

Grassbox



The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 32

Winter 2000

NOW WE ARE TEN

Just over ten years ago I had an idea of starting a regular rally for lawn mower collectors. Somewhere along the way came the idea for the Old Lawnmower Club....

The Club has come a long way in these past ten years, although I would like to think that it retains the informal and friendly air that we started with. Many of the people who were involved at the start are still taking an active part in the Club although sadly one or two friends are no longer with us.

To celebrate the Club's tenth anniversary we are planning our biggest and best ever annual rally at Milton Keynes Museum this May. If you only ever come to the rally once, please try to make it this year. The museum is looking rather good and the 'new' lawn mower shed is nearly completed, so there will be lots to see and do in addition to the exhibitors' mowers.

In this edition I have included a short, personal view on the history of the Club and how it might develop in the future. In the end though, the Club is only as active and vibrant as the members. So the more people that participate, either by attending events, writing for the newsletter, or simply by contacting and meeting other members, the better it is for everyone.

What has made the club so successful over the years is that everyone is so friendly. Of course there is the occasional difference of opinion and rivalry to find the rarest or oldest or biggest or smallest or newest mower. But these are the things that make belonging to the Club so much fun!



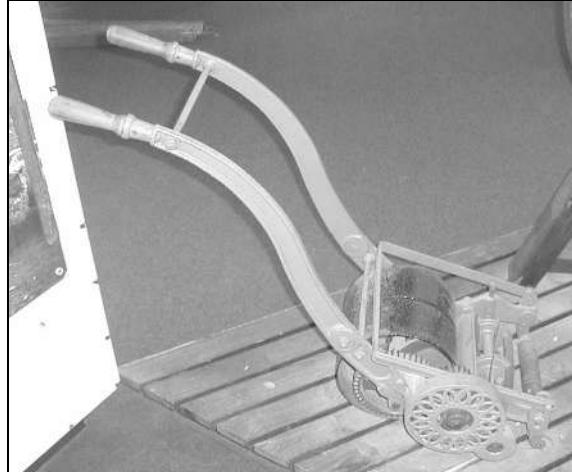
Another of Chris Thompson's seemingly unending supply of old postcards shows a 1935 Ransomes Atlas mower in use.



Following his article on Godiva mowers in last Summer's Grassbox, JR Baldwin sent in this photograph of a Godiva motor mower taken from May 1922 edition of *Implement & Machinery Review*. The same edition had another unusual motor mower (see inside).

PEWTER MOWERS

Brian Radam, curator of the British Lawnmower Museum and Club Member, has sourced some model side wheel lawn mowers made from pewter. Normally available for £59.99, Brian has offered the models to Club Members for £49.99. Please contact Brian directly on 07971 144009.



This Samuelson 'Favorite' mower was made in Banbury and is now on display in the town's museum. Samuelson started manufacturing Budding mowers in 1854 but soon progressed to improved machines designed by Boyd. The company stopped making mowers in the early years of last century but continued to make other machinery for a while. Admission to Banbury Museum is free and it's well worth popping in if you are in the area.

DIARY DATES

Derby Industrial Museum: Saturday 13 May. An exhibition of old lawn mowers at Derby Industrial Museum organised by OLC Member, David Meredith (Tel: 01283 701599/Derby).

Milton Keynes Museum: Saturday/Sunday 20/21 May. The Club's AGM will be, as ever, on the Sunday morning. Put the date in your diary now! Further details from Keith.

Chignall Village Hall Vintage Rally: Saturday 3 June. Held at Chignall Smealey, Chelmsford, Essex. Horticultural exhibits (including mowers) and related items such as literature and hand tools welcome at this rural one-day event. Details from Chris Thompson (Tel: 01376 320259/Braintree) or Norman Wasteney (Tel: 01245 440947/Chelmsford).

Marsworth Village Show, Tring: Sunday 18 June. Further details from Chris Griffiths (Tel: 0468 222127).

Banbury Steam Rally: 24/25 June 2000. Our second biggest event of the year, and one of the best steam rallies in the midlands. Open to all members of the Club. Details from Robbie.

Old Kiln Museum, Farnham: Sunday 2 July. The club has exhibited at the museum on a number of occasions and has been invited to participate in a special event celebrating the renovation of the museum's cricket pavilion and focusing on lawns and gardening. Details initially from Keith.

Farm Machinery Preservation Society, Essex: Saturday/Sunday 1/2 July. Farm Machinery Preservation Society Annual Rally, Gosfield, Braintree, Essex. Mowers welcome. Closing date for inclusion in programme, 25 May. Details from Chris Thompson (Tel: 01376 320259/Braintree).

Welland Steam Rally: 28, 29, 30 July. Details from Tony Hopwood (Tel: 01684 592134/Upton on Severn).

Knowl Hill Steam Rally: 12/13 August. Since the last edition of Grassbox we have learned that John Keeley, owner of the rally site, has sadly died which may mean that the event is cancelled this year. Further information in future editions, in the meantime, more details from Keith.

Erewash Museum: Saturday 19 August. Our annual rally at the picturesque town museum in Ilkeston. All welcome, especially our members in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Details from Keith.

Fenland Country Show, Floods Ferry, Wisbech: 26-28 August. Details from Paul Pearman (Tel: 01945 587027).

Stroud Vintage Transport & Engine Club Rally: 9/10 September. Further details from John Stickland (Tel: 07967 712898/Stroud).

Bedfordshire Steam Fayre: 16/17 September. Details from Dick Hardwick.

Three Counties Garden Show, Malvern: 23/24 September. This is a new event for the Club and we are very keen to make sure that it receives support from members in the area. Details from Tony Hopwood (Tel: 01684 592134/Upton on Severn).

THREE COUNTIES SHOW

We are keen to establish a new lawn mower rally at the Three Counties Autumn Show at the Malvern Showground, 23/24 September 2000. This event is one of the most popular gardening shows in the Midlands and is well worth a visit, especially for flower lovers. Tony Hopwood has been working hard to ensure the event organisers are willing to allow a lawn mower display. He has also managed to secure sponsorship from Howard Engineering which manufactures Dennis and JP mowers. Tony plans to take his 'Shingler' Dennis as featured in the last Grassbox, although machines from all manufacturers are welcome. It would be really good if as many members of the club as possible could attend the show on either or both days. More information from Tony on 01684 592134 (Upton on Severn).

ANNUAL RALLY PREVIEW AND NOTES

The Annual Rally at Milton Keynes Museum is always the best chance of the year to meet and chat with other club members and this year promises to be no exception. We are planning a few changes to make it an even better weekend/day this year:

For the first time, we have been given permission to camp at the Museum on the Friday night as well as the Saturday. This means that anyone arriving on the Friday can make it a full day on the Saturday and have a really relaxing weekend. As in previous years, however, if you do intend to camp on either night, please let Keith know beforehand so that adequate space is prepared. Also, please try not to arrive before 7.30pm as there may not be anyone there to meet you.

We will be holding a special barbecue party at the Museum on the Saturday evening to celebrate the anniversary. Usually exhibitors staying on the Saturday visit one of the local pubs but last year we felt that this created too many logistical problems. With exhibitors bringing family and pets, it makes sense for everyone to stay on site for the evening. This also means that people can arrive at any time and still be able to get on to the site. The barbecue will be at a low 'all inclusive' price to keep it simple.

A popular feature of the rally is the bring and buy section that has developed in recent years. A number of members bring mowers to sell at the rally and there is usually a bargain or two to be had. With so many enthusiasts present, this is one of the best places to buy or sell a mower, so if anyone would like to bring something, feel free. And don't forget to leave some space in the boot, trailer or holdall to take something home.

We are hoping to produce some special 10th anniversary souvenirs for all members who attend the event. These will be different to the mementos given out in the past couple of years, in case anyone was wondering!

The Museum's tea room will be open on the Saturday and Sunday to provide refreshments including snacks, salads, sandwiches and cakes so there's no need to bring your own picnic or packed lunch.

Finally, the Club Shop will be open for a limited period on each day to sell the full range of souvenirs (as listed on the Grassbox advertisement sheet), so if you need a new sweat shirt, some car stickers or transfers for your Atco Standard restoration project, bring some cash!



Chris Thompson sent in this photo of his Webb hand mower with a 'Ladybird' motor as featured in the last Grassbox.

CLUB'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY

The idea for the Old Lawnmower Club came out of a rally I organised at Milton Keynes Museum in 1989. I had been collecting mowers since 1978 and the Museum, where I was a volunteer, had a small collection on display. I made contact with a number of potential exhibitors, including Andrew Grout and John Bloxham, and we got together on the Museum's lawn in May 1989. We repeated the event again in May 1990, by which time we had attracted people from further afield, including Andrew Hall and Michael Duck. Conversations at the 1990 rally led to the idea of the Club so this year marks our 10th anniversary.



One of our first rallies on the lawn at MKM. The Museum now has a special lawn mower display building and grass area which is used for the annual rally.

We have always aimed to promote the collection, preservation and presentation of old lawn mowers and from the start we have been a national Club. This was to encourage people to join and make contact with collectors from other parts of the country, and overseas too of course, and I think this has been one of the main successes of the Club. In the beginning we thought there might only ever be 50 members, although we soon had many more than that and now have 250 including a growing number outside the UK. Another of our aims has been to encourage events to welcome lawn mower exhibits. In the early 1990s I met Robbie who convinced the Banbury Steam Rally committee to allow a special lawn mower section. We have held a Club rally there since 1992 and for the past two years Club members have either won or shared the 'best exhibit' prize. As a small Club we try hard to put on a professional display that impresses the public and we usually succeed. But we cannot always attend the many events to which we are invited, although individual members go to many rallies on their own. If more people in the Club turned up for their 'local' Club rally we could do more.

THE BUSY BEE!

JR Baldwin found an advertisement for 'The Bee' motor mower made by WJ&CT Burgess of Brentwood, Essex, in the May 1922 edition of *Implement & Machinery Review*.

MOTOR LAWN MOWERS FOR 1922

THE "BEE" (PATENT) MOTOR LAWN MOWER.

Width of Cut 16 in.
PRICE £49 10s.

Weight of
16 in. Machine
200 lbs.

Width of Cut 22 in.
PRICE £55.

EXTREME SIMPLICITY—MINIMUM FUEL CONSUMPTION.
CUTTER **ALWAYS** makes nearly 100 cuts per second (regardless of the speed of travel)—hence it **ALWAYS CUTS PERFECTLY.**

ABSOLUTE, SIMPLE AND EFFORTLESS
CONTROL OF BOTH CUT AND TRAVEL.

The mower is unusual because the engine is attached directly to the cutting cylinder in much the same way as the John Shaw 'Governor' of the same period. Although the mowers appear similar they are not the same design, as the photos show. The advertisement for 'The Bee' says that 'the cutter always makes nearly 100 cuts per second regardless of the speed of travel, hence it always cuts perfectly'.

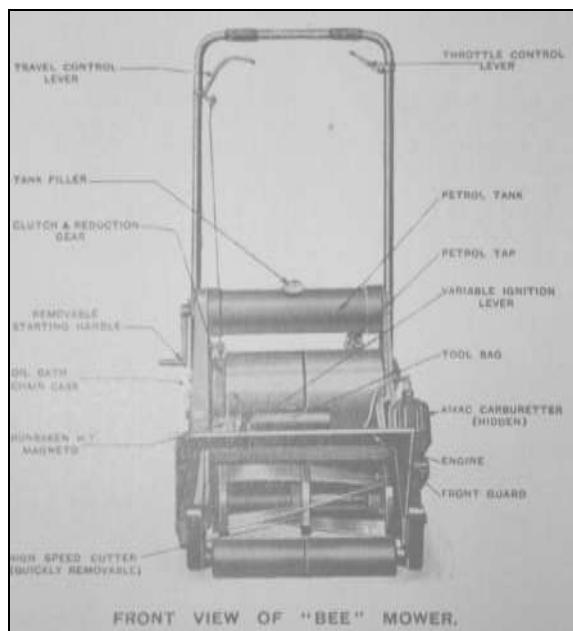
Although I initially ran the Club alone and at my own expense we decided to establish a committee and introduce a small membership fee in 1994. This spread the workload and allowed us to do more for members. Robbie has done sterling work as our secretary since then, ably supported by committee members including John Barnard, Les Harrison, Alec Hillyar, Tim Durant, Martin Stephenson and Andrew Grout (who helped me form the Club in the first place).



One of my personal favourite moments, from 1992, when Andy Hall and Mike Duck inspected the Museum's 'Budding' mower to see if they could fit it in the back of the van. Looking on is a selection of Club committee members!

"Grassbox" has improved over the years and we have increased the number of information sheets and services for members. Andrew Hall operates our special enquiry service and Chris Thompson has compiled an impressive directory of mowing machines and manufacturers. In fact, so many people have contributed to the success of the Club and its activities that it would be impossible to list everyone in this article. I am sure all members would join me in thanking everyone who has contributed to the success of the Club over the years. Many are mentioned here, but if I have left anyone out, I apologise.

The last ten years have been a lot of fun and I have made many friends around the world. Like many others in the Club I have happy memories of the events we have attended, although retelling some of these stories here would not do them justice. I only hope that the next ten years will bring as much enjoyment as the past ten.



The reel acts as the flywheel for the engine and allows The Bee to be used a push mower in confined spaces. The rear roller is driven through a chain at the opposite end of the cylinder from the engine, controlled by a simple clutch. The mower was available in 16" (price £49-10s) and 22" (price £55) cutting widths. Has anyone seen an example?



Does anyone know about the origins of this Trojan sidewheel mower. Could it be a US mower or a catalogue machine? The colours are bright mid-green with pattern and lettering picked out in gold.

PLUMBING THE DEPTHS OF LEAD IN PETROL

David Hooson writes that unleaded petrol is apparently more likely to attack nitrile based fuel pipes and rubber seals found in all kinds of vintage machinery, compared to old fashioned leaded [petrol]. This is irrespective of whether the mower is two or four stroke powered.

David also writes that unleaded petrol contains slightly higher levels of benzene than leaded petrol. Benzene is known to cause cancer and this may increase the risks of respiratory problems if engines are run indoors. The risk is extremely low of course, but it is a wise precaution in any case not to run any internal combustion engine in confined spaces because of the poisonous gases that are given off, such as carbon monoxide and sulphur and nitrogen oxides. David has one piece of good news though. Apparently unleaded petrol has no effect on valve seats below engine speeds of around 3000rpm, which is well within the running speed of most old four stroke mower engines. David recommends using an additive in any case, such as Castrol Valve Master, just to be on the safe side.

ANOTHER TOP TIP

Tim Durant says that a useful labour saving tip is to apply gold paint to fiddly raised letters using Artline acrylic paint pens. This saves messing around with tins of paint and small brushes. The pens are available from good craft shops everywhere, according to Tim. One downside is that the water based paint will come off eventually, although it is a simple process to apply another coat.

DIRECTORY UPDATES

We will shortly be starting on the 2000 editions of the Club's four main information leaflets: Members; Museums; Books; Services. The Membership Directory will be based on information we already have, but if anyone has additions or amendments to the other three leaflets, please let Keith know as soon as possible. We are particularly keen to develop the Services Directory into a source of information on all aspects of preservation and restoration, so if anyone has any suggestions on what to include, please let Keith know.

NEW WEBSITE

We have upgraded the Club's Website by registering an official internet domain name, which means that information about the Club can now be found at:
<http://www.oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk>

MOWER MANTRA!

By Tony Hopwood

Inspired during the recent long winter, our resident 'Poet Laureate' has prepared a special anthem to be sung to the tune of 'Praise My Soul The King Of Heaven'. Tony suggests we sing the anthem at the start of each rally!

*Grass may grow as high as heaven
To the heap the cuttings bring
Ransomes, Atco, Silens Messor
Let us all their praises sing
Vintage mower, vintage mower
Wondrous shiny bladed thing
Edwin Budding, great inventor
Found our fathers in distress
Praise him still the same as ever
Banished scythes and cleared the mess
Vintage mower, vintage mower
Glorious in its usefulness
Mow machine, it helps and spares us
With its iron frame it goes
Trims the sward and swiftly bears us
Leaving strips where'er it mows
Vintage mower, vintage mower
Banishing our summer woes
Mowing helps us to enjoy things
Easing street from life's mad race
Grass and weed cut down before us
Leaving trim and verdant space
Vintage mower, vintage mower
Makes the lawn a better place.*



This Green's Zephyr has 12 blades to give an excellent finish on golf greens and was made in the mid 1950s. It belongs to John Whieldon.

Keith Wootton can be contacted by post at Milton Keynes Museum or at 7 Church Lane, Cold Higham, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 8LS. Tel: 01327 830675 or 0378 315966 (mobile). **Robbie Robinson** can be contacted at 10 Burchester Avenue, Headington, Oxford OX3 9NA. Tel: 01865 450899. The Club can also be contacted by email at: olc@artizan.demon.co.uk or via the web at <http://www.oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk>

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Edited and written (except where stated) by Keith Wootton