

Seven greenkeepers, seven different tractors: Hugh Tilley found out how each fared in their own environment

Seven FAVOURITE tractors

Tractors are a prime part of the machinery fleet on most golf courses, their main functions may be hauling a trailer, aerating, loading, mowing or any of many other tasks. Their ability to provide traction, carry or drive an implement, or provide hydraulic flow and pressure makes them versatile and cost effective work horses. However while most tractors are extremely versatile the specific requirements of certain courses often determines which abilities are most important and so which tractor is most suitable.

Most golf course tractors are in the 25hp to 70hp power range and while those below 45hp are often tagged 'compact' there is considerable overlapping in specification and price. Not all tractors are equal, the standard specification of one tractor may be significantly higher than another, on the other hand sophistication usually costs money, so a basic tractor may offer best value, especially if it is only needed occasionally. Tyre and transmission options need most careful consideration, four wheel drive may be an option not needed by all. Specific equipment, such as a loader, may call for extra hydraulics or a larger pump while a cab may be a desirable option for 'compacts' usually quoted with basic roll-bar.

There is almost infinite scope to match machine to specific requirement, which is just as well as the needs of each golf course is as individual as its greenkeepers and traditions. This makes it impossible to try to compare one tractor against another. Nevertheless specific requirements often indicate a specification and this may be found as standard or at little or no extra cost in a particular model. Existing equipment and main line operations, such as deep aeration, trailer and loader work or gang mowing often determine the power, weight and transmission requirements, or there may be a price constraint. Another and very important reason to select a specific make and model may be the ability of the local dealer. Thus this feature is not an attempt to judge one machine against another but to appraise them against their environment and the expectation of their respective greenkeepers.

Massey Ferguson 1260 at The Belfry

The Belfry has a fleet of eight tractors of varying sizes, but the selection of a Massey Ferguson 1260 was largely determined by the need to operate a deep tine aerator. A prime consideration was the strength and credibility of the dealer support, and Derek Ganning, course manager, stated that they would not contemplate going to a supplier who could not provide the level of support they at The Belfry consider essential. The course has considerable favourable past experience with ET Breakwell Ltd at Shirley and while Breakwells had just changed their tractor franchise, Derek said it was not as if MF was an unknown make, furthermore the quoted price was 'competitive.' While the exact price was not quoted to *Greenkeeper International*, the suppliers did hint that it was in the region of £17,000.

The Belfry had demonstrations of both the MF and one other similar machine before making their decision. Options specified included cab, front weights and extra wide turf tyres. As the machine was to be used extensively on tees and greens the requirement for the widest possible tyres is obvious. The machine has four wheel drive as standard. Front weights are required to ensure stability with the 1.6m wide Wiedenmann Terra-Spike and this is more important due to the fact that the tractor has a high lift capacity of 1300kg at link ends. Although The Belfry cannot be considered a hilly



Derek Ganning, left, receives the keys to his MF 1260 from ET Breakwell's Mark Radford

course, tractor stability is important and they had noted how compact tractor and Terra-Spike are as a combination.

Asked what in particular they like about the tractor, the first response was "the gears," both for their ease of selection and for the handy positioning of the levers. Although the gearbox provides sixteen ratios in both forward and reverse, selection is simple and the 'shuttle' lever makes shifting direction easy. Maximum speeds are 16.2mph – and slightly less in reverse while the minimum speed at the rated engine speed is 0.8 mph, which is considered slow enough. With all three gear levers placed beside the driver to the left the operator platform is kept uncluttered, and the 'tidiness' of the whole layout

was remarked on.

The Belfry expect that the tractor will be used for other tasks and these could include operating the Gannon reseeders and also a Varispreeder. The PTO has a rated maximum power of 31hp, and with both 540 and 1000 rpm outputs, there are the options to transmit maximum power or drive lesser loads with greatest economy. The PTO has an independent clutch which is operated hydraulically, again an essential feature where PTO operation is to be the main use of the tractor.

Technically the MF1260 has a rated engine power of 35 hp at a rated speed of 2500 rpm. The engine is a three cylinder turbo charged diesel which gives maximum torque at 1600 rpm.



Duncan Bawcutt
with his
John Deere 855

John Deere 855 at Bowood Golf & Country Club

The second tractor considered is a John Deere 855 of which Bowood Golf & Country Club in Wiltshire have two – alongside several other models in the same shade of green. Of the two machines the more interesting is their loader tractor as this is equipped with both front loader and a back hoe. Used to load topdressing as well as for trenching and similar work, "It is," says Duncan Bawcutt, course manager, "perfect for what it does." Although about four years old and with a modest 1200 hours on the clock, it has never had any problems, "just one set of seals, damaged by string around the axle". The three cylinder direct injection diesel engine is rated at 24hp and it is, says Duncan, a superb engine which always starts first time and uses no oil. "Furthermore it is quiet, unlike others I could name."

However perhaps the most important feature of this tractor is its drive train (transmission in American) which is hydrostatic. Used as a loader this means quick gearless speed and direction changes making for fast work cycle times. Of course it also has power steering and four wheel drive, features which Duncan considered essential for such a use. Operation is so simple to use that the tractor is frequently 'borrowed' by other departments on the estate. Bowood have their own fitter, Tony Rumping, and he particularly likes the tractor because it is "simple to work on". He said they operate a slightly extended service schedule, although based on the JD recommendations, because, "we use better oil." Asked about the cost of replacement parts, his comment was that if you never need any, it did not matter how much

they cost. The one modification which Tony admitted having made to the tractor was to the exhaust as the standard outlet is a stub on the side. To this he had added an upright pipe to emit the exhaust gas above the operator's head.

When first bought the tractor was simply equipped with the JD 70A front loader which was counterbalanced by a concrete block lifted on the rear links, however the versatility of the unit was later increased by the purchase of a Lewis Landlord 300S back hoe for trenching and ditching. An important design feature of the tractor, and one which makes it suitable for loader and back-hoe, is the substantial frame built into the tractor as this gives strength and rigidity to take the stresses and strains of the work. Mounting and demounting both loader and back-hoe is quick and easy, about two minutes to remove the front and perhaps ten to clear the back. The back-hoe mounts on a sub-frame and is held with two bolts while the hydraulics are self-contained and driven by a PTO pump. The front loader has a built-in stand which flips down when required to remove the unit.

Another feature of hydrostatic transmission is the ability to vary speed instantly, and Duncan said this makes the 855 particularly ideal for topdressing. The tyres on Bowood's 855 are 'oversize turf', and are interchangeable with those on the larger 33hp JD955.

The engine is a direct injection three cylinder diesel, with a two range transmission giving maximum speeds of 8 and 11mph. The PTO is live and independent, and a mid PTO is available as well as the conventional rear one. All up weight without loader and back-hoe is well under a tonne.

Contact!



Stewart & Co	Mid Lothian	0131 663 6617
John Lindsay Professional Sportsturf	N Ireland	01762 339229
Gem Professional	Accrington	01254 393321
Gwyn Cadogan	Gwent	01291 672026
Hewitts Sportsturf	Leicester	01533 867029
Collier Turf Care	Norwich	01603 870944
Sta-Brite Supplies	Basingstoke	01256 811811
Roffey Brothers	Bournemouth	01202 537777
E T Breakwell	Midlands	0121 7333344
Eastern Garden Machinery	Jersey	01534 855466

Distributors of the best sports
and amenity grass seed

Mommersteeg 

The Anderson Centre, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6XY
Telephone 01480 459500 Fax 01480 459990

Seven FAVOURITE tractors



Zetor 5245 at the Chesfield Downs Family Golf Centre

The Chesfield Downs Family Centre has two Zetor tractors, one five years old and another just three – and they expect to buy another shortly. Course manager is Chris Brook and he joked about the cab being big enough to be a dining room. In fact with extra seats it is both roomy and safe to carry one or two passengers, in addition it is quiet and comfortable. But of course the most important reason for Chesfield Downs' pur-

chase is financial: Zetors represent exceptional value for money, and Chris made no bones about the fact that they equal cheap horsepower. The original machine cost £6,500 with interest free repayments spread over four years, and while changing circumstances and inflation together with increases in specification have raised the cost of a replacement, Chris still does not expect to pay more than £12,000, interest free over three years for four wheel drive and 50hp.

Chesfield Downs do their own servicing on the tractors, ensuring that oil changes are carried out regularly and everything is kept up together. The dealer, Lodgeway Tractors, has been very supportive, but there have been no reliability problems on the tractors, although they have experienced one clutch cylinder oil leak, and the lights have posed some problems – but Chris said these are not vital to him. Those replacement parts which have been needed have been inexpensive too.

The Zetor 5245 is powered by a 50hp 3 cylinder direct injection diesel engine with a ten speed transmission. One of the features of the transmission is that it has two low speed gears at the bottom of the range which are ideal for working with a deep tine aerator – Chesfield Down has a 1.6m Terra-Spike, whereas some tractors need a special creep gearbox.

Although the Zetor is larger, more powerful, and heavier than a 'compact' tractor there is now a well established option to fit wide low ground pressure tyres, and Lodgeway Tractors say that they can fit GoodYear 'Softrac' tyres which give even lower ground pressures; these tyres made specially for turf production fit as if made for the tractor. In summing up, Chris said, "Yes – we're very pleased with them," but perhaps the fact that he is considering buying another is the ultimate seal of approval.

Ford 1520 – Faringdon Golf Course

Fitted with a Lewis Landlugger 22 front loader and 4 in 1 bucket, Faringdon GC's Ford 1520 "does everything," according to owner Roger Carpenter. Bought two or three years ago, the tractor has played a large part in making this nine hole pay and play course at Faringdon, Oxfordshire which is run by the owner very much as a hands-on operation.

Roger tried out a number of competitive machines before selecting the Ford 1520 from T H White Ltd, whom he cannot praise highly enough. In comparing it he commented it 'eats' the competition, and was 'ten times better' than another well known make. In particular the transmission is far more efficient and it has a very effective lifting ability, both on the linkage and with the loader. Roger has not found it running out of power, but he did say that he would have the next model up in Ford's range if it had hydrostatic transmission.

With the loader and 4 in 1 bucket the tractor is an extremely versatile unit which is used for all manner of lifting,



Roger Carpenter aboard his Ford 1520

levelling and shifting jobs. Roger said that the transmission made operating it so easy, "you just rock the foot pedal to go backwards and forwards, and of course steering is fully hydrostatic." Furthermore the lift height on the loader is sufficient to load the normal tipper lorry. It is kept on and used as a front weight when operating with the Amazone Groundkeeper and

other implements on the back. The Groundkeeper is also a tool which has multi-purpose use at Faringdon being used to cut long grass as well as for collecting leaves, rubbish and grass clippings – "it'll take up anything," Roger commented.

"In fact the only time the loader comes off is when I go spraying the greens and I want the least possible weight". The

listed weight of the tractor is 1034 kgs and it has a 874kg linkage lift capacity. The tractor has a 23hp 3 cylinder engine and hydrostatic transmission, four wheel drive and wide turf tyres. Its service and reliability record is impeccable and certainly Roger was no less enthusiastic than the other users to whom *Greenkeeper International* spoke.

Kubota ST30 at Laleham Golf Club

At Laleham alongside the Thames in Middlesex the need was for a compact tractor which was very light and versatile, and which could be used for tasks for which the Cushman was not well suited, such as aeration and other draft work. John Ross, course manager at Laleham, sees the compact as being complementary to turf maintenance vehicles. The club took quotes on several machines of similar specification before deciding on the Kubota ST30 supplied by J Gibbs Ltd of Bedford.

Particular features of the Kubota are hydrostatic transmission and a bi-speed front axle which means less scuffing of the ground on tight turns when using 4WD. Rated at 29hp and under a tonne in weight, the tractor offers a very high power to weight ratio and John has been able to slit weekly or more often all through the winter, often in front of the golfers without them being aware of it. As a result only about four days play have been lost this winter, and there has been no disease. John stated that a prime reason for buying the tractor was to take a lot of the TMVs' workload as these were in danger of being 'worked to death.' The ST30 has proved itself able to haul the Magna 5 mower,



John Ross with his Kubota ST30

although this will not be a regular task. John summed up operating it by saying it was quiet, comfortable and easy to use, and his only reservation was the relatively high centre of gravity which meant that common-sense is required by the operator, particu-

larly when operating with the loader. However Laleham on the Thames flood plain is basically a flat course. No reliability or service problems have been encountered, the one call made to Gibbs, under warranty, got them on the course within 20 minutes.

The ST30 is fitted with a loader and back-hoe and can operate a deep tine aerator which gives it even more versatility. "You can't be too flexible," John stated, "the Kubota ST30 gives us exceptional flexibility and we are absolutely delighted with it."

Introducing the tractor

THIS IS LEADING EDGE TECHNOLOGY...

Versatility from the independent PTO, together with 4WD that gives ground clearance as high as 2WD tractors.

Comfort from the full-floating ISO-mounted flat deck with more legroom and less vibration.



Lamborghini 250 Runner – at Coombe Wood, Kingston-on-Thames

Compact manoeuvrable versatility sums up David Holloway's requirements, however more specifically he needed a machine which could carry a sprayer, could operate on banks and has good dealer support. The Lamborghini meets his requirements well with its 25hp power output, 4WD and full power steering. But the more salient features are that it has good ground clearance and a short wheelbase which allows it to go over the banks which surround many of the tees and greens and then turn round within the limited space available. Iseki and Kubota had also been considered.

David is a staunch advocate of compact tractors finding that turf maintenance vehicles such as the Cushman have their limitations on the course because of their lack of clearance and linkage lift height. In comparison he also considered that the compact tractor is simpler, more sturdy and likely to have a longer trouble free life with a better resale value at the end.

One of the more important implements for the Lamborghini is the 300 litre Hardi sprayer, and David saw particular advantage to the fact that the operator could

lift and lower it on the arms when necessary to clear banks and slopes. Nor had it escaped his notice that three point linkage equipment is cheaper to buy and more readily available than that made for TMVs.

A manual transmission tractor was deliberately chosen because it does not suffer loss of speed when climbing a hill in the way that hydrostatic transmission does, this is considered as being of particular importance when using a sprayer. The 250 Runner has a twelve ratio box with full synchromesh and 'shuttle'. The speed range of from 0.4 to 15 mph gives a very low speed for Verti-draining and similar tasks,

although this is not a current requirement.

Double acting spool valves and a full set of six front weights were also specified, the former placed conveniently ahead of the operator instead of in the usual place – around the driver's bottom. Although not equipped with a loader, David was well aware that one is available and easy to fit. The two criticisms he made were that the hydraulic oil filter looked vulnerable and there was little room on the platform for anyone with large boots, particularly on the right hand side where there are two brake pedals, a diff. lock and accelerator pedals all vying for limited space – perhaps

Seven FAVOURITE tractors

a penalty for the short wheelbase of the tractor.

As to service, David has found suppliers Risboro' Turf extremely 'willing and able', but after the first year with a maintenance contract linked to the warranty Coombe Wood will use their own mechanic for most of the work on the tractor.

Price had been a consideration, but not an overriding one, however it was 'right' and it represented good value. In summary, David's comments were "it is a sturdy little tractor, very stable and to date I'm very pleased with it".



David Holloway is pictured with his Lamborghini 250 Runner

that gives you The EDGE

THIS IS THE NEW KUBOTA GRANDEL...

GRANDEL IS A RANGE of three tractors L3300, L3600 and L4200 which have been designed and built to bring high (33.8, 37.1 and 43.7 DIN) horse power benefits to the maintenance and care of golf courses, sports grounds and large expanses of recreational parkland.

Power from the unique Triple Vortex Combustion System diesel engine for more torque with minimum pollution. (Surpasses the stringent Californian regulations).



Three tractors which offer operator comfort with a European-style cab that ensures less noise and less vibration.

Three tractors which are equipped throughout, (both inside and out) with leading edge technology to improve your performance.

The new Kubota Grandel has the strengths to give you the competitive edge in your work.

Efficiency from the fully synchronised main and shuttle transmissions with heavy duty, large diameter clutch.

Kubota (UK) Limited, Dormer Road, Thame, Oxon, OX9 3UN. Tel 01844-214500 Fax 01844-216685

To take *The EDGE* off on a test-drive. Just complete the coupon and take it away.

GI.4.95

NAME _____ COMPANY _____

ADDRESS _____

POST CODE _____ TEL _____

Kubota

You're better off with Kubota

AD
REF
86

Seven FAVOURITE tractors

Antonio Carraro Tigretac 5500 on Mendip Springs Golf Club

Bought specifically for autumn and early spring work because of its exceptional light footedness, the Tigretac 5500 hides 48hp under its bonnet with a 3 cylinder water cooled diesel engine. It has constantly engaged four wheel drive with large wide 31x15.5-15 tyres which spread its almost two tonne weight very well, so well that according to Ian Harrison, course manager, it makes less impression than the human foot. In fact prior to purchase Mendip Springs had the demonstrator on the course and put it to tow a set of trailed gang mowers over one of the wettest spots, and while the tractor made no impression the gang mower wheels left deep ruts – it was virtually ordered on the spot.

Mendip Springs has 27 holes plus a driving range, with eleven of the holes running onto the North Somerset Levels – in other

words low lying, flat and liable to becoming very wet. Thus a high powered low ground pressure vehicle is essential if late autumn and early spring work is to be carried out with minimum damage to turf and soil. The main tasks for the Tigretac are spraying, fertilising, gang mowing and trailer work, however it is flexible enough to be used for a wide variety of tasks including aerating and soil working. The manual transmission with twelve ratios provides ample scope for suiting speed with the requirements of the job and is amply slow enough at the bottom end for drainage and aeration work.

One feature which has yet to be tested is the ability to swing the entire seat and driving console so that the tractor can be operated in reverse. Ian suggested that this would be ideal for operating with a rotary mower in front.



The main criticism of the tractor is the cab and ergonomic layout inside it, this Ian suggested was not particularly well thought out, with the cab cladding seeming to be an afterthought. In-cab noise was not a problem as operators use head phones for a radio or ear protectors. BS Mowers of Bristol who supplied the machine, Ian said, have been fantastic, nothing has been too much trouble, they have moved switches, added lights and adapted the cab to our requirements without any extra charge. Neither servicing nor spares seem to be any problem.

Ian is very conscious of safety

particularly with young inexperienced operators, here the stability of the Tigretac is 'brilliant' with the wide tyres and a low centre of gravity it is very sure footed on banks – which may be as well when the result of getting too close to the edge and losing control would be an involuntary bath.

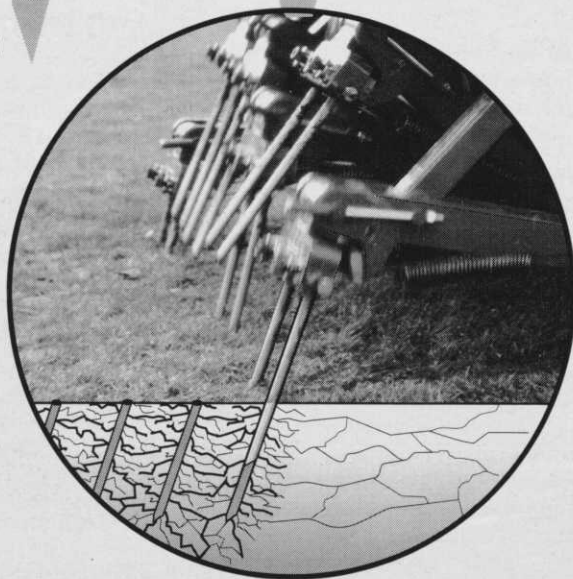
Overall Ian has no hesitation in recommending the machine, for him the price was right, it is a high powered compact golf tractor which does not suffer from being a compromised agricultural tractor, and he does not understand why there are not more of them on golf courses.

EARTH SHATTERING!

The Huxley Soil Reliever

- the ultimate in deep compaction relief for all soils beneath all sports turf surfaces.

- Suitable for most turf tractors from 30hp upwards.
- Rapid tine action ensures a cleaner, quicker finish.
- Reduced maintenance - greasing required just once a week.
- Rugged steel construction for a long working life.
- Available in a choice of 60" or 80" working widths with 5/16", 1/2", 3/4", 7/8" or 1" solid tines or 5/8", 3/4", 1" or 1 1/4" coring tines. Maximum tine depth: 14".
- Backed by probably the best after-sales service in the business.



HUXLEYS GRASS MACHINERY LTD

The Dean, New Alresford,
Hampshire SO24 9BL
Tel: 01962 733222
Fax: 01962 734702

5 Simpson Road,
East Mains Industrial Estate, Broxburn,
West Lothian EH52 5AU
Tel: 01506 856968 Fax: 01506 856086