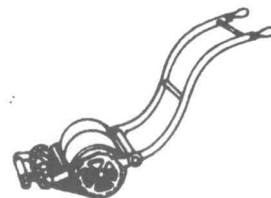


Grassbox



The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 19

Winter 1996

SO LONG 1996

It is hard to believe that another year is over and that soon we will all be getting ready for the new rally and events season. I dare say that many people reading this will be busy with their Winter restoration projects (even I may have something new to rally next year!).

Two questions that have cropped up regularly on my travels this year. First, have we found all of the mowers? Second, is the value of machines going up?

It is hard to believe that anywhere near all of the mowers in existence have been found, but we probably do have to look a little harder to find them. Enough said.

There is little doubt that the prices of mowers are rising, *under certain conditions*. Auction prices seem to be fairly static, especially for most motor mowers. You can still find an Atco Standard in reasonable condition going for around £30, sometimes less, which is much as it was five years ago. Occasionally, at the bigger auctions, an unusual mower (it is usually a push mower, believe it or not) will go for what seems an extortionate price, but only when two or three really keen collectors are in the bidding. Privately, mowers do change hands for apparently high prices, but these tend to be desirable (to the buyer at least) machines. The price of hand mowers varies greatly because there is a wider variety in type, age and desirability. Just because a Silens Messor is 100 years old does not make it valuable. Remember, there were millions made and not many people collect them, so they have no real value.

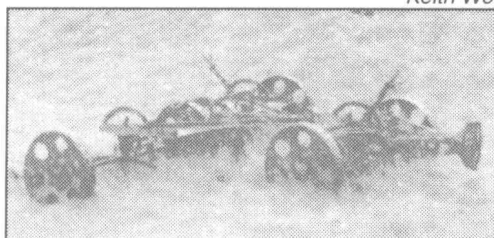
I have this year seen some very common hand mowers advertised for hundreds of pounds in local newspapers and in magazines such as *Loot*, but these prices are way over the odds. I know the same mowers regularly change hands for well under £50 and normally nearer a tenner.

On a different note, I would like to apologise for the change in photograph quality in the last edition. I have changed the way *Grassbox* is produced, with the long term aim of improving overall quality. However, the last edition was the first produced in this way, and was not wholly successful. I am optimistic that things will improve.

To round the year off, thanks to everyone who has helped the Club during 1996. There really are too many to mention, but thanks anyway. As long as the Club retains its informal appeal, I am sure we will all continue to enjoy belonging and joining in.

The Club is planning even more developments for 1997, and I really do hope we will see more Members than ever attending the rallies and events that people are even now working very hard behind the scenes to make a success. A very Merry Christmas and a Successful and Happy New Year to everyone.

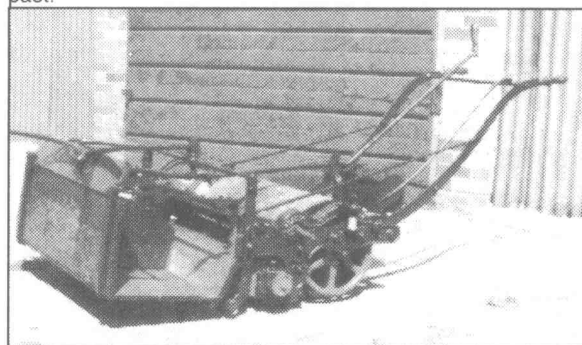
Keith Wootton



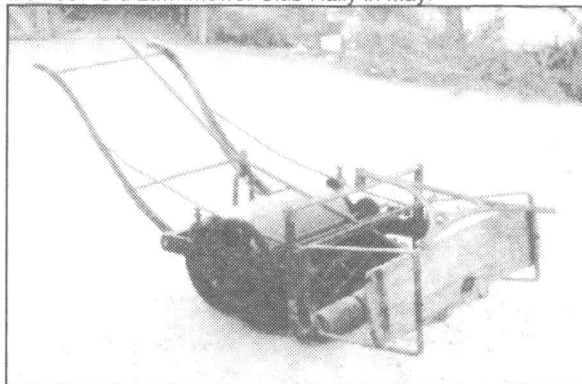
Spotted by a member of the Club at Glengorm Castle, Scotland was this set of 1930s Ransomes gang mowers.

PONY MOWER RESTORATIONS

Mike Duck has recently completed the restoration of a Shanks pony mower for the Hall & Duck Trust. This mower was supplied new in 1895 to Kings Nympton House, near South Molton in North Devon. Mike had to make a new axle because the original had 3" cut off for some reason in the past.

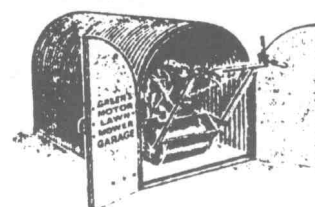


Mike is now working on another Shanks mower, a 25" model, which was recently retrieved from Eire along with some other mowers now residing in the Trust's collection. The Shanks needs a new grass box and a new cutting cylinder, and Mike hopes to complete the project in time for the 1997 Old Lawnmower Club Rally in May.



Green's Mower Garage

Extra if required enamelled—
5/6, 6/6, 7/6, 10/6 respectively



	Length	Width	Height	Prices
No. 1	5 ft. 8 in.	2 ft. 6 in.	3 ft. 3 in.	£3 10 0
No. 2	5 ft. 8 in.	2 ft. 9 in.	3 ft. 6 in.	3 16 0
No. 3	5 ft. 10 in.	3 ft. 2 in.	3 ft. 6 in.	4 0 0
No. 4	7 ft. 4 in.	4 ft. 0 in.	3 ft. 6 in.	4 10 0

In its 1933 catalogue, Green's advertised a mower garage in four sizes suitable for its range of motor mowers. The smallest garage was 5'8" long x 2'6" wide x 3'3" high, priced £3-10-0. The largest was 7'4" long x 4'0" wide x 3'6" high, priced at £4-10-0. Has anyone ever seen one of these garages?

EVENTS NEWS

SHUTTLEWORTH STEAM FAIR

For the third year in a row, Club Members attended the Bedford Steam Society annual rally (14/15 September). This year the location was changed from Shefford, where last year we displayed in a 'mud bath', to the grounds of the Shuttleworth estate. This is a glorious venue for a rally; a large area of grassland, dotted with trees and overlooked by the grand Shuttleworth manor house. The weather was perfect and a display of over 20 machines was put on across the weekend. These covered a range of ages from the 1880s to the 1960s and sizes from 8 to 24". Included was a range of Atcos portraying several of the company's types from the HY to the late 1950s models, as well as two early line markers belonging to Robert Sturridge. The display attracted considerable interest from the public and other exhibitors alike and our thanks go out to John Bloxham, Robert Sturridge, and Charles Crouchman for exhibiting mowers.



The rally as a whole was a great success and we look forward to exhibiting there again next year in equally enjoyable and relaxing style.

Alan & Dick Hardwick

CHESTER CARNIVAL 10/11 MAY 1997

Once again we invite Old Lawnmower Club members to enter the lawn mower section of our annual carnival. We believe the 196 carnival was enjoyed by those who attended. The 1997 event will include a major Flower Show as well as the usual vintage and classic vehicles, military displays, Knockout competition etc, and will be held as usual at the Chester Racecourse. For entry forms, please contact Old Lawnmower Club Member, Ian Fewtrell, Ellesmere, 9 Seabank Road, Lower Heswall, Wirral, Merseyside L60 4SN. Tel: 0151 342 7159.

Dennis Mitchell

DIARY DATES

Annual Rally - 17/18 May 1997

The Annual General Meeting of the Club will be held at midday on Sunday 18 May at the Museum. Details from Keith Wootton.

Chester Carnival - 10/11 May 1997

Details from Ian Fewtrell (address above)

Banbury Steam Rally - 28/29 June 1997

Details from Robbie Robinson

Erewash Museum - 16 August 1997

Provisional Date- details from Keith Wootton

HOLDING A RALLY?

Holding a lawn mower rally next year? Let the Club know and publicise the event in Grassbox. Why not borrow one of the new Club banners? The dark green and yellow banners are available for use by any Member free of charge, and the Club will even pay postage to and from any UK location. If anyone should like to borrow a banner, please contact Keith Wootton well in advance.



Keith Wootton was not very successful at getting his 1921 Shanks Jehu to run at this year's Banbury Rally.

CHANNEL FOUR PROGRAMME

A number of Club Members will be aware of the research Amirani Films has been doing towards a Channel Four programme on vintage lawn mowers to be shown in the New Year. I understand that the company has chosen to feature a Dennis owner. A big thanks to everyone who helped the researchers.

VICTA

Following the article on the Victa Mowers in Grassbox 18, I found some more information on the marque.

The original patent for the Victa was filed by Mervyn Victor Richardson on 2 May 1955, under Australian Patent 8770/55.



According to the information I found, the Victa is a "two-stroke petrol lawn mower with sufficient power in its rotary-action blades to deal with long thick grass". The mower was developed in 1952 by Richardson and was an immediate success. He set up a family company in 1953, sold 100 mowers in the first year and 60,000 in the fourth. Within a few years he was a millionaire.

The original designs were never patented because British patent 385473 of 29 February 1932 - presumably from Ransomes or Power Specialities - is earlier so the idea was not new. However, since 1955, various improvements have been patented by Victa.

The information (written in Australia) also claimed Victa is the largest mower manufacturer in the world. I am not sure if this is true, although Victa does export to most countries including the UK.

Keith Wootton

MORE ON OBSCURE MOWERS

Since my article on Obscure Mowers in Grassbox 17 I have received letters from a number of Club Members who have some of the machines mentioned.

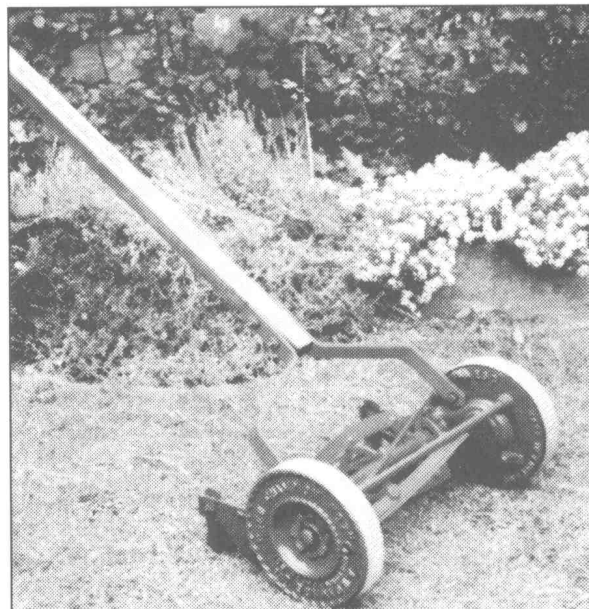
Alan Pearson has a sidewheel mower, made by Ransomes and marked as such (including on the sidewheels) but with a plaque on the handle stating 'Gamages'.

Dr Tom Catner has the original wooden box for a 12" Gamage mower (bought by his father in the 1920s). The mower was delivered in the box and printed on the side is "Lawson Gem", Coldwell Lawnmowers (then a piece that is unreadable) and Gamages. He can remember the mower well, in fact using it himself when old enough to push it! The mower was left behind in a house move in the 1950s, but his father kept the wooden box as a toolbox, a use which it still has to this day.

I wonder if anyone in the Club has come across an Emery Clipper mower, possibly around 14" cut, made in Willenhall, Wolverhampton. If so, I would like to hear from them on 01694 751322 (Shrewsbury).

Tony Garratt.

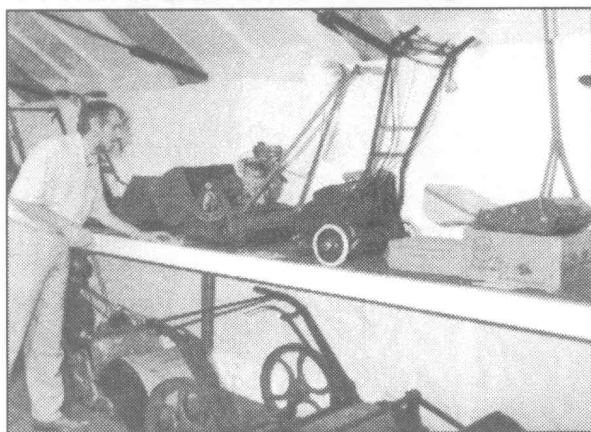
Chris Thompson adds: With reference to Tony Garratt's article in the Summer 'Grassbox', this was a most useful item and it would surprise me if Club members were not already writing to add to it. I have one or two of my own (see table, below).



Stan Hardwick has sent in this photograph of his 1920s Gamage's sidewheel mower, which was in fact made by Qualcast. According to Stan, the mower is basically a 12" Qualcast E.

Name	Size	Type	Supp/Man	Source	Comments
Selfridge Super Mower	10"	s/w push	Selfridges Stores Made by Suffolk Iron Foundries	Own	late 30s
The Horley	10-12"	s/w push	Youngs of Horley	Youngs Catalogue 1940	
The Horley	12"	roller push	Youngs of Horley	Youngs Catalogue	47/-d

TRERICE MOWERS



Editor's Note: Brian (pictured at Trerice, above) has invited the Club to hold another Rally at Trerice in 1997, and we are looking at dates in July or August. More news in the New Year.

We are continuing to make improvements to our collection and the photograph shows one of our two new display areas created for the 1996 season. During 1996/7 closed period we are making further improvements to our display so we can incorporate about 20 new machines we "found" in a barn in Cornwall. These were destined to come to Trerice in the 1980s, but never made it.

Their condition was not good but Geoff Lord, our splendid volunteer handyman is gradually bringing them back to life. Included in our new mowers is a lovely small white line marker made by Gamages of Holborn and bits of a motorised hedge trimmer made by a local Truro firm called Teagle. By the very nature of its shape (8' long with 2'6" blades at right angles to the shaft) it will be a challenge to display, but display it we will. Also during the winter the display cards in new perspex boxes will be fitted and we hope to improve the lighting. We open again on 28 March 1997 and hope to see some Grassbox readers.

Brian Kirby, Trerice, Cornwall

MORE ON THE CGA

I have now found out that the Country Gentleman's Association started in 1902, but that The Country Gentleman (a magazine) was producing catalogues prior to that. I have seen one for 1900, and am pretty certain they produced one as early as 1892.

Tony Garratt

MILTON KEYNES MUSEUM DISPLAY

Work is progressing on the new display at Milton Keynes Museum. A building has been found to accommodate the collection and this will shortly be erected in the Museum's field. If work proceeds to plan, the new display will be open in May in time for the Annual Club Rally.

STATESIDE SEARCH

I found some interesting information on the Internet (the international computer network) relating to American mowers. Over there, they call them reel mowers, instead of cylinder mowers, and they usually mean sidewheel machines.

An American company, the American Lawn Mower Company/Great States Corporation of Shelbyville, Indiana, started manufacturing lawn mowers 100 years ago. To celebrate its centenary it has been looking for the oldest example of one of its mowers still in use, and the oldest person still using one of its mowers.

The oldest mower found so far, an A L Schneider machine, was being used in Wisconsin and was about 107 years old. The oldest person still mowing with a hand mower was 95 years old at the time of the competition.

The American Lawn Mower Company was formed in 1895 by four partners in Richmond, Indiana.

A total of 4,000 reel/cylinder mowers were sold by American in 1896 for between \$2.20 and \$4.75 each. This was somewhat less than £1 Sterling.

In the 1920s the Great States company, a producer of hand mowers, moved to Shelbyville. It was acquired by American in 1936.

Business boomed for the company in the 1940s, with retail unit sales peaking at 200,000 in 1945.

Rotary power mower sales surpassed cylinder mower sales in 1953. Cylinder mower companies failed in their dozens, but American survived.

In the early 1980s, land costs went up and lawn sizes went down, which made small mowers more popular. Retail unit sales soared to more than 150,000 per year from the mid-1980s through 1991.

According to the company it expects to its machines to remain popular because tighter pollution controls will push the price of competitors' petrol machines higher.

Apparently, sales reached a new peak of around 250,000 units in 1994, with mowers costing between \$75 to \$100.

If anyone has a mower made by this company, please let the Club know and we will pass the news on to the company in the US.

The company has also been encouraging "reel" Americans to send in photos or anecdotes about their American/Great States mowers.

The company has promised to send more information to the Club, and this will be featured in a future edition.

NEW CAR STICKERS

Les Harrison has devised and produced some car stickers for Club Members to the normal yellow on green design. The stickers are priced just 40p each, and are available from Keith Wootton. Please send two 20p stamps for each sticker you require, plus an extra one to cover postage.

MEET YOUR MAKER

The Club is currently trying to arrange a visit to Ransomes in Ipswich and Atco/Qualcast in Stowmarket to look around the factories and see how lawn mowers are made. Both are in Suffolk, and it should be possible to visit both on the same day. However, the companies only allow visits during the week, which may make it difficult for some people to attend. The likeliest dates are April, May or June 1997, but watch this space in the next edition for more news.

HALL & DUCK SPARES

The Hall & Duck Trust has announced that it will shortly be introducing a spares services for the supply of parts for Atco mowers and Villiers and JAP engines. Parts are available for many machines, but Members should write to Andrew Hall with their requirements, and he will reply with availability and prices. The Trust is also planning to introduce some transfers for Ransomes mowers in the near future, and news of this will be included in a future Grassbox.

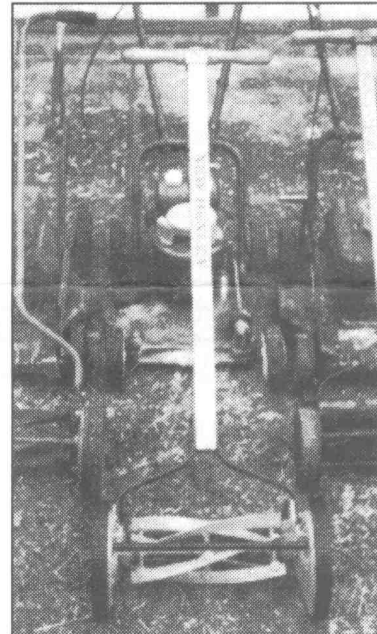
NO MOWERS AT AMBERLEY

There are no mowers at Amberley, as suggested in the Museums Directory published earlier this year. However, the Club may hold a special rally at the 'Chalk Pits', as Amberley is sometimes known, in 1997.

CLOTHING

Club sweatshirts, polo shirts and sew-on badges, in dark green with gold lettering and club logo, are available from Robbie Robinson at the following prices (which include post and packing): Sweatshirts £15, Polo Shirts £14, Sew On Badges £5. Small, medium, large and extra large sizes are available.

NEW HENLEY DOWN UNDER



Graham Marshall from Geelong, Australia, has written in to tell the Club about his collection, which includes two early rotary mowers, a Pace and a Victa. The collection also includes a New Henley sidewheel mower, made in the USA. Can anyone tell what sort of age this mower might be?

Keith Wootton can be contacted by post at Milton Keynes Museum or at 92 Artizan Road, Abington, Northampton NN1 4HS. Tel: 01604 31192. **Robbie Robinson** can be contacted at 10 Burchester Avenue, Headington, Oxford OX3 9NA. Tel: 01865 450899.

Next Edition

Feb 1997

Grassbox

Edition 19 - Dec 1996

Edited and written

(except where stated)

by Keith Wootton