

It is difficult to determine exactly when the compact tractor first appeared on the greenkeeping scene. Roland Taylor investigates...

PULLING POWER



Above: The JCB 2cx can be adapted for many towing applications

The Japanese are credited by many with its introduction but it depends on what is classed as this type of tractor. If it is based on size and horsepower then a good candidate for the title could go to Harry Ferguson's TE 20. Some readers will remember the Wee Grey Fergie as it was and still is affectionately known. It was primarily used on farms, but a lot were sold to golf courses for pulling trailed gangs and the Hayter 6/14's which were used for cutting the rough.

Interestingly enough, the names David Brown and Ford were both associated with the development of this little workhorse. Harry Ferguson produced his first tractor in Belfast in 1933. It incorporated the three-point linkage and was a prototype for the David Brown 1200, which was built from 1936 to 1937. D B decided to go their own way and Ferguson was left without a supplier. He decided to show it to Henry Ford who agreed to build a tractor using the Ferguson hydraulic system. The outcome of this liaison was the Ford Ferguson 9N, which was highly successful with over 30,600 units being built over an eight-year period. Ford and Ferguson eventually fell out and a famous American lawsuit ensued.

After the war, UK motor manufacturers were looking for extra work and the Coventry-based Standard Motor Company was approached by Ferguson to build tractors. A deal was agreed and tractor production started with the first TE20 coming off the line at the end of 1946 and from 1948 until 1954, 400,000 units were produced at Coventry.

Today the TE20 is highly prized and much sought after by vintage tractor enthusiasts, often fetching prices close to those for a modern compact tractor at the lower end of the range.

The decline in present-day agriculture has had a marked affect on the tractor industry and manufacturers that once were household names are now mere shadows of their former selves. The break-up of small farms has meant large prairie like fields and where once a drive in the country meant seeing a number of blue or red and grey tractors at work, today they are a rare sight.

During the halcyon days the amenity sectors, including golf, were the poor relations, with limited development of tractors for these specific applications. The advent of the compact tractor played an important part



The Iseki TF325 offers excellent driveability with a choice of manual or hydrostatic transmission

in changing this situation and today, in light of the loss of agricultural business, manufacturers looking for sales are more inclined to direct their efforts in this sector. As far as golf is concerned, the question is how big is the demand for this type of tractor. Over the last two decades, turf maintenance equipment has changed considerably.

Where once a tractor plus set of gangmowers was used for fairways and rough, today the self-contained rider, triples or quadruples are commonplace and utility vehicles, have on many courses, replaced a tractor and trailer. Some equipment, like the vertidrain requires big powerful tractors but this is a limited application, which is often carried out by a contractor.

Clearly cost does come into the equation and where resources are limited the compact tractor, because of its power output and versatility could still be the best investment. The choice of tractors is wide with virtually any horsepower available.

Among the features that are generally standard throughout the ranges on offer are hydrostatic transmission, two or four wheel drive and power steering.

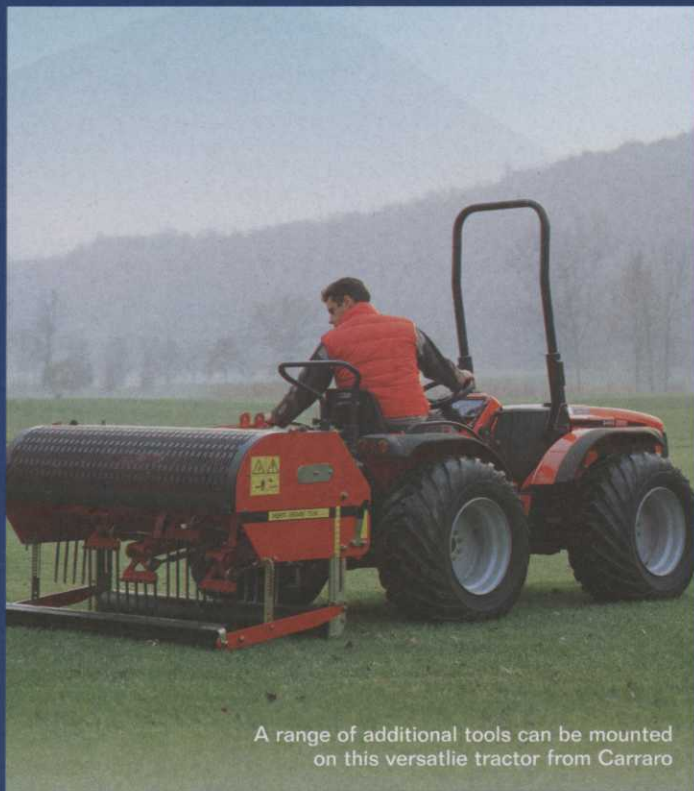
Kubota

Kubota have used a 22hp three-cylinder water-cooled diesel engine to power their new compact tractor - the BX2200. This latest addition to the range is said to be the first for over 15 years to offer both two and four wheel models. Rear and mid PTO's are standard and the company say the tractor is capable of handling many of their own attachments that have been designed for larger units. The two-speed hydrostatic transmission plus differential lock enables the operator to have complete speed control to match specific operations or prevailing conditions.

Kubota's Marketing Manager, Tom Barnes said they are planning to launch Hydrostatic transmission (HST) versions of the L3600 and 4200 in July plus at this year's SALTEX some exciting new models will be unveiled.

Charterhouse

The fact that you can turn the driving position through 180 degrees makes the Antonio Carraro range of tractors unusual to say the least. This totally reversible system enables the tractor to be used with out-front attachments the same as a specialist



A range of additional tools can be mounted on this versatile tractor from Carraro

PULLING POWER



This Kubota AM 3300 is both versatile and powerful



The John Deere 4100 combines practicality and durability with the addition of a cab



built machine, or alternatively as a conventional tractor. In addition the units have a full oscillating chassis making them, the manufacturers say, highly manoeuvrable with a tight turning circle. Four wheel hydrostatic drives with differentials to both axles give extra traction when required. The Supertrac 5400 and 8400 HTM are available with 47hp or 75hp diesel power units and the Ergit TRX/TTR offers a choice of 60, 64, 75 or 87hp.

John Deere

To be launched shortly in the UK is the new 4700 compact utility tractor, which is claimed to have the highest horsepower and hydrostatic transmission in its class. It will be available with a choice of transmission options - Hydrostatic, Powr Reverser™ and Powr Reverser™ with Creeper. The engines are said to comply with USA 2000 emissions standards and low noise levels. Other features include independent shiftable rear and optional mid ptos; separate power steering and flow

enhanced hydraulics to give optimum performance.

The 400 Series offers 4 wheel drive models from 21hp to 41hp. All have the new Yanmar clean and silent three or four cylinder diesel engine. Manual or hydrostatic transmission is available on all units except 4200, which is hydrostatic only, and the 4500 that comes as a manual.

Standard specifications are long life oil cooled disc brakes, power steering on the move front wheel drive plus differential lock. Three versions of factory fitted cab are available.

Textron

A new generation of Ransome compact tractors the TT series replaces the existing CT range.

The 18hp and 21hp are indirect injection diesel engines, with mechanical or hydrostatic drive and a 24hp engine with hydrostatic drive. All have four-wheel drive and power steering. The rear mounted pto operates at 540rpm and the mid-mounted provides 2000rpm

For that extra power and perfor-

mance the 25hp CT325 has four wheel drive and power steering as standard and a choice of either manual or hydrostatic transmission.

The two models in the CT400 series are said to be constructed to a standard normally associated with larger agricultural machines. They feature powerful four cylinder diesel engines, with synchro shuttle shift transmission on the CT435 and hydraulic shuttle shift on the CT445. A creep speed facility and Q-cabs are standard.

The latest edition to the Iseki TK series was introduced earlier this year - the TK546. Powered by a water-cooled, 46hp four-cylinder diesel engine this new model has a lifting capacity of 1700kgs for working with heavy attachments. The cab has large, wide opening side doors providing easy access rear side windows that open fully it incorporates ergonomic features including air conditioning as a standard feature.

Argo Ltd

There are six models in the

MF1200 series of compacts with a horsepower range from 16.5 to 40. Three cylinder diesel engines are standard on all and depending on the models are available with either hydrostatic or mechanical transmission and rear and mid ptos are standard. Depending on the specifications other features can include power steering, oil cooled disc brakes and hydraulics capable of lifting 550kg on the three-point linkage.

The company launched three models in the MF2200 series in 1999 to bridge the gap between compact and standard tractors. These are available with either 47hp, 54 hp or 64hp diesel engines. There is a choice of specification that includes mechanical or advanced electro-hydraulic controls plus low profile and centre of gravity models for situations where extra stability is required.

Motokov UK Ltd

The company distributes the Landini tractors from Italy and has recently launched two new ranges.



The robust Massey Ferguson 1260

There are three models in the Mistral compact series all are powered by green Yanmar diesel engines and have 12x12 synchromesh reverse shuttle transmissions. A 16x16 system with creep speed is an option.

Equal four wheel drive is the main feature of the four Discovery tractors which also incorporate a drivers platform that rotates 180 degrees to give full reverse drive for out front mowers, plus the company says, easier manoeuvring in difficult situations. Differential locks can be engaged simultaneously to front and rear wheels through a button on the dashboard.

JCB

JCB have come up with a unit that features the benefits of both a loader and tractor - the 2CXU Groundmaster.

According to the manufacturers this latest introduction has been specially developed as a highly versatile piece of kit.

A combination of conventional tractor pto, three-point-linkage and traditional loading shovel provides

the opportunity of using an extensive range of attachments plus various methods of transporting materials. A 0.8 cubic metre shovel is fitted, as standard. The tractor unit is powered by a Perkins diesel and has drive to all the four-wheels each the same size.

This configuration is said to provide maximum manoeuvrability with minimal ground disturbance.

Powered steering can be applied to either all, or just two of the wheels. This machine is another indication of the move by manufacturers away from the traditional tractor design.

Conclusion

As you will see from this there are changes taking place in the compact tractor market with new designs being introduced to increase the versatility - an important aspect when considering replacing equipment.

Clearly, tractor manufacturers are paying much more attention to the turf and amenity sectors and no doubt over the next few years we will see even more innovative introductions.

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