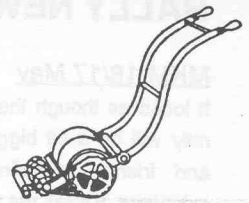


Grassbox

The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 4



Spring 1992

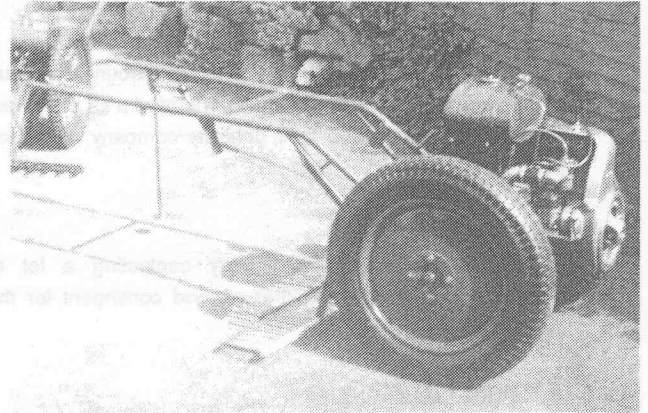
CLUB NEWS

The Club goes from strength to strength, with over eighty people now registered or in the process of joining.

Thank you to everyone who has written in with information, photographs, contributions, comments and criticism. I have tried to include as much as possible, so please keep it coming. The more I receive, the less work I have to do in putting each edition together, and the less time it will take.

Interest in lawnmower collecting seems to be increasing all the time. More and more people are realising that collecting lawnmowers is an interesting hobby which is still relatively inexpensive to get into, with a ready supply of old and interesting machines to be collected. The press and other media are also becoming interested in the Club and lawnmower collecting in general, so this should make the hobby even more popular. And many rallies around the country are now interested in incorporating lawnmower sections, so there should be more events for us all to go to.

One of the objectives of the Club is to promote lawnmower collecting, restoration and rallying. It looks as though we are having an effect.



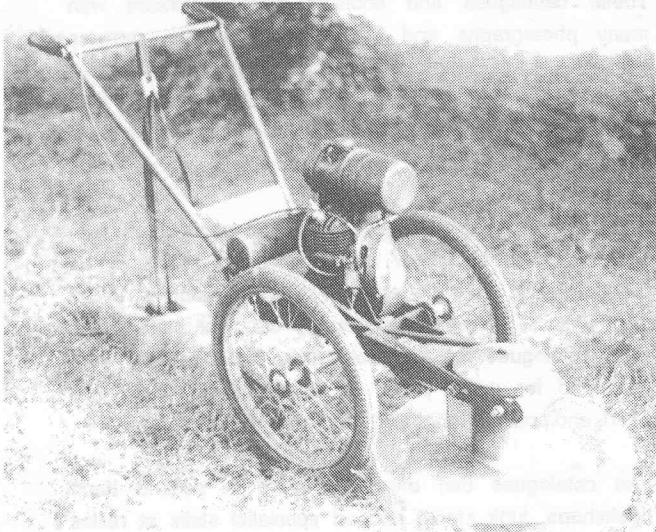
Stanley Hardwick's lovely 1947 Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies Overgreen (photo S Hardwick).

Rare Ransomes

Readers may have seen old lawnmowers in two recent editions of Old Glory magazine. The first (Feb 92, p11) showed the winner of a competition organised by Ransomes last year to find the oldest working Ransomes motor mower (see also Grassbox2). The winning mower was a 24" cut, Orwell engined machine made in 1905 which is still being used regularly in Norfolk by its owner, Roy Masters. The second (Apr 92, p49) was a letter from Club Member Michael Duck, with a photograph showing a 1905 Ransomes from the Hall & Duck Collection. Incidentally, another Club Member, Alan Pearson, has also been in touch to let me know he has a similar Ransomes which is slightly newer than the two mentioned above. It just goes to show that really old lawnmowers can still be found.

TRANSFERS

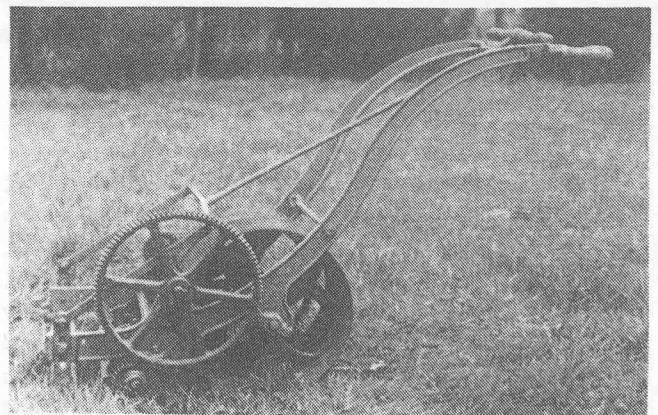
Thanks to everyone who has said they are interested in the early Atco Standard transfers as mentioned in earlier Grassboxes. I will be contacting everyone soon with news on progress.



Lethal Weapon? No - A Loyd Auto Rotary Sickle (c1955), also sold as the "Four Seasons Scrubcutter". This one belongs to Andrew Grout.

MORE ON MUSEUMS

Brian Kirby, Curator of the Halford Collection at Trerice in Cornwall, informs me that the mowers in the collection have been filmed for an edition of the BBC's "History Man" series, to be shown after April. The lawnmower collection is also to be featured in an edition of Country Life sometime soon.



This Budding was probably made in about 1855 by Samuelsons of Banbury. It can now be seen at Milton Keynes Museum and is one of the oldest lawnmowers in existence.

RALLY NEWS

MKM 16/17 May

It looks as though the entry for the Milton Keynes Museum rally will be a bit bigger than last year, with new Members and friends attending along with most of last year's exhibitors. It's still not too late to decide to attend, and even if you can't bring a machine, just pop along and meet some of the others in the Club. There should be a report in the next Grassbox.

Hatfield 20/21 June

This looks like being a good show, with around ten Club Members exhibiting. The Club has generated a lot of interest from the organisers and their publicity company, so watch out for coverage.

Banbury 27/28 June

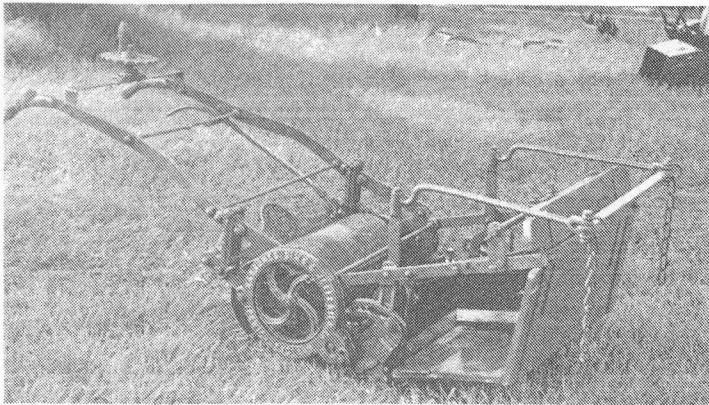
Robbie Robinson has been busy contacting a lot of Members and has put together a good contingent for the Rally which should be fun.

Ardingly 11/12 July

Michael Duck recommends this rally which incorporates a horticultural section where lawnmowers are welcome. Telephone 0273 306817 for more information

Rutland NVT&EC Horticultural Weekend 12/13 September

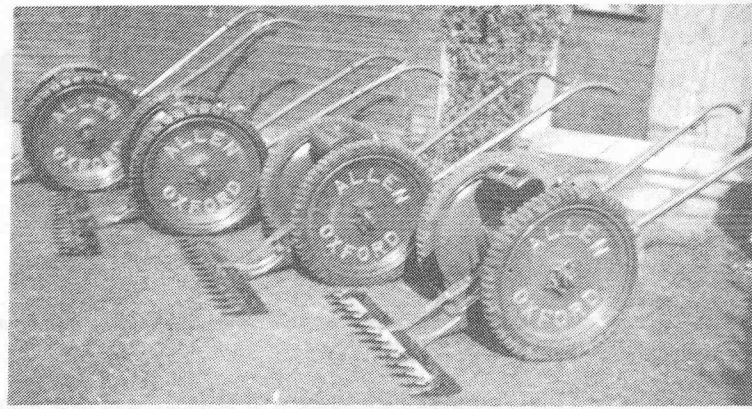
I attended David Smith's Horticultural Weekend near Newark last year and I can definitely recommend it. Although the weekend is more geared towards horticultural equipment, rather than lawnmowers, I know many Members are interested in both, so get along if you can. Contact David Smith, 22 Tollbar Avenue, Bottesford, Notts NG13 0BB (Telephone 0949 42147).



Another pony/horse drawn mower, from the Hall & Duck Collection, as seen at Milton Keynes Museum 1991.

INSURANCE

If you are going to rally lawnmowers, especially motorised, you will need some public liability insurance to remain within the law. Many people use a scheme organised by D L Franklin, The Mount, Dolley's Hill, Normandy, Guildford, Surrey GU3 2AQ. Although the scheme was originally designed for stationary engines, lawnmowers are also acceptable and you can normally register up to seven mowers, with three allowed to be shown at any one time. It costs £5 per year (April to March), with cover extending to up to £1,000,000 for any one accident. You can find out more by sending a stamped addressed envelope to Mr Franklin at the address above.



This set of Allen Scythes form part of Stanley Hardwick's collection (photo S Hardwick).

Anyone sending a stamped addressed envelope will help me save a bit of money on the next Grassboxes - Keith.

DATING AGENCY

General

A slightly different Dating Agency this issue, looking at how to date machines in other ways. A number of Members, including Mr C A Garrett and Robbie Robinson have written in saying that catalogues and price lists are a good source of dating information. Many manufacturers published catalogues each year, which can still be found with luck. A number of organisations, such as the Country Gentlemen's Association (CGA), Metal Agencies Co Ltd, and the Army & Navy Stores, published catalogues covering a wide range of items they were selling. Lawnmowers were often included.

These catalogues and booklets were illustrated with many photographs and line drawings of the mowers available. Usually information on price, different sizes and add-on bits which could be bought were also included. Occasionally, if you are lucky, it might even say how many have been sold during previous years!

Most of the catalogues included a date somewhere and, while they do not allow any individual machine to be dated exactly, they do at least allow a machine to be identified as "in production" during the year stated. The CGA catalogues are especially good because they were published for many years, at least between 1920 and 1960, and possibly longer.

The catalogues can often be found in second hand bookshops, junk stores and on specialist stalls at rallies and markets. Large libraries may also have some of the CGA and similar handbooks or catalogues. Happy hunting.

MORE ON AUTOMOWERS.

Andrew Hall informs me he has the only existing ledger of The Automower Company (Dating Agency, Grassbox3) for the period 1928- 33. The ledger covers quite a bit of information on the mowers produced by the company, and Andrew will be happy to provide information on request. Andrew can be contacted at 84 Kenilworth Avenue, Wimbledon Park, London SW19 7LR.

THE LOST COMPANIES

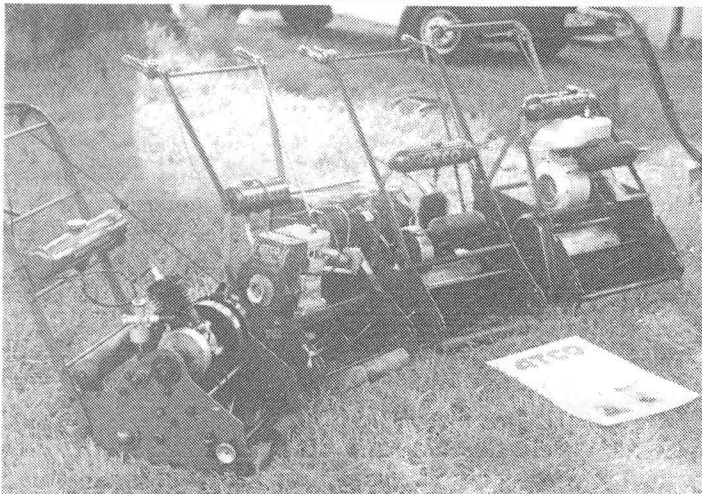
While some manufacturers seem to have been around for ever, many more have disappeared. Most of these companies had a relatively short life and produced very few mowers. Some people believe that one or two "manufacturers", especially from the Victorian era, never made a production mower, but merely advertised designs in catalogues and newspapers in the hope that someone would buy their "products".

Whatever the truth, there are certainly many companies whose products, if they do exist, are very rare. Often these manufacturers were involved in other industries and only made lawnmowers as a sideline, especially when times were tight. This is particularly true of the period immediately after the first world war when many engineering companies wanted to use their newly redundant arms-producing skills to good use. Some companies, notably Atco (Charles H Pugh) and Qualcast, were successful, but many smaller companies came and went within a few years. A similar pattern arose in the early 1930s when recession forced engineering companies to look for new products and markets. It is no coincidence that the 1920s had seen a significant social change in Britain when many new suburban houses were built with a small garden. The engineering companies probably thought they had a new market ready to buy lawnmowers. In reality, companies like Ransomes, Atco, Qualcast and Webb cleaned up. By the mid 1930s the big well known companies were really the only ones left, and of course most of these have gone now too.

Royal Enfield was one of a number of companies to manufacture mowers in addition to other products. Model and year unknown.



A word of caution to anyone who finds a mower with a strange name. It was common practice for some manufacturers (Ransomes and Qualcast for example) to produce mowers with other companies' names on. These were then sold through catalogues and mail order, or to shops like Woolworths or the Army and Navy Stores. This was a lucrative business for some manufacturers and would make an interesting specialist collection area for someone.



The Mower on the left is Ted Sutton's Royal Enfield. The three on the right are some of Robbie Robinson's Atcos.

RESTORATION CORNER

More Services/Suppliers This Issue

JP Mowers: Salisbury and Swaine Ltd, 58 Between Street, Cobham, Surrey KT11 1AF still service JPs and other machines for customers. Contact Ian Cox at the above address for more information.

JAP/Villiers Engines: Gordon Davenport has stocks of JAP and Villiers engines, parts and information, including spare parts lists. His company stocks mowers, chainsaws and Opperman Motocarts. Gordon is also trying to find out what happened to an old JAP supplier of his called Frank Leach Motors. Can anyone help? Contact Gordon Davenport: Telephone 0743 362950 (Shrewsbury, Shropshire).

Atco Spares: Richard Sutton is able to help with Atco spares and part numbers. Contact Richard Sutton: Telephone 0594 841588 (Lydney, Gloucestershire).

Two-Stroke.....by Neil

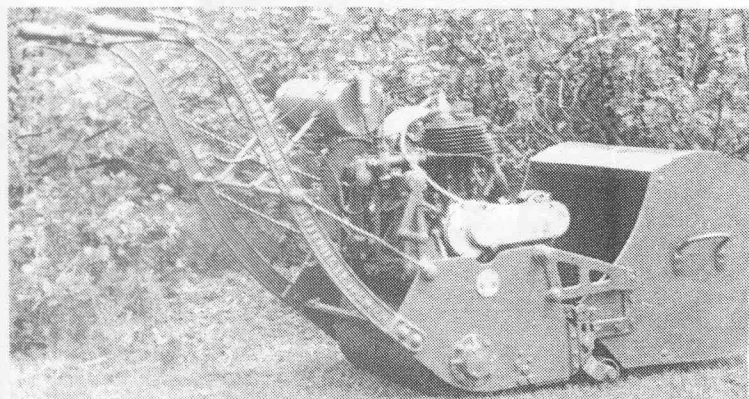


More On Paint

Malcolm Hemley has written in to say that the correct paint for Dennis lawnmowers in the period 1953-61 (mowers with E140 and E197 engines) was Mid-Brunswick Green BS381c226, undercoat 711/047, topcoat 724/062. Prior to 1953, the green was apparently slightly darker as more blue was used in mixing the paint.

Oops!?!?

Sharp eyed readers including Andrew Hall and Andrew Grout were soon writing in to tell me that the photograph of Andrew Grout's "Greens" motor mower featured in Grassbox3 was in fact a Ransomes. Andrew MacMorland also spotted this, writing to say the photo looked like his 1922 20" Mk4 Ransomes of which he sent a photograph. Oh dear, will I ever get it right?



Andrew MacMorland sent in this photo of his 1922 Mk4 Ransomes 20" (photo A MacMorland).

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

RANSOMES POCKET GUIDES

Roger Bird has sent me a very interesting little booklet price list called the Pocket Price List and Calendar, as produced by Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies. These were produced between at least 1887 and 1931. Roger has 13 different "years" (1887/91/95 and 1910/13/14/16/19/20/21/23/29/31) from this period and would like to hear from anyone who may have copies to fill in his missing years. Does anyone have any which contain lawnmower information?

FUNDING THE CLUB

Thank you to everyone who has sent in stamps or cash to help with funding the Club and Grassbox. Your help and generosity is much appreciated at this end. If everyone who wrote to me continues to include a stamp (envelopes are useful too, but not essential), this will help me continue to keep costs down as the main cost of running the Club is postage.

NEW DIRECTORY

The latest edition of the Club Directory is enclosed with this edition. Virtually everyone who has joined the Club has agreed to take part, and Edition 2 contains details of over 70 Members.

In compiling the Directory, I have used the information supplied on Membership Registration Forms. Only members who have agreed to participate are included, so anyone who asked not to be included is not on the list. Please send in any amendments you may have for your own entry so that it can be incorporated into the next edition later this year.

ADVERTS

Wanted: Parts for 22" Atco Standard - flywheel cover, carburettor filter cover, throttle, mounts for the fuel tank. Please send information to Roland Soonex, via Keith Wootton at the Club.

Wanted: Grassbox and chainguard wanted for early Qualcast 16. Contact Andrew Pyne: Telephone 071 476 6898 (London).

Wanted: Operational Allen Scythe at reasonable cost to start collection. Contact Robin Davis: Telephone 0306 885056 (Dorking, Surrey).

Wanted: Information on the Lloyds Pegasus and grassbox for a Greens Flyweight. Contact Stephen Daly: Telephone 0455 239264 (Hinckley, Leicestershire). Also Stephen is prepared to sell one or two of his larger Ransomes (Mastif 30" and two 24" machines) and Dennis (two models) to make room in his shed.

Wanted: Large "Coat of Arms" transfer for 1940s/50s Ransomes mower. Contact Ted Sutton: Telephone 0869 810316 (Banbury, Oxfordshire).

For sale or exchange: c1947 Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies 14" Lightweight Mk4 complete with grassbox and mower carrier. c1955 Ransomes Minor 14". 1958 Atco Lightweight 14". Plus many more petrol, electric and push mowers from the 1950s/60s. Contact Andrew Grout: 0908 583350 (Milton Keynes).

For Sale: Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies "Light 14" motor mower, number T9252. Contact Mr Brian Chapman, 8 Home Close, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4JL.

For Sale: Atco Lightweight 1938, RSJ Minor 1946, RSJ Lightweight 1938-39, Dennis 24". Contact Colin Cope: Telephone 0732 350826 (Tonbridge, Kent).

Send in your advert for inclusion in the next Grassbox. It's Free!

Information Wanted on Coverella

Colin Cope would like to receive information on his recently acquired Coverella ride on mower, made by Coverella Ltd, 14 South Street, Hythe, Hampshire in around 1969/70. The mower has a 5hp Briggs & Stratton engine. Contact Colin Cope: Telephone 0732 350826 (Tonbridge, Kent).

SORRY!!

Finally, a couple of apologies. First, sorry if I you have had to wait for a reply to your Membership application recently. I have been waiting until Grassbox 4 and the new Directory were ready before I replied. Second, as many of you know, it becomes harder to send out a personal letter with general mailings of Grassbox etc, so please don't hold it against me.

**Next Edition
July 1992**

Grassbox
Edition 4 - April 1992
Edited by Keith Wootton