



Test it...

A hole in one

Well, 'in three', actually. **Malcolm Bates** puts together three bits of kit designed to make short work of repairing the potholes in your driveway

It's the same every year - a mixture of heavy rain and a few sharp frosts and even the most lightly-used driveway or private road is likely to develop a few potholes. Add in traffic from the postman, tractors and the local council bin wagon and the problem soon escalates to the point where you've got a car tyre-damaging assault course.

So, what's to be done? Get your retaliation in early, best sums it up. You could, of course, employ a contractor and get the whole job done professionally, but, if my recent experience of getting a reasonable quote for fresh Tarmac in my yard is anything to go by, that's a more serious 'budgeting issue'.

Could you do the job yourself? The key requirement is to get hold of some suitable 'fill'. The idea being to keep a handy little stockpile and use it as required. Used road cold planer chippings are ideal as, in effect, you're 'recycling' an old road! The trouble is, what you tend to get is a mixture of usable material, plus dust and rubbish.

Problem one then is to find a way of producing clean, graded fill - a size roughly between a sugar lump and a Ferrero Rocher is what we're looking for. The clever new 'Multidrum' screener attachment for the widely-available-to-hire Belle 'Minimix 150' cement mixer is the solution.

Problem two - you'll need to transport what can be quite heavy loads of material to where they are needed. An ordinary wheelbarrow would do. But the new British-made 'MUV' electric barrow from Nu-Star is far better.

And finally? Where most DIY pothole fillers go wrong is that they don't employ enough 'fire power' to compact the fill into the hole. JCB has the answer in the 'SD580' single drum vibrating roller/compactor.

How long will such DIY repairs last? Not as long as doing the job professionally, obviously. But the key issue here is to stop things getting any worse. So in that context, let's see if all three bits of kit can help deliver a viable, cost-effective DIY solution.

Fleet of foot

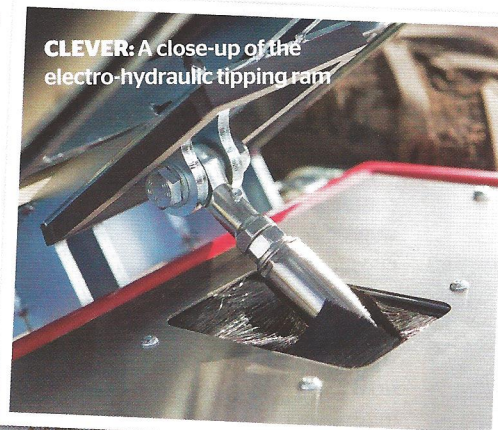
NU-STAR 'MUV' BATTERY-ELECTRIC TIPPING BARROW

- Battery-powered narrow-access 400kg capacity tipping barrow. Width over body, 33 inches (830mm).
- Price as tested £4,475.
- Available from Nu-Star Mechanical Handling Limited, Derby. Call 0115 880 0070 for more product information, your nearest dealer location and demonstration bookings.

Is there a new trend here? First the Multidrum, now the MUV (multi utility vehicle). Both designed and built in the UK. The MUV battery electric barrow is fresh onto a market previously the preserve of imported machines. True, at best, this is still 'a budding new trend'. But it's a welcome move in the right direction.

In fact 'direction' is very much what the MUV is all about. It has two load-carrying wheels and a third 'jockey' wheel to (a) take the strain off the handlebars - and you - and (b) help provide the direction-changing capability. In theory, this 830mm-wide unit should pass from the rear access of a house to a skip in the front - which is of considerable value when working on domestic-scale DIY construction jobs.

Again 'in theory', the MUV should also be ideal for working around the stable yard, on groundscape operations, or indeed anywhere where you want to carry more than a simple manual wheelbarrow can handle - and to do that without you



CLEVER: A close-up of the electro-hydraulic tipping ram

having to use all your strength or energy in the process. Result? More work, with less effort.

Using a 24-volt gel battery pack, the MUV comes with a two-speed transmission, giving a 'transport' speed and a lower setting for manoeuvring in tight places. There's also a 'reverse gear' and an electro-hydraulic 'power tip'.

So how does it work in practice? I was amazed at how capable it was - even when well-loaded with heavy chippings. Just to test the limits of tipping power, we put a heaped load into the tipping body and the single ram still coped without protest.

Moans? Sadly, it's just a bit too wide to go through a domestic doorway. And being a three-wheeler, care is needed when turning on cambered surfaces. If there is a limitation, it's when hill climbing on loose surfaces with a load. It's not lack of power, but wheelspin that brings it to a halt. Bigger wheels might help.

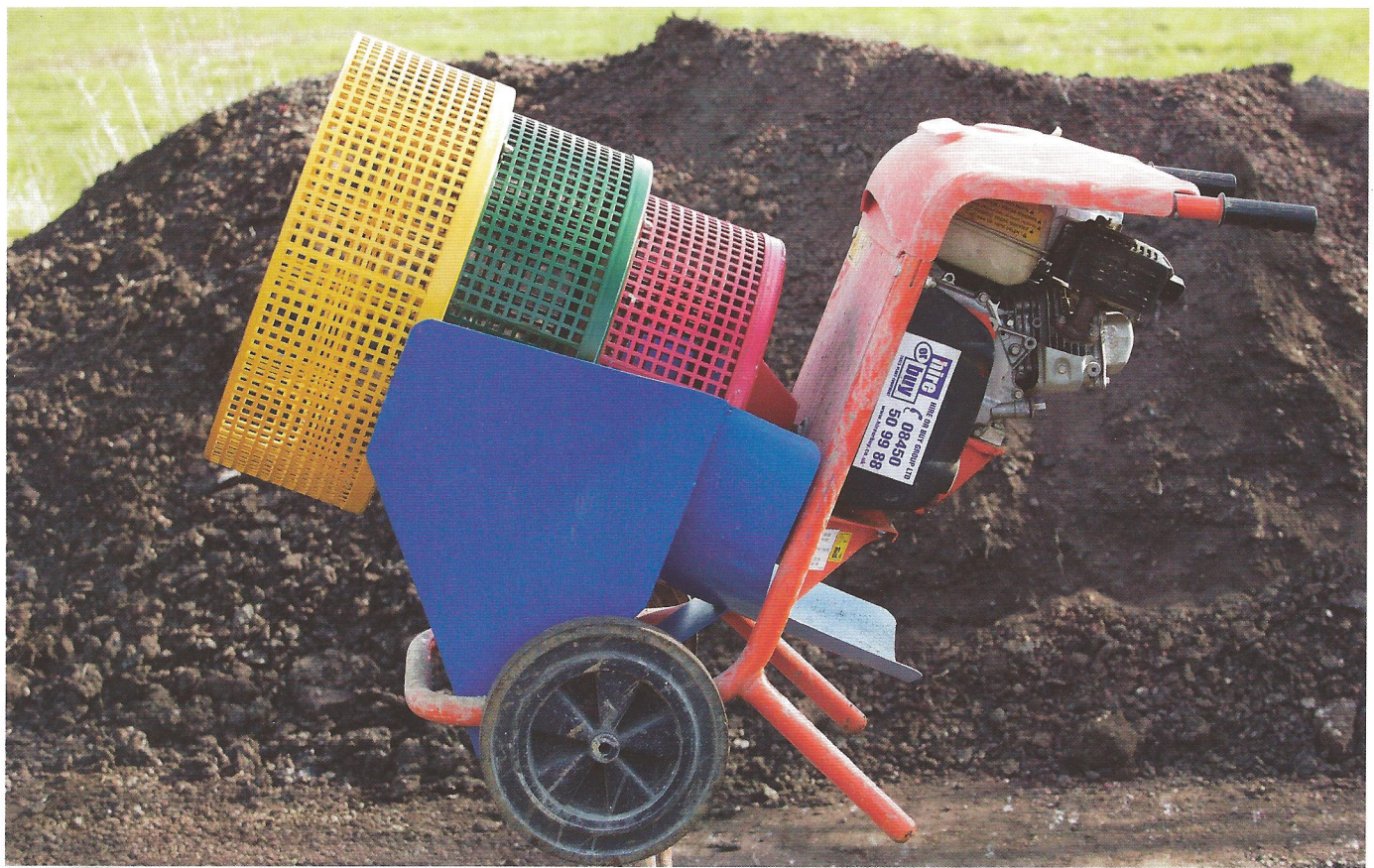
Oh, and going in a straight line does depend on the castor-action jockey wheel agreeing with you!



VERDICT

The operator walks behind with speed dialled-in by twist grip. There is, of course, a 'deadman' control, so if there's an emergency, the machine will stop instantly. There's a choice of metal or plastic body, a tow hitch to move trailers and a flat load bed. A 'ride-on' version - with controlled steering - may also be offered shortly, but I found the MUV, the ideal tool for transporting (and tipping) large quantities of heavy material.

In comparison, the humble wheelbarrow used for the fines was very hard work!



Drum roll please

MULTIDRUM TWO-WAY DRUM SCREEN

- Rotary-action drum screener attachment for Belle 'Minimix 150'.
- Price as tested £295 (mixer extra).
- Requires basic assembly.
- Available from Multidrum Limited, Wem, Shropshire.
- Call 07850 974799 for more product information and dispatch details.

Drum screens are widely used by demolition contractors and recycling companies to turn a mixture of materials into something that can either be re-used or sold, by ejecting the rubbish. But until now, even the smaller drum screen attachments needed a specialised power source such as a hydraulic excavator.

In contrast, the Multidrum utilises the simple, widely-available petrol-driven Belle 'Minimix 150', which, if required, is readily available on hire. The standard mixer drum is simply unthreaded and the Multidrum mounted in its place. Mine was an early pre-production model and arrived by courier in four parts - the three different-sized perforated drums and the delivery chute which... Well, you're probably there ahead of me - this chutes the graded 'product' into one wheelbarrow at the back and 'the fines' (everything else) into a second barrow at the front of the mixer. All it took was half an hour or so of assembly - a one-off job of course - a single pull on the Honda engine starter cord and we were in business.

It really is amazing how effective this little pocket-sized solution is. And here's the really interesting bit - it works both ways. On this job, I wanted the graded fill for the pot holes and, after initial rolling, used the fines to give a sealed surface after a final pass. But you could just as easily use the Multidrum to take stones, brick fragments and other debris out of soil on a 'brownfield' site to produce high quality topsoil.



MIXING IT UP: Malcolm loads up the unit

VERDICT

This product is still rather new and it might be that a return lip on the larger (yellow) drum would help make it faster to load, without spillage.

But that minor criticism aside, this turns an already useful bit of kit - the mixer - into something doubly useful. It's highly likely your local hire company will be offering the Multidrum option alongside the mixer, but if not, you could always buy the Multidrum and hire in the mixer when you need it.

That way, you'll be ready for the next batch of potholes, sooner rather than later!



On a roll

JCB 'SD580' SINGLE DRUM VIBRATING ROLLER

● Single drum vibrating roller, powered by a Honda GX160 3.6kW petrol engine. Machine width, 696mm. ● Price as tested £4,286 - purpose-built trailer £929 extra. Available from JCB Sales, Rokester, Staffs. ● Call 0800 581761 for more product information, your nearest dealer location and demonstration bookings.

Having watched the contractors who resurfaced my yard wrestling with a large, venerable pedestrian-operated single drum roller, I was in two minds about the little JCB SD580.

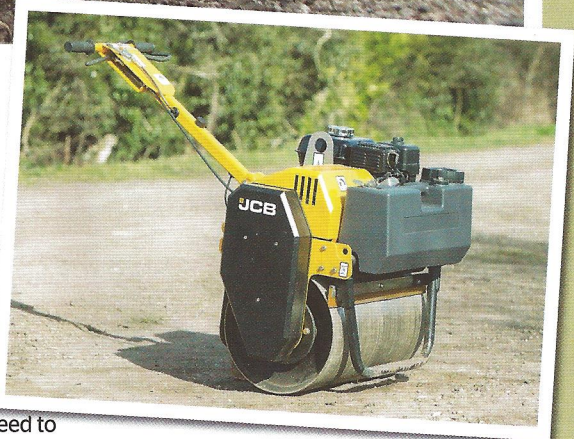
While JCB also does 'larger', the SD580 looked ideal for smaller resurfacing jobs that require constant direction changing. This, of course, suggested it should be easier to handle than the machine (of another brand) used by the contractors - their's had a worrying delay between the operator's signal to apply reverse thrust and any actual change of direction taking place. You think I was worried? Just ask the wall of my house.

In contrast, my mission was to discover if the JCB SD580 had the capability to provide the final crushing blows to my DIY pothole-mending project, while leaving me with enough energy to tackle all the other jobs that need doing. It certainly looked easier to handle, but was it big enough?

As you might expect, a company like JCB has product specialists to ask the right questions beforehand - ensuring the kit selected does the job expected. You should expect nothing less from either your plant and machinery dealer or - if you're hiring rather than buying - your local plant hire desk. The flipside is, you need to give them details regarding your usage requirements, if you're going to get the right machine for the job.

Moans? They're hard to find. Fuel consumption was very good and the 15-litre water tank (to stop 'hot rolled' sticking) plenty large enough for patching work.

As with any machine that relies on 'vibration' to do its work, it was satisfying to discover that even after a whole day's work, my wrists didn't protest. While it would be impossible to make a 'quiet' vibrating roller, if you're hiring kit like this, it's probably a good idea to get the newest machine you can find as the newer it is, the more user-friendly it should be.



ABOVE: The JCB 'SD580' gives an end result that looks professional and is standing up well to large vehicle traffic

VERDICT

Nice to report that the SD580 should be ideal for providing the 'rolling action' for your DIY patch repairs. Had I been using fresh tarmac of course, that would have 'hot rolling action', but by picking a warm day and rolling-in a covering of asphalt 'fines' to seal the surface, the end result looked the part and, so far, seems to have stood up well to an assault by the 26-tonne council bin wagon that squeezes down the lane every Friday.

ALL PRICES INCLUDE VAT UNLESS STATED