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2023, Issue 3



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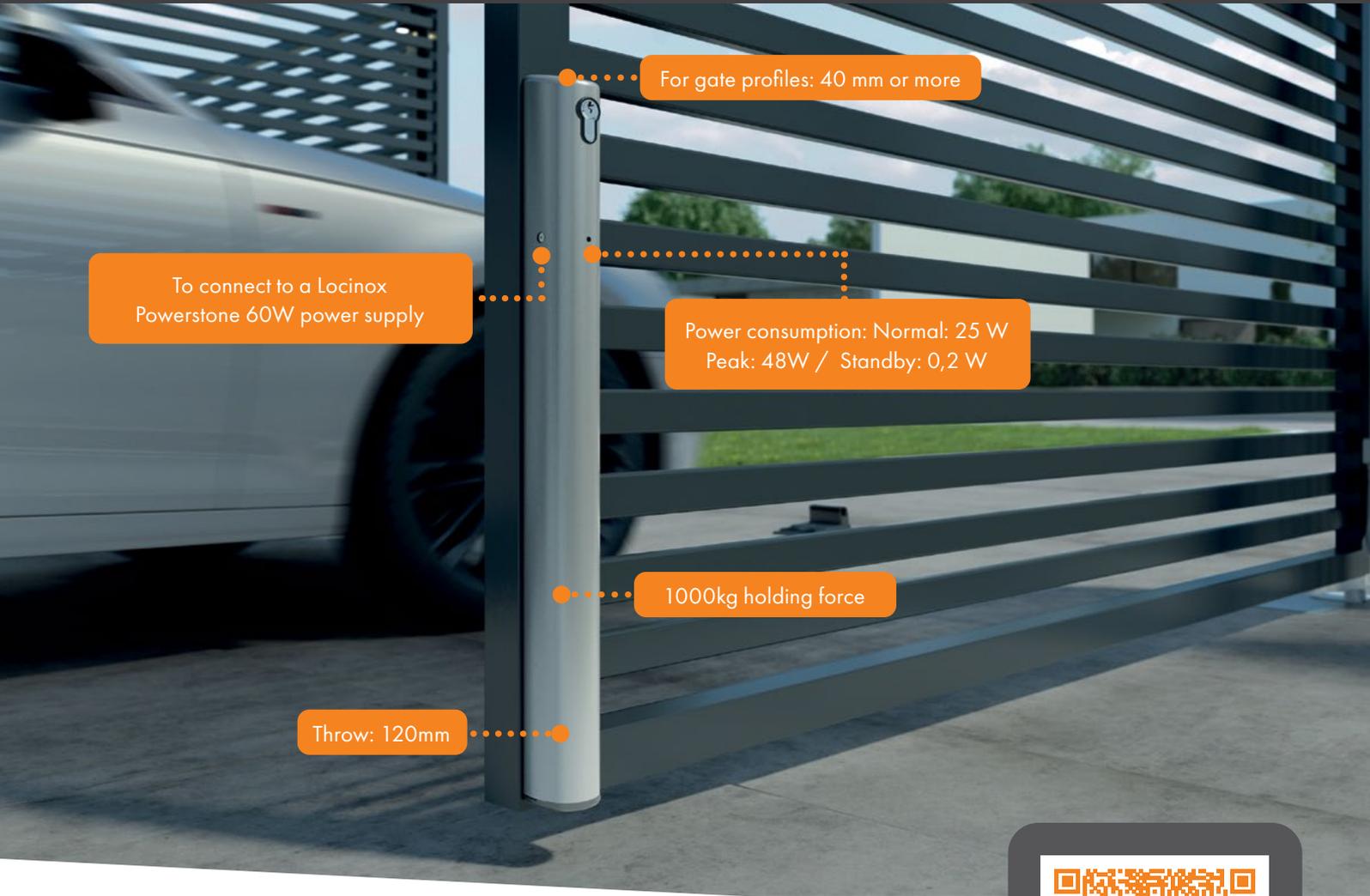
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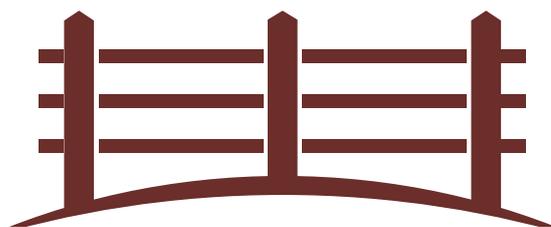
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All fencing installers can now retire

In April, several German fencing installers sent us the new Aldi brochure. The accompanying comments ranged from 'Look, we can retire,' to 'Look, now they've killed off our wonderful profession'.

Had you told us 10 years ago that in 10 years time you'd be able to buy fencing at the discount supermarket, we probably would have questioned whether you still had all your ducks in a row. But in actual fact we could have seen that it was coming. Because it's a trend that has become established for some time now. For years already, fences and gates have not just come to customers via a fencing installer. That was already underway in the last century when the construction markets started to sell fencing as well.

It's a phenomenon you see in all industries when a product, which is in high demand, has been refined to the limit of its development. Let's take bricks as an example. Once upon a time, thousands of years ago, someone came up with the idea of baking bricks from clay. The first bricks were kneaded into a shape by hand, but this method was soon overtaken by the mould box that allowed a series of bricks of (approximately) equal size and structure to be made. This development made the brick a handy, easy-to-process and cheap-to-produce building product, with which the Romans were already building entire cities. Over the centuries, all sorts of different shapes and variations were invented of course, but the basics of brick-making did not change. The brick was more or less perfected and there wasn't much room for improvement. There was only one option with which brick producers could distinguish themselves from their competitors: ensuring a better price. Since extracting, firing and transporting clay

cost about the same everywhere, they also had only one means for reducing the price: increasing volumes so they could spread all the fixed costs over more bricks. So, what happened then? Whereas in the past every village on a river had its own brickworks and its own small kiln, now you only see large brick factories that produce millions of bricks a year.

Exactly the same thing has happened in the fencing industry. Rigid mesh panels, rolls of mesh, posts, fixings – you name it: they were all invented by someone once, then improved or modified a few times by different parties until a standard emerged that was sufficiently perfected. After that, people stopped developing and merely copied, with price becoming the main differentiator.

Once it's a question of price only, another economic effect comes into play: the demand-driven market changes into a supply-driven market. Factories no longer produce according to market demand but force each other to increase production. Because whoever is unable to match the price will sell nothing. This leads to investment in better and faster machines and they have to be kept running. The demand becomes a secondary consideration. In this way, fencing materials also end up at DIY stores, building material dealers, landscapers, garden centres and, of course, no end of Internet shops. With the discount supermarket ultimately being the low point.

But now the question: is that necessarily a bad thing?

One side effect is that all kinds of amateur handymen can also easily obtain fencing materials. Then suddenly you see a van driving around with the legend 'Man with a Van'. For Caretaking Services, House Clearances and

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FENCE POST



Franck @Jardin Design

This photo comes from our regular reader and faithful photo submitter Franck Walravens from Chastrès, in Wallonia. Franck runs a landscaping company, Jardin Design, as well as a fencing company, Multisepa. And when both companies are working together for the same customer, it makes for great pictures. Thanks a lot for sending it in Franck!

Julien @Grillages Naas

We received this photo from Julien Seguin, of Grillages Naas from Villenave d'Ornon, a suburb of Bordeaux. He came across this gate in the salt marshes close to the town of Les Sables d'Olonne, on the Atlantic coast (Département de la Vendée). Just what the gate is doing there is a complete mystery as there is no path leading to or from it, nor is there any house or building to be seen in the distance. Many thanks for the photo, Julien!





Nicole @SIH

Nicole Falsche of SIH Sicherungsanlagen, a high security fencing company from the East German town of Rietz-Neuendorf (a village between Berlin and Frankfurt an der Oder), sent us this photo. She accompanied it with the comment, "Just fitting a modest sliding gate." Nice little gate, Nicole! Feel free to send us another photo when the project is finished, it's bound to look even more impressive then. Thanks for submitting this!





Jan @Hafco Hekwerk

This photo came from Jan Meesen of Hafco Hekwerk in Terneuzen, in Zeelandic Flanders. There's nothing better than a photo of your just-completed fence with your works van behind it. Looks the business, Jan. Many thanks for the photo!

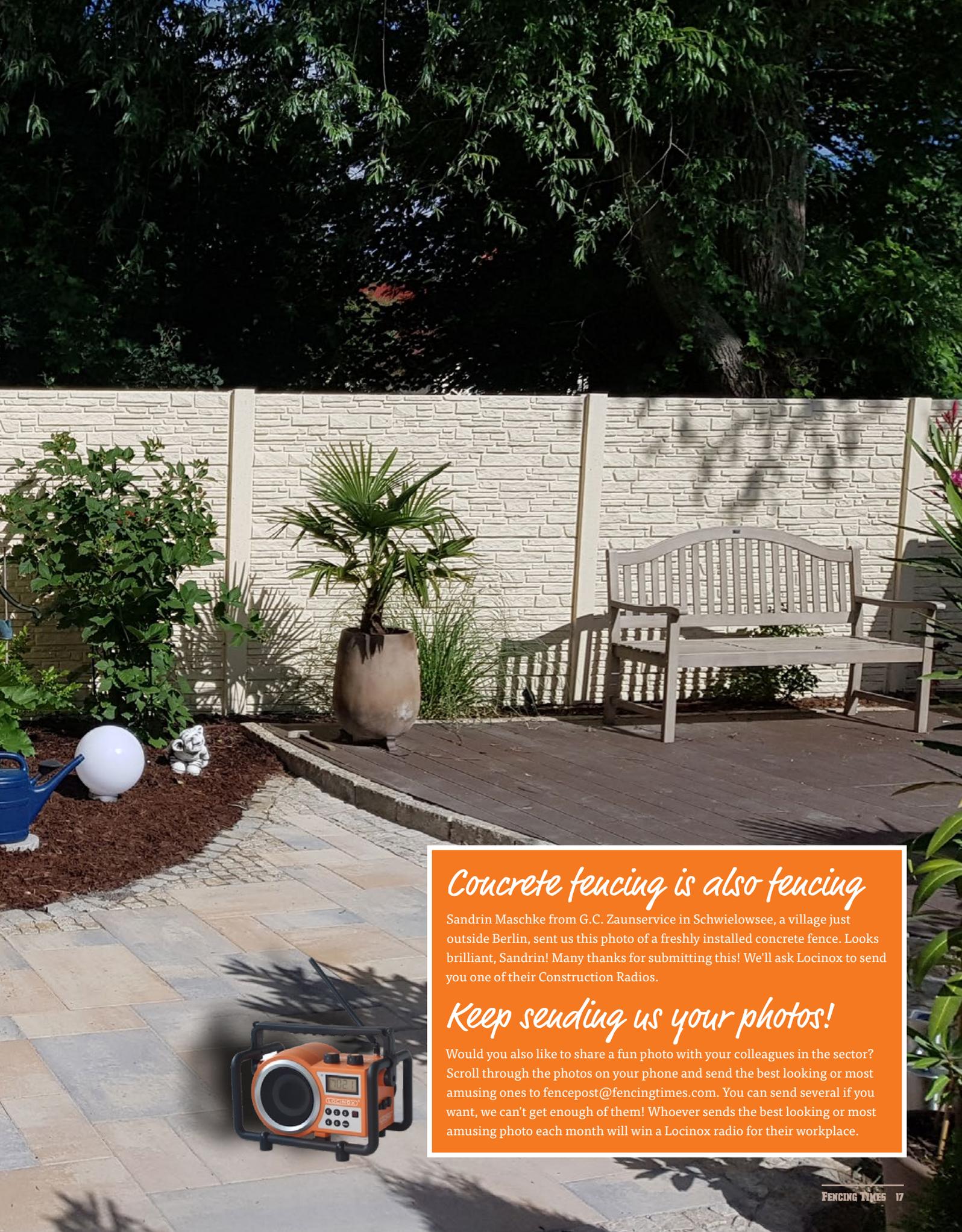


Manfred @Brix

We received this photo from Manfred Wograndl, of the German firm Brix in Neuried, near Munich. "Look, we now have curved Hoffmeister gates in our range as well," he added. It proves in any event that Hoffmeister gates have robust guide portals. Many thanks for the photo, Manfred!







Concrete fencing is also fencing

Sandrin Maschke from G.C. Zaunservice in Schwielowsee, a village just outside Berlin, sent us this photo of a freshly installed concrete fence. Looks brilliant, Sandrin! Many thanks for submitting this! We'll ask Locinox to send you one of their Construction Radios.

Keep sending us your photos!

Would you also like to share a fun photo with your colleagues in the sector? Scroll through the photos on your phone and send the best looking or most amusing ones to fencepost@fencingtimes.com. You can send several if you want, we can't get enough of them! Whoever sends the best looking or most amusing photo each month will win a Locinox radio for their workplace.



IPBE makes movable bollard for slopes



Bollard manufacturer IPBE from La Ciotat, a town just outside Marseille in the South of France, has made changes to the design of its movable bollard BA273. The bollard is now available with slope adjustments of up to 17 degrees.

“Until now, the top side of movable bollards was always straight,” sales manager Thomas Rayret says, “but the street or drive in which they’re installed is by no means always level. This often posed a major challenge for our clients. They either had to install the bollard some distance away, or make changes to the road surface; it’s been a thorn in our side for a long time. When we were asked to work on a marina, where the ramp down to the water had to be protected by a bollard, we took that as our cue to develop an angled bollard.”

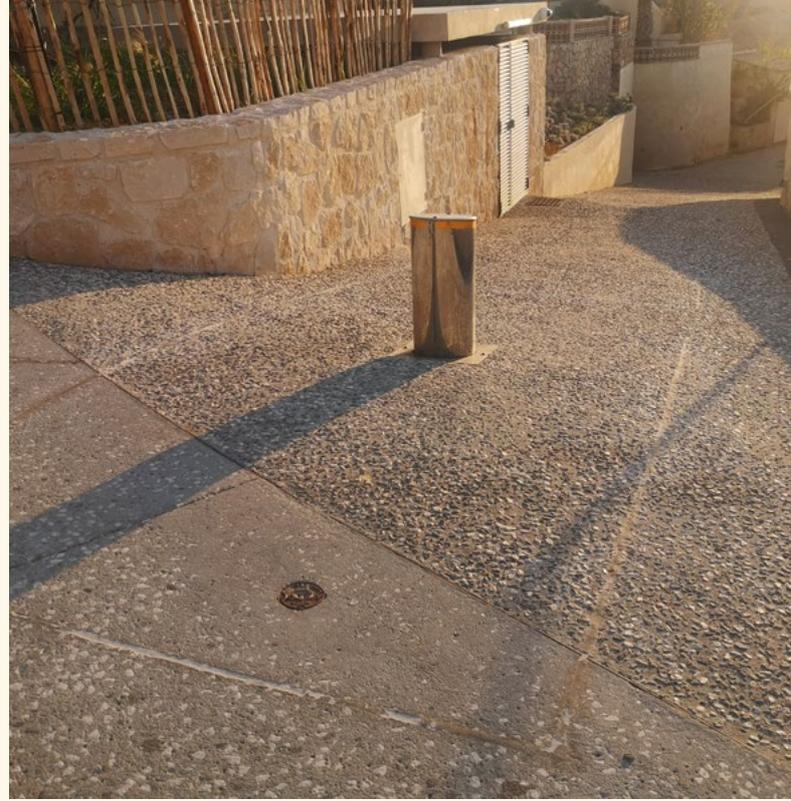
DESIGN

“It sounds simple, putting an angled top on a round pole – but it really wasn’t,” Rayret says. “To start with, not only did the movable bollard need to be angled, but the tube within which it moves up and down did as well. It also meant that the post cover and the hole in the cover plate are not circles, but ovals. The calculations, then the sketches, and finally the metalworking, were all fairly complicated. And all the more since at all of those steps we wanted to think about how we’d do things in the future, so that from now on we can manufacture bollards for any degree of slope.”

SLOPE

The movable bollard BA273 with slope adjustment, to give it its full name, is suitable for slopes of up to 17 percent. “That’s a huge angle,” Rayret says. “Most slopes have a 5 or 10 percent angle. Obviously bigger angles are possible – we know how to do it now – but we’ll need to make further adjustments to the product for that. Various things, including the installation depth and the dimensions of the cover plate, are very different then.” The slope adjustments are made at the factory. “The angle isn’t variable; customers need to state what it is when making the order. If, at the time of delivery, it turns out that the actual slope angle is different to the measurement that was given, civil engineering work is needed. It mostly only needs a change of half or one degree, which is doable.” ■

The new bollard’s full name in French is ‘Borne Escamotable Automatique BA273 – Récupérateur de Pente’, literally: Movable Automatic Bollard with Slope Recovery



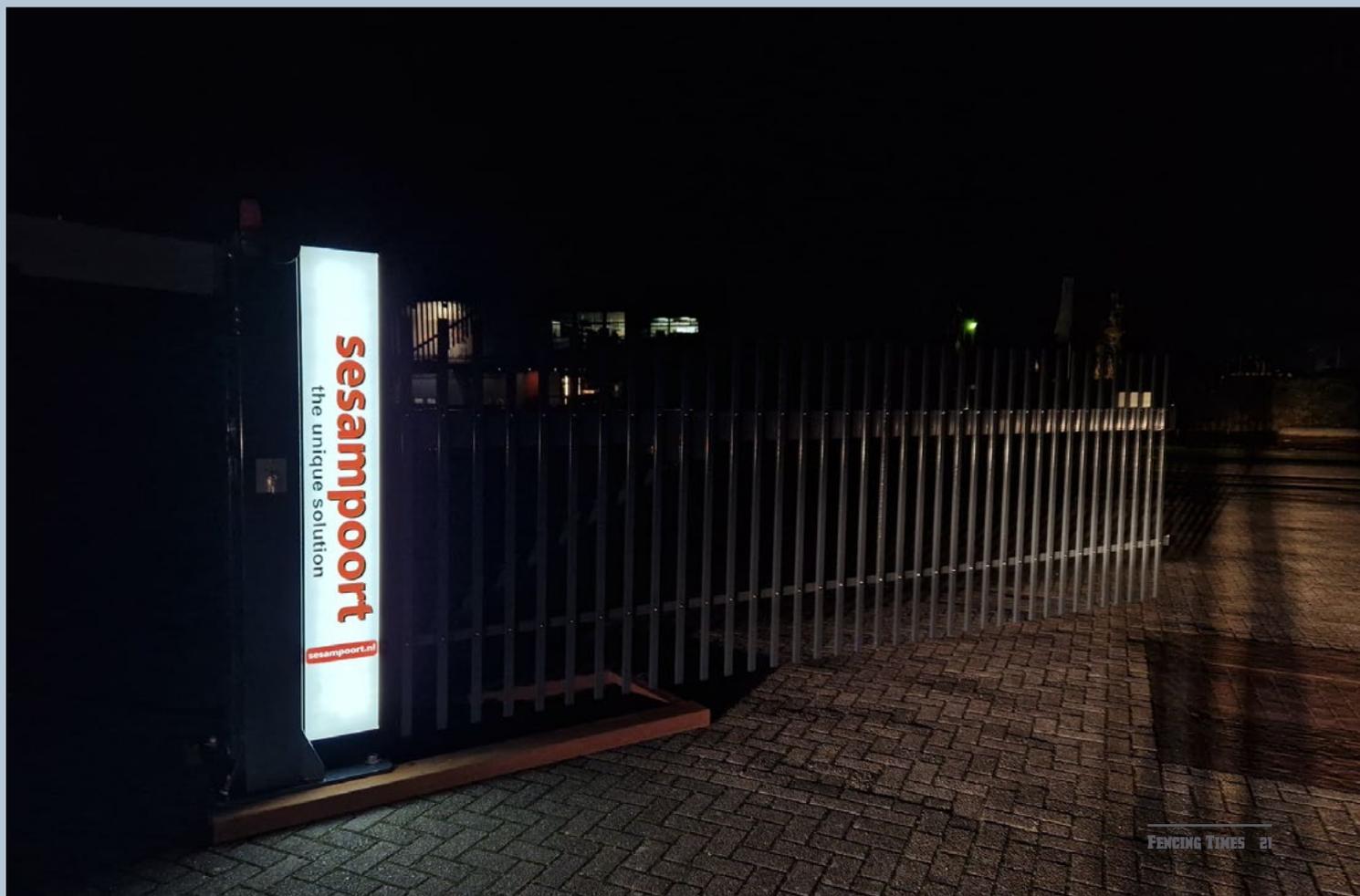
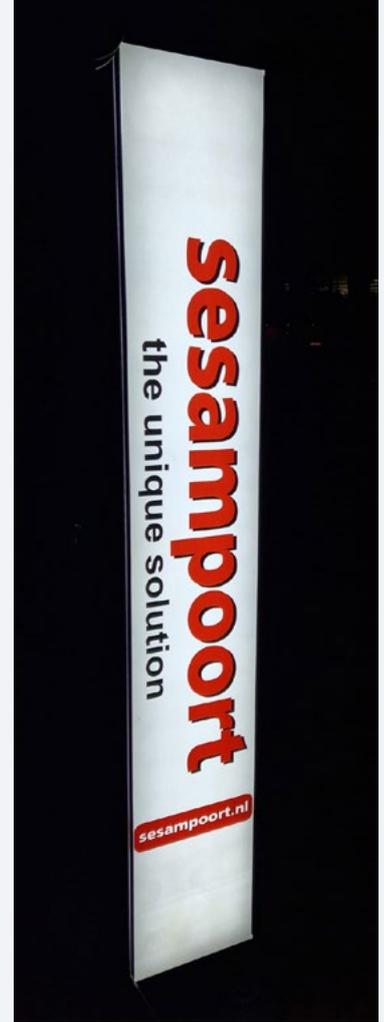
Sesame Gate now available with light box



Dutch vertical gate manufacturer Sesampoort, from Meijel near Venlo, has offered its Sesame Gates with an optional advertising light box since the start of this year. The new light box allows companies to customise their driveways to match their own house style.

“There’s a steel plate with the Sesampoort logo next to the pillar as standard,” founder Wil Thijssen says. “For an extra charge the customer’s logo can be lasered into the plate, and the plate – or the entire gate – can be coated in the company’s colour. But lasering only allows you to work with one colour. On top of that, not all fonts can be used – if the lines are too close together, there’s a risk that one of the pieces in between might fall out. That’s why we created the light box.”

The new light box is made of aluminium with built-in LED lighting. There is a transparent sheet of plastic built into the front, with a cloth stretched across it. *“The cloth can be printed with any font and colour you like,”* Thijssen says. *“Then the lighting in the box means that the text stands out. Because the cloth is a separate piece, you can easily replace it or alternate between different cloths.”* The aluminium of the box is coated in the same colour as the gate, so the box and the pillar form a cohesive whole. ■



Locinox brings new handles to the market

Locinox, a Belgian gate hardware manufacturer of gate hardware based in Waregem, expanded its range in April with the addition of a new set of robust handles. These make it easier for users to open gates that are equipped with access control.

“We’re seeing an increase in the number of gates for which people are buying electric openers,” sales director Lieven Pieters says. “These openers block the lock’s latch, meaning that you can’t fit a standard handle to the outside, but you need a fixed knob instead. Obviously we already have those, but with more and more gates being fitted with access control, we want to give customers more options.”

EASY TO OPERATE

So those additional options are now available, in the form of the new handles. These are vertical grips that you can install on the front stile of the gate leaf. “The bars have a sleek design that enable you to give gates a modern appearance,” Pieters says. “They’re also incredibly robust, which can be very handy for high-traffic gates. But the most important feature is that the handles make it easier to operate the gate. A long handle gives gate users more room on which they can get hold of the gate leaf, or push against it.”





Lieven Pieters



BAR-A AND BAR-I

The new handles come in two models: Bar-A and Bar-I. The 'I' in Bar-I stands for inox, which is the French word for stainless steel – the material from which this handle is made. *“Classic stainless steel goes with anything,”* Pieters says. *“It’s the universal solution: you can install it on every gate, whatever the colour or surroundings. The Bar-A, on the other hand, is a response to the trend of the coming years. It’s made of black anodised aluminium. We’re seeing that black is the new colour in bathrooms and kitchens. An anodised black handle on a black-coated gate looks especially good, but the black handle looks great on anthracite gates too. These are still being sold in large numbers across Europe.*

OPTIONS

The Bar-I is available with straight fixings for installation, or with fixings that rotate the handle away from the front stile by 60 or 90 degrees. On the Bar-A the fixings are straight or at a 60-degree angle. *“Every gate is different,”* Pieters says. *“Sometimes the gate is at right angles to a wall – then you can bring the handle inwards, so the user doesn’t scrape their hands to bits. In contrast, on other gates you might particularly want the handle not to block the view of the attractive gate leaf infill, so on those you can install a straight handle.”* All handles can be mounted to either the inside or outside of the gate, or both.



INSTALLATION

The new handles are mounted using Locinox's own Quick-Fix fixings: two-part stainless steel plugs that were specially developed for installation in tubular profiles. The first part is firmly fixed into the wall of the profile, and the second part – the actual plug – snaps into the first one. "We've had those plugs for 20 years," Pieters says, "but the snap-in system is an improvement that we added two years ago. It means that the inner part of the plug doesn't fall down into the profile, never to be seen again, when you unscrew the bolt. It's a faster and stronger system than installation using blind rivets. We supply it with almost all our products." When a gate is fitted with these handles, they are used instead of a standard fixed knob. "We have special anodised aluminium cover plates, which you can fit over the handle hole on mortise locks, or over the handle hole and the cylinder. Then you can add them to gates in all situations and configurations." ■



Fancy Fence passes crash test

Polish retractable gate manufacturer Fancy Fence, based in Lublin, has created a reinforced version of its retractable gate. The new gate is called Fancy Fence HVM. In April the HVM gate passed a crash test at CTS in Münster, Germany.



“Until now, those wanting to prevent vehicle attacks could choose between bollards or big, heavy fences and gates,” creator and owner Jacek Kühnl-Kinel says. “But bollards are only able to stop vehicles, not people. And heavy fences let the public see that there’s fear of a terror attack. That’s why we created an HVM version of our gate, solving both problems.”

IDEA

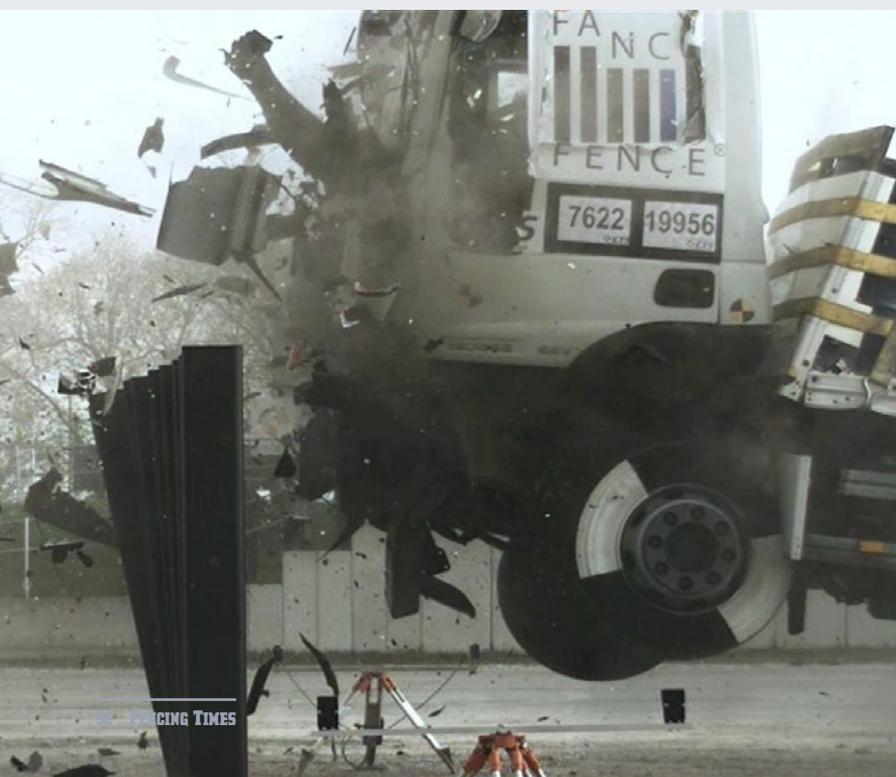
HVM stands for Hostile Vehicle Mitigation, and is an abbreviation used around the world. “Particularly since the truck attacks in Berlin and Nice a few years back, there’s demand all over Europe for solutions that can be used to close off squares, or sometimes entire city centres, to traffic,” Kühnl-Kinel says. “But at the same time, neither governments nor architects want visitors to those squares to feel unsafe due to seeing steel and concrete barricades everywhere. So designers almost always think about how that steel and concrete can be concealed. Because our gates sink into the ground, they’re the ideal solution for many architects. We’d already had a few people ask whether we would be able to produce a version that’s able to stop vehicles. Eighteen months ago we made the move and started to work on this.”

DEVELOPMENT

“We didn’t want to change the gate’s appearance,” Kühnl-Kinel goes on. “Fancy Fence’s success is thanks to its minimalist appearance, so the reinforcement needed to be on the inside. I’m not going to give away how exactly we achieved that, because we’re still thinking about whether to patent it. What I can tell you is that the insides of the profiles are reinforced with various materials including steel and concrete. We’ve also modified the frame so that it’s tensioned, like the strings on a tennis racket. This means that a hostile vehicle isn’t just stopped, but is bounced backwards. We spent a long time on calculations and drawings, and then we created simulations. We’ve got engineers who are really good at this. The simulations showed that the gate will be able to stop hostile vehicles.”







CRASH TEST

"But of course, good calculations and simulations aren't enough," Kühnl-Kinel says. "Customers want guarantees and they want tests to be carried out by an independent party to ensure that the gate meets the standard. In Europe that standard is IWA 14-1, which will soon become an ISO standard, and in America it's ASTM 2656. So off we went to CTS in Münster. CTS is a crash test company with a track record of more than 8000 tests. They tested a prototype of the gate, by driving a 7.5 tonne truck into it at 50 kilometres an hour. The most important value in both standards is the penetration value. In order to determine this, CTS measures how far the truck's centre of gravity – which is located around 2 metres behind the front bumper – has travelled over the fence line after impact. We were aiming for a penetration value of 0.0, but thanks to the built-in tennis racket effect the final result was a value of -2.8m. In other words, it was negative. This was exactly what the simulations had shown, but was still much better than we'd dared to hope for. It also gives us a lot of confidence in the future, because we've also run simulations using higher speeds and heavier trucks and we now know that the gate can withstand those too. Unfortunately, though obviously, the gate itself was a writeoff after the crash. That was what we'd expected, but all the same a brief test was carried out to see whether it still worked. It didn't. But the truck was totalled as well, and that was the aim, haha." The test also measured whether large pieces of debris penetrated the gate, potentially injuring anyone on the actual site. "We passed that test too – not a single piece of major debris had made it through. CTS also tested whether there was a chance of the driver surviving the crash. Apparently this is set down in the US standard, as they want to be able to interrogate a perpetrator after an attack. We passed that test as well."

FANCY FENCE HVM

The new Fancy Fence HVM gate is supplied with a passage width of up to 5 metres. "But just like with the standard version, you can put several gates in a row without being able to see where the joins are," Kühnl-Kinel says. "We carried out our testing with a gate height of 1.8 metres, but it can be higher too. It doesn't affect its ability to stop vehicles." The gate used in the test was fitted with a Tousek Pull T15 sliding gate drive. "We've had good experiences with it. But here, too – as with the standard gate – any type of drive can be used. If the installer or their customer prefers to use a drive made by Came, Faac or Nice, we'll use that. The gate has an underground counterweight, meaning that the drive unit only needs to provide the movement – it doesn't need to carry the weight of the gate leaf." The new Fancy Fence HVM gate is available to order as of this spring. ■







4

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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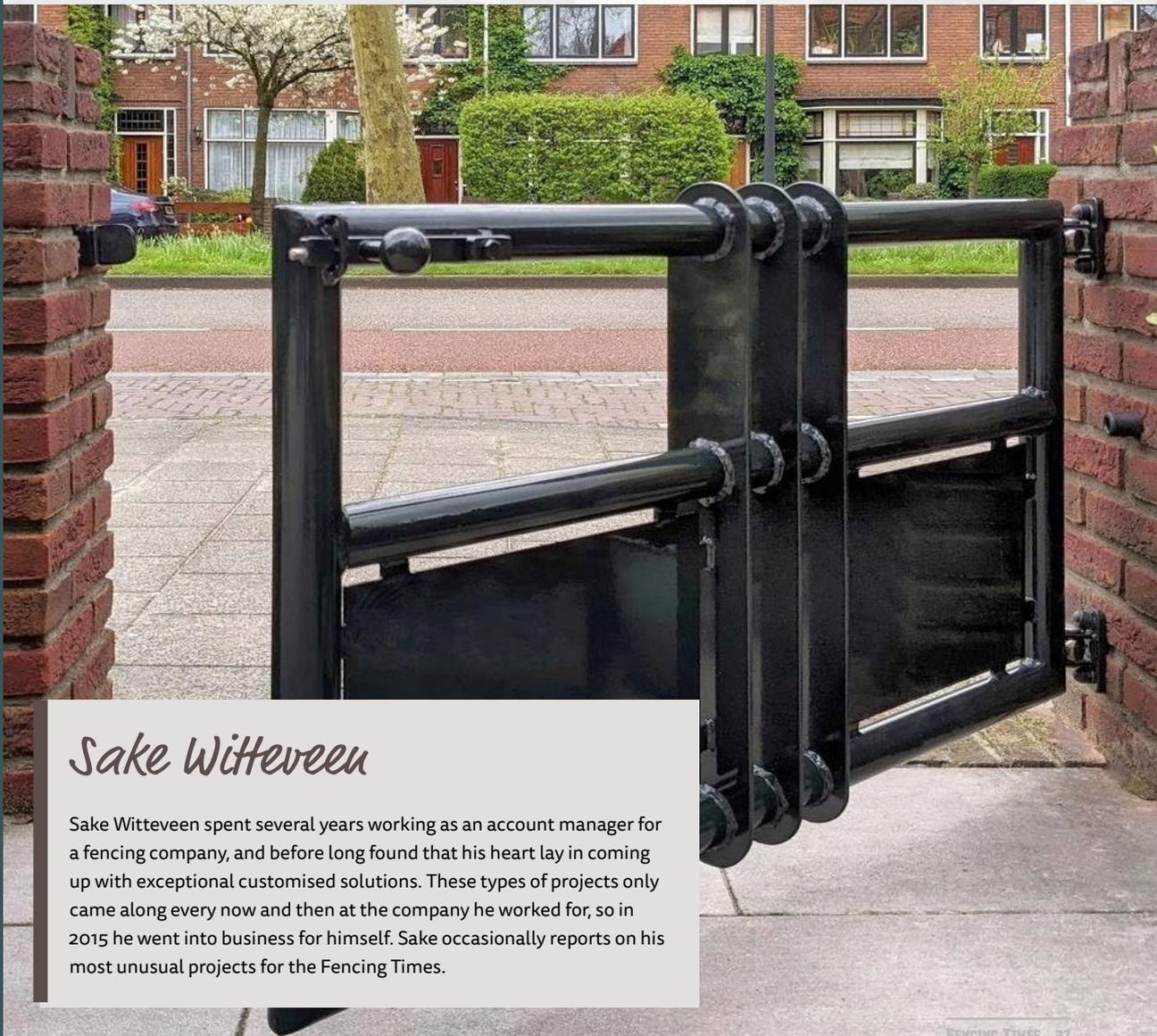
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1930s-style fencing

The Professoerwijk (professors' quarter) in the Dutch city of Leiden was built in the 1920s and '30s for the city's more affluent residents, and is full of larger-than-average terrace houses. Houses of this era typically feature front gardens bordered by low walls with tubular

steel fencing on top and in between them. In most of these houses neither the walls or the tubes are still in good condition after 100 years - if they're still there at all. The walls are crumbling and subsiding, the copings are broken and the tubes have rusted.



Sake Witteveen

Sake Witteveen spent several years working as an account manager for a fencing company, and before long found that his heart lay in coming up with exceptional customised solutions. These types of projects only came along every now and then at the company he worked for, so in 2015 he went into business for himself. Sake occasionally reports on his most unusual projects for the Fencing Times.



The new
old-style fence

But these things don't, in themselves, mean that all these fences need to be replaced right away. As fun as this profession is and however much I like selling new fences, the old walls and fences in the neighbourhood exude a particular atmosphere that's in keeping with the character of the area. The houses, the trees, and sometimes even the cobbled streets... everything in the neighbourhood is 100 years old and the old fences, however sagging, rusted and bent, are authentic and fit in perfectly. Just lean a couple of rusty bikes against them for the finishing touch to the cityscape. Charming, and irreplaceable.

But this spring I had a call from a customer whose old walls had been in too poor a condition to be refurbished. He'd had them demolished and rebuilt, and wanted to know if I was able to create a replica of the steel fencing that could still be seen here and there in the neighbourhood. Obviously there were no technical drawings available, and few archival images either, as all architectural drawings of the area had been destroyed in a major fire at the city archives in 1929. The only way to find examples was to look around the neighbourhood. It then became clear that, although the walls themselves are often still standing, over the years unfortunately most of the original fencing has disappeared. This is of course understandable; at that time steel wasn't galvanised, merely given an external coating of red lead primer. No matter how hard some of the residents did their best to keep the steel's paint fresh, the rust from within is unstoppable.

A street in the same neighbourhood. The walls – which have sometimes been refurbished multiple times – are often still there, but the fences on top are rarely original. (Photo: Google Street View)





100



A matching pedestrian gate



Fortunately fences in the original condition can still be found here and there and I was able to photograph them. I then took these photos to a metalworker with a small workshop at home. He turned 65 this year and is a consummate craftsman, with 40 years of experience and a brilliant sense of aesthetics, as well as an eye for detail and the perfect finish. He no longer works full-time and only takes on smaller jobs. Naturally there are bigger welding and construction companies or smithies who can do this type of work, but the rates are often almost unaffordable and the costing inexplicable. I'm not a fan. Needless to say, the fence we recreated here wasn't cheap in the end either, but the price was clear and straightforward and to me that's what's important – just a normal price for a beautiful product.

We screwed the tubes to the walls of the new fence, which isn't exactly the same as how it was done on the old fences; for these, the pipes were built into the wall during its construction. In this case the walls had already been completed, and anyway building the pipes into the masonry increases the chance of them rusting through. We also screwed on the decorative elements made of sheet steel, which again had been built into the original walls.

The customer also wanted a pedestrian gate for the path leading to his front door. We weren't able to find a 100-year-old example of one, and I have to say that I don't think gates were ever installed at the time the neighbourhood was built. We eventually came

across a gate in the neighbourhood that, while clearly not an original gate from a century ago, is a good match for the fencing style. We used it as an example.

All in all it's a project that I'm very proud of. With the surface treatments available today – pieces individually galvanised and powder-coated in monumental green – the fence will last for many decades, or perhaps even another 100 years. And the house, despite its brand-new fence, still has an authentic 1930s appearance. I know for a fact that this customer will more than recover the price he paid for his fence, should he ever decide to sell the house. ■

This gate in the same street was used as a starting point



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New management team for Alpsteinzaun and Alpsteintor

Fencing company Alpsteinzaun, from Arnegg near St Gallen in north-eastern Switzerland, is under new management. On 1 April, founder Hans Graf passed the baton to his daughter Livia and his business partner Manuel Enzler.





Before beginning his fencing company, Hans Graf had a farm with cows and horses. “I’ve kept it on, as a sort of hobby,” he says. “Over the past 20 years I’ve only been able to spend time with the animals in the mornings and evenings before and after work, and that really wasn’t enough for me. That’s why Livia and Manuel have now taken over the management, so I can spend more time on the farm.”

Alpsteinzaun has eight installation teams on the road and works for customers across all categories, from prisons to farmers who want to fence off a field. The company also has its own fencing market, where DIY customers can bring a trailer along and purchase fencing components.

Livia, who at 23 is the same age as the business, grew up with fencing. “It was very quickly obvious that my future is in the fencing industry too,” she says. “I grew up with it, but I really enjoy it as well. No two days are the same, there are new challenges all the time. And I also love seeing our own fences and gates, both in the area and everywhere. Almost without exception, the fences make the buildings they surround look more attractive or luxurious. That makes me incredibly proud.”

When asked if her age provokes sceptical responses, she answers laconically. “I can’t change the fact that I’m so young,” she says. “I’m bound to run into all sorts of things that I don’t have any experience with yet. But common sense often takes you a long way too, and I’ve never been one to be scared of new challenges. Fortunately I don’t have to do it alone either – I have a great co-director.”





Livia Graf

Age: 23
Education: Office manager (and currently doing agricultural training)
Hobbies: Riding, photography, farm life
With the company: since 2019

Manuel Euzler

Age: 29
Education: Electrician & technical office manager
Hobbies: Football coach
With the company: since 2017

Manuel and Livia with founder Hans

The name of that co-director is Manuel Enzler. Manuel had already been responsible for gate installation company Alpsteintor since 2018, when Hans Graf set it up under a separate limited company. *“Manuel has also been familiar with the business since his childhood,”* Livia says. *“His father Ruedi has been a project manager with us for 9 years, and his mother is my Gotti!”* Manuel, who also grew up on a farm, started out as an electrician. His passion is automation, and making it as easy as possible for customers to manage their access. *“But he’s a true all-rounder, and obviously he can also do fencing. ‘Nothing’s impossible,’ he always says. From now on we’ll manage both companies together.”*

The two new directors are very much looking forward to their new positions. *“Both businesses are running well,”* Livia says. *“We’ve got an amazing team, with installers who come up with solutions themselves if they encounter unexpected things on a project. And we’ve got three good project managers, who take responsibility for every project and don’t rest until the customer is happy. Despite that, we obviously have our own ideas and we can’t wait to put them into action. For 2023 our motto is: We look at where we are, set the sails in the right position, and make use of the new wind.”* ■

A note from the editors:

Congratulations, Livia and Manuel, on your new challenge. We wish you a prosperous future and, above all, a lot of enjoyment. And to Livia: hopefully you won’t be too busy now to keep taking photos and sending them in – we always look forward to seeing them!

1) ‘Gotti’ is Swiss German for godmother





Alpsteinzaun und Alpsteintor

The company name refers to the region in which the business is based. The Alpstein is a subgroup of the Appenzeller Alps and is situated across the Swiss cantons of Appenzell Innerrhoden, Appenzell Ausserrhoden and St Gallen. Despite its rather low altitude in comparison to other Alpine peaks – the highest mountain is Säntis, at 2501 metres – the Alpstein has an imposing appearance due to its northern location only a short distance from Lake Constance (just under 30 kilometres as the crow flies).

Location:	Arnegg, Switzerland
Founded:	2000 (originally as Zaunteam Hans Graf)
Founder:	Hans Graf
Number of teams on the road:	8 (7 fencing installation, 1 electrical)
Customer base:	Farmers, private individuals, industry and governments, right through to prisons

Focus on End Stops

Gate Safety by Design

There have been a number of accidents that have involved sliding gate leaves falling, notably the tragic death of Jill Lunn in April 2013 who was killed when a giant steel gate leaf toppled on her at her home near Norwich, UK.

This could very easily equally happen on a manually operated gate, or on an automated gate which has been put into manual operation. Indeed, another case involved a sliding gate in a school setting, that had been changed from an automated to manual operation, the gate over-ran and fell on a child causing a serious but thankfully not fatal injury.

With every case, it is clear that a risk assessment had either not been carried out to mitigate the risks or that there had been a failure to identify all the key risks.

In normal automatic operation most sliding gates position themselves at the open and closed positions by the use of limit switches or encoders. However, if the limits fail for whatever reason, it is essential that the risk of the gate over travelling and falling are taken into consideration.

Richard Jackson

For many years, Richard Jackson was responsible for running English fencing business H.S. Jackson & Son. Based in Ashford, Kent, it's one of the largest fencing companies in the UK. In 2010, after separate gate accidents took the lives of two children in quick succession, Richard founded Gate Safe, a charity dedicated to increasing gate safety. In 2012 he handed the reins of Jacksons Fencing to his brother Peter, freeing himself to focus entirely on Gate Safe.





As is commonplace, there are a number of ways that this can be achieved. For example, you could use physical stops at either end of the travel of the gate leaf, stop posts and ground stops. Another option could be to have slam plates fitted both to the gate leaf and the support posts, that are sufficiently robust to stop the gate over travelling. This might be more appropriate for a cantilever gate where the alignment to a physical stop may not be so accurate due to the wind flexing the gate leaf. Or you could apply multiple options – a physical stop in the closed position and a second support post that supports the gate if it over travels in the opening cycle.

In any of the options these end stops should be secured by multiple fixings and must be sufficiently robust to be capable of stopping the gate leaf – the British Standard states there should be a safety factor of 3.5 times the expected maximum load.

When the appropriate solution has been identified, the installer must be confident that by eliminating one risk they have not created a further danger, which means a return to the original risk assessment to check for any potential additional hazards. These risks must be mitigated or if they are deemed negligible, they may be classed as residual risks that are noted as not warranting further action. Regardless of this, it's imperative that the installer logs these actions in writing to provide a clear audit trail.

Gates found without end stops should be taken out of service until remedial works have been carried out and should be securely held in a position that ensures that no accidental movement can occur until the necessary corrections have been made. ■



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LET'S GO HIGH-TECH

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



Securing a villa with perimeter detection

Part 2 in the series 'High-Tech Perimeter Security in Practice'

A few years back when I worked for a perimeter security company, I went to see a professional footballer in Bavaria. He lived with his wife and young children in a big villa, in a lovely leafy neighbourhood on the outskirts of a village. He was often away from home playing in international matches, which made his wife nervous. While she did have an au pair and a maid, fame has its down side and when there was a major match on anyone could tell that she was more or less at home by herself. The villa was very well protected both structurally and electronically, but that didn't provide her with sufficient reassurance. She wanted to be able to know that something was wrong right from an early stage, not just when bad guys were already practically in the house.

THE PROPERTY

At the front of the property the villa was closed off by a white stucco wall of around 1.8 metres high, in the same style as the house. The driveway was protected by an electric gate, with closed infill to prevent people looking in. It was a fairly large block of land, but because the villa was sizeable too, there wasn't too much space to the right and left of the house – we're talking just a few metres to the boundary with the neighbour's property. Both sides of the block were heavily overgrown, and the same on the neighbouring properties. There were fences to either side, both left and right, but these were completely overgrown with plants. The owner had installed wooden fences in front of these to provide additional protection from prying eyes.

To the front of the villa, on the right-hand side next to the driveway, was a lawn with flowerbeds, sloping upwards and ending at the level of the first floor. In fact the double garage was situated under this sloping portion. If you walked up the slope on that side, you could actually step right onto the first-floor balcony where the bedrooms are located. The ascending section ended at a wall with a small pedestrian gate, on the other side of which were stairs leading downwards. Those stairs led back to the ground floor, and to the cellar. The gate was rarely used and was always kept locked.



The left-hand side of the block was flat, but with just 3 metres of space between the villa and the fence on the property boundary. From the driveway was a path to the left running along the house to the back. Next to the path was a garden bed up to the fenceline, heavily overgrown with plants and shrubs. The footpath led to a wide lawn, extending behind the villa across the entire width of the plot and sloping down towards a lake. On the right side of the property was a large pond, which also bordered the terrace. Between the pond and the right-hand gate were several more metres of garden beds, all heavily overgrown with plants and shrubs. So that gives you a good description of the situation.

DRAMA

I've mentioned in previous columns that while many architects and garden designers are able to sketch and imagine the loveliest things, most of them pay no attention at all to the fact that there are also people walking this earth who want to do evil. In security terms this villa was obviously a drama, especially bearing in mind that the lady of the house was often home at home on her own with small children.

The installer who had called me in to help had suggested fitting cameras across the entire property. Other than just a few cameras, such as at the driveway and gate, the clients didn't like this idea. Their reasoning was that large numbers of cameras would end up attracting more attention. The footballer lived there in relatively anonymity and the cameras could give people the idea that there was something worth taking there. And on top of that, his wife wasn't comfortable with what might happen to the images in the control room. She was very protective of her privacy.

So the question I was asked was: Are there other options?

When I'm asked that, I run through the full list of detection systems and see what we can cross off. Usually there are only a few options left over. You then look at the pros and cons of each system and use what best suits the client's requirements – and budget. Fortunately money didn't play a major role in this case. Obviously it's not something that people come out with just like that, especially not to a vendor, but if you use your eyes while you're on that sort of visit you quickly get a feel for it. So we were able to assess all the options based on their usability and effectiveness.



The front of the house viewed from the street, with gate and driveway

POSSIBILITIES

So cameras were off the list. Incidentally, this project was a couple of years ago, when alarm and motion detection technologies were less reliable than they are today. There also wasn't a lot of space next to the house, and there were lots of bushes. These are hardly ideal conditions for cameras, especially not at night. The thermal imaging cameras available today might be a supplementary option, but technology hadn't advanced so far at the time.

The footballer and his wife had the clear wish to know as soon as possible if there was an intruder on the property. The best option for this is a fence detection system, because what these systems do is secure the real periphery, the fencing. Intruders are spotted even before they step onto the property. However, for this to happen, the fence needs to be in good condition and also free of vegetation, which wasn't the case here. On top of that, there was a wall at the front and no fence at all at the rear of the property, where the edge of the lake was the natural perimeter. So fence detection wasn't an option either.

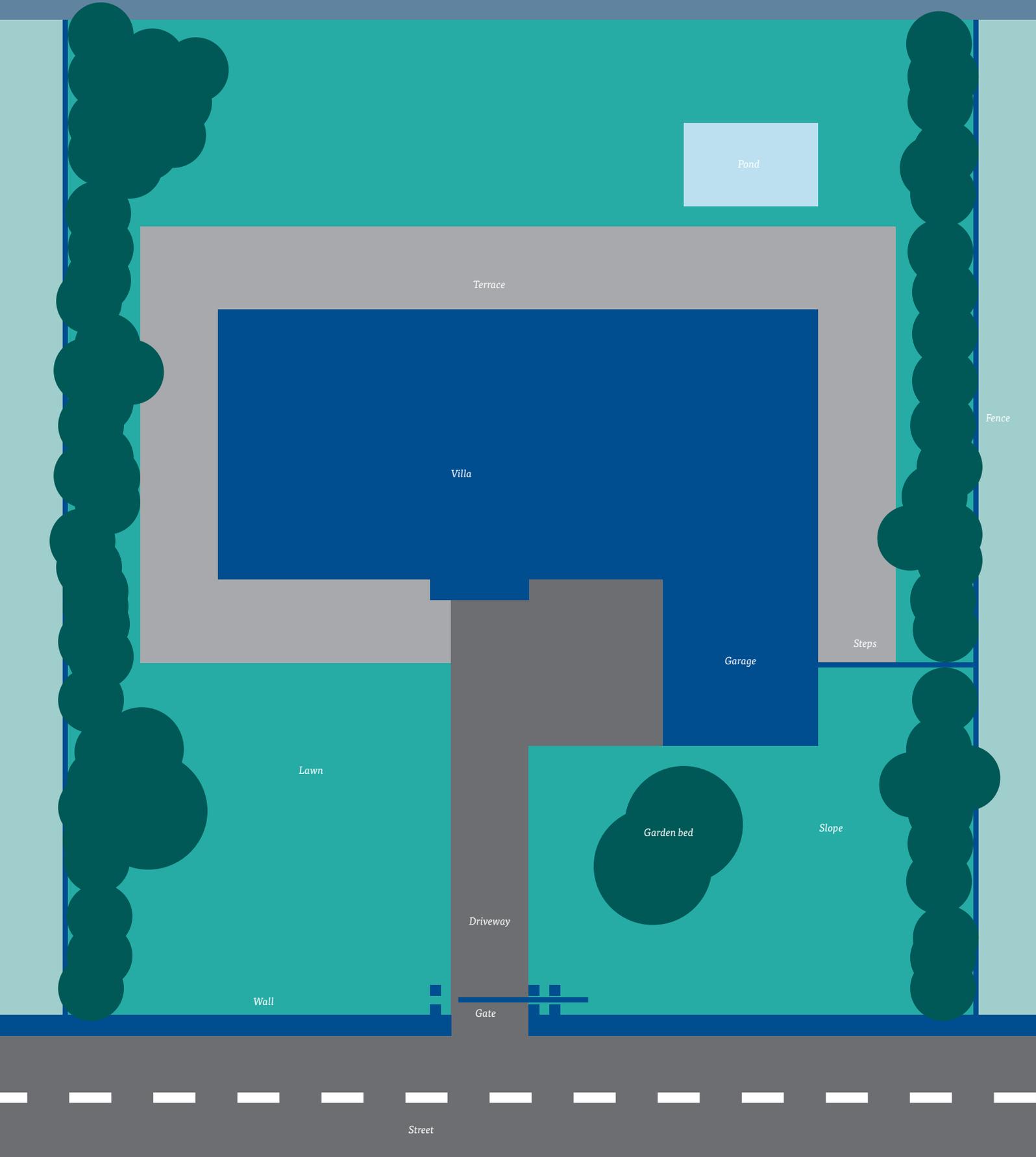
Then the next option was a field detection systems; these can be fitted to the inside of the wall or fence. Here we're talking about radar, microwave, infrared and laser systems.

Whatever technology you use here, they all have one thing in common: the area they secure needs to be free of movement, be it by bushes, trees, or anything else. At the front on the inside of the wall and at the back near the lake edge or the lawn this was doable, but it was absolutely not feasible at the sides of the villa. Unless we cut back all that vegetation. Well, you guessed it: they wouldn't hear of it.

THE SOLUTION

The only remaining option was a ground detection system – and the passive variant in particular, a so-called 'pressure detection system' that uses two buried pipes (hoses) that are filled with liquid and can measure the differences in pressure caused by someone walking close to the hose. There's also an active version of the system that uses a field of radio waves, but the shrubbery in the flowerbeds meant that that type was not an option here. The passive detection system isn't affected by shrubs moving in the wind, as they don't cause pressure differences in the soil. The fluid-filled hoses can be laid between the shrubs with no issue, so the system is ideal for this project, particularly on either side of the villa.

Lake



Ensuring that the hoses are situated as far from the house as possible enables the earliest possible detection in this situation, and thus the longest response time. There wasn't too much time to be gained on the sides of the villa, due to the small amount of space between the villa and the property boundary. However, there was plenty of space to the front and rear of the villa in particular, and laying the hoses as close to the boundary as possible allows for the maximum response time.

For that reason it was decided to put the hoses to the front of the house immediately next to the wall (on the inside, obviously) and those at the back as close to the lake as possible. In both cases the hoses were to be as far away from the villa as we could get them. In this way, anyone who might approach from the front or rear of the property (which is what intruders usually do, as entering via a neighbour's property carries additional risks) would be detected as quickly as possible. Another benefit of this system is that it can be laid in a sloping lawn; having the two hoses at different heights doesn't affect detection. It's even a positive to have an uphill slope, as an intruder will move more slowly and take shorter steps. Passive ground detection is more or less 100 per cent reliable anyway, but on an uphill slope it's guaranteed.

COMPROMISE

So was this the ideal solution then, with no downsides, everybody happy? Well... not quite. The hoses do have to be laid in the ground, and that's a bit of an issue when you're at a villa that's just been completely renovated and the landscaper has just put the finishing touches on the garden.

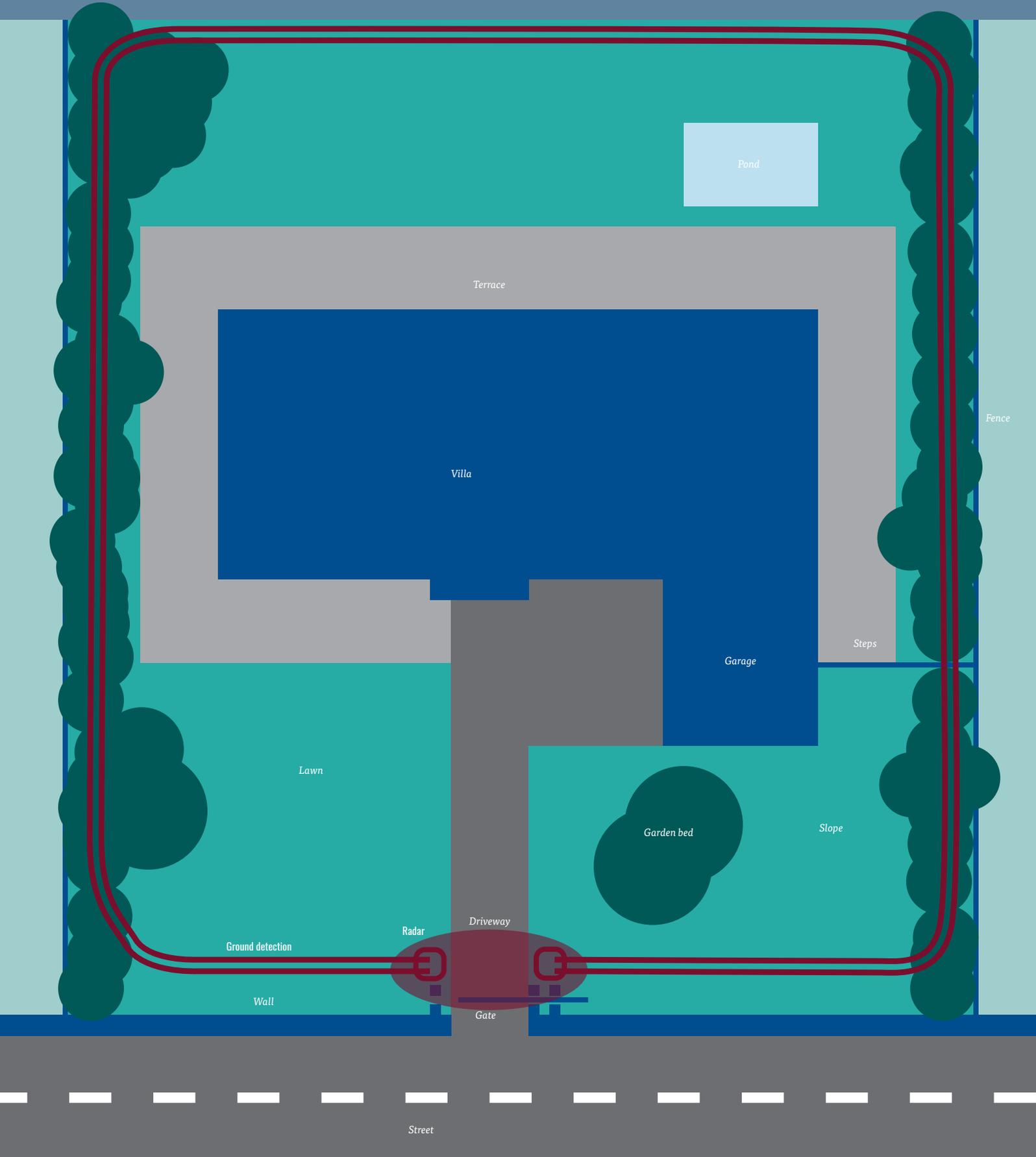
This is the major drawback of ground detection systems: you need to be involved in the project from the earliest stage, before the garden is laid out (or even better, before it's designed). That ensures the least disruption. Usually, however, you're called in too late and then ground detection isn't an option because nobody wants to dig up the garden so soon. In this situation, though, the lady of the house had no other options and her fear won out over the inconvenience – a clear advantage for the one selling the ground detection system.

My advice in these types of situations is to have the digging done by the client's own landscaper or gardener – that means the lowest chance of complaints afterwards, especially with wealthy clients as in this case. Fortunately it doesn't take long before any digging done in a flowerbed is no longer visible. Signs of digging in a lawn take longer to fade away, although the gardener has some influence on that. Good old-fashioned manual work – with a shovel – causes the least damage. As soon as machines are involved the digging looks rough and ugly. Be sure to talk this through with the client and the gardener so both know what to expect.



A random villa that would be suitable for use as the Fencing Times headquarters

Lake



Fence

Pond

Terrace

Villa

Garage

Steps

Lawn

Garden bed

Slope

Driveway

Radar

Ground detection

Wall

Gate

Street

IN PRACTICE

Once the gardener had been called in and we went over everything again, other typical practical problems came to light. For example, it turned out that the driveway paving wasn't laid on a bed of sand, but (with German precision) on a mixture of sand and cement, to prevent subsidence.

This demonstrates another disadvantage of being brought on to a project at a late stage. If the paving is laid on stabilised sand, any pressure waves from intruders will not be transmitted to the hoses; this stabilised sand is actually as hard as concrete. An active ground detection system would be a more appropriate option for securing the driveway now. It works with radio waves, which have no trouble with hard asphalt or concrete surfaces. But the active system had already been crossed off the list due to the shrubbery, and using two different ground detection systems isn't something you do lightly. On top of that, it's an extremely expensive option for a five-metre-wide driveway.

We then considered removing part of the driveway and then re-laying a strip on a bed of sand, but the clients strongly objected to that option. Did the newly-laid driveway really need to be dug up again, on top of digging up the whole garden? Was there really no other option?

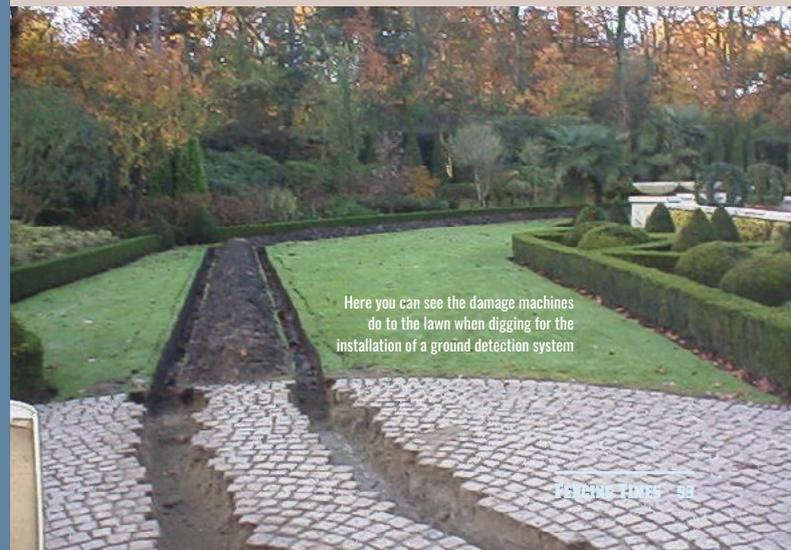
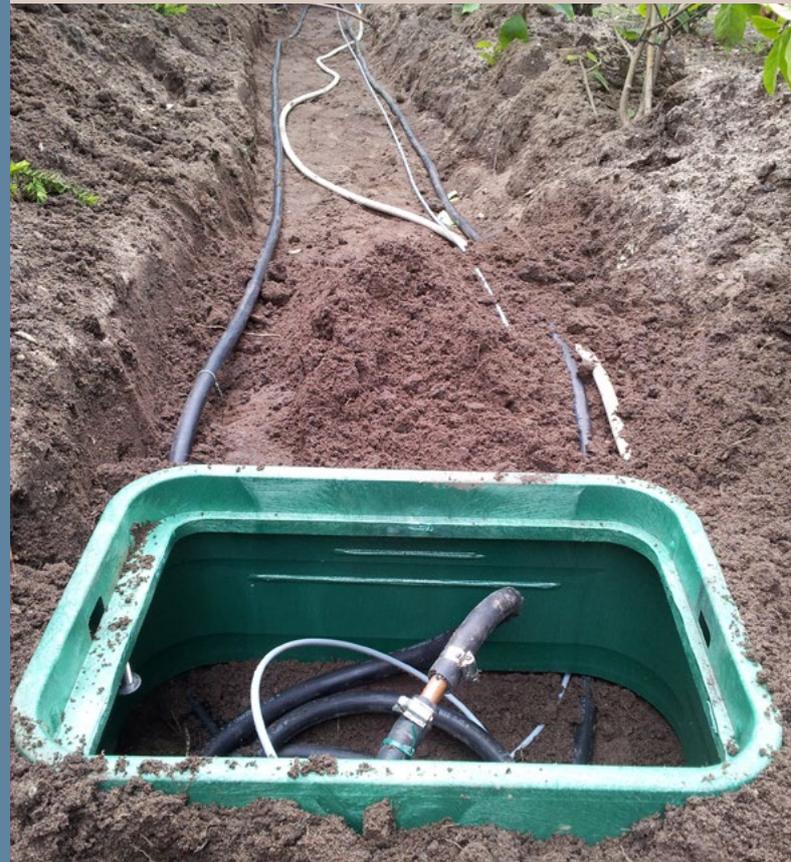
EXTRA WORK

The only other option we could come up with at the time was to secure the sliding gate and driveway with a field detection system, i.e. a system using radar, laser or infrared. Fortunately there was plenty of space here, and no movement from shrubs or plants. We installed a small Doppler radar with a 12-metre range on a small post next to the driveway, covering the gate and the entire width of the driveway. The radar was calibrated for immediate detection of anyone who might climb over the gate outside the range of the ground hoses.

This did mean that the ground detection system, which was initially planned as a closed perimeter system, would no longer be a closed system. This carries risks: intruders who unknowingly seek out the edges of the system can then slip in between the two systems. The only way to avoid this is by ensuring that the ranges of the two systems overlap. It made the layout of the ground system more complicated too; this now had to be laid in a U shape. With an O shape you can add a maintenance pit at any point in the loop, to house the technology that measures pressure differences. This type of pit also requires a power cable and a data cable, so you naturally choose a point that's as close as possible to the house and easily accessible from the house's technical room.

Now the ground detection system was laid out in a type of U shape, with the two end points on either side of the driveway. This meant that additional pits were required, with additional digging needed for the cables. Along with the radar, it meant considerable extra costs – it would have been much cheaper to repave part of the driveway.

Nevertheless, this was the option they chose. Oh well, I wasn't the one paying the bill. The problem was solved and everyone involved was happy. ■





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FENCES IN THE NEWS



31 MAY 2023

Ornamental point on wrought iron fence molests newsreader's eye



Alix Kendall, a newsreader for TV station Fox 9 – and who hasn't heard of her – was visiting a friend when she slipped and fell head first onto a wrought iron fence with ornamental points.

She ended up with a large cut just above her left eye. "It was less than an inch away," she wrote on Instagram. "Otherwise, I'd have lost my eye." Apart from 10 stitches, she escaped with just a

black eye and so she wants to get back to work as soon as possible. As the newsreaders at Fox 9, which broadcasts local news for Minneapolis and Saint Paul, don't have their own make-up team,

Kendall needs to figure out for herself how to cover up the scars before she can go back on air. If you regularly watch Fox 9 for your daily news update, be sure to let us know if she succeeded. ■

Activists breach fence at Berlin airport



We see a nice job coming up for fencing installers in the Berlin area. This winter, some climate activists cut holes in several places in the chain-link fences around Berlin's Brandenburg airport (BER for short) and then glued themselves to the runways. The authorities managed to catch and remove them within 20 minutes or so, but flights were held up for nearly 2 hours. This was just the latest setback for the airport, which was one of Germany's largest construction projects having got underway in 2006.

It was originally scheduled to open in November 2011, but a combination of poor construction planning, lack of construction supervision and extensive technical defects led to the opening date being postponed a total of seven times. With its cost soaring to over seven billion euros, this construction project has become the German symbol for a large-scale government project that gets out of control.

After 14 years of construction, the airport finally opened in October 2020, but as it would now seem, with very poor perimeter security.

We in the industry are well used to fencing being underestimated and thought about too late, so in that respect it's not really surprising

that this is apparently the case here as well. Even so, for a prestige project in which each and every nut and bolt was discussed by 27 different committees in the years prior to its opening, we would have expected otherwise.

The airport itself was not surprised by the incident. *"It was clear that you need to be prepared for the fact that someone could get through this fence,"* a spokesman told television station RBB. *"I don't mean to imply that the fence is unsafe – just the opposite. It conforms to the highest international safety standards. But a fence that is 28 kilometres in length and encloses an area equivalent to 2000 football fields simply*

cannot be guarded in such a way that will stop someone who is hell-bent on getting through it." The latter is of course a fatuous argument. Here on the editorial staff we can reel off without pausing for breath a list of ten fencing types, each of which will withstand intruders for at least long enough that

they can be overpowered by guards or police before they break through the fence. And our regular columnist Rajmond would be delighted to write a security plan for detecting those intruders before they even got anywhere near the fences. But these are all measures that are more expensive than the chain-link fences which currently surround the airport. Anyway, given a few more such incidents they will also realise there in the airport boardrooms that an expensive fence is cheaper than having to regularly shut down all air traffic. And then, of course, 28 kilometres will be a rather nice job. We can't wait. ■



Lightning strikes electric fence around farm

These pictures reveal what happens when lightning strikes an electric fence.

A video surfaced on YouTube, from a farmer in Aiken, South Carolina.

We've no idea how the fence was earthed or whether that would have made any difference, but looking at the screenshots - especially the smoke rising from the entire length of the fence - it must have been an almighty strike. ■



Mesh in chain-link fence too small for cute fox cub



Whenever we look for news for this column, we stumble upon countless photos and videos of animals that have got themselves stuck in a fence.

Practically all of these news stories are the same and not worth mentioning but for this adorable fox cub we will make an exception because it's so cute.

The little creature got stuck in a wire fence in Lexington, Kentucky and was freed with a pair of bolt cutters by people from Lexington-Fayette Animal Care & Control.

They took him to the Kentucky Wildlife Centre to recuperate. The latest reports say that the fox cub is recovering well and can soon be released back to the wild. ■

According to a survey of 100 installers:

84% reported unsafe design to be the most common cause for automated gate accidents in the last 10 years

Overwhelming majority advised that well over half of gates checked / maintained were 'unsafe by design'

62% believed the design errors are the responsibility of inappropriately trained installers



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THE JOB

You will actively seek out information of interest to fence installers. You will contact producers, wholesalers, trade show organisers and industry associations on the phone. You will scour their websites, follow them on social media and look for them at trade shows and other events and quiz them about developments in their company or organisation. Then you will sieve this information for newsworthiness and write an article about it – or deliver the information to a copywriter.

YOU THE PERSON

- You have a permanent passion for fencing. As soon as you got involved with the industry, you never wanted to leave it
- You are familiar with construction culture and the mentality of fencing installers
- You work in an accurate manner with an eye for detail and you enjoy immersing yourself in a subject
- You speak at least German and English. Other languages such as French, Italian, Polish and Dutch are a nice-to-have
- Preferably, you have the ability to write well or would enjoy learning to do so, but this is not a firm requirement
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