

# How to get the best out of your maintenance equipment

James de Haviland reports on how having a little knowledge can save you money



**In many cases, the routine service and daily maintenance demands of modern equipment has been reduced, but that does not also mean a quick wash is all it takes to keep a given item of equipment running efficiently. A little mechanical knowledge and sympathy can go a long way in cutting costs and improving efficiency.**

A key management skill is establishing the right balance between those machinery maintenance tasks that can be carried out in-house and knowing when to call in third party skills.

It would be a brave golf club that would forgo its own workshop facili-

ties to rely solely upon a third party for all its equipment maintenance needs.

But whilst a well-equipped workshop remains pretty much as a 'must have', ensuring there are individuals on hand to exploit such facilities is not always a primary consideration.

To get the best from your equipment it pays to firstly establish what can be done in-house to look after it and what is best left to a dealer specialist to sort out.

A modern ride-on mower may still 'look' pretty similar to kit that was in action a decade or more ago but increasingly electronics are in integral part of the design.

These can make operation easier

as switches replace various levers but it can also mean you need to have access to a different set of skills to find any faults and remedy them.

It is here where having some mechanical skills can really pay dividends. It is all too easy to take the wrong action when a given type of equipment develops a fault.

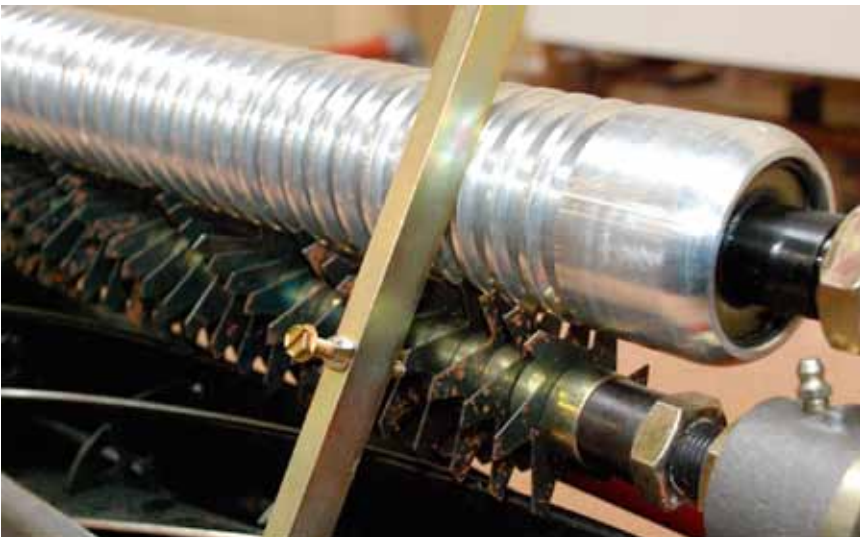
The first is to simply call someone in to fix the issue.

Good call if the problem takes specialist skills to diagnose and fix, less so if a squirt of WD40 to displace some moisture is all that is needed.

The flip side is the error of trying to carry out an in-house repair and to subsequently do more damage.

ABOVE: Setting up the mower

ABOVE RIGHT: setting the bar



Trained fitters typically dislike arriving to find a machine has been taken apart to solve a problem that cannot subsequently be checked as the machine is reduced to a pile of bits.

The key is having enough mechanical knowledge to understand what may help but know when it is best to leave well alone and call in help.

There are other issues too.

Few realise, for example, that hydraulic circuits can be under tremendous pressures.

A tiny leak, when pressurised, can produce a jet of hydraulic fluid that may not be visible but still has the power to penetrate clothing and 'inject' oil into anyone unfortunate enough to probe with an investigating hand.

Those that understand this will

never work on a mower with a leak until they are sure there is no pressure in the system.

Those unaware of the potential dangers could end up with a nasty injury.

So, a little knowledge can save money and help avoid accidents.

But how do you know who has the right level of knowledge and who should be instructed to stick to a pressure washer and a grease gun? The short answer is training.

Those with various 'paper' qualifications may be able to prove they are safe to be let loose on basic mechanical work but a newcomer claiming mechanical skills may need to offer some proof of competence.

Getting it wrong can cause equipment issues and, more importantly, even result in injury.

### Warranties and equipment care

Modern equipment should demand less in terms of routine care and not necessarily tax the servicing skills of club personnel who have been working on various types of equipment for years.

On the other hand, manufacturers and supplying dealers are increasingly linking in a maintenance package to various sales initiatives.

For both manufacturers and dealers it makes sound business sense to ensure a given item of kit is serviced to OEM schedules using OEM replacement parts.

Of equal importance, there is a need to ensure equipment is serviced during its warranty period.

It is difficult for warranty claims to be handled sympathetically when there is no record of the machine having been serviced in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations.

This is of increasing significance with equipment with a long original or extended warranty. In all cases, it pays to talk through how a given item of new equipment will be looked after to ensure you get the best backup. If the dealer / manufacturer offers any training courses as part of a deal try and ensure they are taken up and by as many staff as possible.

Operator training is increasingly valuable and should go well beyond the basic machine installation you may get when a new bit of kit is delivered.

Knowing where an elusive grease point is can make a great deal of difference!

As budgets are squeezed, the cost of maintaining certain items of equipment may come under review. Below are some pointers that may help when thinking ahead

### Maintenance contracts and dealer servicing – with in-house routine and simple servicing offers:

- Planned regular maintenance, in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, will comply with warranty requirements
- Regular servicing will enhance reliability
- Burden of maintenance responsibility shared with a third party
- Routine maintenance reduces downtime
- Enhanced residual values of kit with a dealer service history
- No need to invest in specialist service tools
- Reduced need to send workshop personnel on factory training courses
- Specialist equipment may be available to reduce service and repair times
- Cost of servicing in demanding season covered

### Advantages of ensuring you retain in-house skills can ensure:

- Minor breakdowns can take less time to resolve
- In-house workshops personnel 'know' the levels of use equipment is put to and can develop a maintenance schedule to match
- In-house repairs may be more economic, particularly on equipment out of warranty
- In-house skills can be tapped to develop modifications and adaptations to suit specific requirements
- Operating costs can be spread to cover all items of equipment, reducing overall maintenance bill
- Older equipment can be kept running longer, particularly by skilled personnel not afraid to modify and adapt to suit changing demands

The ability to repair a puncture quickly in-house can save time and money.

Basic workshop skills should be nurtured and encouraged, particularly for those willing to undertake further training to enhance their skills.

Setting the height of cut or verticutter adjustment is a job typically left to one person.

But if another wants to learn what to do then they should be encouraged.

Sharing skills is an asset.

