



REMINISCING

Grimme UK Ltd • The First 25 Years

August 2018



25 ^{UK} **GRIMME**
1993 - 2018

Foreword

Barry Burrell was one of the original 7 employees of Grimme UK. However, like the others, he had been involved with the Grimme product for many years before this. In his words, whilst Grimme UK has now been in existence for 25 years, the Grimme brand has been in the UK for considerably longer. The first Grimme machine arrived in 1963 and up to the point that Grimme UK was formed in 1993 Grimme had delivered around 3500 machines to the UK.

Fortunately, Barry not only has a splendid memory about the history of the Grimme brand in the UK and Grimme products, but also had the foresight to take or collect pictures as events in the Company's history unfolded and to keep safe original brochures that today are probably unique!

Using these, Barry compiled his own history of Grimme UK and the earlier years. What follows are some of his Reminiscences – a series of unique insights into the development of the Grimme brand in the UK.

As one of the "Magnificent Seven" I made the journey with Barry, sharing in many of these experiences. I hope you enjoy re-living them as much as I have.

Barry White
Managing Director
Grimme UK Limited

We acknowledge the help provided by the growers noted in the text for their permission to use original photographs of their machines.

Barry Burrell has spent his entire career in agriculture. After leaving school he worked on a farm and is no stranger to digging and picking potatoes. He can remember using a spinner to dig potatoes for the pickers that followed and also the consequences if you tried to drive the gang too hard! This was the start of a lifelong interest in agricultural machinery and how it can be used to make life easier and more productive. He was one of the original "Magnificent Seven" to join Grimme UK but had plenty of Grimme sales under his belt before this.

Before his retirement, he enjoyed more than two decades of successful sales with Grimme UK, much of this on the retail side. Although he is now officially "retired", he still spends a couple of days a week working at Swineshead sharing his experience and enthusiasm for all things Grimme.

He is an avid collector and restorer of old farm machinery and an accomplished model maker too, with a keen eye for detail that can be seen in the scale model dioramas he builds. These depict farm scenes past and present and focus mainly on different aspects of root crop establishment and harvesting. Many of the models he makes are built from scratch using only photographic references, yet they are real works of art – accurate to the last detail. Barry often displays his dioramas at local schools and events where they offer a different way stimulate children's interest in agriculture at a time when the industry is crying out for new recruits.



Barry driving the tractor demonstrating an early Grimme machine. Brian Cooper (another of the Magnificent Seven) is on the harvester.

The Early Years

Until destoning opened the way for wider cultivation, the soft Fenland soils in Lincolnshire were the types of place where potatoes were grown intensively. They were also harvested in much the same labour intensive way with a spinner to dig the potatoes running ahead of the many pickers who collected and bagged them. Back-breaking work!

Franz Grimme senior noticed that the spinning diggers flung potatoes randomly, making the pickers work harder. His first great innovation was simple (aren't they all!) – a basket attached to the digger, which caught the potatoes and placed them all in a row. Probably the very first windrower!

By 1963, Grimme harvesters were showing growers in Germany and particularly in Holland the benefits of mechanisation. The "Universal" harvester launched in 1956 was a milestone in the history of Grimme and using the mantra "from practical experience to practical use" the Company followed market feedback to enhance and develop the harvester. Sales expanded rapidly and so did the Company.

Growers in the UK were not slow to recognise the benefits of mechanisation either. Initially, machines were designed for single row planting. However, the concept of destoning, pioneered by Charles Creyke in Yorkshire, opened the door for wider and more intensive cultivation of potatoes. The innovation wasn't lost on Grimme which developed a self-propelled machine using the farm's tractor as a skid-unit. This was fundamental to a system that not only destoned and planted in one pass but which also enabled the same skid to be re-mounted on the harvester.

More harvesters followed the Concord, built specifically for the UK and then the Britannia, which had twin main webs – the first concept of a modern 2 row machine. However, the first full production 2 Row harvester to sell in huge numbers, not just in the UK but in Australia and New Zealand too, was the GB.



An early horse drawn spinner with basket

By the time of the last shipment to the UK in 1986 this was part of a range of 3 models – the Continental, an unmanned machine; the Continental GB, manned with a bagging platform and air weighing and the Jumbo with a 3 tonne bunker.

The final consignment to the UK arrived by boat and many of the harvesters had been damaged in rough weather. In fact it must have been so bad that one harvester was missing. It can only be assumed that this is currently at the bottom of the North Sea! Barry recalls another harvester "near miss" that happened when he and Brian Cooper were taking a Jumbo to Scotland for a demonstration. They removed the elevator to reduce the height, conscious that they had to negotiate some low bridges en-route. When they reached a cast iron railway bridge they thought it best for Barry to get up with the harvester to call the clearances as the lorry went under the bridge at a crawl. All of a sudden, an express thundered over the bridge and compressed the spans on to the top of the harvester so much and so fast that the rivets punched holes in the harvester's guards!

The next generation Super Continental was the forerunner of modern 3 web, 2 row machines. Evolution had overtaken revolution although Grimme innovation continued to keep pace with the introduction of split webs with joiners and rubber drives that reduced wear.

"Franz Grimme senior noticed that the spinning diggers flung potatoes randomly, making the pickers work harder. His first great innovation was simple (aren't they all!) – a basket attached to the digger, which caught the potatoes and placed them all in a row. Probably the very first windrower!"



Start of a New Era

In 1993 a decision was made that the development of the Grimme brand in the UK demanded a stronger, dedicated focus. Something better suited to a direct subsidiary rather than an importer. So Grimme UK Limited was born in November 1993. As with all handovers, there were some initial issues – not least the looming presence of Smithfield Show! However, a number of the previous team elected to take the plunge with Grimme UK. On day one there were just 7 employees, led by Ken Tomlinson as MD. Brian Cooper, Barry White, Barry Burrell and Ralph Powell took responsibility for sales across the UK – each with their own regions! Mike Baumber took control of the finances and Gary Skipworth handled Aftersales.

The new business was based in a building in Sleaford, not ideal in terms of its limited size and access for goods and machines. However, for the next four years it was to be home. Within six months the team grew with the addition of four Service Engineers, one for each region.

We started with a clean sheet and needed to build the dealer network throughout the UK. Some of the existing dealers who had been selling Grimme decided to join the new Company but quite a few were new. Having a number of existing dealers really helped because they already knew the product range. We had to carry out sales and service training for new dealers. We also took many of them on factory visits, visiting seed trial premises in Holland first and then on to Grimme in Damme.

Our initial range of machines included the new Grimme Combistar destoner, which we launched at Smithfield Show in December together with the new VL30B Potato Planter. This was built in Germany for Grimme by Gruse Company.

The Combistar was fitted with seven rows of stars that the operator could adjust on the move for height and inter-shaft spacing. This really increased sieving capacity over a conventional web destoner. One or two spacers could be fitted to cater for different soil types and conditions. In heavy, cloddy conditions this could

be increased to three to give extra separation. For salad crops or carrot or parsnip crops no spacers were fitted.

After the star section, the soil flow went onto the main web, which was available in a range of different pitches. All the webs were fitted with joining bars for easy change-over. Different sizes of cross conveyer were also available. Other options included boulder boxes; light or heavy duty scrubber webs; levelling on the rear axle and rear wheel steering. This was a major breakthrough in destoner technology.

Following its launch, orders for the new Combi-Star CS1500 and CS1700 started to come in rapidly from both large and small growers and from contractors too. Ray Bartrum in Cambridgeshire ordered a new machine to separate very sandy soil for carrots and parsnips and used this with no spacers between the stars and 28mm main webs. Heygate Farms in Norfolk and Strawson Farms in Nottinghamshire were just a few of the first customers to see the potential of this new design of separator.



Because it had gone from design to production very rapidly to ensure a model was available at Smithfield Show, there were some teething problems in a number of machines. However, Grimme demonstrated its commitment to UK buyers by taking these back to the factory where they were modified and refinished ready for the next season – much to the owners' delight!

The VL30 potato planter was the first planter that Grimme offered into the UK market place. Initially, compared to other makes of planter, the market share of the VL30 planter was very low. The VL was unique in the UK by offering for the first time either an innovative shaping hood to cover the planted crop or conventional covering bodies like those used on all other makes of machines. Additional options included vibrating panels in the seed feed chambers together with cup vibrators within the cup belt towers. Different sizes of cup inserts were available for large or small seed and the planter was driven through the wheels via a pto shaft with sprocket changes in the drive train to adjust seed spacing.

Almost at once the shaping hood on the VL planter captured the imagination of UK growers. As a result, other manufacturers soon began to copy the Grimme hood. The concept was so popular that Grimme UK even sold hoods to new customers for them to retro-fit to other makes of planter! It's no surprise that today the shaping hood remains the most popular covering system.

It's no good having an outstanding product if you don't show the market what you have got. Although today we still spend quite a bit of time demonstrating machines, back then the pace was relentless. We wanted to give as many farmers/growers as possible the opportunity to see Grimme machines at work in their own conditions.

In the spring it was our new range of destoners and planters. Thanks to the unique design of the star shafts in the new Combi-Star, we were able to change specifications of stars and spacings while on farm. To reset the spacers from destoning to suit declodding took around two hours. We used to carry spare shafts already built up into different configurations.

It was the same two years later when we ran a really intense demonstration programme following the launch of the GL32B, which soon proved very popular once growers saw just what it could do.

At harvest time we moved on to harvesters. When the new 2 row Grimme Variant came onto the UK market, it was available with hydraulic wheel drive as an option. We demonstrated this fitted with the RS roller separator and the all new hydraulic wheel drive system since most new harvesters were fitted with this option.

Smithfield Show 1996 proved outstanding for Grimme UK. We had three brand new products on the stand: the Grimme Combi-Web Destoner; the GL32B Planter and the revolutionary GZ1700 DL1 Harvester.

The Combi-Web was an all web machine. Large diameter drives and middle rollers travelled towards the main web. At first glance, it looked like a three web machine but actually had only two webs. 97 production machines were built in this format, but the following year they were built as three web machines. All the main web and rear chassis was a standard build, the same as the Combi-Star.

Until 1996, the planters were built for Grimme by a German company called Grusse, which had been making a range of farm equipment for many years. One product line was potato planters and included the early Grimme VL30. The company also built the rear and front mounted KS and KSA haulm toppers for a number of years until, around this time, production was moved into the Grimme factory at Damme.

The new Grimme GL32B potato planter was manufactured at Grimme Damme and is still in production today. The early machines required some minor modifications that were carried out within the first weeks of the season and since then there have only been minor changes to the successful design of this popular planter.

The GZ1700 DL1 and DLS

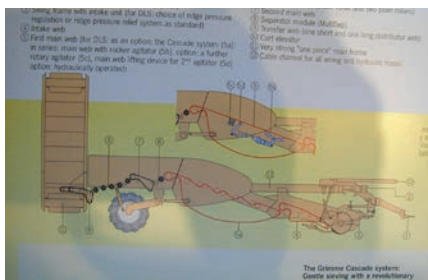
A new prototype GZ1700 was initially tested at R.H.Lamyman's farm at Wilsford, near Sleaford. It was used in fields that were well off the beaten track and hidden by hedges to stop the competition getting their beady eyes on this new product and some of the innovative ideas fitted to it. These new concepts included the "Wavy Web" (Cascade) system and an all new separation system that was to be the forerunner of today's Multi-Sep. Fortunately, we managed to keep the new machine a secret from the competition right up to its launch at the 1996 Smithfield Show – at which Barry White sold the first machine to John Scoles in Yorkshire.

Altogether around sixty new GZ harvesters were sold, most of these fitted with the new main web cascade (wavy) web system. The Cascade system was designed with the main web running around steel rollers inside dummy side panels to agitate the crop instead of the conventional standard agitation system that had been used for many years in all types of potato harvesters including Grimme.

The cascade system for main web agitation was fitted as standard to all new GZ 1700 DL1 machines sold in the first season. However, it turned out to be a very wet lifting season. This put a lot of stress on the main webs, which for the first time were fitted with an overlap-type joiner. Due to the wet conditions, the webs were forced to carry a far greater weight of soil around the cascade rollers and consequently a number of the new joiners failed. Any customer that experienced this type of failure on their GZ DL1 harvester was given the option to have the machine changed to the standard and proven type agitation system for the following season.

However, by the end of the harvest a larger version of the GZ, the DLS, was introduced with a short first intake digging web fitted, which carried the crop onto the main web. This first intake web allowed us to offer growers the choice of cascade (wavy web) system again.

After the introduction of the larger DLS, the standard DL1 only sold in small numbers to smaller growers while the larger farms / growers opted for the higher output DLS version.



Multi-Sep – changes the face of separation technology

In 1996 a new concept separation system was launched as an option to replace the popular Roller Separator (RS). The new Multi-Sep unit comprised four shafts with large diameter plastic "paddle" stars. Each shaft had a smaller diameter rubber roller running against it with height and distance movement that was hydraulically controlled by the operator, together with variable speed control for both star shafts and rubber rollers. Initially, the unit was chain driven but later it was changed to belt drive. In trials it worked well and acted more gently on the crop than the roller separation unit.

Picture (bottom right) shows the Multi-Sep fitted with the original paddle star design, the rubber clod rollers were adjustable in height and width via hydraulic rams.

Test work on the Multi-Sep separation system continued over the years that followed and in the late Autumn of 1999 it was modified to see if a rubber spiral segment roller would improve the separation of wet soil beyond the standard multi-bladed yellow star.

I helped Barry White conduct the first test in the workshop at Swineshead, where he exchanged two rows off the original paddle stars for the new spiral rollers. We filled a wheelbarrow with wet soil from the wash pit and then

put this through the machine over the new spirals. The difference in performance between the standard stars and the new spirals was amazing. Without doubt, the new spirals were far better at removing the soil. The following day Barry and I took two spiral shafts to a customer's harvester in North Yorkshire. We fitted these and the customer carried out more test-work. The in-field results were just as impressive and because of the vast difference in the amount of soil which the new spiral rollers were taking out, the decision was made to fit the new spiral system into all new GZ Multi-Sep machines as standard for the following year (pictured top left and centre).

Grimme UK finds a **new home** and continues to grow

1997 saw Grimme UK start developing a new green-field site at Swineshead to replace the Sleaford building. Everything was carefully designed and purpose-built. A new workshop was fitted with an overhead crane for unloading machines from the factory and to assist with general lifting in the workshop.

A new stores building was able to supply spares in large quantities to the dealer network throughout the UK. There was a new showroom so we could show customers our products undercover.

New offices ran across the front of the complete length of the building, and also gave us a conference room for product training together with canteen facilities.

The new Swineshead premises were opened by Franz Grimme in 1998. During the Open Day principals and salesman joined us from the Grimme dealer network across the UK. We were able to showcase not just the new buildings but the latest products too. Stuart Smith from our technical service department showed customers the new GBT computer controls that were a major advance for the GZ range of harvesters.

Early in 2013 Phase One of a new building project commenced to provide new workshop and stores facilities alongside the old workshop and stores. These were urgently required to give extra space in the workshop for large self-propelled machines, which are now being sold in increasing numbers. The new workshop had more "headroom" than the old workshop so larger cranes to lift more weight could be installed. An additional "office block" was built within the new stores area complete with a new canteen.



Franz Grimme opening the new Grimme UK HQ at Swineshead

The Second Phase of the new building work was under-cover storage for used and new machine displays. This was open-fronted and ideal for all but the largest machines.

In 2014 work started on the Technicom Training Centre in the former showroom area. Three new product training rooms were built – all with state of the art AV and IT facilities. These are supported by full kitchen facilities and toilets and used not just for training both Grimme UK and dealer network staff but also to support the apprenticeship schemes offered by Grimme and Brooksby Melton College. The large hall provides an ideal venue not just to bring in Grimme machines from planters to self-propelled harvesters for training or display but also for open events for dealers and growers.

The new Technicom training centre was officially opened in March 2015 by Mrs Christine Grimme and Franz Grimme. All Grimme UK staff were invited for a special evening event.

After dinner Franz Grimme spoke to the team and was presented with a unique clock that now hangs in the Centre.

Invitations had been sent to all Grimme dealers and many farmers / growers to come to a special Open Day, the following day, and view the new Technicom centre together with all the new building work, which had been carried out over the previous two years including the new workshops, the additions to the parts area and the new outside storage shed.

A huge display of all kinds of new Grimme machines had also been assembled featuring different models of harvesters, spring equipment and grading equipment.

"Everything was carefully designed and purpose-built."



The new Technicom Centre at Swineshead houses Grimme Academy which is home for dealer training and plays a central part in the apprentice training programme with Brooksby Melton College. Trained technicians are the lifeblood of our industry.



The first crop of technicians graduating from Brooksby Melton College with some of the Grimme managers who have overseen their training.

Run Up to the Millennium

The lead into the Millennium saw lots of new developments both in the business and in the Grimme UK product range. The Grimme SF 150-60 two row self-propelled harvester made its first appearance in the UK, working in Suffolk near Woodbridge on very sandy soil lifting salad potatoes. From Suffolk we moved to Lincolnshire harvesting main crop potatoes for S Pugh at Swineshead. After this it was up to the Scottish Borders, near Berwick upon Tweed, working at an open demonstration for Smith Brothers. Then the harvester came back down to Yorkshire following which it went to Ireland. A few of these harvesters were sold into the UK. The first went into Suffolk lifting salad potatoes on very light sandy soil in the Melton Woodbridge area. In the UK the harvester was re-designated 170-60 because of the wider intake width at the front to lift 72" bed widths.

A new two row SE 150/60 trailed version of the self-propelled harvester also debuted in the UK around this time. This trailed version was used for demonstration trial work on the lighter soil conditions near Mildenhall in Suffolk. Like the self-propelled version, these machines were best suited to salad crops with the result that not many were sold in the UK. Nevertheless, the concept of the harvester running outside the rows was very good and meant larger tyres could be fitted to the tractor to make pulling easier in soft or wet conditions. Hydraulic wheel-drive was also fitted and made traction even better.

Test work was also carried out on a new type of bed-forming system to suit the lighter soil conditions in some areas of the UK. In light soil, deeper beds are needed when separating for carrots, parsnips, or potatoes. Called the Shapeforma this new machine was capable of producing beds up to

twenty inches deep and used stainless steel rollers at the rear of the long furrow openers to assist in keeping the side of the beds firm. The shape of the bed gave a better flow into the following destoner, which also helped the bed shape after the separator. The Shapeforma appeared at the 1999 Smithfield Show, ready for sales into season 2000. In later versions longer bodies were fitted to eliminate the need for the stainless steel rollers. These performed well and the following year all Shapeformas were fitted with the longer bodies. The same type of body was also fitted to the bed tillas used on heavy soil types.

When a prototype three bed stone and clod separator came for trial work in the UK, we tried it first on a farm near Mansfield, Nottinghamshire where it was pulled by a Caterpillar Challenger rubber-tracked crawler with around three hundred horse power! After a few days of trial work it was decided we should arrange a working demonstration to show larger acreage growers how well we thought might suit their application.

The demonstration took place on sandy soil in the same area near Bilsthorpe. We used the new prototype Shapeforma and the growers that attended were impressed with the high output the destoner could achieve.

However, over the next couple of years only two of the three bed separators were sold to growers in the Nottinghamshire area. Within the next few years they had been sold to Greens of Soham which put them to work in Norfolk. A two bed windrower was also adapted from the third separator chassis that had been built, which also found a home at Greens. Subsequently, a few years later, all three machines were moved on to K.S. Coles, a grower in Somerset, where we believe they may all still be at work!

At the start of 2000 two new key members of staff joined Grimme UK. Michael Allsop joined as the new



Managing Director, to take over from Ken Tomlinson later in the year, whilst Barry Baker took over from Barry White as Area Sales Manager for the Northern Area. Barry White moved into a new technical role in which he did more experimental & product development work as well as overseeing the running of the workshops and the Area Technicians.

Late in 2000 a version of the GZ 1700 DLS with a top separation system and picking table was brought over for trials in the UK. Based on a concept from the Grimme Q All-Rounder, it featured twin separation systems including either an RS roller separator or Multi-Sep after the second main web and a further Multi-Sep before to the picking table on the top. Testing was done on the light sandy soil conditions in the Mansfield area of Nottinghamshire in fields that had been stone separated. Results were good and, on the strength of these, machines were purchased for the following season by three large local growers.

Towards the end of the 2000 discussions began in earnest about a new self-propelled machine. Something we had already been

asking for. We thought that two versions were needed – an unmanned and a manned machine.

Germany gave us a line drawing of a proposed design in time for Smithfield Show. We showed this to prospective customers throughout the Show and had a very good response – mainly from growers cropping between 180-300 acres. Following the Show, after further discussion it was agreed to build the two versions for the 2001 season.

For its Press Launch the new self-propelled Grimme SF GBS two row harvester was put to work in Suffolk. A manned harvester working in very light sandy soil conditions, lifting green top potatoes into boxes. The agricultural press was well represented at the launch of this new machine. Preparation of the press packages that we gave to the journalists wasn't without its own difficulties since we had to take 35mm images of the machine as it worked and then get 10 sets of prints specially developed ready to go into the to press packs!

The following day we moved the harvester to John Rix who farmed near Colchester. Again, we were lifting a green top early variety into boxes.

From there, we moved the SF GBS up to Yorkshire to Scoles Farms, where we held another open demonstration and after this the machine carried on up to Scotland for further demonstrations. Surprisingly, early buyers for the new self-propelled machines included a number of smaller growers as well as the larger acreage growers we expected.

Sales of the unmanned version were steady but started to find homes with carrot growers once they were fitted with different shares and powered discs. It didn't take long for them to gain a reputation as a very good vegetable harvester.

The first Grimme SF3000 self-propelled four row harvester to be sold in the UK was purchased by Mr Harrison of Cromer in Norfolk. With Mr Harrison's assistance we were able to show his SF3000 working alongside our GBS1700 to demonstrate the output and separation of both machines. Many local farmers and growers showed interest in both machines and although only the one SF3000 was sold into the UK the GBS1700 turned out to be a huge success with growers large and small.

"...the new self-propelled Grimme SF GBS two row harvester was put to work in Suffolk. A manned harvester working in very light sandy soil conditions, lifting green top potatoes into boxes. The agricultural press was well represented at the launch of this new machine."





A Star is Born – Story of the GT Harvester

In 2005 testing began on a new two row harvester prototype to replace the GZ1700 machine. The GT170S, which was fitted with the Multi-Sep separation system was tested intensively in all areas of the UK and in all conditions.

The picture below shows one of the early prototype harvesters working in main crop lifting season. The GTS version, which was fitted with an intake web was also fitted with a windrower kit to windrow crop to the left to enable four rows to be lifted in one pass since this idea was rapidly gaining in popularity for opening out the field.



The New Grimme GT170M and GT170S machines were launched into the UK market in 2006. The M version was configured with a main web leading onto a second web followed by a single Multi-Sep separation system. As an alternative, the second main web could be replaced with a second Multi-Sep separator, which gave the GT a tremendous advantage over all our competitors since we could now offer a double separator system against their single systems that were largely restricted to roller separation (RS).

The GTS machine was fitted with a short intake web leading onto the shorter main web, making it a higher output harvester for the larger grower. Sales were very strong for the 2006 season with this new harvester replacing not just older Grimme GZ Harvesters but also plenty of competitors' machines too. 90% of the new GTs sold were fitted with the double Multi-Sep separator.

Pictured left is a Grimme GT170M working near Spalding Lincolnshire lifting early potatoes, the customer is messrs Dobneys from Surfleet.

Since its launch, the GT has gone on to sell more than 2000 units in the UK. However, the specification of the latest 2018 Anniversary Edition GT contains a huge number of advances in design and components from the models that were launched in 2006. Many of these are below the skin, which to a layman may not appear the have changed much over the intervening years.

“90% of the new GTs sold were fitted with the double Multi-Sep separator.”

Self-Propelled Harvesters “Come of Age”

The New SF 170 GT 2 row, self-propelled potato harvester was launched in the UK during 2007. The SF harvester range comprised three new models: one unmanned model and two different capacity manned machines. They all could be fitted with either RS separation or Multi-Sep units. Shortly after these machines were launched they were renamed Varitrons.

The Varitron 200 was the unmanned harvester; the Varitron 220 had full picking facilities and either a standard wide cart elevator or a small holding bunker to hold enough crop to change-over trailers on the run; the Varitron 270 was similar although this was fitted with a 6 tonne bunker.

The first unmanned machine was ordered by H Prins of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire and was set to work on their silty soils. Working with an early Grimme Variant two row harvester that had been converted to a windrowing machine, they lifted four rows per pass through the field – very high output. Fitted with the all new offset front wheels, terra depth control and centre share it made light work of lifting the four rows. Plus the twin separation system enabled them to load a clean sample into the trailers.

The picture shows four Grimme self-propelled harvesters ready for action at a later self-propelled demonstration at Worth Farms, Holbeach. L to R: 4 row Tectron, Varitron 200 and DLS x 2.

Early the next year, (2008) the Grimme sales team agreed that it would be great idea to hold open working demonstrations of the full Grimme range of spring and harvesting machines plus grading and handling equipment to show as many growers as possible the latest advances in the different ranges – notably the new Varitron 220.

It was decided to hold two field demonstrations. The Spring Open Demonstration would be for local growers in the Root Systems' retail trade area. Albert Bartlett kindly offered the site at Dunstone Fen near Lincoln on a medium fen type soil with no stone. They also agreed to supply the seed, and would supply all the chemicals required for the growing crop plus irrigation if it was needed – depending on the season. Root Systems were responsible for all soil preparation and planting the crop.

At the Open Harvest Demonstration Grimme UK would provide all the

equipment required for both lifting and grading the crop and then Albert Bartlett would provide the transport for the crop from the grader to their packing station at Kirton Holme near Boston.

Soil preparation was carried out using a Grimme single bed Tilla followed by the single bed Bedforma. For soil separation, we used a Grimme Combi-Star fitted with three spacers and a 50mm main web with a 40mm cross conveyer. Rooster seed potatoes were planted using a Grimme GL32B fitted with the standard shaping hood.

Machines used in the autumn for lifting the crop were a Grimme GT170M two row trailed harvester fitted with Multi-Sep and picking table; A Grimme GT170S fitted with double Multi-Sep separation system and a Varitron 220 fitted with Double Multi-Sep. These all worked in their own plots.

For grading the crop we used a Grimme grader, again fitted with Multi-Sep separation and also a spiral roller separator. A store elevator was used to load bulkers ready to go to the pack-house. Between loading bulkers we had a box filling system in place to fill boxes that were later loaded on lorries and also taken to the pack-house at Kirton Holme.





Root Systems – Adding Retail Strength

In September 2003 Grimme UK Ltd., formed a new company to retail the full range of Grimme products in Lincolnshire. A key reason was the difficulty in finding additional dealers with the resources and commitment to focus on root crop machinery sales in this area. Something that was essential to provide local growers with the level of support they expected.

Barry Burrell was responsible for sales in the new company, supported by Graham Fryer as Workshop Manager with Martin Barnes as its Service Engineer. Later that year, after Graham moved to Fowlers, a Grimme Dealer in Scotland, Russ Bulman took his place in this “elite team”. Gary Britchford also joined Root Systems to provide parts support for retail customers.

The initial trading area for Root Systems was North Cambridgeshire and South Lincolnshire. In addition,

a small group of farmers growing potatoes in Hampshire and Sussex wanted to deal with the new company for sales service and parts because there was no potato machinery dealer in these areas that they could rely on. Later the Root Systems trade area was extended to include North Lincolnshire.

The Root Systems model proved popular with growers who were in areas where retail support for potato and similar specialist machinery was limited. Over the next 7 years, Grimme UK opened a further three retail outlets, first in Glenrothes, Scotland, then in Shrewsbury and finally in Dunnington, York.

These Grimme Retail Outlets are not in competition with other dealers in the network although some, like Swineshead, handle sales and support for specific products like sugar beet machinery.

“The Root Systems model proved popular with growers who were in areas where retail support for potato and similar specialist machinery was limited.”

Sweet Solution – A story of Sugar Beet

Grimme doesn't just provide cultivation, harvesting and handling solutions for potato growers but for many other kinds of root crops and vegetables too. In Europe, Grimme is a major player in sugar beet machinery. Even though the market here is smaller with far fewer annual machine sales, Grimme has also begun to consolidate its position thanks to some innovative harvesters.

The Grimme Maxtron Sugar Beet Harvester was introduced in 2003 to be sold and supported exclusively by Root Systems – largely because the main acreage of beet was grown in and adjacent to the Root Systems area. The first demonstration was to the press at Holme Fen near Peterborough. We were pleased to receive help from British Sugar and used their main offices for the introductory seminar, after which we showed the press the Maxtron working on the black peaty soil in this area.

During the first season we did demonstrations in Lincolnshire and then on to Yorkshire. At that time all the contractors used harvesters fitted with walking share lifters whereas we used the opel wheel system that is favoured on the Continent. Some UK growers liked the opel wheels because they lifted the crop more gently and managed to extract most of the tap-root intact, which has a significant impact on yield. However, other growers / contractors were sceptical about this method even though we were lifting the crop cleaner than their machines could.

John Taylor drove the Maxtron for all the demonstrations we did. Metcalfe Farms were very keen for us to demonstrate it on different customers' farms, which we did. They then bought the first new Maxtron to come to the UK for the 2004 season.



Rexor 620 and 630 at 2014 sugar beet demonstration

The first Grimme Rootster six row trailed sugar beet harvester arrived in the UK during 2007. The first demonstration was in East Anglia, near Snetterton in Norfolk, where it was working in very sandy conditions with flint stones present in the soil. The Rootster worked very well both there and on the subsequent demonstration in Lincolnshire at Thompson Farms near Holbeach. Both customers ordered for the following season commenting that it was a very impressive harvester.

Following the Rootster was the first all-wheel self-propelled Rexor – the 620. With the potential for higher road speeds this began to excite greater interest among UK contractors. With the advent of the all new Rexor 630 in 2015 and the development of an accompanying walking share system, we had the proverbial “Full House”. In 2015, 3 new Grimme sugar beet harvesters arrived by road, in convoy, all on the same day. It was uncanny that the load represented the full range – one Rexor 630, one Rexor 620 and one Maxtron. A sure sign that Grimme is now becoming established in the sugar beet market and, with de-regulation to come, will have the opportunity to increase sales in the coming years.

“In Europe, Grimme is a major player in sugar beet machinery. Even though the market here is smaller with far fewer annual machine sales, Grimme has also begun to consolidate its position thanks to some innovative harvesters.”



The **Planter** Marches On

In 2010 Grimme built the GL42K belt feed potato planter as an option to the cup feed machine which we had been selling since 1994 starting with the VL20 planter. Seed potatoes in the UK can vary considerably in size and a mix of large tubers mixed and small tubers can be very difficult to plant with any accuracy using a cup feed machine. However, belt feed planters are able to cope with any size of seed mixed in the same sample.

We learned a lot in the first season with the GL42K. As a result a number of areas were addressed to enhance its performance. That's why for the 2011 season a new chassis was fitted to the machine to improve steerage. The updated planter was re-designated GB 215 and the modified chassis was

offered to all customers with the earlier GL42K. This ensured that all Grimme belt planters would be of a similar design.

2012 saw the introduction of the new GB330 three row belt feed planter. Some growers had been asking for a new three row planter for several years. The GB330 incorporated many of the features from the GB215. However, instead of being a fully mounted machine it was built as a trailed planter. In addition, many growers on three rows also planted two rows of different varieties in a bed and with this planter a kit could be supplied to go from three to two rows, making it a very versatile machine.

The advent of ISOBUS controls gives the GB greater accuracy at speed.

"2012 saw the introduction of the new GB330 three row belt feed planter. Some growers had been asking for a new three row planter for several years."

The right idea at the wrong time?

In 2009 the GT300 three row unmanned harvester arrived in the UK. At this time, not many growers were in the market for this size of harvester, but test work was being done on a wide bed system for soil separation, planting and harvesting in conjunction with growers in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

The bed width on test was 108"/270cm using wide spacers on the tractor wheels both front and rear. A wide bedformer and wide de-stoner were built to start the system in the spring followed by wide haulm topper and the GT300 for harvest. Grimme UK called this the MAXI bed system.

Instead of the conventional 1.8m bed width, MAXI Bed increase this by 50% to 2.7m. The reasoning was that the number of passes in the field was reduced as were the number of beds per acre, which reduced the number of plants growing at the edges of the beds in different light conditions – making the crop more homogenous. Overall, it aimed to increase the net cultivation surface and with it field yield. It also aimed to reduce cultivation times and increase productivity and to improve water management. However, in spite of the apparent benefits, it was a big ask for growers to change everything!



GT300 in development with Barry White and Graham Fryer taking a break

The first operation to create the wider bed was bed forming with the new Grimme BF 300. This was followed by the wider than standard Grimme CS240 separator. All the machine widths were aligned from this. The destoner produced an evenly aerated bed, ideal for potatoes and other vegetable crops. The new GL33T planter was built to plant the crop into the wider bed and the GT300 to harvest it.

"The destoner produced an evenly aerated bed, ideal for potatoes and other vegetable crops. The new GL33T planter was built to plant the crop into the wider bed and the GT300 to harvest it."



The GL33T in action planting the MAXI-BED



Members of Team Grimme 2015, pictured before leaving Grimme York for Damme. Inset shows the "Tandem" team in 2013.

Riding for Charity

The team at Grimme UK has raised quite a bit of money for different charities over recent years – largely through mass "bike-rides". The first was a 100 mile marathon in 2013 that started at Grimme York and travelled down through Goole, Epworth and Gainsborough, stopping for lunch near Lincoln, and then on through Billingham to finish at Grimme Swineshead in the late afternoon. Amazingly, everyone that started went over the finish line to complete the ride. Quite an achievement when you think that the tandem was taken straight out of a shed, where it had seen little action, the tyres were pumped up and off it went without a hitch. This raised over £4000 for local charities.

The charity ride that followed in May 2015 was far more adventurous. The UK team was joined by a contingent from Scandinavia and Germany to attempt to cycle over 285 miles in just 3 days from the UK to Grimme's headquarters in Damme, Germany.

No one in the team had any previous experience of what actually lay ahead. In the words of Glyn Argent, "As a team we were unsure of what to expect before we left Grimme York. None of us had ever ridden such a distance in the time we had allowed ourselves. We wanted to complete the ride in under 24hr and actually managed to complete the journey in total time of 19hr 36minutes. Some of our team, due to their work load had done very minimal training, and that makes what we all accomplished even more remarkable"

When they reached Grimme Damme the team was welcomed by Mrs Christine Grimme and Christoph Grimme and many other company employees. Support like that made it all the more worthwhile.

The team managed to raise in excess of £10,000 for the charity "Children with Cancer UK".

"The team managed to raise in excess of £10,000 for the charity 'Children with Cancer UK'".



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