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## HISTORY OF LAWN MOWERS

Until 1830 mowing lawns was a painstakingly long business. It took much of the gardener's time. Scythes were used and it took quite a lot of skill to cut an area of grass short without sticking the point of the scythe into the ground. In 1830 a man named Edward Beard Budding patented the first lawn mower, his idea came from a new machine which took the nap off felt in the factory where he worked in Stroud.

Before the patent rights were obtained a lot of work was involved in producing a prototype and Budding needed finance for production so he turned to James Farabee to support him. The machines were made in the Phoenix Iron Works, Stroud. The cut of these machines was 19" and the cutting cylinder was driven by the back roller through gears which made the cylinder turn 12 times that of the roller. The cutting cylinder worked against a rigid knife bar so that the grass was cut like scissors. The height of the cut could be varied. Budding also as an innovator designed one of the first adjustable spanners which was also produced at Farabee's factory; he also designed a revolver, J.R.A. Ransome applied for a licence to make lawn mowers in 1832 after Budding's patent, whilst Edward Beard Budding died aged 50 at Dursley in 1846 not knowing the future popularity which would be obtained by these machines because in his day lawn mowers were not publicly acclaimed.

In the 1830's Ransomes made the Budding lawn mower as did Farabee in a modified version - they found it was rather heavy so they put an extra handle on so that a man could pull from the front. By 1842 Alexander Shank registered a machine which cut, swept up, and effectively rolled the grass. It was 42" in width and was pulled by a pony. Later still in 1850 Thomas Green & Co. brought out their range of mowers. At about this time Farabee went out of production leaving the big three in production, Ransomes, Shanks, and Greens. Shanks and Greens finished production in the late 1960's leaving Ransome's at the forefront as they still are today. In 1851 the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace was a golden opportunity for lawn mower manufacturers.

During the 1860's decade lawn tennis, soccer, rugger, bowls, croquet and hockey became popular and a lot of iron working companies produced mowers. In the 1870's the side wheel mower was produced by Fellowes & Bates of Manchester, they also cut prices and increased production. About this time manufacturers started exporting, and Thomas Coldwell born in Stalybridge and educated there was the first manufacturer in the USA. The Coldwell Lawn Mower Co. became the largest factory in the world to be devoted to lawn mowers at that time. British lawn mower companies starting exporting to other countries - one of them New Zealand which has the equivalent of our own lush grass. Later New Zealand had their own manufacturers such as Victor and Morrison.

By the close of the 19th century the next great step was made when the Leyland Co. produced an oil fired steam mower made to the Sumner patent. The machine was made in various widths from 25" to 42". The weight range was from  $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 ton. The claim was that steam could be raised in 10 mins. Shanks followed suit with a steam roller combined lawn mower with a seating arrangement for the driver. In 1902 they produced 30" lawn mowers only which resembled Leyland's. Greens produced widths of 30", 36" and 42" - these had seats at the rear.

Experiments were then being carried out on petrol driven mowers following the invention of the internal combustion engine and in 1897 the Benz Co. in Stuttgart and Coldwell Mowers of New York produced prototypes. The first real production model came from Grimsley & Son of Leicester in 1899. Ransomes first came out with a 42" machine with a seat, and their second was a smaller 30" mower which was sold to Cadbury Bros. of Bournville. Later they extended the range from 24" to 42". The largest was powered by a water cooled 6hp Simms engine, the middle range by a 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ hp water cooled engine, and the smallest by a 3hp air cooled engine.

By World War I machine weights had been greatly reduced to improve the handling characteristics, in 1907 however, Shanks produced a 24" machine for cutting tennis courts which weighed 3 cwt.

During World War I most manufacturers were engaged in the war effort and it was not until 1920 that Charles H. Pugh Ltd. cycle component manufacturers got the idea of putting an engine on a donkey mower and in 1920 they went into full scale production once again cutting the price of motor mowers. They adopted the trade name of Atco (Atlas Chain Co., drive chains for mowers) which has become a household name.

In 1925 the Royal Horticultural Society had trials in Regents Park, London. Some of the manufacturers represented were Greens, Atco, Auto-mower, G.N. Ltd., M.P. Co. Ltd., John Shaw Ltd., Godiva Ltd. and Automo, Notts. whilst in 1926 Ransomes patented the first electrically propelled lawn mower - but the trouble was the length of the cable.

In 1928 Allens of Bicester, Oxford produced a reciprocating scythe for long grass and banks which was like the agricultural scythe of nearly 100 years before. By 1932 Atco produced a single wheel scythe in which the petrol tank was made to balance the scythe on the opposite side. The first rotary scythe was produced in 1934 and was powered either by electricity or petrol. The late 1920's saw the change of cast iron frames to pressed steel in the production of mowers.

Other manufacturers who swelled total production were J.P. Super Mowers - a subsidiary of Rolls Royce - H.C. Webb, Dennis & Enfield. These, though like many others stopped production

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because of World War II. Many did not carry on after. Some small firms made them again, eg, Valor, the paraffin fire people, but by the end of the 30's Atco bought all the small firms out and were themselves swallowed up by the Birmid Qualcast Co.

Today lawn mowers have become more advanced and technically efficient though requiring more maintenance.

When cleaning out that old garden shed, garage or moving into another house and finding an old relic, don't take it to the local tip or smash it up for scrap, do me a favour and give me a ring anytime...

Andrew Hall, Wallingfield, Wales Bar, Sheffield, S31 8RL. Tel. Worksoop 770331

Footnote: Andrew is a recognised authority on lawn mowers, having appeared on TV with his collection. He is one of our newest members, making regular visits to his relatives in this area

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WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY EASTER FAIR & PRESERVATION RALLY 1983

We left Potterne at 0800 hours in brilliant sunshine, could it last? On the way down it became dull but stayed dry. When I reached Doniford, which I understand was not the original venue, the sun shone again. On arrival, I was given a number and told that I would find my numbered position marked on the ground...and it was, for the rally 'field' was, in fact, tarmac... I soon had my Lister unloaded and it started at the first attempt but it took the next hour and a half to get the dynamo working.

There were about 30 engines in the programme, excluding my own as I had left it too late in entering, but not many of these appeared on the Saturday. However, on the Sunday, we saw a few more turn up, together with some Vintage cars and Buses, Motorcycles, Classic cars, some Military Vehicles and a selection of Farm Tractors, including no less than 3 Field Marshalls. Winner of the West Somerset Press Challenge Cup for Stationary Engines was a 1917 Lister P. It makes a change to see a Lister win anything, although this rally had more of this make than anything. (Surely Listers have won the Queen's Award to Industry on a number of occasions..? Isn't that sufficient - Ed.).

Other Wessex members at the Rally were Brian Palmer, with his 1932 Ruston Hornsby type PR, and Gerald Harris, who didn't bring an engine but had the misfortune to have a horse box blown into his van on Sunday night. We had a visit from Chairman Ian Skuse (WITHOUT an engine) on Monday.

On Sunday, a group of enthusiasts went for a ride on the train which broke down, and they were stranded for 4 hours. This didn't put off Gerald Harris and myself on Monday; we took a ride behind a steam locomotive from Williton to Washford, had a look around the museum there and then caught the train to Williton ... a Diesel this time.

Although this was a cold rally site with the wind coming in off the sea at several knots, I think it was enjoyed by most exhibitors. I should add here that the site is a holiday centre, owned and operated by Freshfields; we had full use of the facilities including the bar and entertainment therein. The Sunday evening entertainment included a performer who demonstrated his 'Uri Geller' type powers on my RAC key; I can't explain how he did it but that's another story.

The major criticism of this Rally was the fact that safety regulations were unheeded., ropes were not provided by the organisers, but as far as I could tell there were no accidents.

Dave Cleaver

FOOTNOTE: This, the first rally report of 1983, is a perfect example of 'just what's wanted'. Not only is it concise but it mentions the engines and Wessex people. It was inspired by David Edgington's article 'How to write about nothing' in a previous Newsletter. It is always nice to type a new name at the foot of an article as well as the regulars, of course. Now, how about the rally YOU went to last weekend...

Other were not too impressed with this Rally for a variety of reasons, too numerous to list. What we as a Club must be concerned about though, is the aspect of safety. Without safety ropes provided 'adequate precautions' that is, any claim on our insurance COULD be nullified. Food for thought. Ed.

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THE CANAL BOAT TRIP

On Saturday April 9th we went to Bradford on Avon for a boat trip. The boat was called Ladywood; it belonged to the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust and it left at 2 o'clock. On the way down we met Tony Jones and Mary Butler who waved a Union Jack. A little farther down we came across a dredger which had floated into the middle of the canal. Next we saw a swan's nest; along came Daddy swan and pecked the boat. When we stopped at Semington to turn around, the trouble started. It was very smelly and muddy, the barge pole got stuck and we had to go back for it. On the way back to Bradford, we saw some herons in the sky. After the trip we went to Tony Jones' garden for some bangers and onions. The weather was nice and about 40 W.S.E.C. members went and all had a super time.

Stephen Butler (age 7½)

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FOR SALE

Two speed chaff cutter, hand type by Harrison MacGregor and supplied by The Bristol Wagon & Carriage Works Co.Ltd., also Bamford Root Cutter, same supplier. For sale, exchange or W.H.Y. Gerald Atherton, Flax Bourton 2393.

Shandy Barrow, excellent condition, £60. Michael Cannon, Bath 859536.

Lister D Type, 1½ hp, 1933, No.105828, Spec.13DRS, trolley mounted, £35. Brian Reakes, 43 Queen's Road, Keynsham 68549.

Lister D Type block, crank and flywheel all in primer. FREE - yes FREE to good home. FREE Mike Hodgson, 3 Lilac Court, Keynsham, Nr. Bristol. (When you buy the other one above, collect this one as well for spare parts...).

Alfa Laval Vacuum Pump. Pre-war model in good condition and in original paint. Fitted with 8" dia. crown pulley and runs at 770rpm max speed. Would suit a small engine around 1½ hp £18 o.n.o. Tom Randall, Midsomer Norton 418926.

Grandfather Clock, made around 1800, thirty-hour mechanism, painted dial, in good condition and working order, about 6'6" (2 metres) tall. £430.

1964 Barford motor scythe, similar to an Allen but better design with belt drive and Villiers four-stroke engine. Needs slight attention. £80

Dennis vertical engine about 1925-30. Unusual lubrication system with drip-feed oiler. Probably off a Dennis mower of the period. Restored but has not been run due to faulty magneto. £45.

Villiers Vee engine, around 1940, complete but needs attention. £15.

Jap engine, about 5 hp, with Rapier pump. OK for spares. £10.

ALL THE ABOVE, apply to Phil Harris, Stoney Lane House, Cocklade, Wedmore, Somerset.

Wolseley WD11, good condition, has been rallied. Terry Filby, Nailsea 854053.

Electric Welder, New, £60 o.n.o.; Early Lister A type, single flywheel, £70 o.n.o., Lister D type, £25; Wolseley WD11, £35; BTH magneto, £20; all complete and in good running order. David Heal, Temple Cloud 52359.

WANTED

Fairly old BSA motorcycle, either A10 or A7, or any 650cc model considered. Will buy or swop for clock (see above) with cash adjustment. Phil Harris, Tel. Wedmore 712048.

Lister 3-way cast iron plug cock; 1" BSP to complete cooling system on L type, Tom Randall as above.

Original type silencer 1½" BSP for 1910 Lister 4 hp. Also splash-guard for 1926 Bamford 2½ hp or one to borrow as a pattern to copy. Michael Cannon, 19 Eagle Road, Batheaston (as above).

The following items are required by a newcomer to the hobby, to complete a Lister D type. Petrol tank, petrol tap, and pipe with unions, silencer, D112H cylinder head cover, water drain tap, and starting handle. Contact the Newsletter Editor in the first instance. Tel. Temple Cloud 52633.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

Bristol Bus Rally, Whitchurch Airport, Hengrove, Bristol 4. August 20-21st. To enter your stationary engine send 25p in stamps to Mr. B.A. Triggell, 32 Beaufort House, Strawbridge Road, Lawrence Hill, Bristol. (The stamps are for the postage of your entry form and confirmation of entry; this is NOT an entrance fee).

Wings and Wheels, at the Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet on Sunday, 26th June and is organised by Shepton Mallet & Wells Lions. There is a limit of 30 engines so apply as soon as you can to Tony Andrews, 32 Stoneleigh, Westbury-sub-Mendip, Wells, Somerset. Tel. Priddy (074987)482.

Have you entered Tony Jones Garden Party yet? Details of this important event sponsored by your Club have been publicised at great length in the last three Newsletters. It takes place at Tony's address on July 9th, 10 & 11th and all facilities are provided. This promises to be a VERY entertaining weekend. Please help Tony and the Club make this the success it deserves.

Crofton Coach Trip had been finalised for 13th November. Leaving the Old Down Inn car park at 10 a.m. and picking up en route at Trowbridge at 10.30 a.m. (pick-up point still to be decided). We hope to lunch at a Public Hostelry at West Wilton and also visit the recently restored Wilton Windmill. The coach has already been booked and the cost will be announced in a future Newsletter.

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THE MARCH MEETING

The March meeting at the Old Down Inn had, as predicted, a record attendance. Ian Skuse opened the meeting and introduced Mr. Roy Pady who had brought along some of his own cine films.

He started with a film of his own airstrip! and then a film of the Dart Valley Railway starring the old GWR locomotive Lytham Manor. The next film was of the 1982 Yesterday's Farming Rally at the Royal Bath & West Showground complete with Roy's very humorous commentary which accompanies all his films. Surely he has missed his vocation - Wogan, watch out! Rally scenes included tractor ploughing, farm implements, and vehicles with a very interesting selection of exhibits from the Cast Iron Seal Society. After the recent success of Ghandi, in the film awards, this film brought the British film industry yet another star! - the 'Tootsie' of the rally field, Wally Hull...! Yes, Wally as never seen before, in drag! taking part in a Tug-o-War. Good close-up filming of stationary engines gave us all a pre-rally season reminder of Blackstone, Amanco, Petter and Norman, along with many others. Film of the coaching marathon gave an insight into how previous patrons of the Old Down Inn would have arrived at the front door.

Herb Gane's raffle at the interval provided prizes for Mike Hodgson, Phil Harris and our Hon. Secretary, Diana.

A film of the North Somerset Rally showed their Club Member's ploughing skills after which, followed a superb film of the ploughing engines of Messrs. Waite and Hobbs. It starred our Club member Derek Maybee, who had a non-speaking sit-down part - on the riding plough. A documentary-type film of tractor pulling followed, taken at both the Yeovil and Stoneleigh Shows; now we all have new heroes in the form of 'Avon Lady' and 'Snoopy'!

FINALLY, the film that probably attracted the crowds (well at least it had the members standing at the back....), yes, 'CINDY', the restoration of a Steam Traction Engine. If you haven't seen it yet, it's a MUST. If you have seen it, and are seeing it again, just let me know where and when. Wally Hull would certainly have some competition with this one..! As a film star she sure has a BIG future in front of her. Polishing bras(s) will never seem quite the same again, after a film where the engine played merely a supporting role. It was a good evening's entertainment Mr. Pady, please come back again... with 'Cindy' part two...?

Stuart 'National' Ashman

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IN PASSING

A number of members have enquired about the small red and silver Membership Plate which the W.S.E.C. sold some years ago for, I believe, about 30p. We regret that this item is no longer available from our suppliers, but we are exploring the possibility of a cast brass one. Also under investigation are W.S.E.C. windscreen stickers.

The Club wishes its former member and regular Newsletter contributor, Harry Champion, a speedy recovery from his recent illness necessitating a lengthy spell in the Bath Royal United Hospital.

Railway enthusiasts will be interested to know that there will be Steam Working at Bath Spa and Bristol Temple Meads Stations on Saturday, 11th June and Sunday, 12th June. Locomotive King George V will arrive Bath Spa at 19.00 hours and Temple Meads platform 3 at 19.35 hours. Locomotive Erlestoke Manor will arrive at Temple Meads platform 4 at 19.25 hours, leaving at 20.25 and return at 22.00 hours. King George V will leave at 20.10 hours. On Sunday, Erlestoke Manor will arrive at Temple Meads 10.25 hours and depart at 10.35 via Parkway.

The Club meeting next month is the now annual Crank & Buy in the slip road adjacent to the Old Down Inn. Come along, bring an engine and some of that old junk from your garage spring clean to sell. Starts at 7.30, water available for your engine. The date? June 27th.

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FINALLY

Both Diana and Tony will be earnestly awaiting the arrival of the postman every morning for the receipt of entry forms for the Club Rally and the Trowbridge Garden Party respectively. Please don't keep them in suspense any longer; ENTER SOON, or it may be too late.

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THANK YOU

I would like to thank the W.S.E.C. Committee for their kind thoughts in sending me a Get Well Card on behalf of the Club when I was ill last month.

Sylvia Yeo