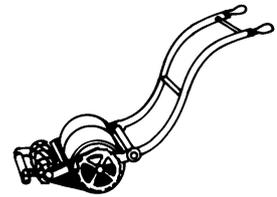


# Grassbox



The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 60

Spring 2007

## ALL SET FOR ANNUAL RALLY?

This time of year always comes up on me in something of a rush. You would think after nearly 20 years running the club and organising the Annual Rally I would know what to expect. But each year presents new challenges and new jobs to do so that everything is ready for the all-important weekend in May.

There's a whole section on the separate ad sheet about the Annual Rally and AGM - it's much that same as previous years - so if you're planning on attending please have a look through. I am really looking forward to seeing old friends and new again in a couple of weeks. And if you haven't been to "the big one" (or any of our events) before, why not make that extra effort this year to call in and see what goes on?

Thanks to everyone who has volunteered to help with the running of the club following my appeal in the last two editions of Grassbox. It's going to be a bit different without Robbie, once he steps down at the AGM, but I am sure that we can take the club into the new era with confidence. There are still plenty of jobs that need doing and finding a few more volunteers will help everyone involved to maintain a degree of sanity.

In addition to news about the Annual Rally there's details about a number of events that the club and individual members are organising throughout the year. These are all worth supporting and I would urge members to lend support wherever they can. After all, one of the aims of the club is to promote the display of old mowers. Some of these events are new and I know from experience that these are the ones that will need the most support to get them off the ground and ensure they come back for another year (assuming that's what the organisers want of course).



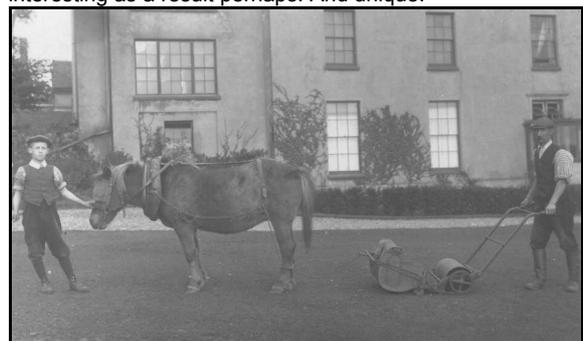
This photo of a steam mower was among some papers I acquired recently. There is nothing to indicate the date of the photograph or the mower itself although it looks as though it was taken much later than when the mower was made. There are very few photographs of steam mowers in circulation so any that are found are bound to be of interest.



This shows Marie Studholme with a Ransomes Patent Chain Automaton. Marie (1875-1930) was born Marion Lupton and became a popular musical comedy and music hall performer at the turn of the 20th century. In addition to travelling around Britain and USA she posed for picture postcards in a variety of costumes and settings, and is recognised as being one of the "pin ups" of her time. There was nothing risqué about this and the cards are now collectable. No indication why she posed with the mower (or the dog) though.

## BAMFORD BODGE UP?

Andrew Hall of the Hall & Duck Trust reckons the Bamfords horse mower featured in Grassbox 59 was bogus. Although the mower looks genuine, Andrew believes that somebody has married a conventional Bamlett knife mower chassis with a Greens lawn mower cutting cylinder. All very plausible. In fact, hybrid mowers like this known to exist. There's a good example at the Motor Heritage Centre in Gaydon where an early petrol motor car engine has been fitted on to a Greens Silens Messor pony or horse mower. Not a genuine Greens machine as such but all the more interesting as a result perhaps. And unique.



The donkey looks forlorn. The mower is a Greens.

## DIARY DATES 2007

**Bell's Piece Horticulture Gardeners Day, Farnham:** Saturday 12 May. Colin Stone is organising an informal get-together at this Leonard Cheshire Home with proceeds towards the charity. Details from Colin Stone. T: 01428 604003 E: colin.stone@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk

**Rover Enthusiasts Club of Ireland:** Sunday 13 May. A special vintage event in Ireland which welcomes all sorts of vintage machinery. Details from Rich Browne. T: 00 353 085 7371564 E: browne.rich@yahoo.ie or Alistair Ritchie T: 07902605629 (Ireland).

**Annual Rally, Milton Keynes Museum:** Saturday 19/Sunday 20 May. Another year, another rally comes along. See the special section in the advertisement sheet for full details.

**Abergavenny Rotary Club, Steam, Veteran and Vintage Rally:** Sunday 27/Monday 28 May. An excellent event – so we're told – in Wales for our members in the area. Well worth supporting. Further details from club member Rob Lloyd. T: 01873 853999 E: Rob@robllloyd.go-plus.net (Abergavenny).

**West Park Steam & Vintage Rally, Wolverhampton:** Saturday 2/Sunday 3 June: a new event which is being held in a recently renovated Victorian park in Wolverhampton. I understand that a number of members from the area are planning on being there but there will be plenty of room for anyone who wants to join them. Details from Janet or Ray Williams. T: 01902 731663 M: 07810 217303 (Wolverhampton).

**American Museum, Bath:** Saturday 16/Sunday 17 June. Simon Woollen, club member and head gardener at the museum, is organising another event following the success last year. Details from Simon Woollen. T: 01225 445696 E: simon.woollen@americanmuseum.org

**Banbury Steam Rally:** Saturday 22/Sunday 23 June. One of our most established events, always popular. More details from Robbie.

**West Dean, Sussex:** Saturday 30 June/Sunday 1 July. Another popular event which is part of West Dean's annual garden show. It's an excellent venue which provides an opportunity to see some restored Victorian kitchen gardens. Detail from Richard Jones. T: 023 92598601 E: richard.jones@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk (Clanfield).

**Ardingly Vintage & Classic Vehicle Show:** Saturday 7/Sunday 8 July. An excellent show that is popular with enthusiasts in the south of England. Further details from club member Paul Mackellow. T: 01892 664786 (Crowborough).

**Norwood Summer Fair, Southport:** Saturday 7 July. Another "new" event for lawn mower collectors. Well worth supporting and you can tie it in with a trip to see the British Lawnmower Museum in the middle of the town. Details from Les Rynhart. T: 01704 547097 E: lesrynhart@yahoo.co.uk (Southport).

**The Chilterns Show:** Saturday 21/Sunday 22 July. a relatively new event that is trying to build up its exhibitor base. T: 01494 717071 E: info@hdfairs.co.uk

**Rustic Sunday, Old Kiln, Farnham:** Sunday 29 July: join club member and rally regular Colin Stone for a very pleasant "one dayer" at this popular venue. Details from Colin Stone. T: 01428 604003 E: colin.stone@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk

**Avon Dassett Village Fete, Warwickshire:** Saturday 4 August. The organisers have contacted us to invite any collectors in the area to join them for this very popular traditional village fete. Details from Jill Burgess. T: 01295 690091 E: jburgess22@tiscali.co.uk (Warwickshire).

**Royal Berkshire Steam Rally:** Saturday 11/Sunday 12 August. A new event which purports to replace the old Knowl Hill Steam Rally. T: 01494 717071 E: info@hdfairs.co.uk

**Harvesting The Old Fashioned Way, Chichester:** Saturday 8/Sunday 9 September. A few members have been going to this event for a couple of years and putting on an excellent display while having a lot of fun. Why not join them this year and add to the merriment? Details from Richard Jones. T: 023 92598601 E: richard.jones@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk (Clanfield).

**Bedford Steam Rally:** Saturday 15/Sunday 16 September. One of the Club's most popular and well-attended events of the year in the spectacular setting of Old Warden Park. Lots to see and do in addition to the mower stuff. Details from Dick Hardwick. T: 01462 816018 E: Hadw2@aol.com (Shefford).

**Tilmow, Old Kiln, Farnham:** Saturday 22/Sunday 23 September. It's moved to a later date on the calendar but should still be a popular event. Details from Colin Stone. T: 01428 604003 E: colin.stone@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk or Andrew Hall. T: 0208 946 8036 E: andrew@hdtrust.co.uk

**Malvern Autumn Show:** Saturday 29/Sunday 30 September: The club's final event of the year is always worth a look. A great setting and much more than just the mowers to see. Who can forget the giant carrots in the marquee? Details from Tony Hopwood.

**Do you organise or attend an event where mowers are welcome? Send us details and we'll include it here.**

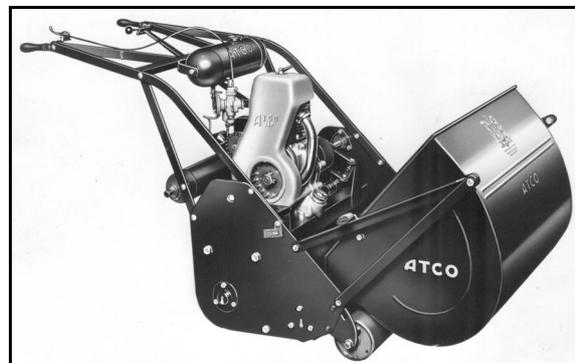


*Atco was always strong on its after sales operation and for many years had a fleet of delivery and service vehicles which would visit its depots and customers. This photo is probably from the late 1940s or early 1950s. The man is carrying one of the company's outboard motors. A few members of the Club have one of these in their collection.*

## Forlawn!

There I stood, sad and forlorn  
on an acre of partly shaved lawn.  
In the midst of the cut, the engine went phut.  
R.I.P. little two stroke, I mourn.  
The Villiers motor looked handsome  
perched proudly atop the old Ransome  
but, lacking ignition, it failed in its mission to level the  
sward of my mansion.  
Oh what a terrible blow  
to suffer cessation of mow.  
Why such a dearth in the trimming of turf?  
Why won't the blasted thing go?  
So off to the workbench I steered  
and skilful repairs engineered.  
Result? A brave chug – it had whiskered a plug.  
Thus the rest of the grass soon got sheared.

*Ken Stevens*



*This Atco motor mower from 1947 is one of their larger machines, a 24 or 30" model, designed for use with a trailer seat, hence the extended handles. 1947 was just about the first year the major manufacturers began to produce new machines after the end of the Second World War. Many were based on pre-war designs although it's harder to tell with Atco because their models generally showed a progression from one to the next anyway.*

## INTERCHANGEABLE PARTS?

A frequent discussion between collectors concerns the availability of spares for some of the older but relatively common hand mowers. Here, Christopher Proudfoot explains some of the considerations for Ransomes and Greens machines.

**Ransomes grass box handles:** The well-known castings for Patent Automaton suit only 8, 10 and 12-inch models, and the slot on the 12-inch ones is bigger than on 8 & 10 inch. The basic pattern is the same, though, so an 8/10-inch casting could be filed to fit a 12, but not the other way round. They are handed, so have to be cast in LH and RH pairs. They also fit New and Chain Automaton when these have been fitted with the Patent type of front roller bracket, as many have. The 12-inch size also fits certain Marquis hand mowers (those without a draw-bar), and 14-inch and 16-inch Mark 6 Motor Mowers.

Automaton Minor grass box handles would be simpler; one size fits all, and they also suit (with the Automaton Minor name ground off) early Anglias and very early Certes. They are handed, though.

For New and Chain Automaton with original roller brackets, the relevant grass box bracket is a simple shape, and not handed. The handle is separate, unhanded, and common to other, later models including Bowling Green, Countess and Midget.

**Silens Messor grass box handles:** Simpler than Automaton, in that one size fits most from 12-inch upwards (with a stud to rest on the draw bar, so there are LH and RH castings). 10-inch up to early 1920s use the same shape but without the stud, so unhanded (the stud could be ground off a casting). Later 10-inch have a unique handle and bracket combined, with LH and RH versions. Most 6 and 8-inch models have similar brackets, but without the handles, so to cover all likely eventualities, you would need three pairs of castings and one single, though the latter could be adapted from one of the paired types.

**Block chain** – in constant demand, both for Greens and Ransomes, in two widths. Ransomes chain fits Follows & Bate. Other block chain machines are too scarce to justify making chain except one-off. Shanks may, for all I know, be the same as Greens or Ransomes, and how many chainless Qualcast Majors are there?



When Tony Houghton bought some enamel advertising signs on eBay from an American seller he was a bit surprised to receive a package almost covered in stamps. Tony doesn't know why this happened but at least some stamp collector somewhere will have a field day.

David Mitchell, a club member from North Wales, extends an invitation to fellow collectors who might like to see where he works at the underground Dinorwig Pumped Hydro Electric Station. This the largest facility of its kind in the UK and sure to be of interest to anyone who likes technology or engineering. You can only see behind the scenes as part of an organised group but these can be arranged by contacting David on 01248 470635 or calling the Electric Mountain (the site's visitor centre) direct on 01286 870636.

## OUT AND ABOUT WITH PAUL AND WENDY

One of our newer members is Paul Mackellow from Sussex who joined the club after seeing our display at the Great Dorset Steam Fair last August. Paul reports that he has been involved with vintage rallies for 25 years as an exhibitor and organiser and that his interests include tractors, motorcycles, cars, stationary engines as well as horticultural machinery.



Over the past couple of years Paul and his wife Wendy have been building up a collection of garden machines and equipment under the title of "Vintage Gardening", visiting numerous shows in the South of England. During 2006, for example, they attended at least eight events with their horticultural exhibits (leaving aside numerous other shows with their other vintage machinery) from April through to November.



Like many members of the club, Paul and Wendy have built their collection through a combination of "lucky" finds, keeping their eyes open and through word of mouth. Events attended included the Sussex and Kent Weald Stationary Engine Group gathering at Michelham Priory in May, the Vintage Agricultural Event at Sedlescombe in August and the Kingsfold Rally in September. They also supported an event organised by the Millbrook Garden Company, for whom Wendy works, putting on a display of lawn care equipment. At most of these events they were offered numerous machines, many of which have now been added to their collection. I am sure this will be a familiar story for any member who attends rallies and events. The images show some of Paul and Wendy's mowers on display at events in 2006.

**NEW-QUALCAST BI!**

**YOU MUST HAVE THIS WONDERFUL NEW MACHINE**

designed to make lawn mowing a pleasure.

- Rubber tyres. ● Rubber handles. ● Tubular steel shafts for strength.
- Self-lubricating bearings. ● 8½-in. driving wheels.
- Self-sharpening. ● Guaranteed 3 years. ● Stove-enamelled finish for durability. ● Spare parts in 24 hours.

This smart, ultra-modern machine is Qualcast's latest achievement. Specially built for lightness and efficiency, it has already become a leading favourite overseas.

World's largest output. Over 3,000,000 satisfied users.

From Ironmongers, etc. In case of difficulty write QUALCAST LTD., DERBY

**747**  
(plus 18/7 Pur. Tax)

BD58A



Very early photographs of lawnmowers occasionally crop up. This one allegedly dates from 1866, hence the poor quality, and appears to show a "Budding" style machine with a bucket grass box.

## ONE THAT GOT AWAY

In the late 1960s when I lived in Tring, Hertfordshire, writes Tony Hopwood, I went to a farm sale at Brill, some 25 miles away which was the dispersal of many years of agricultural sediment with a huge variety of agricultural and household bygones.

One item took my eye - a huge motor mower at least 30 inch cut driven by a water cooled single cylinder open crank oil engine with hot tube ignition suggesting a pre-1900 date.

The transmission was unique comprising a differential and steering system with flat belt, gears, link chains, and band brakes. The machine was steered like a tank or later Lloyds mowers by handles to apply drive or braking to the outer rollers. Being recently married, and not having much cash or the trailer at the sales, I had to drop out of the bidding, so it went for £15 - a good sum in those days when you could buy a fine stationary engine for £10 from the scrap man.

I've often wondered what happened to it and whether it was factory or blacksmith made. A discussion with Andrew Hall a few years ago brought the suggestion that it may have been a pre 1900 American Coldwell, so there the matter rests. If it survives it could be the oldest internal combustion engined motor mower in the UK!

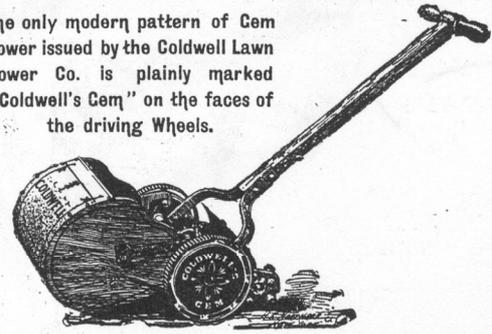
## ...AND ONE THAT DIDN'T

A few years ago a well-known Sussex man rang me up, writes David Lumsden, to tell me that there was an old Lister mowing machine in the Lewes dump and that I had better get down there quickly as they were not sure what to do with it. Never having even heard about any Lister machine, I hurried off.

How true is the saying is "it is not what you know, but who". I found an amazing Lister powered Automower perched on top of the heap. The men there were rather perplexed at my obvious delight and that I thought it was "brilliant". Having loaded it up, I set off to my local engine man who sorted out the clutch and generally overhauled the works. I will not go into all the details but it had a roller at the back and two castor wheels in the front to manoeuvre. It was a Type H, built in 1939 and therefore imagine my great surprise and true delight when Alan Hardwick showed it off so beautifully in Grassbox 46 and 48. Under Alan's guidance a real "rags to riches".

# CAUTION.

The only modern pattern of Gem Mower issued by the Coldwell Lawn Mower Co. is plainly marked "Coldwell's Gem" on the faces of the driving wheels.



'Twould be wise to save yourself from becoming entangled with obsolete stock by looking for the FULL IMPRINT. This is the only machine now guaranteed by the makers: the only one for which demand exists.

Any Gem not clearly marked COLDWELL'S GEM is without the radical improvements which give the guaranteed machine its fine cut and great durability.

Sole Agents for the United Kingdom—

**The South British Trading Co.,**

Ltd.,

13-15, Wilson St., Finsbury, E.C.

FRIEDENSTEIN-POLLITT: Managing Directors.

Ted Wells saw this advert from *The Ironmongers Journal*, May 11 1907 (yes, almost exactly 100 years ago) for the Coldwell Gem. One of the interesting points about the copy is that it emphasises how to spot "authentic" machines, implying that inferior copies were available.



Mike Tomkins found this photo in a book about working animals published c1980. It's in India but the make of mower isn't clear although it's obviously old-fashioned, perhaps a Greens or Ransomes. I have seen a number of similar images taken in India over the years. Might be worth some of our more avid collectors taking a holiday there!

**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](mailto:olc@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk) or the web at: <http://www.oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk>

**Next Edition: July 2007**

Edition 60 – Apr 2007

Edited & written (except where stated) by Keith Wootton