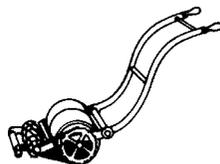


Grassbox

The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 106

Winter 2019



EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Grassbox 106. I'm afraid it has appeared a little later than intended largely due to a lack of material to fill its pages this time. However, I hope club members will find something of interest in its pages.

Keith Wootton has provided some information about events in 2019, including the annual rally in May and a planned visit to the Dennis factory. More information on pages 13 and 14.

We intend to publish another issue of Grassbox with the auction entry form before the AGM and therefore I need to have all material for the next issue before 14th April.

THIRD GENERATION MOWER COLLECTOR?

The image to the right shows Thomas Proudfoot, the Editor's son, showing a keen interest in his grandfather Christopher's Ransomes Coronet back in September. Tommy turned a year old just after Christmas and is now walking. He often shows an interest in the mowers in Daddy's shed so maybe we will see a third generation of lawn mower enthusiasts, and indeed OLC member, from the Proudfoot Family!



Front cover photo by Colin Stone.

CONTACTING THE CLUB

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T: 01788 822224 E: al.h@mail.com

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The rare pre-war Rotoscythe in the images above and right was at the Milton Keynes Rally in 2018 and is an example of the first Rotary lawn mower. This one is the Long Grass model, with large wheels, the rear ones featuring pneumatic tyres. It was available in 14" and 18" sizes, being Models D and E respectively. The catalogue page below right is from 1939, while the image from an advert for the normal domestic model with a rear roller shows very clearly the strange crocodile skin paint effect that is visible in the few remaining survivors today. The background colour was green, and would pose quite a headache for anyone planning to restore a rotor-scythe now!



EIGHTEEN INCH ROTOSCYTHE LONG GRASS CUTTER

MODEL 18 LGC.

**TWENTY SEVEN
GUINEAS CASH**

or £7 8s. 0d. with order
and 12 monthly payments
of £1 17s. 6d.



This Rotoscythe is being widely used for cutting long grass and weeds on road verges, golf bunkers, orchards, paddocks and poultry runs. It is a most useful machine for preparing rough land for lawn making.

As in the other Rotoscythes the cutters are guarded by the casing, giving safety in operation.

The machine is fully supported on four wheels mounted on ball bearings and no weight is carried by the user, who walks centrally behind.

The rear wheels are 16 inches in diameter, fitted with pneumatic tyres, and the large diameter of these wheels enables really rough ground to be negotiated.

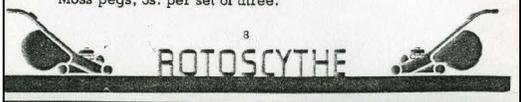
This long grass cutter is easily portable and can be conveniently handled at all times by one operator. It is equivalent to many men working with scythes and makes an instant economy when installed.

Weight complete, 110 lbs.

See also general specification inside back cover.

Spare cutters, 3s. per set of three.

Moss pegs, 3s. per set of three.



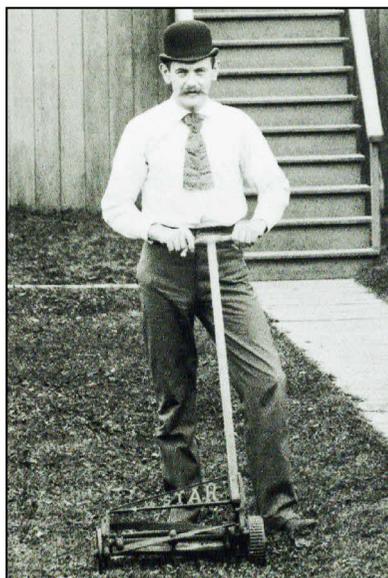
A STAR MOWER

By Clive Gravett



I recently acquired an interesting 8in x 10in glass negative (*above, close up of mower, right*) from the USA showing a Chicago family in their garden with a bowler hatted man pushing an unusual looking lawn mower. On closer inspection you could clearly see '16 Star' within the bracing bar above the cutting cylinder. The unusual feature being that the handle was to left of the machine, with only one geared driving wheel.

Research revealed that the mower was made by Dille & McGuire of Richmond Indiana who patented this design in July 1885. Also known as the 'Richmond Star' this model was sold in the UK by Perry & Co (Limited), Holborn, London as seen in the 1888 advertisement.



The design was to enable the grass to be cut close to walls, fences, flower beds etc, the offset handle reducing potential injury to your hands against a wall, also reducing the need for edging, with the non-gearred wheel being very narrow.

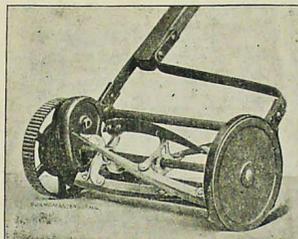
Other manufacturers produced similar machines including Lawson Manufacturing Co, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA whose machine was called The Racine lawn mower and being sold in 1898.

Right. Note the Racine's handle is on the opposite side to the Star.

Advertising stated that the mowers were quieter & easier to push than the more common doubled geared machines & quite capable of cutting open lawns as well as the edges.

The Racine Lawn Mower.

The Lawson Mfg. Company, Milwaukee, Wis., are introducing a new lawn mower, as illustrated herewith. The manufacturers claim that the mower will cut not only flat or even surfaces of the lawn, terraces and other places, but also close to fences, shrubs, flower borders, trees, &c., without injury, and do it so effectually as to dispense with the use of trimming shears and the work of clipping the borders of a lawn to finish it up. They avoid the use of a wooden roller. The bed knife is pivoted, resting securely under the center of the wiper or cylinder knives, and adjusted to the spider knives by set screws. Its adjustment is very simple and

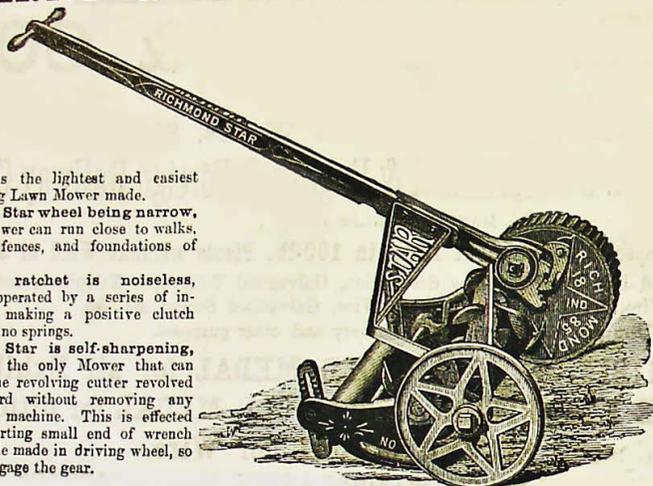


Racine Lawn Mower.

effective. The smooth wheel or idler at the left allows the machine to cut within $\frac{1}{8}$ inch of the edge of the lawn. The single driving wheel at the right reduces the clicking noise to a minimum, avoiding back lash or rattling. The handle is placed at the right, equalizing the strain from the drive wheel. The blind wheel at the left is so arranged that it compels the operator to use the machine at an angle that insures evenness in cutting the grass. The power required to operate this machine is referred to as much less than the old style with double drive wheels. The spider knives being hung from the center, the machine cuts grass evenly at any angle.

THE LAWN MOWER OF THE SEASON.

PERRY & CO.'S "STAR" LAWN MOWER.



It is the lightest and easiest running Lawn Mower made.

The Star wheel being narrow, the Mower can run close to walks, walls, fences, and foundations of houses.

The ratchet is noiseless, being operated by a series of inclines, making a positive clutch having no springs.

The Star is self-sharpening, and is the only Mower that can have the revolving cutter revolved backward without removing any part of machine. This is effected by inserting small end of wrench into hole made in driving wheel, so as to engage the gear.

Its rear cut and adjustable roller enable it to be used on uneven ground, and to cut high or low grass.

The roller arms are so arranged that the Mower may be raised or lowered, to regulate the height of cut.

PRICES.

10 in.	60/-
12 in.	80/-
14 in.	70/-
16 in.	80/-

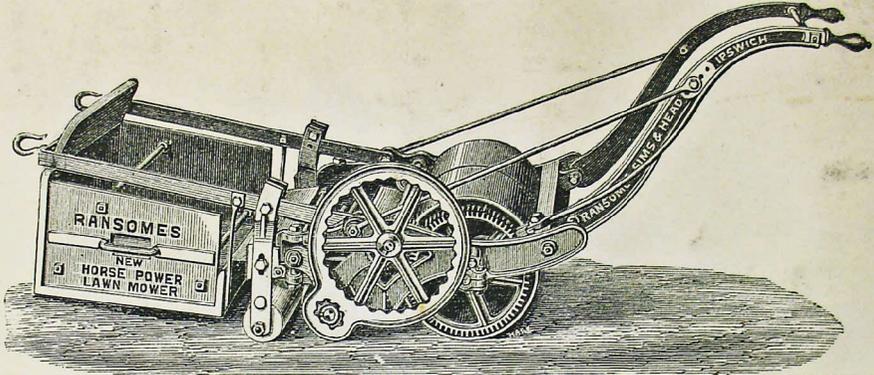
Liberal discount to the trade. Particulars on application.

SOLD BY ALL IRONMONGERS.

Wholesale—PERRY & CO. (Limited), Holborn Viaduct, London.



RANSOMES' "HORSE POWER" LAWN MOWERS.



Are made from new designs, embody many improvements, and are believed to be the very best Horse Power Machines yet introduced.

They are suitable for Large Lawns and Pleasure Grounds; Cricket Grounds; Arboretums; Croquet, Badminton, and Lawn Tennis Grounds; Bowling Greens; the Borders of Parks and Drives; and other large pieces of grass.

They possess the following important improvements:—

A. Grass box for delivering the grass at pleasure on either side, without any complicated machinery.

B. A strong frame, with adjustable handles.

C. A new and most simple adjustment for setting the knives.

D. An adjustable concave to suit the wear of the knives and the delivery of the grass.

E. A "wind" guard to prevent the grass blowing about in windy weather.

F. An automatic gearing working direct on to the driving spindle.

G. The box folds over the machine, which can then be stowed away in small compass.

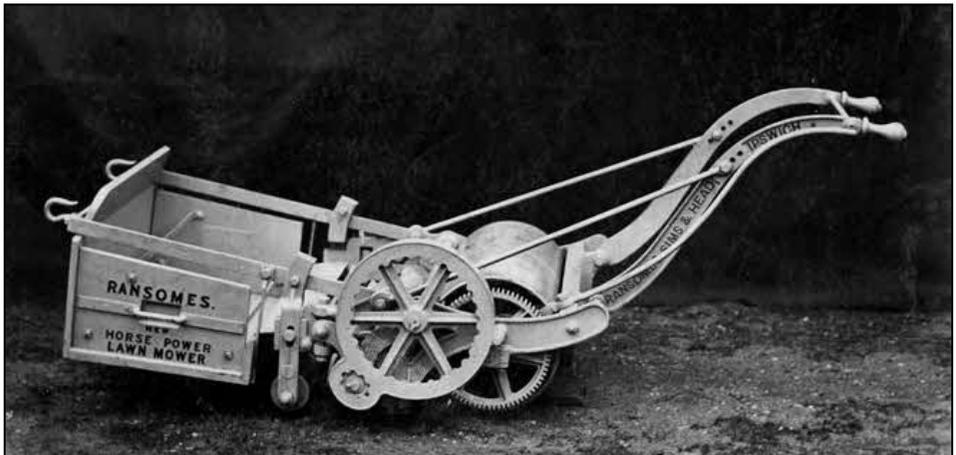
H. An Extra Cutting Cylinder is recommended with all Horse Power Machines, which can be used when the other requires re-grinding. A lower price charged if ordered with the machine.

4th. The 26 in. Machine is suitable for a **Pony**, is similar to the larger Machines, and includes most of the above improvements.

The HORSE POWER LAWN MOWERS are made in the following sizes:—

26 inches. 30 inches. 36 inches. 48 inches wide.

Three images of Ransomes first generation of pony mower, introduced in around 1870. Above and left are from Clive Gravett's collection, below is Ransomes own factory photograph from the MERL collection at Reading.



BOOK REVIEW: TWO MEN WENT TO MOW

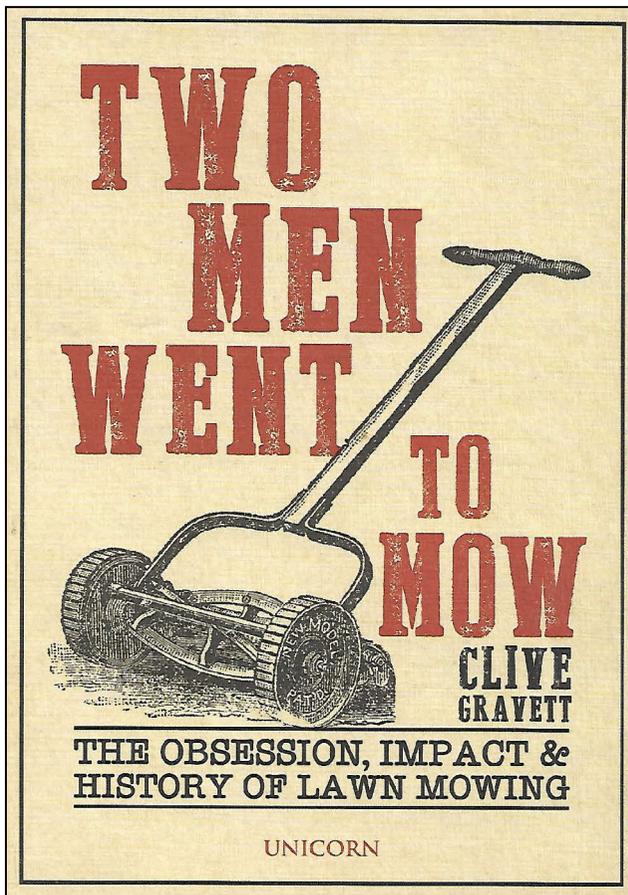
By Clive Gravett

A rarity among the various types of collector is Clive Gravett, who in a matter of eight years or so has learnt more about lawn mower history than most of us have in a lifetime. An inquisitive mind, and a dogged determination to get to the bottom of things, are what is needed for this sort of learning, and Unicorn Publishing clearly knew they'd found the right man when they approached Clive to produce a book about lawn mowers.

The result is a delightful, easy-to-read book, ideal for bedtime even if you have no especial interest in lawn mower history. It is not a definitive, academic history book but a light-hearted account, incorporating a bit about Clive himself and his charity, the Budding Foundation, which provides help for young people, not to mention his involvement with the South Downs Heritage Centre and his lawn mower display there. The book is episodic, each chapter being short and well illustrated, and suitable for dipping into. If you want to follow the history of lawn mowers, though, it is generally chronological. To show that it does not need to be followed too earnestly, there are informal touches such as captions

in coloured blocks which are not quite in line, (the misalignment is often so slight as to look like carelessness rather than design!).

Lest the subject of lawn mowers is too much for the attention span of a lay reader, there are diversions into Budding's family history, his grave at Dursley, the Dursley Pedersen bicycle (nothing to do with mowers, except that



its inventor is buried in the same churchyard as Budding!) and Budding's other inventions (an adjustable spanner and an early form of revolver). While there are sections on subjects familiar to us, like Green's Silens Messor or Ransomes' Automaton, more recent products such as the Flymo, the Hayterette (still whirling round) and the Suffolk Punch are discussed. On the other hand, there are two pages devoted to the Sabo, a German equivalent to Hayter, of which I had never heard. Robot mowers are covered, but ride-ons start and finish with the Easimow and Lawnrider.



Above: Clive with a Silens Messor at Edwin Budding's graveside.

There are times when one feels that Unicorn could have done some constructive editing; for example, we are told "On reaching ten years of age in 1963 my dad purchased a Suffolk Colt ..."? It's all too easy to write that sort of sentence, and while it raises a smile, it is the duty of a good publisher to spot it before going to press. And they should have known (as Clive now does!) that Tunbridge Wells is in Kent, not Sussex. But never mind; it is a splendid book, and a welcome addition to any mower

collector's limited library. 'Two Men Went to Mow'? - Edwin Budding and Clive Gravett!

A signed copy of the book can be ordered direct from the author by visiting www.thebuddingfoundation.co.uk or contacting Clive on 07833 306619; this will ensure the charity receives a contribution. Cost £18.50 incl p&p. (extra for overseas.)

Christopher Proudfoot

YOUR FIRST RESTORATION - PERHAPS YOU LEARNT MORE THAN YOU THINK

By Tony Brooke

As with to learning to ride a bicycle, or our first car we ever owned, most of us can remember the first lawn mower we ever attempted to restore. The enthusiasm and excitement of getting our hands on the machine, the vision that we held in our mind's eye, of what it was going to look like when finished. It simply was going to be fully operational and a thing of beauty, maybe even a rarity. Yet few of us would anticipate the learnings that we would acquire during the process of restoration. Some of us may have been complete novices, like myself, with a garage full of tools acquired over a life time of DIY tasks, initially considered adequate for tackling a simple task of lawn mower restoration. We may not have had careers which required problem solving, or project management or lateral thinking, or component sourcing skills. We may not initially understand that some parts are threaded in the opposite direction to normal, or the difference between oil and grease. But lawn mower restoration is an interest or even consummate passion which upon reflection teaches us hitherto unknown skills, skills which may have wider application to life in general.

Interestingly, despite frustration, we can ourselves become more circumspect, a desire to wield a 4lb lump hammer is suddenly tempered in case of damaging our valuable piece of rusty metal, indeed the way we view our lawn mower becomes much more reverential. We almost become subservient to its needs!



Above: One of Tony's JP restorations.

So issues such as stuck rusty parts, remembering so many components and the order in which they need to be fitted, the characteristics of different paints, where to get parts, budgeting, planning ahead, communication and networking with other club members, whilst all being aspects of lawnmower restoration, demand levels of skill in us all which suddenly makes our common interest

transcend to something entirely different. After all, how many other hobbies require attention to detail, perseverance, communication skills, lateral thinking, networking skills, and even domestic negotiating skills. Friendships develop, some lasting years, all around discussing the intricacies of this and that challenge or mower problem. This can result in some people putting us firmly in the camp of being obsessive cranks. But these subjective life-skill benefits of lawnmower restoration resolutely provide us with the ammunition to challenge this ill-informed view.

My view is that we have every right to feel pride in our accomplishments in completing a restoration project, however small the step might be and no matter what make of mower. Even the

more experienced restorers amongst us, and I do not count myself amongst them, can remember past mistakes, and the learning from them. I have plenty of mistakes yet to make but the irony is that through trying to minimize the number of mistakes, we may be limiting our learning experiences. I always remember the analogy that a baby does not learn to walk without falling over and it is through the guidance of the OLC, and the information passed between members that we advance our learnings. Such learnings are a two-way thing, in both the giving and receiving of advice and information. Of that, we should as members be equally proud. May there be many more freed rusty nuts in the future and ever younger obsessive cranks.

Eric Smit from Holland has sent us this image of a recent find, it is a German made Abner, dating from 1958. Eric believes this to be quite a rare machine.



THE 'HANDY' GRASS EDGE CLIPPER

By Clive Gravett



Thomas Green & Son Ltd advertised the 'Handy' edger clipper in 1895 and continued to produce them with only minor modifications until the late 1930's.

As with most Thomas Greens mowers each edger has a unique serial number, shown in the accompanying image.

I am compiling a list of the serial numbers to gain a better understanding of the number sold, and also supply members with an idea of their edger's age.

If you have one of these in your collection, or know of one, please let me have the serial number, an image would also be helpful including the handle which appears to have changed during the production period.

I will publish a follow up article in this magazine in due course.

Information

to

clive@museumofgardening.co.uk



CLUB SERVICES AND INFORMATION

NEW TREASURER

We are now looking for a new Treasurer to take over this important role from the late Dick Hardwick. The Treasurer's duties include making sure we maintain proper records of income and expenditure, attending committee meetings, preparing reports for the committee and annual general meeting, and overseeing payments to various suppliers.

We do not expect anyone to take this role on lightly or suddenly. Instead, we envisage appointing the new person formally at the next AGM in May so that there is some time for them to learn about what is required. Keith is filling the role until then and will be able to help the new Treasurer get up to speed. The new treasurer will ideally be able to use basic computer programs including email and Excel. They will be able to attend two committee meetings and the AGM at the annual rally each year.

Being treasurer is not difficult or onerous and various members of the committee will be able to help and support until the new person has settled in.

If you are interested in finding out more, please send Keith an email.

DENNIS FACTORY VISIT

Earlier this year the committee decided to award Honorary Life Membership to Ian Howard, the managing director of Dennis. This is in recognition of the support Ian has given to many members since we started the club. Not only are Dennis able to supply spares for many of their earlier machines, they are

usually able to provide background information about the age of the machine and advice on maintenance etc.

We are hoping to arrange a visit to the Dennis factory near Derby in the early part of 2019 to meet Ian, present him with his award and see some mowers being made. The visit will be open to any member who wants to attend but we will need to confirm numbers beforehand with the team at Dennis. Once we have a clearer idea of numbers, we will be able to confirm a time and date.

In the first instance, if you are interested in attending this unique event please send an email to Keith.

AGM 2019

The provisional date for next year's Annual Rally at Milton Keynes Museum is 18/19 May. As usual the club's Annual General Meeting will be held on the Sunday.

This will be our 30th annual rally at the museum following the first one back in 1990. To celebrate, the committee has decided that the theme this year will be "The mower that has been in my collection the longest" - that's the one you have had the longest not the oldest one in your collection. It will be interesting to see what machines sparked each member's interest!

CLUB SHOP

All club items for sale can be found on the [website](http://www.oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk/members/souvenirs) at www.oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk/members/souvenirs and

www.oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk/members/transfers-decals (both in the Members-Only section). Ideally, members should contact Gerry Norris by email on norrigerry@gmail.com to check stock availability and postage costs etc.

SPARES

The Garfitt's spares service continues to be run by Richard Jones. He can be contacted on 01243 575937 or by email at lawnmower.jones@hotmail.co.uk to order bottom blades, cutting cylinders and fixing screws from Garfitt's of Sheffield. Items ordered through Richard are subject to special terms and you only need to pay the club after the order is received. Richard will also be able to offer general advice on removal and replacement of the blades.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Every renewal we have received so far has been updated on the club's database. This means that if the label on the envelope containing this edition of Grassbox still says Until: 2018 then you have not yet rejoined. There is no need to tell if you do not want to remain a member. However, if you do not rejoin now this will be the last edition of Grassbox that you receive.

Don't forget, we send out all renewal notices at the same time every year in June so you do not need to do anything until then if your renewal date says anything other than Until: 2018.

WEBSITE

The Forum section of the website has been particularly active recently with a number of members posting queries –

and answers – about the mowers they are bringing back to life or restoring. Why not go along to the website and see what's being said?

Colin has been updating parts of the site dedicated to the Club Shop, including adding some of "missing" items and offering some great discounts on a few things that we'd like to make sure go to members. If you didn't buy a last-minute Christmas present for the mower-lover in your life, why not make it a New Year's resolution.

Members may not be aware that the Directory of Mower Manufacturers and Models that we produced in print many years ago is now fully online. This is a great resource if you're trying to learn about a particular mower or the variety of makers and machines over the years. It is one of our ongoing projects to update and add to this directory so please let us know if you have any additions.

WEBSITE PASSWORD

The password is Webb99! You will only need to use this if you log on with the generic olcmember username.

DIRECTORY OF MEMBERS

The Directory of Members that is posted on the Members-Only section of the website will now be updated every three months – usually at the same time we send out the e-news to remind members about the next Grassbox. In this way we hope the directory will be as up to date as possible and new members will be added more quickly than when the list was produced annually. The

Next Edition: Spring 2019
Edition 106 - Winter 2019. Edited by William Proudfoot

cost of printing the directory and sending a copy to everyone is rather expensive which is why we produce it electronically. However, we realise that a significant minority of members do not

have email or web access. We will be happy to run off a basic copy for any such member who requests one by post (write to Keith at the address contained elsewhere in this edition).

ADVERTISEMENTS

FOR SALE

- 16" Atco Standard Grass Box only, 1922 £45 C: Joseph Bass T: 07724 730146 E: omegaboy2014@gmail.com (Cleveland)
- 28" Atco Groundsman, 1956, c/w Villiers engine, c/w box, £100 C: Lee Smallwood T: 07930 287567 E: lee@smallwood.it (Bristol)
- 21" Mountfield M6 Powerdrive, 1984, c/w Tecumseh engine, £55 C: Stuart Rogers T: 07473 865937 E: sfrontdoor20a@btinternet.com (Godalming)#
- 24" Dennis, c1930s, c/w box, offers C: David Reid T: E: davidd.reid@btinternet.com (Northwich)#
- 20" Ransomes Antelope, offers C: Paul Webb T: 07989 852772 E: pmwebb99@btinternet.com (Brentwood)#
- 30" Dennis Premier Mk 1 Motor Mower, c/w ride-on attachment and 3 gangs, c/w box, offers C: Paul Webb T: 07989 852772 E: pmwebb99@btinternet.com (Brentwood)#
- 12" Qualcast Suffolk Colt, c/w Type 75614 engine, c/w box, £40 C: Robin Barton T: 0115 9631459 E: bart6msp@gmail.com (Nottingham)#
- 12"/14" Atco/Suffolk Punch/Qualcast/Greens motor mowers, 1950/60s, c/w Atco and Suffolk Punch engine, c/w box, £50ono C: David Vickers T: 01926 494168 E: potts.vickers@talktalk.net (Warwick)#
- 18" Qualcast, 1960s C: Josie Lewis T: 01793 530920 E: j.lewis19@btinternet.com (Swindon)#
- 24" Atco Ride-on, 1971, c/w Tecumseh H50-65275H engine, c/w box, £25 C: Charlotte Bell T: 0191 2818643 E: charlotteambell@gmail.com (Newcastle-upon-Tyne)#
- 17" Atco, 1969, c/w 4S engine, c/w box, £30 C: Bob Hamnett T: 01524 701394 E: bobvalhamnett@btinternet.com (Carnforth)#
- Atco Standard, 1920s, offers C: Dave Norbury T: E: davenorbury@hotmail.com (Chichester)#

Ransomes Ajax, c/w box. Offers. C: Peter Ransome E: ransome436@btinternet.com (Worcester)#

WANTED

- Pre war motor mower , e.g. Atco, Ransome, Dennis . Anything considered. Tim Colledge 07779 387085, or timgnford@gmail.com
- Operators Manual, any literature, Piston with rings 80.5mm oversize Bump shims / head gasket (and possibly more) for the JLO ROCKWELL DL425 Two Stroke Diesel engine. C: Paul Harvey E: rotary.mower.man@btinternet.com (Tewkesbury)
- Grass box, brass petrol tank and spare engine for 14" Atco Standard C: Joseph Bass T: 07724 730146 E: omegaboy2014@gmail.com (Middlesbrough)
- Pre 1940 lawn mowers. Anything considered, except Atco, including individual machines and whole collections. Write to Michael Duck, 1 Belmont Terrace, Shepton Beauchamp, Somerset TA19 0JX.

Adverts can be submitted by filling in a form on the Club website, this is by far the easiest method as it helps to ensure that all the necessary information is provided. Adverts are also welcome by post or phone and are free of charge. Non members are denoted by a '#'

SOUVENIRS/CLOTHING

Fleece £25

Most sizes available to order.

Sweatshirt £15

XS/Small/Medium/Large/X/L and XX/Large

Polo Shirt £14

XS/Small/Medium/Large/X/L and XX/Large

Pilot Shirt £14

15"/16"/17&1/2/18"/19"

Overalls £26

Reg Leg 31"

42"/44"/46"/48"/52"/54" Waist

Baseball cap £8.50

Car sticker (Round) £1

Sew on badge £5

Pin badge £2

Tape measure £3

Exhibit log sheet £0.10

Glass tumbler (2010 20th anniversary) £4

Grassbox binder £6

(To fit smaller Grassbox magazine)

Spark plug NGK £4

Large type to fit most Villiers 2 strokes. Only two left.

B&W Photo set £10

Ransomes van £5

Ransomes poster £1

THE OLD LAWNMOWER COMPANY

Specialists in post-war Lawnmowers & Scythes (Atco, Dennis, Ransomes, Suffolk, Webb, Allen)

SPARE PARTS SALES RESTORATION OPERATION MANUALS

New blade sharpening kit now available!

See website for details: www.oldlawnmowers.co.uk

T: 07930 314187 Ivor Gregory (Old Lawnmower Club Member)

DENNIS Z TYPE SPARES

(former stock of Geoffrey Brooks)

Engine Parts - Piston Rings - Connecting Rods - Oil Pump Drive Gears

Cutting cylinders for 24" and 30" (not 36") and bottom blades

Transmission Parts, second hand cylinders and rear rollers

hq@testvalleytrout.co.uk T: 01794 512453

Christopher Saunders-Davies (Old Lawnmower Club Member)

THE MOWER CENTRE

For all sorts of spare parts

Atco - Suffolk - Dennis - Villiers - JAP - Briggs & Stratton - Kohler

Gaskets - Piston Rings - Ignition Coils - Silencers - Cables - Petrol Taps - Oilers

Points - Condensers - Atco Kick Start Springs

Call Us For Our Mail Order Price List T: 01323 842477

John Cruise (Old Lawnmower Club Member)

themowercentrehaulsham.com

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