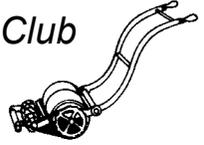


Grassbox

The magazine of The Old Lawnmower Club

Number 95

Winter 2016



EDITORIAL

Welcome to Grassbox 95. This issue welcomes in the new year, and as always the Winter edition is put together at a time when mowers are not perhaps the first thing that springs to mind. As I write we are experiencing the first real cold weather of this otherwise wet winter, and the workshop seems a somewhat unappealing place to be on a freezing evening. That is probably beneficial for club members as I have to sit at my computer and write this rather than potter about with the latest project outside!

The annual rally is now less than 4 months away, and Keith has provided the usual basic information in this issue. This also means that this edition has included with it the form for the auction, which hopefully will be as well supported as ever, and also the form for third party insurance. As ever the latter need only be of interest if you intend to attend

Front Cover: A Qualcast battery powered Super Panther is proudly displayed on the front of this leaflet from about 1970. This model cost £31 20 0 and came in just a 12" size.

a rally or other public event with your mowers this year, and as a club we strongly recommend you take advantage of this service if your machines will be displayed.

As ever I am grateful for all the material sent it to me for Grassbox. Occasionally there is too much to fit, though this doesn't happen that often, it was the case with the last edition, no. 94. By contrast, this edition is mostly filled by material sent for the last issue that there was no space for. Please, if you wonder why your photo or piece has not appeared yet, I'm afraid I do have to hold stuff over for leaner times on occasion. With this in mind, I now have little for the next issue, so would gladly receive your contributions. Remember, you don't need to write anything at all if you don't want to, just a photo or illustration can always be the start of an article. I am acutely aware that it is very often the same half dozen or so members who contribute, but different faces are always welcome! I must though express my thanks for all those who write and contribute material on a regular basis, you are the people without whom this magazine would cease to exist!

CONTACTING THE CLUB

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MOWERS IN THE MEDIA

Old lawnmowers have made quite a good appearance in the media recently, with one prominent BBC documentary featuring two club members in two different episodes. Monty Don's Secret History of the British Garden was shown by the BBC on Sundays in late November and early December. Episode three included Brian Radam and a large Silens Messor being demonstrated with a pony, while Christopher Proudfoot appeared in Episode four with his Auxiliary Chain Lawnmower and then with a Shanks Jehu. Monty Don was seen trying out all three machines, and showed genuine interest in the subject during filming. Fresh from his success as an ambassador for the Dull Men's Club, Stan Hardwick was featured with his collection in the Daily Express in September, a large photograph showing him in this conservatory with some of his mowers. Well done to all!

HELP REQUIRED

Les Carter of Yeovil in Somerset is seeking any information on Royal Enfield, both the company and their mowers for the period between 1933 and 1938. Les particularly wants to know more about his 14 inch Royal Enfield, which has a Villiers engine and is all gear driven. Anyone with any paperwork, advertise-

ments or other information can contact Les on 01935 429814.

AND FINALLY...

This photograph of Keith Wootton and Richard Jones was kindly sent in by Rod Child, and shows them both dressed as two likely looking wartime characters at Alec Hillier's 50th birthday party. Alec, secretary of the club, celebrated in style with a 1940s weekend at his home in August last year.



FROM MOTORCYCLES TO MOWERS

PART 2. FOUR STROKE ENGINES

By Walter McClellan and Grant Simpson

Prior to 1920 the few manufacturers of motorised lawn mowers were using rather heavy and cumbersome air or water-cooled engines, which were costly to purchase or manufacture.

It seems that the decision by ATCO to use a Villiers motorcycle engine for their first lawn mower, led the way for other makers to use engines that were more efficient, lighter and mostly cheaper while providing adequate power. This use of motorcycle type engines brought power mowing within the reach of a wider spectrum of users, culminating in power mowers for the home gardener.

J.A.P. ATCO

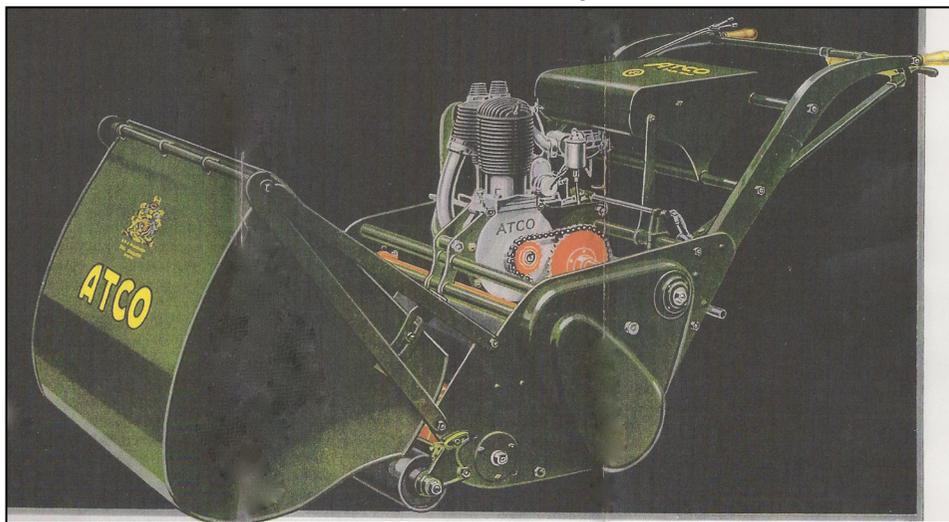
From 1926, ATCO began using J.A.P. engines to replace the Villiers 350cc engine on their 24 inch and 30 inch

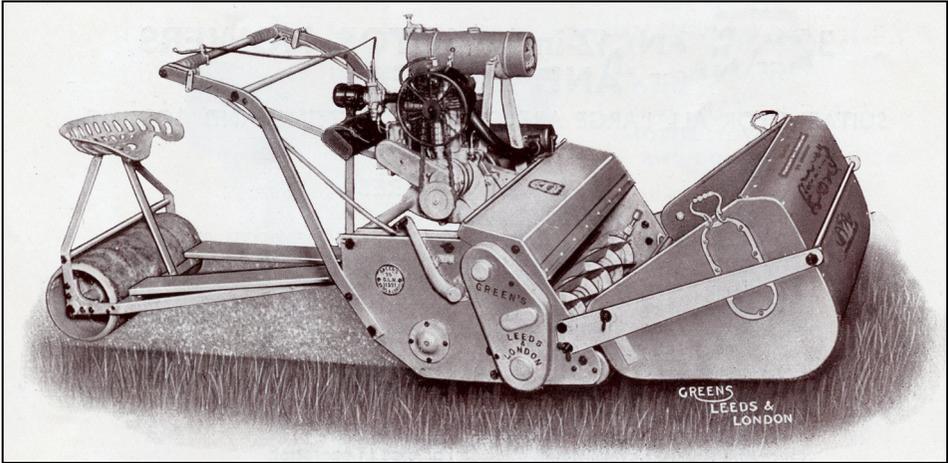
mowers. These engines were based on the 1920s side valve motorcycle models, except they had some features exclusive to ATCO. One feature was the magneto driven by an open chain and not enclosed in an aluminium casing. This persisted until the last use of J.A.P. engines in the late 1940s.

The ATCO De Luxe range used J.A.P. engines with the makers ID ground off. Until the De Luxe models of the early 1930s, lubrication was effected by gravity feed via an adjustable sight feed. Later a total loss system with a feed pump such as a Best and Lloyd or Pilgrim was used.

The 1920s saw two JAP models, one of 350cc and the other 500cc capacity. In the 1930s, a 200cc engine arrived as an option on the 16inch model instead of a Villiers engine. Also, a 600cc version

Large ATCO De Luxe, early 1930s, with JAP engine.





24" Greens motor mower from the 1937 catalogue, showing a J.A.P. engine. These had an Amal carburettor.

followed the earlier 500cc engine in the larger sizes. There was also a water-cooled version on the 36 inch model. All these engines, with few exceptions, had open valve chests.

Carburettors used were initially a Senspray, followed by Amal units, the latter often replacing the earlier units when mowers went back to the factory for servicing.

Magnetos were Lucas until superseded by Wicos in the 1930s. From the late 1930s, engines with detachable cylinder heads and enclosed valves became available.

Blackburne

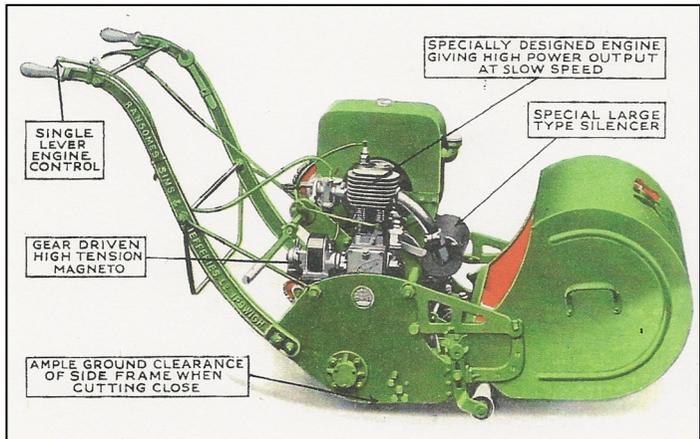
Ransomes were no doubt the best customers using Blackburne engines throughout the decade approximately 1924 to 1934. These engines were generally the standard 350cc side-valve, followed by the 175cc and 200cc units

Early 1930s 16" Mk 4 Ransomes with 175cc Blackburne engine.

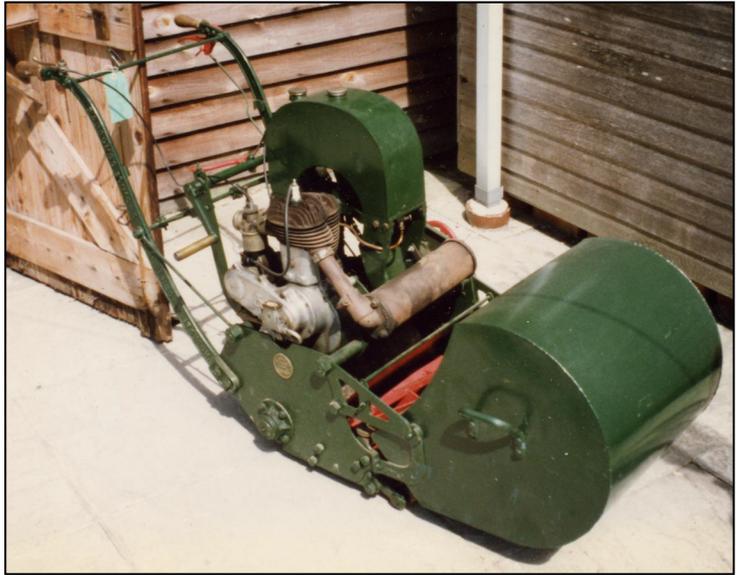
Other Users

Shanks, Automower, Greens, Lloyds. But ATCO was the most prolific user.

Shanks and Greens also used JAP units with an enclosed valve chest and enclosed magneto drive, but still with a blind cylinder head.



with magnetos driven by spur gears. These engines were not altered from the motorcycle configuration and had drip-feed lubrication followed later by a total loss system with Pilgrim pump. Carburettors were Binks, followed by concentric float Amal units. Magnetos were generally Lucas.



Ransomes Mk. 5 16" fitted with a 198 cc Sturmev Archer engine.

A late 1930s Shanks Firefly at Milton Keynes last year with a JAP engine. Note the 'flying saucer' shaped silencer.



Other Users

Other users were Shanks whose units were the same as those employed by Ransomes.

Shanks very large mowers were fitted with a V-Twin engine, which may have been sourced from Blackburne.

Early Dennis mowers were fitted with specially designed Blackburne units.

J.P. also had a model with a 175cc Blackburne engine.

Sturmev Archer Ransomes

Ransomes took up use of these motorcycle based units, which were a proprietary spin-off from the Raleigh motor cycle company, which ceased production in

1933. Engine sizes were 198cc, 250cc, 600cc.

The smallest unit used a total loss lubrication system, via a Pilgrim pump, while the larger engines had a re circulation dry sump system. Magnetos were Lucas and carburettors were Amal concentric float. The Sturmev Archer engine replaced the Blackburne engine. In 1939 Ransomes purchased the engine patents and from this time on the engines were labelled Ransomes instead of "S.A."

Conclusion

The Villiers 269cc two stroke engine proved to be an ideal power unit for motor mowers. Villiers followed this engine with a set of three different sized engines introduced from 1922 and provided an opportunity for a range of new mower sizes.

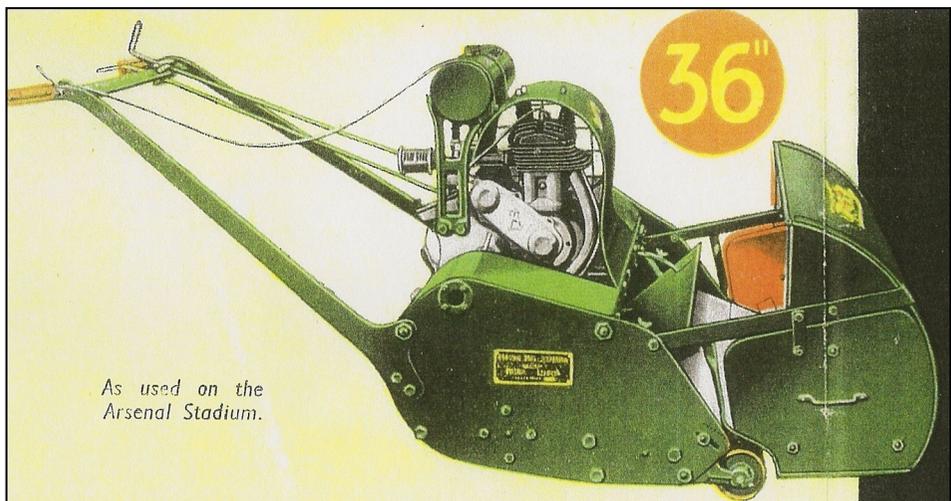
While engine makers were continually developing their motorcycle engines to obtain increased power and perform-

ance, the manufacturers of motor mowers had little need for such development. The limited performance requirements for mowers were met by standard engines without special tuning. The production of a small 98cc two stroke engine by Villiers for use in low powered motorcycles and autobikes proved a boon for mower manufacturers. These small engines were ideal for powering mowers designed for domestic lawns.

For large industrial mowers, manufacturers had a selection of four stroke motorcycle engines to choose from. They selected standard side valve engines, not the higher output overhead valve models. ATCO used JAP engines extensively. Ransomes relied on Blackburne engines until they made the Sturmev Archer engine their own.

Post War saw the increasing use of small four stroke engines which were mostly adaptations of engines primarily designed for stationary use. Initially developed for use by the forces, their introduction marked the demise of the motorcycle derived units.

Below 1935 Ransomes R type with Sturmev Archer engine.



EARLY GREENS SM DELUXE RESTORATION

By Brian Hornsey

Advertised in the local auctioneer's catalogue for August 1st 2015 as '1890 lawn mower 18 inch', it carries the serial number 377143 and is believed to have been made by Greens in about 1913/14 and is in fact one of the earliest Silens Messer Deluxe machines. The SM Deluxe is listed in the 1916 Greens catalogue, and as it seems unlikely that new models were introduced during the war, it was probably a pre war innovation. It was in very complete condition, having been repainted a long time ago, with the usual expected amount of woodworm damage and minor rusting areas – but it was complete with grassbox. The only part that had been re-made during its earlier life was one of the two cylinder adjuster plates (sometimes these have been cracked by over-tightened during adjustment).

The cutting cylinder boasts 8 blades. By far the most interesting feature of this mower are the cylinder bearing housings. The standard two piece brass bushes have been replaced by a single solid steel block (*see right*) with a ball bearing housing on the inside closest to the cutting cylinder, so the cylinder revolves very smoothly. This means that unlike normal 18" Silens Messors of the time it has only one chain, and that is of the narrower size, not the wider one usually used on larger sizes. It is the presence of ball bearings that make this machine an SM Deluxe rather than just a Silens Messor.



Another Deluxe feature is that each rear roller is rounded on the outside edge, something not normally found on Silens Messors until about 1930. The rollers are held apart, as is normal on bigger models, by a collar clamped to the shaft. The corrugated grassbox had to be fitted with two new wooden sides. The originals had been made from tongue & grooved strips which had lost their tongues and were held together by metal strips on the inside surfaces. New sides were made from cutting down two corner shelf units bought from Homebase! Although the original box had no decals on it (as it was an early de-luxe) my enthusiasm ran away with me and I bought a set on Ebay from a supplier in Australia.

New wood hand grips were provided by John Barnard and 4 new front rollers were tailor-made from hardwood by a man in Edinburgh who advertises on Ebay – expensive but good quality.

The rear drive cog has a hole drilled through one of its spokes - why? Has it been modified to fit a grinding in pin as on the Ransomes equivalent?

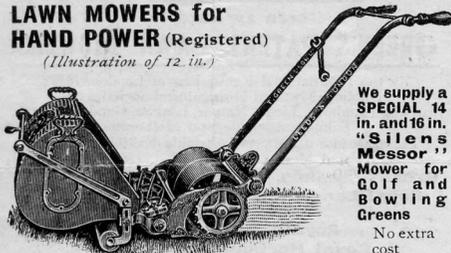
Sometime ago I bought on Ebay a triple whipple tree and split it up, making each

piece suitable as a pony-pull. (For those who are unfamiliar with this term, this whipple tree is a 3-tiered assembly that is used to connect the front of a cart to the horse's collar). So my mower now boasts one of these roped to the draw bar.

The two photos on this page show Brian's mower after restoration. The page below from the 1916 Greens catalogue has a note at the bottom about the Deluxe. It is not illustrated as it presumably was like Brian's machine in that the main feature was the bearings. Note that the addition of ball bearings adds a whole pound to the cost of the mower! It can also be assumed from the text that Deluxe models all came with the alterations to make them suitable for fine turf, also available on the ordinary Silens Messor. Note also from the text that a removable delivery plate was optional.



GREEN'S PATENT "SILENS MESSOR" LAWN MOWERS for HAND POWER (Registered)
(Illustration of 12 in.)



We supply a **SPECIAL 14 in. and 16 in. "Silens Messor" Mower for Golf and Bowling Greens**

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The "Silens Messor" is a very light running Machine and practically noiseless; for high class work it has no equal; it produces a fine even surface on the lawn. **The Cylinder, which is reversible, has eight cutters.**

To cut 6 in....	Price	£2 10 0...	Can be worked by a Lady
" 8 "	"	3 10 0...	" "
" 10 "	"	4 10 0...	" " Youth
" 12 "	"	5 10 0...	" " Man
" 14 "	"	6 15 0...	" "
" 16 "	"	8 0 0...	" " Man on even lawn
" 18 "	"	9 0 0...	" " Man & Boy
" 20 "	"	9 15 0...	" "
" 22 "	"	10 5 0...	" " Two Men
" 24 "	"	10 15 0...	" "

Complete with Grass Box.

Drawing Rope and Handle supplied with all Hand Machines from 14 in. size and upwards; if required for 12 in., 2s. extra. Grass Box Arms and Drawing Stay are not fitted to sizes under 12 in.

If specially mentioned when ordering that mower is required to throw the grass in rear when using without grass box, **a loose delivery plate can be fitted**, in place of the ordinary fixed sole-plate, at no extra cost. **This type of Machine can be supplied with Gear instead of Chain drive, if required, at above prices.**

The Machines are sent out on small open platforms, for which no charge is made.

Kindly mention on order when Machines are required for **Bowling or Putting Greens**, as a specially close cut is arranged for.

Green's (CHAIN PATTERN) Model de Luxe "Silens Messor"
 14 in., £7 15 0; 16 in., £9 0 0; 18 in., £10 0 0
 Complete with Grass Box.
This Machine is fitted with Ball Bearings, and designed for very fine cutting

FRONT RUNNERS

By William Proudfoot

No this isn't about race horses but rather one of those odd little spin offs of the mower industry that occurred from time to time. The front runner was designed to solve the problem inherent in side wheelers that made it so difficult to cut up to the edges of flower beds. The idea was to support the mower while one wheel overhangs the edge of



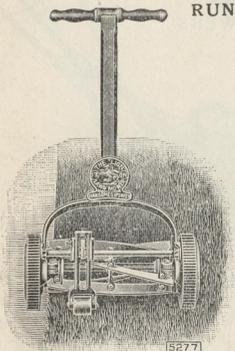
the lawn, and variations on the theme were sold by at least 4 different manufacturers.

Both Greens and Ransomes offered differing versions of Slatter's Patent front runner, starting in about 1909. The

Ransomes type was more sophisticated, as it was made in three pieces and could slide up and down. This is shown *below left* from the 1915 catalogue.

For the student of such things, there are at least two different versions of this design, seen together *above*, on a 13" Lion at the 2014 Annual Rally.

SLATTER'S
Improved Patent
FRONT
RUNNER



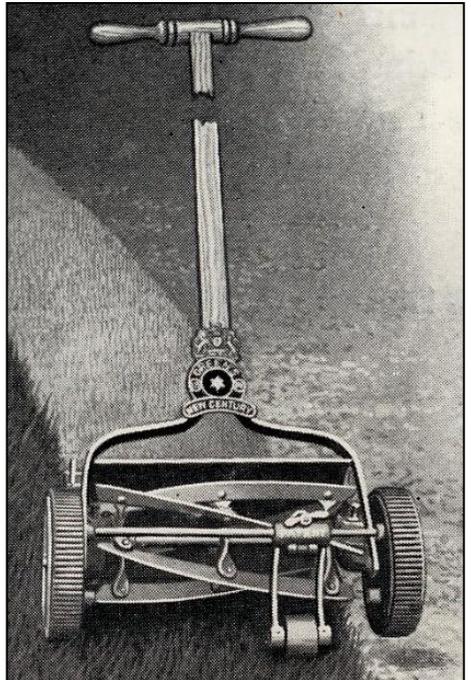
Can be fitted to any Side-Wheel Machine.

THIS is a useful attachment for enabling side-wheel Lawn Mowers to be used for cutting quite up to the edges of small lawns; it can also be adjusted for cutting narrow grass borders.

It is simple to attach and can be adjusted to any height.

PRICE 5/-

13



The Greens design was somewhat simpler, the whole runner being one piece attached to the crossbar by a single grub screw. This is seen *above* on the Lion's equivalent, the New century.

Greens continued to work on the idea and in the 1930s produced a solution to the obvious problem with the front runner, that being that with one in place on the crossbar it is impossible to use the mowers's grass box. The solution was one of the innovations tried on the bottom of the range Greens Utility, with a



iron roller on it, whereas the original Ransomes type only had a wood roller. Suffolk also produced a front runner, seen here, *below*, in the 1939 catalogue. This design has more in common with the Ransomes one, being a two piece sliding design. It also has a wooden roller. The relative rarity of front runners of all types today suggests their use was limited in reality.



the runner mounted separately on two internal roller brackets, similar to those at the rear of the machine. This 10 inch example was displayed at Milton Keynes some years ago by Stan Hardwick. As an aside, the Utility's other claim to (slight) fame was the mounting of the handles very low down on the rear side frames, removing the need for the counterbalancing weight on the the delivery plate when used with a grass box. Other manufacturers used the front runner idea too, and a design similar to the original Greens pattern was available for Pennsylvanias, as seen in the next image, *top right*. As with the later Greens design, this has a proper cast

SUFFOLK

FRONT ROLLER ATTACHMENT

An inexpensive and very strong Roller Attachment for fitting on the front tie rod of Lawn Mowers, to enable an ordinary Side Wheel Machine to cut to the extreme edges of Lawns.

SPECIAL FEATURES :

1. Heavy cast-iron bracket suitably grooved, with grooved clamp for bolting to front tie rod on Mower.
2. Heavy cast-iron Roller Carrier, slotted to take bolt permanently screwed to bracket to ensure easy adjustment.
3. Complete with wood roller.

Price: 3/- each



This advertising postcard is one of a series showing this small boy and a high wheel Pennsylvania. The chap with the stone roller has certainly drawn the short straw in this photograph!

WORDSEARCH

By Geoff Christopher



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MOWER
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QUALCAST
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CLUB SERVICES AND INFORMATION

SPARES

Contact Richard Jones on 01243 575937 or by email at lawnmower.jones@hotmail.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.

CLUB INSURANCE

Please let Keith know if you would like the free third party insurance this year. This is the insurance that is required for attendance at most events and rallies. You don't need the insurance if you don't go to events.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Don't forget, all memberships are renewed at the same time each year, soon after the Annual Rally and AGM. We will send a notification during June or July to every member scheduled to renew.

WEBSITE UPDATE

All back copies of Grassbox have now had passwords removed and each edition has its own page with basic details of content so that site visitors can search for specific articles.

WEBSITE PASSWORD

The current username and password for basic access to the website are as follows:

Username: olcmember

Password: Atco1936!

Members with their own unique username and password can log on as normal.

ANNUAL RALLY

This year's Annual Rally will be held on the weekend of 21/22 May at Milton Keynes Museum. We envisage that arrangements for the event will be much the same as in previous years. Members are welcome to arrive on the Friday afternoon if they are coming for the weekend.

The committee discussed a number of options for this year's theme. We wanted to do something in memory of Tony Hopwood and this naturally led to the idea of a Dennis theme because he had a number of these machines in his collection. Hopefully all Dennis owners coming to the rally will make an effort to bring one. The presence of a few extra Dennis mowers also raises the prospect of more working machines at the rally which might help stimulate a bit of competition for the "Working Mower" prize. The committee was mindful that many members do not have Dennis machines or have no easy way to transport them. With this in mind we decided on a second theme of JP mowers as we know that there is a good variety of machines out there.

The committee also decided to retain the schedule on the Sunday with the auction in the morning and the AGM after lunch.

More details about the event will be included in the next edition of Grassbox which we expect will be in April.

ADVERTISEMENTS

FOR SALE

- 20" Ransomes Marquis. Free to good home.
C: Alan Carter. T: 01992 551221 (Hertford).
- 24" Ransomes Mk8A, 1935, c/w Sturmey Archer engine, c/w box, 150 C: Wayne Smith T: 01226 712576 E: wbsgas@talktalk.net (Barnsley)
- 22" Ransomes , 1928, c/w Sturmey Archer engine, c/w box, Offers C: A South T: 01526 860654 E: alan.a.south@gmail.com (Sleaford)#
- Suffolk Punch Model No 24A, c/w 73G14 engine, c/w box, £250 C: Linda J Ferguson T: 01309 694845 E: linda.j.ferguson@talk21.com (Elgin, Moray)#
- 12" Shanks Hawk, Unknown, Offers C: Frank Neville T: 01896 830084 E: frank@fcnev.plus.com (Edinburgh)#
- 18" Ransomes Auto Certes 18 Mk8, c/w B&S engine, c/w box, Offers C: Wyn Alexander T: 07977 066127 E: wyn.alexander99@sky.com (Swansea)#
- 18" Ransomes Marquis BSA Sloper, c/w BSA engine, Offers C: Joan Westbrook T: 01424 882162 E: pre65fourstrok@btinternet.com (Tonbridge)#
- 14" Webb, c1960, c/w B&S Patent No 2999491 engine, c/w box, Offers C: Peter John Simmonds T: 01672 810737 E: peterberyls@tiscali.co.uk (Marlborough)#
- 20" Ransomes Mark 4, 1924, c/w Blackburne engine, c/w box, Offers over £180 C: John Holding T: 01544 388176 E: john.holding@talk21.com (Leominster)#
- 14" Suffolk Super Punch, c1978, c/w 75G14 Model 28A engine, c/w box, Offers C: Carol McKerracher T: E: thornntonlodge13a@gmail.com (Harrogate)#
- 8" Webb Childrens 8" push mower, poor condition, for spares/restoration, c/w engine, c/w , FTGH C: Derek Bird T: 020 8398 5933 E: 7rydal@gmail.com (Kingston-on-Thames)#
- 17" Suffolk Super Punch Dual Drive 17 Professional, 1967, c/w SIF engine, c/w box, £100 C: Richard Fensome T: 07929 527945 E: richardfensome@hotmail.com (Nottingham)#
- 12" Ransomes Ajax Mk3, c/w box, Offers C: Dennis Smith T: 01379 678639 E: magdensmith@btinternet.com (Diss in Norfolk)#
- 14" Atco, c/w Villiers Midget engine, c/w box, FTGH C: David Burling T: 01276 31787 E: mavedaveburling@tiscali.co.uk (Camberley)#
- 18" Ransomes Minor Mk6, 1955-60, c/w box C: Paul Waters T: 01633 400295 E: paulandk@btinternet.com (Newport, S Wales)#
- 14" Atco Light two stroke 1451 (non runner, complete but needs restoration), 1951, c/w Villiers engine, c/w box, Offers C: Peter Harrison T: 07840 750686 E: peter.harrison734@googlemail.com (Helston)#
- Suffolk Colt, c/w box, offers C: Henry Christmas E: xmas@btinternet.com (Falmouth)#
- Greens Monitor, c/w box, FTGH C: Nick Evans E: nicholas.evans50@btinternet.com (Moreton in Marsh)#
- 24" Ransomes Matador, c/w JAP Model 4.3 engine; 24" Atco, c/w Villiers engine; Atco Standard; three Dennis mowers for parts; odd engine bits and pieces. C: A Goddard E: agoddard48@btinternet.com (Unknown)#

WANTED

- Grassbox for 16" Ransomes Certes Mk10 or Mk12, C: David Bolland T: 0161 427 5669 E: dbolland@talktalk.net (Stockport)
- 17" Qualcast classic 43 S; 18" Hayterette. C: Alan Carter. T: 01992 551221 (Hertford)
- Atco Scythe C: Robert Jenkins E: robert.jenkins39@yahoo.co.uk (Unknown)#
- 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.

Adverts can be submitted by filling in a form on the Club website, this is by far the easiest method as it helps to ensure that all the necessary information is provided. Adverts are also welcome by post or phone and are free of charge. Non members are denoted by a '#'.

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Fleece £25

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XS/Small/Medium/Large/X/L and XX/Large

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Reg Leg 31"

42"/44"/46"/48"/52"/54" Waist

Baseball cap £8.50

Car sticker (Round) £1

Sew on badge £5

Pin badge £2

Tape measure £3

Exhibit log sheet £0.10

Mug (2007) £5

Glass (2010) £5

Grassbox binder £6

(To fit smaller Grassbox magazine)

Spark plug NGK £4

Large type to fit most Villiers 2 strokes. Only two left.

B&W Photo set £10

Ransomes van £5

Ransomes poster £1

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T: 07930 314187 Ivor Gregory (Old Lawnmower Club Member)

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Engine Parts - Piston Rings - Connecting Rods - Oil Pump Drive Gears

Cutting cylinders for 24" and 30" (not 36") and bottom blades

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John Cruise (Old Lawnmower Club Member)

themowercentrehaulsham.com

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