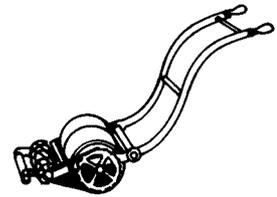


Grassbox



The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 63

Winter 2008

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Many thanks to everyone who has been in touch offering to help run the club following my plea in the last edition. It is good to know that there are other members willing to pick up the baton. There was a good response from members offering to help distribute Grassbox and with membership renewals. In fact, if all has gone to plan, this edition could well have come to you from one of these members. If we have not been in touch to follow up on your offer, do not worry, we will get round to it. We still need a bit more help with things like the website and publicity. Hopefully one of you is game...

I am sure members will want to join me in congratulating William on his first edition. Most of the work was his and this edition contains even more. This introduction is the only piece I have written for the main edition this time although the ad sheet was a joint effort.

We had some scheduling issues to work out for this and subsequent editions which meant that the next Grassbox may well be sent out only a week or two before the Annual Rally. For this reason, and to encourage as much participation as possible, we have included an Annual Rally Auction entry form this time. Also included on the ad sheet is an application form for the club's third party public liability insurance. Full explanations on the sheet.

Keith Wootton

FROM THE EDITOR

Firstly, I am very grateful to all those who have complimented me on my efforts with Grassbox 62, and I hope you will all enjoy this issue as much. Secondly, I would like to second Keith in thanking those, aside from me, who have stepped forward to help run the Club.

I also hope very much that more club members will come forward to write contributions to the magazine, as I am sure there are plenty of you out there with something to contribute, and it is especially good to hear about the many rallies that club members attend over the summer. I would ideally like all contributions and adverts for the next issue by the middle of April.

William Proudfoot



This machine appears to be a Shank's Patent Lawnmower, the predecessor of the Standard Gear. It probably dates from between 1868 and 1875, and has differently shaped handles from the Standards. The location is only given as "St. Nicholas Rectory", and from the photographer's address is (or was) in the Guildford area.

THE JP POWER MAXEES

With the club auction coming up again soon (see last page of the Advertisement sheet for details), it seems like a good time to reflect on one member's purchase at last year's sale. Henry Ellis bought a rare variant of the otherwise quite common JP Maxees, which was in quite a sorry state at the auction last year, but he has now restored it to his usual high standard.



The restored machine, complete with new transfers.

As for the mower and its history, **Henry Ellis** takes up the story:

According to my grand dating theory the Maxees was made in April 1962. I originally thought that JP did a kit for converting a standard push Maxees to the power-assisted version but now that I've rebuilt it I'm not so sure, and I've not seen any brochure or other evidence suggesting that they might have done. However the mains electric version of the Maxees - and the Monarch - was available as a factory build and as a conversion kit, for example in the January 1955 price list a 12" Maxees is £12.50 and in the electric version is £28.35; the conversion kit is priced at £15.75 (all with purchase tax to be added). The next price list I have is January 1963 and a power-assisted Maxees like mine is £37.50 with no mention of a conversion kit.

Interestingly, I had finished the mower itself and was turning my attention to the engine which seems quite worn and rattly when I managed to buy off eBay a new - never run - engine (JAP 34cc 2-stroke) which the seller had had for 35 years or so and never used. From its serial number it is a couple of years earlier (1959) than the one on the mower but never mind, I installed it and of course it started first time.

William Proudfoot can be contacted by post at The Old Rectory, Fawkham, Longfield, Kent DA3 8LX, by phone on 01474 707513, or by email at: william.proudfoot@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk

Next Edition: May 2008

Edition 63 - Feb. 2008. Edited & written (except where stated) by William Proudfoot

DIARY DATES

Agricultural Machinery Day, White Webbs Museum, Enfield: Sunday 30 March. Slightly short notice for the first event of the year, but several club members attended last year and it would be good to fly the Club's flag again. Details from John D'Agostino T: 07956 252691.

Welsh Heartlands Vintage Festival, the Civic Centre and Country Park, Pontllanfraith, Caerphilly, Saturday 19/Sunday 20 April: Festival organiser David Griffiths is very keen to attract OLC members to display their machines at this event. Further details from: Welsh Heartlands Autofest, RVTPS, 59 Cardiff Road, BARGOED, CF81 8PA F: 01443 815115 or visit their website: www.welsh-transport-festival.co.uk

Annual Rally & AGM, Milton Keynes Museum: Saturday 17/Sunday 18 May. It's time to start planning for the Annual Rally! As in past years there will be the AGM on the Sunday morning, and the auction on the Sunday afternoon, General enquiries to Keith Wootton. T: 01327 830675 or keith.wootton@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk

15th Annual Vintage Event, Sheet, Petersfield, Hampshire: Sunday 25 May. Details from John Lovell 01730 263508 or Liz Storey 07788 974976 (Non Members) **Chignal Village Hall, Essex, Garden Fete and Vintage Rally: Saturday 7 June.** Details from Norman Wasteneay. Tel: 01245 440947 (Member).

West Park Steam and Vintage Rally, West Park, Wolverhampton: Saturday 7/Sunday 8 June. Details from Ray Williams, 47 Old Fallings Lane, Fallings Park, Wolverhampton WV10 8BH T: 01902 731663 M: 07810 217303 E: Charlotte.Williams2@wlv.ac.uk

Banbury Steam Rally, Bloxham: Saturday 28/Sunday 29 June. A regular club event for many years. Further details from Robbie Robinson T: 01895 450899 E: bernard.robinson@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk

Dacorum Machinery & Steam Preservation Group Rally, Potten End, Hemel Hempstead, Herts: Saturday 26/Sunday 27 July. The group is keen for OLC members to display machines this year. Further details from the club rally organiser on 07749011629 or email mgsteam@hotmail.co.uk

Shuttleworth Country Fayre, Old Warden: Saturday 13/Sunday 14 September. One of the club's well supported and popular events in a spectacular setting. Details from Dick Hardwick T: 01462 816018 E: Hadw2@aol.com W: www.bseps.org.uk



Alan Hardwick's American girlfriend Traci gets a taste of the rally field at Shuttleworth last year

RALLY REPORTS

By Dick Hardwick

Shuttleworth Show or, more correctly, **Bedfordshire Steam & Country Fayre**

As I write this on a cold, wet, blustery winter day, this event, held in September 2007 when the weather was sunny, warm and even dusty seems a long time ago. But the recalled memories provide warmth and a smile, so life is not quite as cheerless today as it might otherwise have been.

This year we were back to just Saturday and Sunday after the three-day event in 2006 to celebrate the organiser's (Bedfordshire Steam Engine Preservation Society) remarkable fifty years of existence. If I thought that things would be back to normal, I was in for a surprise or two!

To start with we were in a new location, well away from the main arena, the stalls, the food bars and all the attractions that tempt us away from 'lawnmower chatting' once in a while during the day at any event. And I'm not including the beer tent: No, we had a small auxiliary one immediately to our left and an excellent hot food stall to our right. We had toilets to the rear of us and a car and caravan park nearby. What more could a mower collector want other than to discover a Budding or two, available for the asking!

In terms of our display things were equally pleasant. Stan and Jonathan Hardwick ventured South from Filey, Yorkshire, once more, with tales of recent flooding and indeed a mower that had only just dried out from being almost submerged for several days.

John Bloxham and I displayed a group of 'devices' that use an Olsson & Rice 1hp. industrial engine, including the Kemmco 6" rotary mower, looking rather like a pneumatic drill, that I got at the OLC auction in May and a lovely generator set, complete with original polished wooden box of John's. We saw an unusual orchard spray blower too with the same engine, but not for sale – yet!

By chance we also assembled a group of American mowers, much to the delight of Alan Hardwick's American girlfriend Traci on her first visit to England and her initiation into the mysteries of lawnmower collecting and display. The photo opposite shows she obviously enjoyed herself!

Most of the club members who usually attend were out in force again – besides the 'Filey' and 'Shefford' Hardwicks there were Alec Hillyar, Roger & Helen Wilkinson with his still immaculate Dennis, Robbie & Wilma Robinson, John Bloxham, Richard Ward - 'Mr. Atco' and Martin Faulkner to name just a few. Unfortunately Richard Jones was kept away by family problems and Andrew Grout was marooned on a ship north of Orkney! He had made careful plans to get back from a holiday in Iceland which involved getting off a ship in the far north of Scotland, travelling to an airport and flying back, just in time to return to civilisation in Luton to join us on Sunday. However, all came to naught when the sea was too rough for the ship to dock in Scotland and next stop was... Bergen, Norway! Thanks for trying Andrew, but a good story is no excuse for not attending!

Let's hope that 2008 is as enjoyable an event as this one was. And if you would like to join the fun, just give Dick Hardwick a phone call (see separate notice about the event) and he should be able to fix things for you.



From the W. B. F. & S. Ltd catalogue, 1926

FABRICATING PONY MOWER DRAWBAR

When presented with machines that are incomplete, it is always an interesting challenge to try and replace the missing parts. This example was something of an extreme, as the front drawbar and roller brackets of a 24" Silens Messor are a rather bigger challenge than I have taken on in the past!

We have for several years had a 28" pony mower with the front end of both frames broken and missing, along with the roller brackets and drawbar. As I have never been able to think of a satisfactory way of mending the frames, nothing has ever been done to it, but the acquisition of a 24" with the frames intact but still with the drawbar and roller brackets missing presented a more feasible opportunity to try and manufacture the missing parts.

A trip to West Dean to measure the components of their two 24" pony machines produced all the necessary information apart from the dimensions I forgot to measure, which Richard Jones very kindly went and measured for me, saving a second long journey. Now, how to make the parts, starting with the roller brackets. These are straight on the pony mowers, which makes things much easier. I cut them out of solid steel with an angle grinder and finished them off with a file, then turned up the boss for the front roller shaft on the lathe. Because it is hollow, I had to screw it in position round the outside of the central hole with small screws, the heads of which were then hidden behind the thin projecting disk screwed to the outside of the bracket. Someone with welder could have done this more easily....



The Roller bracket completed. The wooden rollers are not yet fitted, so you can see the boss that the shaft rotates in. Note also the stop on the drawbar side (see below)

The most challenging parts were the drawbar sides, which are tapered, and are "I" section for much of their length. I could have made a wooden pattern had them cast, but when I set out I didn't know a foundry that could do malleable castings, so I decided to fabricate them out of steel, which would have been easy with a milling machine, but was very time consuming without. First I cut a piece of steel plate of the minimum thickness of the original to the basic outside shape, and then I had to grind out the recess where it joins the roller bracket. This was quite difficult, as there is a very tight inside curve, which required a small grinding wheel on an electric drill to get into. I then made up the thicker parts in 1/8" steel plate, and riveted them onto the basic piece of steel with small copper rivets before drilling the large fixing holes in each end and doing a lot of filing and finishing by hand.

To make them appear more like cast iron it is obviously important to leave all the edges slightly rounded off, as castings rarely have sharp corners.

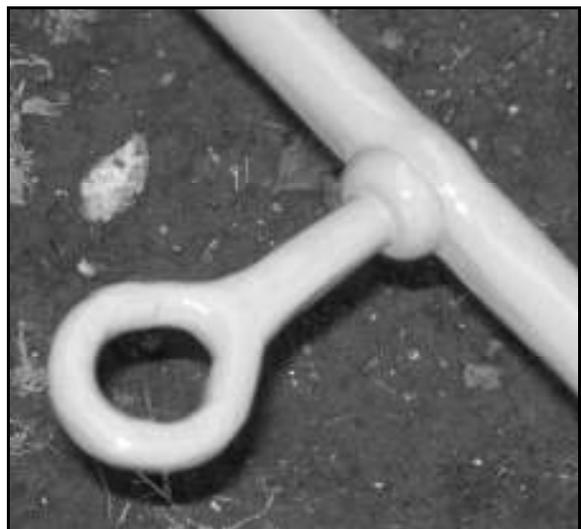


The drawbar sides. The raised sections along the edges and at each are separate pieces of metal, cut to shape and held on with copper rivets.

I also had to manufacture the raised stop on the inside of the drawbar which rests against the roller bracket, and this was done by heating a strip of steel up, bending it to the right profile, then riveting it on. This is one piece which could have been done in a few minutes with a run of weld metal ground to shape.

Finally, the front crossbar, which involved use of a forge. This process I have done several times before when making crossbars, and goes as follows. Firstly, I made the bosses that bars have on the end of them on the lathe, and drilled a hole in them less than the diameter of the crossbar. Then I reduce the size of the end of the crossbar, which if it had been a short one, I could have done on the lathe (as I did making crossbars for a 10" Chain Tennis's handles) But being much too long for our lathe, we had to heat it up in the forge and reduce its size with a swaging hammer. We got it so that the boss didn't quite fit onto the bar, then heated the boss up to red heat and hammered it on.

I also had to make the hole in the middle of the bar and the hook which goes into it, which was the hardest part, as my blacksmithing skills are not really up to this sort of work! Nevertheless, I had made all the parts necessary, and once some filling had been done and the parts painted they look deceptively like the originals. Now I could get on with restoring the rest of the mower, which fortunately was fairly straightforward, as it was not too badly rusted or seized. How long did it take? I dread to think!



The hook, which isn't as well made as it could have been! Notice also the swelling in the crossbar where the hook is riveted in place, made by punching the hole when the metal was red hot rather than by drilling it. The raised stop adjacent to the crossbar was made and fitted in the same way as those on the crossbar ends, as described above.

SPANNER SPOT

This issue it is the turn of Green's spanners. Of course Green's spanners have slightly more interest to lawnmower collectors than those of many other makes, as most Green's hand mowers have a little wire loop embedded into the cast iron handles on the right hand handlebar (or "side frame upper part" as Green's called the handles in their parts lists). This wire loop is for holding the spanner that the mower came with, and some collectors would consider the machine incomplete without an appropriate spanner in the loop.

The basic Silens Messor machines were produced with spanner loops from 1889 onwards. Curved handle machines do not have them, and straight handles machines did not have them between 1887 and 1889. Indeed, the first machines with loops have "1889" cast into the top of the handlebar on the outside.

Green's cast iron spanners are identifiable by the word "GREENS" cast into them about half way along in incuse letters. Some also have part numbers cast in the same fashion, but more of that later. What is not certain is whether any spanners made before 1905 have been identified yet, as the incuse lettering and application of part numbers is never found on Green's mowers prior to that date. It may well be that Green's spanners made before 1905 are unmarked, and thus not picked out of the proverbial spanner box at an auto jumble as being mower related. It appears that all Green's spanners were originally painted red, and some have quite a lot of original paint left on them. All the spanners in these images are repainted in red. In their earlier parts lists, Greens usually referred to the spanners as "screw keys", though the word "spanner" was being used by the mid twenties.

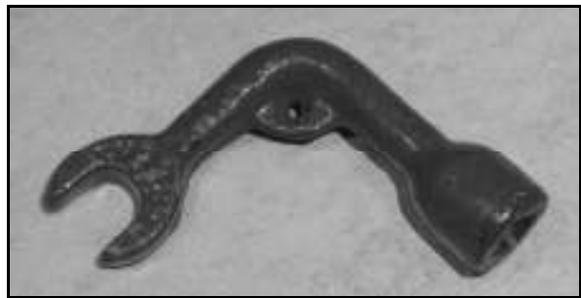
Below is the basic Silens Messor spanner which would have come with most post 1905 machines This just says GREENS on it.



Below are two spanners, the smaller of which is the same size and shape as the one above, but with the writing on the other side, and the letters "SM" after the word GREENS. The larger spanner is identical in shape and design, and is presumably for the larger hand mowers. It is likely that the "SM" letters were added once there were several other Greens models available in the 1920s



Now this (*opposite, top*) is a spanner to look out for. This is what Green's in their parts lists called a "spanner and box key". It has a square socket fitting on one end, and an open ended spanner on the other. As can be seen it is cast iron, with the ends at 90 degrees to each other. The part number NC-18 cast into it gives way the machine it is intended for as a New Century.



Although still cast iron, this spanner (*below*) is altogether more angular than the Silens Messor one, and survives in quite large numbers. It could have originally belonged with any one of several different machines, as unlike Ransomes, Greens had different part numbers for every component of each model, so that even parts like the pawls or the spanner that were shared between several models have different numbers in different parts lists. This spanner seems to have come with almost all the 1920s and 30s hand mowers other than the Silens Messor, including side-wheel machines such as the Greenson.



Like many companies after the war, spanners were mainly bought in; however some had the Greens name added to them. Sadly, the letters on this flat steel spanner do not show up well in a photo, but are of very similar style to the incuse letters on the cast iron spanners. This one is interesting as like most commercial spanners the jaw sizes at each end were probably of sequential sizes, however, the larger end of this one looks to have been ground out, possibly at the factory, as the mower it came with most likely required two jaw sizes not normally available on the same spanner. This appears to be the spanner in the parts list for the Cadet, and possibly other post war sidewheel machines.



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