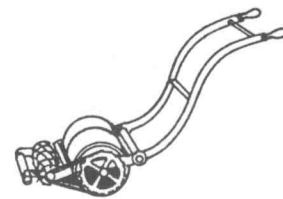


# Grassbox

The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 7



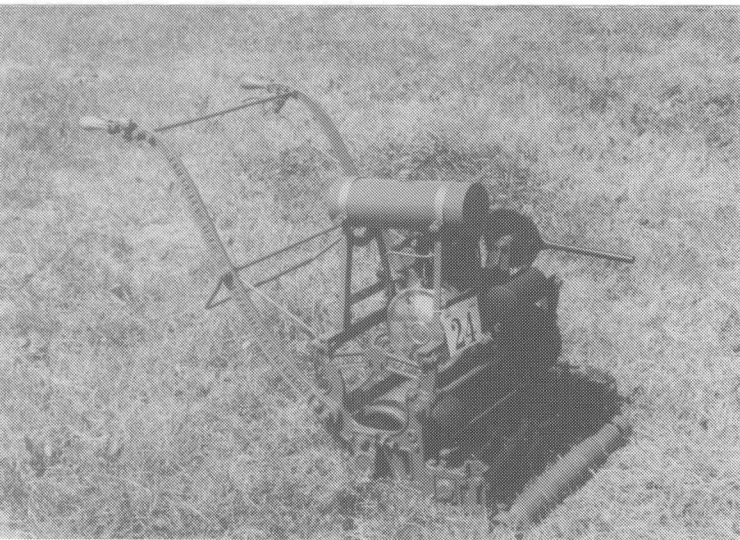
Autumn 1993

## WELCOME BACK

Welcome to the new style Old Lawnmower Club. For those of you who have been with the Club from the start, thank you for your continued support and interest. And to all you new Members, welcome.

As many readers will know, the Summer has been spent reorganising the Club. The main changes have been the introduction of a proper constitution, the formation of the Committee and re-registering all Members. Most of this work has been done by the new Club Secretary, Robbie Robinson, and I should like to thank him for his efforts. Along with myself, the other Committee Members are Mike Dibley from Norwich and Andrew Grout from Aspley Guise (near Milton Keynes). The Club's Treasurer is Martin Stephenson, who is also from near Milton Keynes.

So far 84 people have joined/rejoined the Club, which is more than most of the people I have spoken to ever thought possible. Inevitably some of the original members have chosen not to rejoin, which is sad. But to progress and become better and (dare I say it) taken more seriously, the re-organisation was necessary. The Club is now in a position to go forward and promote the collection, preservation and display of old lawnmowers to an unsuspecting world.



Robbie Robinson's 1921 Mkl Ransomes, a regular visitor to the rally field.

## CLUB DIRECTORY

Now that the Club is on a more organised footing, it has been possible to produce a new Membership Directory. Everyone who had joined up 1 September is included. The format of the two earlier editions remains, but we have taken the opportunity to update the information on each Member. The idea from now on is to produce an annual register, each September, to include all Members at that point. New Members will be included in a special section in the Grassboxes which appear between each Directory, which should enable us to keep everyone as up to date as possible.



A collection of 1921 lawnmowers. (L to R), 'Oval frame' Atco Standard, Ransomes Mkl, Shanks.

## Unusual Lawn Mower For Preservation

Cadbury's World at Bournville, Birmingham has recently donated an unusual machine to the Hall & Duck Collection for preservation.

The lawn mower combination roller was manufactured by Thomas Greens & Sons of Leeds. It dates from the early 1920s and has a cutting width of 42". The original engine would have been a Dorman but in the mid-1930s it was replaced with a Ford.

Michael Duck and Andrew Hall will restore the machine over the next two years. The main parts which are missing are the grass collecting box and the mechanical patent grass release apparatus, which Michael and Andrew will fabricate. Michael and Andrew are indebted to Alex Chalmers for his perseverance in the heavy haulage transportation of the machine to its new home in Somerset.



The Hall & Duck Collection was founded in 1982 by the then public relations officer of Ransomes plc who had the foresight to amalgamate two well established collections to preserve the history and development of the lawn mower. Today the collection houses over 700 machines of pre-1940 age and has collated information on over 400 companies related to lawn mower production.

The photograph shows Alex Chambers (left) and Michael Duck (right) loading the Greens mower ready for transportation from Bournville to Somerset.

## Rally Reports

Reports of rallies always seem to be a little dated if left too long after the event, but I have included brief summaries of the main OLC events this year. Thanks to everyone who sent in details of the events they were attending.

### Banbury Rally

The Banbury Steam Rally this year was held on 26/27 June over what was the best weekend of the summer to that point with the sun shining on both days and one or two people (including myself) suffering a bit of sunburn.

The Lawnmower section had a very good display with a broad cross section of machines - over 45 in all including a Samuelson exhibited by Ted & Pat Wells, and Shaw's Governor from the Hall & Duck Collection. There was also a complete set of Ransomes 'Lion' 9, 11, 13 and 15 inch sidewheel mowers, the first three belonging to me and the 15 belonging to Alex Hillyar. It was also interesting to see three 1921 motor mowers from different manufacturers with the same 269cc Villiers engine; Hall & Duck's Shanks, Keith Wootton's Atco Standard oval frame, and my Ransomes Mk2.

Keith's perseverance finally paid off when he managed to get his Qualcast 16 running properly and Andrew Grout even brought his own wall with an electrical socket fitted to run his mains electric JP.

With the weather so hot it was essential that we had ample internal lubrication to stave off the effects of dehydration, and a good time was had by all on Saturday night in the local pub (we only went for something to eat), although the walk back did not seem like two miles.

I should like to thank all of the exhibitors who attended the rally and hope that we can put on an even better show next year - Robbie Robinson.



Jeff Skinner and Geoffrey Christopher show how it's done. A push/pull Ransomes at MKM Rally, 1993.

### Hatfield

Hatfield could have been wet. A day earlier and it would have been wet. Five inches of rain in the preceding seven days, they said. But in the end it was fine. And the only problem was working out how to stop some of the heavy mowers sinking into the spongy turf. Saturday was fine, Sunday better, and the people that attended had a really good time. Highlight of the weekend must surely have been the private guided tour of the Elizabethan Mansion on the Saturday evening. But the mowers were good too. We are going next year (20/21 June so make a note in your diary if you want to come along. Thoroughly recommended - Keith Wootton.



Mr & Mrs Tomkins with the smallest (and largest) collection of mowers at the MKM Rally, 1993.

### Milton Keynes Rally

As in years before, the MKM rally fell into two parts. The Saturday was attended by quite a few OLC Members and, because the Museum was only open for a few hours in the afternoon, it allowed a lot of time for idle chatter, serious bargaining and a lot of one-upmanship. The Saturday evening involved a short journey to one of the local canal-side pubs, with a late night finish!

The serious rallying was all done on the Sunday when a number of Members came along to bring machines and to attend the inaugural club meeting. Somehow, we managed to cram about 20 people into a small room usually only big enough for a dozen or so. It was useful to get people together to discuss the way ahead, and some good decisions were made, which most readers will know about because of the letters which were sent out after this.

Although the weather was not particularly good, the weekend was I think a success. It was good to see so many new faces to put to the names on the Membership list and to meet up with all of the old friends. Quite a few of the photographs appearing in this Grassbox were taken during the event - Keith Wootton.

## GRASSBOX

With a more organised Club, so a more regular Grassbox. This will mean every three months. The publication months have been chosen to fit in with the Club's anticipated activities as far as is possible, so that we can use mailings of Grassbox for other things too. So, the publication months will be:

March	Advance Notice of AGM & Annual Rally
June	AGM Report & Membership Chasing
September	Membership Directory
December	Looking Back/Looking Ahead

As the publication date will be towards the end of each of these months, it will be possible to take contributions from Members up to the first day of the publication month. Don't leave it all to the poor old editor - anything you can send in will be more than welcome, and I try to use as much as I can. Photographs or your machines, pictures/drawings from old catalogues, restoration hints, the correct paint to use, funny experiences, rally reports. Anything really.



## KNOW YOUR MAKER

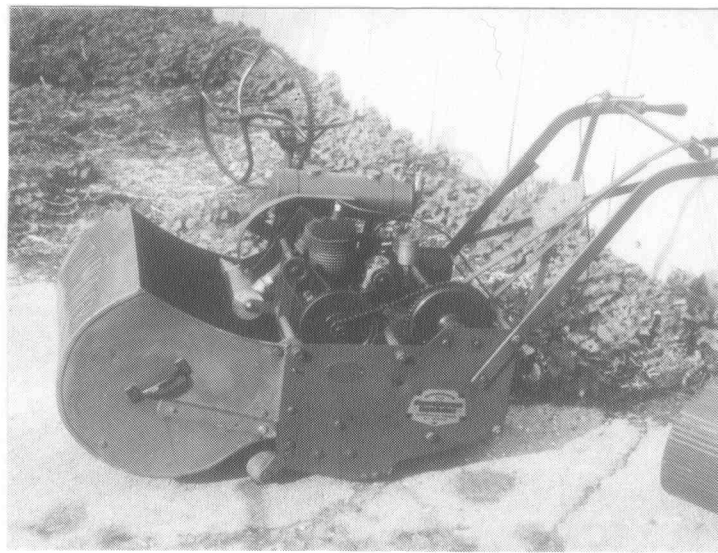
### AUTOMOWER

Automower is one of those companies that had its lawnmower hey-day in the 1920s. The company's origins lie in the years immediately before the first world war when George Grist opened a garage in Norton St Phillip, near Bath, to service cars and cycles. Between 1917 and 1920 he served in the armed forces, returning in 1920 to develop his business. He started to fit motors, probably motor cycle engines, in Ransomes and Shanks pony mowers. The Automower Engineering Company Limited was formed in 1925, by which time the lawnmowers produced were to the company's own design, with a steel frame. At this time Automowers were only equalled in technical excellence by Dennis.

Throughout this period, the company continued to produce other items including house lighting, plumbing plants, mole ploughs, timber haulage tractors and trailers. In the mid-1920s a field roller, The Auto Roller, was introduced.

Lawnmower production continued up to 1939 when it slowed, eventually ceasing altogether in 1946. The rights to all designs were transferred to Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies. In fact the Auto Certes, a popular RSJ mower, was partly an Automower design.

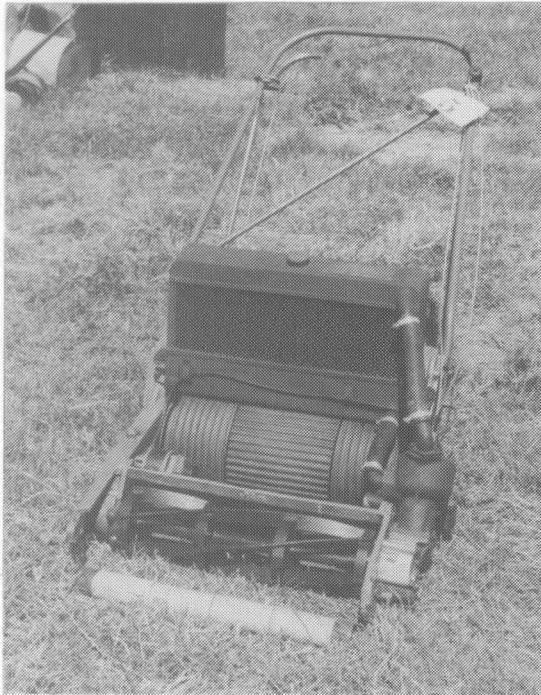
During the lawnmower years, something over 4000 Automowers were produced in sizes including 12", 15", 18", 24" and 30". Many of the machines were fitted with JAP side valve engines. A roller seat was a popular attachment.



1920s Automower. Part of the Hall & Duck Collection.

Many members of the Old Lawnmower Club have Automowers, and they are particularly prized amongst collectors.

Based on information supplied by Andrew Hall.



John Shaw 'Governor'. Notice how the cutting cylinder also acts as the flywheel for the engine mounted at the side.

## PLANNING AHEAD

Readers of earlier Grassboxes may recall a short piece on the possibility of producing some proper transfers for the Atco Standard which are, of course, no longer available. With the new funding of the Club, this would now seem to be a viable consideration, with profits made being used to fund additional designs. Although they are not available yet, I would anticipate that the cost of a complete set of transfers for the early standard would be about £10. This would include three copies of the 'The Atco Motor Mower' design (one on each side of petrol tank and one on the fan guard) and two round 'CHP' decals (for Grassbox and Toolbox lid). Does this seem a reasonable amount to pay? Let me know. And also, any ideas on the next design?

## INSURANCE

I have been trying to find out a bit more about insurance, following a number of letters from Members. I contacted two of the leading insurers of stationary engines to see what their views would be on the subject.

David Franklin said that he would cover any three motor mowers at any one time, for £5 a year. In addition, within the same fee, he would be prepared to insure an unlimited number of hand propelled (ie push) lawnmowers.

North Cotswold Insurance Services had a slightly different view. They are able to cover any three motor mowers, so long as they remain stationary (ie they are not used), no matter what type of engine or motor is fitted, again for £5 a year. For non-motor mowers, they are able to cover any five machines for £8 per year. They do point out however that push lawnmowers may be covered on the owner's home contents insurance and suggest that individuals check with their broker to see if this is the case.

Both companies offer the £1,000,000 indemnity which is now the minimum requirement at many of the events and rallies around the country. And both companies will need a list of all the mowers in an individual's collection that are likely to be rallied in the insurance period.

### Addresses:

North Cotswold Insurance Services, The Curfew, Oxford Street, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire GL56 0LE.

David Franklin, The Mount, Dolley's Hill, Normandy, Guildford, Surrey GU3 2AQ.

## Paint

Eagle Industrial Paints has introduced two new paint ranges for vintage enthusiasts, Vintage Farmline (brush) and Vintage Farmspeed (spray). It is available by mail order from Eagle Industrial Paints on 0746 764242 (Bridgenorth, Shropshire).

## Adverts

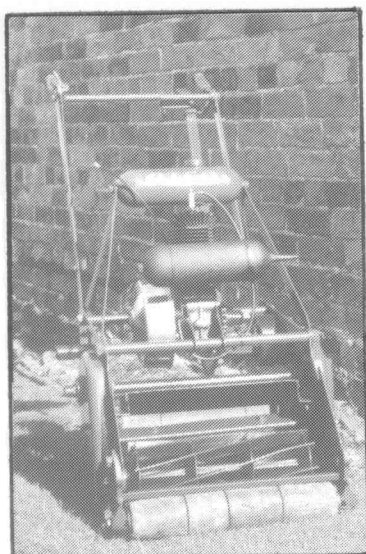
Following requests from a number of Members, advertisers who are not Members of the Club are marked.

**Wanted:** Transfers (or design) for grassbox badge from a Shanks 'Scot' sidewheel lawnmower. Contact Mr R Vardill: Telephone 0743 358374 (Shrewsbury) (Not Member).

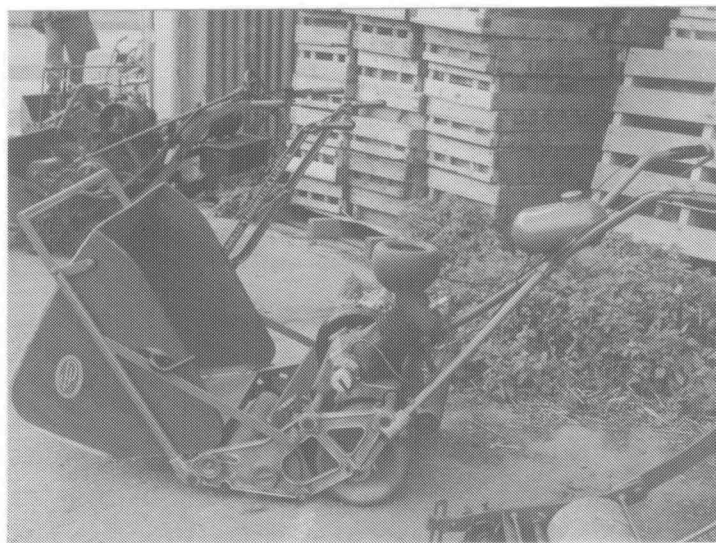
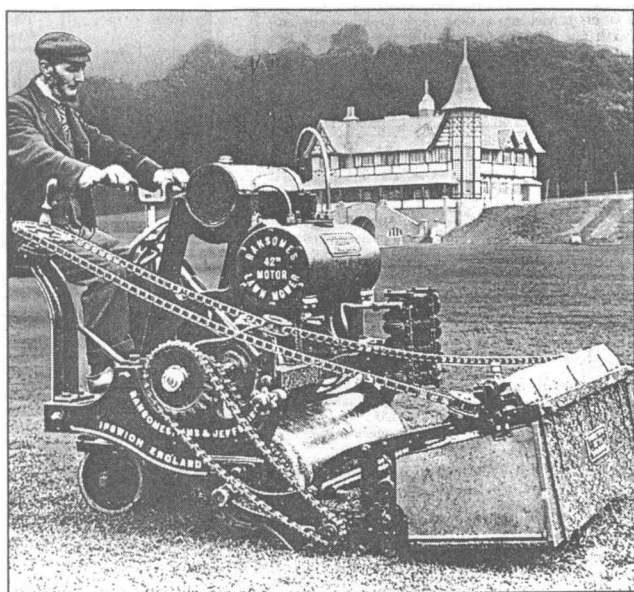
**For Sale:** JP Simplex mower with Villiers engine. Contact Mr G W Davies: Telephone 826599 (Middlesbrough) (Not Member).

**Help:** Assistance with replacement cutters on a Brott 320. Contact W G Arnold: Telephone 0263 833264 (Norwich) (Not Member).

**For Sale:** 1931 14" Ransomes K Series with Villiers Mk 8 engine, partially restored, in pieces but believed to be complete. Supplied with photographs, cheap to good home. Greens Flyweight with JAP two stroke, running. Lloyd's Pegasus bowling green mower, complete. Contact Steve Daly: Telephone 0455 23924 (Leicester).



*Tony Garratt's 1935 Atco Lightweight (photo A C Garratt).*



*Unusual JP water cooled lawnmower, as seen at the Hall & Duck Collection.*

## BURGLARY

Richard Jones of Petersfield has written to let me know that a Greens 6" Multim In Parvo push mower that he had was stolen from his home early in the summer. Having spent a lot of time restoring the mower, he is obviously keen to trace its whereabouts and has asked that anyone who might be able to help him trace it contact him on 0730 260275 (Petersfield).



*A pair of unusual Pennsylvania sidewheel mowers.*

**Next Edition  
Dec 1993**

Grassbox  
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Edited by Keith Wootton