum for dealer debate.”



Stihl – Gold sponsor

Simon Hewitt, Head of Marketing at STIHL GB says: “These are exciting and challenging times for retail in Great Britain. STIHL GB is delighted to support this event which will bring dealers together to consider the future and what prospects it will hold.”

Ariens – Networking sponsor

Jef O'Riley, Marketing Manager for Ariens in the UK says: “Ariens is a family company to which a strong and profitable dealer network is central to its success. We're delighted to be associated with this exciting event.”

BAGMA – Networking sponsor

BAGMA director Keith Christian says: “We're really pleased to be associated with this landmark conference which promises to be a highly constructive and useful day for dealers, whatever the size of their business.”

Gardencare – Networking sponsor

David Beck, Gardencare CEO says: “Dealers in England, Scotland and Wales will now directly benefit from Gardencare's same best-in-class service, generous margins and market-leading five-year warranties on both lawnmowers and hand-held products. This is why we feel it's vitally important to support this conference.”

ON A CHARGE

IS THERE SOME GENUINE MOMENTUM BEHIND BATTERY-POWERED GARDEN AND TURF TECHNOLOGY? EDITOR STEVE GIBBS REPORTS

Following Bosch last year saying it was planning to end production of its “nosier, dirtier” petrol mowers it has felt like the industry has truly come to a watershed moment with battery powered garden machinery.

Since then it has seemed like almost every manufacturer has wanted in on the sector – be it with a family of universally powered battery tools, or on the robotic side.

Certainly the rest of Europe seems ahead of the curve in both of these areas compared with the UK. The statistic I heard on a recent visit to the AL-KO facility in Germany – which had both new cordless machinery and autonomous mowers to show off – was that last year something like 280,000 robotic mowers were sold across Europe, compared with 2,000 here.

Sales of the more conventional battery products also still aren’t coming anywhere near close to their petrol equivalents. Darren Spencer, European Manager of Ariens UK, told me the figure he keeps hearing from dealers is that it currently only represents around 5% of their business – “A small minority of sales”.

But Ariens is still planning to launch a family of battery powered products this year. So why this confidence in the sector?

It does feel that perceptions are starting to shift. Does the adage that dealers are not keen on stocking the products because they don’t see much service work off the back of them, still apply?

Great potential

Peter Chaloner of Henton and Chattell, which distributes the

Ego range of battery powered products doesn’t believe so. He says, “I would say that dealers recognise that actually, yes the servicing opportunities are reduced with battery machines, but we should seize the moment. Because actually these are great products with great potential.

“Customers are going to be demanding these cordless products. If they can’t buy them through the dealer network they’re going to source them somewhere else.”

Peter and other distributors and manufacturers like him, believe that cordless is definitely the next revolution. This belief which many dealers may feel they have heard in the past, seems to be backed up this time around with technology that actually delivers the results.

“There’s an opportunity for dealers to tune into their customer demographic,” continued Peter, “to deliver what they want. Older consumers like the convenience of battery products. There’s an ageing population that will be coming through and they are the people that will be buying cordless.”

You can add into this potential sales mix younger people coming up, who may be looking to buy their first mower. This generation will be tuned into gadgets and technology and are time-poor, therefore

robotic machines may naturally appeal. Also they will have grown up with a culture of charging up devices before use as the norm.

And, of course, there will be many consumers across the board that will be turned on by the products because they are convenient, clean and light.

Mower Magic is the UK’s sole distributor of the Robomow automatic lawnmowers. John Hall, Managing Director, agrees with this, saying: “Robotic lawnmowers are becoming increasingly popular as people realise how quickly, easily and efficiently they do their job.”

Whilst Steve Morris, Honda (UK) Head of Power Equipment who has launched battery products for the first time this season, says: “The lawn and garden market in the UK is moving and changing at a promising pace, so to be entering a new sector at this time with such a strong range of products is a very exciting time for us.”



New steel deck cordless mower from Ego



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HUSQVARNA'S AUTOMOWER CHALLENGE UNDERWAY

£300,000 WORTH OF EQUIPMENT GIVEN AWAY IN INNOVATIVE CAMPAIGN

Husqvarna has given away £300,000 worth of gardening equipment across the UK, as part of the 2016 Husqvarna Automower Challenge.

This innovative robotic lawn mowing project has recruited 100 participants from across the UK to trial the Husqvarna Automower, in their garden this summer.

Husqvarna UK Sales and Marketing Director, Ken Brewster, explains: "The awareness around robotic lawnmowers in the UK is significantly lower than in Europe. We want to show UK gardeners that robotic lawnmowers have huge benefits, immediately saving time, eliminating noise, ease of use and environmental advantages.

"English lawns have a world-wide reputation of being immaculate, lush and, of course, striped and what we're curious to find out is how much culture plays a big role when it comes to maintaining the lawn. We're eager to learn how the gardening

nation will experience and respond to having a robotic mower managing their lawn."

Each participant, who was selected between February and March, receives a model of robotic mower to suit the size and complexity of their lawn, installed by a specialist Husqvarna dealer.

Ken adds: "This is one of the largest campaigns Husqvarna, as a company, has ever undertaken in the UK; not only do 100 gardeners get to test one of the best-selling robotic lawnmowers on the market today, but they get to keep it and continue to use it to maintain their lawn."

To qualify to take part in the challenge, participants had to have access to a lawn which is between 500m² and 6,000m², be active on social media and be able to capture and upload video content online, to share their Husqvarna Automower experiences.

To find out more visit

www.automowerchallenge.co.uk



STIHL SHOWS ITS RANGE TO THE PRESS

CORDLESS MACHINES AT LONDON EVENT

At this year's Garden Press Event, held at the Barbican in central London, STIHL displayed a myriad of cordless machines as well as a brand new cordless VIKING mower.

The new VIKING machine was the MA339 C lawnmower which replaces the MA339 model. This cordless mower features a height adjustable, mono-comfort handle for easy and efficient emptying of the grass catcher box and special high-lift blades.

A high-performance lithium-ion battery provides power for up to 370m² of neatly-mown lawn and the mower benefits from robust polymer housing and six-setting cutting height. Operation is assisted by a powerful, electronically controlled EC motor, developed by STIHL.

Also on show at the Barbican

was the STIHL FSA 90R cordless brushcutter that benefits from a lighter weight than its predecessor model at just 2.8kg. The unit is powered by 36V lithium-ion PRO battery technology and features STIHL's powerful EC Motor. Partnered with the AP300 battery the FSA 90R runs for up to 30 minutes, with ECOSPEED load control helping to extend the battery life.

Featured on the stand were also the BGA 100 backpack blower, the AR 3000 backpack battery, the MSA 160 C-BQ chainsaw and the HSA 25 shrub cutter.

The company also used the show to announce the STIHL Garten collection – an all-new cordless range generated with the everyday, home gardener in mind. Products in this new range will come

complete with 36V lithium-ion batteries and chargers and most significantly, will feature lower price points to increase appeal to everyday gardeners.

The STIHL Garten collection will include a cordless hedge trimmer, blower, chainsaw and brushcutter.



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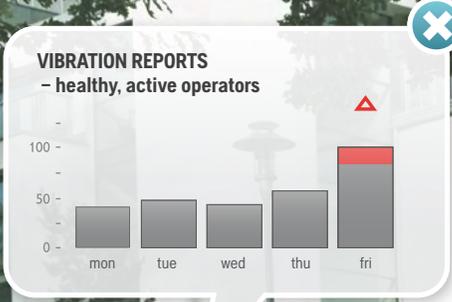
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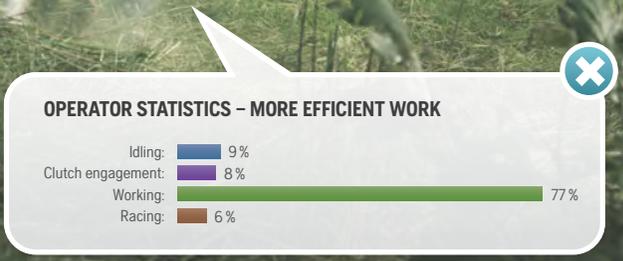
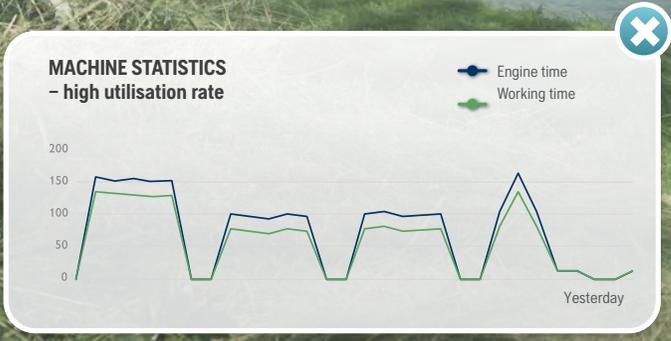
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EGO QUADRUPLES MOWER OFFERING

AND INTRODUCES STEEL DECK



EGO Power+ has launched its new range of lithium-ion powered products.

Three new lawnmowers have been added to the range which now includes a contemporary steel deck design that is available with a 50cm width with the option of a self-drive feature that runs from an independent motor. This can be operated at variable speeds dependent on the user and grass conditions. Due to the independent motor, the self-drive feature operates separately from the cutting system.

A 52cm poly deck model has also been added to the range to offer a wider alternative to the 50cm mower. The new poly model also features the self-drive option.

All four mowers in the range are able to be compactly folded for vertical storage and have mulching capabilities.

New batteries, featuring EGO's patented arc design and "keep cool" cell technology, have also been added to the range with a 5Ah and 7.5Ah being introduced to power the mower's new features.

ROBOMOW UPDATES MODELS

CAPABILITIES EXTENDED

For 2016 Robomow has updated its range, introducing power wheels and extending the capabilities of its machines to cover gardens up to 3,500m² – nearly an acre.

Dual 56cm blades on larger models enable the widest, most efficient cut in its category and every model features the unique Patented Edging Mode exclusive to Robomow, which enables the blades to cut to the wheel base and trim right over the lawn edge.

Robomow's GSM feature, included in its premium models, sends operational and security alerts directly to users' smartphones. As well as this, the comprehensive Bluetooth connecting app allows them to check battery life, see when it is next due to mow, send the Robomow to mow and drive it manually around the garden.

Also new for 2016 is RoboHome, a waterproof shelter especially for RS models. This provides a Robomow with extra protection from direct sunlight or rain, keeping it clean, pristine and promoting a longer lifespan. ●



BUSINESS MONITOR

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CORDLESS MACHINERY SURVEY SPRING 2016

While dealers are impressed with tech, there is real concern over servicing

We had a very strong response from dealers who wanted to let us know their thoughts on the current state of the cordless machinery market. From your comments there appears to be a real split out there between advocates of the technology and those who hold very real concerns that spread of such machinery could spell trouble for traditional servicing dealers.

What does appear to be the case though is that everybody is stocking cordless machinery in one form or another. Nobody at all responded saying they didn't hold any cordless brands. Most respondents held two company's machines (45%).

On the whole, dealers said they were 'quite confident' in the products they stocked (38%) and

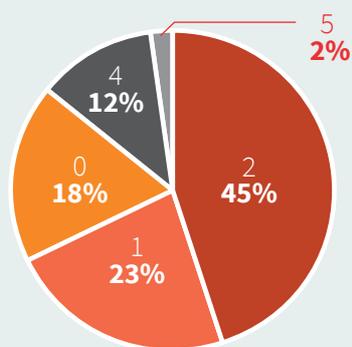
they would 'sometimes' recommend a cordless mower over a petrol one to a customer (43%).

There was not an overwhelmingly positive result to the question of whether customers demand cordless products, with most respondents saying 'occasionally' (44%) or 'hardly ever' (38%).

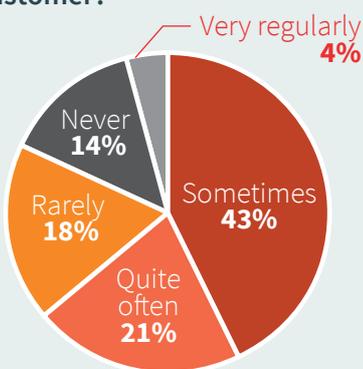
Slightly more encouraging, but by no means earth-shattering, was the news that 50% said that customers 'some of the time' make additional purchases after buying a cordless machine.

But as expected, the biggest concern that the responding dealers had was that 56% said that they got no service work at all off the back of a cordless machinery sale.

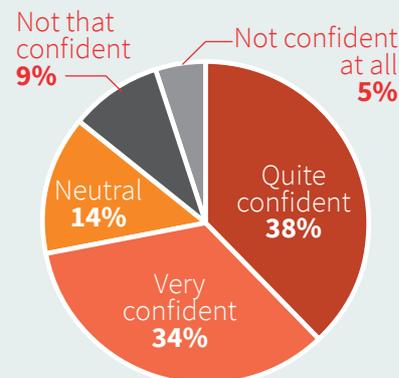
How many brands of battery powered/cordless machinery do you stock?



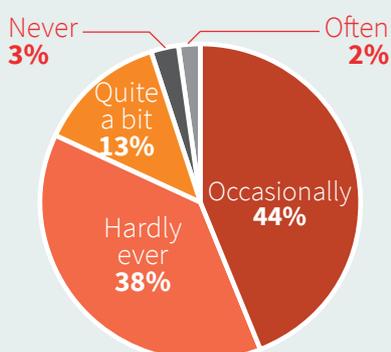
Do you recommend a cordless machine over a petrol one to a customer?



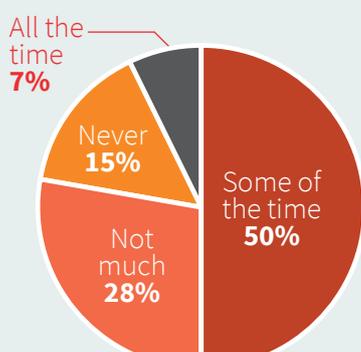
What is your confidence in the cordless machines you stock?



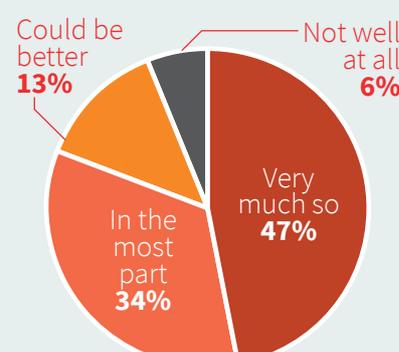
Do your customers demand cordless machines from you?



Do you find customers make additional purchases following a cordless machine sale?



Are you well supported by the manufacturers of the cordless brands you stock?

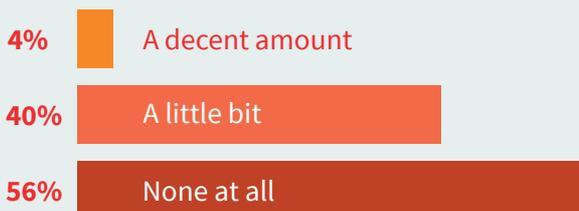


YOUR SAY

WE ASKED YOUR VIEWS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF THE BATTERY POWERED MACHINERY MARKET. DID YOU THINK IT WAS A REVOLUTION OR SOMETHING WE'VE SEEN BEFORE?

- It's awful for continued service and repair work for small businesses that rely on the workshop. Only good for the internet dealer who only sells boxes.
- A bit less of a fad than before, as we hope the technology has improved. We still need another year or so to prove that this is the case for battery life. This is the key area for customers as replacement batteries are expensive. We do hope manufacturers will address this soon.
- Distributors are pushing it a lot harder than customers are seeking it.
- At the moment, it's still very niche, with considerable consumer resistance. No revolution this year!
- In the next 5-10 years, definitely.
- It should be worrying to all service departments – the next step of the throw-away era we live in.
- I hope it's a passing fad as my business is 75% service and repair.
- We can actually make some money on certain brands. The customers love them and we have no problem selling them – although there is a bit more demonstration involved.
- Technology is getting there and is welcome since it will free up the workshop to focus on higher value machinery where invoices can be raised to cover the true cost of the work carried out.
- I think it will take a few years but it's here to stay I'm afraid.
- Possibly the future of mowing, but the demise of the domestic service industry.
- Needs to be cheaper for universal appeal, but certainly have customers looking for them.
- It's here to sell and it's here to stay and grow.
- Yes, I firmly believe the entire industry will be totally transformed within next 10 years. May well see the demise of the specialist dealer network, as the need for two-stroke and four stroke engines dwindles.
- Turkeys voting for Christmas springs to mind. As dealers we're encouraging the death knell of back-up dealer support and service work. The manufacturers won't care because the less that goes wrong and the easier they are to use means there's less warranty and therefore less hassle for them.
- Older customers find cordless very agreeable compared with the cost of key start petrol mowers.
- We're now promoting sales as the machines have a bigger capacity of power size and run time. We expect this to grow rapidly in the next two years.
- This is a growing market, especially with the elderly. As long as this technology meets expectations it will continue to expand. Not good for the specialist dealer as there is little or no service work.
- We as a dealership like cordless and promote it as much as we can. However, we can't get any real traction on it. The main reason is cost. It's just too expensive compared with the corded equivalent
- I think it's the future.

Do you get much service work from cordless machinery sales?



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LISTENING TO DEALERS

ROCHFORD GARDEN MACHINERY'S DEALER TO TRIP TO AL-KO HQ BRILLIANTLY SHOWED HOW EXPERT OPINIONS LEAD TO PRACTICAL CHANGES. EDITOR STEVE GIBBS WAS INVITED ALONG.

"I am only the voice of the dealers," said Stewart Anderson, managing director of Rochford Garden Machinery on a recent trip to AL-KO's head office in Kötzt, Germany.

"AL-KO think it's me that's complaining, but I'm not personally. What I feedback has been fed back to me from the dealers. And so if the dealers don't tell me what's bothering them, I can't relate it to someone who can do something about it."

Stewart, Mark Rochford and the whole team were very keen to impress this message on the large group of UK dealers who were taken to the HQ and the brand new research and development facility recently. And it was very clear just how much the German and Austrian bosses at AL-KO valued their relationship with Rochfords and, by extension, with the UK dealers. At every step of the visit it was clear the European high-ups genuinely wanted to

hear what the dealers honestly thought about their machines.

AL-KO sales manager, Gernot Trippold, who is based at the Austrian factory in Obdach, told the dealers how the UK market is pretty unique within Europe, but how AL-KO are prepared to gear production specifically to fulfil their needs. "We know there are different demands between the UK and Europe," he said. "Some markets are driven by petrol engines, some are driven by electrical engines. Some territories like Slovakia for example are only interested in the entry level, lower cost machines. Not the high-end equipment like the UK desires.

"Machines have to be perfect in your country. People love their lawns. If you compare it to Austria, people there feel they have to mow their lawns - to them it's a chore which they do not enjoy."

An example of the UK difference, which was referred to a lot during the trip, was our country's desire

to mow the grass as low as possible. In Austria a perfectly acceptable height of cut on a tractor's mowing deck is 3-5cm. But, Mr Trippold joked, "In your country, in the best case, you want to cut the grass under the roots!

"Of course this is quite hard to provide," he continued, "but we tried to find a solution which we will be able to show you today.

"This pressure to make change came from our customers, Rochfords, who gained that knowledge from their customers, you the dealers.

"This is the reason why we are here today. We want you to see all the resources we have at our disposal here to find solutions to any problems."

Strong relationship

Rochfords have been working with AL-KO since 2003. Both parties clearly have a very respectful and honest relationship with each other.

“WE HAVE A SERIOUS AND POWERFUL RELATIONSHIP FOUNDED ON A VERY CONSTRUCTIVE BASIS”

Mr Trippold reminisced about their early days together. He said, “I learnt so much from Peter Rochford. He was a tough guy. And then I met Stewart who had come through the school of Peter Rochford - and so now it's not really any easier for me!

“Seriously though, our partnership 13 years on is very, very good. We have a serious and powerful relationship founded on a very constructive basis.”

Stewart Anderson agreed, saying “90% of the time the relationship is plain sailing. We deal with a lot of companies and AL-KO, as long as you get to the right person, they get the things we ask for done.”

A recent practical example of this stems from the UK desire for a height of cut as low as possible on a garden tractor. Stewart explained, “The actual problem was not so much the cutting height. The problem was that the belts were jumping off at the lower levels.

“So when we went to AL-KO it was this tendency for the belts to come off that we wanted to address. But we thought at the same time let's look at being able to cut lower. Let's fix everything in one go.

“So we sat down and looked at all aspects and we really very neatly engineered all the problems out.

“The point being, once we got to know about the problem, and how frustrating it was for the dealer, we were able to actually do something about it.”

Mr Trippold said, “Once we've

heard from Rochfords about a change that they want to see on a machine, we can go away and re-design and engineer. Subsequently I can then proudly invite Stewart over to Austria to view the prototype and he can say that it reaches the criteria ready for manufacture.

“In this specific case with the changing of the deck we can now mow down to 15mm. Nowhere else in Europe needs a height that low, but we want to make sure that we are satisfying each country's demands.”

Feedback encouraged

During the course of several presentations made to the assembled dealers, feedback from the floor was

encouraged at all times.

One point raised was that AL-KO maybe had too a broad a range and wouldn't this soon become even larger what with the recent acquisition of Solo?

Stewart addressed this saying, “The reason for this in the past has been that AL-KO were hitting too many different price points for many different markets. But things are changing and being rationalised.

“What has happened is that the AL-KO Powerline range is now essentially re-badged as Solo By AL-KO, and some purely AL-KO mowers have been brought across into this range. So it's not like the range has expanded significantly because of the introduction of Solo. We are going to have a



The flagship showroom in Kötz

good, confident range now.”

All dealers were then invited to hold an open discussion with the senior management of AL-KO in the room. Many points and ideas were raised including many challenges for the engineering team of AL-KO. Stewart said it was exactly this sort of feedback he was wanting to encourage because we were in the right place to be heard by people who could do something about it.

These people were the product managers and designers who were on hand in the R&D facility. Mr Trippold promised, “If you are not satisfied with any aspect of the machine, now you have an opportunity to speak to the product manager himself. Please challenge these guys - they should know every single screw in their product.”

R&D facility

Before the group met the product managers and got hands-on with some new machinery the opportunity was afforded to tour the brand new Research and Development building.

Stewart Anderson said, “I’ve visited facilities all over the world

for 30 years and this department stands out. I’ve never seen anything like it. I think it’s unbelievable.

“To me it really exemplifies what the difference is with AL-KO products. It’s great for the dealers to see where all the in-depth testing takes place. They have the ability here to thoroughly scrutinise all aspects of the machines - and ultimately that’s what makes these products reliable.”

The German hosts were rightly proud of the two-story building. As well as being absolutely spotless it contained a myriad of cutting edge testing equipment. There was a room for example, which could be set on fire for up to 90 minutes without affecting the rest of the building. There were large 3D printers, wet testing areas, a machine to throw projectiles at mowers for hours on end, stress machines, battery testers and so on. It really was a most impressive and comprehensive site.

Following the tour the dealers spent the afternoon in the facility getting to grips with some new products.

There were five stations set

up, each manned by a product manager who was there to respond to and take on board any comments that the group had. Moving between robot mowers, battery tools, Solo By AL-KO brushcutters & chainsaws, garden tractors and push mowers, dealers got a sense of what they could expect to see in their stores soon.

It was also during this session that we were shown the garden tractor that had its cutting deck altered specifically for the UK market as a direct result of dealer feedback.

Flagship store

The main part of the trip was finished off with a visit to the AL-KO flagship retail store which is located just up the road from the HQ in Kötz.

This beautifully designed building featured state-of-the-art displays including Europe’s largest video screen which dominated the back wall, stretching over two floors.

Being a Rochfords trip, the dealers were also treated to a wonderful social programme with a Bavarian night back at the hotel. During the course of the evening Stewart aided by Mark and Kerry Moore made presentations to the German hosts to thank them for their hospitality. And to compliment the sausages, sauerkraut and steins, traditional games such as log sawing and nail hammering were played.

A final stop-off at the BMW Museum in Munich before catching the plane home rounded off what was a truly constructive and valuable experience.

The impression I was left with was that listening to the expert guys who are dealing with this machinery every day is clearly paying off for Rochfords and AL-KO. It felt like that this system of feedback was appreciated from all sides. A most impressive way of working. ●



Battery testing in the R&D facility

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NEW MACHINERY, NEW CHALLENGES

Progressing from servicing and dealing in used machinery to supplying and supporting new equipment is a big move for any independent business. Martin Rickatson found out how Staffs-based Jason Bloor has approached the challenges of becoming a franchised dealer

Dealers in used equipment and those that supply primarily new products have many things in common, not least the fact that, broadly-speaking, they are both looking to sell their wares to the same end users. But there are also plenty of differences in the approaches the two types of business require, not least the fact that, for a franchised dealer, there's a supplier to satisfy as well as the customer.

It's a balancing act that Jason Bloor would appear to have

successfully mastered since moving on from retailing only second-hand farm machinery to take on a tractor franchise with Italian maker Landini and additional agencies for some key agricultural equipment names.

From a family dairy farm, in his 20s Jason operated as a farm contractor while also working at home. Later he diversified further by building up a business buying and selling used farm machinery. In 2004, the family decided to cease milking and focus on beef and arable farming, and he consolidated

his contracting activities to set up his current business, J A Bloor Agricultural Services Ltd.

The firm has developed an established reputation as a respected machinery source and supply business providing good value second-hand farm equipment, and for hiring out machinery including tractors, telescopic handlers, excavators, forage wagons and slurry tankers.

"In addition to supplying used equipment locally and nationally, we've grown a strong export



Marketing support is provided by Jason's wife, Janine, with the business fully online via Twitter, Facebook and its own website

business to Ireland and other countries in Europe,” explains Jason, who subsequently began employing service staff.

“The expertise our team developed in preparing and refurbishing equipment for sale also brought in an increasing amount of workshop servicing and repairs for local farmers.”

New equipment

Given the way in which the business was developing, the decision to take on new equipment franchises was a natural progression, reasons Jason.

“Just over two years ago, we began looking to add the supply of new tractors and machinery to the established business of offering refurbished used equipment. It was an obvious move really, particularly as we already had the service staff and the used outlets to move on trade-ins. We subsequently put a lot of time, energy and money into

FARMERS ARE LOOKING FOR THE DEDICATION THAT BIG BUSINESSES SOMETIMES SEEM UNABLE TO GIVE THEM

improving the facilities here to provide a better and broader service to farmers and others in rural communities in Staffordshire and neighbouring counties, and to show manufacturers and importers that we’re professional and serious about our business.”

With a smartened site and stores, Jason then sought a tractor range that would appeal to the area’s predominantly livestock-based farming businesses, speaking with

three potential partners.

Ultimately a deal was struck with Doncaster-based AgriArgo, importer of the Italian-made 35-212hp Landini range, which at the time was under-represented locally. The agreement enabled J A Bloor Agricultural Services Ltd to provide genuine parts, routine servicing and repairs to established Landini tractor users, and to supply new Landini tractors throughout Staffordshire and into Derbyshire

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and surrounding counties.

“We’d had quite a few used Landinis pass through our second-hand operation, and had been impressed by them,” says Jason.

“They have a keen following in certain parts of the UK and in Ireland, particularly among livestock farmers, and are invariably described as bomb-proof in terms of reliability. In our used operations, I’ve traded a number of Landini tractors over the years and never had any trouble with them.”

Becoming a Landini dealer at this point coincided with parent firm Argo rolling out its biggest ever collection of new models, from small tractors traditionally used on dairy and other livestock farms to high-spec machines with the sort of fingertip controls and technology

that larger arable units and their operators now expect.

“I had the opportunity to visit the Landini factory in Italy, and returned home very impressed. The workforce were clearly very dedicated and focused on attention to detail, and the quality control process was very thorough.

“All this helps to motivate me as a dealer to sell a manufacturer’s products, and I came away with a lot of confidence. I think it’s important we know we’re supplying the right product made by people who share our values.”

The range available gives the Bloor business the opportunity to compete in all sectors, with compact tractors for the likes of equestrian and turf markets, through mid-range machines for livestock farmers up to the 200hp-

plus models now commonly sought-after by the area’s arable units, bigger mixed farms and contractors.

“We didn’t want the pressures and politics that go with some mainstream full-line tractor franchises, and the clashes these can bring with other product lines,” says Jason.

“Having also secured agencies such as Vicon, Bunning and Takeuchi, we were already happy we had the products to meet those needs.”

One-stop shop

The new equipment retailing operation and its franchises were launched to potential customers at several local agricultural shows during 2014-15, and since then the company has further expanded and improved its premises, which include a retail stores and a spares department.

For Jason Bloor, securing the Landini tractor agency and franchises for other well-known farm equipment manufacturers such as Vicon is the culmination of plans to create a one-stop shop for most hardware required by local farmers – everything from fencing materials and power washers to tractors, ATVs and a full range of farm equipment.

“Moving into new equipment retailing alongside used has made our business more diverse. We already had the engineering capabilities within our team, and have been able to back those with the service courses offered by the makers whose products we’re now supplying to ensure we’re fully familiar with the new tractors and equipment.”

New franchises taken on as part of the business growth plan include Redrock slurry and silage equipment, Portequip trailers, feeders and cattle handling equipment, AG Engineering cubicle bedding and pasture machinery, TGB ATVs and JPM low-loader,



A strong presence at local agricultural shows over the past two years has helped to raise the profile of the firm and its franchises



The staff includes three experienced full-time technicians and an apprentice, while the firm has recently appointed a new salesman

multi-purpose and cattle trailers.

Aside from the aforementioned deal with Vicon, which gave the business access to a complete range of grassland machinery, sprayers and fertiliser spreaders, recent signings include Bunning manure spreaders and Takeuchi excavators.

The new franchises have been backed by the supply of a wider range of parts, tools and sundries, with the new parts store and retail operation managed by Jake Leedham, who joined the business following its expansion.

“Jake came to us with a wealth of experience in this field, which has helped greatly,” says Jason.

“We aim to ensure every item is competitively priced and clearly labelled to help customers make quick and straightforward purchasing decisions.”

Products in this department include ranges of replacement parts and accessories from Granit, Sparex, Bepco, Vapormatic and QTP, plus clothing, tools, batteries, service items and power take-off shafts and guards.

The business also stocks the Ehrle range of pressure washers, Chemodex oils, Draper tools, children’s toys, fencing sundries, and various other lines.

Jason maintains a hands-on grasp of the service operation, supported by three experienced full-time technicians.

Meanwhile, keen to support young talent, an agricultural student has recently joined the service team as an apprentice with the firm, while a new salesman, Craig Slaney, has just been appointed.

Full-time administration assistant Sharon Millington is in charge of the business’s modern office facilities, which use professional IT accounts software, while Jason greatly values his long-standing business relationship with Andrew Nicholas from the Harvey Hughes farm consultancy, who provides sound business planning.

Jason’s wife Janine provides strategic and marketing support, with the firm highly visible on the internet via its @JABAgri Twitter feed, JA Bloor Facebook page and

jablooragriservices.co.uk website.

“The sort of focused management support and back-up that’s behind me is key to any successful, growing enterprise,” he believes.

“Farmers are looking for the dedication that big businesses sometimes seem unable to give them. We’re not nine-to-five people – our service team starts at 7am and finishes at 6pm, or later if necessary to get the job done – and my phone is on 24/7.

“We provide that level of service support because we know how critical it is to a farm’s daily routine that tractors and machinery are working as they should.

“We can’t necessarily compete with the machinery pricing policies of the big multi-branch dealers and their big-name franchises, and getting people to change tractor makes is a hard task. We’ve turned a few, though, and are making inroads, and I think customers are happy to look at new names if they know they are going to get a dedicated level of service to support them.” ●



BUILDING A BRAND

Established across Europe and on the shelves of some of the major retailers over here for the past five years, Grizzly Tools is now looking to establish an independent dealer network

“We’re not so interested in doing £100 million of turnover,” says Danny Stollo, Managing Director of Grizzly Tools Ltd. “We’re interested in building a brand on the back of its reliability, its service and its people. We want to establish a name for Grizzly Tools based on what used to be known as a great British service.”

Housed in Bilston, West Midlands, Grizzly Tools have been sold across Europe for over 15 years in 20 different countries. For the past five years, Grizzly has established the brand and its products in some of the biggest high street names in the UK. Stores such as Homebase, Argos, House Of Fraser and Halfords have all taken on the brand. But until recently the company’s profile has been low in the specialist garden machinery sector.

Now, however, Danny and his team see the future success of the products with the establishment of a UK-wide independent dealer network.

“We’ve made huge steps with the mainstream retailer market,” says Danny, “but we’ve realised that it’s a shrinking market. Floor space is reducing for garden machinery in the likes of Homebase and B&Q. Those stores aren’t so interested in stocking machinery these days. We, however, are confident in the quality of our products and therefore want them to be sold by expert machinery guys. We know these machines will flourish with the backing of dealers who can effectively sell their features and benefits to the consumer.”

The Grizzly range is certainly large enough to be an

interesting prospect. It offers an array of tools including lawnmowers, brushcutters and strimmers, hedge trimmers, chainsaws, leaf blowers, pressure washers, water pumps and more.

German designed, Chinese built

The machines are designed in Germany and built in China. Danny is well aware that the phrase ‘Chinese built’ can for some people be instantly off-putting. He says, though, that Grizzly has six members of staff based in Shanghai whose job is purely quality control.

“Frankfurt Germany, where Grizzly’s HQ is based, is where all the research and development is carried out. Product development is based on sound principles of safety and reliability with a very high demand for quality,” he says.

“We have people on the ground in our factories who are there every day overseeing production and QC. We will test high numbers of each batch before they’re passed to leave the factory. They’re checked for quality and, very importantly, consistency. And then, when they reach us, they’re quality controlled again.

“All our machines are tested before they go into full production by independent testing houses TUV and Intertek. The products are tested to destruction. These people are experts in product certification and auditing.

“To give you an idea, it costs us about 16,000 euros per test, per product. We’re looking for an outcome of



L-R: Danny Stollo, Grizzly Tools md, Gemma Shaw, commercial director and Joe Hamlett, dealership network manager

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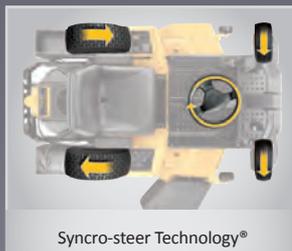
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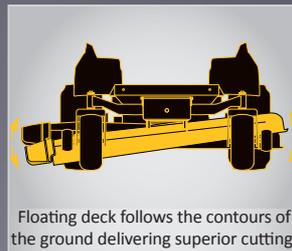
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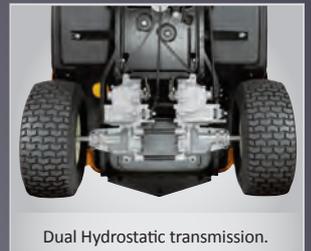
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“OUR APPROACH IS TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE ESTABLISHED BRANDS”

‘good’ or ‘better than good’. Any shortcomings that are identified will be redesigned or a better solution found before the new product goes into full production. Once this has been rectified, a new batch of up to 500 are made and those are sent back to Germany and a selection of those are tested again. And that applies to the whole range from the entry level machines up to our largest products.

“From a safety point of view, there’s no way we can be accused of being a so-called ‘cheap Chinese brand’”

Establishing a network

To back up this confidence Grizzly has in its products, it offers a three-year guarantee on all items purchased in the UK.

Dealership Network Manager, Joe Hamlett, who is currently travelling the UK meeting potential new dealers, says that this warranty proves the company’s belief in what it is selling.

Joe says, “It’s understandable that some of the guys I’ve been talking to, their first reaction is: there’s not room for another manufacturer. But we’re confident in our range. We do pride ourselves on the level of service that we provide. We wouldn’t give away that three-year guarantee if we weren’t confident that the tools would outlast that warranty. We would be out of business in no time if they didn’t.

“I think the consumer is coming round; we’re selling a lot more product through the mainstream retailers and

the other outlets we use, so now for us it’s just about getting the machines onto the shelves in the dealers’ stores. We want the dealers to help us create a great brand – a brand that people come to trust and rely on.”

Danny agrees that establishing a dealership network is the important next stage for the company.

“Our approach is to be different from the established brands; we’re here to solve any problem that a dealer may potentially come up against, in the simplest way.

“An example would be that a dealer would be given a replacement product to give to the customer if for any reason they could not repair it or time delays meant inconvenience for the customer. It would be seen that they have made that decision – meaning their relationship with their customer isn’t damaged. We want simple, good old-fashioned customer service.

“I’m happy for our dealers to take the credit for giving a customer a new machine if that’s what it comes to. Because that customer will tell their friends and family if they’ve had a good experience at that dealership and with our brand. If they’ve had a bad experience then they will tell everyone.”

Grizzly stresses that dealers can make money with the range. It was keen to get across that it believes it is offering quality products with decent margins, which dealers will be able to service and look after.

To offer dealers something different to the mainstream retailers Grizzly has put together an exclusive dealership offer. It has taken eight or so new products that aren’t sold to any other outlet or through any other company, which will just be offered for the dealers. It has also added to that its most popular sellers, which it says dealers will be able to sell and compete with the established high street retailers on price, if they stock them. And stocking commitments are not large; buying two would get a dealer this preferred rate.

Joe explains: “What we don’t want to do with our dealers is dictate to them. We would never tell any potential dealer how to sell a product.

“We believe our products will sell themselves as they are quality machines. If a dealer takes stock items and for whatever reason they’re not moving, as long as they’re boxed, we’re happy to take them back and issue a credit note. It’s about establishing good relationships.”

Danny backs this up, saying: “We look after our dealers. When we sign someone up we give them



exclusivity in their local area – and we let them tell us what that area is. Obviously I want customers to be able to get hold of our products easily, as well as being able to get them serviced or repaired, but I don't want dealers on top of each other. That's not productive for either party.

“We can also deliver parts the next day and can give access to our full online parts look-up system, which is currently being built.”

Range of products

Grizzly Tools' distribution and repair facility in the West Midlands is packed to the rafters with boxed products and spare parts.

Electric, petrol and battery-powered machines offering tools for almost every garden care task are available in the range. Some, like the petrol hedge trimmer and electric chainsaws, offer professional levels of vibration dampening.

“All our efforts go into making the machines the best they can be. All our electric lawnmowers, for instance, from the smallest up to our largest, have achieved an anti-tip standard called EK9. All have blade break function, even our entry level lawnmower.”

While Grizzly Tools might not be that well known a name in the industry currently, it has been selling well in the UK for the past five years. Danny says growth has



Product is packed to rafters in the West Midlands facility

been consistent and this year the company is looking at another 58% on 2015.

And importantly, it wants to do this with specialist dealers.

“We want the dealers to be part of the Grizzly story,” says Danny. “I'd say to them: ‘it's new, so get in on the ground floor – as we grow, you'll grow with us’.

“The key is that we want the industry to know that we're not just here for five minutes. We've put an awful lot of effort into the products, into the back-up of the products and into thinking about the dealership network we want.

“Essentially we're looking for dealers who are not frightened to be part of a growing brand and are eager to be part of the Grizzly story.” ●





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IN-HOUSE APPROACH

French fertiliser spreader and drill specialist Sulky says the recent opening of its own UK subsidiary shows it's committed to building on what's already the firm's third largest market. Martin Rickatson discovered more about the company's plans

It's an indication of how important French firm Sulky considers the UK market that the company has chosen to form its first overseas subsidiary here. After its home country and neighbouring Germany, this is the third largest destination by volume for the blue-liveried twin-disc fertiliser spreaders and drills previously imported by Cambs firm Reco. And while it sells machines into 50 countries around the world, it's here that the company sees some of the most significant potential for growth, part of a strategy to double its export turnover by 2020.

Last year, Sulky announced plans to amicably end its longstanding agreement with Reco and to create its own UK sales, service and spares operation. In an indication

of the level of co-operation that exists between friendly French farm equipment firms, the new Sulky UK business, launched back in November, is based at the established Bourne, Lincs premises of plough and cultivation specialist Gregoire Besson.

With the latter having a product line which complements that of Sulky, and informal ties between the two already existing, the arrangement makes a lot of sense, according to David Parsons, who has moved from a South-East Regional Sales Manager role with Reco to become National Product and Marketing Manager for the new Sulky UK concern. Its aim, he says, is to build on the base that was built under Reco.

"With the new Sulky UK business,

we're able to focus on just the three key product areas of fertiliser spreaders, drills and power harrows," he explains.

"In 2014, around 2,400 spreaders were sold in the UK, plus 500 pneumatic drills and 1,100 power harrows. Sulky has previously held as much as 10% of the spreader market, and we'd like to return to that position, and target a similar share of the conventional and pneumatic drill markets.

"With power harrows, we've more work to do, as previously these were only sold by Reco in combination with Sulky drills, and not as standalone units. Our target is to build Sulky recognition and be in the first three brands in each of our product categories within the next few years."

SULKY HAS NOW PRODUCED MORE THAN ONE MILLION MACHINES DURING ITS LIFETIME

To do that, Sulky-Burel UK shares a regional dealer sales team with Gregoire Besson to jointly manage the UK networks of both brands, a system which partly mirrors successful arrangements it already has in place with Rabe (a Gregoire Besson brand) in German-speaking countries, and John Deere in the CIS.

As the brand's Product Manager, though, David Parsons is focused only on Sulky, backed by a sales assistant and supported by two national service engineers and a spare parts coordinator who are all dedicated to Sulky products.

Further backing for dealers and end users comes from a fully-stocked spares facility at Bourne, from where Sulky UK will also

be providing product training to dealers, says Mr Parsons. Sulky also has a full English-language website with online spares catalogues, manuals and the firm's Fertitest database, which provides recommended settings for 900 different fertilisers/products.

"We want to build an engaged distribution network, and will be supporting them by providing stock orders of machines, promotion, and commercial and technical training. In addition, we'll be attending LAMMA and Cereals, and supporting dealers at other shows, while we've also appointed a UK marketing agency, and have a prominent new 'That's Sulky Payback!' advertising campaign.

"In our first three months after

the UK business was founded, we retailed more than 50 machines, and signed a number of dealers, many of whom previously sold Sulky. Among them are Halse of Honiton, all five branches of Tallis Amos Group, three of the four branches of Rea Valley Tractors, RBM in Yorkshire, and Russells, now also the owner of Hallmark."

The network, which contains both former Reco dealers and completely new signings to the Sulky brand, is reckoned to be almost complete, although there are still arrangements to finalise in areas such as the South-East.

"Our dealer sales management team comprises Stuart Dickson, formerly of Reco, in Scotland, plus Stephen Treadgold in the West of



The 7.5ha Chateaubourg site accommodates a 20,000 sq m production plant housing high-tech manufacturing, assembly and finishing facilities.

“WE WANT TO BUILD AN ENGAGED NETWORK, SUPPORTED BY STOCK ORDERS, PROMOTION AND TRAINING”

England and Harvey Sherwin in the East, all of whom we share with Gregoire Besson. And we have two dedicated Sulky service engineers, Josh Spencer and Richard German, to back dealers with support and set-up.”

The Burel family also has an interest in Sky Agriculture, the French direct and min-till specialist which is jointly-owned by Julian Burel and French farmer and agronomist David Guy. However, with the partners’ belief that this method of crop establishment requires a distinct focus, this is run as a separate entity, both in marketing and import terms – in the UK, Opico holds the Sky distributorship.

Sulky-Burel celebrates its 80th birthday this year. The firm was founded in 1936 by Fabien Burel, who began the company by building carts, and later developed a horse-drawn drill. The demand for a light machine that could be pulled quickly and provide a high work rate led to this being named

after a type of horse trap with these characteristics – the Sulky.

Today the firm remains independent and family-owned, with Julian Burel being the third generation to head the company. Sulky has now produced more than one million machines during its lifetime, remaining focused on drilling, fertiliser application and soil preparation equipment. Now employing 250 staff, it produces 4,500 machines annually, of which around 30% are exported, and in 2015 turned over €42m (£32m).

The employees are spread over three French factories. Chateaubourg is the primary site for mounted fertiliser spreaders, power harrows and drills, while the plant at Carvin, which Sulky acquired in 1987 when it bought French drill firm Roger, produces mainly drills, including the Sky min/no-till units. Lastly, the Fontenay facility, acquired as part of Sulky’s 2001 purchase of Sirtec, focuses on the trailed spreaders formerly made by that firm.

At Chateaubourg, the 7.5ha site accommodates a 20,000 sq m production plant housing high-tech manufacturing, assembly and finishing facilities, including a state-of-the-art paint plant which applies a three-layer finish in a 10-step process. There are five flexible assembly lines, which can be adapted to suit seasonal manufacturing. The site is also home to a training facility and a recently completed research and development centre – more than 5% of turnover is reinvested in research and development, and Sulky holds several dozen patents.

“This flexible structure helps to manage market volatility, so we can quickly switch to meet requirements,” explains Julian Burel.

“But producing what the customer wants is just as much about staff dynamism and motivation. We invest more than 3% of turnover annually in training, to ensure products are built to the standards expected.” ●



The new Sulky UK team, which includes a number of former Reco staff, shares dealer sales managers with Gregoire Besson UK.

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PETER CHALONER

Distributor Henton & Chattell is celebrating its 85th anniversary this year. Editor Steve Gibbs met MD Peter Chaloner to discuss how the company is combining rapid change with tried and tested tradition

“The industry is changing so quickly,” says Henton & Chattell MD Peter Chaloner, “but we’ve never seen such rapid change as there has been in the past three years.”

Nottingham-based machinery distributor Henton & Chattell was established by Peter’s grandfather Leslie Henton, along with Charles Chattell, in 1931. The two partners, who had set up five stores before the start of the war, started off as ironmongers first and foremost. It wasn’t until just before the outbreak of WWII that Leslie Henton started showing an interest in horticultural machinery.

After the war there was a great demand for equipment to keep the airfields in shape. “That’s really when they started off with that side of the business quite quickly,” says Peter, “in particular with Trusty Tractors.”

In 1949 the two partners consolidated their five retail premises into one. A large house next to their premises on Radcliffe Road in Nottingham was converted to a showroom. At the same time they purchased a 99-year lease for the premises at London Road, which has expanded to over 100,000sq ft from its initial 5,000sq ft space and still is their home today.

Henton & Chattell now stocks more than 50 machinery franchises and does business with over 1,500 trade dealers, providing parts and machinery, across the UK.

Peter puts its continued success down to the company’s ability to continually evolve.

“Our mindset now at Henton & Chattell is for rapid change to keep up with the times,” he says. “We’re always looking for new opportunities, whatever those might be. Whatever challenges we meet, we feel we’re able to reform and transform ourselves to face them.”

Exclusive brands

The biggest change that Peter believes Hentons has had to make in recent years is fundamentally to its distribution model. In the past it was more of a

traditional distributor for major manufacturers, but due to shifts in the market, the company realised it needed to focus on exclusive brands.

“We could see how the demand from dealers was changing and to satisfy that we really had to adapt very quickly.

“Our business really evolved when we made a connection in China which led us to taking on the Cobra brand exclusively. It utterly transformed the business so it became quite different from something that it was perhaps only four years ago.

“But it’s not just with Cobra, it’s also with Billy Goat, Allett and Ego – we have exclusive arrangements with all of those.

“I will admit that maybe other distributors saw that the industry was changing and that focusing on exclusive brands was the way forward a bit earlier than we did. So you could say that maybe we have been playing catch-up a little bit. But without a doubt we are making good progress.

“Our mantra is: ‘we are specialist dealer wholesalers and distributors who can provide something different for our customers’. We want our customers to succeed over and above anything else. If they’re succeeding, we’re succeeding.”

Dealer relationships

Henton & Chattell’s business relies almost totally on the UK independent dealer network. It has other concerns that are very important to it, such as its John Deere dealership, but being a regional concern that offers a finite level of business.

Therefore a primary concern of the company is looking after the 1,500 dealers around the UK whom they do business with on a daily basis.

“Our biggest customer group is the specialist dealer,” Peter confirms. “That’s what our business is all about.

“We believe in looking after our customers with personal relationships. We can have all the best



Leslie Henton (left) and Charles Chattell started the business 85 years ago

automated systems in the world, but we still value face-to-face relationships. It's so important to us.

"With our parts team for example, it's vital that they are available to our dealers – we know that's what they want. We find dealers appreciate that personal connection which we endeavour to build up with them."

To this end Hentons proudly continues with its telephone ordering system rather than taking it all online. "To us it's integral to our service offering," says Peter. "We still have four or five people dedicated to parts technical and we have people for the machinery side as well. It's a big investment for us but we believe it pays dividends for delivering that next level of service. I would say that we have 1,000 calls a day through to our team. That's despite about 85% of our orders going through electronically."

"It's about building relationships with people. We're in this for the long-term. We always say there's a limited number of dealers, there's not loads of new dealerships opening up, therefore we value those relationships we have with our established dealers."

And both parties need to be profitable don't they?

"Absolutely. That's certainly key for us. It's a business relationship which would break-down if it wasn't. We believe we offer good margins for dealers across our ranges. Our approach on our brands is to try to pitch

our pricing so that the dealer can be profitable whilst still making the machines attractive to customers.

"We also like to listen to dealers who may tell us 'you need something like this in the range', or 'why haven't you got one of those?' We encourage feedback. If it's practical and cost-effective to make changes to the range, we'll do it. Quite a few of the latest developments have been driven that way."

Cobra connection

In terms of product offerings, it probably is with the Cobra brand where Henton & Chattell has changed the most over the last couple of years. In fact it boasts that the brand is the UK's most rapidly growing, offering as it does now, 46 different lawnmowers.

"Cobra is a dedicated dealer-specialist brand that will never appear in any of the multiples," states Peter. "Our approach with Cobra, like all our brands, is to really invest in it. We put the advertising in and really make it work for the dealers and ourselves. It has to be a good value proposition for every level of the market."

And does Henton's believe it is achieving that?

"We are. If we weren't we wouldn't be able to achieve a market differential. In essence we would just be another manufacturer bringing in product that was similar to everyone else. Differentiating with a good offering and keeping a steady supply

“WE’VE NEVER SEEN SUCH RAPID CHANGE AS THERE HAS BEEN IN THE PAST THREE YEARS”

of new product coming through is vital.

“China has been a really interesting journey for us, but made a lot easier by having our company contact, Andy Smith, living in Shanghai and acting as our factory auditor. He’s built a local team up for us there that oversees all our factory checks. Every product that we bring in has been through an inspection process.

“In order to maintain quality choice of factory is vital, as are quality control measures. The system we’ve established has worked really well for us. It’s given us the confidence to start investing in terms of tooling and manufacturing different products.

“We’re focused on bringing something different to the market, which brings an advantage to both the dealer and the consumer.

“Our outlook for the future is developing the range even further. Currently we have one of the UK’s largest range of lawnmowers which we achieved in quite a rapid timeframe. We launched the range just two and a half years ago. Therefore we’ve had to adapt our business quickly, because of how it’s taken off.”

Does Henton’s find that dealers like this influx of new product?

“Yes they do, but of course where there are occasionally problems, we fix those. It’s finding new skills to fit in with this new style of business. We require a dynamic approach to reach satisfying resolutions.”

Getting out there

Towards the end of last year Henton & Chattell saw about 500 of its dealers across the UK in a series of roadshows. Asked if it is planning on repeating the events this year, Peter says they haven’t finalised plans yet. “We might look at another format of a dealer conference, perhaps,” he says.

“While an annual event for a company such as ours can be okay, I feel you need to have something new to hang it on. And whilst with

Cobra and Billy Goat, for example, there’s always new product coming through, we want the events to have the pull to draw the crowds. So we might look at a different format this year.”

And what exhibitions for Hentons? It had a sizeable presence at the revamped SALTEX last year; did Peter feel it was worth it?

“It was very good for us,” he confirms. “We’ve actually got a slightly larger stand booked for this year because we felt we were slightly cramped last time. I would say that the show worked really well for us.

“We did, however, try the Executive Hire show in Coventry this February and I can’t say we’ll be rushing back to that!”

Peter Chaloner sums up Henton & Chattell’s philosophy saying, “In recent years, the garden machinery industry’s seen many major transformations; 30 years ago it was all about the threat from the sheds for the dealers – nowadays it’s the challenges posed by pricing from internet-only retailers.

“In order for Henton & Chattell to maintain its position within this industry we’ve had to change quickly and positively throughout our 85 years.

“And actually we’re all the better for it. I believe each time we have this regeneration we build into a new business which is better and stronger.” ●





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ZERO DIFFERENCE

David Withers is a well known figure in the UK turfcare industry. He was named President of Jacobsen in October 2011, when he also became a member of Textron's Executive Leadership Team, and he is now based in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Before leading Jacobsen, David served as Managing Director of the Ransomes division of Jacobsen in Ipswich. In this role since January 2005, he oversaw international operations for the Ransomes and Jacobsen brands, as well as E-Z-GO's brand in Europe.

Over in the UK recently, *Service Dealer* met David to talk about recent developments, the differences between the UK and US markets, and where he sees the industry heading.



SERVICE DEALER: So David, what's new with Ransomes Jacobsen this year?

DAVID WITHERS: We've got a lot of new product. At BTME our main launch was the new Jacobsen Truckster XD. That's a big deal for us. We've been known for trucks in the past with our Cushman brand, but the previous model, which was very successful, ran for a long time. We had that for maybe 20 years – we updated it a little bit, but we needed to change it.

So this was a ground-up new design that we've been wanting to do for a while, to not only improve on what we had, but also to improve on what the competition has. It's a big deal for us and we're certainly finding interest from golf clubs who run competitor's vehicles.

SD: At the Louisville, GIE-EXPO exhibition last October, Jacobsen was introducing a new zero-turn mower. Do you think those units are not really suitable for the UK market?

DW: It's funny. I'll just talk you through what we did there. We obviously have a good golf business in the US, but we have a weaker municipal business there. Over here we've got good municipal business with Ransomes, but in America we use the Jacobsen brand for municipal and golf.

What we excel in is the large rotaries and the trucks – but a lot of what the US municipalities use is a zero-turn machine. And we didn't have one.

So we decided that we needed to enter that market and we figured the best way was through acquisition. So we bought the company Dixie Chopper in 2014.

That brand, however, is really geared at homeowners

with acreage – it doesn't really go to professional users. So whilst we carried on down that branding route with Dixie, what I've also done at the same time is taken that Dixie product, Jacobsen-ised it, and then put it into my professional Jacobsen channel. We've seen positive progress already and that we're really pleased with.

There are roughly 500,000 zero-turn machines sold annually in America, whereas in Europe it's around 2,000.

SD: Do you see any potential growth over here amongst the so-called 'prosumer' sector?

DW: The big issue with zero-turns over the years in the UK has been a couple of things. Firstly, America is big, and so therefore, the prosumer there cuts their own grass, they then stick the mower on a trailer, drive to the next place, unload it, and off they go.

Conversely with so much of our business in the UK, users want to be able to drive the mower itself to the next place. Our municipal mowers get specified with a cab in order to be road-worthy. You can't drive a ZT on a road really, it's too dangerous, the steering is too sensitive.

And then the other thing is, a lot of people at the professional end don't want petrol, they want diesel. If you look at the volume sales, 95-97% of that volume in North America is petrol.

So the combination of zero-turn being a little bit scary over here for road work and the lack of diesel choice has made it slow to ever take off.

SD: Can you see that changing?

DW: Ultimately I believe fast-forward 10 years, they'll be here. The reason being that more productive, cheaper products usually win.

If you compare a standard out-front rotary from any of the major manufacturers, let's say one that sells for around £15,000, with a 72" deck and a 22hp engine. A diesel ZT of similar spec is probably going to cost £10,000. Discounting travelling, the productivity is higher when you're actually cutting. So ultimately it's a cheaper, quicker way of cutting grass.

SD: Is their lack of popularity here due to our obsession with finish?

DW: No, I honestly think it has more to do with size. I mean, how many gardens do we have over here where even the smallest ZT could be really justified?

Land is so much cheaper in America, therefore plot sizes are so much bigger, and the desire to be able to cut your grass within an hour leads to the demand for bigger and quicker machines.

That's what generates that enormous demand we see in North America.

SD: What are your plans for zero-turns in the UK then?

DW: We're definitely going to bring them here. It's just from a scale point-of-view, it's never going to

be anything along the lines of North America.

If you think along GDP lines, the European Union and America are similar, so a lot of businesses argue that what you do in America economically should be roughly what you do in Europe. But because our business is determined as much by physical geography as it is by economics, I don't think zero-turn will ever be huge here. But it will get bigger.

SD: Would you say that the issue of the size of areas requiring cutting is the biggest factor that determines the difference between the US and UK markets?

DW: In that sector, then probably yes. In golf, however, it would be different.

SD: How so?

DW: Well, in golf it's weird. The cost differential is enormous. To be a member of a golf course in America the difference is huge. For example, here I was a member of Bury St Edmunds golf club and that was £700 a year to be a member. And in the US I'm a member of a similar level club and that is \$700 a month – around £6,000 a year.

The big difference is that in the UK you're growing a plant that's native to this country. Generally speaking over there, you're growing an exotic plant that's been imported and wants to die given half a chance.



Jacobsen's new LF 577 mower

So, in the US, clubs need to look after their environment to a different level. Therefore the maintenance costs are just massively higher. As people are paying a premium to be a member they're going to have very high expectations of how their course looks and plays.

The other big difference with US golf courses is that because they buy so much equipment, most courses will have their own mechanic, whereas over here most courses will rely on their local dealer.



The newly launched Truckster XD

SD: I heard 2015 was a very good year for the outdoor powered machinery industry in North America. Was it for Jacobsen?

DW: It was a good year – particularly for zero-turn.

SD: And in the UK?

DW: It was a really good municipal year and for golf it was OK.

We did, though, have a very, very strong Ransomes year here in 2015. We're confident in saying we're the market leaders in our sector. Golf will carry on at a good level though. You can see with the good attendance to the recent shows, that there's always going to be a core interest there.

SD: What do you think about the value of shows nowadays?

DW: I think shows in general have totally changed. I've been in this industry for 30 years. I used to go to a show and I'd sell everything off the stand. Visitors would come and make purchasing decision on the day.

You also had to be more reliant on shows to bring your customers to you. Now we have sophisticated customer management systems, so I know all my customers' details

already. I know what they last bought, I know when my rep last visited them and so on.

The value of exhibitions now lies much more in being both an educational and social event. The machines displayed are more a gathering point for people to meet and chat and discuss what's been going on in their lives and business. They book a demo, but they aren't the sales hubs that they used to be.

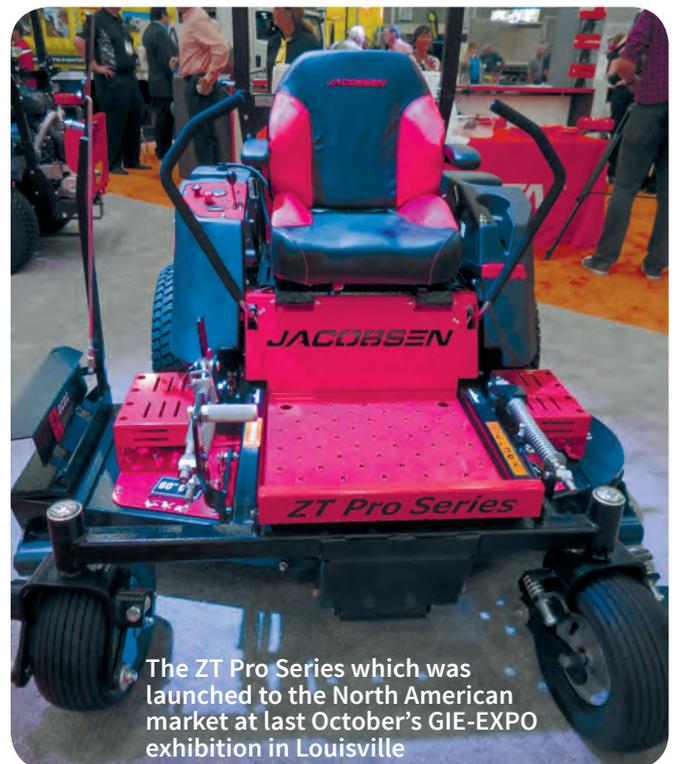
SD: So if that is the case, is there still a worth in your business attending?

DW: Of course, or else we wouldn't still be exhibiting. Plus there's also the support for the associations that organise the events. We really value our relationships with BIGGA and the IOG, and the money we spend with them goes to a lot of worthy causes, most obviously their education programmes. Therefore we like to support what they do.

I'm not negative about shows. People are still turning up to attend them in good numbers, it's just that they're different from what they once were. We as a company need to make sure we're maximising the benefit of what we can get from them. It's good for us that we're supporting the organisations that we value, but at the same time each show has to be cost-effective.

It's always nice, however, to get customers in the seats and to turn the machines on. But with the indoor shows the only way you can do that is with our electric machines, like the Jacobsen Eclipse greens mowers.

SD: David, thank you.



The ZT Pro Series which was launched to the North American market at last October's GIE-EXPO exhibition in Louisville

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TAXATION

HMRC ON THE PROWL

HMRC are bringing in a new tax regime for every taxpayer and the legislation framing the system is being written over the summer. It will not be compulsory for individuals but it will be for businesses and it's going to create extra expense and work.

Called the Tax Dashboard, it will leave some of the tax regime in place but it's going to radically alter the way businesses report to HMRC. It will force firms to keep digital records so that reports can be submitted to HMRC four times a year, in a format that HMRC sets.

The impacts are likely to include changes to daily/weekly record keeping and firms will need to use HMRC compatible software to submit the information.

It's not yet clear what will happen to the annual self-assessment return. Somehow, firms and HMRC need to get to the exact same position as they would have been with the full annual return (which will still exist in parallel). In practical terms the only way to check whatever comes out from the aggregation of the four quarterly reports will be to do a full self-assessment, even though it won't actually be submitted.

HMRC seem to be set on having the new system and it isn't interested in any real exemptions for those that are digitally excluded; they'll be expected to pay

someone else to do the reporting.

While the regime is not destined to fail, there is a risk that it could – and the problem is, if it does, how will it be dealt with? It's more likely that firms will be effectively given impossible obligations to meet and so will then be penalised for failing to meet those obligations.

The laws behind the system have to be passed by April 2017, so draft clauses will be published by December 2016. This means they will be written this summer. If businesses want some chance of changing the regime they need to speak to their MP and HMRC between now and the end of July. Interestingly, HMRC have said that they will be consulting on the detail and want to hear from taxpayers.

Contact details for the local MP can be found at <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/mps/>. HMRC should be posting details of what is happening when via <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-tax-digital>. Remember, those that say or do nothing before the end of the summer will be left complying with whatever is passed by Parliament.



Edited by Adam Bernstein

ACCOUNTING

UNIFORMLY TAXED

Yen-pei Chen, a corporate reporting and tax manager at the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants writes:

Not everyone knows that tax deductions can be claimed for uniforms and specialist clothing if they are “wholly and exclusively for the purposes of” the trade or the employment – in other words, if their only purpose is to allow someone to do their job.

The good news is, if a piece of clothing qualifies for tax deductions, these deductions can be claimed not only on the cost of buying it, but also on the cost of maintaining, repairing and replacing it in future years.

Ordinary clothes worn at work don't qualify and figuring out whether a piece of clothing qualifies as uniform or specialist clothing, rather than plain ordinary

clothes, involves wading into a mire of case law.

HMRC's *Employment Income Manual* defines a uniform as “a set of clothing of a specialised nature that is recognisable as a uniform and is intended to identify its wearer as having a particular occupation. Examples include traditional nurse or police uniforms.” So far, so good.

However, it's not enough for

clothing to look alike for them to qualify as uniforms.

Clothes of the same colour and design won't be accepted as uniforms unless they "readily identify the employee to an observer as working for this [particular] employer". So adding on detachable name badges doesn't help. But putting a "permanent and conspicuous" badge or logo onto clothing might just make it a uniform.

The case law around specialist clothing throws up some rather surreal anecdotes. To qualify as specialist clothing, that piece of clothing must have one single purpose – to allow the wearer to do his or her job. Any piece of clothing

that has another purpose, such as providing "warmth and decency," would not qualify.

When designing uniforms for your workforce, make sure the taxman can recognise them as uniforms. This means that logos or company names should be permanent, and clearly visible.

You have a better chance of getting tax deductions if the clothing is purely for the purpose of your business.

If you provide employees with clothing for work, it is well worth applying for a dispensation from HMRC to exempt the company from having to report the clothing-related costs and paying national insurance on them.

Without a dispensation, you will need to make sure that the cost of providing and maintaining the clothing is reflected correctly on your employees' P11D as a taxable benefit.

If you provide clothing which does not qualify for tax deductions, the costs related to them must be included on the employees' P11D as a taxable benefit, and you will also have to pay Class 1A national insurance on them.

The tax rules are complex on clothing but they are clear: items must be "wholly and exclusively" for the purposes of the job.

If in doubt, seek good advice.

Visit www.gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-clothing/overview

EMPLOYMENT LAW

CAN EMPLOYERS READ THE PERSONAL EMAILS OF THEIR EMPLOYEES?

"How far can employers lawfully go when checking employees private email?" asks Lee Ashwood, an associate in the employment department of law firm Eversheds.

That question was answered in a recent landmark judgment by the European Court of Human Rights. The court found that a Romanian company could read the personal messages of one of its employees, Mr Barbulescu, which he had sent on Yahoo Messenger while he was supposed to be working. The court's judgement could apply to

the UK should someone bring a claim similar to that of Mr Barbulescu.

Mr Barbulescu was employed as an engineer in charge of sales. His employer asked him to create his own Yahoo Messenger account so that he could respond to enquiries from his clients from his work computer. Subsequently, without Mr Barbulescu's knowledge, the employer monitored his Yahoo Messenger communications for just over a week. At the outset of the monitoring, the employer

believed Mr Barbulescu's Yahoo Messenger account contained only client-related communications. However, the employer discovered that Mr Barbulescu was using it for personal messages during work-time. When Mr Barbulescu denied this, his employer presented him with a transcript of messages he had exchanged with his fiancée and his brother. The employer dismissed Mr Barbulescu.

Having been through the Romanian courts, Mr Barbulescu went to the European Court of



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Human Rights. He argued that his employer's conduct had disproportionately infringed the right given to him by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is a right to respect his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.

In the court's view, it was not

unreasonable for Mr Barbulescu's employer to seek to verify that one of its employees was completing their professional tasks during working hours. Furthermore, Mr Barbulescu's disciplinary breach, his use of company resources for personal reasons, had been established and it was clear

that his employer had only used the transcript of his personal communications to the extent that it proved that he was using his work computer during work-time for personal purposes. As a result, the court found that there was a fair balance between Mr Barbulescu's right to respect for his private life and correspondence and the interests of his employer.

While employees should not have an expectation that any communication made on a work computer or work phone will remain private, that does not mean that employers are free to monitor all communications as and when they choose to do so. One of the key considerations in this case was that the employer's policy clearly prohibited using company computers for personal use.

Visit www.bailii.org/eu/cases/ECHR/2016/61.html



BUSINESS NEWS DIGEST

New online disputes platform for consumers and traders

The European Commission has launched a new platform to help consumers and traders solve disputes over a purchase made online.

The Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platform offers a single point of entry that allows EU consumers and traders to settle their disputes for both domestic and cross-border online purchases. Disputes are channelled to national Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) bodies that are connected to the platform and which have been selected by Member States according to quality criteria and notified to the Commission.

The platform is user-friendly and accessible on all types of devices. Consumers can fill out the complaint form on the platform in three simple steps. It lets users conduct the entire resolution procedure online and it is also multilingual – a translation service is available on the platform to assist disputes involving parties based in different European countries.

See tinyurl.com/sdodr

New Broadband Code for small firms

Ofcom has announced a new Voluntary Broadband Code of Practice which gives small businesses the right to leave a supplier without penalty if the broadband speeds they get fall short of what they were promised.

The Federation of Small Businesses supports the

move and said: "A dependable broadband connection is now essential for almost every aspect of modern business life, yet small businesses' dissatisfaction with broadband providers appears to be widespread and deeply felt."

See tinyurl.com/sdofcom

ICO launches new data protection self-assessment tool

The ICO has launched a self-assessment tool that will help SMEs assess their compliance with the Data Protection Act. The toolkit provides links to relevant guidance and further information, and will generate a rating based on responses. The toolkit may be completed as one comprehensive assessment that embraces the key obligations that SMEs have in relation to processing their customers' or clients' personal information. Alternatively, it can be broken down into separate checklists so users can tailor it to their organisation's particular needs and risks.

Information Commissioner Christopher Graham said: "Good data protection practice makes business sense. It can lead to better, more efficient customer service and help to protect and enhance your reputation. It could also help you avoid a fine from the ICO."

See tinyurl.com/sdico

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JOHN DEERE OPENS NEW APPRENTICE TRAINING CENTRE

For dealer apprentices on Ag Tech, Parts Tech and Turf Tech courses

The British agriculture and turf industry's first and only purpose-built apprentice training facility has been opened by John Deere and training provider ProVQ at St James Business Park, Radcliffe-on-Trent in Nottinghamshire.

Designed specifically and solely for John Deere dealer apprentices enrolled on the company's Ag Tech, Parts Tech and Turf Tech training programmes, the new centre is close to John Deere Limited's headquarters at Langar.

The company's three-year Ag and Turf Tech apprenticeships lead to the IMI Level 2 and 3 Diplomas in Landbased Engineering. Each year group trains at the centre for eight weeks a year in four blocks of two weeks, with some days spent at Langar when working with larger machines such as combines and

self-propelled forage harvesters.

The two-year Parts Tech apprenticeship, leading to a Level 3 Diploma in Vehicle Parts Competence, is mostly work-based at the sponsoring dealer, with four weeks of training taking place at Radcliffe.

John Deere appointed ProVQ Limited in summer 2015 as its new business partner to deliver the apprentice training programmes on behalf of its dealers in England, Scotland and Wales (separate training programmes are provided in Northern Ireland and Eire). Full-time ProVQ staff based at the new centre include Programme Manager Ian Crowder, Learner Support Manager Christine Coxon and Group Trainers Richard Jenkins, Sebastian Gillbard and Benjamin Hobster.

ProVQ started its apprentice

training programmes in 2005, and went on to develop a full range of national services including apprentice recruitment, training, vocational assessment and qualifications. Today the company trains over 600 apprentices and many hundreds of adult learners on technical, parts and customer service programmes.

The new John Deere Apprentice Training Centre features a reception, air conditioned classrooms, workshop areas, changing and washing facilities plus a dining room. Provision has also been made for further expansion, with plans in place for two more classrooms and a small workshop/laboratory when required.

"Our new business partnership with ProVQ is already going from strength to strength, and we are delighted to have established this new bespoke facility so close to our UK headquarters," says John Deere Limited Training Centre Manager Richard Halsall. "The company's investment in the Apprentice Training Centre reinforces our continuing aim to provide industry leading training programmes for our agricultural and turf dealers."

ProVQ Limited's Managing Director Julian Lloyd adds: "We have jointly developed a very high quality training environment in which John Deere apprentices can learn to master the technology that underpins the comprehensive John Deere product range. We look forward to seeing many young people come through our doors in the future at the start of what is a very exciting and rewarding career."



Apprentice group in the workshop at John Deere's new Apprentice Training Centre



DEALERS GAIN A-RATED TRAINING

Reform network visits Austria

Recently a number of delegates from the Reform Werk dealer network attended a training session at the company's Wels, Austria factory.

Simon Richard, UK Agent for the Reform range says, "The training was in support of the installation at their premises of the very latest diagnostic equipment.

"Any downtime for contractors can prove

costly and Reform's policy is to invest in provision of the best back-up service.

"In addition to the most up to date equipment, these A-rated dealerships now also have the support of a UK based Factory Product Technician.

"The training programme was delivered by Reform staff assisted by staff from engine manufacturer VM."

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EXCITING YEAR FOR KRAMP ACADEMY *Created for dealers by dealers*

Kramp Academy 2015-16 is drawing to a close and while the company takes time to reflect on another exciting year, it says it is proud of the many positives it can remind people of.

Richard Kendrick, Marketing Manager, says, "We introduced new courses this year and feedback has been extremely encouraging. We also have a number of customers who repeatedly send their staff to the Academy due to the level of information provided and the high levels of expertise from the trainers."

"Kramp Academy has been created for dealers by dealers," continues Richard. "If you have staff who find it hard to identify or sell product and you struggle to find the appropriate training anywhere else in the marketplace, then Kramp Academy can provide it."

How to register

If you have a training requirement not already covered by the Kramp Academy, simply email Richard Kendrick (kendrick.richard@kramp.com) or Laura Ponder (ponder.laura@kramp.com) and they will be in touch to discuss your requirements.

Full details of all the Kramp Academy training can be found at www.kramp.com.

Need bespoke training for your company?

The new Kramp Academy brochure will be available in July/August 2016. If your business requires training delivered on your premises, or maybe there is a training requirement not covered in the brochure, dealers are asked to contact Richard or Laura and ask for a training proposal.

Kramp Academy in dealers' words

Kramp has shared some examples of the feedback (given anonymously) that it has received on its feedback forms so far from the 2015-16 season.

Introduction to PTO

"Very knowledgeable trainers knew what they were talking about."

"Good mix of practical and theory."

Hydraulics I

"Very detailed course."

Hydraulics for Women

"The course was very informative."

Retail Sales & Merchandising

"Excellent course – very well delivered with energy, enthusiasm and fun."

"Helpful and up-to-date."

Business Finance I

"Trainer knew his stuff."

Marketing Basic

"Really useful information."





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DOMESTIC

HAYTER CELEBRATES 70TH WITH LIMITED EDITION *Special Platinum Harrier 41 Autodrive*

Hayter this year celebrates its 70th anniversary.

To mark this special occasion and demonstrate its 70 years of experience and knowledge, the company is launching a limited edition Platinum lawn mower.

Based on the Harrier 41 Autodrive model, the mower is suitable for small to medium sized gardens.

Hayter Marketing Manager, Julie Dommett, says: "With 70 years' experience of developing premium lawn care products for both professional contractors and

homeowners, we are synonymous with British grass cutting. We are not only incredibly proud to be celebrating our 70th anniversary this year, but honoured to continue manufacturing our products here in the UK.

"The limited edition Platinum lawn mower is available for this year only, and is a fitting tribute to this special anniversary. Only 500 of this model have been produced, so anyone interested should contact their local Hayter dealer at their earliest opportunity."



Based in the Hertfordshire hamlet of Spellbrook, Hayter has been manufacturing premium lawn care products since 1946, when the company's founder, Douglas Hayter, pioneered the development of the rotary mower.

DOMESTIC

BRIGGS & STRATTON APPLIES PRESSURE *Six new pressure washers*

Briggs & Stratton has launched its new power product line-up for the 2016 season which features six new pressure washers.

There are new pressure washers in the Elite series. The 3000PX projects 1,134 litres per hour at 3,000 PSI and 207 bar. It features an 875EX Series 190cc engine from Briggs & Stratton including ReadyStart technology.

Also in the Elite series is the 4000 model with a 2100 Series 420cc engine. It delivers 908 litres per hour with a maximum PSI of 4,000. It has five quick connect nozzles for cleaning options of various angles, with the addition of soap.

The Sprint series is Briggs & Stratton's collection of electric pressure washers.

The 1700E uses 420 litres per hour with a maximum PSI of 2,030, and 140 bar. It has an integrated steam clean option as well as a turbo nozzle wand with three spray tips.

For increased output, the 1800E uses 510 litres per hour with a maximum PSI of 2,320, and 160 bar. Its turbo nozzle cleans up to 40% faster than a standard nozzle and it has various pressure settings as well as an integrated detergent tank.

Similar to the 1800E is the 1800EPF which features POWERflow+ technology for better cleaning and extended reach.

The new range of Briggs & Stratton Power Product also includes four generators.



DEALERS

CUB CADET LAUNCHES MOBILE APP

Contains details and specifications across the entire range

Cub Cadet has announced its latest initiative to offer more to its dealers by launching a free-to-download app.

The app contains all details and specifications across the entire 2016 Cub Cadet range and is easily divided by product type for quick and simple navigation.

It has been deliberately designed as a speedy tool for dealers when face to face with customers, but also provides customers with another means of researching online before visiting their local Cub Cadet dealer.

The app has a catalogue-style approach and from the home page users simply select the product type they are interested in across the full Cub Cadet line-up, encompassing lawn mowers, mini-riders, lawn tractors, zero-turn riders, robotics,

UTV and chore performers.

Each product has a vast amount of detail to choose from with quick reference guides highlighting each product's key features and benefits, along with advice on which product to choose based upon the required mowing area.

Dealers and consumers alike can easily see detailed product specifications including: cutting information, discharge system, engine details, drive systems, dimensions and price.

For further information and videos, it is possible to link through to the Cub Cadet website.

Nick Hills, General Manager of Cub Cadet UK, comments: "Cub Cadet's heritage spans 55 years. Whilst we have a strong and prestigious background, we're always evolving and looking to new



technologies to support our dealers and customers. Our new app is yet another example of that.

"Supporting our dealers is key to our success, so we want to do all we can to help them, which is why we have rolled out the Powershop showroom displays and developed this new app."

The Cub Cadet app is available for apple devices and can be downloaded from iTunes by searching for Cub Cadet.



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DOMESTIC

JOHN DEERE X350R GOES DEEP

New deck on latest lawn tractor

The new X350R lawn tractor is designed for users with areas of grass of up to about two acres.

The company boasts that it is simple to operate, with easy-to-use foot pedals, a modern car-style instrument display and a powerful 12.2kW/3,100rpm Kawasaki petrol engine with cruise control.

The X350R features a new 107cm rear discharge Accel Deep mower deck, designed with a deep body and flat

top to allow a clean flow of grass cuttings for a quality cut, even in normally difficult tall grass. The stamped steel design of the durable heavy-duty deck eliminates sharp edges and corners where material can build up and compromise performance. John Deere says the new Accel Deep deck ensures a premium finish, as well as many hours of trouble-free operation.

Height of cut is adjustable from 25mm to 102mm in 6mm increments, using a dial – all from the comfort of the lawn tractor's deluxe seat. An adjustable fill switch for the grass collector activates an indicator and alarm so that the operator can choose when to empty the machine.

The high capacity 300-litre collector means faster work with fewer stops to empty the clippings, which is also quickly done from the operator's seat. An optional mulching kit is also available.

A wide range of front and rear-mounted attachments and implements can be used with the unit, including utility carts, a rotary brush, front blade and snow blower.



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www.stigalawnmowers.co.uk

DOMESTIC / COMMERCIAL

KUBOTA CASH BACK OFFER

Running on certain ride-on models

Available until 30th June 2016, Kubota is currently running its latest cash back offer.

The scheme includes the GR2120, T1880 and GR1600 ride-on mowers.

Buyers of the GR2120 can claim back £300, whilst buyers of the T1880 and GR1600 ride-on mowers can enjoy £200 cash back. The incentive is open to anyone who purchases one of these ride-on mowers from Kubota dealers.

The GR2120 incorporates a Glide Steer system for greater manoeuvrability, hydraulic power steering, a mower lift and 4WD drive.

The GR1600 mower features Kubota's ETVCS diesel engine, HST transmission and a Glide Cut direct collection system with an easy-dump grass collector, requiring very little routine maintenance.

The Kubota T1880 ride-on mower comes equipped with an 18hp OHV air-cooled petrol

engine, combining functionality with extra comfort. There is also the option of cruise control, as well as a grass collector and infinity deck.



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EVENTS 2016

MAY 2016

- 2 North Somerset Show
www.nsas.org.uk
- 14-15 Nottinghamshire County Show
www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com/
- 11-13 Balmoral Show, Belfast
www.balmoralshow.co.uk
- 18 ScotGrass
www.scotgrass.co.uk
- 24-28 Chelsea Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 19-21 Devon County Show
www.devoncountyshow.co.uk
- 21 Fife Show
www.fifeshow.com/
- 21-22 Royal Welsh Spring Festival
www.rwas.co.uk/spring-festival/
- 28 Shropshire County Show
www.shropshirecountyshow.com
- 28-29 Herts County Show
www.hertsshow.com
- 30 Surrey County Show
www.surreycountyshow.co.uk

JUNE 2016

- 1-2 Staffordshire County Show
www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show/
- 1-2 Suffolk County Show
www.suffolkshow.co.uk/
- 1-4 Royal Bath & West Show
www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/
- 3-5 Gardening Scotland, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh
www.gardeningscotland.com
- 5 Rutland Show
www.rutlandcountyshow.com/
- 9-11 Royal Cornwall Show
www.royalcornwallshow.org
- 9-11 South of England Show
www.seas.org.uk/shows.asp?ID=2
- 15-16 Cereals 2016, Boothby Graffoe, Nr Lincoln, Lincolnshire
www.cerealsevent.co.uk
- 16-19 BBC Gardeners' World Live - Birmingham NEC
www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com
- 17-19 Three Counties Show, Malvern
www.threecounties.co.uk/threecounties
- 19 Cranleigh Show
www.cranleighshow.co.uk/
- 21-22 Cheshire County Show
www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 22-23 Lincolnshire Show

www.lincolnshireshowground.co.uk/whats-on/event/the-lincolnshire-show

- 23-26 Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org
- 26 Derbyshire County Show
www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 26 Royal Isle of Wight County Show
www.riwas.org.uk/
- 29-30 Royal Norfolk Show
www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk

JULY 2016

- 2-3 Smallholders' Show, South of England Showground, Ardingly
www.smallholdersshows.co.uk
- 5-10 Hampton Court Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 6-7 Livestock Event, Birmingham NEC
www.livestockevent.co.uk
- 8-10 Kent County Show
www.kentshowground.co.uk
- 9 Newport Show
www.newportshow.org/
- 12-14 Great Yorkshire Show
www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk
- 16 Camborne Show
www.camborne-show.org.uk
- 18-21 Royal Welsh Show
www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show/
- 20-24 RHS Flower Show - Tatton Park
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 22-24 UK Game Fair, NAEC Stoneleigh Park
www.ukgamefair.com/
- 23 Mid Devon Show
www.middevonshow.co.uk
- 26-28 New Forest & Hampshire County Show
www.newforestshow.co.uk
- 29-30 Border Union Show
www.buas.org/show/

AUGUST 2016

- 3 North Devon Show
www.northdevonshow.com
- 3-4 Bakewell Show
www.bakewellshow.org
- 4 Honiton Agricultural Show
www.honitonshow.co.uk
- 4-7 Countryfile Live, Blenheim Palace
www.countryfilelive.com
- 6 Garstang Show
www.garstangshow.org
- 6 Emley Show
www.emleyshow.com

- 6 Dumfries Agricultural Show
www.dumfriesshow.co.uk
- 9-10 Anglesey County Show
www.angleseyshow.org.uk/anglesey-show.html
- 10 Vale of Glamorgan Ag Show
www.valeofglamorganshow.co.uk
- 12-13 Shrewsbury Flower Show
www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk
- 14 Ripley Show
www.ripleyshow.co.uk
- 16-18 Pembrokeshire County Show
www.pembsshow.org
- 17 Gillingham & Shaftesbury Show
www.gillshaftshow.co.uk
- 17-18 Pembrokeshire County Show
www.pembsshow.org
- 19 Cranleigh Show
www.cranleighshow.org.uk
- 21 Mid-Somerset Ag Show
www.midsomersetshow.org.uk
- 25 Monmouthshire Show
www.monmouthshow.co.uk

SEPTEMBER 2016

- 1 Bucks County Show
www.buckscountyshow.co.uk
- 3 Alresford Show
www.alresfordshow.co.uk
- 3-7 Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC
www.autumnfair.com
- 3-4 Dorset County Show
www.dorsetcountyshow.co.uk
- 4-6 spoga-gafa 2016
www.spogagafa.com
- 8 Westmoreland County Show
www.westmorlandshow.co.uk
- 10 Usk Show
www.uskshow.co.uk
- 10 Romsey Show
www.romseyshow.co.uk
- 12-14 Glee 2016
www.gleebirmingham.com
- 14 Tillage-Live, Monks Kirby, Warwickshire
<http://tillage-live.uk.com/>
- 15-17 APF 2016, Ragley Estate, Alcester
www.apfexhibition.co.uk/

OCTOBER 2016

- 5 The Dairy Show, Bath & West Showground
www.bathandwest.com/the-dairy-show
- 19-21 Green Industry & Equipment Expo, Louisville, USA
<http://gie-expo.com>
- 22-23 Countryside Live, Harrogate
www.countrysidelive.co.uk



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CONTRACTED OUT?

Where the will is there, dealers can fight their corner

She is hardly a household name, but Maggie Hassan, the Democratic Governor of New Hampshire, has managed to upset a battalion of farm and grass machinery manufacturers in the US, spearheaded perhaps inevitably by John Deere. And it's all over dealer contracts.

In 2013, New Hampshire passed into law the Automobile Dealer Bill of Rights to provide car and truck dealers some protection against manufacturers enforcing mandatory and costly upgrades to premises; terminating contracts "without due cause" and providing "proper reimbursement" of warranty work. Most of the 50 states have their own version.

New Hampshire is a small state wedged between Massachusetts and the Canadian border, and has a population of fewer than a million and a half. Frankly, it was not a high profile bill, the state has only 500-odd auto and truck dealers, but the New Hampshire Auto Dealers Association knew how to play the political game at local level. A few donations here, words in the ears of friends and representatives in the House and the Senate – and the bill flew through. Out-of-state manufacturers didn't get a whiff until it was too late.

Then Governor Hassan decided that the bill should also apply to manufacturers of farm and grounds care equipment. Oh dear, oh dear, that put the cat amongst the pigeons. Under the heading of stating the bleeding obvious, the manufacturers said, "We sell different products for different uses to different individuals and entities". They also said that the law would terminate manufacturers' dealership agreements and create "substantial uncertainty in the market". John Deere was appointed the spear-carrier to 'go legal' against the decision to lump ag manufacturers in with car and truck franchises.

Last December, the New Hampshire Supreme Court rejected virtually all their arguments, so lawyers have taken the case to the US Supreme Court for a further ruling, requesting that the law should not become force until it has been considered by the higher court, saying that it is unconstitutional. Back in New Hampshire, however, the President of the NH Auto Dealers Association is adamant, "The debate is over and the law in New Hampshire is fully in effect".

All of which will resonate with many in the UK dealer community, particularly at this pivotal time in our future. How many times do we hear that we can't do this or that "because of Brussels". One of our

'straight banana' moments comes every year with the publication of tractor sales league tables. Who was market leader in 2015, or did Kubota do a Leicester City and shock the big boys? Who knows? We're only allowed to know these performance indicators for 2014 in 2016 "because of Brussels".

It's becoming less and less clear how the Europe vote will turn out. We're in uncharted territory. You can bet that industry bodies will be unlikely to show their hand, such will be the kaleidoscope of opinion within its ranks. Witness the treatment of the head of the British Chambers of Commerce when he dared to show his personal preference. Freed from such constraint however, the former AEA CEO Roger Lane-Nott is enthusiastically and visibly demonstrating exactly where he stands in Twitter-land!

But as a group of dealers in New Hampshire have demonstrated, given a dose of political savvy, a cause worth fighting – and a direct route to decision makers – they could make their voice heard and acted upon in a way that's virtually impossible in EU-land.

Dealer contracts from manufacturers have been a contentious issue over the years. Their legality has been challenged a number of times. In the end the key issues of direct relevance to dealers are performance requirements and termination terms. Whatever the rights and wrongs of a manufacturer 'sacking' a dealership (or vice-versa) no amount of paper nor legal debate will transcend the unwillingness of one party to trade with another. Contracts can only deal with the consequences of the fall-out, not the relationship itself.



JIM GREEN



INTERNATIONAL RESCUE

DEALER BRINGS 1970S CUB CADET BACK TO LIFE *Painstaking restoration of International 76*

Banbury based dealer, Andrew Bolter, of FN Pile and Sons, has spent six months painstakingly restoring a Cub Cadet International 76, with a Briggs and Stratton pull-start engine, originally manufactured in 1972.

The vintage model had been stowed away for many years in a shed in the depths of the Staffordshire countryside, until it was rescued by a neighbour, who, noting the significance of the model, listed it on eBay on the owner's behalf.

It was promptly snapped up by Andrew, and once he got it safely back to Oxfordshire, he set about the restoration process, doing everything himself. The belts,

pulleys and blades were all in great condition, and remain the originals. In fact, the only item that actually needed changing was the float in the carburettor. The lawn tractor now once again runs like a dream.

Cosmetically, the fibreglass bonnet has survived the test of time, and Andrew carried out all the repainting himself in the original International Yellow, staying true to the tractor's history. He even sourced stickers and transfers from the original suppliers in the USA to complete the full restoration.

Andrew has subsequently shown the restored tractor at the Model Tractor Show and will now exhibit it at steam rallies.

"Restoring the International 76



has been a real pleasure," says Andrew. "I've done-up big tractors in the past, so it was nice to do something smaller."

Andrew's next restoration project is a 1971 Cub Cadet International Model 106.

ICE'LL BE BACK

AUSTIN RETURNS FROM ARCTIC *Completes another ultra marathon for charities*

Austin Jarrett, Managing Director of Allett Mowers, has returned from the Arctic, the location of his latest challenge, a 230km self-supported foot race.

The ICE ultra marathon is a five-stage, 230km extreme stage race across UNESCO World Heritage sites, Swedish Lapland and the

Arctic Circle. The course crossed through terrain ranging from ice forests to frozen lakes, mountain ranges and snowfields.

Austin, 51, says, "I knew I had to do this race. Having conquered desert and jungle ultra marathons in the last few years, I knew that an extreme cold weather race would have to be my next big challenge. Temperatures as low as minus 30°C provide a number of challenges to an ultra runner. Great care has to be taken not to freeze in your own sweat, and breathing heavily while running can cause throat and lung problems. Additionally, proper care needs to be taken to keep fingers,

ears and nose covered or frostbite can strike with irreversible results.

"The Arctic was surprisingly warm in mid-February this year with daytime temperatures rising to up to -12°C. This resulted in soft trails of deep snow which was more difficult to run in than the Sahara sand dunes."

Austin runs to raise money for three charities and has raised nearly £25,000 over the past two years for VSO, The Eve Appeal and Oak Tree Farm Rural Project Limited.

You can still donate at <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/IcelceJarrett>



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