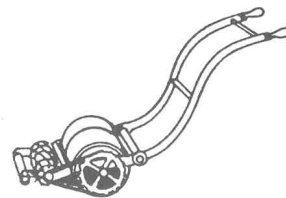


Grassbox

The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club



Number 10

Summer 1994

AUTUMN ALREADY!

Welcome to a regrettably late Grassbox 10. The year has gone by so quickly that the weeks just seem to have disappeared. So what should have been a mid-season issue this has turned out to be more like an Autumn update. In this issue there is information about the AGM and some of the rallies and events the Club has been to this year. We are already planning next year's events (it's never too soon to plan) and it looks like being another busy year.

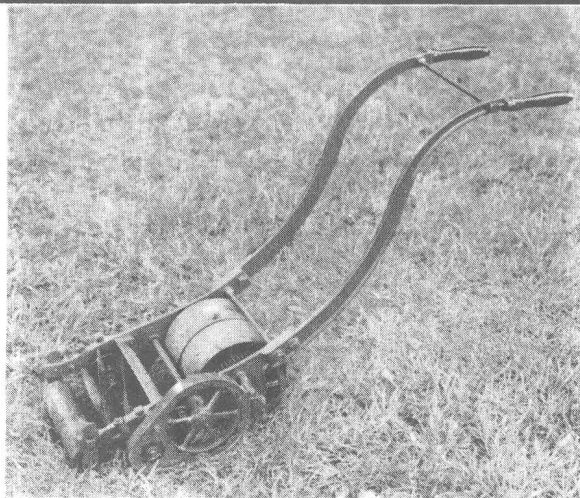
At this year's events a number of those attending have commented on the relatively small number of Club Members who take part. There may be many reasons for this of course, but it may well be that some Members are not sure what attending events involves, or perhaps they feel that their mowers are not worth showing. I hope neither is true because the Club aims to be one where every Member can take part irrespective of the mowers they own. Having said that, many Members live too far from the 'Club' Rallies for them to participate, but we are getting further afield. I also know that a number of people have been able to organise lawnmower sections at their own local rallies, perhaps for the first time. So lawnmowers are beginning to be accepted at more and more events.



Robbie Robinson and Alec Hillyar show how Robbie's push/pull 12" Silens Messor should be used.

Membership Directory

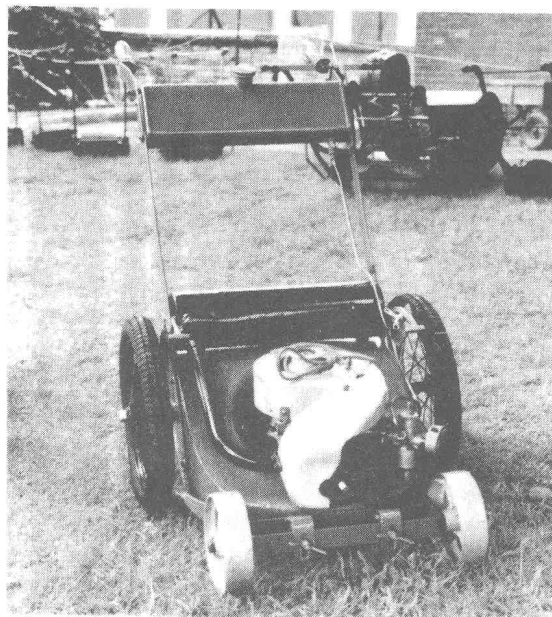
At the AGM one or two Members raised the point that the Annual Membership Directory contained Members addresses as well as their telephone numbers. This, they felt, may lead to people turning up to their home unexpectedly. With this in mind, and also taking into account the growing number of Members, I think that from this year the Directory of Members should only include telephone numbers and collection/interest details. This will enable the Club to include all Members on only two or three sheets of paper, without any security risks. Please bear in mind that only Members joining or rejoining the Club before 1 September will be included in this year's Directory, which is due to be issued with the next edition. New Members and latecomers will be included in subsequent editions of Grassbox.



A very early Ransomes Automaton, part of the Hall & Duck Collection. The Automaton was introduced by Ransomes in 1867 following a brief period when the company had not been making mowers, preferring instead to sell Greens Silens Messors. The Automaton was an instant success, available in a variety of sizes from 8" (priced £2.15s), 10", 12", 16" and more. The largest model was a 48" horse drawn model priced at £32. The original Automaton was eventually replaced by the 'New Automaton', which was available in chain and gear drive versions. At the turn of the century these models were in turn superseded by the 'Patent Chain' and 'Patent Gear' models, which are quite common in collections. These were still listed in catalogues up to 1939.

MIKE DIBLEY

With deep sadness, I have to report the untimely death of Mike Dibley, who died in July from cancer. Mike was one of the first members of the Club and was for the past five years one of the most active and generous of club members, in addition to being one of our founding committee. Those of us that knew Mike will always remember him for his sense of humour and his willingness to help and support others.



This example of an early rotary mower is a Power Specialties Rotoscythe from 1935 belonging to Chris Armour.

AGM REPORT

The Annual General Meeting of the Club was attended by more than 25 Members of the Club on Sunday 22 May. Keith Wootton (Chairperson) welcomed everyone and gave a report on the year's activities, including details of events attended and other highlights. The Club had become better organised, thanks to the work of the Committee, particularly Robbie Robinson who now does most of the administrative work, and others. Keith reported that sadly Mike Dibley had decided to stand down from the Committee due to illness.

Robbie Robinson (Secretary) reported that there were now over 120 Members and that this included many new people who had joined for the first time during the year. Robbie also reported that Membership fees would remain the same for at least the next year, and probably longer, and that the current year's fees were now due. He also reported that the Committee had been meeting regularly during the year to discuss Club matters.

Martin Stephenson (Treasurer) reported that the Club had £518.98 in the bank account. The amount in the bank would allow the Club to undertake some special projects which required costs being paid before income could be generated,

such as producing sets of transfers for certain mowers. Martin also reported that an independent audit of the accounts had highlighted a number of ways in which the accounts could be improved in the future, and that the Committee would ensure that these steps were undertaken.

A number of topics were discussed, notably the draft constitution which the Committee had prepared. The Committee undertook to review the constitution again during the, noting the comments of the AGM. The major concern was over the aims and objectives of the Club.

Concerns were also raised over the content of the Membership Directory. It was generally felt that only names and telephone numbers should be included, along with collection details, as this avoided publishing people's addresses.

The following people were elected to the Committee: Keith Wootton, Chairperson, Robbie Robinson, Secretary, Martin Stephenson, Treasurer, Andrew Grout, John Barnard, and John Meakin.

A full set of minutes for the AGM can be obtained from Robbie Robinson.

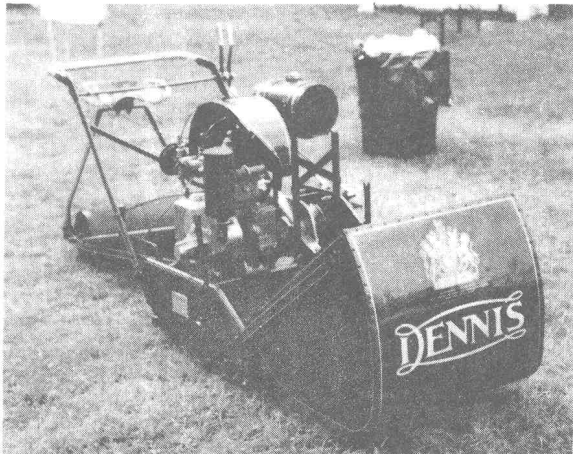
Rally Reports

Milton Keynes Rally: 21/22 May

Another good turn out this year, with more than 20 Club Members exhibiting and many more attending over the weekend. Although the weekend was cooler and damper than in previous years, this did not affect the weekend too much, and everyone seemed to have a good time. It was particularly pleasing to see so many people from so far away making the effort to come along. The AGM (see separate report) on the Sunday morning was also well attended.

Hatfield Rally: 18/19 June

A small group attended the Hatfield Festival of Gardening in June. The occasion was marked by the first public appearance of Geoffrey Wilkinson's newly restored Dennis. Unfortunately next year's Festival coincides with the Banbury Rally, and it may not be possible to arrange attendance at Hatfield.



Roger Wilkinson's immaculate Dennis made its first public appearance at Hatfield Rally. The mower, dating from 1935 was originally used in a vicarage close to Roger's home. When Roger found it, the Dennis was in a sorry state, but after much effort, the results are worth it. Roger thinks that the visit to Hatfield was the first time the error had left his home village in over 60 years.

Banbury Steam Rally: 25/26 June

Another large turn out from the Club ensured that Banbury Rally was a highlight of the year. Robbie Robinson had prepared a special exhibition of lawnmower advertisements and literature which, along with some push mowers, was displayed in a small marquee. This was a popular idea which Robbie hopes to repeat next year.

Erewash Museum: 13 August

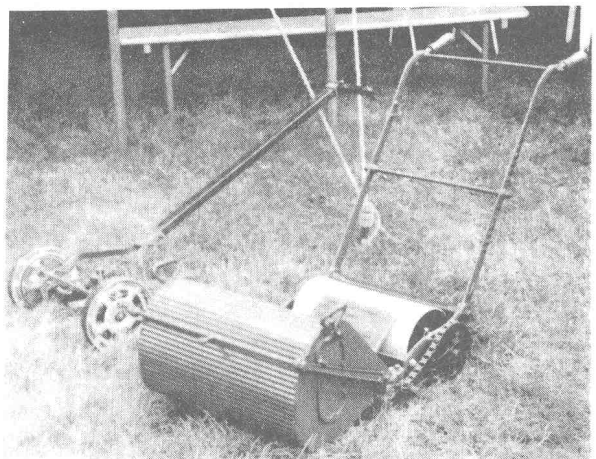
A small group of Club Members travelled to Erewash Museum in Ilkeston on August to show off a selection of mowers. Most of the day was spent giving interviews to the local TV and Radio which were intrigued by the whole event. The setting was the walled garden of the museum, which was formerly a large town house. It is likely that the Club will make this one day event a regular date.

County of Salop Steam Rally: 28/29 August

A small group attended the old Bishop's Castle Rally over the August Bank Holiday. Andrew Grout was in the middle of a round trip to Scotland to collect yet another huge Ransomes ride on, and John Barnard managed to add to his collection with the acquisition of a very early 6" Shanks push mower. Quite a contrast. Elsewhere, an Atco Standard was sold for £50 at an auction during the Rally. Other Members attending included John Whieldon and Tony Garratt.

Museum of Garden History: 16 October

By the time this Grassbox arrives the Club will also have attended a small rally at the Museum of Garden History in London.



Richard Jones' splendid example of a Greens Silens Messor, complete with corrugated grass box. Greens began making the Silens Messor ("Silent Cutter") in the 1860s and the machines were still available in the late 1930s.

Contributions in the form of photographs, articles, advertisements and copies of old brochures and catalogues can be sent to Keith Wootton, 92 Artizan Road, Abington, Northampton NN1 4HS.

NOT EVEN TRAINS WILL STOP HIM!

By Andrew Grout - based on events at
the Great Dorset Steam Fair 1991

I travelled to the Great Dorset Steam Fair on Wednesday 28 August, mainly on the British rail network but finishing the journey on a Dorset bus. Everything I needed for the next five days I carried with me. This will become more relevant later.

Whilst viewing the lots in the auction on the Thursday morning I was drawn to three machines out of the 1345 lots in the auction; lot 637, a Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies 12" Patent Gear; lot 1030, a 30" Atco Standard (I think); lot 1124, listed as a "Ransomes ride on mower made in the 1930s, converted by me, Hammond of Cricklade, in the early 1940s, date of engine 10/5/32, Austin 10, good working order."

After inspecting these machines the rest of the day was spent going to Salisbury to increase that funny paper stuff that burns holes in pockets.

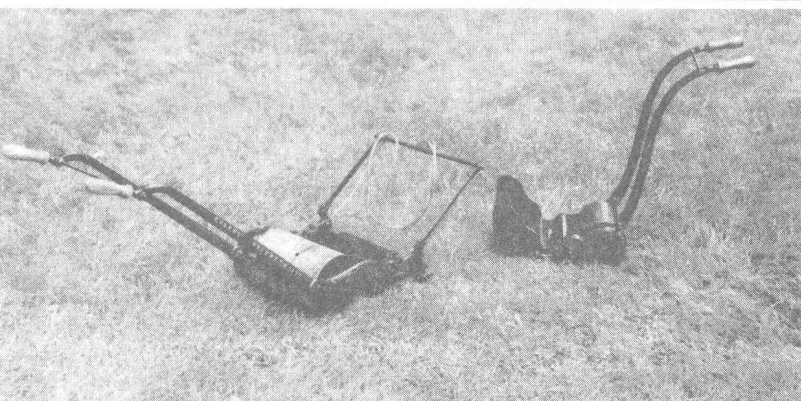
Friday, day of the auction, I was on too early and had to waste some time before the lots I was interested in came under the hammer. Three sales running at the same time, so I was unable to bid for lot 637 as well as the other two. I opted to follow the outside auction with the two lots 1030 and 1124. The Atco went for more money than I was prepared to pay, so I was left to bid for lot 1124. The initial high price was forced down when nobody bid, and when reasonable price was reached the first bid went in. Eventually there were just two people left bidding, and the price kept rising but in smaller amounts until eventually the other bidder dropped out. Five pounds more and he could have had it, the last bid being on my limit. I had run out of money, brought a 24" Ransomes ride-on and had a major transport problem. How to get it from Dorset to my home in Bedfordshire. And more to the point how to tell my mother!

After a lot of grovelling, pleading and bribing I was able to persuade a traction engine owner (previously unknown to me) to squeeze my new mower on his trailer and bring it to his yard just south of Luton. I could then move it the thirty remaining miles to my home, and about a week after purchasing the mower it finally arrived at my place.



Andrew Grout on-board the big 1930s Ransomes ride-on. And it works too. Andy's now got an even bigger one to play with, following a recent trip to Scotland.

Have I learnt anything from this episode you might ask? The answer is no! If somebody offered me a Ransomes pony mower tomorrow, I would drag it home if necessary (there's a challenge if ever I heard one). I would like to thank Mr Albert Fensom of Flamstead for transporting the mower from Dorset, my father for transporting it from Flamstead to home, and my mother for putting up with an ever increasing number of old lawnmowers. Remember, if a lawnmower's interesting enough, it is worth restoring however derelict it may be. More about that in another article.



John Barnard's Barnard, Bishop and Barnard (right) appears too small to be a real mower, but it is. Notice how small it is compared to Robbie Robinson's 12" Silens Messor.

MORE ON CATALOGUES

Bob Payne has sent in some pages from the 'Buck & Hickman' catalogues from 1935 and 1958, showing pages with old lawnmowers. In the 1935 catalogue, Greens Silens Messors were still being sold for £6-15s-0d for a 10" model, while an Atco DeLuxe 20" with a four stroke engine was £55-0-0 (£45-0-0 with two stroke). In 1958, a 20" Atco (with two stroke engine) was £54-0-0 (+purchase tax). For younger readers 15s=75p and purchase tax was the forerunner of VAT.

INFORMATION SERVICE

The Club's new information service has been used by a number of people by now, with excellent results. For just £3 anyone can find out all there is to know about their particular mower. This is sure a small price to pay to obtain a lot of information which is not readily available elsewhere. Details of the scheme can be obtained from Robbie Robinson on 0865 68682 (Oxford).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

National Trust Centenary Rally, 5 July 1995

The Club has been invited by Brian Kirby, Curator of Trerice Manor, Cornwall, to organise a lawnmower rally to help the National Trust celebrate its centenary in 1995. Trerice, as many Members will know, is the home of the David Halford Collection of Vintage Mowers, and Brian is a Member of the Club. The event is proposed for Sunday 5 July 1995, which is almost a year away. This could well be one of the events of the year, and I am sure that for those Members who have not been to Trerice before (and I'm one of them!), this could be the excuse we've been waiting for.

Otmoor Rally, September 1995

The Club has also been invited to attend Otmoor Rally, near Oxford, in September 1995. I am not sure of the dates for the event yet, but further details will be included in a future edition.

Other Diary Dates

13/14 May 1995: Club Annual Rally and AGM, Milton Keynes Museum.

24/25 June 1995: Banbury Steam Rally.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Note: Advertisers who are not members of the club are marked (NM)

FOR SALE

1928 Atco Standard. Also, 24" RSJ with kickstart, year unknown. Contact Mr Brian Roberts. Tel: 095 276216 (Weston-Under-Lizard, Shropshire)(NM).
Qualcast B1, Folgate J2. Contact Harry Lee. Tel: 0274 723413 (Bradford)(NM).
24" Greens with four stroke Greens engine, with trailer, probably from late 1920s. Also 14" Ransomes with Villiers engine, probably mid-1930s. Contact Bernard Harding. Tel: 0483 232552 (Woking).
1927 Ransomes Marquis, £120. Contact George Wells. Tel: 0932 843403 (NM).
JP Super. 1920s. Contact David Nightingale. Tel: 0223 233171 (NM)(Cambridge).
Ransomes 12" Anglia, 1935-55. Contact Mr R Head, 62 Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk (NM).
Greens Silens Messor 12" c1920. Contact RA Bradford. Tel: 0602 893781 (Nottingham)(NM).
24" Dennis, 1929 in working order. Contact AA Hirst. Tel: 0255 674758 (Frinton-on-Sea, Essex)(NM).
Two Webb Whippets. Contact Mrs FG Johnston Tel: 0489 782833 (NM)(Southampton).
Atco lawn weeder. Contact Mr N Wilkins. Tel: 0494 432356 (Amersham)(NM).
British Binch Model B 15". Contact Mrs Margaret Cream Tel: 0223 351457 (Cambridge)(NM).
Collection of lawnmower. Contact Harold Beer. Tel: 0392 76164 (Exeter)(NM).
1947 16" JP Super. Contact Tony Barnes. Tel: 0299 823947 (Stourport)(NM).
Two 30" Atco motor mowers, c1930s. Contact Mr Sear. Tel: 0280 704993 (Brackley)(NM).
24" Atco with 4S JAP, c1930s. Contact Mr Scott. Tel: 0780 63365 (Stamford)(NM).

Two Atco Standards, one 22" one unknown size. Contact Martin Hudson Tel: 0684 310232 (Worcester)(NM).
20" JP, c1936. Contact Mr Salisbury. Tel: 0824 790346 (North Wales)(NM).
17" Atco kickstart model, c1930s. Contact Mr Waghorn Tel: 0442 2823024 (Tring)(NM).
Atco Standard. Contact Mr Groves Tel: 0432 850184 (Hereford)(NM).
A number of Atco Standards, Allen Scythes and spares for each model. Details from Andrew Grout Tel: 0908 583350 (Milton Keynes).
A variety of horticultural machines including a Hayter mower and a JAP motor. Contact Mr Pierce. Tel: 0908 679749 (Milton Keynes)(NM).
1946 28" Atco with grassbox, 18" Atco Standard with Senspray carb, Gamages roller mower, 1947 14" Ransomes Lightweight with grassbox and carrier wheels, Shanks Silver Comet roller mower. Contact Andrew Grout Tel: 0908 583350 (Milton Keynes).
RSJ Chain Automaton c1914, Dennis Swallow rotary, Qualcast Commodore 16", Shay Rotoscythe. Contact John Burrow. Tel: 0203 276013 (Cambridge)(NM).
14" Atco 1962. Contact Frank Whayman. Tel: 0462 458265 (Hitchin).

WANTED

Grassbox for 8" Webb Whippet. Contact Mr Tibbett 0525 712322 (Woburn, Bedfordshire)(NM).
12" Atco HY/Standard or 14" Standard. Contact Mr Pennell. Tel: 0753 883707 (Chalfont St Peter).
16" Atco Standard. Contact J F Wride. 0272 799285 (Bristol).
Grassbox and Grass Thrower plate for Ransomes Ajax. Contact Geoff Winwood Tel: 0746 764791 (NM)(Bridgnorth).
Exhaust pipe for 16" Atco Standard. Ride on attachment for 30" Ransomes. Rotary cultivator attachment for Clifford Cultivator. Contact Philip Swain. Tel: 057 045 284 (Llangybi).

LAUGHING GNOMES

Tony Garratt sent in this advertisement from the Spring 1954 edition of The Countryman. Surprisingly light-hearted, the advert shows how Atco and Shanks were prepared to work together before they eventually merged at the end of the 1950s.

By Appointment to the late King George VI
Charles H. Pugh Ltd.,
Motor Mower Manufacturers

There's no Service like
ATCO
SERVICE

ATCO and SHANKS
join hands

This means:
A wider than ever
range of mowing equip-
ment—hand, motor and
gang—and sold through
the Atco Sales Organi-
sation.
Atco Service is now
available to owners of
Shanks mowers from
Atco Service Branches
throughout the
country.

Your Atco Supplier, if you
wish it, can put you in touch
with your ATCO SERVICE
BRANCH.

CHARLES H. PUGH LTD.,
Atco Works,
Birmingham, 9.

WOODTURNING

Roy Moore of Custom Woodturning has contacted the Club to promote his roller woodturning service. Roy can turn rollers for any mower from beech at a price of about £1 per inch of finished roller, although the price will depend on the precise measurements. Roy can be contacted on 0276 474820 (Lightwater, Surrey), and operates a mail-order service.

Mike's Mowers

Some of the mowers from Mike Dibley's collection are available to members of the Club. For a list of available mowers, and prices, please contact Andrew Hall c/o The Hall & Duck Collection, 84 Kenilworth Avenue, Wimbledon Park, London SW19 7LR.

MUSEUM DIRECTORY

The Club is compiling a Directory of Museums with lawnmowers and lawnmower related displays. If any Member knows of any such museum, please send details to Keith Wootton at the usual addresses.

Next Edition December 1994

More on Rally attendance
Hall & Duck at the IoG
Another 'big' Andy Groot story
Membership Directory
Grassbox
Edition 10 - October 1994
Edited by Keith Wootton