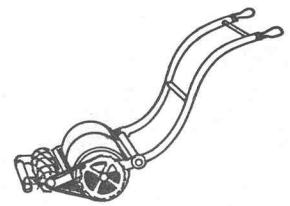


Grassbox

The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club



Number 5

Summer 1992

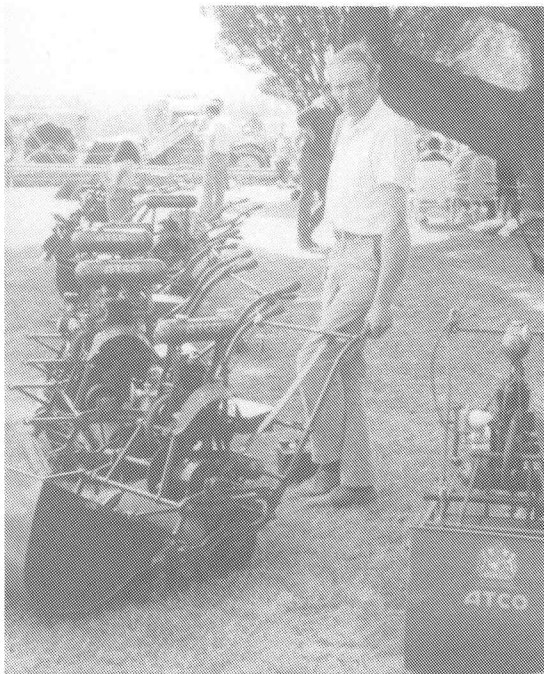
MEMBERSHIP TOPS 100

The Old Lawnmower Club now has over 100 Members.

Considering how recently the Club started, this is quite a landmark and there seems to be no sign of a slow down in interest. I get around five letters each week, and a couple of phone calls, from people who have heard about the Club and want to know more.

It is still surprising that there are so many lawnmower enthusiasts about. When I formed the Club I thought we would be doing well to find 30 Members in the first year or two, and that was being optimistic. So thanks to everyone who has joined, and thanks to all your contributions, words of encouragement and everything else.

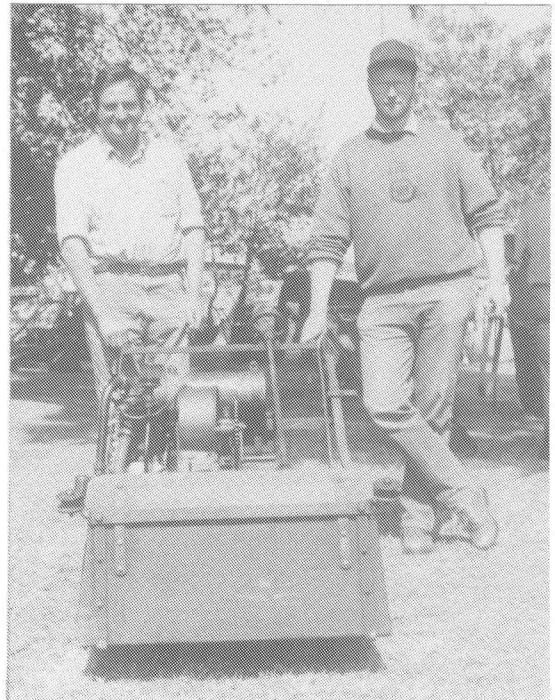
In this issue, as well as most of the regular features, I have included a few more photos than usual. I hope you like them.



Geoffrey Christopher and his five Atco Standards at MKM Rally.

Toys

Toy lawnmowers may not be everyone's idea of old lawnmowers, although quite a few Members seem to have one of the 8" Webb toy/display mowers. One Club Member however has over 50 toy and model lawnmowers. T M Tomkins would be interested to hear from anyone else who collects them or has any that could be added to his collection. He can be contacted on 021 353 6618 (Birmingham).



Mike Duck (left) and Andy Hall (right) with 1905 Ransomes at MKM Rally.

HALL & DUCK AT 10

Andrew Hall and Michael Duck are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Hall & Duck Collection with a special weekend on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 October at Michael's in Somerset. The weekend will include special "guided tours" of the part of the collection housed there (quite a few of the 500+ mowers in the Collection). On the Saturday evening there will be a party in a local pub and Andrew and Michael are providing all the food, although guests will have to buy their own drink (and presumably at least one for the hosts!). Andrew and Michael have also arranged overnight accommodation and asked the Club to coordinate arrangements and invite all Members to attend. However, they need to know who will be going so they can make all the arrangements. If anyone is interested, please let Keith (0604 31192) know and he will send further details.

Back Copies

Quite a few people have written in to ask whether back copies of earlier Grassboxes are available. The simple answer is "Yes they are". However, rather than send out all copies to each new Member, I can only supply back issues on request. If you have written in recently to ask for back copies, please be patient. I will get them to you as soon as possible.

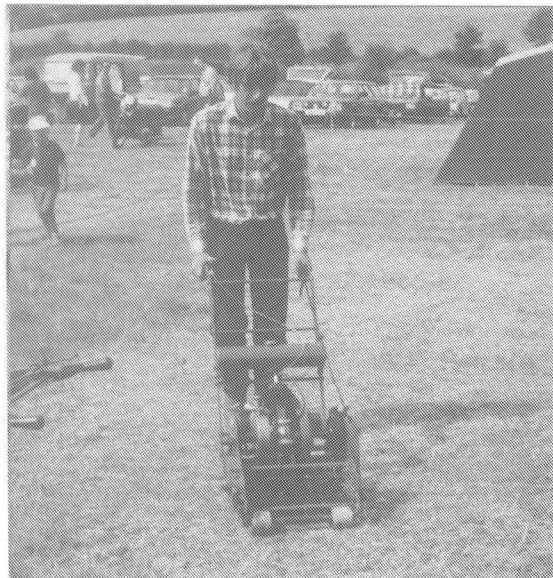
Rally News

MKM

It was good to see so many enthusiasts at this year's MKM Rally. As well as the exhibitors themselves, and we filled the Museum's lawn area, loads of Members popped along to say hello and see what was going on. It would be unfair to pick out any stars of the show. The format of using the Saturday as a "Club" day and the Sunday as the Museum day seemed popular with exhibitors and it is planned to keep the same format next year when the Rally will be on 15/16 May.

Hatfield

The setting of Hatfield House's front lawn was very impressive and it was strange to be part of a garden show rather than a vintage meet. Eight Members brought machines during the weekend and the public seemed very interested. Quite a few prospective Members also appeared. The Club had a small marquee, but it was so hot we used the space in front to display everything. A ring parade with commentary was a bit of fun and the event seemed to go quite well. The Club has been invited to next year's event (19/20 June) and anyone interested in attending can find out more from Keith Wootton.



Alec Hillyar gets to grips with his Royal Enfield at Banbury.



Tony Brown and Allen Scythe at Hatfield House.

Banbury

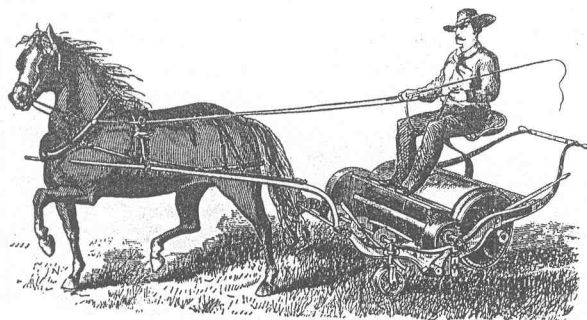
The weekend of 27/28 June saw the Banbury Steam Rally at Bloxham and for the first time a lawnmower section. There was a good cross section of machines on display, particularly on the Sunday with 37 exhibits including Andrew Hall and Michael Duck's 1905 Ransomes, Milton Keynes Museum's "Budding", and Antony Lewis's John Shaw.

Young Dan Dabbs from Daventry was well and truly bitten by the bug. He arrived on Saturday with a child's Webb and after spending all day with the lawnmower exhibitors arrived on Sunday with a Webb Witch, Ransomes Minor and Allen Scythe as well as a collection of scythes and shears. He is now a Member of the Club. Andrew Hall arrived with one mower and, after spending most of Saturday at a "secret" location, went home with five.

The "play" area proved popular with several exhibitors demonstrating their skill at mowing. Even Andrew Grout's JP managed one circuit of the area before expiring. A good time was had by all and I would like to thank all the exhibitors for attending and making it such a success. Next year's Rally is 26/27 June - Robbie Robinson.

Rutland Horticultural Weekend 12/13 Sep

This event is thoroughly recommended to any vintage horticultural machinery enthusiast. It is being held where the A46 crosses the A52 at Bingham, Nottinghamshire. Further details from David Smith on 0949 42147 (Bottesford, Notts).

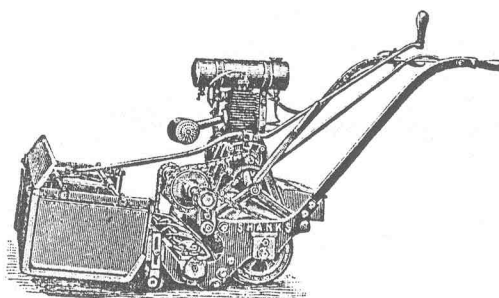


Stateside Pony Mower

Lawnmowers have been produced in the US for almost as long as in Britain. This picture is taken from an 1874 advert for Excelsior Mowers and was found by Ted Wells. Notice that this particular model, unlike British machines, was ride-on but could also be operated from behind.

Posters & Leaflets

A Shanks mower similar to this Jehu (available in 20 & 24in versions in about 1920) is featured on a special poster publicising the Club. There are also new leaflets which give details of the Club and include a Membership form. If any Member would like a supply of either, please let Keith know.



Dating Agency Dennis

Dennis is usually very helpful with dating mowers right back to the very early machines made just after the First World War. As always, the more information you can provide, the better. The company can now be contacted at Howardson Works, Ashbourne Road, Kirk Langley, Derby, DE6 4NJ. Telephone 0332 824777.

General

OMC Member Roger Evans is the Honorary Librarian of The Sports Turf Research Institute and a collector of hand mowers. The Institute has been compiling a collection of literature on post-1920 sportsground equipment, including catalogues, adverts and brochures. Roger has offered to help any OMC Members with any queries if possible and can be contacted on 0274 582375 (Shipley, West Yorkshire).

More on CGA

Following the piece in Grassbox 4 on the Country Gentlemen's Association catalogues, Tony Garratt has written in to say that, as far as he knows they were produced from 1914 until 1965. Most of the popular makes of lawnmower would have been included and this is a good way of dating all sorts of garden machinery, not just lawnmowers. Also, according to Tony, Country Life magazine has featured a number of adverts for lawnmowers over the years. Tony is lucky enough to have a copy of the 23 February 1929 edition which includes a full colour advert for the Atco Standard.

Atco

Atco/Qualcast can be contacted at Milton Road, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1EY. They cannot normally help with dating (most of the early company records were destroyed), but I know they do their best to help with other information when they can. The technical assistant to contact is KG Hupperton. (Dennis/Atco information supplied by John Blizzard).

Does anyone know any other ways of dating particular makes of lawnmower? If so, let other Club Members know through Grassbox.



Antony Lewis with John Shaw motor mower at Milton Keynes Museum.

Restoration Corner

More Services/Suppliers This Issue

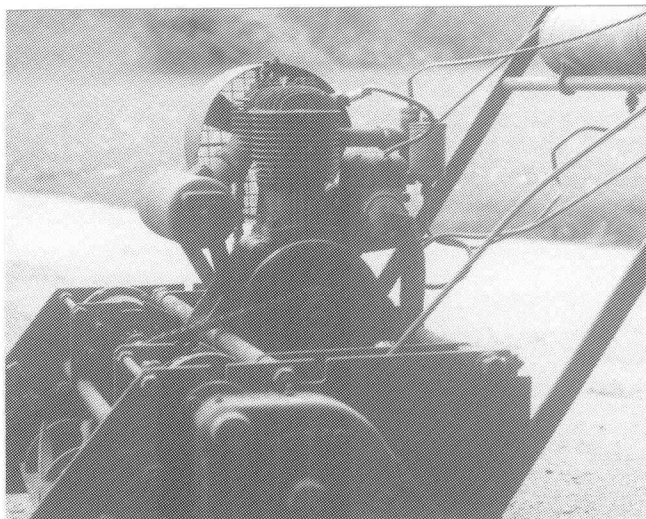
Ignition Supplies: Mike Green, The Boatyard, Myrtle Street, Appledore, Bideford, North Devon: Telephone 0237 475986.

Paint: Atco & Suffolk green paint can be obtained through Clive Repik. Also shot blasting/priming and machining of small parts: Telephone 0626 53533 (Newton Abbot).

Spares: Brian Farah, Harland Garden Machinery, Green Hammerton, York YO5 8AE has or can obtain old and obsolete parts for many machines: Telephone 0423 330455.

Wooden Parts: R A Thurlby, 13 New Street, Tingewick, Buckingham can make wooden rollers and handles to pattern: Telephone 0280 848569.

Do you have any special skills or services to offer OMC Members? If so, let the Club know and it will include them in Grassbox.



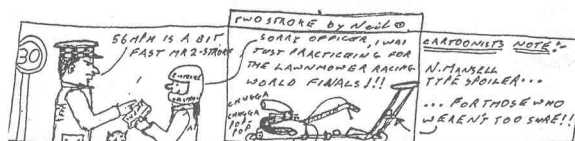
Help Tony

Tony Garratt is looking for more information on some of his mowers, including a 20" Greens (pictured) which has a 250cc JAP four stroke engine. Engine serial number is BY----/0----S which should make it 1938 according to the JAP dating guide featured in Grassbox 2. However, the mower looks more like a 1920s model. Also, Tony would be pleased to receive any information on his 12" Lightweight Mk1 and 16" Mk12 Ransomes. He can be contacted on 06945 322 (Shrewsbury).

Villiers Help

OMC Club Member Pete Stratford's father was chief engineer at Villiers in Wolverhampton prior to the company being taken over by Norton. He has passed on much of his knowledge to his Pete, who is willing to help any Member with Villiers queries. Pete can be contacted on 0533 839293 (Leicester).

Two-Stroke.....by Neil



TECHNICAL TIP

Villiers Flywheel Magnetos

These are fairly reliable, even on very old machines. If you have a problem, check the simple things first. Make sure the points are clean, that they open and close correctly and that none of the internal connection wires are broken. Next check where the HT lead enters the magneto. The little spring, brass contact or screw which holds the wire into the connector can all break or corrode but can be mended quite easily. If the coil or condenser is broken, or the magnets weak, you may need to take the flywheel off to make further repairs. Be careful with the magnets which are inside, they can easily become misaligned. Also, make sure that there are some timing marks on the flywheel and crankcase to help when you put it all together again. If not, make some marks of your own. To get the flywheel off, Villiers always used to recommend one of their special "Hammertight" spanners (a bit like a ring spanner except the other end is blunt, for hitting). The idea is to hit the blunt end with a hammer to loosen the nut. A second hit should loosen the flywheel from its tapered shaft. With some of the early Villiers flywheels the nut can only be loosened about one turn before it tightens up again, unless the flywheel is free to come off. Once repairs are complete, the flywheel can be replaced. Hit the "Hammertight" to tighten the flywheel, but make sure the timing (or your own) marks are aligned.



Richard Dent with two 1950s Aycos at this year's MKM Rally.

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

Vantage

Does anyone know anything about a lightweight handmower called a Vantage, made by DAP of Dudley? It has die-cast sideplates, twin wheel rear roller and a canvas grassbox. It is probably late 1930s/1940s. If anyone can help, please contact Christopher Proudfoot on 0474 707513 (Longfield, Kent), or via the Club.



John Barnard with a Samuelsons and a Ransomes pushmower at MKM Rally.

WHO'S IN THE NEWS?

Thanks to everyone who has sent in copies of cuttings from local and national papers and magazines which have featured them and their collections or those of others. OMC Members featured include Roger Burnett (Malton, N Yorks), Andrew Grout (Milton Keynes), Neil Williams (Milton Keynes), Stanley Hardwick (Filey, Yorkshire), Brian Radam (British Lawnmower Museum, Southport, Lancashire), Brian Kirby (Halford Collection, Trerice, Cornwall), Roger Evans (Shipley, W Yorks), Tony Houghton (Basildon, Essex), Tony Dowdeswell (Essex), Christopher Proudfoot (Longfield, Kent), Andrew Hall (London), Michael Duck (Ilminster, Somerset) and many of the people who came to one or other of the Milton Keynes Museum Rallies.

There is obviously a lot of interest in old lawnmowers around the country, and getting in the local papers is a good way of expanding your collection. Most locals are interested in people with unusual hobbies, so why not give it a go? And if you do get in, let the Club know. It will not be possible to print them in Grassbox, but the cuttings are building into an interesting library.

ADVERTS

There were so many adverts for this edition that I decided to produce an extra sheet to put them all on. This should be enclosed with your copy of Grassbox. Doing this has allowed more space in the newsletter and also means that you can throw the adverts away when you no longer need them.

**Next Edition
Oct 1992**

Grassbox

Edition 5 - August 1992

Edited by Keith Wootton