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Hedge Trimmers

STRAIGHT TALK FROM THE OPERATORS SEAT...

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Product History

"We started production of trimmers in 2003, the leading driver to manufacture the range was that it was a product which utilised our skills in mechanical, hydraulic and electrical engineering."

"These were skills which had been honed on pea viners and oilseed rape swathers over the years. The new product range also offered a diversification into the commercial and amenity sector.

The first step was to hire a design engineer with previous experience in the trimmer sector. He was given a blank piece of paper to design a trimmer from scratch. Contractors were our initial target market, people who demand higher specification machines. However as soon as we delivered the first prototype for testing we found that there is a lot more to trimmers than meets the eye! Contractors and farmers have discerning tastes and know exactly what they want from a machine. We quickly realised that we had a lot to learn about hedge trimmers and that the quickest way to learn was to listen to customers.

Our design and development team took on board from the start how important it was to involve end users and operators, and we duly incorporated many of the features they required.

We have always tried to be innovative rather than follow our competition. An example of this was that we were the first

manufacturer to offer a hydraulic head roller. We were also first to offer a variable forward reach machine with digital proportional controls and first again combining variable forwards reach and telescopic in the same machine – the VFRT. The plan is to continue with more innovation in the future.

First rate product support has always been the cornerstone of Shelbourne Reynolds business, stemming back to the days of the pea viners and rape swathers where any amount of downtime was intolerable. The same customer support ethic is now carried forward to Shelbourne trimmers.

After initially targeting contractors and successfully building up sales and acceptance of the HD700 range we have now expanded our line up to offer a full range of small and medium sized hedge and verge trimmers, as well as other complimentary mowing equipment."

Neil Smith.
Sales and Marketing Director

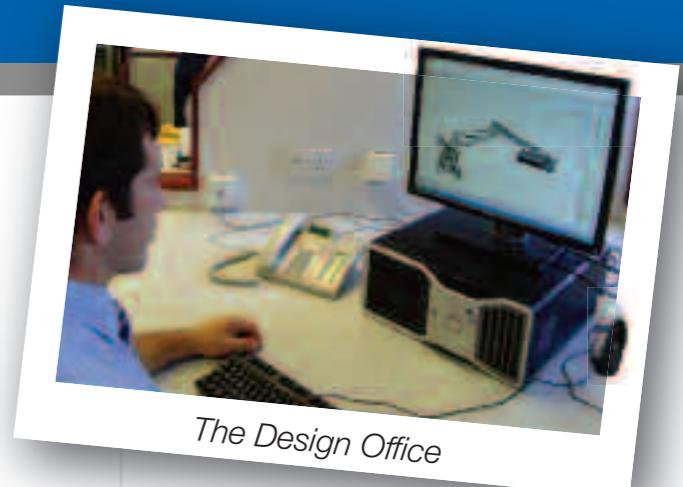
Design

Designing a machine is not a simple operation.

We consider many factors, but ultimately we must design our products to meet customer demands. We tend to be customer-led in our approach, and welcome feedback on how we do things.

Our design team is based in our Stanton factory, and is made up of seven full-time engineers, each of whom works on specific products. These engineers are also product specialists, and are well placed to answer customer queries on machines bearing in mind that they designed the machine in the first place.

The team works on new machine concepts, modifications and changes to specifications, generates all parts books and operator manuals, plus works closely with the sales, parts and service teams to ensure that when we design a machine it is backed up, and that any customer input is taken on board.



Using 3D Solid Works software the design team supply our modern manufacturing facility with all information, whether in the form of drawings or directly to state-of-the-art laser cutting and CNC machines. All of our design engineers have an agricultural or manufacturing background, ensuring that they understand the requirements you have for a machine, whether it is a mixer wagon, trimmer or muck spreader.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing is based in Stanton, a few miles North East of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. In our 130,000 square foot factory we employ over 130 people, with an average employment duration of over 12 years.



We carry out high standard manufacturing with modern equipment such as laser cutters and CNC machines, plus have our own powder coating paint plant to ensure a high quality finish to every machine that leaves to be delivered to our dealers.

Our manufacturing facility is closely linked to our design office to ensure any changes to machines are made when specifications

are changed, with feedback to ensure that these are possible. Most metal panels are laser cut and then bent in-house, and we retain the majority of welding in-house to retain quality. We even manufacture complete gearboxes for our stripper headers to ensure that they are to our exact standards.



Before delivery, however, comes inspection.

All machines are fully assembled, built up and tested prior to delivery, meaning that they are ready to go to work once on farm.

All trimmers have their onboard oil systems flushed to remove the chance of any contamination, with a tractor used to run these up to full operational temperature to check for any leaks and electronic system issues.



Manufacturing

What this means for our customers is that each Shelbourne machine that leaves our factory is thoroughly checked and tested.

It will be ready for work. This reduces hassle for the dealer and customer.



Support



Unless we can back up a machine, it is of little use to our customers.

This is why we hold great significance in ensuring that we can support our machines where it matters – in the field. Whether through technical support over the phone, from supplying parts or from servicing on-farm, our backup service is key.

We have close links with our UK and export dealers who can generally assist you with most day-to-day parts and service requirements. However, we can also call on our trained technicians on the road to assist when required. Our service manager, James Swinstead, is responsible for ensuring that we look after our customers and their machines, while Andy Freeman handles the management of parts stock and distribution. We run a full overnight parts service, and the fact

that we manufacture all machines in Stanton means that we always have parts available for instant dispatch to customers and dealers.

As a customer-motivated company, we offer excellent support during office hours where there is always someone who can answer your query, plus an out-of-hours service for emergency contact if required.

Our product specialists work with our service and parts teams to ensure that your Shelbourne machine is up and running as soon as possible, as we know breakdowns costs money and time, and ultimately we realise that as a professional company selling to professional users, downtime is not an option.



Stephen & John Morris

SWINFORD, LEICESTERSHIRE, UK (HD775VFRT)



"With the 2015 hedgetrimming season opening a month later than previously, it's hoped the VFRT's key features will help handle the same amount of work in the shorter time frame."

VFRT depended on to help meet new hedge regulations

Summer 2015's change in hedge cutting regulations, delaying the task's permissible start point by a month from its old date of August 1, looks likely to increase pressure on farmers and contractors this season. Being forced to pack more work into a shorter period, they may also need to find other ways to get at hedges that were formerly accessible by running on the stubble between the end of one crop and the beginning of another, but are now difficult to get at because the land may well have been cultivated and drilled.

One farming and contracting concern from Leicestershire which is putting its faith in the forward and telescopic reach capabilities of a Shelbourne Reynolds VFRT to help out is that of Stephen and John Morris. From their base at Swinford in Leicestershire, the brothers run a 1000-acre (400ha) arable unit, as well as a 50-head suckler herd, 150 fattening cattle and 500 ewes, but also offer a number of contract services, among which is hedge cutting.

With the stock to look after, the cropping to manage and their own hedges to get round – in addition to other contract services including spraying and round and big square baling – systems which speed up a task are a high priority when purchasing machinery. That's a key reason the business now runs a Shelbourne Reynolds HD775 VFRT.

"We've offered contract services alongside our farming for a long time, and are lucky to have a good band of loyal customers," says Stephen Morris.

"Hedge trimming keeps Ben, one of our drivers, busy for much of the time from the start through to the end of the season. This year, of course, he'll be starting a month later than previously, but I'm hoping our VFRT will help us handle the same amount of work as usual in the shorter time frame."

"Having the telescopic boom is a bonus for reaching without having to move the tractor"

Aside from reliability, it's hoped some of that will come from the ability the VFRT offers to make work easier on the operator by bringing the head alongside him, due to the cleverly-designed joint between the two boom sections. There's also the fact that it offers telescopic reach, limiting any need to reposition the tractor when aiming for work that's just out of reach with a conventional boom.

"Traditionally we ran Bomford hedge trimmers, but we went to a Shelbourne VFR last time we renewed our machine. Some of the new technology that was in the VFRT when it was launched made me take a look at a Shelbourne again when we made our most recent change, and although I considered both Spearhead and Bomford alternatives, they didn't have the same sort of telescopic/forward reach combination."

Fitted with T-flails, the workload for the VFRT and operator Ben Maskell is almost exclusively hedge-based – verge mowing isn't called for. Having had a good few years' experience hedge trimming, he is more than happy with the machine he now gets to work with.

"It's a good combination with the New Holland T6080 I use it with. The tractor has just the right amount of power and weight to handle the machine, and the axle mounting makes for a very stable outfit."

"Bringing the head right alongside the tractor not only makes work easier, but keeps windows cleaner too, notes operator Ben Maskell."

"The ability to bring the head right alongside me without losing reach makes long days so much easier and less tiring, and as an added bonus it helps to keep the side door's window glass clean."

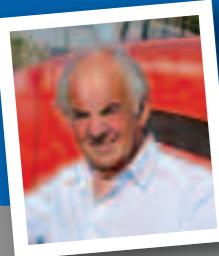
"Having the telescopic boom is a bonus for reaching without having to move the tractor, while the speed of head rotation is particularly impressive with this machine."

Stephen Morris says he's impressed by the fact Shelbourne never take reliability for granted, and appear to have addressed the few odd glitches he had with his old model.

"I'd like to get 5-6 years from the VFRT without major repairs, and on the performance and appearance of the machine so far, it should easily be capable of that."



"Systems which speed up tasks are a high priority for the Morris family when purchasing machinery, hence the adoption of VFRT technology."



Giles Pursey

SOMERSET, UK (HD760T)



"The Shelbourne was a lot quieter, probably because of the low-flow hydraulic system."

"I always say to anyone in hedge trimming who's considering a new machine that if they haven't tried a Shelbourne, they should."

That's Somerset contractor Giles Pursey's advice, and with almost every make of hedge trimmer having been through his hands, he's well-qualified to offer advice. Putting 900 hours/year of hedge work on his tractor and its Shelbourne Reynolds HD760T partner, he works within a 15-mile radius of his base in the village of Street, Somerset cutting hedges for around 70 local farms.

"Previously I'd run a long line of McConnel hedge trimmers," he explains.

"But with the most recent machine in particular, reliability was becoming a big issue, with problems ranging from spool block oil leaks to ram end breakages."

"I can't afford to let customers down and get behind with work, or chase around dealers for spares or for a service engineer to come out."

When his last machine came due for renewal, therefore, he looked at a number of different machines, including a Shelbourne Reynolds hedge trimmer. It was this machine that impressed him most, he says, for a number of reasons.

"The noise of the rotor drive was the first thing that put me off a number of those I tried," says Giles.

"None of them operate silently, of course, but the Shelbourne was a lot quieter, probably because of the low-flow hydraulic system. If you're spending long days trimming, it's nice to have something that doesn't leave your ears ringing at the end of the day."

"Then there was the specification offered as standard on the Shelbourne, with a lot of features that I would have had to pay extra for on some of the other machines, such as head and arm float. And with a Telescopic model I could have telescopic reach still within a

"The specification offered as standard on the Shelbourne, had a lot of features that I would have had to pay extra for on some of the other machines"

compact machine, which is important on our narrow lanes."

Having made his decision in favour of the Shelbourne, he duly placed an order for a HD760T, in time for the 2013-14 hedgecutting season. With telescopic reach of 4.8 to 6.0m and specified with a 1.5m (5ft) head, like all Shelbourne hedgecutters his machine has been built exactly to his requirements.

"I wanted a rotor with two rather than three rows of flails, as I reckon this makes things easier to keep in balance if one requires replacing, as the only other one I have to also change to keep things even is its opposite number, rather than a third one as well. Shelbourne had no problem supplying me with what I asked for."

"They are a really good company for listening to customers and responding with improvements, such as the redesigned kingpost with sufficient room behind it for debris to pass through rather than get trapped behind and build up."

But it's not just the way in which Shelbourne machines are made that has impressed him – it's also what they are made from.

"I specified the HD760T with competition flails, and after two and a half years of use at 1,900hrs/year there was still enough life in them to complete that third year."

"They provide a much better finish than what I was getting from the flails on my last machine, and when flailing ditch banks they don't tend to pick up the material and wrap the reeds around the rotor. It leaves a cleaner cut, and also deposits the material neatly, retaining it within the head."

"The hydraulic roller adjustment is also a real bonus, meaning I can move straight from finishing a hedge to tidying the bank alongside it without having to leave the cab."

Operational design also comes in for praise, with the Shelbourne joystick scoring marks for being easier to operate over a long day.

"Ease of use is excellent, but it's also the little things, like the way it's laid out, that make it good to work with. I can dial in the sensitivity I want from the stick, and having the telescopic buttons on top of the joystick makes them much easier to operate precisely with your thumb. On my old machine, where they were on the side of the stick, it was easy to nudge them accidentally and move the boom outwards without intending to."

"If I had to pick three reasons I'd buy another Shelbourne, I'd say reliability, build strength and back-up. It's my first, but it won't be my last."



"Ease of use is excellent, but it's also the little things, like the way it's laid out, that make it good to work with"



Tom Stockil

MARKINGTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE, UK (HD765VFRT)



"Our first Powerblade VFRT has been totally reliable and its design has enabled us to get through more work in a day."

Reliability and build quality were the key reasons Tom Stockil and his father Michael chose to break a long-held relationship with their hedge trimmer supplier. Having found those qualities by switching to a Shelbourne Reynolds VFRT, they have been able to cut the trimmer fleet for their contracting business from three machines to two, while maintaining the same amount of work.

"We cut the hedges on around 15-16,000 acres each year within a ten mile radius of home," explains Tom, who is based at Markington, near Harrogate.

"With that amount of land to get round, as well as our own dairy herd to look after, the reliability issues we were enduring with the McConnel machines that previously made up our whole fleet were causing us big problems. We were finding that they simply weren't heavy-duty enough, and we were experiencing hydraulic problems

with seals, pipes and pumps."

"Aside from the cost, with that much land to get round, contracting customers to keep happy and our own farm to look after, we couldn't afford to lose that sort of time."

The issues led to the Stockils reconsidering their choice of make, and after assessing the design and build quality of others on the market, they purchased a Shelbourne HD775 VFRT from local dealer

"The reach to the rear is also really good – it makes cutting behind poles and into corners much easier."

Jackson's Motor Engineers.

"They've always given us fantastic support, so we were confident in the back up we would get, despite the fact we were moving to a new make." Tom says of the family's dealer.

"Apart from the build quality of the Shelbourne machine, it was the design and the specification fitted as standard that were the key attractions. Features such as a head and boom float were part of the basic specification on the Shelbourne, making verge mowing much easier and tidier."

But it's the combination of variable forward reach with a telescopic extending boom which really appealed to the Stockils.

"When considering a new machine, we really wanted forward reach, but didn't want to give up the telescopic capability of our existing machines. The idea of having the two together with the VFRT was a big attraction, and it works really well – it's one of the features that means the Shelbourne has taken on the work of two machines."

"The forward reach is brilliant, and makes so much difference to vision. With the McConnel I had to look back what seemed like a long way over my shoulder, whereas with the VFRT the head is right alongside."

"The reach to the rear is also really good – it makes cutting behind poles and into corners much easier. With two-year growth, I tend to do one top cut at a fairly fast forward speed, then cut on the angle, then do the side, leaving just a final top trim to finish off."

"I can do that by cutting once around with the boom in its forward position, then on the next pass set the boom back to do the awkward bits. Once the boom is set up for a pass, there's little need to move it again."

"And the hydraulic nose cone fitted to our machine is really handy. I can open the hood up for mulching brambles and close it down for hedge work. The hedge trimmer makes a really neat job, which I put down to the head design and the heavy T-flails."

The success of the Shelbourne addition to the Stockil hedge trimmer fleet means it's likely to be joined by a similar machine in the near future.

"Our first VFRT has been totally reliable and its design has enabled us to get through more work in a day. On current experience, when our other hedge trimmer comes due for replacement, it will almost certainly be for a Shelbourne."





Pete Rideout

CHETTLE, DORSET, UK (HD760T & HD770T)



"I've built up a good customer base & aim to do a good job for all of them."

Based at Chettle, Dorset, Mr Rideout offers his customers a range of different services but majors on drilling, baling and hedge cutting.

"One of the most annoying things about hedge cutting is that after concentrating hard to create a good level, even cut, you look back and see the odd uncut branch sticking up," says Pete Rideout.

And it's an opinion you can have some sympathy with – the way a hedge looks after it is cut is usually considered to be a reflection on the ability of the operator, not the machine used to cut it.

Which is why, he insists, he purchased his first Shelbourne Reynolds hedge cutter a few years ago and, following the success with that one, why he recently purchased a second machine. Mr Rideout offers his customers a range of different services but majors on drilling, baling and hedge cutting.

"These three jobs tend to keep me pretty well occupied throughout most of the year," he explains. I've built up a good customer base and aim to do a good job for all of them."

This 'doing a good job' is a recurring theme when talking to Mr Rideout. He clearly is at pains to present the best work possible for his customers.

"I first saw the Shelbourne last year and, bearing in mind the success we'd achieved with the company's earlier machine, I thought I would give it a try," he says.

He opted for the HD70T – a telescopic machine which could extend its reach hydraulically out to 7m.

"It's really excellent to have a hedge cutter that can help me achieve the high standards I want to present to my customers."

"There's no doubt that the Shelbourne Head does a good job both in heavy growth – two years or older – and also in those hedges that have that wispy, light weight material that can almost be blown out of the way before it is cut," explains Mr Rideout.

Up in the tractor cab, the controls sit snugly on the left hand arm rest – their electronic action providing precise proportional control.

"It's the first hedge trimmer I've operated for which the manufacturer has actually provided a bracket to mount the controls on," he says. "Usually you have to spend £50 getting someone to make one."

This season, Mr Rideout says he expects to clock up about 1,000 hours using the machine as he cuts his way along mile after mile of hedgerows.

"Each hedge is different and represents a new challenge but the idea is always to leave a tidy job and a hedge that is going to flourish during the year and look good. It's really excellent to have a hedge cutter that can help me achieve the high standards I want to present to my customers."

"And the other good thing about my new Shelbourne is that it attracts the attention of my customers who invariably stop and have a chat with me," he says. "It's a chance for them to appreciate the quality of the work – and, as has happened in the past, they offer me extra work in the future."



"The hydraulic height adjusted roller makes a fantastic contribution to the operation of the head"

Digital Proportional Electronic Control



Mick & Peter Wright

WISBECH, NORFOLK, UK (HD870T)

"We need a strong, reliable machine, and it looks like the Powerblade HD should give us that."



"With the HD870, float response is excellent – it's so smooth that you would barely know the head is down in the working position."

Hedgetrimming contractor provides stern test for new Powerblade HD800.

One of the first of the new contractor-targeted Shelbourne Reynolds Powerblade HD800 range of hedge trimmers to go to work has been given a thorough test during the 2015-16 season in the hands of its new owners, one of eastern England's largest specialist contractors in field boundary and verge maintenance.

MJ Wright and Son runs a trio of trimmers to cover 2,800ha (7,000ac) of farmland, plus roadside work and contracts for bodies including Anglian Water across a radius of 40 miles from its base at Walton Highway, near Wisbech on the Norfolk/Cambs border. Five years ago the business bought its first Shelbourne trimmer, based on both a desire to switch makes following dissatisfaction with manufacturer back-up for its previous machine, and good initial impressions of the way the Powerblade models are designed and built.

"We'd looked over Shelbourne machines before, and were impressed by their features and engineering," says Mick Wright, who runs the business with his son, Peter, and two operators, carrying out a range of agricultural, municipal and construction services.

"At that point we weren't ready to change, but later we had the opportunity to take a Powerblade HD700 series machine on a week's demo, and put it up against a model from another maker. That did enough to impress us, and while we'd previously bought good secondhand machines, following a visit to the Shelbourne factory we placed an order for a HD770T, our first new trimmer."

Performance and reliability more than met the Wrights' expectations, but Mick says that what impressed him just as much was the back-up received directly from Shelbourne Reynolds on the odd occasion when it was required.

"Being able to speak directly to the people who designed and built the machine is very handy, with someone always on the end of the phone if we had an issue, and on the one occasion we had a rotor balance problem on a Friday, factory support came out and sorted it by the next working day. We cannot afford long periods of downtime in the hedgetrimming season, especially now it has been shortened, so this sort of back-up is invaluable."

The 770 completed five years' work with the business, totting up over 3,500hrs during that time. When it came due for renewal, its design, reliability and the support provided by Shelbourne Reynolds, plus the firm's responsiveness to feedback, meant Mick was keen to replace it with a similar machine.

"However, at that point Shelbourne asked if we would like the opportunity to take on a pre-production version of one of the new HD800 models it was developing specifically for the contractor market. We'd provided pointers on HD700 design, and I was keen to see what had been developed on the HD800 range to create a contractor machine, and help with final feedback."

Delivered at the end of October 2015, the pre-production HD870 Tele was one of a small batch of machines built in the run-up to full manufacturing and the range's launch at LAMMA 2016. Among other upgrades the range incorporates a new mainframe design, greater slew arc and updated oil and cooling capacities, and Mick's early experience suggests the new trimmers are more than up to the job of coping with contractor demands.

"On verge work we like to operate at 12-13km/hr, for the best combination of finish and output, and had worked with Shelbourne to improve the head float response at these speeds on the HD700s, to ensure they could respond quickly without losing sequence," explains Peter Wright, who has done a lot of the work with the machine.

"With the HD870, float response is excellent – it's so smooth that you would barely know the head is down in the working position. The increase in oil cooler and fan size, and the reversing fan feature, have helped overcome any issues with power loss on hot days, while the service access is much better, with the removable oil cooler tap screen and better radiator access, plus the protection of the whole service area under the new top cover."

"We have again specified competition flails, which we find give a good clean finish, but we have a bigger 1.5m head on this machine, rather than the 1.2m unit on our old HD770T, which helps reduce passes. Controlling it and the boom is much easier with the Shelbourne joystick design than that on our old machines."

With individual farms taking on more land, contracts are getting bigger, while the later start to the trimming season means the job is under greater pressure, points out Mick.

"We're also now travelling across an area covering Norfolk and Cambridgeshire up into south Lincolnshire and Rutland. All of this means we need a strong, reliable machine, and it looks like the Powerblade HD should give us that."



"Being able to speak directly to the people who designed and built the machine is very handy, with someone always on the end of the phone if we had an issue."



Mike Tomlinson

UTTOXETER, STAFFORDSHIRE, UK (HD865VFRT)

Hedge trimmer design has taken another step forward with the introduction of the variable forward reach system. We visited the first user of Shelbourne Reynold's innovative 6.2m VFR and discovered a success.

There can be few better views in the countryside than a well trimmed hedge – its sides uniform, top level and the surrounding vegetation neatly cut. Of the skills used in an industry which now places more emphasis on speed than straight ploughing, hedge trimming must count as one of the last remaining tasks where operator skill can be truly appreciated.

And it is one which contractor Mike Tomlinson takes very seriously. Based near Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, Mr Tomlinson has taken the art of hedge trimming to new levels - levels that have earned him the respect of his customers.

"I've been offering a contract hedge trimming service since 1982," he says. "And, if I've learnt anything at all in that time it is that there is little

point doing the same sort of job every other contractor in the area does, you have to do it better."

It's a policy that, over the years, has served him well, he reports. And it has enabled him to charge a premium for his work which his customers are prepared to pay – particularly when the hedges to be trimmed are on the roadside or in prominent positions.

Such recognition has also led to him being offered work by large companies which have hedges that need to be kept in a tidy condition, and there are also now contracts for golf courses and race courses. While there is no doubt years of experience have provided Mr Tomlinson with the knowledge and skills required to trim hedges he concedes that having a good hedge trimmer is also a key ingredient.



"It's a very clever system which uses a parallel linkage to ensure the head remains in the correct position as it is moved forwards or rearwards."

"I have no complaints what so ever with this machine it has the ability to produce the high standard of work my customers expect me to deliver."

"You can't expect to produce the best work if the kit you are using is in poor condition or badly designed," he insists.

When he first started his business Mr Tomlinson operated Econ trimmers but when this company decided to stop making them he turned to McConnell. By 2004 he was using a fixed forward reach McConnell but, while the performance of the machine was adequate the view of the cutting head was interrupted by the rear pillar of the tractor cab – which he said was annoying.

It was this point he vowed that his next machine would be a variable forward reach hedge trimmer with digital proportional electronic joystick controls. A visit to the LAMMA event was to result in him discussing with Shelbourne Reynolds the possibility of building a hedge trimmer that could have a cutting head which could be positioned where the operator wanted it to be – a variable forward reach machine (VFR), along with the control system he wanted.

"Shelbourne agreed to design and make one and, after various discussions and a try out of one of the company's standard machines, I ordered one," he says.

As agreed, the new hedge trimmer was delivered by Shelbourne at the beginning of August and was fitted to his Case CVX135.

"It was an exciting moment," he says. "It was the first time I'd had a chance to use the machine and certainly the first time to use the variable forward reach feature."

The 6.2m VFR fits onto the tractor using a box-section sub-frame for which the tractor's two drop arms provide the support – the lift arms are removed. The pto shaft, which powers the trimmer's hydraulic system, and the top link are fitted as normal.

"The first try out was quite an experience," says Mr Tomlinson. "I activated the control to move the cutter head forward and watched it retain its front-on position as it moved forward to a position beyond that of the front window. It was just so good – and I knew then that my neck need never ache again."

Having operated the machine for a number of months, he says for hedge trimming he sets the head in a position where he is looking slightly ahead of it and, when tidying up the bottom of the hedge he has it further forwards so he can see the position of the whole of the head.

The only slight issue he has is that as the head moves forward there is a point where the balance of the trimmer moves to the front so that the very small amount of play on the top link is translated as several inches of vertical movement at the cutter head. To help restrict this movement Mr Tomlinson has fitted a turnbuckle linkage to the top link.

"Perhaps more weight on the rear would be the answer," he comments. "But it's not a big problem."



In 2015 Mike replaced his HD775VFRT with a new HD865VFRT

With up to 1,800 hours clocked between the 1st August and the end of February on hedge trimming duties it is clear that he has some volume of work to complete. And despite this workload, he reports that this is the first machine he has owned that has never been back to the dealer in its first season.

"At the end of every day I spend about half an hour with the grinder sharpening the flails to ensure they are razor sharp for the next day's work," he explains. "It is really important to have them sharp or the finish of the hedge with its smashed ends looks dreadful."

Mr Tomlinson points out that he only operates the pto at about 450 rpm – the head does a better job of cutting at a slower speed by not 'blowing' the small branches out the way. Having the skill to leave the hedge level and even is acquired only with practice but making a clean tidy job when cutting alongside roads requires a front sweeper unit to be used.

Since the trimmer was delivered, there have been one or two minor additions – a couple of covers to pivot points to provide greater protection and the angling of pipe work so that it did not become crimped.



Tim Frizzel

STURMINSTER NEWTON, DORSET, UK (HD62VFR)



"The overall operation of the machine is very undemanding!"

Tim Frizzel was adamant - he was not going back to using a hedge cutter that required him to spend all his time looking over his left shoulder.

With that proviso registered, when his Econ mid-mounted machine had reached the age and condition when the word 'tired' was the polite way of describing it, he was keen to replace it with a hedge cutter that could place the flail head where he could see it.

Based at Sturminster Newton in Dorset, Mr Frizzel has been cutting hedges for more years than he says he cares to remember - and clearly long enough to remember the aching necks that occur when operating a rear mounted machine.

All of which is now history because his latest hedge cutter is a Shelbourne Reynolds 6.2m VFR - variable forward reach. He says he

had heard about the VFR machine and contacted Shelbourne to put his name down for one - if he liked it he said he would buy it.

"It turned up in October last year and we fitted it to my John Deere 6820 and I gave it a go." Mr Frizzel draws breath. "Well, it was just so different from the Econ in the way it was controlled, cut and every other way. I was very impressed and told them to leave it with me."

Of course, the biggest feature that appeals to him is the variable forward reach system which, through a parallel linkage can move the flail head forward so that it is in line with the cab, so no 'neck stretching' is required, as he calls it.

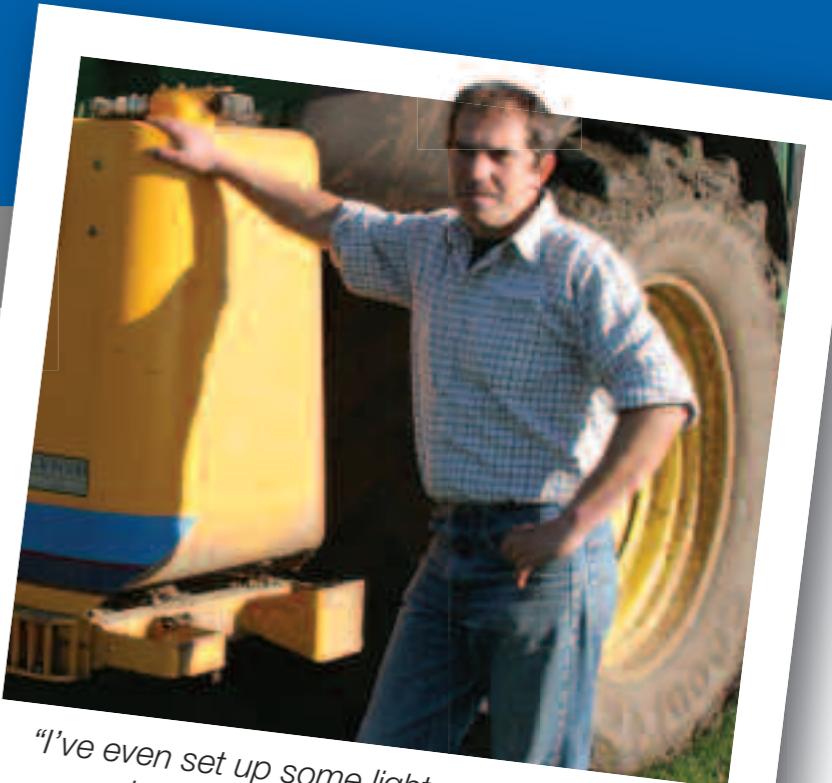
"Its a contractor's machine - one which has a lot of metal in it and can be used day in day out."

"The system really is so good," he insists. "The point is that it is not a swing forwards - that would alter the angle of the flail head. It just moves forward, or backwards, retaining the head in a square-on position."

He also points out that, with the flail head in its forward position it follows the tractor, rather than looping out from the rear of the tractor with every slight turn of the steering wheel. And while we are discussing the flail head, Mr Frizzel pays tribute to its roller that can be raised or lowered hydraulically.

"This is a very useful feature that allows me to set a cutting height when cutting verges and not worry about digging into the ground," he explains. "For hedge cutting, I have the roller lifted out of the way."

In the actual cutting department the head has been fitted with T-flails. When cutting verges the flails cut downwards and for hedges the rotation is reversed to cut upwards. This arrangement means that he can keep the 'hedge' side blades sharp so they cut efficiently while the 'grass' side blades can become dull - their duties not being so demanding. With a pretty full order book of hedges to cut, Mr Frizzel has been pretty busy since the machine arrived yet he reports that operating stress levels are remarkably low.

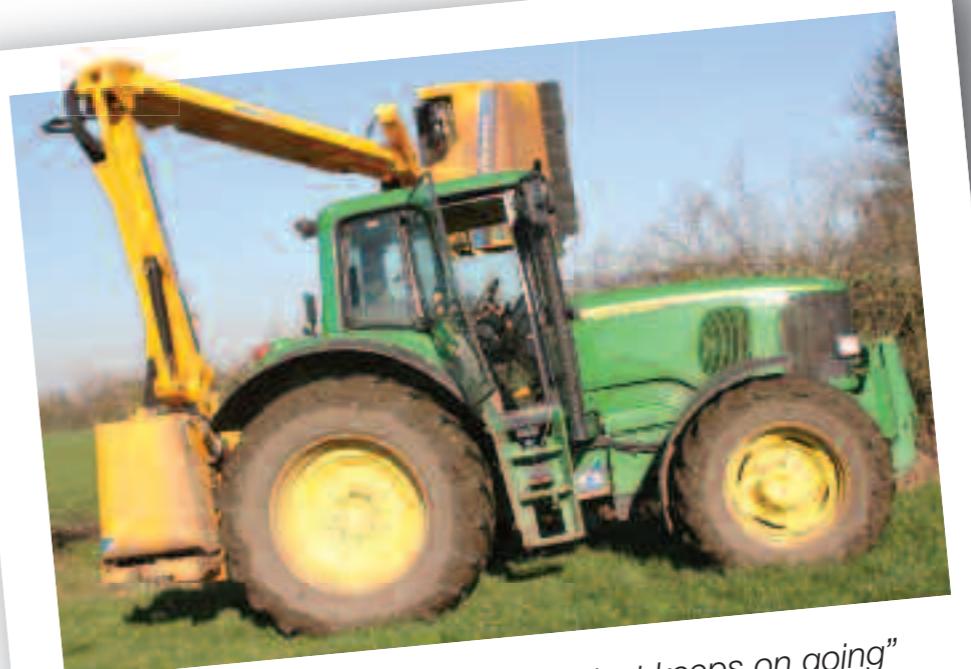


"I've even set up some lights so I can operate it into the evening and beyond."

"The digital controls are logical and are proportional so you can speed up or slow down a movement with the result that the overall operation of the machine is very undemanding," he comments. "I've even set up some lights so I can operate it into the evening and beyond."

He adds that an increasing amount of his work is now on hedges that have a two-year growth although roadside hedges and those that are in the public eye generally get trimmed every year.

The two year growth, he reports, does require more effort to cut, as one would expect, but does not represent any particular problems for the machine.



"Apart from a routine greasing, it just keeps on going"

That is perhaps something for the future but for now at least, he says he is more than pleased with the Shelbourne machine.



Mark Harvey

HINTON ST MARY, DORSET, UK (HD70T)



"It was the Shelbourne Reynolds Powerblade HD70T with its telescoping seven metre reach that offered not only the best value in terms of specification, but also in my opinion, the best control system."

There are over 36 miles of hedges to cut each year on the land which forms Hinton St Mary Estate in Dorset. The intention is to cut every mile, every year.

Managed by Velcourt under the guidance of farm manager Mark Harvey, the farmed area at Hinton St Mary Estate runs to some 1,750 acres of which 1,000 acres is down to arable cropping with the remainder under grass and forage maize for the Estate's 400-cow dairy herd and its 225 followers.

"With that distance of hedge row, you can imagine that our field sizes are not that big," says Mr Harvey. "The average is about 22 acres which is a bit on the tight side for some of the larger cultivators and combines we operate."

On the heavy land that dominates the area, cropping is oilseed rape, winter wheat and winter oats – he says he does not begin to

even think about planting any spring sown crops. A generous field boundary means that, apart from the environmental advantages this achieves, it also allows access for hedge trimming.

"When we first came here about five years ago, the hedges were getting tall and wide and many needed a saw to get them down to size," he explains. "But since then we have made the time to trim all the hedges each year."

Mr Harvey makes the point that in this particular area – the Blackmore Vale as it is known – hedgerows manage to put on an incredible amount of growth each year.

"Shelbourne has gone to town on the design and build of this machine, I'm trying to avoid having to say it's over engineered, but I can't think of a better way of describing it."

"It's quite alarming just how much they can grow within just 12 months," he says. "I really would not like to leave them for two years before we trimmed them."

The demands on the hedge trimmer then could be judged, quite correctly, to be pretty high. Until last year a Bomford machine was employed but its reach was not considered to be long enough. According to Mr Harvey, the profusion of wide ditches on the farm meant that some hedges could not be cut properly which meant that they would have soon reverted to the condition they were in before.

"We clearly needed a larger machine with more reach – and a high degree of reliability," he says. "And after looking at what the market had to offer it was the Shelbourne Reynolds HD70T with its telescoping seven metre reach that offered not only the best value in terms of specification, but also in my opinion, the best control system."

He adds that the clinching factor was that his tractor driver liked the hydraulically height adjusted roller on the flail head – something that he had never experienced before and was clearly going to help him achieve some tidy work. The new trimmer turned up in the autumn of last year and was put to work almost immediately attached to a Case CVX 195, operated by Dave Stevens.

"The first detail I noted was the proportional digital control system which makes the positioning of the head so much easier," says Dave. "The ability to just tweak the head's position or alternatively, if required move it quickly is a big plus."

The telescopic action also means that there is little need to steer the tractor to or from the hedge which also makes life easier.

"The other point to note is that while this machine can operate across ditches and cut the far side of hedges with little problem, it can also operate in the narrowest of lanes," says Dave. "If there's room to drive the tractor down the lane, there's room to cut the hedge."

A feature of the 1.2m Shelbourne flail head which appears to find favour with all who use it is the hydraulically raised or lowered rear roller that can be set down when cutting verges or raised clear when trimming hedges.

"It really is a very useful feature," he says. "Other systems which have bolts to loosen or pins to move so that the roller height can be adjusted just results in the roller never being moved."

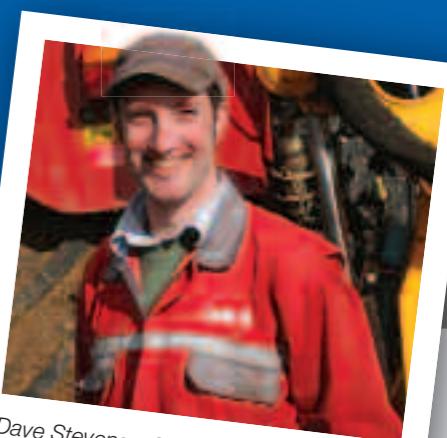
Dave also makes the point that by using 'T' flails he can reverse the flail rotation so that it cuts 'down' when cutting the vegetation at the bottom the hedge and 'up' when trimming hedges. He adds that the 70hp hydraulic motor on the flail head means that it powers its way through material without losing speed or momentum.

"There is nothing worse than an underpowered flail," he says. "The limit on output should be mainly on travelling conditions – not just the ability of the flails to cut."

So far, Dave has clocked up over 450 hours trimming with the new HD70T and all has been well. As Mark Harvey comments that the amount of metal built into the design of the machine should ensure more than a few years of trouble-free operation.



"The proportional digital control system makes the positioning of the head so much easier."



Dave Stevens - Operates the Powerblade.



Mark Chapman

NORTH CORNWALL, UK (HD775VFRT)



"I had little hesitation in changing it for another Shelbourne Powerblade"

It's a mark of the finish left behind by his pair of Shelbourne Reynolds hedge trimmers that, when working for his local council, Cornish contractor Mark Chapman is often to match up rough grass areas to those cut by their mower teams.

"They're happy that there's very little difference in the finish left between the mowers and our machines on rough grass areas," says Mark, who runs an HD775 VFRT alongside a 656.

Of his total hedge trimming workload, which has been built up almost solely by word of mouth rather than advertising, council work makes up a sizeable proportion of the hours the two trimmers accumulate each season. Aside from a couple of months off during October and November, they are busy almost all year round, trimming undergrowth and rough ground when not cutting hedges. Farm hedges make up the bulk of the work, though, and Mark covers a sizeable area of North

Cornwall between the towns of Launceston, Wadebridge, Bodmin and Callington.

But it's only recently that his machines have been judged good enough to trim around the carefully-manicured grassed areas across the local council land. That's come about with a change in his favoured make, to Shelbourne Reynolds, which began when he bought one of the first VFRT (variable forward reach telescopic) machine to be retailed.

"I previously ran models of another make, but when they came due for replacement, my local Shelbourne dealer Andrew Symons offered me

"I was really impressed with it and decided to place an order"

a demo of a Shelbourne HD770 T, the first time I had tried a machine with a telescopic boom."

"I was really impressed with it, and decided to place an order, but it happened that Shelbourne was just about to launch the VFRT, which also offered variable forward reach. I had the opportunity to buy one of the first machines off the line."

Since delivery in early 2014, his HD775 VFRT has been used with a Massey Ferguson 6480 to tackle the heaviest and most demanding jobs on his rounds, and those requiring the longest reach.

"It needs a decent-sized tractor to handle it, but then it's capable of handling very big jobs," suggests Mark.

"We put the MF's wheels in narrow to fit easily around our lanes, but we make sure we weight the tractor properly. It handles the hedge trimmer well and they make a good pairing. This is the only machine that can trim some of the local council's steep banks."

After just a few months, Mark was sufficiently impressed with the design and build of the HD775 VFRT to take a decision on investing in another machine to take on more work.

"I had little hesitation in changing it for another Shelbourne. What I wanted was a smaller, lighter machine to work with our MF 6475 for more general work, so I bought a 656. It has the same hydraulic system and rotor as my other trimmer, while the digital proportional electronic joystick is also identical, which is a good thing, as it's nice to use and there's no need to get used to another



"Small details matter a lot when spending long hours in the cab"



"The Shelbourne machines both leave a much neater finish"

way of operating the machine if having to switch between the two."

Small details matter a lot when spending long hours in the cab, says Mark, and the joystick's design and layout, the materials it and the armrest are made from, and the overall fit and finish, are rated highly."

"It makes either of the trimmers a pleasure to operate. The 775 works for ten months of the year, and the 656 for 6-8 months, so it's important whoever is behind the wheel is comfortable, and that the machines are reliable."

Competition flails are Mark's favoured types for general use, but with the length of time between cuts being extended in many circumstances, he is finding that heavier units are needed for some work.

"We switch to T-flails in winter to enable us to handle heavy three-year growth, while on some council hedges we've been asked to cut there's some very thick five-year growth. The Shelbourne flails and the machine in general have coped well though."

Both farm and council customers can be demanding, points out Mark, but the impression left behind is his advert for both services and helps to ensure he gets called back.

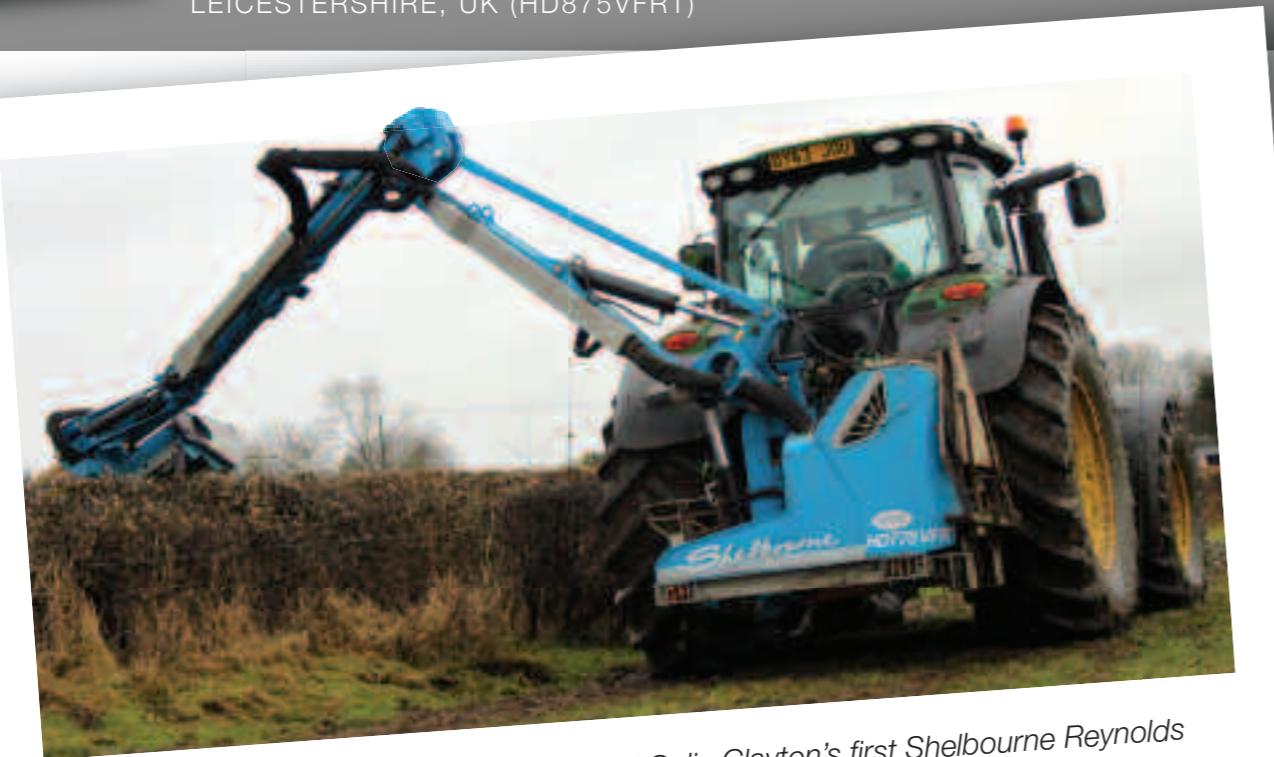
"The Shelbourne machines both leave a much neater finish, and there's much less evidence of debris flying about. We find we don't need to run window guards on the tractor, as the head design means we're not throwing debris at its side."

"Having bought early production models in both cases, we expected a few niggles, but Shelbourne and our dealer have never let us down and supported us well. The build quality on both the 656 and the 775 is very good, and I'm sure we'll be sticking with Shelbourne the next time we come to trade in a trimmer."



Colin Clayton

LEICESTERSHIRE, UK (HD875VFRT)



"A new HD775 VFRT last season replaced Colin Clayton's first Shelbourne Reynolds Powerblade, an HD762 VFR."

Contractor's first Shelbourne Hedge Trimmer makes way for another.

With a big ploughing and combination drilling workload in autumn and spring, Leicestershire contractor Colin Clayton has to fit his third main contract service, hedge trimming, into the four months between November and February, plus a brief fortnight-long window in late summer. In that time he has to meet the demands of as many as 80 customers across the county.

That means he puts reliability and ease of use high up his list of hedge trimmer requirements, and since the beginning of the 2014-15 season he has trusted a Shelbourne Reynolds HD775 VFRT to give him just that.

With no verge mowing duties, Colin's work consists solely of hedge trimming, and variable forward reach is valued highly for the ability it gives to trim hedge sides without causing neck ache.

"Previously I ran an HD762 VFR, which was my first experience of a Shelbourne machine, and of variable forward reach," he explains.

"Before then I'd been a long-time Bomford user, but with that and many of the other hedge trimmer makes now coming from the same stable, I became interested in Shelbourne partly because of their independence, but also because I could deal with one British company in one location producing one range of hedge trimmer products.

"But it was also because of their design ideas, including the way in which they achieve the forward reach on the VFR. The pivot between the boom sections means it loses very little reach when the head is moved forward.

"The local dealer, Sharnford Tractors, was keen to get me to consider changing makes, and offered me a demo to show what the machine could do. When I tried a VFR, the benefits of variable forward reach – chiefly bringing the head alongside the cab – were obvious."

Colin Clayton says the fact Shelbourne Reynolds is an independent British manufacturer is important to him.

The demo machine he tried impressed Colin sufficiently to order a HD762 VFR, which subsequently gave three years' reliable service. At that point in Colin's planned replacement cycle, he decided to trade the machine in for a new model. Despite another look at what other makes had to offer, he says he had little hesitation in choosing another Shelbourne.

"I was keen on another VFR, but when I visited LAMMA back in 2014, Shelbourne showed the VFRT on their stand for the first time.

"The idea of having some telescopic capability to add to the variable forward reach was appealing, as it would give me a lot more flexibility over where to drive the tractor and how close to get to the work, especially when on the field side of hedges."

An HD775 VFRT was duly ordered through Sharnford Tractors in time for the start of the 2014-15 hedge trimming season. Coupled up to his John Deere 6210R, since its arrival the VFRT hasn't disappointed, says Colin.

"I already knew how handy the variable forward reach was, helping a great deal when I'm siding up hedges and taking a lot of the neck ache out of the job. Having the ability alongside that to reach outwards rather than reposition the tractor is a very handy addition to the machine."

The head design is probably the best of all those that he has operated over time, believes Colin.

"It does an excellent job of retaining the material and propelling it straight downwards into the hedge. I rarely find that I have to clean the road of clippings. There's plenty of power at the flail

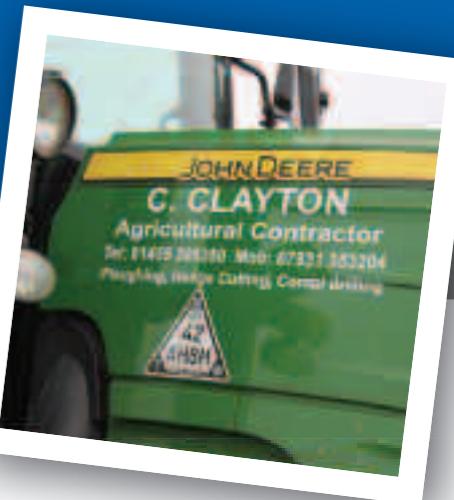
head, and the C-flails I specified leave a nice finish on hedge work.



"Having telescopic reach in addition to variable forward reach makes the VFRT a well-rounded package."



"With 80 customers to serve between tillage and drilling work in autumn and in spring, Colin Clayton values the reliability and ease of use of his VFRT."





Colin Clayton (cont.)

LEICESTERSHIRE, UK (HD875VFRT)



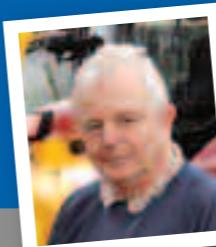
"Telescopic capability is valued for the benefit it offers in not having to reposition the tractor or get too close to the work." Colin specified C-flails when ordering his Powerblade HD775 VFRT

"It's an easy machine to service and maintain, and it's simple to mount and dismount. The joystick panel is easy to operate, and Shelbourne have been genuinely interested in the feedback I've given them on its design. Although it stays on the 6210R through most of the hedge cutting season, it does have to come off the tractor when it's needed for drilling work, and that's a fairly quick job, even with the axle brackets.

"I'm pleased I stuck with Shelbourne again. Neither the machine nor the company and the dealer have let me down, and with a lot of work to get around in a relatively short period before I need to get on with spring ploughing and drilling, that's important."



Colin has now just traded for a new HD875VFRT



Anton Crisp

GRESSENHALL, NEAR DEREHAM, UK (HD775VFRT)

"Shelbourne were prepared to specify my machine exactly how I wanted it"

Manufacturer independence appeals to Norfolk hedging contractor.

The benefits of buying a locally-made machine from an independent manufacturer willing to respond to feedback mean Shelbourne Reynolds has become the preferred hedge trimmer supplier for one Norfolk contractor.

For the past thirty years hedgecutting has been the focus of the contracting business run by Anton Crisp alongside the 48ha (120ac) family arable operation at Glebe Farm, Gressenhall, near Dereham. The decision to switch to a Shelbourne trimmer is a relatively recent one, influenced by the desire to work with a manufacturer offering an independent approach to the demands of hedge trimmer users.

"Shelbourne were prepared to specify my machine exactly how I wanted it," says Mr Crisp.

"The 767 VFR I'm running currently has an additional 0.5m reach over the standard model, something Shelbourne were able to engineer into the machine at my request when it was built."

It was the dedication of the people making the machines that also impressed him on a machinery club trip around the factory at Stanton, near Bury St Edmunds.

"It was good to see the pride taken in the products being manufactured, and the engineers were keen to listen to ideas and feedback."

"And with the factory being nearby, I know that I can get support from the staff there if needed."

With the amount of work he puts his trimmers

through, they are changed every two years. His tractor toots up 2,000hrs each year during eight months of trimming work, with about a third of the total coming from verge mowing contracts for Norfolk County Council's appointed highways contractor. Most work is carried out within a 20 mile radius for 40-50 regular customers.

Purchased through Ernest Doe at North Walsham, Mr Crisp's 767 VFR is just over 18 months old. When it's replaced this summer, it's likely to make way for one of the latest VFRT models, combining variable forward reach with a telescopic second arm.

"I've had one on demo, and the combination of variable forward reach with a telescopic boom is very useful. We have some very narrow lanes, and variable forward reach helps in cutting hedge sides tight to the tractor. Extra telescopic reach will be a useful addition to that."



Anton has since traded for a new HD775VFRT machine



Ed Kilby

WALTON, WETHERBY, YORKSHIRE (HD70T)



"Shelbourne are fantastic at helping with parts and backup"

Backup and features the key for West Yorkshire contractor.

Ed Kilby and his father farm 300 acres of arable and grassland at Walton, West Yorkshire under the name WB and A Kilby & Son. As well as growing wheat, spring and winter barley, plus oilseed rape, the Kilbys handle a suckler herd enterprise and small contracting service.

A large part of this service, which includes potato planting, bale wrapping and buck raking as part of a local silage team, is hedgecutting. Running almost non-stop from August 1st through to March 1st, Mr Kilby is mostly hedge or verge cutting on local farms within an 8-10 mile radius of his base, although some farms are sited a few miles further afield.

He started expanding the hedgecutting business in 2002, originally running another brand of machine, but as work grew he needed more capacity and looked for alternatives.

Having seen Shelbourne's relatively new range of trimmers at the Smithfield Show in December 2004, Mr Kilby liked what he saw and invested in a 6.7m ex-demo machine which managed to clock up some 4,000 hours.

"The guys from Shelbourne brought the machine up for us to try, and it just stayed on the farm as it did a really good job," he says.

This machine was then replaced in July 2009 with the largest model from Shelbourne, the HD70T with 7m reach and telescopic arm. Mr Kilby was pleased with some of the changes made to the latest design, which included a beefier frame construction. Again, Shelbourne's staff came out with the new machine to offer support during installation, and were also on hand to sort out a problem with the main lift ram which arose.

"I called the factory when I discovered an internal oil leak in the ram, and the company sent a new one up in a service van the next day as it was too late for overnight delivery. The engineer fitted the ram and I was up and running straight away. That's great service, and I find that Shelbourne are fantastic at helping with parts and backup, which is vital for a contractor, especially in the busiest August and September periods," adds Mr Kilby.

Part of the plan when buying the larger machine was the extra reach it offered.

"The guys from Shelbourne brought the machine up for us to try, and it just stayed on the farm as it did a really good job"

"Sometimes, you just need that extra distance to reach across to a hedge or bank," Mr Kilby points out. "It also means that the boom height can be kept lower, which makes working on top of banks safer and more stable."

Also new on the HD70T, which has completed around 1,000 hours per year so far, was proportional joystick control.

"I really like this, and it is much more precise than the more basic oil-over-oil low pressure system I had previously on other machines," he comments. "It is just fantastic to use as you can tweak it just how you like it, and the armrest is very comfortable and easy to adjust."

The trimmer is well matched to its power supply tractor, an 02-plate New Holland TM150 with 11,000 hours on the clock. As the dedicated hedgecutting tractor, and one which came from a drainage board and hence has wider tyres set to a 76 inch track and solid wheel centres, the outfit is ideal for aiding in stability.

Mr Kilby is mainly working on cutting hedges, and he generally reckons to re-edge his Shelbourne T flails twice a week on normal growth, but if in heavy two or three year growth material a new edge can be a daily requirement to keep a nice cut. With 1,900 hours clocked up already, the 1.2m head is still running on its original drive belts.

"I was a keen direct drive user, but I have to say that the belt drive has given no problems"

"I was a keen direct drive user, but I have to say that the belt drive has given no problems," he remarks. "And it rarely needs adjusting, which saves me time."

A spare set of belts plus oil pipes and, of course, extra flails are always in the tool box. The roller system that Shelbourne has fitted to its machines gains high praise too.

"It is really beefed up compared to the previous one we had, and the single ram works really well saving flail wear on the grass we do cut on verges and banks," Mr Kilby adds.

So what is the process for achieving a really neat hedge finish in West Yorkshire?

"I personally start at the top, trimming off the bulk and leaving three or four inches, and then I use a shoulder cut which is reckoned to encourage birds into using hedges," he remarks. "I then run a side cut and finish with a trim on top, reducing rotor speed for this final pass to create a neater finish."

The tractor runs in 1,000rpm pto speed, but this means the 140hp New Holland is only really on tickover to achieve the required 540rpm shaft speed. Despite its engine size, Mr Kilby reckons to be able to use just 7.5 litres per hour across a whole day, including travel to and from sites.

It appears then that backup of parts and service from Shelbourne are high on the list of likes for Ed Kilby, along with a solid, reliable machine and an exceptional control system. As for when the next trimmer is to arrive, this will depend on cost to change but is likely given the experience so far that another Shelbourne machine will almost certainly be cutting many of West Yorkshire's hedges for a while longer yet.



"It is really beefed up compared to the previous one we had"





Rick Playle

BIRCH, ESSEX, UK (HD870T)



In 2016 Rick purchased a new HD870T machine

First and last impressions count for Essex contractor.

Taking a look at Rick Playle's hedgecutting setup would lead you to think that it is brand new and almost out of the box, but first impressions can be deceptive.

Having been employed on farms when leaving school but moving into the haulage industry, Mr Playle takes pride in his machines and his work, which he reckons is why he gets repeat business every season. He reckons that turning up on farms in a neat tractor and equipment makes a great first impression and leaving a neat hedge or verge makes a great lasting impression. Based just South of Colchester at Birch Farms, he runs his contracting business around an immaculate 6,000 hour five-year old John Deere 6620 and Shelbourne HD70T trimmer, purchased in September 2010.

Having started contracting in March 2000 by hiring himself in as labour to local farms, Mr Playle soon began regular work for a Colchester-based hedgecutting contractor. He spent four years in this role honing his accuracy for that all important quality hedge finish, and was soon being asked by customers why he didn't go into business himself. This

prompted him to commence trading in his own right shortly afterwards as RJ Playle Services.

"I purchased a second-hand John Deere 6600 tractor and McConnel 650 hedgecutter, which had been well used," Mr Playle says. "Work soon snowballed and I was quickly in need of a newer machine, and I purchased the same brand as I was familiar with their layout," he adds.

However, he had seen Shelbourne's range of hedgecutters and kept one eye on the developments being made with its machines while running his existing competitive models. These, however, proved to be below his expected build and performance levels, and during harvest 2009 he requested a Shelbourne demonstration from Steve Plumb of local dealer Ernest Doe.

An HD60T machine duly arrived and he was suitably impressed enough to do a deal for a larger seven-metre reach HD70T machine, which arrived in September 2010. So the Shelbourne must have impressed on its demonstration to completely change brand?



"Shelbourne's digital proportional controls gets nothing but support"

"It did impress me a great deal, and the machine continues to now," says Mr Playle. "What I really like is that the HD70T is a true seven-metre reach machine, because I don't feel some manufacturers actually give the true reach that they state," he comments. "Having a telescopic arm was a must, as it means that the tractor can stay on the road or field and does not need to ride drains to reach the furthest hedges and banks".

Another area which impressed Mr Playle is the Shelbourne 1.2m head, which he says just does not eject material out from the front as other heads he has used. For a man who likes to not only keep his kit clean, but also the area he has cut, this is a big plus.

"I don't know what it is, maybe how close the rotor runs to the hood, but I just don't get the material flying out towards the tractor that I am used to," he says.

This, in turn, means he runs the rear blower unit less often also. On the subject of the head, Mr Playle likes a few other features at the business end of his Shelbourne machine.

"I really like the fact that the head is belt drive. I was a bit dubious of it at first having had direct drive heads previously, but I have to say it has been very good, adjusted by a simple tensioner and bolt," he comments. "I also like that Shelbourne's designers have made it easy to change rotors, as I have been experimenting with changing from a hedge rotor with F10 'T' flails to a verge rotor equipped with F10 competition flails."

Mr Playle is always keen to get the best finish, and he reckons the 15 minutes to swap rotors over when doing bulk areas of grass is well worth it, and is aiming to carry both types on a special bracket for this season. Also singled out for praise is the design of the rear roller, which can be adjusted hydraulically via the trimmer's control system.

"Shelbourne have made this a very simple roller control system with one ram, which is not prone to damage or cylinder creep,

"The system has a really simple computer which takes seconds to alter for different settings, & I like that I can switch slew to the joystick for tasks such as cutting around corners in fields. It just makes it easier to work quicker and neater."

and it takes the impact over ground contours very well," he points out.

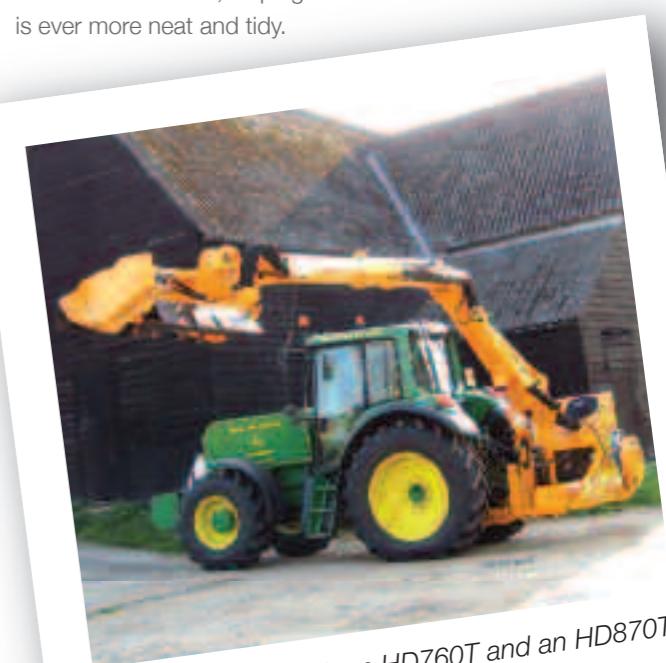
"Up in the cab, a machine and its operator are only as good as the control system they use. Shelbourne's digital proportional controls are specified here, and this gets nothing but support. "I like the fact that all of the rams can all be adjusted for flow in both directions, and so too can the control response," Mr Playle says.

Praise is also given to the bracket which supports the control box, which Mr Playle has mounted in lieu of the John Deere's left arm rest, and which can be adjusted simply to give the correct work angle.

The HD70T is employed on farms within about a fifteen mile radius of Mr Playle's base, and he reckons that he covers around 10,000 acres per year, and finds that now it is ever more important to run a reliable machine, with spares available fast if needed.

"I handle land for farmers running large combines and cultivation rigs, so they want hedges cut and me out without delay. The key to this job is speed, but I like to make sure I do a good job – it's my only advertisement so it is worth doing it properly!" he says. "It is vital that flails are sharp, enabling me to achieve good speeds and also do a better job of a hedge or verge."

So will this machine be replaced by another Shelbourne? It appears that this will be the likely result given the performance of the HD70T so far, helping to ensure Essex's farmland is ever more neat and tidy.



Rick now runs both an HD760T and an HD870T



Roger & John Sandoe

BODMIN, CORNWALL (HD760T & HD775VFRT)



"We were very impressed with the build quality of the Shelbourne compared to our previous machines"

Shelbourne keeps trails clear in Cornwall.

The beautiful countryside in Cornwall is a popular attraction for tourists, not just for walking but for biking trails. One contractor outfit who is responsible for the maintenance of these trails is father and son team Roger and John Sandoe, who operate from the town of Bodmin. Their recent purchase of a Shelbourne HD60T hedgecutter has made this operation more efficient and more importantly more enjoyable.

The tourism industry is a big business in Cornwall and is often a way for farmers and contractors to diversify their operations. A popular attraction has recently been bike trails throughout the countryside and woodland, such as the Clay and Coastal trails, and the Bodmin Beacon nature reserve. Keeping the trails maintained involves cutting the verges back on a regular basis, keeping the paths clear in addition to tackling some of the overhead growth periodically at the beginning and end of the season.

With some three passes in February, the trail mowing peaks in July with plenty of bramble growth to be knocked back.

Contractor Roger Sandoe and his son John have been responsible for this task for a number of years, investing in a Shelbourne HD60T hedgecutter in 2010. Arriving in the October, the HD60T replaced a seven-year old Bomford Hawk with a 5.4m reach. Supplied by new dealer Jonathan Lutey Agricultural Services in Wadebridge, some five miles West of their yard, this particular machine had to be converted especially for the job to allow the cutting of verges on the trails. A narrow road kit was converted especially to fit onto the HD60T to allow the head to be pulled straight behind the machine rather than at an angle when in tight spaces.



"Mr Sandoe is impressed with the extendable boom and the hydraulically adjusted roller which have improved operation"

Roger Sandoe first saw the Shelbourne machine at the Royal Cornwall Show in 2010 and when it came to replacement the HD60T was opted as the way forward.

"We were very impressed with the build quality of the Shelbourne compared to our previous machines," he explains. "They looked a heavy-duty unit and was some 400kg heavier than our existing hedgecutter, which we need for our operation."

With a longer reach of 6.0m, telescopic boom and verge kit, the Shelbourne machine was ideal for cutting both verges and overhead growth. Used on a John Deere 6930, the mounting of the HD60T was also an improvement over the outgoing model where the telescopic stabiliser arms were redesigned and a stronger McConnell headstock fitted. With the Shelbourne there was no need for this and when traveling over undulating terrain it is a very stable machine. As the tractor is used on other jobs the hedger is required to be removed regularly which Roger Sandoe considers a simple operation.

Working with other contractors in the area and the local council, the Sandoes do not just specialise in hedgecutting. They also run a John Deere 7810 with a hookloader trailer

"With a longer reach of 6.0m, telescopic boom and verge kit, the Shelbourne machine was ideal for cutting both verges & overhead growth."

for transport duties, in addition to a Fendt 818 which is in charge of running a stone crusher on their latest track reclamation operation.

"We try to keep tractors working all year round," says Mr Sandoe, "and the track reclamation business has been a very popular venture in the area and as diversification is the key, there is always plenty to do."

The Sandoes have also been working with Shelbourne's Powerspread after putting it to test on sewage cake from South West Water. Again, in cooperation with another local contractor, the Powerspread machine worked extremely well in the conditions when up against the competitive spreaders and provided an excellent spread pattern.

Mr Sandoe is impressed with the build quality of his HD60T, as well as the extendable boom and the hydraulically adjusted roller which have also improved operation. He particularly likes the proportional electronic joystick control feature for precise adjustments and allowing the driver to decide the speed of each operation.

Mr Sandoe hopes to keep his Shelbourne for as long as his previous machine and so far has no doubt that he will be reinvesting in another when the time comes for replacement.



"Since this initial story was written Roger and John have purchased an additional HD775VFRT machine and updated their HD60T to a new HD760T"