Hugh Tilley canvasses opinion on six TMV and ATVs from the people who know them best.

Whether their main used is as course runabout, to carry specific attachments or as the major component of greens maintenance, turf maintenance and all terrain vehicles (TMVs and ATVs) have found a place on most UK golf courses. Cushman has arguably become a generic name and the best known of TMVs, perhaps with the greatest number of attachments built for it, however there are competitors and most greenkeepers agree that a TMV is not always the best machine to carry out some tasks, nor are they ideal for three point linkage implements. For tasks such as ball collection or course ranger duties, expect to have to operate and maintain it, and it is no good having a machine which not everyone is happy with.

The machine is expected to undertake the majority of greens and tee work, and for this the club has top dresser, cargo box, sprayer and multi-tine aerator. These units have the same working width as the Workhorse itself thus making matching runs easy, particularly when topdressing. Stephen commented that turning on and off the topdresser drive was extremely easy and pleasant as the lever was very conveniently placed. Important features in the selection apart from the easiness of driving was the fact that the engine is mounted at the front under a bonnet where it is extremely convenient for maintenance. The "solid" construction of the machine was another factor and it felt safe with four wheels and a good track width. Stephen said that they undertake their own machine maintenance and the good accessibility made this simple, it also meant that such routines as checking oil levels was less likely to be neglected. The three cylinder Kubota diesel rated at 23.5 hp has adequate power, and the payload is around a tonne. Although Stephen felt that the machine may be heavier than its competition it is still very nimble, and it does have very wide wheels, thus he is perfectly happy to have it in his greens.

The SV of the name means "Systems Vehicle" - Tiverton Golf Club has now had its own for a couple of months and the club extremely satisfied with it. Bought through MST at Tiverton nevertheless consideration was given for several other competitive machines. Head Greenkeeper Tiverton is Stephen Baker and he said that selecting the Jacobsen was a joint decision because all four of the greenkeepers expect to have to operate and maintain it, and it is no good having a machine which not everyone is happy with.

The three cylinder Kubota 22hp engined diesel Trucksters, both three wheel versions and the club likes them. Naturally Salisbury has an extensive range of equipment to fit, including a three point linkage kit which has yet to be used. The main uses for the machines apart from transport of staff and materials is for spraying and top dressing. At the present one machine is being used exclusively with a Hardi sprayer, while the other alternates between transport duties, topdressing and other implement tasks. The 'stable' includes two types of slitter, a coring drum and brush.

The only serious reservation he has is over the pt which at 1000 rpm is too fast for the many implements which use (the normal European speed) 540 rpm. Mention was also made of the fact that the machine found difficulty maintaining a constant speed on undulating ground, so that the operator has to consciously compensate with the throttle to maintain his speed when spraying. There are other little niggles such as the seats which are not well attached and a cab induced drone which is "wearing" for the operator over day long use. The service record includes a parking brake cable which snapped, but with this as with other items no problems have been found with Ransomes won't increase the Turf Trucksters size, add complications or in any way 'tart the machines up'.

Cushman Turf Trucksters on Salisbury & South Wilts GC

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Attaching implements is easy, they are very comfortable. The new machine is seen as offering several important improvements on previous models, such as wider lower ground pressure tyres, greater ground clearance and several other upgrades which add strength and reliability to the machine – and better looks in the Ransomes livery. Nevertheless the machine still scores at Salisbury on its simplicity, ease of use and overall efficiency for the job.

Toro Workman 3300D - Highpost GC near Salisbury.

Lauchlan Millar “inherited” the Workman when he moved to Highpost earlier this year, in this time he has become an ardent fan of it. Although only 18 months old the Highpost machine has clocked up 1,000 hours with few problems. A lot of the work has been hauling soil, sand and other materials around the 18 hole course during the winter when the ground was too wet to take a tractor and trailer. Lauchlan praised the brakes and surefootedness of the machine which allows the operator to back to the edge of a bunker and tip in the knowledge that the machine won’t slide in. The hydraulic tip works even with a full load of over a tonne. Highpost has the full length cargo box which was considered the most useful option, a decision which was not been regretted. Another option which has been appreciated is the cab, “the course is not called Highpost for nothing,” Lauchlan added. It is possible to get the machine to do anything but the Jacobsen and Cushman only one rear wheel are driven. This was not a problem as it was a reflection of the natural result of making a light-footed carrier which can be taken onto greens without marking them. The Workman mounts its 21hp Mitsubishi engine and transmission centrally and integrates them with the rear axle to give better balance. There are two short constant velocity joints on the transaxle and Highpost have had a problem with one.

The machine was bought with topdressing as a priority use and for this it has been “brilliant”. “I was stunned how fast it works,” Lauchlan said. “We can topdress all18 greens in under a day including the brushing in. The machine has a fast transport speed and a topdresser which is wider than the loader bucket thus non-working time is minimised. Toro provides a key lock-out feature which prevents operators accessing 3rd gear unless it is unlocked by key. “We don't need that feature here, but I foresee a lot of clubs where it would prevent abuse,” he commented – “members don't like to see greenkeepers racing around the course.”

Other uses for Highpost's Workman include slitting, tineing and brushing. The brush is used on Saturdays and Sundays rather than switching, “and you can't see any marks.”

Routine service and maintenance is carried out by Highpost staff themselves, but the machine did go back to Romsey Garden Machinery for a 1000 hr/pre season service this winter. There were no criticisms over access to the mechanicals which live under the body, props are supplied to hold the body up safely and servicing was rated as “easy”. The considered user opinion on the Toro Workman at Highpost is that it is a well thought out machine, with a suspension which is “streets ahead” of the competition.

Kawasaki Mules at Donnington Grove, near Newbury

Two Mule 1000s on the Donnington Grove Country Club have a hard life and are putting a lot of miles under their wheels. Bought specifically because there is a lot of running around to do, it is over a mile to the furthest hole, and even the nearest is over half a mile from the ex-farm buildings used as the greenkeepers' base. Bought in March 1993, each has now clocked up about 7500 miles, and cost a significant sum in replacement parts. Course Manager, David Winterton, was happy that he received good recommendations for the Mule, David conceded that new models are likely to be better.

Donnington’s experience with the Mules was that they need a skilled mechanic close by, fortunately they have one in-house, otherwise they might not have kept the machines. Apart from replacing parts there had been a regular need to re-tune the twin carburettors, however David conceded that new models are likely to be better.

Although on the face of it this does not appear an ideal recommendation for the Mule, David was happy that he received good value, particularly as they did a...
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Now it’s 92% sold for the 1996 BTME

The 1996 BTME at Harrogate on January 24-26 is already 92% sold – and that’s including the additional space in Hall D which has been added for next year’s show.

New companies which are showing for the first time or returning next year are Wood Graphics, Sowards, Broadside Publishing and Phoenix Sports Turf Services.

The BIGGA stand will have a new home for ’96, moving to Hall D where you can find out all the usual information about membership, educational initiatives and Greenkeeper International. You will also be able to purchase merchandise including blazers, rain suits and reference books.

Hall D will also feature expanded catering facilities.

The educational programme is all but finalised and with speakers travelling from USA, Canada, Switzerland and Portugal it will be the most comprehensive programme found anywhere in Europe. The National Education Conference, the specialist workshop programmes and the Seminars which run in conjunction with the exhibition are second to none.

BTME 96 will be the place to be next year but don’t just take our word for it. Here’s what Andie Hardie, Sales Director of Gem Professional said about it: “The show goes from strength to strength and is an absolute must for any organisation active in the amenity market today.”

AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. Name one of the countries from which National Education Conference speakers are coming.
2. In which hall will you find the BIGGA stand?

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Third prize: One night’s accommodation in a top Harrogate hotel and entry to all education seminar sessions.

job which he felt nothing else could do significantly better or cheaper.

Huxleys Huxtruck at Maidenhead GC

Right price and package with proven backing were important factors in Maidenhead GC’s selection of the Huxtruck. It was supplied with box, cab and topper and also a Hardi sprayer. In future there is a prospect of purchasing a Core-master, when the hydrostatic drive of the Huxtruck will mean no problem travelling at the very slow pace required for this operation. There was some initial scepticism about the electronic speed control however it has been found to work very well and the greenkeepers have become enthusiastic about it.

Gordon Payne, Head Greenkeeper and Chris Mitchell, First Assistant and main operator were very positive about the machine. They had found that in almost all respects it was better than the well known machine it replaced. For instance they considered it to be better made with a stronger box, better to tip and it has a better turning circle. They were also sold on hydrostatics, feeling these to be simpler, more flexible and less prone to wear and tear. Power steering and a well placed greasing points to ease and no problems of access.

Huxleys had listened to greenkeepers about what they want in a hydrostatic drive and this material withstands a greater knock than “tin” without damage or loss of paint, although once damaged it was more difficult to repair. The feeling was that it would keep its good looks better.

Both greenkeepers felt that Huxleys had listened to greenkeepers about what they want in a TMV, and they complimented the attention to detail such as the higher front to the box which prevents material tipping down the front onto the works beneath. They also liked the cab which was easy to remove, furthermore it has a better windscreen wiper for mention as was the hydraulically drivenpto.

John Deere Gators at Wootton Bassett Golf Club

American Golf (UK) Ltd, operator of Wootton Bassett Golf Club near Swindon, has purchased about ten John Deere Gators for UK courses and has three working on this particular course. Their main
use is as lightweight runabouts with ability to carry a significant payload. The Wootton Bassett's machines are in constant use every day and Laurence Pithie, Director of Maintenance UK, said because of the drainage problems inherited on the course they were about the only machines which could be used this winter. Two of the machines are 4x2 models – four wheels with two driven while one is a 6x4. The latter carries a greater load and is more comfortable to ride, but is also more difficult to steer. However according to Mark Silk, course superintendent, once you have the knack of using the throttle to assist the turn it is no more difficult than the normal two wheel drive machines, although there is less manoeuvrability.

Mark admitted that the machines were often overloaded, nominal capacities are 408kg and 544kg, but at Wootton Bassett they pile the box as high as they can. With the soil, sand and gravel which so often are the payload this has had the local distributor, John Miller Ltd at Chippenham, wincing. Nevertheless there has been very little downtime for the machines, the main replacements have been two king pins and an exhaust on the two 4x2s which are now almost eighteen months old. Drive belts have also been replaced once, more as routine than necessity, as the cost is only £20. The six wheeler is a year younger than the four-wheelers.

Options specified on the machines include the plastic bed liner, electro-hydraulic box tip, heavy duty air filters and a tow hitch. The standard knobbly tyres have been retained, but when questioned about any damage to the turf, Mark was adamant that there was very little even with the machines fully laden. Although the engines are petrol driven Wootton Bassett has found them very economic, tanks are normally filled about once a week, and "filled" means three quarters full as there can be some leakage from the cap breather when filled right up. The club has a licensed petrol store which is kept locked and complies with local authority and fire brigade requirements, although storage quantities probably don't need this. Thus there were none of the problems often levelled against petrol machines.

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