



# Dutch

*Style*



**Scott MacCallum travelled to the Netherlands to visit two companies whose product Campey Turf Care has brought into its portfolio**

On the face of it similarities may be difficult to detect but there is actually a close link between the late England Football Manager, Bobby Robson, and Richard Campey, founder and owner of Campey Turf Care Systems.

In the late '70s Bobby Robson transformed his Ipswich Town team from one of England's better teams into one of the top teams in Europe, culminating in the winning of the UEFA Cup in 1981. He did so thanks to the enlightened signing of two Dutchmen, Arnold Muhren and Frans Thyssen, whose continental talents – rare in English football in those days – gave Ipswich that little something extra.

Richard Campey also made two enlightened Dutch signings when he added Imants and Vredo to his stable of fine turf and agricultural machinery manufacturers, whose product he sells throughout the world. The top of the range equipment has ensured that many sports clubs, and a growing number of contractors and farms, now have machinery which has been supplied to them by Campey Turf Care Systems.

Imants and Vredo are similarly sized companies, each with just under 50 employees, who excel in producing well engineered solutions to specific turf related issues.

Imants celebrated its 125th

*Fasteners*





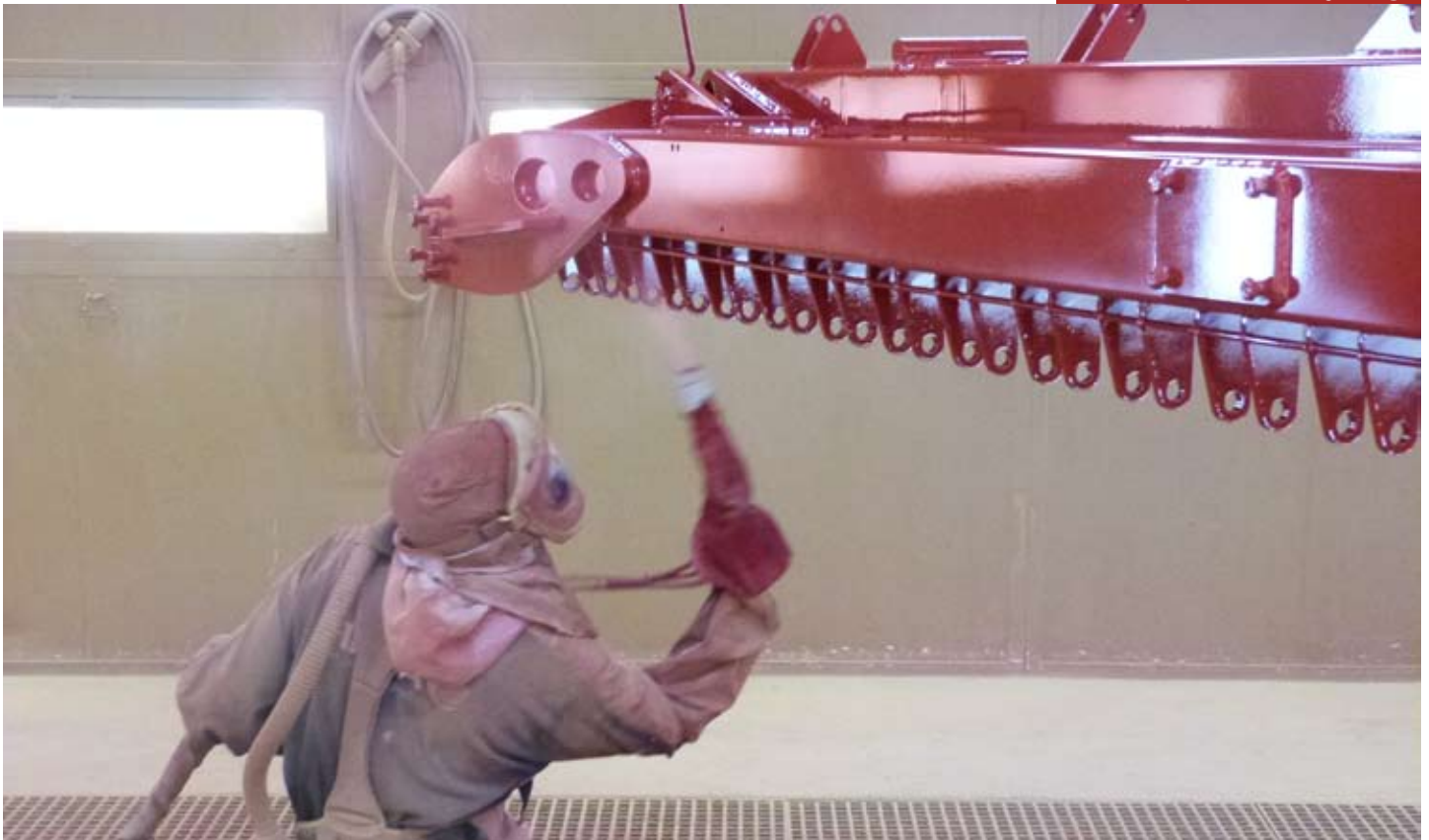
► anniversary in 2010 but other than its age it is a very modern company. Jos Imants was a blacksmith, living in the village of Reusel on the Belgian border, who developed and built a horse drawn plough which proved very popular throughout the country which led to the setting up of a sales division and a developing range of products. The plough proved the main product until the 1960s when it dropped out of fashion and the company then developed a spader which proved extremely successful throughout the '70s and '80s.

The company's major shareholder is now Felix Peters, who started on the sales team 20 years ago and took over the company in 1995. He has since masterminded the development of the product range which now boasts such well known tools as the Shockwave; Rotoknife; Rotosweep; Rotoblast; Sandcat; Greenwave as well as the range of Koro products for which Imants bought the rights.

The company now produces 400 machines a year with 70 per cent of them exported – a huge map of the world covers one wall of the board room, highlighting everywhere an Imants product has been bought and it is an impressive sight.

“We have a staff of 45 with five full time engineers, using 3D design techniques, and eight per cent of turnover is invested in R&D. With niche product being sold throughout the world, securing patents in every

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country is not possible so we have to keep ahead of the copiers and competition by continual innovation and producing new products,” explained Felix.

The company has increased its turnover by 80 per cent in the last five years with 15 per cent annual growth and has benefited from a recent change in production methods. Manufacturing work is not permitted to start until everything needed to complete the job is in place to remove the need to walk across the factory floor to collect nuts and bolts, etc.

“A consultant undertook a survey for us and we discovered that under the old method someone had to walk across the factory floor 35 times to collect bolts for just one machine. We have saved a great deal of time,” explained Hans de Kort, who joined the company from the automotive industry eight years ago and who is now a shareholder.

This has reduced lead time for orders from 12 weeks to just four.

Since its inception, Imants has always been a responsible employer with the company motto: “The men behind the machines are as important as the man behind the director’s desk”.

Vredo is another family company, but much younger than Imants, founded as it was in 1976.

Now 1976 boasted something we have not seen for several years – a stonking hot summer – and as a result

all the fields across Holland were brown. The de Vree family had been agricultural contractors, but felt that they needed to find a way to make the fields green again so thus the Vredo Overseeder was developed and the company founded to manufacture it.

Initially, ten were built and sold immediately, even without the aid of a sales team, and the company was off and running.

The overseeder has remained a consistent best seller with its unique double disc system proving extremely efficient and it has been refined to inject slurry into the soil as well which has worked extremely well in agriculture, but is now being considered for sports fields as well.

The company currently employs 47 – also boasting a highly sophisticated R&D department – and produced 12 million euro turnover this year alone. They use 350 tonnes of steel each year and use a laser cutter which can cut through a kilometre of steel each day. It exports around 425 machines to 26 countries each year and find customers as the best sportclubs, professional contractors, golf clubs, farmers and local authorities. It also invests approximately six per cent of its turnover in research and development and is still driven forward by Hans de Vree who is director, owner and also the creative mind.

Campey Turf Care collaborates closely with both companies on

product and, like Sir Bobby Robson, Richard Campey can see the double Dutch route to success.

“We are proud to be working very closely together with both these innovative companies. The build quality is always very high giving trouble-free machines that we are confident to sell to turf professionals and contractors,” said Richard.

“These machines have helped to achieve better quality playing surfaces at all levels. There will be more new products coming along from these companies in the next five years that will further enhance their portfolios, simply because they are committed to investing in research and development. This is paramount to keeping ahead of the game.”

Whatever the turf care equivalent of the UEFA Cup, wise heads will have a few euro on Campey to pick up the trophy in the next couple of seasons.

**Left, on the Imants factory floor. Above, at work in the paint shop. Below, football allegiances...**

