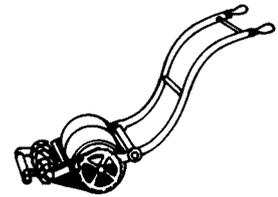


Grassbox



The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 49

Summer 2004

GETTING THE IMAGE RIGHT

Welcome to the latest Grassbox, which this time is overflowing with pictures and news about our Annual Rally in May. There was lots to try and include and I have had to keep back some of the images for another time. To be honest I have still gone a bit heavy on the images so there might not be as much to read as usual but hopefully they will be of interest.

In this edition there is also news about forthcoming events, some brief "top tip" advice and a report of the April sale at Cheffins where prices were surprisingly low I thought.

The next Grassbox will be a very special edition, our 50th. I have been thinking about this for a while and it seems to me a good opportunity to produce another colour supplement in celebration. Visitors to the Annual Rally will know that this year's special souvenir was a ring binder for keeping back copies of Grassbox and we chose this partly in recognition of the impending milestone. I already have lots of images to use but I would be especially interested to receive more from members. These might be a shot of a favourite mower, an old image or perhaps something taken at one of our events over the years. Any format, print or digital will do, and originals can be returned if required.

Finally, if you still haven't been to an event where mowers are welcomed this year, there are still a few opportunities before the end of the season. These events are organised for people to attend and enjoy, whether or not you bring a mower with you, so pop along and give a bit of support. Enjoy the rest of the Summer.



It's a dog's life doing the mowing!. Toby Sears sent in this picture that he found in a magazine. Did the dog mistake the mower for a Ransomes Mastiff we wonder?

NEW TRANSFERS

Our range of transfers continues to grow but I would like to add to the selection available. In principle we can make a transfer out of any image but the best way to start is from the original. If you have any that we can use to prepare new designs please send them to Keith. Alternatively, we can work from good quality digital photographs or scans of originals in-situ. There is a list of available designs on the advert sheet and colour images can be found on the website. For more information contact Keith.



Andrew Grout (left) presents John Barnard with the Andrew Grout Plate for the mower the "exhibitors would most liked to have taken home from the Annual Rally, a 1930s Lloyds Moto Mower.



Christopher Thompson found yet another old postcard with a lawn mower. Unlike many of the other images we have featured in past editions of Grassbox the mower, which looks like a Silens Messor, is very much part of the story.



The Hardwick family were presented with the Charlie Jones Award at the Annual Rally for their long standing contribution to the Club's activities. Dick, Alan and Joyce are seen here with the award.

DIARY DATES 2004

Bedfordshire Steam Fayre: Saturday 18/Sunday 19 September. Details from Dick Hardwick. Tel: 01462 816018 (Shefford).

Farming & Country Festival, Farming World, Faversham: A great day of country fun, one of the biggest vintage events in Kent. All mowers welcome. Details from N Lawrence. Tel: 01843 845546 (Kent).

Malvern Autumn Garden Show: Saturday 25/Sunday 26 September. Details from Tony Hopwood. Details from Tony Hopwood on 01684 592134 (Upton on Severn).



Roger Wilkinson builds up some speed with his 1930s Dennis at the Annual Rally. The mower has won prizes at events in the past but, unlike some collectors, Roger is never afraid to get it up and running to show how it works.

TOP TIPS - SPINNING BITS

It's useful to be able to spin old engines, cutting cylinders and drives to loosen them up and chase ancient rust and crud out of the works with fresh oil, writes Tony Hopwood. A low geared mains electric drill with a half inch chuck has enough power for the job and it's usually possible to find a nut for the drive on the shaft somewhere that turns clockwise.

The technique is particularly useful for loosening up small rope start engines like Villiers and JP where a half inch square drive socket can be fitted on the crankshaft nut holding the flywheel magneto. The socket is driven by a cut down coach screw with a square head that is a loose fit in the socket square. The screw shank is clamped in the drill chuck and the engine can be motored electrically to clean up the bore or test the spark with the plug out. Some tool shops may also have a ¼ to ½ adapter for socket sets that could also be used.

It's also possible to use the drill to start a small engine but take care that when the engine starts that the socket does not get loose or do damage if it flies off!



Adrian and Elsa spent a few minutes taking a Qualcast Panther apart so that the cylinder could be reground using the Museum's grinder during the rally.

BEDFORDSHIRE STEAM FAYRE

This year's run of this popular, annual event will be on its usual weekend of 18/19 September. The Old Lawnmower Club will once again be represented by a range of mowers on display belonging to local members - well that's if, like Robbie Robinson - you regard Oxford as being local to Shuttleworth Park, Old Warden, Bedfordshire.

Last year we had a great weekend, as usual, with our own barbecue on Saturday evening before heading for the beer tent and the musical entertainment provided by 'Rocking Revival' - a band who seem to know the kind of music and songs that 'old restorers' of any kind of mechanical device like to sing. They always play Alec Hillyar's favourite song "Alice" too which he joins in with gusto!

If you haven't displayed some of your mowers here you have missed a real treat. But you can correct that right now by contacting fellow members Alan & Dick Hardwick, who arrange your entry in the Club display, free of course, vehicle passes etc. Members usually bring a sleeping bag (no rude comments please) and sleep over in our display marquee. Sunday breakfast at the College restaurant is a real treat and sets you up for the rest of the day.

There is plenty of interest to see and we usually get lots of offers of old mowers 'to go to good homes.' If you don't want to join the Club display you could always come to the Fayre as a visitor. Ticket price (£8.00, £6.00 for seniors) includes admission to the wonderful display of vintage aircraft belonging to the Shuttleworth Collection that puts on regular flying displays. For more information and/or to enter contact Dick on 01462 816018 or hadw2@aol.com or take a look around the event website at www.bseps.ork.uk (Dick Hardwick).



The two hand mowers either side of the Lloyds Moto Mower are versions of the Greens New Century and Ransomes Anglo Paris designed for cutting banks and slopes. The usual T handle is replaced with a longer straight handle that attaches to the rear roller mounting using special brackets. Mowers like these were offered by the leading manufacturers in the early part of the last century but examples are rarely seen today.



After the cylinder had been reground and replaced Adrian was off across the grass filling the box with fresh clippings.

ANOTHER GREAT ANNUAL RALLY

The Club's Annual Rally at Milton Keynes Museum in May proved to be one of our best ever. The weather was warm and sunny which was a pleasant improvement on last year. Around 90 members of the Club were present at some time over the weekend and the array of mowers on show was as good as any previous event. In the excitement we forgot to count exactly how many but there must have been 200 or so over the weekend.

The event has always presented an ideal opportunity to exhibit new acquisitions and restorations and this year was no exception although some familiar favourites were also there. The event also presents an opportunity to meet up with old friends and compare notes on mowers and there was plenty of discussion on both days as people pored over exhibits to check out the standard of restoration.

Each year when I write this report I suggest it is difficult to pick out individual machines to highlight. Some people always have new exhibits while others are content to bring the same machines year after year. There is room for everyone and this is part of the charm of our event. But I suppose I do have to choose a few.

A couple of people brought along mowers that they have restored in the past year having bought the machines off the Museum during its recent disposal of surplus machines. Among these was the splendid Atcoscythe restored by David Merchant, as shown on page four.



Chris Stoneman displayed an unusual, unrestored MP Mower Pusher (see above). This version was one of the smaller models (there were at least three different MPs) without a clutch. Instead the MP's engine is started with the wheels off the ground. These are lowered when the engine starts to "engage" the drive - basic but effective. Chris hopes to restore the MP in the near future.

Among the unusual hand mowers were an Archimedean mower restored recently by Michael Duck of the Hall & Duck Trust and an Edgbaston shown by Christopher Proudfoot that has sidewheels and rear roller.

It was good to see a few intrepid exhibitors give the grass a good mow on the Sunday afternoon and these included Jack Asquith (below) with his Ransomes motor mower and Roger Wilkinson (page two) with his Dennis. Rumour has it that Roger has finally succumbed and added a second mower to his collection. Their hard work meant I was able to take a week off mowing the Museum's grass.



Alan Hardwick sees if one of the mystery parts fitted on to this Greens Mulum in Parvo. It didn't.

Some of the newer machines on display included a selection of solar powered and robotic mowers brought along by Brian Radam from Southport.

This year we were able to use the Museum's cylinder grinder properly for the first time after an abortive attempt last year. Adrian Gray and his partner Elsa had brought along a Qualcast Panther and after a quick dismantling job the cylinder was out of the machine and soon on the grinder for a sharpen. A few minutes later it was back in the mower and cutting the lawn.

The annual competition for the Andrew Grout Plate was won by John Barnard for his Lloyds sidewheel motor mower. As always exhibitors voted for their favourite mower on show and the Lloyds was an overwhelming winner. This was the second time John had won the prize and he joins other two time winners Stan Hardwick and Andrew MacMorland. Will one of them complete a hat-trick in 2005?

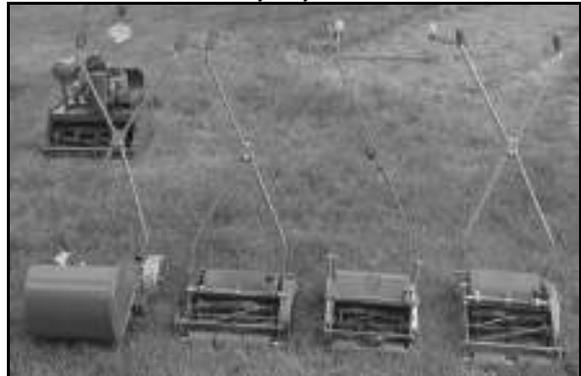
The bring and buy stalls continue to be popular and this year there were plenty of items on sale, including hand and motor mowers and spare parts. Trading was brisk on both days as might be expected.

The Club's AGM was held on the Sunday morning as usual and formal business was completed in good time. A full report of the meeting, and a summary of my Chairperson's report, is included in the advertisement sheet.

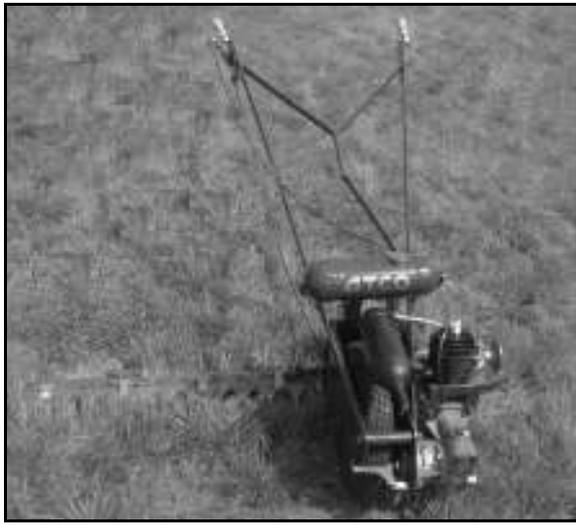
The Charlie Jones Award for 2004 was presented to The Hardwick family of Shefford for their continued support of the club. Dick and Alan were present on the day although the award was also meant for Joyce who helps them organise the display at the Bedfordshire Steam Rally.

A new competition this year organised by Richard Jones involved visitors identifying parts from old mowers. A number of people managed to identify correctly the six items presented by Richard. All correct answers were placed in a hat and the winner drawn out turned out to be Alan Hardwick (above).

As always the weekend came to an end far too soon but at least there are other events for us all to meet up before next year. The dates of next Annual Rally have yet to be finalised but will be published in the next edition of Grassbox. This promises to be a big event for us because it will be our 15th anniversary rally.



Henry Ellis displayed a selection of JP hand mowers at the Annual Rally, including (left to right) 1949 Matchless 10", 1959 Minor Mk2 11", 1938 Minor 9" and 1964 Minimower 10". One of the keenest viewers of these was Stewart Baillie who had flown down from Scotland to be at the event.



David Merchant's post war Atcoscythe was on show at our Annual Rally. David bought the mower at the event in 2003 and completed the restoration just in time, applying the transfers the night before driving to Milton Keynes.

LOTS OF MOWERS AT CHEFFINS

There was a good selection of mowers at the Cheffins sale in April with prices well within the reach of most collectors. Unlike many recent Cheffins sales there were no obvious star lots but the overall quality was good. Many mowers were complete and in original condition or had been sympathetically restored. Compared to past Cheffins events motor mowers outnumbered the hand mowers and were the more interesting lots.

Despite strong interest in many lots, prices were not as high as might have been expected. One would normally expect the keenest interest for the rarest mowers but the full list of hammer prices suggests otherwise.

A 1921 "Oval Frame" Atco Motor Mower with spare cutting cylinder went for just £50, well below the normal going rate. More realistic was £150 for a 24" Atco Standard with JAP engine although this might be slightly high.

Among the more unusual motor mowers were a 16" Shanks Firefly (£110) and a 12" Automower (£160), both with two stroke engines from the 1920s. These prices were about right but £22 for an 18" Automower, also from the 1920s, with a four stroke engine, was a steal.

A major surprise was the "square tank" Dennis, numbered machine 140, again early 1920s. Examples this old do not come up often and the hammer price of £5 made it one of the bargains of the day.

Elsewhere there was a nice example of a 1930s Greens motor mower (£65) and a selection of Ransomes motor mowers from the late 1920s through to the 1940s, all in complete and original condition with their grass boxes. These sold for sensible prices - £10 to £32 - and will make nice additions to their buyers' collections.

A number of Atco "HY" Standards from the 1920s were sold for prices ranging from £5 to £30. These mowers are less common than the ordinary Atco Standards (an example of which sold for just £12) of the same period and ought to be more popular with collectors.

Three British Anzani Lawn Riders sold for £28, £70 and £100. Although still high considering the prices paid for more interesting machines, these were more realistic than the £270 made by one in April 2003. Among the more modern machines were a Brott (£90), Rotoscythe (£25) and Lloyds 30" motorised sidewheel (£32).

One of the more interesting hand mowers was a "Stadco Comet" sidewheel sold for £35, reasonable considering this is an unusual model. Elsewhere, £45 for a Ransomes Ajax and £50 for a JP Maxees Mk3 with box were about right.

This is a slightly shortened version of an article I wrote for July's Farm & Horticultural Equipment Collector magazine. A full price list can be found on the Cheffins website at www.cheffins.co.uk/vintage_auctions/index.htm

A BIT ABOUT BACKLAPPING

Backlapping is a traditional method of restoring an edge to a blunt cutting cylinder by grinding that can be carried out while the cylinder remains in place, writes *Richard Jones*.

Backlapping can be carried out on any kind of cylinder mower but if the cylinder is badly worn a professional regrind will be necessary. Backlapping is done by rotating the cylinder in the opposite direction to normal while applying a special grinding paste that can be bought from most lawn mower shops. Valve grinding paste can be used as an alternative but is more expensive! It is best done by two people, one to steady the mower and apply the paste and the other to turn the cylinder. Tools such as a brace and socket (or perhaps the drill device described in the Top Tip) make the task of turning the cylinder much easier.

Before starting you will need to remove a drive gear or chain so that the cylinder can be turned on its own. Use an old paint brush to spread the paste on the rotating cylinder. Caution must be taken when the cylinder is rotating as fingers look better on your hand! Spread the paste evenly across the cylinder and every so often reset the cylinder back on to its correct cut but not too tight otherwise you will have trouble turning it. It may take some time and quite a lot of effort to get the cylinder lapped in but once done you should have a good service and a slight, sharp edge. It is very important to clean the paste thoroughly from the cylinder and bottom blade and then reset the cylinder for a good cut!

The same method is used with all mowers but with a sidewheel there is a neat trick. Remove both wheels and swap the left hand drive pinion and pawl to the right hand side (or vice versa) and refit the wheel on that side. Screw a handle into the small hole in the wheel and use it to turn the wheel. The cylinder should now turn backwards ready for the backlapping. Once again, when the backlapping is done be sure to clean the paste off thoroughly from the cylinder and bottom blade and reset the cylinder for a good cut! Happy backlapping!



Richard Durrant displayed an array of Atco motor mowers from the 1920s to 60s at the Annual Rally.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

All Membership Renewal notices were sent out by Robbie during June. The information provided by you on those forms will be used when compiling this year's Membership Directory. Members who do not rejoin for the coming year will receive the next Grassbox but no more after that.

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 07778 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@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk or the web at: <http://www.oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk>

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Edited & written (except where stated) by Keith Wootton