

REAL WORLD TEST TMVs and ATVs GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL

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 an ATV without frills, except possibly a protective cage for the driver, is a simple and inexpensive means of accessing all parts of the course without damaging the turf. Many tasks require load carrying capabilities, while for others the ability to carry two or three people as well as tools and materials is important. Prices range from around £2500 for a plain ATV to around £4000 – £6000 for a transport utility and up to £14,000+ for a purpose built TMV. Diesel adds perhaps £1000 to the price but few greenkeepers are looking at anything else, nor is price the most important factor when it comes to buying such a major item.

Jacobsen Workhorse SV 2322 at Tiverton GC

The SV of the name means "Sys-

tems 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 at 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 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.

Cushman Turf Trucksters on Salisbury & South Wilts GC

This 27 hole downland course has two 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.

Kerran Daly, Course Manager at Salisbury admits to being a fan of Cushmans, he likes the simplicity, the (lack of) size and the manoeuvrability. He hopes that Ransomes won't increase the Turf Trucksters size, add complications or in any way 'tart the machines up'.

The only serious reservation he has is over the pto 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 spares and service which are sourced through T.H. White Ltd. For maintenance access to the engine and mechanical components was rated as excellent. Kerran said he finds the machines 'very stable', certainly he has no criticism over the three wheel configura-



Jacobsen Workhorse SV 2322



Cushman Turf Truckster

tion, and with a good suspension they are very comfortable. Attaching implements is easy, and the box is light enough not to need legs or complex jacking systems. 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 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 spin its wheels, as like both the Jacobsen and Cushman only rear wheels are driven. This was not really a criticism just 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 all 18 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 assess 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 not critical of this except that he considered that Kawasaki parts were expensive, quoting the recent necessary replacement of the electronic ignition circuit box as £260.

Donnington looked as several machines before electing to buy the Mules. The competitors were “failed” for lower speed and lack of “pull”. Stability, low ground pressure and ability to carry a payload were factors which added to the Mule’s speed and

engine torque to select them. The Mules ability to climb steepish slopes even when loaded is not overlooked and, of course, this is important given the steep nature of quite a lot of the course.

Both machines are on differing tyres to those originally fitted, Donnington had to try quite hard to get a less aggressive tread pattern. Both machines have weather cabs fitted, a feature which is particularly appreciated because of the exposed nature of much of the course and the distances which are travelled at high(ish) speeds going to and fro. David assessed the life of the machines, in his use, as about three years, when they should have clocked up about 11,250 miles, used about £2350 worth of petrol and cost £1500 in parts. Bought at £4700 and with an anticipated resale value of £1000, this means an annual cost of £2500, however when worked out on a mileage basis the 67 pence per mile is seen as perfectly acceptable given the work they are undertaking.

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



Toro Workman 3300D



Kawasaki Mule



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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, Swards, 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.

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Huxleys Huxtruk

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

Huxleys Huxtruk at Maidenhead GC

Right price and package with proven backing were important factors in Maidenhead GC's selection of the Huxtruk. It was supplied with box, cab and topdresser and also a Hardi sprayer. In future there is a prospect of purchasing a Coremaster, when the hydrostatic drive of the Huxtruk 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 steering wheel were singled out for mention as was the hydraulically driven pto.

Top dressing has become a mornings work which can be carried out by one man on his own. The machine has sufficient speed to make it easy to return to the

heap and tractor loader without bothering to take a tractor and trailer out or have another member of the staff hanging around to service and assist the topdresser. Maidenhead's Huxtruk service record is excellent, and in the 18 months it has been on the course there has been one pto seal failure and a loose hydraulic pipe, both "no charge" items.

Routine servicing is minimal with very few grease points to grease and no problems of access. If there was a criticism it was that there is too much fibreglass cladding, however it was agreed that 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 than its predecessor. The machine was supplied by and is serviced by Huxley's retail division.

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 knobby tyres have been retained, but when questioned about any damage to the turf, Mark was adamant that there was very little even with the



John Deere Gator

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.

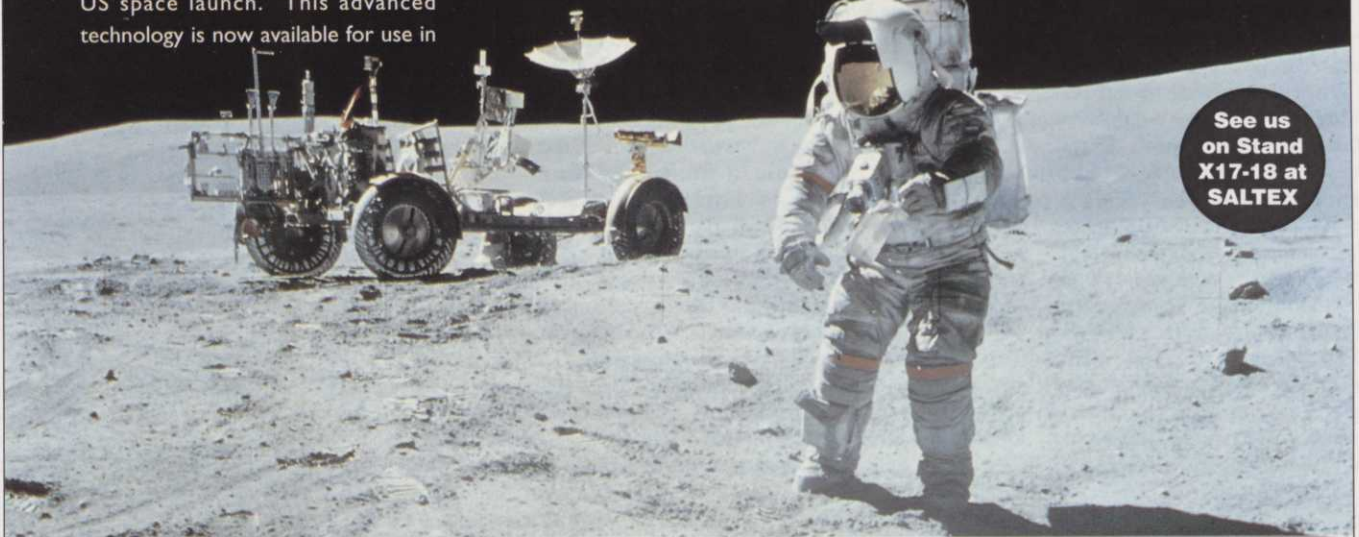
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