Simon Hutton is a remarkable young man. As Scott MacCallum found out, he has two full time jobs and puts more than his fair share of overtime into both of them...

Simon Hutton is a remarkable young man. As Scott MacCallum found out, he has two full time jobs and puts more than his fair share of overtime into both of them. With a talent for greenkeeping, he is described by others as "come lately" to greenkeeping. Simon has already chalked up almost 14 years of experience, and has a network of contacts to draw on from all aspects of the industry to enable him to carry out the tasks he is unable to undertake himself.

Oh yes. Simon has just turned 22. His is a remarkable story of a single minded determination to succeed in a profession for which he has had a passion since an early age, and of a family who have pulled together to create a superb little golf club which certainly lives up to the term "family concern".

"My father, Tim, was the professional at Sleaford Golf Club and it was always his dream to have his own golf course," explained Simon, as he grabbed a bite of breakfast in the attractive little Sudbrook Moor clubhouse.

In the early days Simon worked on the course in his spare time after school.

"School was not a priority for me," he confessed. "From the age of eight I used to hand cut the greens and cut the rough while my mother, Judith, who was a teacher at the time, used to cut the fairways in an old Massey Ferguson with trailed gangs when she got home from work," said Simon, who mused about how such a situation would go down with the Health and Safety Executive these days.

Judith retired from greenkeeping duties when they employed Ernie Tatchell, as a professional/mechanic. Other labour is brought in on a self-employed basis.

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September 2000  Greenkeeper International  31
Simon says

Simon’s love of all things greenkeeping began as he grew up in the family home on Sleaford Golf Club itself.

“I used to love knocking about with the greenkeepers and did so every spare minute I had,” recalled Simon, who remembers him Dunn, Head Greenkeeper at Sleaford as well as John Scottney, who took over a year before the Hutton family began their great adventure.

“This is my element when I bought this place because I could be hands on.”

Simon worked full-time on the course when he left school at 16 and the next big leap for the course came in 97.

“We bought another four acres and put two new holes to replace two not so good holes. It made it a proper course and we had 18 greens and nine tees which means that galleries play to a different green on the back nine.”

His greenkeeping skills have been accumulated through experience, reading books and magazines while he forged friendships with people who were able to pass on knowledge to him.

“I’m a quick learner and although I’ve made mistakes they have tended to be minor and made on our own course, which tends to be fairly disease free.”

“I’ve sprayed for Fusarium three times one but it got me thinking more seriously about it.”

“I chewed the over and I had an old tractor that we could put it up to and I knew that I had the money to buy it as I lived at home and all I did was work and never had time to spend it so I bought a Wiedenmann for £16,000 in February last year.”

Initially he did his own course and a few football pitches before sending out some brochures to five or six local clubs some of which took him on.

In addition they spent a full three to four week spell at Belton Woods on pathway construction, tee building, bunker work and big roll turfing, with the help of another contact who had experience in that field.

He has also worked at The Belfry and was involved in some work on the Millennium Dome and Cardiff’s Millennium Stadium.

“Then last July I decided to buy a brand new Kubota L3600 tractor and got some work with Nununam Borough Council to verti-drain all 14 of their football pitches and sand spread them. I went out and bought an Amazone sand spreader. Then last autumn it was absolute mayhem.

“I hadn’t done any advertising at all but I was going all over the country and I ended up buying a trailer to put behind my Trooper, which I’d already bought, and it just got busier and busier.”

“I had New Year’s Day off and the verti-drain was absolutely solid until something like May/98 when Simon, who has recently bought another Kubota tractor, a Polecled core collector while a second verti-drain is on the cards for this month.”

While Simon, Hutton Fine Turf Services enjoyed such a successful period the man himself was still running Sudbrook Moor, with the help of Ernie and two students, both of whom have worked for Simon since they were 15 and hence he need to extend his working week to 100 hours.

“From example I haven’t started after six for the past month and normally don’t finish until eight or nine at night, seven days a week.”

“The success of the contracting business is a boost to the whole Hutton family which is completed by his younger brother, Ben, who is an aspiring tournament professional.”

“My father runs the pro shop and has an accountant but does all his own invoicing in his “spare” time. I don’t mind putting the hours in but it’s tough when you can’t see an end to it, I don’t want to get too big because I’ve seen it with other contractors who are not making any money, hence the need to extend his working week to 100 hours.”

“With his easy manner and extraordinary work ethic you can be sure that whatever the future holds for him he will make a success of it.”

Above: Remarkably, a bird has nested in the hydraulic arm of the company trailer, and now, the chicks travel everywhere it goes
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Roland Taylor starts planning for autumn, by examining the various blower and sweeper products available

Have you ever thought that Mother Nature is having a laugh at your expense? You just seem to have got on top of the grass and she turns round and starts dumping thousands of tonnes of leaves all over the place. That time of the year is not too far away, so now is the time to start taking stock of the equipment that is available and preparing your battle plans.

Fallen leaves are unpredictable; they often pile up in difficult and virtually inaccessible places and the first good gust of wind sends them all over the place. To clear up this annual event efficiently can be a labour-intensive operation. Fortunately, manufacturers have not been slow in addressing the problems and there is now a plethora of machinery available, not only to deal with virtually every situation but also make the clearing up task easy, fast and cost effective.
Leaf clearing machinery incorporates one or more of three basic systems: blowing, sucking or sweeping. These come in a number of configurations.

**Blowing & sucking**
At the heart of both blowing and sucking is an impeller for creating the blast of air or a vacuum - these two often go together as in the blower/vacs. Where leaves are being collected, in most cases they will pass through the impeller and in doing so are chopped up. This combination has two advantages. Firstly, it reduces their volume, often significantly, thus reducing the number of times the collector has to be emptied. Secondly, the fibres of the material are broken up and exposed so decomposition is accelerated. Obviously, organic matter is not always all that passes through this type of system - stones, sand and other foreign bodies can be picked up so the impeller has to be constructed from a material that withstands a fair amount of abuse. This is a point worth remembering when considering which machine to choose. Other factors that can affect performance are the speed and the way in which the volume of air is expelled.

There are other methods of collection using airflows where the material is picked up and passes directly into a collector - these are generally found in the domestic machines. Machinery using the impeller system comes in all shapes and sizes. There are the highly portable hand held and backpack models, wheel pushed or self propelled and tractor mounted versions.
Wanderhoses
Most of the pedestrian and tractor machines using the suck and blow principle offer as an optional attachment a wanderhose. This consists of large diameter inlet and outlet flexible tubing of various lengths. They are designed for clearing leaves from areas that are inaccessible to the large units, such as ditches and culverts or areas such as greens where heaver machinery would not be acceptable. A wanderhose can also be used for sucking up piles of leaves that have been windrowed by another machine. The system is used on loaders which are purpose built for collecting leaves and litter into trailers or a vehicle’s buck.

Brush type action
These can be split into two forms: the conventional rotary brush or the flail. The brush is usually an attachment for a tractor, ride-on mower or ATV and these are available as an out-front unit or rear-mounted. While they work reasonably well on grassed areas they perform better on hard surfaces.

Rotary mowers
Any rotary mower pedestrian or ride on that incorporates a collecting system will collect leaves - some machines do this well.

Around the course
Greens
These are the number one priority and the equipment has to be as light as possible so the hand held or backpack blowers are the answer. The leaves can be blown into heaps off the green ready for picking up. With the hand held models there are two things to look out for - plenty of power yet lightweight (power to weight ratio) and the velocity of the airstream. The nozzles on these units can be directed wherever they are required.

Tees
The equipment used on the greens is also suitable for tees. Here, the pedestrian machines may be more at home.

Fairways
This is where the tractor mounted units come into their own. The blower models can be used to directing leaves into windrows or piles. With the flail the material is collected immediately.

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Bunkers
There is the problem of sucking up or blowing sand about and in most cases these are better manually raked.

Other areas
Each course will have specific requirements. If there are large areas of hard surfaces to be kept clear then the type of machines used in pedestrian precincts might be the answer. The tractor mounted rotary brush type is also ideal for these areas.

What to choose
Each course will have different requirements and there are plenty of machines on the market. Now is the time to start looking at what is available. Saltex provides an ideal opportunity to do just that. An alternative could be to hire some machinery but the only problem is when. Leaf fall can happen overnight. One hard frost followed by high winds and there are masses to clear up or it could take up to a month before the trees are bare.

Because of this everyone needs to hire at the same time and machinery might not be available. However if you are thinking of going the hire route it is worth talking to your local hirer now.

Leaves may look good in their autumnal colours, but they present a problem greenkeepers could do without - so a little preparation now could make the task, and life, a lot easier when it eventually happens.

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September 2000 Greenkeeper International 39
Steve Isaacs gives some advice on the health check you should give your course to give it the best chance of surviving winter. A time for hibernation... not likely!

**WINTER HEALTH CHECK**

The days are drawing in and winter beckons. The course has looked fantastic all summer and now all you want to do is put your greens safely to bed to ensure they survive the winter so you can repeat that performance next season.

Sorry, you're living in the past. You can't rest the course over winter anymore, the demand from members is for year-round play and year-round play you must provide, oh, and on near perfect surfaces as well thank you. There will, undoubtedly, be courses where poor drainage or harsh weather conditions limit winter use. Only a massive investment in fairway drainage and green reconstruction is likely to make the worst of these playable through the wettest part of the year. Nevertheless, the majority of courses are playable for much of the winter and there is a need to plan for the winter's play if the course is to emerge the following spring in a condition where you can take full advantage of any early growing weather.

Prepare for winter all year round

Winter preparation is not a case of working hard on the greens for a couple of weeks in the autumn. It used to be, autumn scarification, coring and top dressing was the norm. However, in those days there were few hardy souls who ventured onto the course over the winter months. Your modern day golfer is a much tougher beast, seemingly determined to play golf in all weathers. Some believe that courses close themselves when the weather is extremely inclement. You need only look out of the clubhouse window to see golfers so padded with extra layers of woolies and waterproofs that they can hardly make a swing to appreciate that this is not the case. So, you must prepare your course for winter play and this must be seen as a year-round exercise, implementing treatments all aimed at producing dry, firm surfaces with a good, dense and healthy grass cover.

Aeration is probably the most important maintenance procedure to produce firm, dry greens but isolated coring or Verti-Draining of greens in October or later is not the way to prepare them for the ravages of winter. Coring and Verti-Draining (or an equivalent such as the Soil Reliever