



CUTTINGS

BRITISH LAWN MOWER RACING ASSOCIATION

Welcome to the first Cuttings of 2021, still in bimonthly mode—with so much still to be down about, the last thing you need is more of my ramblings than absolutely necessary!

I'm not sure if I was alone in waking up on Friday January 1st 2021 (bright eyed and bushy tailed) and finding that everything appeared to be identical in almost every way to Thursday December 31st 2020? Despite everyone's insistence that we needed to get 2020 over and done with sooner rather than later, we still find ourselves plagued by the spectre of COVID-19 and subject to heavy restrictions and to rules that would seem completely unbelievable to us just one short year ago.

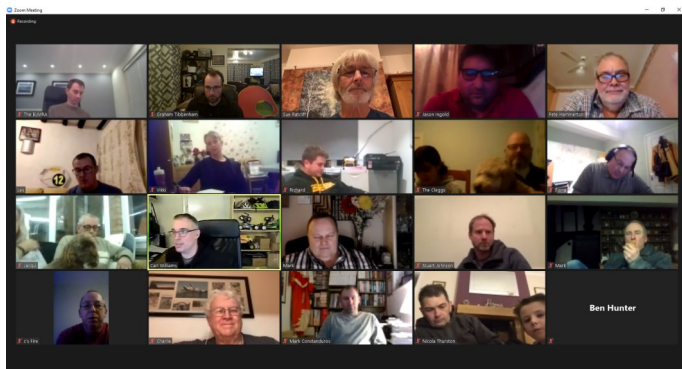
Despite periods of great optimism, we were eventually forced to accept that the 2020 season was not meant to be, as restrictions threatened to take away many of the things that make this sport great and because those restrictions kept changing just after you'd got to grips with the last ones. As it stands, that is where we still are, although the promise of lockdown easing does feel like a light at the end of the tunnel. It's still hard to say exactly what the 2021 season will look like, it's fair to say that it's not going to be a normal year, but hopefully it will at least be a year—once again, all we can do is keep our chins up, hope for the best and do everything we can to get together as soon as we can!

Graham

AGM & Login and Natter

Whilst it's fair to say that the turnout for our first ever virtual AGM was not stellar, it did prove to be fairly successful!

The absence of any contentious technical discussions and with less of the usual heckling enthusiastic input we managed to speed through what I'm sure most consider the boring bits of a typical AGM in record time.



Screenshot from our first virtual AGM

To be honest though, the moments of silence did prove a strange departure from the norm and perhaps highlighted how much we all miss our usual get-togethers.

Once the meeting drew to a close, the committee reflected on how things went and once we'd gotten over the elation of managing to sneak through a motion to double the committee salary, thoughts turned to the things that weren't really discussed, but had become clear once we'd got through the agenda and into the virtual tea and biscuits.

I've said it a number of times; going mower racing sometimes feels like it's less about the racing and more about spending time together, and many of us have not seen or heard from each other for over a year.

To try to remedy this we decided that we really ought to squeeze as much as we can out of our Zoom subscription and use it to allow members to stay in touch. Many will remember the monthly Noggin and Natter evenings that used to be held in the Cricketers—well in a similar vein, Login and Natter is now a thing and will be held via Zoom on the first Monday of each month at 7:30pm!

continued overleaf

2021 Race Calendar

When the committee met earlier this month, we realised that we still weren't in a position to finalise our 2021 race calendar and decided that all we could do at that time was wait until Boris made his announcement on the 22nd. With this now behind us and the government's 'roadmap' to lockdown easing in hand, we have some idea what their game plan looks like, and we can use this to form our own. The government's plan is of course conditional on COVID playing ball and so this will of course have to be a caveat of our own.

As reported previously, Pugs has been in touch with all of our land owners and the picture looks reasonably rosy for all our BLMRA organised events. We have even gotten wind of a new venue which has loads of potential; unfortunately it is some distance away, so there is a lot to work out yet—not least whether or not that is something we can even contemplate this year, depending upon how restricted we are with dates, camping and the like.

The show front however is not looking so good, with Hedington out and Cowpie now having cancelled too (but promising once again to roll over their 2020 show, Mower Racing and all). Codicote, our only remaining paying fixture, being later in the year have yet to make a decision on whether to pull the plug. Their committee are meeting next week and so we should know for sure in the very near future.

The events that pay us to appear help to balance out the venues that we have to pay for and all sprint racing income helps to subsidise the 12 hour. With this as the case, no major sponsor and currently no field, we need to have some very grown up discussions about the fate of the 2021 event.

Whatever the outcome, we want to reassure you that if for the first time in 44 years we have to go without our 12 hour fix for two years back to back, we intend to do something equally special, but less onerous to plan, with the proposed 2021 date. We have high hopes that this will be one to remember and will still attract the usual crowd from the wider mower racing family, but as I say, it's still very much plan B.

Finally, we want to announce that come hell or high water, we will be holding a 12 hour on the 13th of August 2022!

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The first session was held on February 8th and attracted 16 attendees. Conversation was lively and covered a number of subjects including the tarmac sessions some have had at Angmering, new mower builds, engines and wheels. We were brought up to date with typical electrical issues on the 2011 Kia Sportage (check the earths), Hudson gave us a brief lecture on dinosaurs and Pugs discovered that saying “walkies” rather loudly has hilarious consequences when there are dog owners present! If you’d like to join the next session, it will be held at 7:30pm on March 1st. Dial in details have been sent to all members already but I will try to remember to include them in the email that accompanies this issue. We have taken the conscious decision not to share these details via social media to try to prevent “Zoombombing” which is apparently a thing now—if for whatever reason you haven’t got the email and would like to join, please get in touch.

ATA Carnet

With the Finnish ice race cancelled, the French 24 hour postponed and travel restrictions aplenty, many are looking at September as the next available opportunity to race abroad.

A recent post by MSUK suggests that post-Brexit there may be more to think about, due to shipping of motorsport vehicles being considered as being for “commercial purposes” and therefore requiring a valid ATA Carnet (car-nay) to avoid paying import duty and tax on it on both sides of the channel.

It is unclear whether as an amateur sport and with a chicken as a prize, mower racing falls foul(!), but we’re taking advice and will let you know.

Committee Salary

Contrary to what I said overleaf, the committee salary has not been doubled. Far from it!

Committee members do not get paid for what we do, the only compensation (other than the warm fuzzy feeling) is a reduced membership fee and a monthly Fish & Chip supper at the meetings.

Obviously the Zoom meetings have knocked the chips on the head (you’ll note we’re all wasting away) and with things as they are, we have voted that committee members should pay for full membership to help keep the lights on.

Homologation

With so many people sat around twiddling their thumbs for long periods of time we’ve had a bit of a run on homologation in the last year, and along with these new builds come some frequently asked questions. One of these is “does anyone have a build sheet for...”, so we thought it worth just running over the process and giving a bit of background to what has become an important part of any mower build.

Group 4 is the most recent addition having only been added to our line up in the late 90s. Whereas Groups 2 and 3 tend to use a small number of very similar models of mower, lawn tractors come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and since we endeavour to keep the silhouette of our mowers looking as standard as possible, this meant that measurements for each model had to be recorded so that we’d have something to compare a prepared mower against—enter the homologation sheet.

Homologation in the motorsport context is a type approval process that ensures that a racing machine complies with the current set of rules, and in common with other motorsports where production vehicles are raced, it also ensures that the finished product is based on a real vehicle and is not in fact just a fully scratch-built one off. Many of you will be aware of the low production ‘special editions’ that manufacturers have put out to build just enough to comply with such rules, such as the Ford Sierra RS500 Cosworth, Austin Metro 6R4 and Westwood Lawnbug Templar edition.

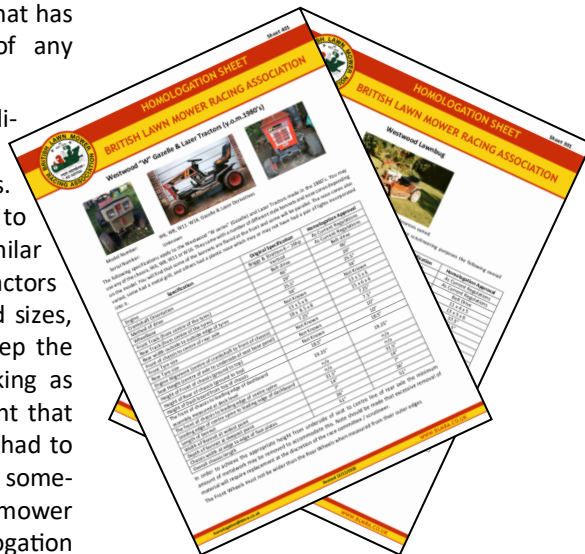
When looking to build any new mower, the flow chart given at the front of our handbook (available on the www.blmra.co.uk) should be followed, this will direct you to contact the homologation team before you start.

Having been doing this for a few years, we’ve amassed a bit of a library of homologation sheets, so the chances are that we’ll have one for your machine and it’ll just be a case of a member of the team satisfying themselves that you are given the right sheet for that mower.

If your mower is something that we haven’t seen before, then you will need to organise with the team to have it measured. This is why we insist that you don’t start till you’ve got in touch.

These measurements will be used to create a brand new sheet, which will contain photos, list all the original ‘factory’ measurements and all the permitted measurements for the final mower—which by and large will be the same values. It’s then up to you to build your mower within the rules laid out in the handbook as well as the dimensions specific to your machine.

We’ve recently started going through our library of sheets, making sure details are correct, they’re complete and giving them some proper BLMRA branding—so don’t panic if yours doesn’t look like those pictured above. But please remember to contact the team at homologation@blmra.co.uk before you start your build to make sure you have the most up to date details, and more importantly to make sure that you are building the mower you think you are!



A couple of our more commonly used homologation sheets

NWLMRA Engine Rules

Many of you will be aware that the NWLMRA this week announced changes to their engine rules, notably allowing the 16HP Briggs and Stratton Vanguard vee-twin engine to be used and removing any “standard exhaust” regulations.

We just wanted to remind members that the BLMRA and NWLMRA rule books, although very similar are managed independently and as such these changes are not duplicated in ours. The list of BLMRA approved engines remains as given in the 2020 handbook and standard exhausts must be used in all groups where specified.