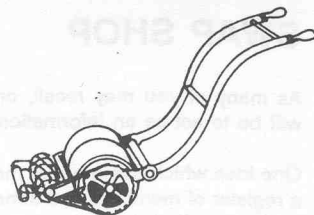


# Grassbox

The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 1



Spring 1991

## LONG TIME NO HEAR

So here we are at last. The first newsletter/magazine of the Old Lawnmower Club. First, apologies to all those who expected me to get the club and magazine off the ground last year. I dare say most of you thought I had forgotten all about the club or decided not to bother, but after a fairly busy summer it seemed like a good idea to wait until the new year before launching the club in earnest.

I have tried to put together the magazine to include items which will be helpful to the serious and casual collector and enthusiast. It's always difficult starting something new, but I hope I've chosen the right topics, even if some of the articles are not that interesting!! One problem I know will turn up sooner rather than later is that I'll run out of articles. So if anyone wants to contribute, please send something in. Otherwise, please let me know which bits you find useful and a waste of time so I can develop future issues.

## CLUB NEWS

This must be the "official" launch of the club in some ways. It was a great surprise how many other people were interested enough in old lawnmowers to write in to GMS User News last year - nearly 40 in fact! I hope everyone would still like to join.

Personally, I would not like the club to be too bureaucratic - it always seems to spoil things. The reason for setting up the club is to allow everyone to keep in touch with each other, so the emphasis should (I think) be on getting together at events and having a good time. Although I am setting up the club, I would like to think as many people will play an active role as possible, even though we are all spread out rather.

There will be no membership or entrance fee (restoration and rallying is already expensive enough!), but it would be very helpful if everyone could complete the enclosed form. This ensures the club has up to date information to work with.

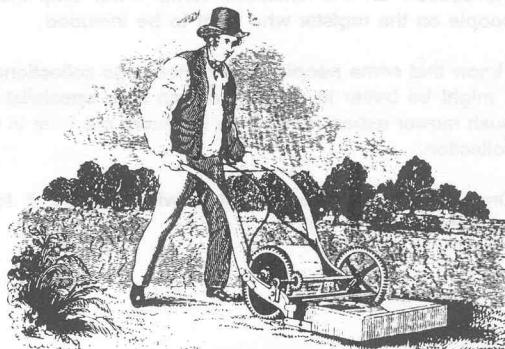
If anyone feels that the club should be more formal, please let me know. After all, there are good reasons for having a set of rules etc.

Milton Keynes Museum of Industry & Rural Life has kindly offered to act as the home of the club (I am a Member of the volunteers' society there). The Museum has around 65 mowers in its collection, dating from between about 1860 and 1970. Call in if you have not been yet!

Finally, I will be keeping the information you send me on a microcomputer. Because of the Data Protection Act, I have to let you know I am doing this and allow you to check the information I have about you in case it is wrong. If there is anything you do not want me to know, please don't fill in that part of the form. I will of course let anyone check the information I hold on them.

Keith Wootton

## But first this...



**BUDDING'S**  
**PATENT GRASS-CUTTING MACHINE.**  
SOLD BY APPOINTMENT, BY  
**J. R. & A. RANSOME, IPSWICH.**

This Machine is so easy to manage, that persons unpractised in the Art of Mowing, may cut the Grass on Lawns, Pleasure Grounds and Bowling Greens, with ease. It is easily adjusted to cut to any length, and the beauty of its operation is, that it leaves no seam, nor any of the cut grass upon the Lawn. Other advantages of this machine are, that the grass may be cut when dry, and consequently it may be used at such hours as are most convenient to the Gardener or Workman, - while the expense of Mowing is considerably lessened, as more than double the work may be done with the same manual labour that is requisite with the scythe.

Budding's machine was the world's first lawnmower and was built under license by a number of companies. Ransomes started manufacturing Budding lawnmowers in 1832 and is the only company to have survived.

## MYSTERY SECTION

### Help!

A member recently asked if I knew anything about a lawnmower he had come across last year. It had the lettering "TMMC" cast into the frame but no other distinguishing marks. The engine was an old looking two stroke with a small cast-iron flywheel. I guessed the machine was made by The Motor Mower Company of Detroit, Michigan, USA, but that's as far as I got. Has anyone out there come across any more information than this - it shouldn't be difficult.

Have you an unidentified mower? Write in and I'll try and include it in the next issue.

## RESTORATION CORNER

Restoration hints and tips. Anything goes, as long as it's about mowers and how to restore them. Do you have suggestions of the right colour paint to use for a particular machine or do you want help with spares? If so, send your suggestions for the next edition.

Please send in your contributions or suggestions for Restoration Corner. I will try and include as many as possible in future editions.

## SWAP SHOP

As many of you may recall, one of the aims of the club will be to act as an information "Swap Shop".

One idea which came out of the rally at MKM was to form a register of members and either details of their collection or perhaps their key interest areas. In this way, members will be able to contact each other to "compare notes" and so on. Being on the register will, of course, be completely voluntary to make sure that no feels obliged to join in.

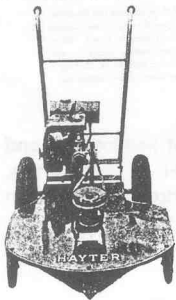
Anyone who wants to join in with the register should send me brief details of their collection or any area where they think they might be of special help to others by filling in the section on the enclosed form. I will only include people on the register who want to be included.

I know that some people have rather large collections, so it might be better to say you are an Atco specialist or a push mower expert rather than list every machine in your collection.

Once I have built up a list, I will circulate it to all members.

## Lethal Weapons?

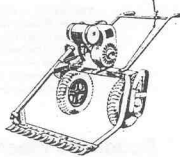
### SCYTHES & SICKLES



THE "HAYTER" MOTOR SCYTHE  
Model B

Designed to solve your grass problem. Fitted with a guard to give maximum protection consistent with efficiency. Cutting Width: 24in. Engine: Villiers 4-stroke, fitted with automatic speed control. Cutter Disc: Adjustable for height of cut.  
£48 15 0 (ex-works).

LLOYD'S AUTOSICKLE

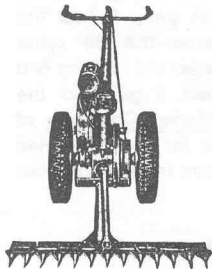


Powered by 2 1/2 h.p. J.A.P. 4-stroke engine  
£125 0 0

THE "LOYD" MOTOR SICKLE

Designed for cutting long and coarse grass, market and farm produce, kale, bracken, heather and undergrowth, etc. A 14in. circular saw can be supplied as an extra, enabling the machine to be used for cutting growing saplings up to 6in. or 8in. in diameter, or for trimming stumps down to ground level. Hand propelled with power-driven blades.  
Width of Cut: 18in. Engine: Villiers 2-stroke  
£49 1 9 (ex-works).

THE "AUTO-CULTO" SCYTHE  
(Self-propelled)



The "Auto-Culto" Scythe is easy to handle, economical to run, efficient in cutting Grass, Brambles, Bracken, Verges.

£69 0 0 (ex-works)  
Extra Blades £1 9 8

"EX-WORKS"  
DENOTES AN  
ADDITIONAL  
MANUFACTURER'S  
CARRIAGE  
CHARGE

Brief Specification:  
Width of Cut: 39in. Engine: 147 c.c. Villiers 2-stroke.  
Fuel Consumption: 1 pint per hour (approx.).  
Wheels: Dunlop pneumatic, with enclosed ratchets.

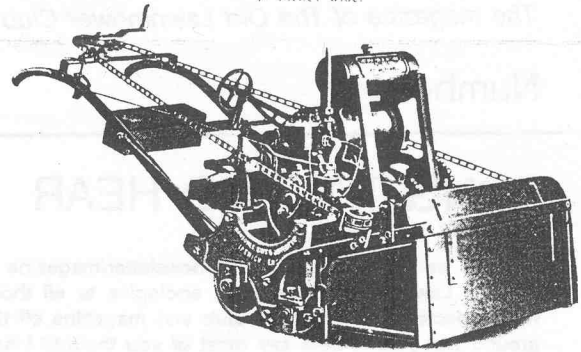
These sickles and scythes were advertised in a gardening catalogue in the mid-1950s. How times have changed.

Don't forget to fill in the Club Registration form and to return it to Keith Wootton, The Old Lawnmower Club, c/o Milton Keynes Museum of Industry & Rural Life, Stacey Hill Farm, Southern Way, Wolverton, Milton Keynes MK12 5EJ.

## The Demise Of Steam

### Ransomes' Patent Motor Lawn Mower.

30 inches wide.



A Ransomes 30 inch mower similar to this won a competition near Chester in 1905 against a Leyland steam powered mower. Steam powered mowers never made a comeback, and today they are almost unknown. Unless you know different...

Get your Lawnmower Rally or event publicised in the next edition - send details now!

## RALLY NEWS

### Milton Keynes Museum 1990

The rally at Milton Keynes Museum last year was a great success, with over 100 machines on show. Around ten of the people who had written in to GMS User News, as well as some people I had contacted, were able to bring machines. One or two people managed to come just to look around, without bringing machines, so it was quite an event. People came from as far away as Norwich, Shepton Mallett and Liverpool and the event was featured on local TV and later in GMS (thanks to Roland & Jane). It would be unfair to pick any stars of the show, but I know everyone who came thoroughly enjoyed the event. I was amazed that everyone was willing to travel so far to the rally and at the amount of time that everyone had obviously put into their machines and how much they knew about them.

### MILTON KEYNES MUSEUM RALLY

Because the rally at Milton Keynes Museum was so successful last year, we have decided to organise another this year. The dates will be the weekend of 18/19 May (an entry form is enclosed). Unlike last year, overnight camping will be available for anyone who wants to stay on site, although the facilities available will be very limited. For those who want to stay in guest houses or at other camp sites, I will be happy to point you in the right direction.

In addition, I have been trying to arrange a rally later in the year to be held in conjunction with one of the larger steam rallies in the north so that friends and members from up that way don't have to travel too far.

### Rally Dates 1991

18/19 May, Milton Keynes Museum

# DATING AGENCY

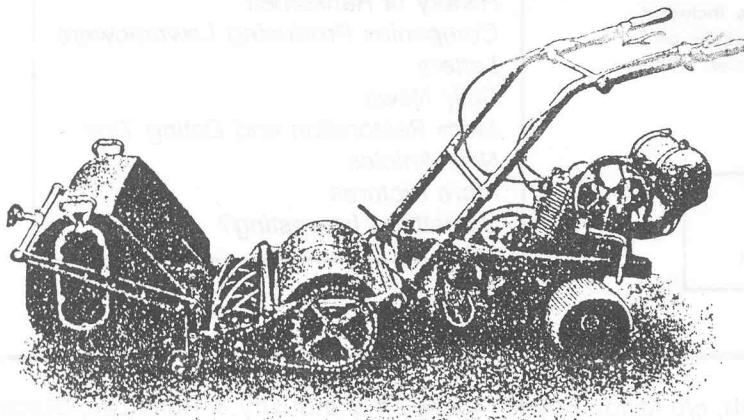
## How Old Is Yours? - One Way To Find Out Is To Look "Under The Bonnet"

Dating old machinery is always a problem and lawnmowers are no exception. Many manufacturers never kept precise records and others have had theirs destroyed or lost. One way is to use engine numbers, assuming it is a motor mower of course!! But beware - engines were often supplied in batches to manufacturers, so the dates can only be estimated. Also, there is no guarantee that the engine is the original supplied with the mower. But in the absence of other methods, it is a good starting point. To start, here is a list of early Villiers code numbers which can be used to approximate the age of a pre-1940 mower. Engines like these were supplied to manufacturers of mowers, motor-cycles and other machinery.

Mark	Prefix	Year	Note	Mark	Prefix	Year	Note
269cc (70mm bore x 70mm stroke)				249cc (63 x 80mm)			
Mk I	O	1913	Separate chain drive magneto	Mk XIV-A	BYP	1932-40	Petroil
Mk II	A				BY		Autolube
Mk III	B				RY		Autolube
Mk IV	C		Later models with brass flywheel magneto	Mk XVII-A	BYX	1934	
				Mk XVIII-A	VV		
				343cc (79 x 70mm)			
Mk V		1922	With flywheel magneto	Mk VI-B	K	1922	
				Mk VII-B	M		
				Mk VIII-B	AZ		
				Mk IX-B	CZ		
				Mk X-B	HZ	1928	
147cc (55 x 62mm)				346cc (70 x 90mm)			
Mk VI-C	H	1922		Mk XIV-B	YZ	1931	Autolube
Mk VII-C	L	1923			YZP	1931	Petroil
Mk VIII-C	W	1924	Produced until 1947				
148cc (57.15 x 67mm)				98cc (50 x 50mm)			
Mk XII-C	GY	1931		Midget	CY	1931	Fitted to many Atco/Qualcast
Mk XV-C	CUX	1934					
247cc (67 x 70mm)				Junior			
Mk VI-AJ		1922			SH		
Mk VII-A	S	1924			XX	1938	Junior Deluxe version
Mk VIII-A	X	1925			XXA	1941	Junior Deluxe version
Mk IX-A	DZ	1926					
Mk X-A	JZ	1929					
Mk X VI-A	AXF	1934-40					

This list covers all Villiers motors made up to the last dates shown, but excludes four models (122, 172, 196, and 197cc) which were almost exclusively motor cycle engines. Comments, additions and amendments to this list would be welcomed.

## THE "RENDLE" MOTOR MOWER AND ROLLER ATTACHMENT



### PUSH & PULL

Mower pushers were popular in the twenties and thirties. Rendle and MP were the most popular makes. This Rendle model was advertised in the twenties for £39 and could be used to push rollers and drive a range of gardening equipment such as sprayers and trimmers.

## FINDING OUT MORE

### Where to find information

Collecting lawnmowers is not very popular and there are very few good or reliable sources of information (one of the reasons for setting up a members' information network). In addition to asking collectors and enthusiasts, another way of researching lawnmowers is to visit museums. The following is a list of museums which either have lawnmowers or documents which may be useful to the collector or enthusiast. In brackets are the main areas of interest, where known:

- Arbroath Museum, Signal Tower, Ladyloan, Arbroath, Angus (Shanks)
- Banbury Museum, 8 Horsefair, Banbury, Oxfordshire (Samuelsons and very early mowers)
- Chalk Pits Museum, Houghton Bridge, Amberley, Arundel, West Sussex (Lawnmower collection)
- Holkham Hall, Holkham, north Norfolk (Small lawnmower collection)
- James Countryside Museum, Bicton, East Budleigh, Budleigh Salterton, Devon
- Milton Keynes Museum of Industry & Rural Life, Wolverton, Milton Keynes (Lawnmower collection)
- Museum of English Rural Life, The University, Whiteknights, Reading, Berkshire (Information on various companies including Ransomes, Greens, Dennis, Drummond and many more. Very helpful)
- Newark Museum, Newark, Nottinghamshire (Small lawnmower collection)
- Science Museum, Exhibition Road, South Kensington, London (Early lawnmowers)
- Stroud & District Museum, Lansdown, Stroud, Gloucestershire (Budding and very early mowers)
- Trelissick Garden, near Truro, Cornwall
- Trerice Manor, St Newlyn East, Newquay, Cornwall (Lawnmower collection)
- West Dean Gardens & Museum of Gardening, West Dean College, near Chichester, West Sussex

Please send in your additions/amendments to this list.



Advice in a booklet from Atco in the 1950s included "Carefully search for and remove all stones, sticks and other hard objects from the lawn area to be mown." Who said it's a lot less bovver?

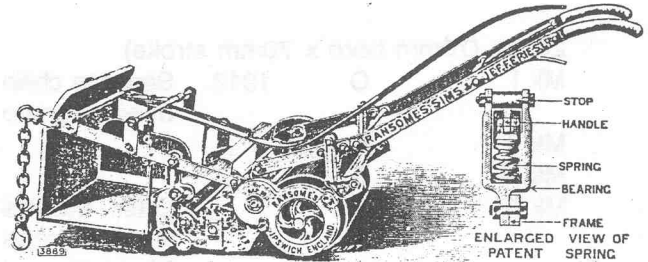
Grassbox  
Edition 1 - March 1991  
Plagiarised and Edited by Keith Wootton

## CHATTERBOX

### Letters

Help me fill this space next time

### Pony Patent



This Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies pony mower was a popular machine at the end of the last century. Like many manufacturers, Ransomes was constantly trying to improve its machines. This patent application was for an improved handle Ransomes claimed would "remove all disagreeable vibration from the machine and hands of the user."

## CLIPPINGS

So much for the first issue. I think another one should come out soon, preferably in May/June (call it Summer!) and then quarterly from then on. Because it's a magazine for the club, I would like to think as many people as possible will contribute. Besides, I think there are too many "I's" in this edition. Please let me know what you think. Are there any sections you would like to see added? Are some I've included a waste of time? Perhaps someone would like to write something. Even a short letter will be more than welcome, as are photos and diagrams. Also, don't keep your special restoration tricks secret - I am sure we'd all like to know. Does anyone think more emphasis should be on preservation rather than restoration?

### NEXT ISSUE

*The Lost Companies*  
*History of Ransomes*  
*Companies Producing Lawnmowers*  
*Letters*  
*Rally News*  
*More Restoration and Dating Tips*  
*New Articles*  
*More Pictures*  
*Something Interesting?*