

**Hugh Tilley takes a look at the one of the golf course's workhorses and speaks with the people who know them best - the greenkeepers**

**H**ighest profile of all greens machinery is the greens mower, and pedestrian or hand operated machines are preferred by most greenkeepers. Most clubs operate a fleet of these and replace them on a regular basis although one 20 year old machine - a 'reserve' - was found. About four makes are in common golf course use, with three or four others not uncommon. Part of the reason for this bias is dealer support, and their active selling of the product. Nevertheless Lloyd, Allett, Hayter and Dennis all have users who believe their machines are in every way equal - if not better than - higher profile and usually more expensive makes, nor did they usually consider that the back up was inferior. Few clubs have undertaken comparative on site testing before purchase - most greenkeepers know what they want.

While reliability is important, perhaps more important to the greenkeeper are other attributes such as ease of use and setting,

quality of cut, ability to keep an edge and how well the set is maintained. Most if not all machines are available with groomers or brushes to set the grass up prior to the cut, however not every greenkeeper is happy with these so not all use them even if fitted. Certainly the variety of grass does have an effect as does how well the club wishes to present its greens. One non-user greenkeeper said, "if this was a championship course I would always use them."

Hayter has recently introduced a totally new greens mower, and states that most of these have been sold into Ireland. The company is currently taking greenkeepers' comments and expects to make a few minor modifications before generally making the model available across the UK. For this reason there was little point including them in this feature. However Hayter is keen that greenkeepers should be aware that it is still in this market.

Sharpening and/or replacement of bottom blades (bed knives) also seems to vary more by user (and location) than by machine. In situ grinding would seem to be the ideal, however not all clubs have this facility, and as a result many rely on back lapping through the season with an out of season dealer service and cylinder sharpen. How frequently this is carried out again varies more by club than by machine - and what is used after top dressing - most greenkeepers spoken to for this give their ride-on triples all the hard and aggressive work - like verti-cutting and cleaning up after top dressing.

**Lloyds Paladins at Mendip Spring, Somerset**

Course Manager, Ian Harrison, has been a Paladin man for 20 years although his current three main machines are only three years old. One of the most important reasons for his like of the machines is their basic simplicity with a well proven design. He

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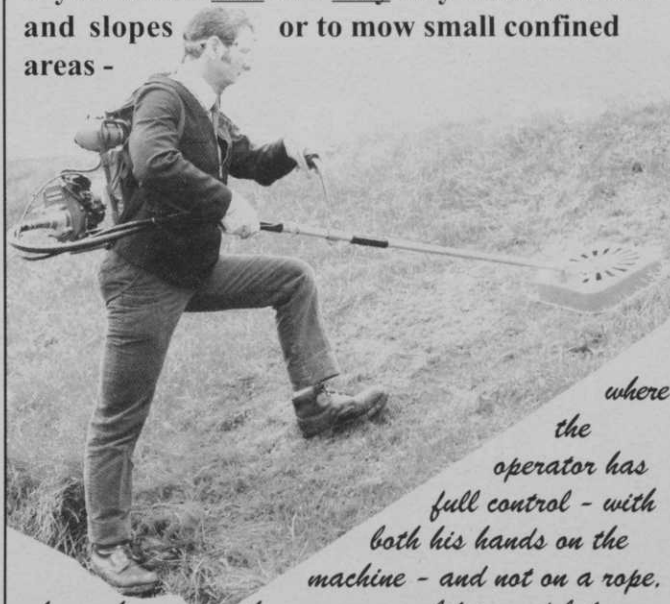
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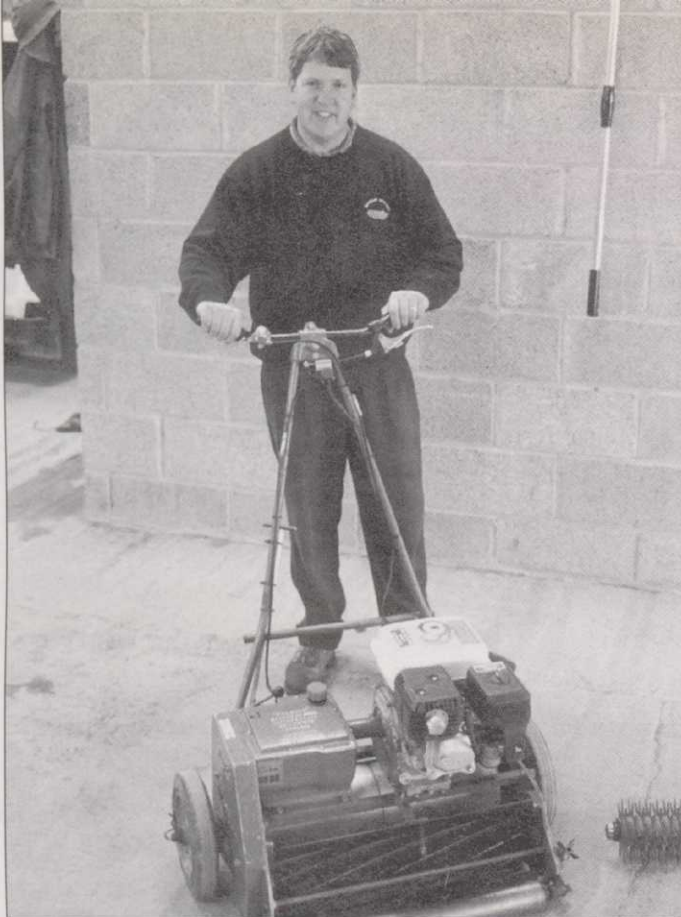
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Ian Harrison with the Lloyds Paladin

considered that the original machines were ahead of their time and that as the design has proven itself there was little need for a change. Additionally the price is right. Another plus point was the clutch design which is more gentle and smoother than most others.

In particular he commented that this simplicity allowed him to explain to trainee greenkeepers how and why the machines worked - which allowed them to get the best from them. Simplicity and accessibility also promoted ease of maintenance. Sharpening is carried out off site about twice a year, with about two bottom blades used per cylinder grind. Back-lapping is carried out by hand about twice a week and each operator is responsible for setting 'his' machine.

Ian maintains that the Paladin produces as good a cut as any machine, he has found the avail-

ability of spares excellent and while - out of patriotism - he would like a British rather than a Honda engine, he admitted that this engine is reliable and almost

everlasting.

The use of roller bearings on the cylinder are an example of the engineering quality which Ian sees as epitomising the design.

The club uses a ride-on triple in the summer, but the pedestrian machines in winter and for all perimeter cuts. No groomers or verti-cutters are used. Verti-cutting being done by the triple, as are first cuts after topdressing.

In simple terms with the Paladin, Ian stated, "what you see is what you get."

**Super Certes 51 at East Devon, Budleigh Salterton**

The three main machines are now about three seasons old having replaced a competitive make with which the club had considerable trouble. Paul Newcombe, Head Greenkeeper, attributed the trouble to the very pebbly and bumpy nature of the tracks between greens (and shed) which took its toll on clutches, gearboxes and drives. Since changing to the Ransomes machines he said that he has experienced no reliability problems (just one clutch cable), although he admitted that the club had modified the transport wheels, replacing

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Paul Newcombe and the Super Certes

them with larger softer pneumatic tyred ones. There has also been the occasional need to adjust the clutches.

The club does not use groomers on their pedestrian machines although these and verti-cutters fit to the ride-on triple which is

the mainstay of summer (March-August) cutting.

Each operator tends to use and be responsible for a specific machine, but Paul sets and adjusts all before they go out. This allows for some individual preferences such as handle height

and clutch cable setting. Cut heights range from 4mm to 6mm, the latter for winter.

Machines are back lapped as required but may not be resharpened for up to two years – little top dressing is used, certainly not in front of the Super Certes. Paul would like to be able to cut all greens all the time by hand but staffing does not allow this.

In Paul's opinion the Ransomes machines offer good value and solid robust reliable engineering.

#### John Deere 220A at Wincanton Golf Course

This racecourse centre nine hole pay and play club was built about five years ago and has only known hand mowing on its greens. The current pedestrian mower recently replaced one of a similar make and has several significant improvements. The machine is equipped with groomer, brushes and verti-cutters, the latter being used about twice a week while the brush may only be used for special occa-

sions, perhaps monthly, if 'nice stripes' are needed. The course is relatively new and has US spec fescue/bent greens. The original JD machine was 'put in' by the constructor, and by fortunate coincidence local dealer Rochford Garden Machinery have taken on the JD franchise. The new machine has an eleven blade cylinder giving it a better cut, and it is also faster than the previous machine. Another significant improvement has been to setting, this is much easier, reported head greenkeeper Richard Cartwright. The Honda engine also has more power than the predecessor, thus it is altogether quicker and better. Improvements have also been made to the grass box.

Back-lapping is carried out 'when required' while the cylinder is reground annually and a new bottom blade is fitted as routine. Routine greasing is a weekly requirement. Cutting height is adjusted between 5mm and 7mm.

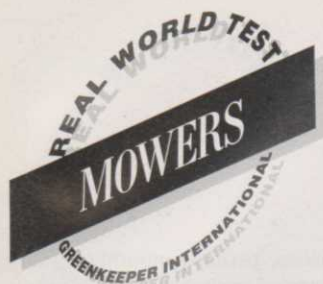
This machine has an operator

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presence handle, however this is of light pressure and easy to hold, in fact the operator liked it and was happy with using it. He also liked the operator friendly layout of the controls and in particular the ease of operating the throttle, which could be shut down with simple thumb pressure at the end of each run. The machine has a centrifugal clutch.

**Jacobsen Greens King 522 at Orchardleigh Golf Club, Frome**

This new 18 hole course has recently taken delivery of a new Greens King 522 for its US spec greens which are based on Pencross creeping bent. Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Ian Roberts, said that they had found distinct lines where the mower had cut with the groomers down. Detailed examination has suggested that this is caused by the groomers not extending across the full cylinder width. Considerable concern has

been shown by the supplier, Bristol dealer - B.S. Mowers and by Jacobsen UK - and significant time has been spent on trying to solve it. In fact there is no effect to actual cut, nor on play, the lines being purely cosmetic where the Pencross is not set up for the cylinder, and this seems to be unique to Orchardleigh, and perhaps Pencross greens. Ian said that both supplier and maker get



Richard Cartwright and the JD 220A

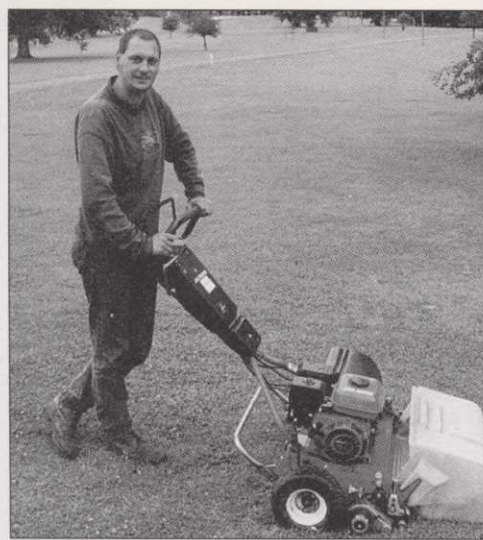
100% for effort, and they are now going to produce a 'special' full width groomer specifically for Orchardleigh. This is not quite as simple at it may seem as the front roller needs extra grooves and the groomer needs extra discs and modification to the bearing housings.

The club operates a one man, one machine policy with its pedestrian mowers, however there are triples for weekend work and for verti-cutting.

Otherwise the club is very pleased with the machine which is lighter than the make it replaces. There have been no problems and the operator is delighted with it.

**Allett Tournament at Alesford Golf Club in Hampshire**

The price was right, significantly



Ian Roberts and the Greens King

lower than most of the competition, the cut quality was equal and it was British, stated Darren Hatcher, Head Greenkeeper at Alesford Golf Club.

The club has recently purchased a single machine, but anticipates buying an additional two before the main hand mowing season this autumn.

Thus while Darren admitted that they have not really tried the machine extensively, the club did have most makes out on demonstration before selecting the Allett.

To date for the work it has

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undertaken, mostly on the putting green, it has been exemplary, with the Kubota engine always starting first time and a superb cut. The club is replacing some elderly machines.

In particular Darren is pleased with the brush groomer system which can be used both for setting the grass up and for cleaning the front roller.

Verti-cutting is carried out by the club's triple.

Operating is extremely easy, and while the machine has two operator presence levers – or dead man's handles, one for cylinder, one for drive, both can be held in by one hand when required.

Obviously without extensive use a sharpening/back lapping routine has yet to be established, but no problems are envisaged. Normal servicing is carried out by the club, and is seen as simple and quick.

#### Toro Greensmaster CR1000 at The Oxfordshire

Course Manager David Gower has the luxury of ten machines, originally bought as tees were also hand mown. Four were bought with groomers primarily for greens use and now three are in daily use with the remainder in reserve – and one set up for collars. Again verti-cutting is carried out with a ride-on triple, but the reserve machines are used after top dressing or coring.

The club has its own mechanic and sharpening system, nevertheless the emphasis with the greens mowers is to ensure that they are adjusted 'right' to minimise the amount of sharpening and back lapping needed. David said that their mechanic is 'very very good' at sharpening, but he would not detail his 'tricks of the trade,' and although there are spare mowers he can get four mowers sharpened in the afternoon after the tea break without trouble.

The club used the thinnest available bottom blades for the



The Allett machine

championship played on the course this spring, however it is now using slightly thicker blades

and not cutting as low. David expects to use two or three blades a year, but then the machines are

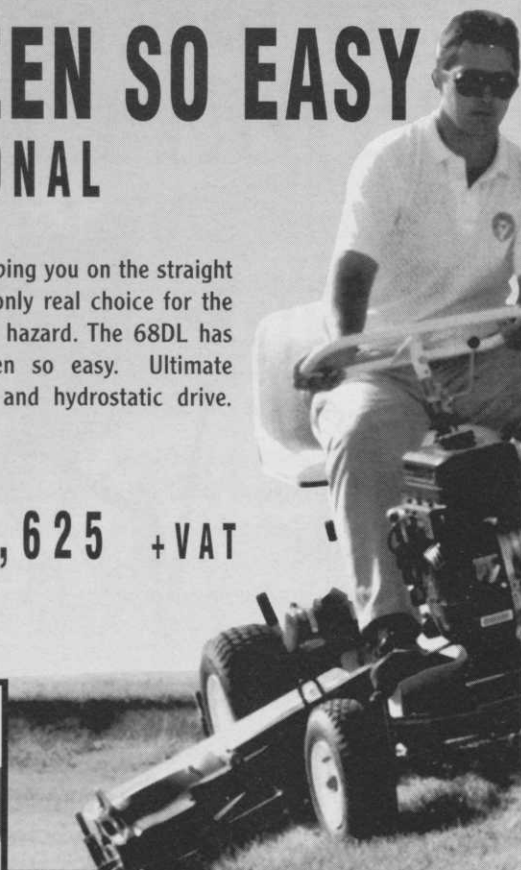
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seldom on the perimeter cuts, which are omitted rather than just taking the groomer out just for these couple of turns.

Another important routine prior to cutting is to check the area, to remove twigs, ball markers, loose studs and etc.

David said the reliability of the Toros has been fantastic and although he admitted to being a 'Jacobsen man' - and still thinks that they have a better groomer, he expects to replace Toro with Toro when the need arises.

In overall appraisal he said "there's no doubt they are a superb mower."

used exclusively on the greens. All mowers are carefully checked each day before they go out to ensure that they are set right and sharp.

Groomers are normally used once or twice a week, however



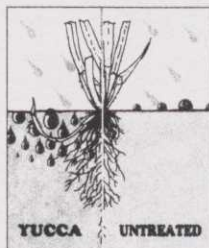
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