The latest products on the market reviewed

NEW COMPACT AND UTILITY TRACTORS

ARGO Tractors has selected a range of nine models with 17 variants all in all, from the product range of its new industrial partner Daedong to form a new line of Landini and McCormick tractors.

Ranging from just 22hp to 91hp, the line-up includes models with a choice of open platform or air conditioned cab, and hydrostatic drive or gearbox transmission.

They represent a significant increase in the specification, choice and power range available previously from GI distributor AgriArgo UK Ltd, Harworth, near Doncaster, South Yorkshire.

“The models and variants chosen by the ARGO Tractors team avoids duplication while ensuring we have a comprehensive range suitable for different applications in farming, horticulture and grounds care,” explained Ray Spinks, General Manager and Sales Director. 

Buyers of the machines will benefit from the after-sales support resources of two major tractor manufacturers – ARGO and Daedong Industrial Company.

“Apart from any spares stocked by our local Landini and McCormick dealers, we at AgriArgo UK have identified the top 100 fastest-moving parts and have added them to the comprehensive parts stock held at our Harworth base,” said Ray.

“We can also call on parts held by Daedong at its European facility in Holland, and on items in the ARGO Tractors parts system in Italy.”

Despite being small in size the newcomers exhibit some grown-up features – such as electro-hydraulic engagement of the front drive axle and rear power take-off; the part digital instruments fitted to some models; and the automatic control that stops and starts the pto when a powered implement is lifted then returned to its working position.

New Greens Mowers from John Deere

John Deere’s new SL Series PrecisionCut walk-behind greens mowers have been designed to save time and money, and provide a top quality finish on golf courses, tennis courts, cricket squares, bowling greens and other fine turf areas.

The 180SL, 220SL and 260SL replace the previous C Series models, and offer true cutting widths of 46, 56 and 66cm respectively. They feature a fixed-bed version of the patented SpeedLank technology now featured on the cutting units of all John Deere PrecisionCut mowers.

Cutting height is precisely adjustable from 22 to 2mm down to 2mm with the standard 11 blade, 127mm diameter reel, which is capable of delivering a consistently high quality cut at speeds up to 5.3mph. These new mowers also feature an optional front-mounted, adjustable turf brush to help stand the grass up and remove dew before cutting. Rotary brush and greener tender conditioner options are also available.

All three SL models feature the same 4hp Honda petrol engine as on the previous range, with a dual-traction drive that provides excellent manoeuvrability and straight tracking on greens, regardless of mower speed.

Base list prices range from £4462 for the 180SL greens mower, up to £5425 for the 260SL model, excluding VAT.

SMART BACKUP SOLUTION

The ATT TM SMARTCut™ is the flexible answer for all greenkeepers who require a replacement, second, or backup set of cutting units.

When budgets are so tight, greenkeepers may just have to prolong the life of an existing triple greens mower that needs replacement cutting units. That’s a dilemma because they may not want to be tied to the same brand when they are able to replace the machine.

But ATT TM SMARTCut™ cutting units are unique in that they can be fitted to Toeo, John Deere or Jacobsen units with only a minor adaptation so they can be used with the new machine, whatever the make. That’s also a bonus if they have a mix of machines in the workshop right now.

Designed for both Tees and Greens, the units offer ease of maintenance with 7 & 11 blade options available. The blade kit adjusts incrementally to a fixed position cylinder to achieve a consistency and quality of cut that is guaranteed comparable, or better, than current OEM units.

This allows a cutting height range of 4mm to 45mm, all of which provide superb results in all situations.

There is an optional patent pending powered true roller brush which, when combined with the SMARTCut™ cutting cassette, sees a power requirement of only a fraction of any other unit on the market. This power saving is a massive bonus for anyone driving their cutting units with electric motors, or just wanting to use less fuel.

SMARTCut™ is part of the ATT turf maintenance cassette system for use with most mainstream triple greens and fairway mowers. This means that when the units are not being used with the cutting cassettes, they can be dropped out of the chassis and replaced by a TMSystem™ cassette dropped in.

The ATT TMSystem™ was previously marketed as a “Nosework™” and these units can also accept the new cutting cassette with a minor upgrade kit.

SISIS Variseeder

For rejuvenating areas such as golf greens and tees, the SISIS Variseeder incorporates a studded roller which creates an excellent seed bed for optimum germination.

Seeding rate is variable and can be set on the simple-to-use SISIS Zero-Max box. A choice of two discharge rollers can be used - an ultra fine roller is available for seed rates as low as 1g/sqm.

The Variseeder can be used with any tractor from 1-4hp with a three-point linkage and can be adapted to fit most tractors. With a working width of 1.3m it offers fast work rates for the high outputs needed in the busy spring season. Additional weights can be added to the integral weight bar for extra effect in hard conditions.

www.sisis.co.uk

www.AgriArgoUK.com

www.deere.co.uk

www.grassgroup.co.uk
I was very saddened, as a great many of you will have been, to hear about the passing of two of our colleagues, Ian McMillan, and Sid Adam, who worked at Walton Heath GC and Hamilton GC respectively.

I am sure that all our members would like to share their sincere condolences with their families and friends during this difficult time.

As the Golf season gets well and truly underway, Greenkeepers and Sports Turf Managers throughout the industry will all be facing up to the challenge of producing the best conditions possible at our respective Golf Courses and Sports facilities.

As ever, Mother Nature will be playing her part, and whether it is too much rain, too little, too windy, too hot, or too cold, we have to come to accept that it is our task as professionals to work with what we get, and make the best of it with the resources we have to hand.

The resourcefulness, adaptability, and initiative demonstrated by those working in our profession never ceases to amaze me, and the dedication to their work and pride in the results is something we seem to have an abundance of within our membership.

In last month’s magazine the anonymous article demonstrated the frustration felt by some, when dealing with employers and customers who choose to be critical of the best you can with the resources made available to you.

Sharing these difficulties through our network, for example, on our bulletin boards, or at meetings and seminars will give you the opportunity to discuss and share positive ideas and gain from the experiences of all your fellow members.

We have reached final interview stage for our new CEO, and hopefully by the time you read this we may have made an announcement in that regard.

At BIGGA we also need to be in a position to make informed decisions, and I’d encourage anyone who has any concerns, to contact our new CEO, and hopefully by the time you read this we may have made an announcement in that regard.

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We are all too well aware that many businesses are facing tougher financial conditions and that many are being asked to tighten their belts.

I’d encourage you to be proactive in this regard in making sure you are putting forward sensible proposals which can contribute to the overall picture.

The managers of the business, including the Greenkeepers, need to be in a position to make informed decisions, aware of what the potential benefits and consequences of those decisions are.

It is far better that you put the business in a situation to do that, and be respected for being practical.

When you are not coming up with solutions, someone else might, and it may be too late to change them.

Working together within your team and in collaboration with the other departments at your operations through the Golf Professional, Clubhouse managers, Secretaries, Committees, and General Managers, we can all pull together and ensure that the best possible use is made of every resource.

Remember that the Golf Course in most cases is the greatest asset of most clubs, and the employers and customers have every right to be concerned about its wellbeing.

They rely on you to be the custodian of that asset, to help them realise its full potential.

Communication is the key in showing that you are just as committed to that cause and that you are making the best use of their resources.

Chairman’s Word
National Chairman, Andrew Mellon, gives his thoughts for the month

Come rain or shine

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At BIGGA we also need to be in a position to make informed decisions, and I’d encourage anyone who has any concerns, or hopefully positive ideas, to contact us.

You can do this either through your section or region, where you can garner support, or direct to myself below or any of your Board members.

We are looking at how we can learn more about what the members want from BIGGA.

As we move forward, members’ input is critical in ensuring the continued success BIGGA has achieved in the last 25 years.

amellon@elmwood.ac.uk
Tel. 07780959502
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The resourcefulness, adaptability, and initiative demonstrated by those working in our profession never ceases to amaze me, and the dedication to their work and pride in what will probably be perceived in a negative manner, may not be the best approach if we want the customer and employer to recognise our frustrations, far better to show interest and engage with the customer and get to the real heart of the problem.

Communication is the key, and setting expectations, communicating what is being done, what impacts matters both within and without our control are having on the end product, will ensure that the employer recognises that you are producing the best you can with the resources made available to you.

Sharing these difficulties through our network, for example, on our bulletin boards, or at meetings and seminars will give you the opportunity to discuss and share positive ideas and gain from the experiences of all your fellow members.

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It’s good to finally see the lighter and feel some warmth in the sun. I think my song for this month will be “Lovely Days” by Bill Witham! Long may these lovely days last!

Work has been steadily progressing on the new look Safety Management System website and it looks like the launch date will be later this month, so watch the website and see next month’s magazine for full details.

For more information on the online course, qualifications and ‘How To’ guides, please visit the website www.bigga.org.uk or call 01347 833800 (option 3). Details are also available from Rachael Duffy, the L&D Administrator.

Please remember to see included in the 2012 programme, please do not hesitate to contact me. Suggestions need to be made by Friday, May 13 at the latest. You can contact me via email to sami@bigga.co.uk.

The GTC is proud of the fact that BIGGA, has a recognised apprenticeship framework, so why not be thousands of pounds!

Employers, usually in association with their Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper should always provide a training budget and with the subsidies available both through the GTC’s work with Government agencies to put monies towards training.

It is always worth discussing with your chosen Centre how, through your support to the trainer/apprentice, costs may be kept down.

Our sector has, in the main, engaged with the work based courses and qualifications which the apprenticeship scheme is based on and that has given employers the best mix of available staff with the required knowledge. This model is now being viewed by other countries as it is very much led by Course Managers who are best placed to train and maintain the professional standard of greenkeeping.

It is some years since the GTC introduced the programme of assessor training, again hands up who remember the old D32-D33 course? Maybe it was a little ahead of its time, however, it was that course that I believe supported our colleagues in colleges and Centres to bring the skills required in greenkeeping together with the theoretical knowledge.

I still hear from college and Centre staff that at some clubs Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers are unknown to get involved in staff training. This I have to say I find disappointing even allowing for the fact that it is difficult it can be times for Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers when the pressure is on to get the course in top condition every day of the year.

All I will add is that you don’t get involved with your staff training it could cost you and your employer a lot more in the future.

I would also like to mention Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers who, in ensuring their staff do develop, sometimes forget their own personal development (CPD). Please remember to keep yourselves up to speed on all the subjects relating to maintenance and management. Attend as many courses as you can and remember home study is an option to gain those formal qualifications.

The GTC are in regular contact with our Quality Assured Centres including colleges and encouraging the use of modern technology to assist with the learning and recording of evidence e.g. photoflash on-line learning.

That moves me nicely onto Higher Education and nobody can have any doubts about the increasing number of courses available, relating to student fees albeit this differs depending which country you live in.

In 2010, thanks to contributions made by the Gold and Silver Key members of BIGGA to the Learning and Development Fund, two companies and individuals contributed to the fund and they are recognised at the bottom of this page every month.

All I will add is that those who have appeared, will be recognized in the future.

With the return of the Turf Managers’ Conference, the Workshops and the Seminars, it promises to be another packed programme.

If you have any suggestions or specific topics that you would like to see included in the 2012 programme, please do not hesitate to contact me.

It’s truly amazing how quickly the year flies by, with planning for the Continue to Learn education programme already underway for January 2012.

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In trying to keep you updated on the Government’s current thoughts and policies for education and training, it is a little like being hit by a fast moving target!

The GTC’s role is to lobby various Government bodies or offer funding support towards the qualifications and schemes we are involved in developing and reviewing.

Over many years employers and learners have benefitted from the generous support given by the Government approved qualifications including the apprenticeship scheme but as we all know nothing is safe in the present economic climate, education has not escaped!

Our colleagues in both colleges and private training Centres are all seeing a reduction in funding support from the Government, with very few exceptions. However, we must remain positive and seek out every opportunity for funding to ensure the “poorest” get the best opportunity to develop their staff.

I know many Course Managers have overall responsibility for their staff training but I still hear that some clubs operate without a budget item for staff training or, even hold Green Meetings without a budget item for staff training or, even hold Green Meetings without me becoming political, so do many others.

I know our colleagues in the Quality Assured Centres are constantly seeking every source of funding and support where costs have to be introduced these are kept to a minimum and we hope never possible. It is always worth discussing with your chosen Centre how, through your support to the trainee/apprentice, costs may be kept down.

Our sector has, I believe, engaged with the work based courses and qualifications which the apprenticeship scheme is based on and that has given employers the best and most qualified staff with the related knowledge. This model is now being viewed by other countries as it is very much led by Course Managers who are best placed to train and maintain the professional standards of greenkeeping.

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It moves me nicely onto Higher Education and nobody can have missed the high praise, the comments relating to student fees albeit this differs depending which country you live in.

All I will add is that The R&A with its Business and Membership’s Scholarship programme are both tremendous opportunities for those students considering entering the Higher Education qualifications. The GTC is proud of the fact the sector has both a structured work based route to train staff and also a more academic option including on-line learning for Higher Education students.

Employers, usually in association with their Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper should always include a training budget item and with the subsidies available both through the GTC’s work with Government agencies and from bodies like BIGGA and The R&A, it need not be thousands of pounds!

It’s good to finally see the lighter and feel some warmth in the sun. I think my song for this month will be “Lovely Day” by Bill Withers. Long may these lovely days last!

Work has been steadily progressing on the new look Safety Management System website and it looks like the launch date will be later this month, so watch the website and see next month’s magazine for full details.

Learning and Development Fund

The development of training resources and funding for education for Members would not be possible without the contributions made by the Gold and Silver key members of BIGGA to the Learning and Development Fund. Both companies and individuals contribute to the fund and they are recognised at the bottom of this page every month.

In 2010, thanks to contributions to the fund, we have supported 14 members with a refund of fees for their education, provided subsidies for several sections and all of the Regions, reprinted field guides, bought new books for the library and introduced the ‘How To...’ Guides. Funds were also used to support Continue to Learn at Harragote Week 2011, the most successful education programme that we have run to date.

My thanks go out to all of our Gold and Silver Key supporters on behalf of all of the Members.

Thank you to our Gold and Silver Key Sponsors

Gold Key Individual Members: Steven Tanner; Wil Hodgson; Andy Carmichael MGA; CSCEO; Ian McKittrick; Fiona Newberry; Andrew Turbull; Ian MacPhilion MGA; Ian Melkonian.
Silver Key Individual Members: Nick Archer; Steve Cush; Paul Jones; Richard Mallin; Sam Longson; Neil Whitman; Sean Marshall; Michael Moseley; Coline Czajka; Derek Gendron; David Golding.

Contact Details

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Jacobsen and these latest appointments complete the very good ‘fit’ with the experienced members of our respected both here in Europe and in the USA. She knows the industry, inside out, and is well our products can be developed and marketed across for golf course superintendents worldwide. Gina was born and raised in Southern California and is a graduate of the University of Kansas. She began her career working with the GCSAA in 2002 to promote her career working with the GCSAA in 2002 to promote the 2010 IOG Saltex exhibition. Newtownhamshire’s Gedling Borough Council has taken delivery of the first Elnow all-electric pedestrian greensmower to be supplied anywhere in the world by its British designer and manufacturer, Allett. Based at Arnot Hill Park, Arnold, East Midlands, the 20in fine-cutoverhead to the Royal Park Hilton Hotel in the southeast of Amsterdam, has taken delivery of the first all-electric Jacobsen Eclipse 322 in Europe. The delivery was facilitated by Ransomes Jacobsen’s Dutch distributor, van der Pols, through their local subsidiary dealer, Boxenkamp Turfcare. Paul Hogehoorn, Head Greenskeeper, said: “Because of our location adjacent to the Royal Park Hilton Hotel, the Jacobsen Eclipse 322 Electric is the ideal greensmower for us here at Golflink Soestduinen. Some of the bedrooms and business meeting rooms are close to greens, but guests are completely unaware when we are mowing, because the machine is so quiet.”

ARGO Tractors Establishes Partnership with Daedong

The Italian ARGO Tractors concern is no stranger to agreements with other manufacturers — it already produces its own compact and tracelaying tractors for two other makes. And in choosing Daedong Industrial Company as its industrial partner for a comprehensive range of compact and utility tractors spanning 22hp to 91hp, ARGO has teamed up with a leading manufacturer in its sector. “Daedong is the clear number one in South Korea, its domestic market, with almost a third of all compact tractor sales,” said Ray Spinks, General Manager and Sales Director of GH distributor AgriKnife UK. “It also has a successful export strategy that has established the company’s presence in many countries through the Kioti export brand, and now accounts for more than half of production. Notwithstanding, the 1200hp Elnow has a 200hp single unit engine, and the electric drive system is a direct current type, which, although it offers lower maintenance and costs, is not as efficient as the fuel type.”

New Role for Graeme

Revaho UK has appointed Graeme Francis as Sports Sales Manager. Graeme brings wealth of experience in the golf and sportsturf irrigation business both in the UK and the Middle East. Graeme will focus on Revaho’s interests in this sector. Stuart Penny, Revaho UK’s Managing Director, said: “Graeme’s appointment further demonstrates Revaho’s commitment to the golf and sportsturf irrigation market. ‘With our comprehensive range of premium products, Revaho will continue to develop our business and increase our profile in this important sector.”

Slumber in Peace

Golflink Soestduinen, a nine-hole parkland golf course in a wooded setting adjacent to Hilton Royal Park Hotel in the southeast of Amsterdam, has taken delivery of the first all-electric Jacobsen Eclipse 322 in Europe. The delivery was facilitated by Ransomes Jacobsen’s Dutch distributor, van der Pols, through their local subsidiary dealer, Boxenkamp Turfcare.

“Because of our location adjacent to the Royal Park Hilton Hotel, the Jacobsen Eclipse 322 Electric is the ideal greensmower for us here at Golflink Soestduinen. Some of the bedrooms and business meeting rooms are close to greens, but guests are completely unaware when we are mowing, because the machine is so quiet.”

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Golflink Soestduinen, a nine-hole parkland golf course in a wooded setting adjacent to Hilton Royal Park Hotel in the southeast of Amsterdam, has taken delivery of the first all-electric Jacobsen Eclipse 322 in Europe. The delivery was facilitated by Ransomes Jacobsen’s Dutch distributor, van der Pols, through their local subsidiary dealer, Boxenkamp Turfcare.

“Because of our location adjacent to the Royal Park Hilton Hotel, the Jacobsen Eclipse 322 Electric is the ideal greensmower for us here at Golflink Soestduinen. Some of the bedrooms and business meeting rooms are close to greens, but guests are completely unaware when we are mowing, because the machine is so quiet.”

ARGO Tractors Establishes Partnership with Daedong

The Italian ARGO Tractors concern is no stranger to agreements with other manufacturers — it already produces its own compact and tracelaying tractors for two other makes. And in choosing Daedong Industrial Company as its industrial partner for a comprehensive range of compact and utility tractors spanning 22hp to 91hp, ARGO has teamed up with a leading manufacturer in its sector. “Daedong is the clear number one in South Korea, its domestic market, with almost a third of all compact tractor sales,” said Ray Spinks, General Manager and Sales Director of GH distributor AgriKnife UK. “It also has a successful export strategy that has established the company’s presence in many countries through the Kioti export brand, and now accounts for more than half of production.

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GI
INDUSTRY UPDATE
The latest turf industry news from around the globe

MORE CHANGES AT
RANSOMES JACOBSEN

Ransomes.Jacobson has added to its senior management team as well as appointing a new marketing communications officer.

Richard Comely has been promoted to the newly-created position of Director, Marketing and Product Management. In this new role he will be responsible for all marketing and promotional activities. He is also responsible for all new products scheduled to come on stream in the near future and the continued development of existing products.

Richard joined Jacobsen UK as a technical service manager in 1997. Following Textron’s purchase of Ransomes in 1998 he was appointed to the role of product manager in the new Ransomes Jacobson organisation.

Further strengthening the marketing department is the appointment of Gina Putnam to the role of Marketing Communications Officer.

Gina was born and raised in Southern California and is a graduate of the University of Kansas. She began her career working with the GCSAA in 2002 to promote professional development and educational standards for golf course superintendents worldwide.

“Richard has been with the company for many years and has a wealth of knowledge of the industry and how our products can be developed and marketed across our territory,” said David Withers.

“Recruiting Gina is also very good for our business. She knows the industry, inside out, and is well respected both here in Europe and in the USA. She is an excellent addition to Richard’s team and will be a very good fit with the experienced members of our marketing department.”

“There are exciting times ahead for Ransomes Jacobson and these latest appointments complete the restructure of my senior leadership team as I position the company for a period of accelerated growth in the short to medium term.”

ARAGO TRACTORS ESTABLISHES PARTNERSHIP WITH DAEDONG

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New Role for Graeme

Revaho UK has appointed Graeme Francis as Sports Sales Manager. With a wealth of experience in the golf and sportsturf irrigation business both in the UK and the Middle East, Graeme will focus on Revaho’s interests in this sector.

Stewart Penny, Revaho UK’s Managing Director, said: “Graeme’s appointment further demonstrates Revaho’s commitment to the golf and sportsturf irrigation market. With our comprehensive range of premium products, Revaho will continue to develop our business and increase our profile in this important sector.”

What’s your number?

Our regular and random profile of an industry figure continues with this month’s lucky number...

Name: David Cole
Company: JSM Limited / JSM Distribution
Position: Managing Director

How long have you been in the industry? 33 Years, to date...

How did you get into it? Fancied a sales job (and more money) and fell across an ad for a Horticultural Machinery Salesman with a company named, Eastern Tractors. I had to double as an assistant to the Service Manager.

What other jobs have you done? Left School to train as a Quantity Surveyor, but I soon got bored with that. A spell as a trainee store manager with the Co-op was also unfulfilling. In the Turf Machinery Industry ever since

What do you like about your current job? The variety, every day and every phone call is different, and the relationships and contacts you build up.

What changes have you seen during your time in the industry? Without a doubt the rapid advances in Technology and modern systems allows us all to squeeze more out of the working day and to work smarter. But it’s also surprising how much hasn’t changed about the fundamentals of our business and customer relations.

What do you like to do in your spare time? Little bits of everything. Family, Walking, Travel, Music, following the footy, gardening, golf

Where do you see yourself in 10 years time? Sanastos, hopefully, I see myself there but I’m not sure the Bank Manager shares the same vision.

Who do you consider to be your best friends in the industry? Too many customers and colleagues to pick out an individual - which is the great thing with this industry, relationships endure.

What do you consider to be your lucky number? 7

Pick a number? 5

David has picked Charmian Robinson

Slumber in Peace

Goldfish Stotsdhuizen, a nine-hole parkland golf course in a wooded setting adjacent to Hilton Park Hotel in the outskirts of Amsterdam, has taken delivery of the first all-electric Jacobsen Eclipse 322 in Europe. The delivery was facilitated by Ransomes Jacobson’s Dutch distributor, van der Pols, through their local subsidiary dealer, Boskenspark Tuffturf.

Paul Hogehoom, Head Greenkeeper, said: “Because of our location adjacent to the Royal Park Hilton Hotel, the Jacobsen Eclipse 322 Electric is the ideal greens mower for us here at Goldfish Stotsdhuizen. Some of the bedrooms and business meeting rooms are close to greens, but guests are completely unaware when we are mowing, because the machine is so quiet.”

Nottinghamshire’s Gedling Borough Council has taken delivery of the first Elmow all-electric pedestrian greensmower to be supplied anywhere in the world by its British designer and manufacturer, Allett.

Based at Arnot Hill Park, Arnold, East Midlands, the 20in fine-cut mower is now being used to maintain a bowling greens situated less than 100m from the civic offices, located also within the 8ha public park, winner of a prestigious Green Flag award for the past four years.

Terry Ball, one of four Parks and Street Care supervisors with Gedling Borough Council, explained that the mower had been spotted initially at the 2010 BT Tower exhibition.

“The principal of an all-electric machine fits extremely well with the council’s vision of making the borough a healthy, green, safe and clean place to live, work and visit”, he said. “The Elmow is very low noise, has minimal vibrations and produces no emissions at the place of work.”

The battery pack gives up to two hours operation from fully-charged which, says Terry Ball, is ideal for regular mowing of bowling greens close to a club house and re-charging point.

Allett’s Leigh Bowers (far left) hands over the new Elmow pedestrian electric greensmower to Gedling Borough Council’s Parks and Street Care manager, Melvyn Cryer (second from right) and Terry Ball (far right), one of four Parks and Street Care supervisors with the council. Also in the picture are members of the council’s fine turf crew who received full training from Leigh in setting, operating and maintaining their new Elmow all-electric mower.

What is your number? 32

Pick a number? 7

MAY 2011 16

MAY 2011 17
A continental approach

Scott MacCallum travelled to the ‘Dutch Alps’ in Germany to meet a recent expat who has already made a big impression at his new club.
A continental approach

Scott MacCallum travelled to the ‘Dutch Alps’ in Germany to meet a recent expat who has already made a big impression at his new club.
When I arrived at GC Schmallenberg, two hours from Dusseldorf and not too far from the German-Dutch border, the scene which greeted me was not something you’d expect to see at a typical British members’ club.

Just outside the Club Shop the sister of Christaante Rutg, the Club Manager, was leading a couple of the lady members in an exercise class. As the music rang out the three were joined by Norbert Hahn, the Chairman of Greens, for some lunges and stretches.

As I say, not something you’d often see at a British club but it is indicative of the less stuffy approach there is to golf in Germany, and in particular GC Schmallenberg.

There is a warm and relaxed approach, which is something Head Greenkeeper, Denis Tweddell, has appreciated since he joined the club at the beginning of March last year.

“Everyone made me incredibly welcome. One of the guys, Charly Hennemann, who is our tree and plant specialist, even decorated our flat for us – I’m afraid for him, while he came with us his jeep and trailer when we bought furniture so we could get it home,” said Denis, who made the move to Germany after seven years as Assistant Head Greenkeeper, on the A81 Course at Turnberry, having reached a high with the 2009 Open Championship.

“People have done so much to help us settle in. The members have been welcoming and I’ve met up with some other expats.”

Gareth Brenner, Course Manager at GC Hummelbachae, has helped me on numerous occasions to settle into my new job and new country, while my friend and ex-workmate at Turnberry, Russell Adams, travels up regularly to visit us here in the mountains.

“Chris Knowles, Course Manager at GC Frankfurt-Hausen, has also been someone I can call for advice on all matters of life in Germany. Funnily enough, I was sitting next to Chris at one of the workshops at Harrogate just before I moved over,” he said.

Since arriving, Denis has added his brand of greenkeeping knowledge, attention to detail and customer service to the dedicated, hard-working team he inherited.

An experienced group, they are the aforementioned Charly, who has been at the club for 22 years; Karl-Heinz Pfeiffer, the mechanic and irrigation technician who has 20 years with the club and who can build anything; Paul Werner Klaucke, is a key player on the construction team and “is a wizard on a mini digger” with 18 years at Schmallenberg while they also have seasonal support from Franz Curdes, a farmer who sold the club the land on which the back nine was built.

Schmallenberg, is 400 metres above sea level, and is in a skiing area affectionately known as the Dutch Alps, is generally buried beneath snow from mid-December until mid to late February and initially he was keen to learn how best to protect the course during this time.

“I talked with the guys here who had experienced the snow and they told me that we needed to spray a preventative as close to the start of the snow fall as possible.

“What I’ve found is that it seems to be important that the ground is frozen before the snow comes because if it isn’t, and there is heat in the ground, you do get more disease.”

Denis admitted that was familiar when they came out of hibernation and that, due to the unexpected early arrival of the snowfall late last year, there was slightly more unusual, but that the language was vital and has helped me integrate much more quickly, said Denis, who revealed that watching the German version of Come Dine with Me had done much to improve the family’s skills and offer up tips to German behaviour.

Along with the team, Denis has already set about improving the surfaces with some micro-tining and slitting.

“We are planning to use the Graden tractor-mounted scarifier twice this season on the older greens in conjunction with trying the compost teas on all our greens.

“We have increased the frequency and type of aeration and have found the scarified aerator an important tool for keeping the surfaces open. We do alternate the scarred rollers with the verti cut units but aim to scarred roll once a week during the season.”

The biggest project the team has tackled in the time Denis has been at Schmallenberg has been to lengthen the course by adding a new tee to each of the 18 holes.

“When I first arrived, Ted Colfren, our Californian pro, said that the club wanted to lengthen the course with a view to attracting an EPD Texas event and making the course more attractive to the better players in the area,” said Denis, who has already demonstrated his playing prowess by winning several medals at the club and seen his handicap drop to 5.

“The club also benefited from the arrival of Joachim Walter and Richard Pege, the extremely proactive Club President and Vice President, who took up their roles just before Denis arrive and whose input has been invaluable.”

EDP is the German National Tour and one which current World Number 1, Martin Kaymer, won as recently as 2006.

“We walked round the course with the committee, Ted and Norbert, and it was daunting because it soon became apparent that they wanted new tees everywhere and they wanted them done before the end of the season with a view to opening them this April,” said Denis, who never forgets how lucky he was to work with such knowledgeable Course Managers, Head men and senior greenkeepers at Turnberry and Bonnyton GC where he started his greenkeeping career.

But the club pulled together to make the project a success.

“Norbert knew a guy who had an excavator and he did much of the earth work and heavy moving for us, while we got some hard core from a local farmer, who was a friend of one of our members. On top of that we got topsoil from one of our members who had a construction company and he even delivered it to where we were digging our terraces.

“The work also coincided with a hot drought spell last June so we could use the time we would have spent cutting fairways and tees.”

All in all it added significantly to the overall maximum length of the course and created some monster holes. The par-6 hole, for example, is uphill and into the prevailing wind is now over 600 yards from the tips, while there are several other holes over 500 yards long, testing