

# MACHINERY REVIEW

John Campbell Assesses The Ransomes Verticut 214

Bob Moreton was impressed by the Verticut 214.



MODERN golfers are more critical of turf conditions than their predecessors ever were. At one time, they were content just to have the greens in good condition, but now they insist on the same high level of upkeep on the fairways, giving a good lie for every shot.

The trend for higher standards on fairways encouraged Ransomes to develop the Verticut 214, which is capable of improving large grassed areas, especially golf course fairways. This machine is designed to control lateral surface growth by verticutting to prevent the build-up of excessive fibre or thatch. Vigorous new growth is encouraged and playing surfaces presented in peak condition.

Ransomes Verticut 214 is a compact, three-unit machine that can be hitched or unhitched easily from most popular makes of tractor. Hydraulic drive verticut reels with spiral cutting action provide efficient operation. Depth adjustment is controlled by front and rear full length rollers and the floating head action of the units allows them to follow ground contours without damaging the turf.

Hydraulically powered verticut reels comprise 18 discs, each fit-

ted with three reversible steel blades spaced  $1\frac{1}{4}$ in apart and revolving at 1,200rpm. Hydraulic control is by means of a single lever, located behind the tractor seat, putting the verticut reels in drive, neutral or reverse.

Linking the verticutting unit to the tractor's three point linkage and connecting the pto shaft can be completed in a few minutes and is just as easily detached by the operator alone. The machine is lifted by tractor hydraulics for easy transport.

Evaluation tests of the Verticut 214 were undertaken at Sunningdale by Jack McMillan and at The Berkshire by Bob Moreton. After using the machine extensively, both agreed the Verticut 214 performed verticutting work on the fairways smoothly and efficiently. The normal working speed of 4mph was ideally suited for doing the job over reasonably undulating ground.

An experienced operator is necessary to obtain the best results - setting the height of the verticut reels is simple, but choosing the right penetration depth to do the work properly requires the expertise of a good greenkeeper. Floating head action of the verticut units allows

them to cope with the severest undulations and the front and rear rollers prevent damage to turf.

One problem they foresaw in initial verticutting work on densely matted fairways was coping with the vast amount of fibre and thatch displaced by the machine. Sweeping up afterwards was necessary to remove residue and leave fairways trim and tidy for play. If verticutting work is done at regular intervals, there is usually little fibre removed to present problems afterwards, for it soon decomposes.

Time of the year is an important consideration for verticutting operations - spring and late summer are probably best. Verticutting can be done at any time during the growing period, provided that weather conditions are favourable - not during drought - and it only needs the verticutting reels properly set for moderate depth penetration.

Jack and Bob agreed that using the Ransomes Verticut 214 would lead to a vast improvement in the condition of fairways, for it is a fast, effective way to control the build-up of thatch. They were impressed by the robustness of the machine and simplicity of operation and control.