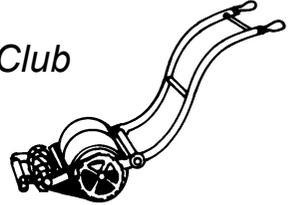


Grassbox

The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 79

Winter 2012





Tony Roe's Mark 1 Ajax, as restored.

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Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or the OLC. The Editor reserves the right to edit all copy submitted for publication.

CONTACTING THE CLUB

Chairman: Peter Hampton. T: 01225 755864 E: peter.hampton@blueyonder.co.uk

Club Secretary: Michael Duck. T: 01460 241374

Treasurer/Club Renewals: Dick Hardwick T: 01462 816018 E: treasurer@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk

Souvenirs/Regalia: Bernard "Robbie" Robinson, 10 Burchester Avenue, Headington, Oxford OX3 9NA T: 01865 450899 E: bernard.robinson@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk

Grassbox Editor: William Proudfoot, The Old Rectory, Fawkham, Longfield, Kent. DA3 8LX T: 01474 707513 E: wproudfoot@firenet.uk.net

President: Keith Wootton, T: 01327 830675 E: keith.wootton@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Many thanks as ever to those members who have sent in material for this issue. This is often a quiet time of year and it is very useful to hear of other collector's current projects, so please keep them coming.

This issue includes a detailed article by Tony Roe about the Ransomes Ajax, the second part of which I am holding over to the next issue. I am very grateful to Tony for the time he has taken over this.

Also included this time is the Auction form for the Milton Keynes rally in May. This will be included in the next issue, but time will probably be very tight between the posting of the next issue and the actual event, so it would be appreciated by us if you submit your lots for the auction this time round rather than waiting till the last minute. Also on the same sheet of paper is the third party insurance form, which should be filled in and returned if you wish to exhibit at rallies over the summer. This will provide you with third party insurance through the Club should anything unfortunate happen.

Finally, I hope as many of you as possible will support the annual rally again this year, and we are hoping again to have a theme for the event, this time to tie in with the Queens Diamond Jubilee, it is hoped that you will dust off all the mowers you may have with a Royal theme to their name.

TRANSFERS

The Club's range of transfers for old mowers continues to expand. Robbie Robinson has done a sterling job over the last few years adding more and more transfers to our supplies, and

what started off as just a range for Atco Standards has now increased to cover most common post-war machines and many pre war models as well. Modern technology has improved the situation vastly, and is it now possible to get new transfers made from photographs of old ones on grassboxes. These can then be 'repaired' and enhanced to show the colours as they originally were, then produced in the small numbers that a club like ours requires them in and a relatively modest cost.

Recent additions have been for several hand mowers, including the grassbox transfer for the Ransomes Patent Chain and Patent Gear Automaton. Two of the four Willing Worker transfers are now available (anyone out there with a really good grassbox or handwheel adjuster transfer for this machine, contact Robbie...) There are also transfers available for the Shanks Eagle, while Caledonia, Silens Messor and the George V coats of arms used on 1920s and 30s Ransomes machines are on their way soon. The Atco range now includes the original rectangular petrol tank transfer that so rarely survives today as they were usually replaced at factory refurbishments.

There are also many Qualcast, Webb and JP transfers available, so I hope very much that members will find this service of use. Certainly the standard of restored mowers will be improved significantly by the addition of the all important transfer without which no grassbox and many chain cases look bare and unadorned. A full list is printed with this issue on the back of the Auction form, and all are illustrated on the OLC website. A few samples have been illustrated on the back cover of this issue of the magazine.

THE RANSOMES AJAX, PART 1

by Tony Roe

In this article I have quoted only those things I have observed and from which I have drawn certain conclusions. I would welcome correction and any further information on this series of mowers. If you know otherwise, please let me know.

I have now acquired what I believe to be the complete range of Ajax series lawnmowers. These mowers were first introduced in 1933. There was no indication then that there was to be whole series to follow and the name plate carries just the Ajax name with no mark number.

It would seem that the rear smooth surface rollers which provided drive to the cutting cylinder was not providing adequate grip, particularly on damp grass. The answer was to provide ribs on the rollers and so was born the Ajax

Mark 2. Gear lubrication on the Mark 1 was with an oil cup whilst the Mark 2 was by grease nipple. Front roller carrier shaft on Mark 1 and early Mark 2 was oil cup lubricated but the later Mark 2 was a fixed roller shaft locked in by a square-headed grub screw and the rollers oiled

between rollers.

The date of the change-over from Mark 1 to Mark 2 I have not been able to establish. The scraper across the mower frame at the rear over the rollers also served as an identity plate, and this was modified by inserting the small letters and number into the mould and provided the "Mk 2" identification. These machines had a few minor changes made between introduction and end of production in 1939/1940 when war with Germany began. No change of Mark numbers was made and I can find no details of when the changes took place.

I am fortunate in obtaining a Mark 2 in Military Olive Drab. (See below) A second Mark 2 has been obtained which is normal civilian dress and has a few changes from the Military unit. Again there was no change of Mark numbers.



The manufacture of the Ajax series was recommenced after peace was declared and material became available to Ransomes. I cannot confirm that the Government required the company to export a percentage of production in order to obtain basic materials, however most British companies suffered severe material restrictions except for export units. The Ajax became the Mark 3 immediately when production restarted and again a number of changes took place. The main one was from cast iron frames to aluminium frames as the latter material was in relatively plentiful supply whereas iron and steel were less readily available. The Mark 3 is the only version which had cover plates over the handles where they attached to the frames. I have a number of Mark 3 machines and all have this plate whereas on all later machines it was omitted. The plate is fitted whether the handles are pressed steel or pipe and the casting is recessed to take the handles and the plate.

It appears that early Mark 3 Ajax units have the pre-war style pressed steel handles but with the hollow now inwards facing whereas the Mark 1 and Mark 2 had the hollow facing outwards. (It should be noted that the pre war Atlas, essentially a cheaper chain driven version of the Ajax, had the hollow facing inwards, so these handles were not interchangeable with Ajaxes that were contemporary with the Atlas. Why Ransomes made two different pairs of handles out of the same components at the same time is something of a mystery. Ed.) Later Mark 3 mowers have the crossed tube handles with the welded in steel plate quadrant between the arms just above the tube crossing point.

I have seen photographs of a Mark 2 offered for sale which had a cross-tube handle provided ex-factory with the machine (according to the seller) as accessories to the standard pressed steel handles fitted to the mower. It may be that these tube handles were being tried out for public response purposes as the photograph showed the quadrant carrying the Royal Warrant of George VI which I have never come across on any other quadrant fitted handles. All Mark 3 quadrant plates I have seen bear the company name and "Ipswich, England".

It was obviously very much cheaper to use standard piping rather than pressings or to pay the very high cost and poor availability of replacement press dies used to make the handles. Looking at the pressings, there was probably quite a lot of waste steel sheet left after cutting out the curved sections prior to pressing. This would have been returned to the steel suppliers for reprocessing but would offer little financial return. Piping required only cutting off to length, bending and welding - a very much quicker and cheaper process than pressing and jiggling for riveting in the cross-rods between the side plates.

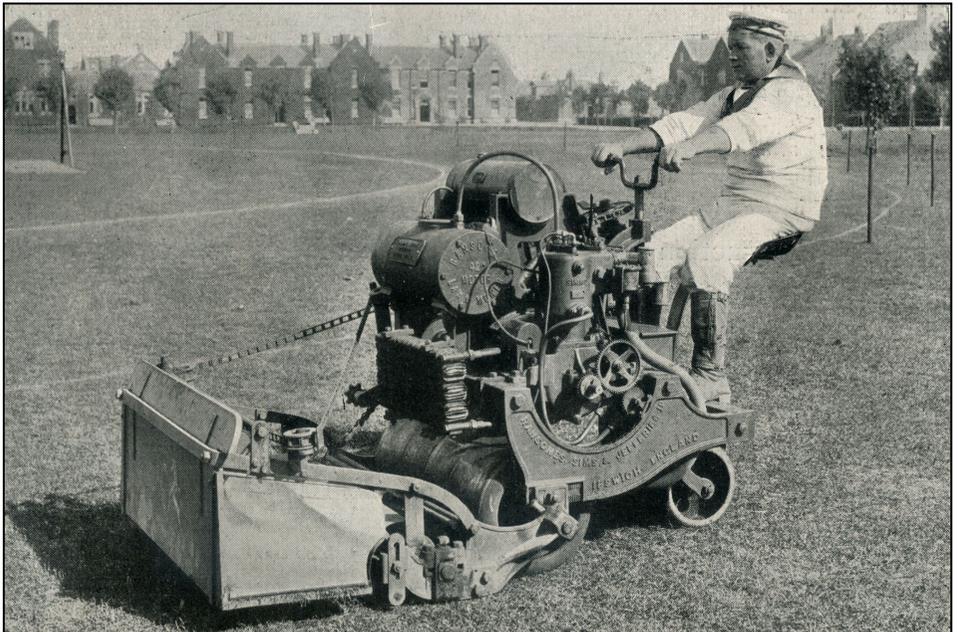
The pipe ends were flattened and drilled to fit the mower side frames and the top end fitted with bicycle style rubber handle grips. All those I have seen that appear original are creamy coloured with finger grips moulded into the lower side. I can only assume these to be the correct factory fitting. Other grips are often found and these appear to be later replacements.

Part 2 follows next issue.



Above: This early photograph from Clive Gravett is not terribly clear, but it shows a Budding type machine in use. It appears that this is of the original Budding design with the cutting cylinder in front of the front roller. The location is unknown.

Below: Also from Clive Gravett, this is a 42" Ransomes from the same era as the Hall & Duck trust's Cadbury machine, seen in use at the Whale Island naval base in Portsmouth Harbour.





Club Chairman Peter Hampton found this picture of a rather alarmed looking individual using his Green's Utility. The Utility, and its close relative the Tyke, were very unusual in that they had the handles mounted outside the frames and way behind the wheels, which means that when used with a grass box the mower does not tip over forwards as most side wheelers do, and the usual heavy weight on the delivery plate is not needed. Note also the two piece handle stem. These are quite common on Greens side wheelers from the 1930s, consisting of two pieces of channel section steel and a coach bolt through each part of the handle.

RALLY REPORT

By Dick Hardwick

The Bedford Steam Fayre last September at Shuttleworth Park was a wonderful event for us again. It's usually a great occasion and has been lucky over the years with weather, but this one seemed even better than usual with 17 Club members displaying nearly 100 machines, spanning a century of mower history. The oldest machine was probably Tim Durant's Climax, or maybe Keith Wootton's Ferrabee 'Improved' with the youngest being a 1971 Gardenmaster, set up with the cylinder mower option, belonging to John Truluck. The nice thing about a Club display at an event running for several days is that everybody doesn't have to be present all the time. That meant that Robbie could get off to play with his motor bike on Sunday with the resulting gap in the display being taken up by Charlie Crouchman who couldn't manage a 'sleep over' on Saturday night so arrived with the dawn on Sunday morning.

It was a three day show (Friday to Sunday) this year – something that was tried a few years ago, without much success, but it certainly worked this time with a lot of visitors taking advantage of reduced entrance fee on Friday. I'm told that this format will be used for the next few years too.

We missed Stan Hardwick this year – how **could** his wife have booked for them to be elsewhere on holiday? – but Jonathan and Victoria brought the usual van full of mowers from Filey for us, and the public, to feast our eyes upon. Besides the regulars, including John Bloxham, Alec Hillyar and Roger

Wilkinson it was nice to see Colin Stone, Dusty Miller and his charming wife, and to welcome Tim Durant back – he was a regular when we first started showing here. Linda & Rod Childs, who indulge in a vintage caravan as well as mowers and hence stayed for all 3 days, introduced a friend – David Wells – to us. Although mowers aren't his main vintage interest he was sensible (or foolish?) enough to have brought one with him that immediately became part of our display, while he, of course, got persuaded to become an OLC member – good move, David!

There were two features of the Club display this year that made things so much better for the public.

The first was having a written description for most (about 80%) of the exhibits. A computer generated A4 landscape sheet of paper, in a plastic sleeve is fine and can easily be pegged down in front of the exhibit. It doesn't have to say a lot, typically up to 6 lines giving manufacturer, model, size, age and maybe a few words about where it came from, or other interesting provenance. Lettering does need to be big enough to be easily read from the other side of the boundary rope, though, that's a good 6ft. away.

The other thing, without doubt, was that working exhibits attract a LOT more attention than static ones. We only had to start up an engine and within minutes there was a crowd of spectators. Even the sight and 'purr' of a hand mower being pushed around brought smiles, admiring glances and interest. Mind you, "only starting up an engine" wasn't



duty performed various appropriate gyrations, just for the hell of it. They were all volunteers on behalf of *The British Heart Foundation*, giving their time and energy in remembrance of a young friend who had recently died of a heart attack. It's funny the things you might see at a Steam Fair, isn't it? If you fancy joining us this year with a mower or two – especially if they have motors that run – on 14th to 16th September. Let me know me in

as easy as it sounds, as the photo here of 6 'experts' – young and old – gathered around a 14" Ransomes lightweight, shows!

Later on I managed to get a couple of passing young ladies to pose with the 14" Ransomes Lightweight, (see picture) but, faced with the inevitable stream of questions on "how should I hold it? where should I stand, which way to look?" etc. I made a spur of the moment suggestion that one of them should imagine she was "making love to it." The picture here wasn't the most realistic pose that she struck, but it is at least decent!

Striking poses was all the rage, it seems, as the young ladies on car park

good time to fix passes for you. You never know what sights might catch your eye!



CAN YOU HELP?

By Peter Hampton

We have a request from an owner of a 1950s 14 inch Greens Flyweight mower with 2 stroke JAP engine.

It seems that some time ago the engine was stripped for repair, by a friend, the result was that the cylinder block and

piston rings have been lost, which means that the owner is in need of these parts to rebuild his now quite rare lawn mower.

The details are as follows;

Thomas Green and Son Ltd Flyweight motor mower No F14/5896 size

14 2 stroke mower, imported or assembled under licence (presumably in Aus-

tralia), by Clyde Industries Ltd. It has a JAP 2stroke motor, see pictures.

The owner is Mr Roger Buxton, 17 School Road, Ferny Creek, Vic 3786, Australia, E-mail bzsm1590@cosmos.net.au



Roger is planning to be in the UK in May this year and it would be nice to present him with some suitable parts when he arrives here.

This 2 stroke JAP engine is also common to the

1950s Qualcast Royal Blade (forerunner of the 14 inch Qualcast Commodore), and also some Qualcast

and Suffolk sidewheel mowers of the same date, see pictures.

Can you help? Please contact Club Chairman Peter Hampton by phone 01225 755864 or

E-mail peter.hampton@blueyonder.co.uk

It would be great to help Roger out and to meet him at our 2012 AGM meeting in May.

COUNTRY LIFE—MARCH 22, 1956 SUPPLEMENT—33

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- 10" Ransomes Anglia Mk 5, c/w grassbox. C: Peter Payne. T: 01291 421470 (Monmouthshire)
- JP Maxees hand mower, c/w box. C: Mrs Elizabeth Duncan T: 01865 762761 (Oxford)#
- 14" Atco, 1950s, c/w Villiers, c/w box, Free. C: Howard Smith T: 01709 710192 E: ha4smith@hotmail.co.uk (Rotherham)
- 34" Atco motor mower, 1960, c/w Villiers, c/w box. C: Tonni T: 001 457 5421758 E: info@marskmusic.dk (Ribe, Denmark)
- 11" JP Minor, c/w box, £50. C: Dave Daniels T: 07850 482577 E: dj.daniels1@virginmedia.com (Aldershot)#
- 60" Ransomes Bobcat, T1861, c/w KOHLER, no box. C: MJ Griffith T: 02232 19031 E: MJGRIFFITH56@YAHOO.COM (Chicago, USA)#
- 18" JP Super, 1922, c/w Villiers, c/w box, Free. C: John Stubbs T: 01256 881274 E: johnstubbs06@btinternet.com (Basingstoke)#
- 36" Dennis, 1933, c/w box, Offers. C: Robert Bell T: 07523 446060 E: hartlebury@ndirect.co.uk (Worcestershire)#
- 16" Ransome Sixteen, Mk2 DS2937, c/w Villiers, no box, Offers. C: Jim Abbott T: 01732 359745 E: jimabbott@blueyonder.co.uk (Tonbridge)#
- 24" Dennis Z Type, c/w Dennis, c/w box, Offers. C: Michael Page T: 01905 840580 E: ovclub@clara.co.uk (Worcester)#
- Qualcast, c1936, c/w Villiers, no box. C: Sean Thulborn. T: 01832 293183. E: seanphulborn@btinternet.com (Peterborough)#
- 16" Ransomes Mk 1 No: DS2218, c1960, c/w Norton Villiers Engine Ref: D07 10 01 7292, c/w box, £1. C: Peter Q Brown. T: 01689 852732. E: pqb_london@ntlworld.com (Bromley)#
- 18" Ransomes Marquis 45, 1995, c/w Kuboto, c/w box, £300ono. C: David Sykes. T: 01943 874864. E: kentonlevitt@blueyonder.co.uk (Ilkley)#
- Mozall, no box, \$100. C: Kyle Hubert. T: 001 507 995 9296 . E: topcop5673@yahoo.com (Lamberton, USA)#
- 12" Qualcast Super Panther - Ball Bearing - Pat No. 884257, c/w box, Free. C: Paul Harding. T: 0208 5676756. E: paul_h_harding@hotmail.com (Ealing)#
- 12" Ransomes, c/w box, £20. C: Mrs Anne Johnson. E: hodan_johnson@yahoo.co.uk (Credition)#
- 14" Webb 21W Series 276 2 speed battery operated, 1970s, c/w box, Free. C: Chris Craven . T: 01524 241919. E: littlebeck@live.co.uk (Lancaster)#
- 14" Atco, 1950, c/w Villiers, c/w box, Offers. C: Tim Greenhalgh. T: 07904 003 643. E: greenhalght70@yahoo.com (Stockport)#
- 12" Greens Zephyr, c/w box, £30. C: Bill Mackintosh. T: 01449 720753. E: wmackintosh1500@suffolkbroadband.net (Stowmarket)#
- 12" Ransomes Ajax, c1950, c/w box, £15. C: Stewart Gray. T: 01252 622831. E: sandcgray@googlemail.com (Basingstoke)#
- 14" Webb Electric, 1950, c/w box, £25. C: Stewart Gray. T: 01252 622831. E: sandycgray@googlemail.com (Basingstoke)#
- 17" Suffolk Punch, c/w box, Offers. C: Brian Corbu. T: 01277-224509. E: brian_corbu@hotmail.com (Brentwood)#
- 14" Suffolk Super Colt, c1981, c/w 75G14-25A, c/w box, Free. C: Ian Clayton. T: 0115 9460995 or mobile 07875 747979. E: ian.clayton76@yahoo.co.uk (Nottingham)#
- 12" Greens Monitor, no box, £50. C: Dale Cass. T: 07986 355542. E: dale.cass@ntlworld.com (Stafford)#
- 36" Riverside Precision, Arun Tractor with HD Cutter Bar, pre1975, c/w Villiers, no box, £30. C: Mike Tanner. T: 01268 710629. E: oldbob@btclick.com (Billericay)#
- Atco Standard, c/w box. C: Ian Russell T: 01743 232458 E: ianrussell@talktalk.net (Shrewsbury)#
- 24" Greens Zephyr, 1965, c/w Villiers, Free. C: Julian Randall T: 02476 384526 E: JRandall@UAP.co.uk (Warwick)#
- Suffolk Super Colt, c/w box, Free. C: Charles Lawrence T: 01892 545543 E: c-lawrence10@tiscali.co.uk (Tunbridge Wells)#
- Suffolk Punch 35S, Free. C: Ian Lee T: 0208 866 7815 E: ians.lee@btinternet.com (Pinner)#

12" Atco, 1959, c/w box. C: Mark Peacock T: 01279 843451 E: Mark.Peacock@stelizabeths.org.uk (Hertfordshire)#

Suffolk Colt; Qualcast Super Panther; Atco battery mower, 1960s; unknown British side-wheel. C: Andy Flegg T: 07778 214366 E: andy.flegg@machinemonitoring.co.uk (Bicester)#

Two Allen Scythes. C: Colin Smith E: colinmarksmith@yahoo.co.uk (Unknown)#

Qualcast Panther, Free. C: Len E: lenlix@telus.net (British Columbia, Canada)#

14" Shanks Caledonia, early chain version; JP Super; Ransomes Minor Mk6. C: Pat Flanagan. T: 087 2464793 (West Meath, Ireland)#

JP Super C: Colin Chambers. T: 01329 664948 (Fareham)#

Webb Whippet, good working order. C: David Wilson. T: 01302 858210 (Doncaster)#

WANTED

20" Ransomes Antelope; Sisis Petrol lawn aerator. C: Alan Carter. T: 01992 551221 (Hertford)

Grass box for British Anzani, 1950s. C: Derek Baker E: derek@broadstone.freemove.co.uk (Poole)#

Pre 1940 lawn mowers. Anything considered, except Atco, including individual machines and whole collections. Write to Michael Duck, 1 Belmont Terrace, Shepton Beauchamp, Somerset TA19 0JX.

Blind enthusiast seeks mowers to restore to original condition or refurbish. Any make and model as long as all parts are with the machine. C: Lewis Alexander T: 07936 877500 E: turningbytouch@gmail.com (Rhyl)#

Grass box for 14" Atco Deluxe, c1980, willing to pay shipping costs. C: Kay T: 00 49 17623882635 E: kayli@t-online.de (Berlin)

Cylinder grinding machine, anything considered. C: Ben Laker. T: 01424 628892 M: 07908 495452 (New Forest)

Adverts are best submitted through the Club website as this gets them into the standard format for the magazine. However, all adverts are welcome by post or phone and are free of charge. Non members are denoted by a '#.

HALL & DUCK INFORMATION SERVICE

The Hall & Duck Trust can provide information on almost any make and model

of lawn mower. For just £15 per machine they will search their extensive information archive and provide copies of documents found, dates of manufacture and more. Special rates for multiple queries. Please make cheques payable to "The Hall & Duck Trust". Send queries with cheques to: **Andrew Hall, Archivist, The Hall & Duck Trust, 1 Belmont Terrace, Shepton Beauchamp, Ilminster, Somerset, TA19 0JX. T: 01460 241374 /E: archivist@hdtrust.co.uk W: www.hdtrust.co.uk**

GARFITTS SPARES

Contact Richard Jones on 01243 575937 or by email at richard.jones@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk to order bottom blades, cutting cylinders and fixing screws from Garfitt's of Sheffield. Items ordered through Richard are subject to special terms and you only need to pay the club after the order is received. Richard will also be able to offer general advice on removal and replacement of the blades.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

All membership renewal notices were sent out by post and email at the beginning of June. A good number of members have already rejoined for the coming year but we are aware that some of the renewal letters have gone astray. Please double check the label on the envelope this edition came in. If this says "Until: 2011" at the bottom right corner you have not yet rejoined and this will be the last Grassbox you will receive unless you renew. All renewals are up to date so you can take the label as an accurate guide to your membership status. Of course, anyone

with anything other than "Until: 2011" on the label does not need to renew this year.

WEBSITE PASSWORD

The password for access to the "members only" part of the website will change as soon as this Grassbox arrives. This is so that only current members of the club (ie those that are currently fully paid up and receive the Grassbox) can log on. The Username will remain the same as before:

Username: olcmember
Password 12"Sidewheel

You need to ensure the words are spelled correctly with the right capital and lower case letters and symbols. Don't forget, this is a generic login so that all members can access all areas of the site. If you want to add your own comments to pages or contribute to the forums you'll need to set up your own specific username and password. Details of how to do this are on the website.

WEBSITE UPDATE

I'd really like to encourage more members to contribute to the website by adding comments to relevant pages or taking part in the forums. There is a huge amount of information available on line and I've spent a lot of time over the past year or so making it easier to add more. A few members have helped but we cannot do it all on our own. In the long run I'm hoping that some of you will be able to help even more by looking after specific sections or areas of the site.

To take part you'll need to register on the site with your own username and password. After that it should be quite

straightforward. It's all done online and anyone who's familiar with webmail systems such as Gmail, Yahoo, AOL or Hotmail should find that adding pages or information is quite a lot like writing an email.

The initial registration can seem a little laborious but it's essential to prevent unauthorised people from getting on-board and messing things up. I'm sorry if that's putting you off but it's important to be vigilant. We probably get one or two attempts every day to post messages or register on the site from very dubious sources.

A number of members have already enrolled on the site but most of them have never gone any further. That makes me think that there's something that putting you all off! So, if that's you, I'd like to hear from you to find out why. Is it because the site's too difficult to use? Or perhaps you need help with some settings? Or some guidance on how to do it? Send me an email to keith@oldlawnmowerclub.co.uk and let me know.

DATE OF ANNUAL RALLY

The 2012 annual rally will be held as usual on the third weekend in May at the Milton Keynes museum of rural life. The dates are the 19th and 20th May, with the AGM and auction taking place on Sunday 20th.

We hope very much as as many members as possible will put the date in their diaries and look forward to seeing you all in May. The format of the Rally will be broadly similar to previous years and more details will be in the next issue. Anyone wanting further information now should contact Keith Wootton. (Details on page 2)

JOIN THE CLUB

By Brian Latham

There's just one good thing about deep winter snow:
Your lawn looks as nice as your neighbour's,
But when the snow melts and the grass starts to grow,
Some old mowers break down from their labours.

But help is at hand, The Old Lawnmower Club,
Keeps spare parts new and old for its members,
The yearly subscription's a snip of a sub,
And the classified ads are tremendous.

When your mower breaks down and you can't get a spark,
Or it belches black smoke like a mill stack,
Or you've worn out the cogs on the ancient kick start,
Don't get mad, please keep calm, please don't crack.

In the wink of an eye The Old Lawnmower Club,
For its members brings instant salvation,
Don't kick your old mower or sit down and blub,
Join the Club it's the best in the nation.

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John Cruise (Old Lawnmower Club Member)

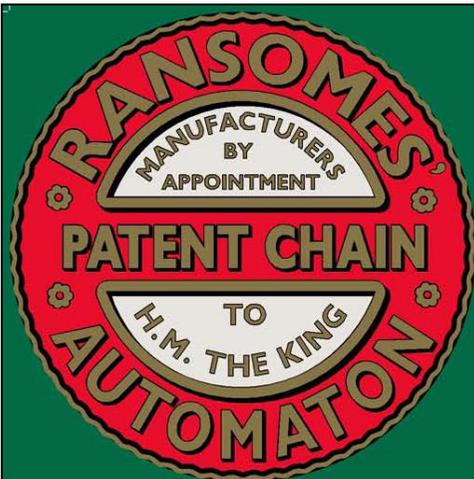
themowercentrehaulsham.com



OLC member Fred Pettit, from Cornwall, had a display at the 2011 Great Dorset Steam Fair. As with the Club's own display there a few years ago, space is limited and Fred could only display a small selection of machines, most of which are seen in the photo. Fred was helped by 11 year old Seb Austin, and reported a lot of interest in the display over the course of the week, and I'm pleased the club banner was seen again at the biggest vintage event of the year.



This Philadelphia Style A high wheel machine is preserved in Australia by Peter Molnar, who decided that he liked the intricate design of the castings so much that he chose to strip it back to bare metal rather than repaint it. The result is quite impressive, if somewhat unoriginal though I am not sure how well this would stand up to a winter in the garden shed of any UK based collector!



A selection of the new transfers for a variety of old mowers that are now available from the club. Images of the whole range can be viewed on the club website, but we hope that these samples will inspire members to embellish their mower restorations with these excellent recreations of the original transfers.

