

FENCING TIMES

XL Edition

2024, Issue 12



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European branche

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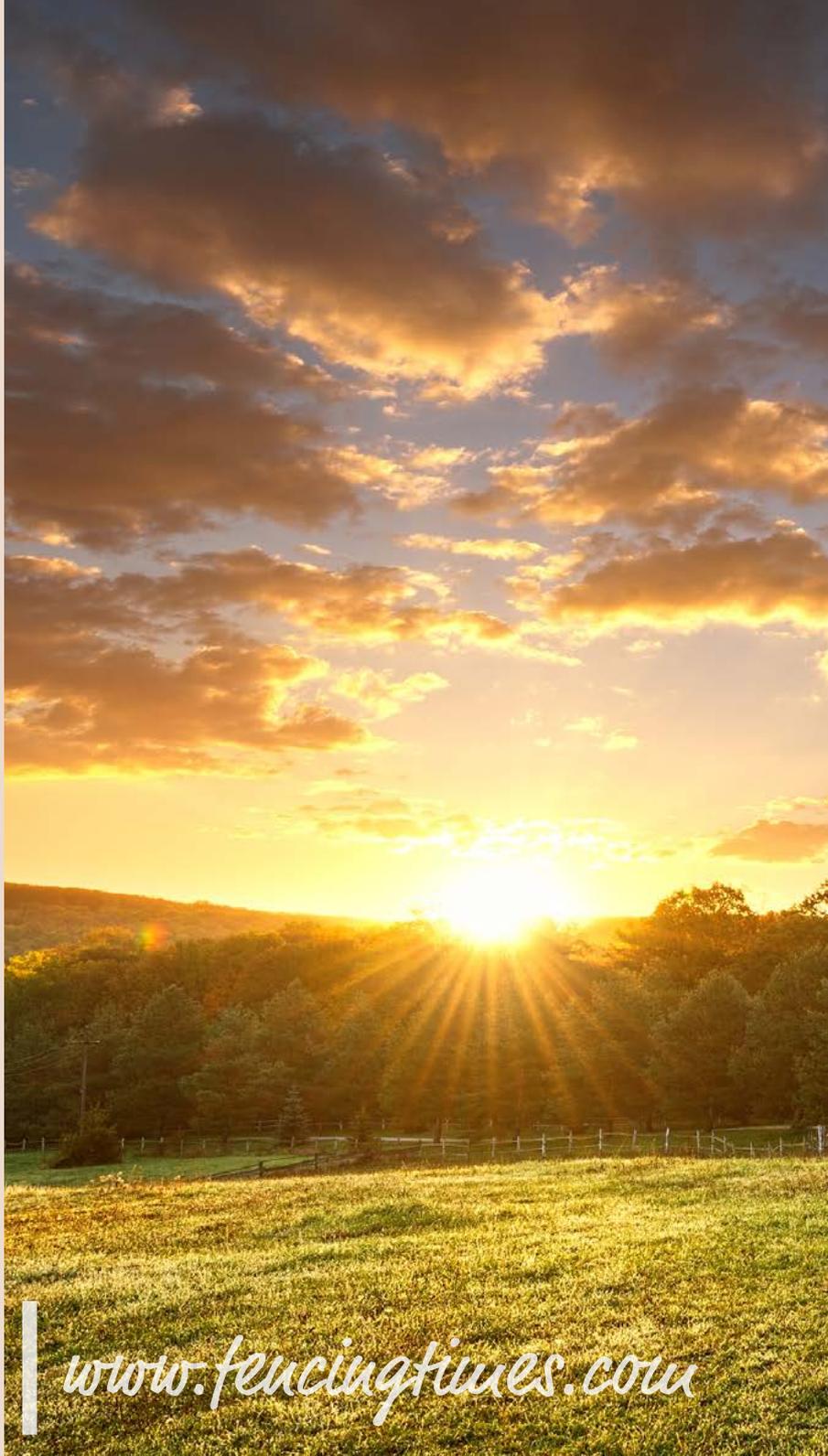
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CIRCULATION:

Fencing Times is published in both print and digital editions. More than 17,000 readers in 7000 businesses across Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK read Fencing Times in their own language. An additional international edition in English is sent to readers throughout Europe.

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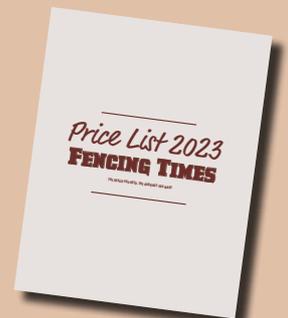
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The greatest %&#\$\$\$ on earth

Fencing installers can generally get along pretty well. They've often learnt the trade via the same (steep) learning curve – with a whole lot of trial and error – and that forges a bond. When a manufacturer or industry association throws a party and fencing installers find themselves at the same table, they have a great time together. They get rounds for each other, tell some really good stories, and have a lot of laughs. We've attended plenty of these parties and have always needed a week to recover, because the fun doesn't stop until the booze has run out, long after the sun has risen.

But there are a few conditions attached to that kind of enjoyment. Because installers only like each other if they live a really long distance apart or have a very different client base. When it comes to their direct competitors in the region, they give them a wide berth and call them unprintable names that you won't find in any dictionary.

"You know Johnson Fencing? Complete amateur. He installs fences in fresh concrete and uses slats and boards to support them. What an idiot. You just can't take him seriously. And Evans, that filthy %&#\$, I don't want anything to do with him either. He used to work for me... so he let me spend my time teaching him how to do everything, and then all of a sudden went off to set up his own business. Now he tells all the customers that he's better at it. As if! I've got 30 years more experience than he does. Oh and then there's Singh. He really is the biggest %&#\$ to ever walk this earth. You know what he did? He stole a job from me in MY town, which has absolutely nothing to do with him, right there on the main street in a fantastic high-visibility location, and he put an enormous nameplate on it. Oh, and I

haven't even told you about McDonald. What a weirdo. If I ever spotted him in front of my car, I'd put my foot on the accelerator. He somehow managed to convince an architect – I reckon he must have bribed him – to use his own system from now on in the specifications for my biggest client."

There's always something. Fred's marketing is too aggressive, and Harry's installers just ignore you when you say hello to them. Sometimes an installer will hold a grudge against some fellow installer, because 17 years ago (when the business was still owned by his father) he came over to borrow a roll of chain-link mesh and paid it back with a roll from a different manufacturer – whose mesh is of course of much lower quality than the mesh from the factory they buy their mesh from. The scumbag.

When you hear installers talking about their competitors like this, your first thought is: "Pfff, is this really such an unsporting industry?" But we do understand where all this envy – and sometimes pure hatred – comes from. The business world isn't like having a casual Sunday afternoon kickabout in the park. The business world is cold-blooded and harsh, and when you're trying to do business in a relatively primitive and unregulated industry like ours, that makes it even harder. If you're on the football field and suffer a slightly-too-hard push on the shoulder, the worst that can happen is that you get a bit of a bruise, while in business a little push from a competitor can easily cost you a few thousand euros or pounds. And we haven't even started on big pushes or tackles. They're not things you can sort out after the game with just a beer and a friendly slap on the shoulder.





At the same time, it's a real shame. Every time we find ourselves at a table with fencing installers from different regions, sometimes even different countries, and see how much they're enjoying each other's company, we wonder why this doesn't work regionally. Being able to get along well with the fencing professionals in your own region has all sorts of advantages.

You can recommend each other for the jobs that you can't or don't want to do yourself. You can hire out installation crews to each other if there's a big job that needs to be finished quickly. You can purchase supplies together, buying bigger quantities and so getting better prices. If all those things go well and you build mutual trust, you could even sit down together to see (obviously without breaking cartel laws) whether you could help each other to increase the price level in your region a little, or protect each other's major customers. Or you could work with two or three others to start up an electrical services company, for which you've never quite had enough work on your own. And even if it's just because it makes it much easier to borrow a box of bolts or some fixings from each other: you're always stronger together than alone.

In order for that to happen, there needs to be tolerance and acceptance. Everyone is struggling. It's a slog for everyone. In hard times everyone has to slog to get orders; in good times everyone slogs to find staff and maintain acceptable delivery times. And hardly anyone in our industry has followed a special course of study for that; the vast majority of competitors have had to learn by trial and error the same way you have. And every competitor occasionally (or regularly) finds themselves in

dire straits and then takes odd – and sometimes unsporting – steps to resolve it. But the moment you realise that the football match you thought you were playing is actually a rugby match, it's easier to see the hard pushes and the tackles as part of the game, and fellow installers as fellow players, rather than %&#\$\$s.

Why not give a wave if you see that colleague driving past who (until yesterday) you thought was a %&#\$\$, thanks to those times he pushed you in the shoulder in the (possibly distant) past. And do the same again the next time. After three or so times, that installer will wave back. And if you happen to run into him at a petrol station, stop for a quick chat – he may well turn out not to be as much of a clown as you thought. Before you know it you'll be sitting together after the match, having a beer. ■



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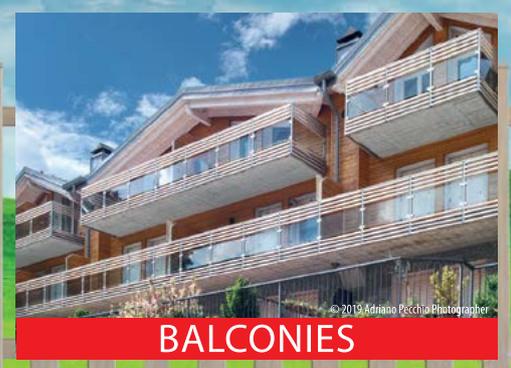
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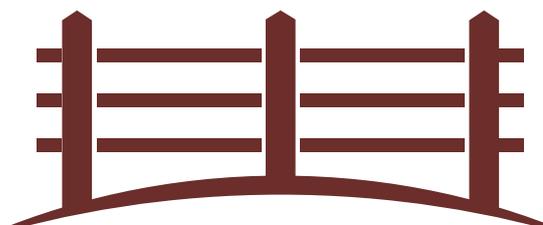
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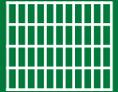
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FENCE POST



Thomas@Pajas

Thomas Genzsch of Pajas Metall in Jena was visiting Oslo, where in the leadup to Christmas there's a big Christmas market in the heart of the city, between the Royal Palace and Oslo Central Station. It features a Ferris wheel, countless stalls, and a huge skating rink. From the front it has a lovely romantic appearance, especially in the evenings. In daylight Thomas went to have a look at the other side, and came across this ultra-modern mobile sliding gate. "If it works, it ain't stupid," as the Americans say. Thanks for the photo, Thomas!

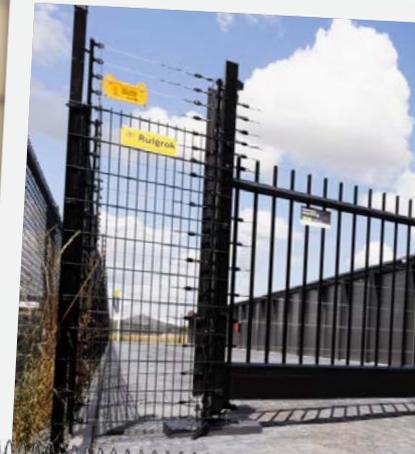
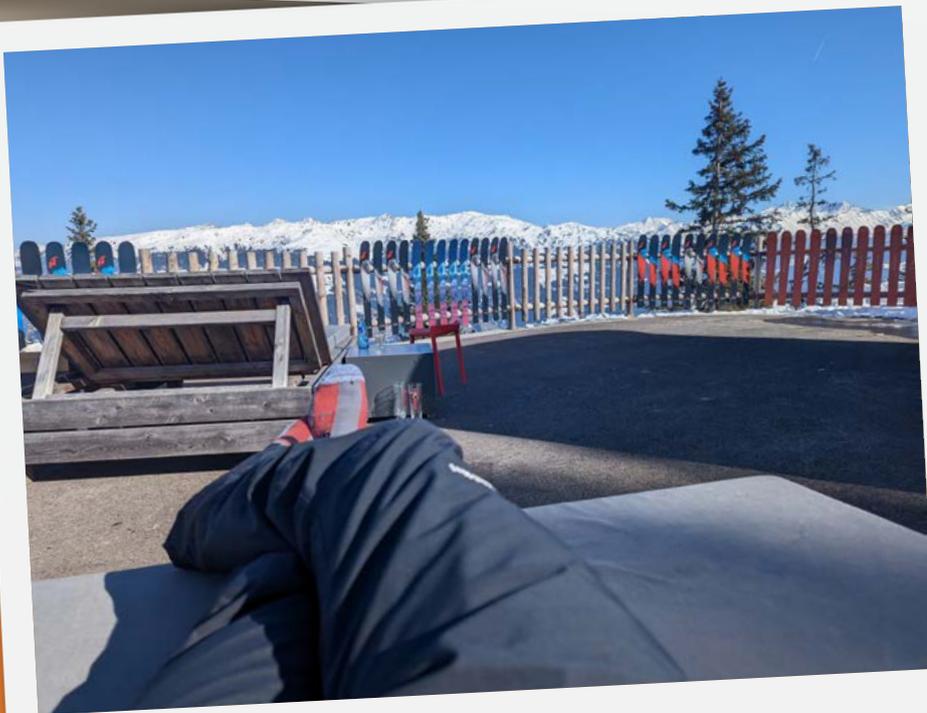
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Have you got a tip for us? Or taken part in something great that you want to share with the market? Spotted a beautiful fence or a beautiful gate? Or perhaps a really ugly fence, which you turned into a great photo? Let us know and share it with your colleagues in the sector.



Cooustautin@Bayer

Now for some more winter photos, although the temperature is already looking more summery even as we type this. Constantin Bayer of Bayer Tor- & Zaunsysteme in Schnelldorf, a town between Nuremberg and Stuttgart, went skiing in the Zillertal in Tyrol. That's where he came across this fence made of skis, surrounding the terrace of a ski hut. Nice photos, Constantin! A great fence and an amazing view - what more could a fencing installer on holiday ask for? Thanks for sending them in.

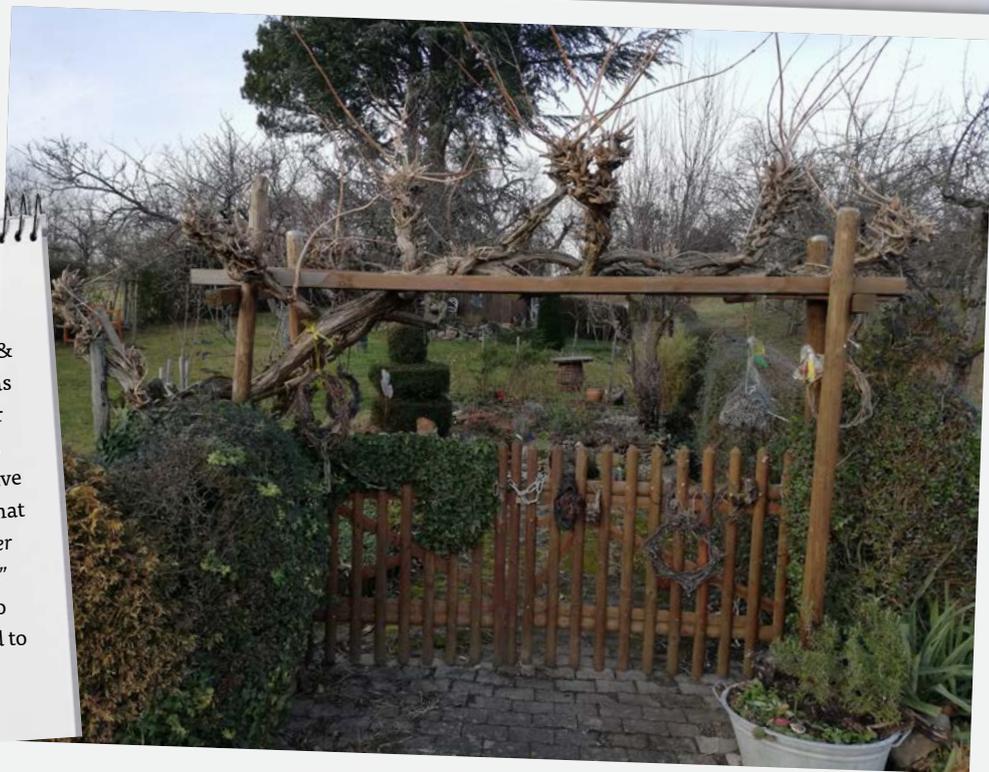


Nick@Ruigrok

Nick Kroone of Ruigrok Hekwerk in Almere near Amsterdam installed two sliding gates with electric and detection wire around a self-storage business in the town of Hulst, on the Dutch-Belgian border. Nice photo, Nick! Thanks for sending it in.

Alexander@BZH

Alexander Seybold of BZH Balkone & Zäune in Köngen, near Stuttgart, was walking through the vineyards near his home when he came across this wooden portal for people of up to five feet in height (or does it just look that way?). "I'll go back again this summer to see what it looks like in full bloom," he writes. Will you send us a photo of it then as well? We're interested to see it!



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Photo of the month



Gerwolt Westhuis of Cronquels Designhekwerk in Sint Janslooster, in the Dutch province of Overijssel, sent us this photo of an unusual fence on a waterway, with a stunning backdrop and taken at sunset. Gorgeous photo, Gerwolt! This month's Locinox construction radio is yours!

Would you also like the chance to win a construction radio? Take a scroll through the photos on your phone and send us your best fencing photos. You'll be doing something good for your fellow fencing installers!



Win a BBQ with Fencing Times

To promote this great magazine, we are looking for photos of readers who are reading. Reading fence worker readers in other words. It doesn't matter where you are reading: At your desk, in the warehouse among the nuts and bolts, outside on the forklift truck, stretched out on some rolls of wire mesh, slumped against a fence or in the back of a pickup truck, the more creative the better. Outside the workplace is also fine of course: on a French campsite or an Austrian ski slope, in a Hawaiian hammock or on the terrace of your water villa in the Maldives, we accept everything.

We know there are few photo models running around in our industry, but we do have Photoshop, and we promise we will show off your best side. And if you

really cannot get in front of the camera yourself, we are sure you have a colleague or an employee who can hold a magazine for you.

We will post all submitted photos on our Instagram account. The photo which gets the most likes through 1 May, will win a barbecue. Then you will at least not have to go to the chip shop during the break, but you can grill your own sausages while building fences. We will announce the winner in the June issue.

Send us your best photos at photo@fencingtimes.com or share them with us directly on Instagram. We do not bother with copyright and small print: you and we can use the photos as we like. You can send as many photos as you want. Do not wait too long to submit, the sooner you submit, the longer your photo can collect likes. Many thanks! ■







Holden now manufactures Fence Repair Tool in England

Agricultural fencing tools and machines importer Holden Fencing Imports is based in Ramsbottom, just outside Manchester. The company's imports include Fence Pro and Kyne post rammers, and from now on it will manufacture the Fence Repair Tool from its range in the UK.

"Until now the Fence Repair Tool has only been made in Australia," director James Holden says. *"We now have purchased the rights to manufacture the tool here in the UK. That will save us a huge amount on transport costs, and delivery times will be considerably faster."*

The Fence Repair Tool enables the user to maintain the tension of agricultural and wildlife mesh while replacing a section. *"Without a Fence Repair Tool, you have to install additional wire tensioners after making a repair,"* Holden says. *"They cost money, and it costs time to install them. With the Fence Repair Tool you maintain the tension of the mesh while you're replacing a section."*

Despite what the name suggests, repairs are not the only time the Fence Repair Tool comes in handy. *"A lot of installers now use it when installing new mesh, too. The fence repair tool is ideal for use with straining boards for removing slack between the boards. It also saves wire tensioners in this situation and it speeds up installation, particularly if you're working alone."*

Holden now has the components of the Fence Repair Tool manufactured by a local construction company, then assembles them himself. *"Now that the Tool no longer has to come all the way from Australia, we're able to supply it within a week or two,"* he says. *"The delivery time used to be as much as 10 weeks, so this really is progress."* ■



Gibidi opens Benelux office

Italian gate drive manufacturer Gibidi, from the Italian town of Poggio Rusco just north of Bologna, opened a new location last November. Situated in Willebroek, between Antwerp and Brussels, the branch will serve as an importer for the Benelux countries.

The new branch comes after Gibidi ended its partnership with the existing importer – which had just been acquired by another owner – last spring, for strategic reasons. *“The new Gibidi BNL, our very own branch, will finally enable us to take all our experience and passion directly to our customers, providing them with top-quality products and services,”* CEO Michele Prandi says.

GIBIDI BNL

The new Gibidi BNL is a collaboration between the Italian manufacturer and Belgian entrepreneur Fritz Maes and his son Nicolas from DM Power, an importer of electrical engineering products primarily from German manufacturers. The latter two are in charge of day-to-day management.



Fritz Maes, Michele Prandi and Nicolas Maes



"The conventional importer formula always means tensions between the importer, who has a vested interest in being extremely obliging to his customers, and the factory," Nicolas Maes says. "In our formula a customer deals directly with representatives of the factory. That way you always know exactly where you stand. It guarantees a good and easy cooperation."

SERVICE

A five-strong team has been created to provide customer service. "One of them comes from the previous importer," Nicolas Maes says. "Another past of the team comes straight from Italy. And we ourselves have a lot of experience there in the automotive market, where it's essential that parts are delivered on time and 'technical support' is written with a capital T. That experience we will also bring in to the new company. For example, we want to have all our products' serial numbers available online, so our customers can look them up themselves to check for any warranties applicable to those products."

ITALIAN WORKSHOP

"For repairs, we make use of the workshop at the company headquarters in Italy," Nicolas Maes continues. "We've made a good deal with a logistics partner to send things back and forth. The technicians at the Italian workshop know all about every component of every drive. They can do repairs faster and better than we'd ever be able to do them in an in-house workshop. Under the new system, customers send their drives directly to Italy and in some cases have them back within a week."

WARRANTY

And finally, Gibidi BNL believes it can win customers over with a new warranty plan that's being rolled out from Italy. "When you register your new Gibidi product on the website, you get a three-year warranty as standard," Fritz Maes says. "Installers who are part of our Gibidi Professional Installer programme are even able to give their customers up to five years' warranty on most products. All in all we have a lot to offer our installers, and we're really looking forward to this new adventure." ■

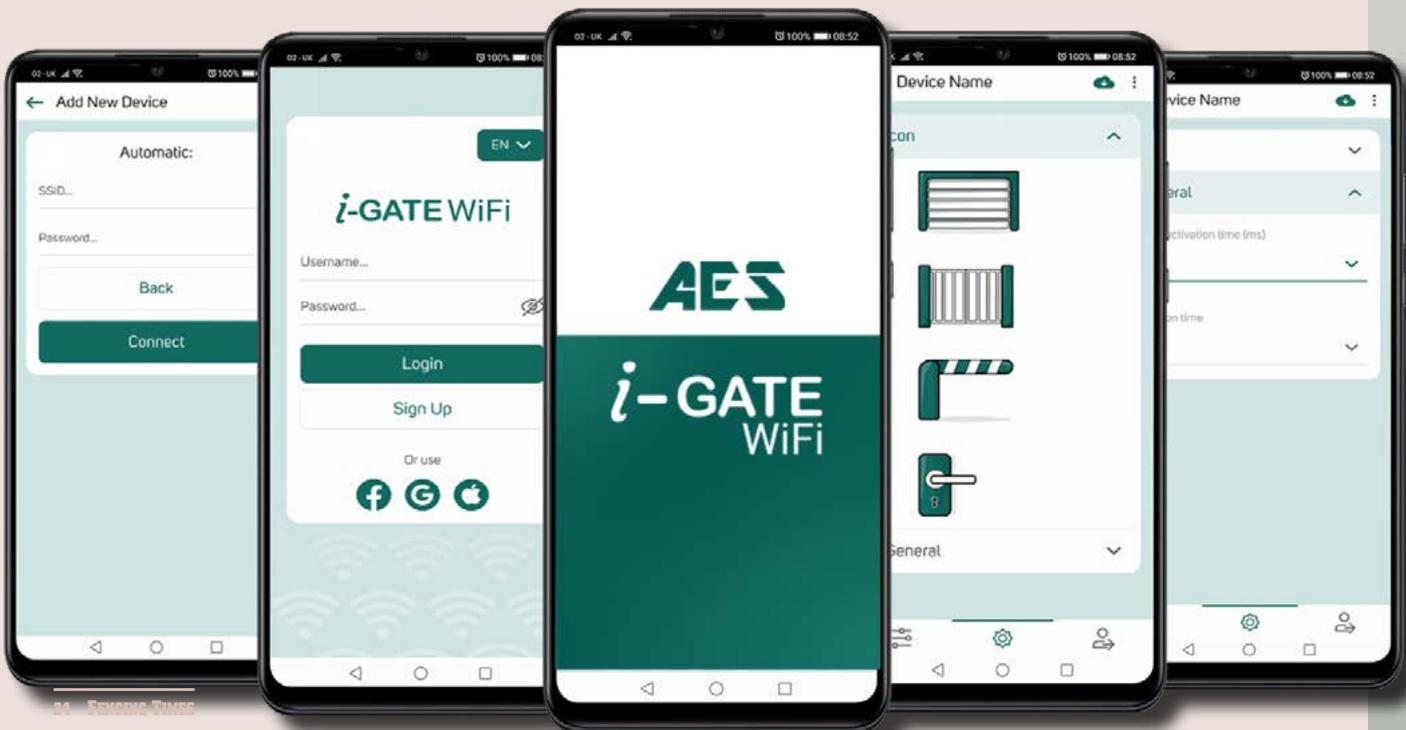
AES adds WiFi version to its i-Gate range

AES Global, an intercom manufacturer based in Cookstown, Northern Ireland, has released a new version of its i-Gate gate opener. In addition to its GSM openers it now offers a WiFi version, which doesn't require a SIM card. "Most WiFi openers on the market were created for garage doors," says Thor Sagland, who managed the development. "You can use them to operate your garage door if you're within WiFi range, but they're no good for the gate at the end of the driveway, which is often a bit further away. So the alternative is then a GSM opener, but that needs a SIM card, which you have to pay for every month. That's why we've launched a WiFi opener that has an extra-large range."

With the i-Gate WiFi, you can open the gate using the AES app. "You can also have other gate users install the app, and then grant them access,"

Sagland says. "If the i-Gate is installed within range of the existing WiFi network – and if that WiFi network is connected to the internet – then you can control the gate from anywhere in the world, using your phone."

The i-Gate WiFi is installed on a DIN rail. You can power it with a direct or alternating current from 8 to 36 volts; in other words, more or less any power supply that's available at the gate. It has a single relay and a connection for an external antenna, for use if it's installed inside a metal cabinet. Sagland: "We created the iGate WiFi in response to market demand, providing a user-friendly solution for anyone who wants to save on monthly SIM card charges but nonetheless enjoy the gate-opening features offered by the AES app." ■





AES
GLOBAL

Thor Sagland



Zaunteam holds conference in Dresden

This year's annual conference for franchisees of Swiss franchiser Zaunteam was held in Dresden. In the second weekend in January, some 140 participants from the by now around 120 partner companies travelled to the eastern German city for a fun and informative long weekend.



Most guests arrived at the conference location, the Maritim Hotel right on the Elbe, on the Thursday. The event officially began on Friday morning, with workshops on marketing planning and Google Business Profiles¹. Then came a contribution by guest speaker Nico Rose on the subject of individual happiness. This included a workshop, giving the Zaunteam partners the opportunity to work in groups to tackle aspects of happiness and to share their goals and experiences. After this busy morning, participants spent the afternoon in various ways in the city centre or visiting the local branch of Zaunteam, Zaunteam Dresden-Süd. In the evening there was a cruise on the Elbe, after which some of the group headed back into the city to experience the Dresden nightlife.

Saturday morning kicked off with lots of news from the franchise centre on developments for the coming year. After that, guest speaker Rolf Jeger gave a presentation on artificial intelligence.

1) Your Google Business Profile enables you to control how Google shows your business to users of Google and Google Maps.





His explanation of the countless uses for ChatGPT led to puzzled faces from some of the listeners. This was followed by a city tour, with the fencing installers breaking up into small groups to visit the most important locations in Dresden's historic city centre, which has only been rebuilt in recent decades. The event ended with a Zaunteam Gala, during which founder Wädi Hübscher gave a speech to all the partners. He also took the opportunity to thank those celebrating work anniversaries for their past 10 or 20 years of loyalty. These partners are able to look forward to an all-inclusive weekend in the Swiss mountains next summer. Hübscher also announced the location of the next conference: 2025's Zaunteam Conference will be held in Nice, on the Côte d'Azur. ■





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Clarke Metal Services back in the mesh business

Last autumn, Crewe-based steel importer and distributor Clarke Metal Services began supplying mesh panels in addition to its existing range of steel sections and profiles.

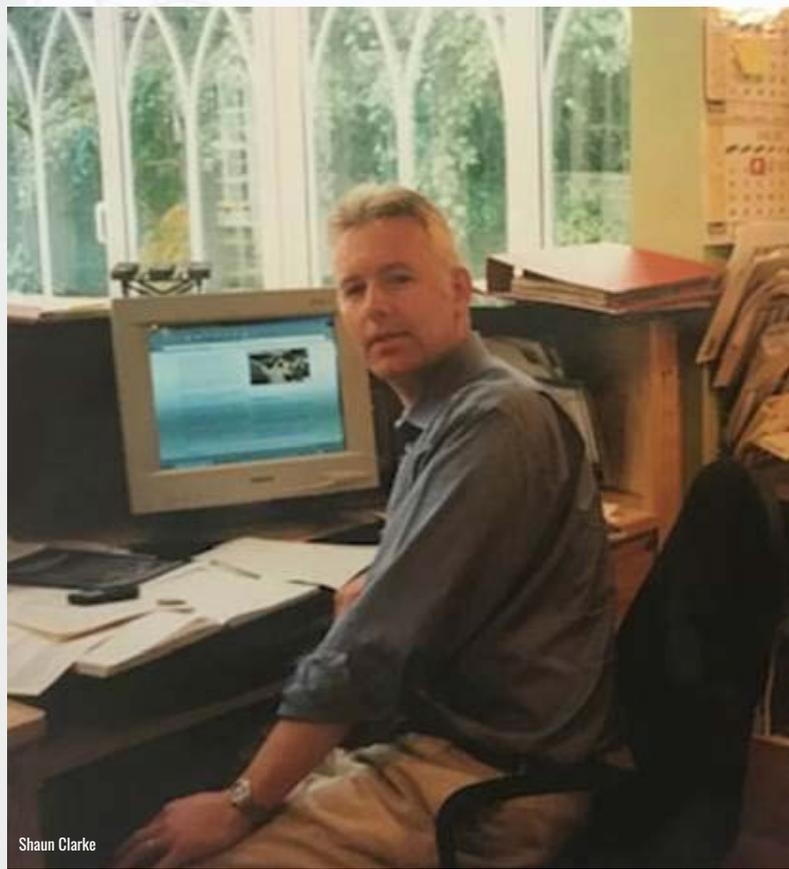


“Over the past years we have supplied a great deal of steel profiles to system suppliers,” managing director Shaun Clarke says. “Obviously there have been a lot of 60x40 standard posts, but we can supply other sizes too. One of my customers required a large amount of mesh and asked if I could supply it. At that point I thought, well, why not?”

HISTORY

“I have been selling steel all my life,” Clarke explains. “My grandfather worked in steel construction – unfortunately, he died as a result of a steel beam crushing him many years before I was born, so you could say that I do have steel in my blood! I started my working life as a junior sales administrator at James and Tatton Steel, where I first met sales director Roger Fouldes. Roger, previously of Tinsley Wire in Sheffield, asked me to start repping in the fur and feather-trade¹. He saw something in me and taught me everything about mesh, mesh rolls and industrial mesh, and later on about mesh fencing, expanded metals, wire, and reinforcement fabric. After that I worked for Hy-Ten International, selling industrial and fencing mesh to distributors throughout the UK and Ireland. I then joined the Finnish steel giant Rautaruukki, selling many products to the fencing market including special cold rolled sections. Ruukki was acquired by SSAB shortly afterwards, and it was at this stage I started my own steel supply business, Clarke Metal Services, which celebrates its 25th anniversary in May of this year.”

1) The fur and feather trade relates to animal containment and cages from simple wire mesh in chicken coops to bird aviaries and beyond.



Shaun Clarke



The Clarke Metals Team

SECOND TIME

This isn't the first time Clarke Metals has dealt in mesh panels. "About 15 years ago we also wanted to expand our steel business into mesh," Clarke says. "At the Tube & Wire trade show in Düsseldorf I met a Dutch mesh manufacturer, Van Merksteijn. They were looking for someone to sell mesh in the UK and Ireland. So we started to sell Van Merksteijn's mesh panels, and after six months it was so successful that we founded a company together: Van Merksteijn UK. We didn't sign contracts, Peter van Merksteijn and I shook hands and that was that. Business was going well but in 2017 the Dutch company changed its strategy and only wanted to work with 100 per cent subsidiaries. They bought me out, along with my then business partner Lawrence, and in return we promised to stay out of the mesh market for a period of three years. We did that, but now the three-year period has more than expired and we're back in the mesh game."

RANGE

Clarke Metals' range of mesh consists of every rigid mesh fencing panel on the market. "We have 2D twin wire, 3D profiled mesh and prison mesh in every configuration you could require, and the posts to match," Clarke says. "Rebound panels, 358, Super-6, Super-10, 45-degree crank extensions. What sets us apart from other suppliers is that we don't have our own factory, so we're not limited by any capacity range. Instead, we have great relationships with our supply partners – not only here in the UK, but in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Turkey. Whatever panel or post you need, with any specific requirements: if there's a machine to manufacture it, we can deliver it to your facility."

SERVICE

Clarke Metal Services is targeting system suppliers and the bigger dealers with its new range. "Our added value is in the service we provide," Shaun Clarke explains. "With the posts, we take care of having the bare steel galvanised and coated, we take care of any holes or inserts, and we add accessories like top caps too. Customers get everything they need in one complete package. We now do the same with the wire mesh panels. We have them manufactured, galvanised and coated; we supply a ready-made product. The only thing you need is our contact number, haha." ■



SEA Benelux opens Dutch branch

Last year saw the launch of SEA Benelux, the importer of Italian drive manufacturer SEA, and the business now has a new branch. As of February there is a location in Meijel in the Netherlands, in addition to the Belgian headquarters in Kapelle-op-den-Bos, between Antwerp and Brussels.

Johan Cannaearts and Willy Thijssen



“Most of our customers are in Belgium,” says owner and managing director Johan Cannaerts. “SEA has really resonated with them. We have an extensive range, with both electromechanical and hydraulic drives, and the brand is at the forefront of technology with brushless motors and a control system that’s second to none. These features are enough for large numbers of fencing professionals and installers to make the switch. It makes us confident that we’ll also be a success in the Netherlands, which is for the most part untapped territory right now. We’re setting up a separate limited liability company too, so we can serve the Dutch market well.”

THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch branch of SEA is in Meijel, between Eindhoven and Venlo. The biggest-selling products are available from stock. “We could have made the decision to ship everything from Belgium or Italy,” Cannaerts says, “but doing things this way means that the majority of orders will be delivered more quickly, providing better service to our Dutch customers.” The Dutch branch will be managed by Willy Thijssen, who will be familiar to most of our readers as the owner of Sesame Gate. “In December I sold the second half of my shares in Sesame Gate to my successor, Mark Swinkels,” Thijssen says¹. “Sesame Gate was a job that kept me busy seven days a week, but I’m 61 now and I didn’t want to go on like that forever. On the other hand, I’m not the type of person who can sit around watching television all day – I need to have something to do. So when I heard from Johan and Eva that they were looking for someone for the Netherlands, I put my hand up right away.”

SUPPORT

“For us that was a winning lottery ticket,” Johan Cannaerts says. “Everyone knows Willy from Sesame Gate, but prior to that he had an installation company in the access technology field². He knows everything there is to know about drives, barriers and bollards, as well as about the safety edges and sensors, intercoms, transmitters and openers that are essential to their operation. There’s no technical question he can’t answer, and on top of that he knows the market like no one else.” “I’ve already studied SEA’s universal control system extensively,” Thijssen says. “I put together a few test setups too, so I know how everything works and I’m able to replicate customers’ situations, so I can provide good support over the phone. And if we’re not able to sort it out over the phone, I’m a lot closer to the customers than the technical staff in Belgium are. So I can just jump in the car and head off to the project to assist the customer.” ■

1) See the article ‘New owner for Sesame Gate’ in this issue.

2) The company Cannaerts is referring to is now known as Mertens Toegangstechniek. Marco Mertens acquired it from Willy Thijssen in 2007.



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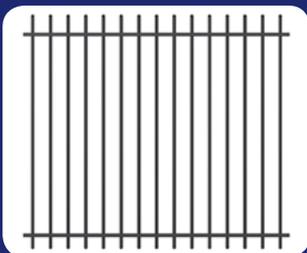
Single Leaf Gates



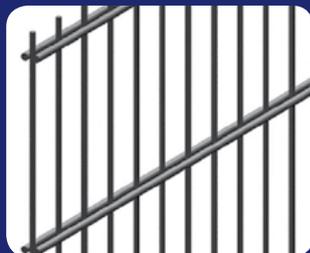
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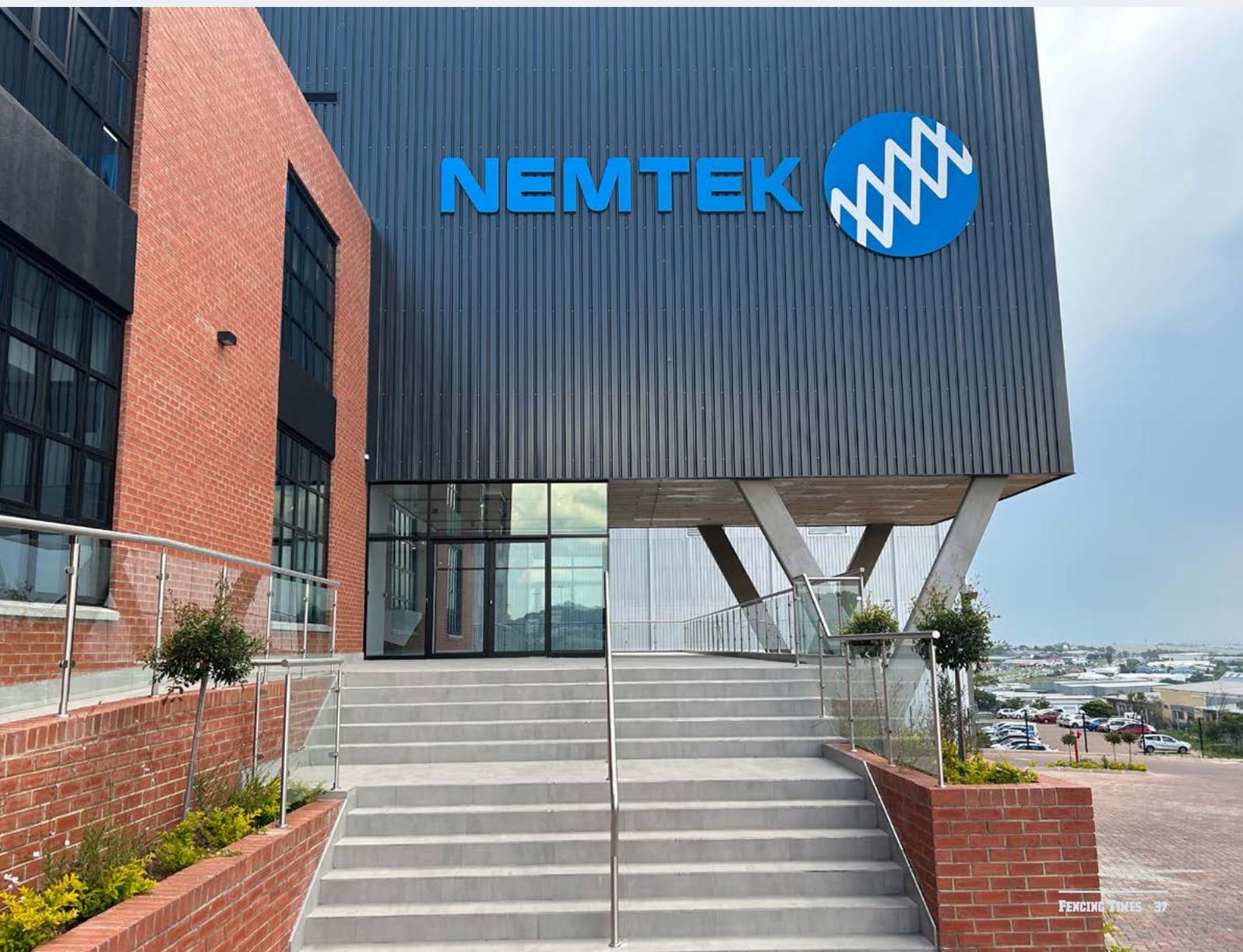
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Nemtek opens European office in the Netherlands

Last autumn, South African electric fencing manufacturer Nemtek opened its new European headquarters. Located in the Dutch city of Oisterwijk, near Eindhoven, the new base will serve the European market.

The Dutch BV was created about three years ago,” Business Development manager Kade Ingram says. “We set it up to make it easier to service European companies, as well as take care of the customs formalities for our clients. But demand has been growing so fast that it was worth turning it into a fully-fledged branch of the business.”

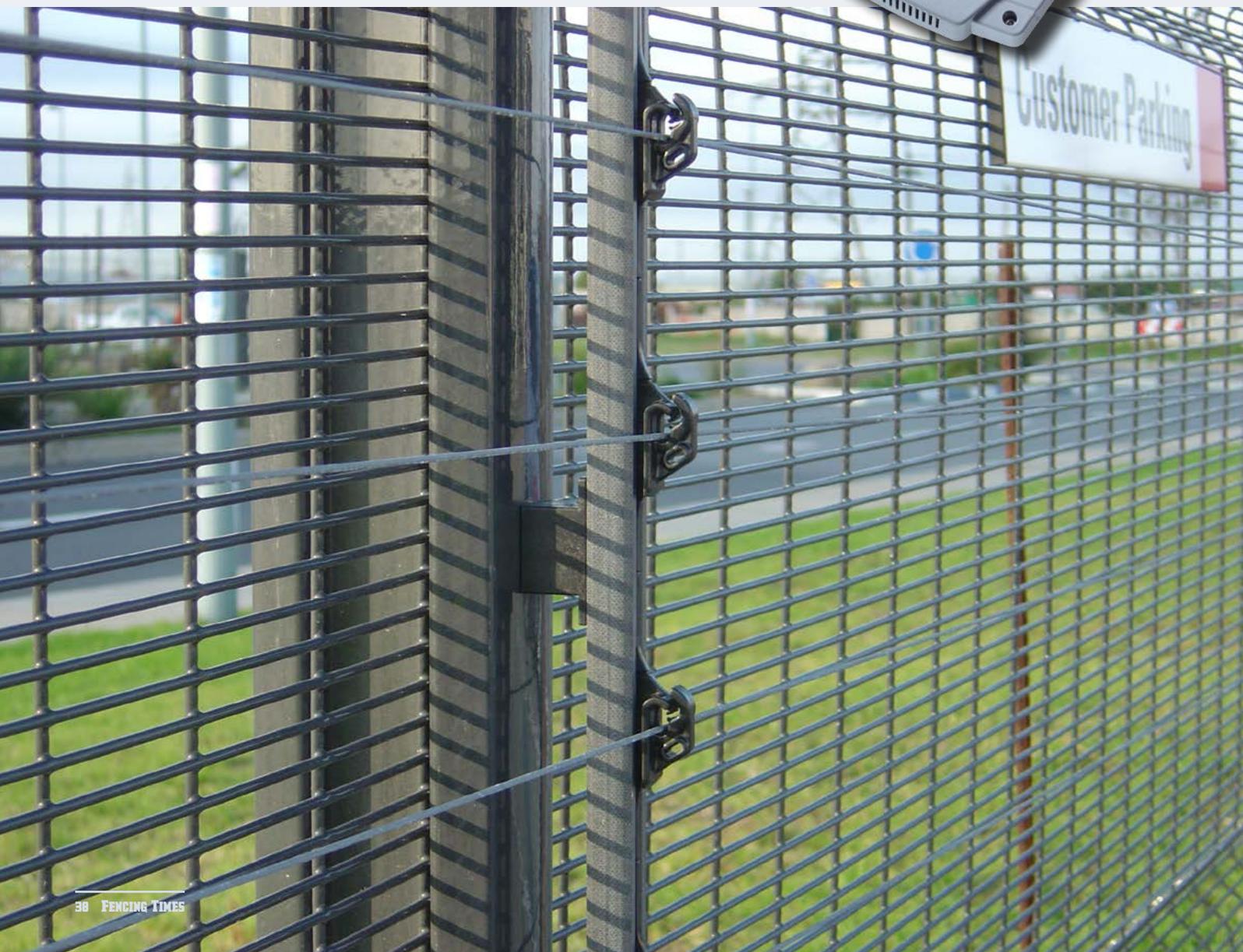


NEW BRANCH

So now the new branch has been established. It's called Nemtek Europe. The location features both office and storage space, with a staff of twelve. The company plans to use it to serve all European customers for the time being. "We have almost our entire range of products in stock here," Ingram says, "so everything can be delivered quickly. It's also much easier to phone and – in particular – to visit our European customers from the Netherlands than it is from South Africa. In addition to providing better service to our existing clients and partners, we want to acquire new ones. Our primary focus here is not only the Benelux countries but also Germany, northern France, UK, Italy, Hungary and Croatia."

RANGE

Nemtek's product range features both security and agricultural fencing. "The first one keeps intruders out, by detecting them and slowing them down," Ingram says, "while the second, in contrast, keeps domestic or farm animals in, and pests out. Both types are available in all shapes and sizes: with our security fencing, we have models for private use, as well as for companies and critical infrastructure. The agricultural models are available for simple pastures for large or small livestock, as well as for horses and equestrian sports, and of course for large and small wild animals and game too. When we started out over 30 years ago we focused on security fencing, so our agricultural fencing styles were developed with a security mindset. They now offer security features and communication capabilities, to not only keep animals in, but to also effectively control the theft and injury of animals by poachers and predators."



CERTIFIED

The entire Nemtek range complies with European standards and regulations.

"We've been operating in Europe for a good fifteen years now," Ingram says. "That's in addition to Australia, Asia and the Americas, by the way. Our focus is on ensuring that every new product we develop is extensively tested and certified before we launch it, so we can sell it in all locations with confidence. And we manufacture everything ourselves, in our own factory in Johannesburg, so we have full control of the quality."

The new branch serves the whole of Europe, from Sweden right down to Greece. ■



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New owner for Sesame Gate

Sesame Gate, a Dutch manufacturer of gates that open vertically, is under new ownership. In December Mark Swinkels purchased the second half of the shares from founder Willy Thijssen, and is now sole shareholder.

“I’d been working alongside Willy for a little while,” Swinkels says. “I had a business in the agricultural sector, which I was forced to close because the laws changed. I knew Willy because he was responsible for access on our site, so I was also familiar with the Sesame Gate. I thought it was a great product and a really interesting one, so I asked Willy whether he thought there might be a future for me in it as well. He was open to that, so then we entered into a partnership, with acquisition as the ultimate objective.”

HISTORY

Sesame Gate was founded in 2007 by Willy Thijssen, who at that time owned an installation business in the field of access technology. “Whenever there was a customer who didn’t have enough space for a gate to swing or slide open, I simply didn’t have a good solution for them,” he explains. “It really bothered me. I’d seen vertical gates in Italy but I didn’t think they were robust enough for the Northern European market, so I started making them myself. They took off right away.”



Mark Swinkels and his wife Wendy



PRODUCTION

Sesame Gates are manufactured in-house. “We outsource the welding, and obviously the galvanising and coating as well,” Thijssen says, “but we do everything else ourselves. We assemble all the steel components, build in the hydraulic cylinder and pump, and install the controls. After that we do all the installation of intercoms, GSM modules or other equipment, and make sure all the cables are neatly tucked away. When all that’s done, we put the gate on a pallet so it’s easy to transport. Once it’s on the site, the customer can simply lift it from the pallet onto the anchors.”

MEMORIES

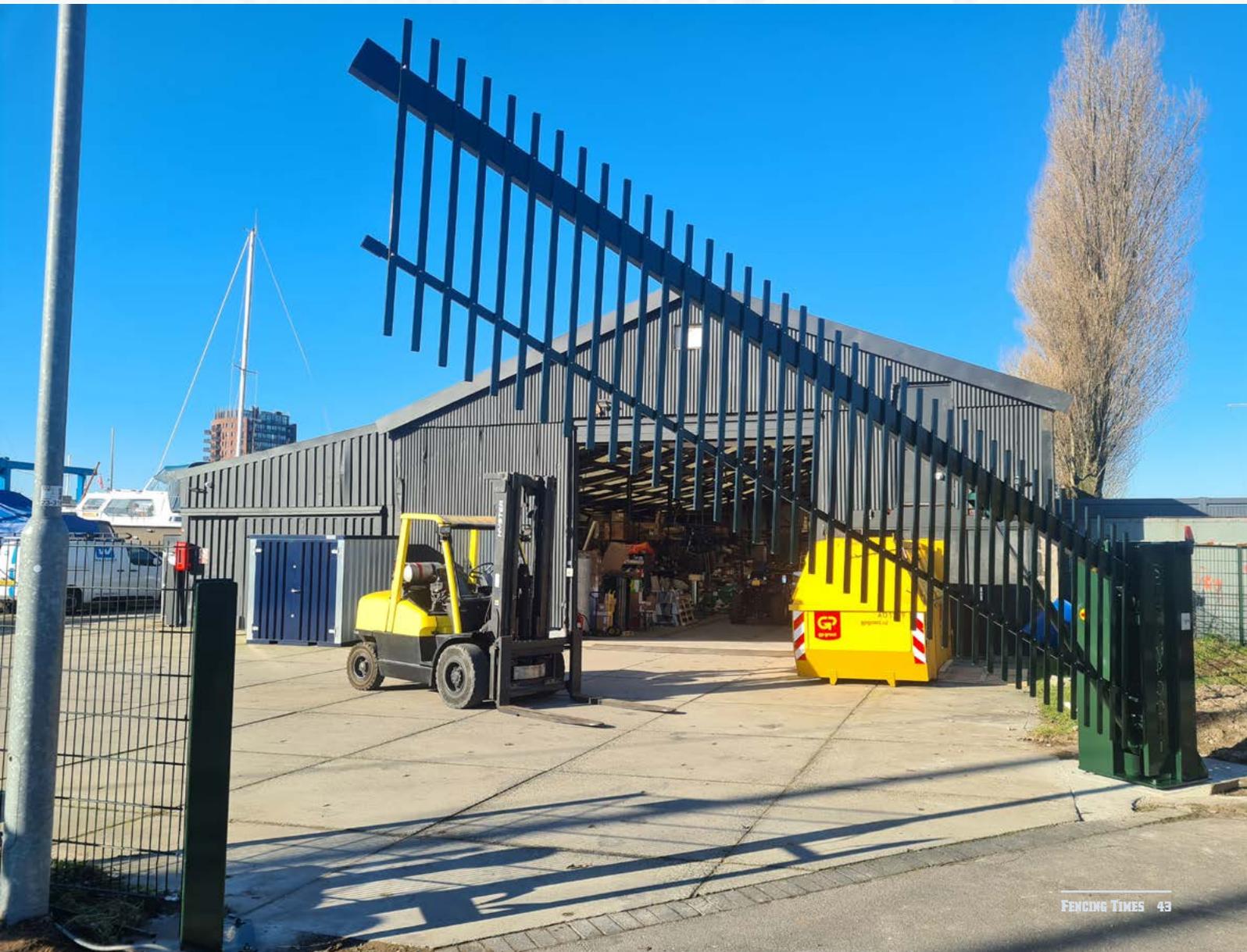
“They were good times,” Thijssen says. “I manufactured the gates for over 15 years, with a great deal of enjoyment in my work. In addition to the Netherlands, where I was obviously very familiar with the market already, I made good sales to fencing installers in mountainous areas where there’s even less room for a gate to swing or slide open. In Germany and Switzerland, but lots in Scandinavia too – particularly Norway. I often went along with the installation crew the first few times, so I could give clients tips on installation. It gave me the opportunity to get to know lots of fencing installers all across Europe, and I’ve got lots of great memories of those times. But it was a job that kept me hard at work seven days a week. I’m now 61, so it’s gradually becoming time to start to slow down a bit, and it’s a good time to hand the business over to someone else.”

ACQUISITION

Thijssen’s successor Mark Swinkels joined the company three years ago. “I started out part-time, to enable me to gradually wind down my agricultural business,” he says. Although Swinkels had no experience at all, learning to manufacture and install the gates went really well for him. “I’ve always been very interested in engineering, and on top of that Willy is an excellent teacher. He knows everything there is to know about both hydraulic and electrical engineering, and he’s good at explaining it. The job is also very varied, which I enjoy as well. One day we might be putting gates together, then the next we hit the road to carry out maintenance or installation, often in different countries. It makes the work interesting.” He acquired 50 per cent of Thijssen’s shares two years ago, then in December bought the remaining half.

THE FUTURE

Willy Thijssen, who has continued to work in the business over the past two years, is now stepping down completely. His new focus will be on building up the Italian drive brand SEA in The Netherlands. "For Willy it's a good way to have a bit more time for himself from now on," Swinkels says. "It's going to be a bit of a challenge for me, particularly for the first little while, because until now we've done everything together. Fortunately it's not like he's going to the other side of the world, and I can just give him a call if there's something I can't figure out for myself. I've also got my wife who helps out with the office work, and my eldest son is studying mechatronics – he can lend a hand on evenings and weekends. I don't have to do everything on my own." ■



New line of Duofuse privacy garden fencing from Plastivan

Plastivan, a Belgian manufacturer in Oostrozebke (between Ghent and Kortrijk) of, among other things, garden fencing, is introducing a new line of sections for its Duofuse garden fencing. They are made of PVC, are reinforced with steel box sections, and printed with wood motifs.

“The wood-plastic-composite panels in our Duofuse range always have one colour,” says sales manager Benelux Jacco Lodewikus. “That’s why we wanted to add panels to the programme with a distinctive and more premium look. These are the new printed panels.”

PRINT

The printing technology for the new panels is by Plastivans Durasid Foresta cladding sections for facade cladding. “Special plastic slats have been developed for the Duofuse garden fencing on which we print photorealistic motifs using a special printer,” Lodewikus continues. “Visually, the panels are barely distinguishable from real wood. Because we only use part of the photo for each plank, all the panels look different, and to anyone looking at the garden fence it looks as if it is constructed of real wooden planks. Only when you touch the panels do you miss the relief and understand that they are imitation. The big advantage of the printed planks over real wood is that it does not weather and is low-maintenance. In cladding, we have been using the printing technique for years already and it has already proven itself. Hardly any discolouration occurs under the influence of UV and other weather influences.”







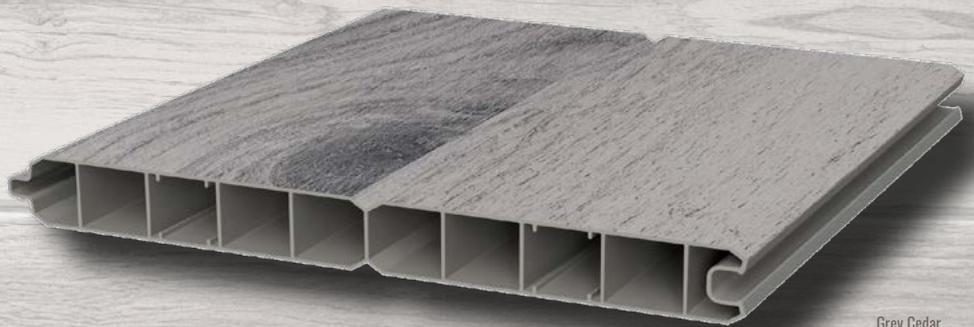
African Padouk



Barnwood Grey

TECHNOLOGY

The new plastic tongue-and-groove section is hollow inside. Each plank is reinforced with a steel box section in one of the chambers. The printed boards are 2 metres long and 250 millimetres high, with a small groove in the middle. *"This way, a 2-metre-high fence appears to consist of 16 narrow wooden boards, when in reality there are only eight,"* says Lodewikus. The slats are locked at the top and bottom by two aluminium sections for extra strength. Those closing sections now come in two types: there is now also a set between which you can mount the boards vertically. *"That immediately gives the fencing a completely different look,"* he says. The printed tongue-and-groove boards fit into the existing aluminium posts of the Duofuse range. They are available with four patterns: Woodland Oak, Grey Cedar, Barnwood Grey and African Padouk. ■



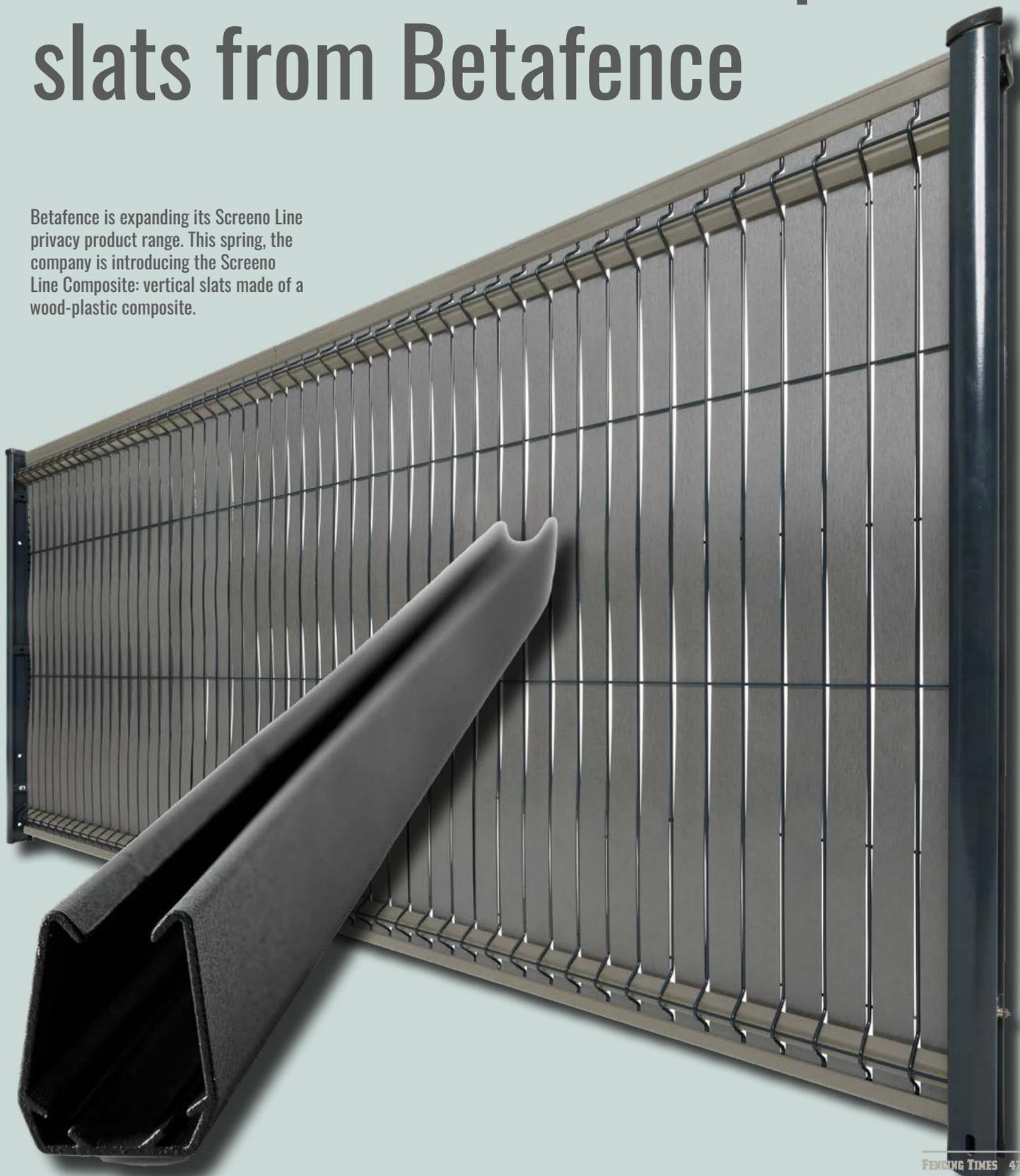
Grey Cedar



Woodland Oak

Screeno Line new composite slats from Betafence

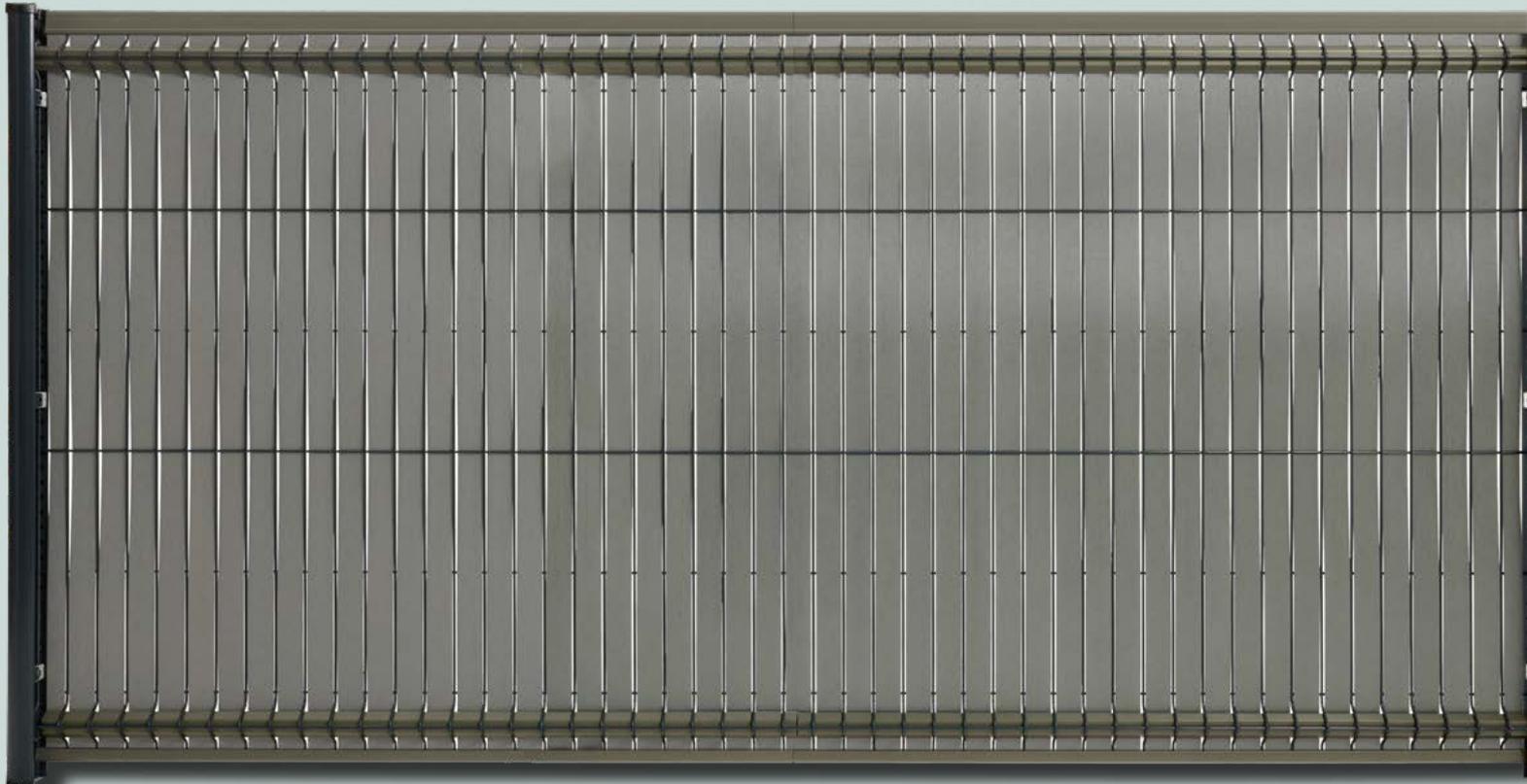
Betafence is expanding its Screeno Line privacy product range. This spring, the company is introducing the Screeno Line Composite: vertical slats made of a wood-plastic composite.



“**T**he demand for privacy solutions remains high,” says product manager Kris van Waes. “For this reason, we now have composite slats in our product line in addition to vertical PVC slats. These have a more premium appearance and have greater weather-resistance.”

SET

The slats are sold in sets. “A set always contains all the parts you need to close one 2.5-meter wire panel,” says Van Waes. “It contains 48 slats with a width of 44 millimetres, plus 2 slats with a width of 31 millimetres for the end meshes, which partially disappear into the posts and we have a top and a bottom aluminium profile to lock the slats in place. These profiles click on the upper and lower horizontal wire. And finally, there are the nose profiles which are also constructed of aluminium, and are inserted from the side into the V-shaped profiles of the wire panels. The nose profiles give the fence a nice finish and provide strength because they push the vertical slats against the horizontal wires.”



UNIVERSAL

The new Screeno Line slats are suitable for all 3D panels ever sold by Betafence. "Bekafor Classic, Nylofor, Nylofor 3D, Nylofor 3D+, Nylofor Essential, Nylofor NYL 3D Light II and Nylofor 3D XL – if the mesh size is 50 millimetres, the slats always fit," says Van Waes. "The shape of the nose profiles is such that they fit into the V profiles of each panel. In addition, they have an integrated rubber strip, which accommodates the tolerances between the different panels. So, our partners can offer the sets with new fencing, but also offer them to customers who already have a fence in place. A second advantage of that strip is that the slats do not scratch during filling." All horizontal aluminium profiles are 1.25 metres long, to ensure that the sets can be easily transported and occupy little space during storage.

SPECS

The slats are 4.3 millimetres thick. "It makes them sturdier and more resistant to warping," says Van Waes. "Furthermore, they are UV-resistant and tested for temperatures from minus twenty to plus fifty degrees Celsius and we confidently give a ten-year warranty on them. We sell the sets in three colours: anthracite, light grey and sand yellow. The accompanying aluminium profiles have a textured coating in RAL 7016, 7039 and 1001. "The colours are similar to the colours in our Horizen Prime line, an insert fence made of aluminium posts and horizontal composite profiles. This allows customers to combine Horizen fencing with custom wire panel fencing with Screeno Line filler profiles." When our customers choose our Screeno Line Composite privacy slats, they get a product that looks great for years to come and needs little to no maintenance. It's a quick, stylish, and environmentally friendly upgrade to an open fence, transforming it into a secure and private perimeter." Betafence sells the sets in all heights from 1000 to 2030 millimetres. ■





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PRO Pflanzende
HENRI
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Krapp organises an in-house exhibition in Bochum

Krapp Eisen, a German wholesaler of building elements and fencing based in Lohne, 80 kilometres south of Bremen, organised an in-house exhibition in Bochum's Century Hall on a Friday in January. Customers and suppliers gathered there for an informative exchange in a casual atmosphere.

It was the second time the Krapp event took place. "When we celebrated our 125th anniversary two years ago, we wanted to do it in a special way," says Henrik Mählmeyer, who heads the fencing sales department. "We then, among some other activities, organised an in-house exhibition. We called it 'Krapp 360 Degrees', because we showed our company from all sides. That was such a great success that we immediately said we would do it more often. Duly noted."

CENTURY HALL

The event took place at Bochum's Century Hall. "Bochum is fairly central," says Mählmeyer. "Most of our 26 branches are located in north-west Germany. Moreover, the atmosphere in the Century Hall – a renovated industrial complex – is ideal." More than 1000 customers visited the 3000-square-metre hall, where just under 50 exhibitors had set up booths. "We like to see our customers as partners. With this exhibition, we show them in detail what they can offer their customers – and that we are ready to offer extensive support after the sale."

Photos: Frank Schönhuber

Henrik Mählmeyer



EXHIBITION

In terms of fences and gates, Krapp showed not only its own spectrum of rigid mesh fencing. “We are much more than just a panel wholesaler,” says Mählmeyer. “This exhibition was a good time to show that. For example, ornamental fencing manufacturer Rüschoff was present with a booth, there were glass terrace walls from Flexo Raumsysteme, arm barriers from Hörmann and the show truck from sliding gate manufacturer Holler Tore was in front. And then there were of course many booths from manufacturers of construction elements. Whether plugs from Fischer, a new impact screwdriver from Bosch or work shoes from Atlas – a fence worker gets everything he needs from us – not just fencing material. I think we are fairly unique in the German fencing market with that.”

Krapp branches



KALE

After the exhibition, a South Oldenburg dinner awaited guests. A hall next to the exhibition hall had been transformed into a restaurant for this purpose. Owner Roland Krapp had a short welcome speech, after which a typical northern German dish of kale with sausage and bacon could be attacked. The next day was reserved for education and training. Since Krapp had a large number of suppliers together in one location anyway, it immediately took the opportunity to have all sales staff extensively trained. *"This again helps to better serve our customers,"* says Mählmeyer. *"All in all, it was a very successful event. The decision to organise it again in 2026 has already been made."* ■



Century Hall Bochum



ELKA Slide gate openers EST-FU with frequency converter controller

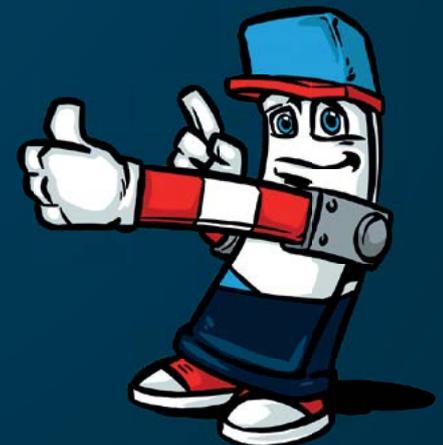
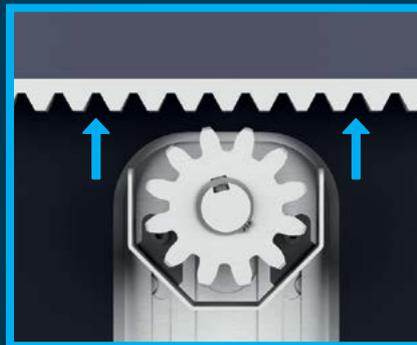
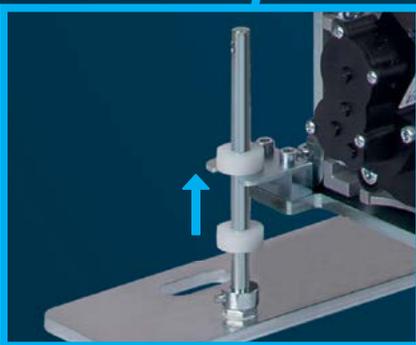
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Beer? Fence beer!

From now on, fence workers who are thirsty no longer have to go to the liquor store but can go to fellow fence worker Viktoria Troll for real fence beer. She had her own beer brewed for the Christmas market she organised on her own premises in December. It caught on so well that the village supermarket now also sells it.





“In Legden, two towns over, a big agricultural event is organised every summer,” says Viktoria Troll of Troll Zaunsysteme from Schöppingen, a town near Münster in north-west Germany. “Many regional entrepreneurs have a stand at that market. Last year I was there as well, with my newly founded fencing company – and then 70 crates of beer were consumed at our stand alone. I thought: ‘Hey, if every beer bottle had my name written on it, I would have been known throughout the region in one fell swoop.’ When I organised my own Christmas market in December, that beer idea surfaced again. Then I took the bull by the horns and looked for a brewery where I could have my own beer brewed.”

BEER

The name Zaunbier (literal translation: fence beer) was coined to make the beer more than just a company beer. “Just a sticker with my name on it would have been boring,” says Troll. “I wanted to come up with something creative that would also make the beer suitable to drink outside the Christmas market. That became the Zaunbier. The beer you drink while chatting with your neighbour on the fence.” Apparently, having a cosy beer with your neighbours over the fence is something that happens often enough in Schöppingen, because the owner of the local Edeka supermarket was immediately enthusiastic when he saw the beer. “He immediately ordered a pallet for his shop, haha. And the funny thing is, his customers buy it too. People now also come to buy crates of Zaunbier at my business. Just last week, someone came for seven crates at once, for a birthday party. I had ordered 280 crates in December, and of those there are only 60 left. A few more weeks and I have to order new beer again.”



TROLL
ZAUNSYSTEME

ZAUN
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ZAUN
BIER
VON TROLL ZAUNSYSTEME



ADVERTISING

As an advertising tool, the new fencing beer also works well. "Here in town anyway, naturally," says Troll. "Everyone has seen the beer by now and everyone knows me now. But it also works well outside the town. Especially with the men. They sometimes still want to look sceptical if they have to take advice from a woman about their fence. But when I then arrive with my own fence beer, that scepticism disappears like snow in the sun." ■

Nice initiative, Viktoria! Now you are not only a fence builder, but also a fence brewer. Can you also ship those crates, by DHL? If so, we hereby order a crate for our editorial office. Writing fencing news is just a bit better with a real fence beer in our stomachs.

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Holler inaugurates new factory

Austrian sliding gate manufacturer Holler Tore from Wagna, near Graz, inaugurated its new sliding gate factory in mid-February during its Expert Days 2024, a two-day event for dealers and gate installers. The Fencing Times was present.





HOLLER
TOP-ZAUN-ANLAGE

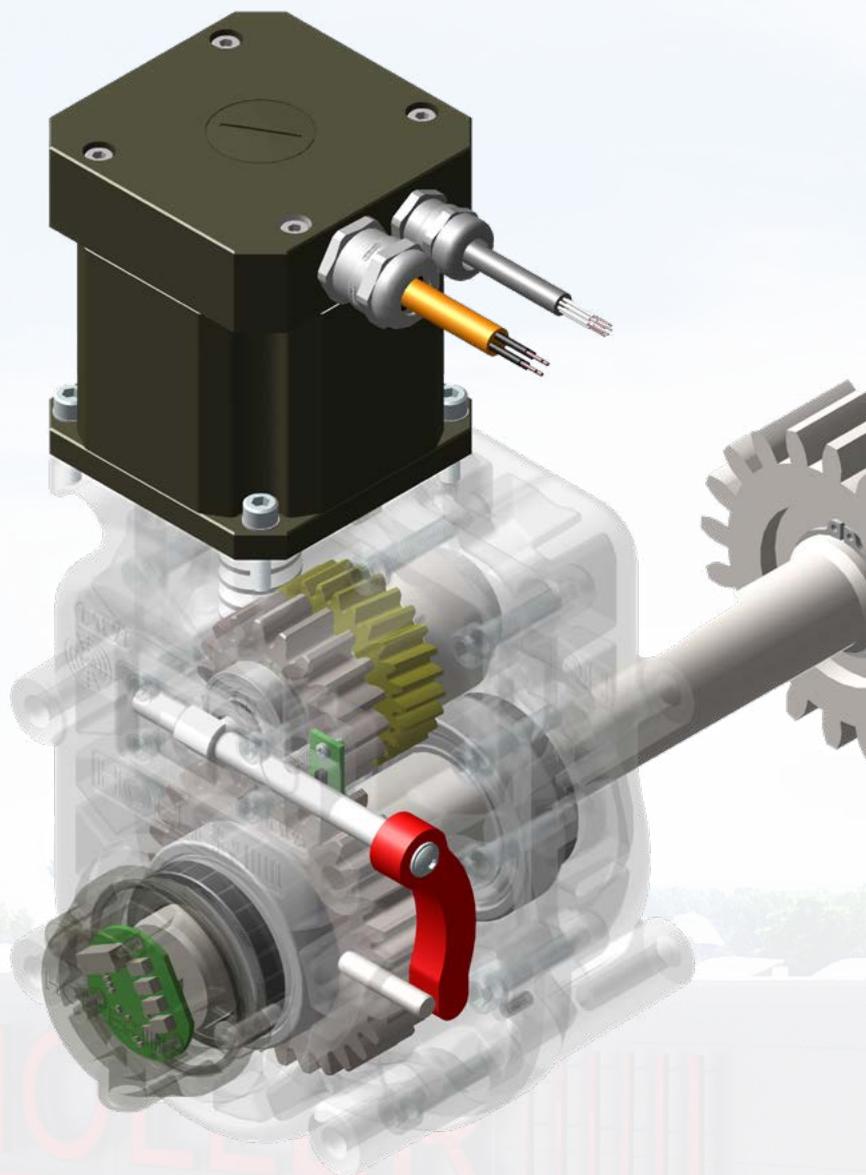
“Since we switched from direct sales to selling through distributors and installers about 15 years ago, we have been trying to organise specialised dealer days every four years,” says founder and owner Ewald Holler. “It’s a good way to introduce new products, customers get a completely different picture this way than when they see something in a brochure. Moreover, we stay in personal contact with our customers, many of whom we have close partnerships with, which is hugely important to us. Because of Corona, the construction of the new factory and some other reasons, the last specialised dealer days were already seven years ago, so it was about time. We have not been idle in terms of product development though, so we were also able to show many novelties.”

NOVELTIES

The event began Friday around lunchtime at the community hall of the municipality of Wagna. There, more than three hundred participants from twenty-two countries were first treated to lunch, after which Holler himself ascended the podium to welcome them. After a brief, general company presentation, he gave the floor to several other speakers. For example, Marcel Vionnet of Holler Switzerland presented the new brushless drives. These are now available for all Holler sliding gates, swing gates, folding gates, and barriers. “We used to install drives from other parties into our gates,” he says. “Now we make them ourselves, so we can adapt them completely to our specific application. With our own, universal controller, which has all the functions our gates need.” Mark Leinung from the German branch then presented the new Holler barriers and a new top drive for swing gates, both completely in-house developments. “The design and drive are now optimally adapted to each other – and to the design of the sliding gates,” says Leinung. “Customers who combine a sliding gate for the night with a barrier for daily traffic now have the ideal combination.”

INTERCOMS

Henk Sletering of Holler Benelux introduced Holler’s new intercom programme. “We used to build any intercom in a gate that a customer wanted,” he says. “That is a lot of work: the customer has to send the intercom to us and then we have to adapt the guide column exactly to that intercom. Or the customer just sends us a drilling and cutting template, but then the customer has to do the installation and discussions can result if something does not fit. We still do that now, but to make it easier for both the customer and us, we now also offer a selection of intercoms as standard, in the price list. The customer then only has to tick the option when ordering and at the factory the process is all set up to build that intercom straight into the column.”





HOLLER GATE CONTROL

Martin Nordlander presented the new Holler Gate Control, which all Holler gates can now be fitted with in the factory. "With Gate Control, you make the control of the gate accessible from the internet," he explained. "That has huge advantages. The installer can read malfunctions remotely, so he already knows what is wrong with a gate even before he gets into his car. This not only means that you no longer have to make unnecessary trips to clean the glass of the photocells, but also that you can offer – lucrative – full-service maintenance contracts in which you solve a malfunction even before the customer realises that there was a malfunction in the first place. Holler Gate Control also has advantages for customers: it gives them a whole range of access control functions, allowing them to grant or deny access to certain groups of users at certain hours of the day."

SPECIALS

Ewald Holler's daughter Lisa showed a whole row of specials built by the company in recent years, including sliding gates 11 metres high or 70 metres wide, with designer or high security infills or in telescopic versions. "It is impossible to put all these different versions or modifications in a catalogue," she says. "But we still like to show what is possible. That way, we give people ideas and especially want to encourage our partners to come to us with their customers' special wishes. Because if something is technically possible, we can realistically always make it."



Lisa Holler





COATING

Thomas Sattler is co-owner of the powder coating company at the first Holler plant. He gave a presentation on repairing the most common coating damages. *"Fences and gates sometimes incur minor damage during transport and installation,"* he said. *"Sometimes this is someone's fault, sometimes not – but in almost all cases, these damages are easier to repair than most people think."* Sattler showed on the stage how it is possible to restore a coating, which has turned white because condensation in the packaging has been heated by the sun, to its own colour with an ordinary hot-air dryer. *"It takes maybe five minutes as a result of which you can avoid endless discussions with the customer,"* he said. Sattler also demonstrated how to repair scratches, pits, and other damage easily and invisibly with a sander and some lacquer.

ENERGY FENCE

Ewald Holler himself also had a few developments. For example, he presented a new fencing mini-power plant, which is suitable for installation on balconies as well as on the ground. It is a package in which two solar panels are built into a standard fence model, complete with an inverter. *"The whole package is ready to be plugged in,"* he says. *"All the customer has to do is put the plug in the outlet and the energy from his fence is available in his home. No permit, no contract with the energy supplier, no complicated hassle, just take some of the power you use during the day from your fence."* He also showed a new hand-held transmitter, talked about several improvements to the folding gates assortment and introduced new models of parcel and letterbox columns.





RÖMERHÖHLE

On Friday evening, the guests were driven in six buses to the Roman limestone quarry Aflenz, just outside Wagna. This is Austria's oldest mine still in operation, mining a special kind of limestone underground. There it was time for festivities. In a shut-down section of the mine specially decorated for the occasion the guests were treated to a performance by opera singers Nataša Trobentar Majcen and Sergej Rupreht, who sang songs from *The Phantom of the Opera*. The unique acoustics in the caves of the mine made the performance extra special. The opera singers alternated with Slovenian saxophonist Oto Vrhovnik and guitarist Dunja Vrhovnik, who swept up the guests at the very opposite end of the musical spectrum with folk songs, summer hits and sing-along classics.

FACTORY

Saturday again started at Wagna's event hall at 9 in the morning for the remainder of the presentations. Around noon, buses took guests to Holler's headquarters for a brief lunch and tours of the company's production facilities. There, many saw for the first time the new, 200-metre-long, 10,000-square-metre factory that Holler had commissioned step by step over the past year. "We moved the production of all sliding gates here," says Ewald Holler. "The existing factory had become far too small for that, although the latest extension to that factory is also only a few years old. In the existing factory, we now make swing and folding gates, barriers, drives, and specials."



WELDING MACHINE

The main component of the new plant is a travelling welding machine, which, fully automatically, welds sliding gates together. It was custom-built especially for Holler and consists of two large welding tables that fit sliding gates of up to 17 metres. "While the robot is working on one welding table," Holler explains, "operators can prepare all aluminium sections on the other welding table, in a template. In order to do so, the welding table is in an inclined position. When all the sections are in place, the welding table turns so that the gate is upright. The machine then drives over the gate, after which two welding robots weld the sections from two sides simultaneously. Welding from two sides simultaneously heats the gate evenly and prevents warping. It is also faster. When the welding is finished, the machine drives to the second welding table, where the sections for the next gate are ready. The operators now grab the gate leaf from the table with a gantry crane and take it to the – also brand-new – coating facility. And then the whole process starts all over again. When the plant is running at full capacity, a gate is finished every eight minutes."





INTERNAL LOGISTICS

At the front, in front of the welding robot and the coating line, is an area where the aluminium sections are received and buffered. *"The different sections are immediately sorted here,"* says Holler. *"The top beams, bottom beams, intermediate posts and other sections that go together in one type of gate are given one colour label and lie in racks coated in that colour. This way, we make it easy for operators to quickly – after all, they only have eight minutes to spare – gather the correct profiles for one gate together and bring them to the welding table."* On the other side of the factory are other departments where the bolted gates are assembled, a department where the leaf and guide column are assembled into one unit – *"'married' we call it"* – and a department where all the electronics are installed and where the gates are tested. Finally, there is a shipping department, where the leaf and column are separated again so that more gates fit on a truck. *"Our gates go all over the world, they are now already in all continents, ha-ha. But also large markets like the Netherlands, Poland or even neighbouring Germany are already so far away that we can save a lot on transport costs if we load the leaves separately on the truck. The gates are then reassembled at our local branches or distributors."*



GALA

The highlight of the event was a large gala dinner on Saturday evening. In addition to the specialised dealer days participants, it was attended by around a hundred and fifty additional guests, including friends, family, and acquaintances from the association life. Wagna's Mayor Peter Stradner, state councillor of Styria Barbara Eibinger-Miedl, Chamber of Commerce Director Herbert Ritter and other dignitaries made speeches, the pastor of the local church blessed the new building and then it was finally time: the ribbon was cut, and the new factory was officially opened. Subsequently the guests feasted on a buffet, which was embellished by a magician who passed the tables with various tricks. There was also a ballerina, who performed various flexible challenges high above the guests, first in a hoop and later in a curtain. Holler himself also took to the podium several times, including a word of thanks for everyone who helped make the new factory possible in the first place. "It took quite a bit of effort to be able to start construction at all," he says. "The land on which the factory stands belonged to seven different farmers, all of whom we had to buy out. Then the parcel had to be changed in the zoning plan with the municipality from arable land to an industrial area and then we still had to get a building permit. Without the support of the municipality of Wagna we would not have succeeded." After the official part of the gala, it was again time to party, to bring the event to a fun close. ■





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Locinox presents new gate opener and closer in one

Locinox, a Belgian manufacturer of gate hardware, gate closers and access control from Waregem, is launching a new type of product: an electric gate opener that not only closes pedestrian gates but opens them as well. The Venus makes it easier for users to pass through the gate, while giving the operator various access control features.



“The Venus is a revolution in pedestrian gates”



Lieven
Pieters



“The Venus is a revolution in the world of pedestrian gates,” sales and marketing director Lieven Pieters says. “It’s a product that simply didn’t exist until now. It adds a lot of extra features to a gate, and makes it much easier to use.”

GATE CLOSER

Like the existing hydraulic gate closers in Locinox’s range, the new Venus assists in closing the gate leaf. “But because it’s electric,” Pieters says, “there are more settings you can adjust than just the closing speed and the strength of the final closing movement. For example, you can now set the number of seconds or minutes for the gate leaf to stay open, meaning that users don’t need to hold the gate leaf open – they can walk through comfortably before the gate leaf starts to close again.”

GATE OPENER

Unlike hydraulic closers, the Venus also controls the gate leaf’s opening movement. “Just a little push against the gate is enough,” Pieters explains. “The electric motor does the rest. We call it the ‘push-and-go’ function. You no longer need to push the gate leaf open – which is something that can require a fair amount of force with a hydraulic gate closer, depending on the settings. On top of that, if you combine the Venus with an electric gate keep, you can have it open on command too. You can then connect it to a Slimstone code panel, or any other

signalling device, for example a handheld transmitter, an intercom or a GSM module. The Venus then opens the gate at the touch of a button.” The new gate opener features a brushless motor that can be reversed at any stage and has no brake, which is why it’s always used in combination with a lock.

APPLICATIONS

The new Venus is intended for all situations in which there is a lot of pedestrian traffic, or where the gate is regularly used by disabled visitors. “The Venus is obviously ideal for wheelchair and walking frame users,” Pieters says. “We also see a lot of potential for places such as bicycle parking areas, where it can be difficult to hold the gate open with one hand as you push your bike through with the other. But really the Venus can be used anywhere that there’s a lot of foot traffic: public buildings, airports, hospitals, schools... you name it. In those locations a hydraulic closer could slow down the flow of traffic, whereas the Venus opens the gate faster than someone can pass through. And ultimately it’s enormously useful as a residential application as well, for private users who need to pass through the gate with bicycles, wheelbarrows, strollers, and heavy shopping bags. The Venus makes this much easier for them.”



TECHNOLOGY

The new gate opener is operated by a brushless motor, which automatically releases if it is forced or meets resistance. "If a gate user pushes or pulls too hard on the gate leaf, it's not a problem," Pieters says. "The drive simply allows it to happen. As soon as the external force stops, the electronics redetermine the gate leaf's position and the software begins a new opening or closing movement. The automatic release function also means that in the event of a power outage, you can easily pass through the gate." All components – the steel gears, the motor and motor control, the power supply, a warning lamp and all electronics – are contained in a compact aluminium housing. "It's all-in-one, both literally and figuratively. There's no additional cabinet containing electronics, or for the power supply. And everything has been tested for use from minus thirty through to plus seventy degrees Celsius, so the Venus always works, whatever the weather." The Venus was put through half a million test movements prior to the launch of the new opener at R+T in Stuttgart in late February. During the testing process, not only was the gate opened and closed, but the gate leaf was struck with a force of 500 Newtons.

INSTALLATION

In order to install the new Venus, you need to drill five holes. "The Venus is attached using four Quick-Fix plugs," Pieters says, "two on the gate leaf and two on the post. Then there's another hole needed for the wiring, and that's it. We supply drilling templates along with it." All the settings are configured using an app on your phone. "The Venus has its own Wi-Fi access point. The app establishes a connection to it, which incidentally can only be done if the casing is opened with a key. After that you can set the opening and closing speeds, opening time, and opening force. The app also includes a handy installation wizard that guides you through the installation process." The Venus is available with three different arms: there's an arm for 90-degree opening as well as one for 180 degrees, plus another arm for when the gate leaf is installed between two walls.



SAFE

The forces used for opening and closing are so low that in most cases there are no additional safety strips or photocells required. *"It's a so-called low-energy drive,"* Pieters says. *"The built-in obstacle detection senses even the slightest bit of resistance, and immediately reverses the direction of movement. It's impossible to get caught between the gate leaf and the closing post. The housing also has a built-in light that starts flashing immediately when the Venus controller receives an opening or closing signal. The Venus has obtained full approval for use in the EU; the approval process for the United States is underway."*

SPECIFICATIONS

The Venus gate opener can be installed on both left- and right-opening gates. It is suitable for gate leaves of up to 1400 millimetres wide and up to 100 kilograms in weight. It fits gate posts of 80 millimetres and wider as standard, and can also be installed on a 60-millimetre post using a special adapter plate. The maximum opening angle is 175 degrees. The Venus is suitable for use with either 110 or 240 volts, and can be supplied with housing of black or clear anodised aluminium. Locinox provides a two-year warranty as standard, while those who register via the app receive a three-year warranty. ■







In addition to being a fencing installer, Livia Graf is a photographer. Whenever her guys finish off a project, she drives to it and takes stunning fencing photos. This is one of them.

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Field detection with laser scanners

Everything you need to know about perimeter detection, part 11: Laser detection

Field detection systems usually consist of a transmitter and a separate receiver, i.e. two devices. The transmitter sends radio waves or light beams, for example, to a receiver. For radio waves, the devices are called bistatic microwave detectors; when light beams are transmitted, this is done using infrared beams. As soon as the microwaves or beams of light are interrupted, there is an alarm situation.



raijmond@fencingtimes.com

Raijmond Rondeel

Raijmond Rondeel has worked in perimeter security for many years. For Fencing Times, he writes about securing outdoor areas with detection systems. Do you have questions? Or a practical example - and are curious what Raijmond would have offered here? Send him an email at raijmond@fencingtimes.com

There are also variations on both techniques, consisting of just a single device. With microwave technology, we then refer to a radar. The transmitter and receiver are located in the same housing. With light, we call this a laser detection system. In this situation, too, the transmitter and receiver are located in the same housing: the laser scanner.

Laser scanners are optical sensors that use laser beams to scan and measure their surroundings. They are able to make two-dimensional measurements. By using a rotating mirror, they combine many measurements to create a full horizontal or vertical scan of the area being protected. 2D laser scanner technology is based on the so-called 'time-of-flight method'. Using a laser diode, the laser transmits pulsed laser beams. If an object or a person enters the area being scanned, these laser beams are reflected back again. This reflection is then received by a photodiode in the laser. Measuring the difference in time between the transmitted and the received light enables the object's size, distance and movement to be determined. This application is called the 'lidar' technique: Light Detection And Ranging. So this technique actually operates in the same way as a radar, only using light rather than radio waves. However, there are differences. Because the wavelength of light waves is many times smaller than that of radar waves, it means that smaller objects are reflected faster than they are with radar. This makes laser detection more accurate and sensitive than radar. However, the detection range is not much over 80 metres. Radar has a detection range of up to 120 metres, or even further.

These types of laser systems are widely used in the safety industry, with laser technology used to, for example, make a machine stop immediately as soon as a light curtain is interrupted. The small size of laser scanners enables them to be built in just about anywhere, and the light curtain can be made completely hand- or even finger-proof. There are an enormous number of applications. In addition to securing machines – or gates – they can be used to count or, for example, measure the contents on a conveyor belt when filling packages using automation. The market is enormous and the possibilities are endless. For example, I know that laser scanners hang above the German Autobahn to scan road freight. They measure the length of passing trucks, and I believe that they're even able to measure how many wheels there are on the ground. This gives an indication

of the type of truck it is. The toll authority can then use this information to check whether the driver has paid the appropriate toll. Almost all industrial manufacturing processes now use laser equipment in one way or another, so it's almost logical that these types of systems are appearing in the security industry as well. Perimeter security is no exception.

A laser detection system is able to project an invisible light curtain, for example, vertically along the inside of a fence or wall. The detector is often mounted on the same post as the security camera. If this light curtain is interrupted, an alarm sounds. Naturally a horizontal light curtain is also an option, for example between two fences or on an open area of a site. A laser scanner has an opening angle of up to 270 degrees, so you can secure a large area of up to 80 metres away from intruders using a single small device. Because the laser detector is able to measure distance, you can permit movement in certain parts of the protected area at certain times of day – for example the area by the main entrance, or by a particular gateway. This then switches to total protection in the night setting.

Another way they are used is by mounting a laser detector on a flat roof. Installing the detector at a height of around 30 centimetres above the flat roof means that any attempt to climb onto or crawl on the roof will be detected. If you make the scan area slightly bigger than the roof itself, you can even detect a ladder being leaned against the edge. Because you're able to set the volume and speed that an object must reach in order to trigger an alarm, you can programme the device so that birds on a roof edge don't set off an unwanted notification.

The same application works perfectly on the inside of a roof as well, for example to secure skylights or other vulnerable roof openings. The large detection range in comparison to motion detectors means that often you can protect several skylights in a row with a single laser scanner, which is a clear advantage. In the same way, you could also secure multiple windows or doorways on the outer façade of an office building. The detector can be programmed very precisely. You can decide exactly which area it needs to scan. It is an extremely reliable field detector that is not affected by small animals or by leaves blowing around. But what about snow, rain and fog? There's a solution to that as well!



By using so-called multi-echo technology, the laser detector can also be used in fog, rain or heavy snow. Although precipitation does cause light reflections, the use of echo signals and software algorithms means that there is little or no impact on the detector. A laser pulse hits a raindrop, part of the pulse is reflected, and this is measured. However, part of the same pulse is not reflected by the raindrop but simply flies past it, and is then reflected by the actual target. The same laser pulse then has two different measurements, known as echo measurements. Because the signals from raindrops are sent back from many different directions, while the different signals coming from the object to be detected all return from the same location, the device's software is still able to detect the object. This works up to a point; if the fog continues to thicken, eventually the physical limits of the device will be reached. The laser beam no longer reaches the target, and therefore is not reflected. Then detection is no longer possible. The laser beam eventually ends up being just a beam of light. However, this is not something that will happen very often. In high-risk situations you can use multiple scanners to avoid this problem. You will then no longer assume a range of 80 metres but, say, a maximum of half that. Laser detectors that are used outdoors often include an internal heater with a thermostat to prevent condensation forming on important components.

The area to be protected can of course be divided into multiple alarm zones. These can be programmed to allow movement in one zone, but not in another. The laser system can also determine the direction in which the intruder is moving. The detector can be set so that movement from left to right triggers an alarm, but the other way around does not. Because the laser scanner knows the precise coordinates of the moving object, it can also pass this on to intelligent alarm management and video systems through the software. These systems in turn relay the information to smart cameras, which can continue to track the intruder as they move across the site.

Using lasers with a high scanning speed (100 hertz or more) allows you to project a hand-tight light curtain. This can even detect the throwing of, say, a mobile phone over a prison wall or the like. This would not work with radar, as the phone is too small for the radar to detect it. There is another big difference with radar too: site security radar uses the Doppler effect, detecting an approaching object only while it is moving. If the object is



stationary, then after a short time the radar goes into idle mode. There's no more movement, so there's no signal to detect. With the laser system the stationary object continues to reflect light, so the laser system continues to 'see' the object even when it's not moving.

Small laser scanners are now often used at, for example, barriers, replacing the induction loop under the road surface. If a car stops under the barrier, the laser scanner will detect it and the barrier will not close. This is another thing that a small Doppler radar would not be able to do – these only detect a car's movement, and if the car stopped after a metre then the radar would not detect it. A clear difference, which in some situations can be important.

Laser scanners are also used indoors. For example, they can project a protective light curtain in front of a work of art, creating a hand- and finger-tight invisible shield. At the moment you get too close to that stunning painting in a museum and point at it, the alarm is triggered. Here, too, you have the option of monitoring just one or two valuable paintings during the day to protect them from visitors getting too close, while at night the same detector protects the entire wall from intruders.

As laser scanners can also be used indoors, there are scanners on the market with a so-called VdS certificate. The security industry has devised certain standards that detectors must meet, for spatial detectors that are used indoors. These products are then tested by European inspection authorities such as the VdS, and assigned to a specific class. These then may or may not be used in a particular risk class. Laser scanners meet the requirements of the highest risk classes in the VdS standard, and may be used in buildings that are at the highest risk, such as banks, museums, and any other building containing extremely attractive goods. This says a lot about the very high detection probability and reliability of these devices.

Unfortunately there are still no technical standards in place for perimeter and outdoor detection equipment. The industry is working on them, but it's a very long and time-consuming process. It appears to be difficult to get certain requirements down on paper that perimeter detection systems need to meet at all times. In addition, the outdoor detection market is small (in terms of absolute numbers) in comparison to detection equipment used indoors. The smaller the sales numbers, the harder it is to recoup the costs of this type of verification process. That means that for now we will have to make do without a certificate or quality mark for perimeter detectors. ■

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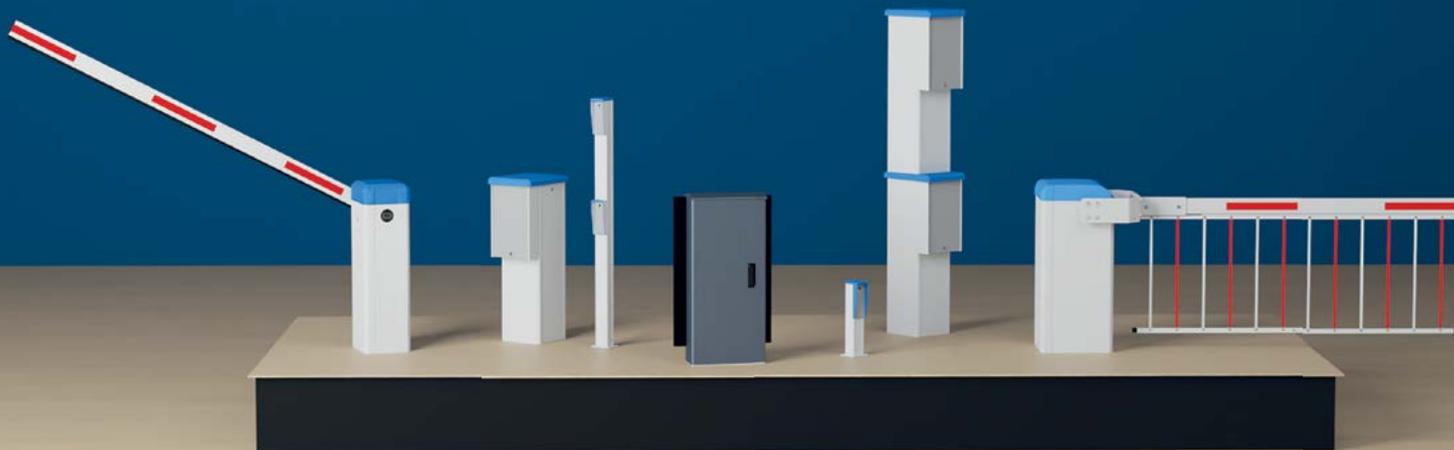
Fencing Times proudly presents:

Fencing championships this year in Wenschiedorf

Good news for everyone who loves fencing: another championship is coming up again! IG Zaunbau is organising a weekend full of challenge and fun for fence builders in September in Wenschiedorf, a small distance south of Frankfurt. In the next issue we will tell you about the programme in detail, but we wanted to let you know the dates in advance so you can put them on your calendar: the championships will be held on Sunday 8 September. The Saturday before can be used for practice and there will be a party in the evening. We would be delighted if you can come! ■

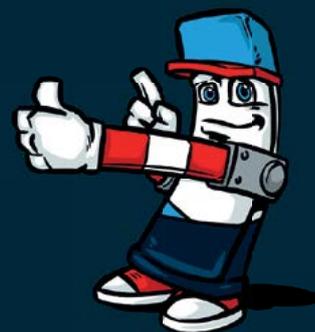


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FENCES IN THE NEWS



28 FEBRUARY 2024

Ski Resort manager fined 600,000 dollar for fatal fence post accident



In New Zealand, NZSki, the operator of the Coronet Peak Ski Area, the Court ordered NZSki to pay 600,000 New Zealand dollar¹ because the company had failed to create a

¹) 600,000 New Zealand dollar is about 335,000 euro

safety net that prevents skiers from skiing into a fence. The fence stands between a ski slope and a lake and was supposed to prevent skiers from skiing into the lake. NZSki had fitted foam pads to the 10 posts closest to the slope but judged that it was very

unlikely for skiers to hit posts further away. In 2014, an expert authored a report recommending cushioning all the posts. NZSki did not do so, whereupon things went horribly wrong in 2019: Anita Graf, a 60-year-old ski instructor who had previously taught in the area

herself, skied at full speed into one of the posts and died instantly. The court now ruled that NZSki was partly to blame for her death and imposed a fine of 440,000 dollar. In addition, NZSki must pay 130,000 dollar in damages, plus court costs of 28,000 dollar. ■

Neighbour dispute over fence leads to 163,000 dollar claim



When fencing involves insane amounts of money, you know we are talking about Australia. In a previous issue, we wrote about a fence around a school, which was to cost 1.4 million Australian dollar – this time it is about a retaining wall in a private garden costing 163,424 dollar². What is going on? Jay Hall and his spouse Kirsty built their own home in north-west Sydney in 2018. They raised the garden slightly and built a retaining wall on the property boundary with the neighbours, with a fence on top. According to Jay, his neighbours were fine with

²) 163,424 Australian dollar is about 100,000 euro

that. But even if that was initially true, at least they disagreed once the retaining wall was there. They were able to prove that the wall was 7 centimetres too far on their plot and complained about it to the municipality, Hills Shire, which had issued the permit. Subsequently, Hill Shire Council officials revoked the initial permit for the project and ordered Jay Hall to move the retaining wall. This time, the neighbours did not give permission to do so through their plot, forcing Hall to spend 20,000 dollar to rebuild a retaining wall and fence that initially had cost 15,000 dollar. When Hall had completed this,

someone from the council came to take a look, whereupon Hall received a letter that everything was now in order. But that was not to the liking of the neighbours, the Flyaks family. They brought Halls before the Land and Environment Court. They felt the retaining wall was not strong enough and the drainage was also not to their liking. The judge agreed with them and ordered the Halls to have the retaining wall and fence removed and rebuilt, but in a better way. And they have to pay the court costs, of course. In an initial cost proposal this came to 163,424 dollar. For a fence. According to Jay Hall, it

is the municipality's fault that his fence was not approved. "I applied for a permit, paid all the fees for it and complied with all the requirements of the municipality," he said. The municipality did not comment on this but did offer to help pay 10,000 dollar towards the new fence. Eh, strange state of affairs there with those Australians. How it ended, we do not know yet. Jay and Kirsty Hall cannot afford the 163,000 dollar, so if the verdict stands, they will have to sell their house to have a retaining wall and fence built for a house that no longer belongs to them. If more becomes known about the case, we will keep you updated. ■

Farmers learn to place fences

Fence workers have a new set of competitors. At least, fence workers in the state of Kentucky in the United States of America. They can pack their bags, because the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council³, the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund⁴, and the Kentucky Beef Network⁵, together with the University of Kentucky and Kentucky State University, organised two real Fencing School days in October.

³ An industry association of forage producers

⁴ A foundation to promote agricultural development

⁵ The Kentucky Beef Network is not a fast-food chain, but a branch of the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association (a trade association) dedicated to helping cattle farmers

"Fencing is vital on the farm," says Chris Teutsch, professor of the UK Department of Plant and Soil Sciences based at the University of Kentucky's Research and Education Centre in Princeton. He immediately uttered a corruption of the American proverb 'Good Fences, Good Neighbours': *"Good fences keep our livestock safe and our animals from getting out and disturbing our neighbours."* It is good that there are universities and professors; we would hardly have thought of this idea ourselves otherwise. Anyway, the Kentucky farmers could thus attend a one-day Fencing School for 35

dollar, where they learned in the morning about the types of fences, what they cost approximately and how to put them up. They also received instructions as to what the innovations are in fencing and what fencing laws apply in Kentucky. In the afternoon, there was first hand practice on how to stake posts, make braces and how to stretch and knot mesh. For us fencers, it is fascinating to read that apparently you can learn how to erect fences in Kentucky in one day. Had we known that we would not have had to join a foreman on assembly for years. All kidding aside, we do not think

the fencers in Kentucky are now shivering in a corner of their workshop in fear that they will not get any more orders because the farmers will now set their fences themselves. That is what those farmers were doing anyway – at best, they are doing a little better now. But we do wonder aloud why those farmers' foundations and industry associations brought in the two universities of Kentucky. If you ask us, they would have been better off asking a couple of experienced fencers. Or did the fencers maybe not have time because they were milking the cows? ■



Hole in Dingo Fence remains open because of bureaucratic wrangling

For the last article in this column, we go back to Australia. For there you have the Dingo Fence, a 5600-kilometre-long fence that runs right across the continent – we have written about this often. The sheep farmers built this starting in 1860 who wanted to protect their sheep in the south from the dingoes⁶ in the north.

6) The dingo is a feral dog from Australia believed to be descended from the Indian steppe wolf. Humans probably adopted them as pets around 5000 years ago. However, they became feral again and so, as an exotic species, developed a lifestyle similar to that of wolves. Dingoes are much smaller than wolves and have the weight of a medium-sized dog (10 to 15 kilos).

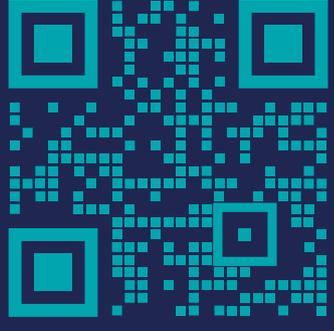
The fence is now under the management of the states, from west to east respectively South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. Because the fence was in extremely poor condition, about 10 years ago those states began issuing orders to repair or renew it. Large sections have now been completed in the meantime, but on the South Australia-New South Wales border there is a large 32-kilometre gap where the fence is just not being repaired. Already in 2019 the decision was

made to completely renew those 32 kilometres, but because of different fence requirements in the two states, frequent extreme weather conditions and the complexity of the permitting process, the state authorities did not put up any fences for more than four years now. To the great displeasure of sheep farmers, of course, who fear that too large a population of dingoes will break through the fence. Last autumn, there were a couple of meetings between sheep farmers' associations and state

authorities and state authorities promised that construction will now begin soon. Local sheep farmers still have little faith in it, but those who fancy a 32-kilometre job can quietly start inquiring about it. ■



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