

Institution of Agricultural Engineers

Michael Dwyer Memorial Prize 2013

SHAUN WEALLEANS

The saying goes something like “Mighty oaks from little acorns grow”. The same analogy could be applied to Shaun Wheallens and his company Sumo. Shaun, the son of a farm manager, founded SW Agriservices in 1991, when he rented a farm shed on the farm so that he could repair tractors. Always keen to move on and develop his business, he started making other agricultural equipment and now, some 20 years later, Sumo (derived from Shaun’s nickname), is a name synonymous with robust and innovative cultivation and tillage equipment within the Agricultural Engineering Industry.

The first piece of machinery to carry the Sumo name was a truck-tired press. In the early years Shaun also made parts for Grimme UK and, as part of the companies progression into manufacturing, further developments led to the production of a Front Mounted Sumo. Over time, the development and manufacturing of Sumo branded products continued such that a couple of factory moves were necessary. Eventually, premises were rented at Full Sutton, on the outskirts of York, where the company was engaged in designing and building machines for Lynx Engineering, KRM, Kverneland and Vaderstad, to name a few.

The company really established itself in the cultivator market in 2002 when the Sumo Trio minimum tillage cultivator was launched. This success led to a trailed version and the Trio has become, we believe, the UK’s bestselling single pass cultivator which has won Gold medal awards in both Serbia and Lithuania, and a Silver medal in the RASE Machinery Awards. Many more awards and nominations have been received since then.

The company has expanded further with the production of new products and has established of a wide network of dealers both in the UK and across Europe, and even as far afield as New Zealand. Sumo continues to invest in R&D and expand its product range. As the company has expanded, Shaun, as Chief Executive, has built up a significant group of young graduate Agricultural Engineers in the design office to ensure that growth and innovation is sustained.

Now known as Sumo UK Ltd, the company has a new factory in Melbourne, Yorkshire. It employs 50 full time members of staff and has over 2,500 machines working in the field. SUMO UK is recognised to be a forward-thinking innovative company that, under Shaun’s leadership, has identified and satisfied the demands of British agriculture.