



CUTTINGS

BRITISH LAWN MOWER RACING ASSOCIATION

In its revised quarterly format, may I welcome you to the first issue of Cuttings for 2022! As the pre-season edition, it will concentrate mostly on the AGM, off-season developments and look forward to the first half of the season. There will then be mid-season, end of season and Christmas editions, with more immediate concerns communicated directly via email and social media.

With one quarter of the year already behind us, we find ourselves with only one more weekend to get machines ready for our first event. Spring Live! at Ardingly is also the first of several shows we have pencilled in this season, which is a very welcome return to form after a couple of very subdued years for the club. Hopefully this will put us back in the public eye whilst whetting the appetite of existing racers, thus giving the club a much needed boost after a string of relatively poor turnouts last season. With a few new venues in the calendar we also hope to forge some long term relationships with landowners, who are becoming increasingly hard to entice and keep hold of!

As is so often the case, my intention at the end of the 2021 season was to put together a gripe list to give me half a chance of getting the mower fighting fit for 2022. I didn't, I haven't and I'm struggling to remember what should have been on the list — I'm sure things look rosier in your garage though right?! Don't panic, DON'T PANIC!!!

Graham

AGM

The first physical AGM since 2019 was held on Saturday 5th of March at Billingshurst centre. We ended up in a room smaller than we would have liked, but unfortunately the attendance was such that the room still felt a little empty with only 15 members attending.

The meeting generally followed the published agenda, starting with a general welcome and then Pete said some words about the life and passing of club founder Jim Gavin, who we all owe so much and will be sorely missed by many. The president and chairman then each gave their season report and a summary of the finances was given.

Committee changes were then approved, which included Pugs standing down, long time member Baz Thomas joining and Ian Ratcliff retaining his title as Chairman for one more year.

Into the meat of the meeting, the new golf ball rule was communicated and there was also discussion over the want to perform more dimensional checks (see '2022 rule change').

Richard then discussed our adoption of the Xero software that has allowed us a much better insight into our incomings and outgoings (see December's Cuttings) and this led neatly into Carl presenting our new membership structure (see 'Camping Only Membership').

Pugs then presented the 2022 calendar and Ian Tanswell shared his intention to organise a number of these meetings on our behalf, drawing on his experi-



Top Left: Group 2 Champion Graham Tibbenham. Top Right: Group 3 Champion Dean Fuller with second and third place Sean Tanswell and Stuart Johnson. Bottom Left: Group 4 Champion Alfie Smith. Bottom Right: Endurance Champion Les Pantry

ence of having done so during his time on the committee previously.

'Any other business' largely centred around the issue of the 12 hour and its feasibility (see '12 Hour') and led us on to the prize giving ceremony.

Prizes were awarded to all podium finishers present in each of the three Groups, first place taking home a rather fetching framed shirt instead of the traditional trophy. Pugs was awarded the Maurice Bowery shield in recognition of the effort, heartache and headaches incurred in pulling together calendars for both 2020 and 2021. Richard Atherton was awarded the Stan Cooper Cup for outstanding

service to the club, in recognition of his efforts on the financial side of things — pushing us towards Xero, administering it, suggesting and running the engine purchases and sales, and just generally forcing us to look really hard at how we do business. Pugs Reeves was then appointed the role of Honorary Vice President — the first inductee since 2017!

Very unusually the meeting finished ahead of time! Thanks to all who attended, and for your engagement and continued support through these hard times; it was great to see you all! Congratulations to all award winners, and we look forward to seeing everyone again in two short weeks time.



Group 3 At Codicote in 2021

The 12 Hour

Without beating around the bush—with only around four months between now and our 12 hour date, it's looking increasingly less likely that this will go ahead.

Discussion of the 12 hour took a lot of time at the AGM and it was clear that those present share our thoughts that we really need to run it this year to secure its future and passions for it run high.

Needless to say we've not written it off yet, but the field that we thought we had this year has fallen through and an alternative is not forthcoming.

As we've pointed out repeatedly; venues are becoming increasingly hard to find, particularly venues within the price range we have become accustomed to. The members present were very supportive of the fact that the only way around this is to broaden our price range—conscious that this will further increase the cost of the event.

To this end, it is almost certain that any future 12 hour will see a real step change in terms of entry fee—with higher costs and no sponsor to subsidise it, the only sensible course of action is to save money where we can and make sure entry fees cover costs. Sounds rather obvious really!

What this looks like remains to be seen, and it may well be that costs will be shared between entrants leading to variable pricing—so with a full entry of 50 teams, each team would pay a 50th, if 25 enter, the fee would be double this.

Obviously this would rely heavily on early entries to give a proper estimation for racers and we would have to consider go/no-go criteria.

Cancellations for weather or pandemics don't even bear thinking about!

2022 Rule Change

Just a reminder about the new rule that was mentioned in December's Cuttings and formally announced at the AGM: The new 'golf ball rule' limits the size of gaps permitted in Group 4 foot plates to 42.67mm (i.e. a golf ball), to limit the chances of the rider getting trapped and injured rather than thrown in an accident.

Aside from this there have been no changes to the rule book other than a few corrections. We intend to perform a number of random spot checks of mowers this season, particularly concentrating on dimensions, and wish to point out once again that 'grandfather rights' are not given to existing mowers—the rules evolve in the name of safety and to maintain a level playing field; so all mowers raced in 2022 must comply with the 2022 rule book.

If anyone needs any rule clarified or require a copy of the current homologation sheet for your mower so that there are no surprises, please get in touch: technical@blmra.co.uk.

Ardingly

Spring Live! at Ardingly showground is our first event of 2022 which should be a great way to start the season in the public eye.

We do unfortunately need to be quite strict on a few things: the big one is noise.

The showground is situated fairly near to houses and they have received noise complaints from neighbours following past events. Therefore part of the agreement we have had to sign in order to race makes heavy mention of this and gives the promotor the right to cut short, cancel and reduce the number of competitors in races.

Clearly we don't want them to enact this right, particularly because of the affect this will have on Championship rounds! As such we intend to do all we can to create barriers with caravans and equipment and we'll need to be much stricter than usual on our silencer rules to keep below the site's boundary limit. Unfortunately this means that we'll be unable to give the usual 'one meeting's grace' and so we advise everyone to do all they can to ensure their mower complies or can be made to comply with our 90dB limit (rule E6) to avoid disappointment.

We also need to provide the showground with a race schedule that they can share with their neighbours ahead of time—and we'll need to stick to it. So expect start, finish and break times to be a little more strict than usual, and so racers will need to ensure they line up promptly.

Being a showground they are also concerned about the mess we'll make of their ground and will impose a fine if we cannot remediate it to their satisfaction. We'll have to play this one by ear, but we just ask for your understanding if we have to change the track at any point, and your help in making good as best we can at the end of the weekend.

Due to this, we'll also need to watch the weather very closely—as we said at the AGM, after Five Oaks we need to stop trying to forge on in the face of inclement weather and keep cancellation an option right up to the last minute: This is a particular example, as we just can't afford the risk. We will of course give as much notice as we possibly can and will endeavour to contact members directly if it's likely you're already on your way.

2022 Calendar

Whilst the calendar has been out for some time now, this is the first time it's appeared in Cuttings since it has been finalised, or at least almost so.

There are a few changes to the dates published in December, notably an April date has been added and the September dates have been pulled forwards.

As I said in the introduction, it's great to see some shows back in the calendar, which is a very welcome change from certain recent meetings where we have had to turn away spectators. Not forgetting of course that shows often come with their own benefits too—stalls, bars, catering, live music and if we're really lucky—at least 8 solid hours of fairground organ music!

There are also three new venues; which is a real relief, particularly after losing three of our regulars in Newdigate, Coddicote and Essex.

Some have been asking about the "TBC" in our calendar. Whilst Pugs has been working on several possibilities, we're hoping that fortune has smiled on us, as we've been approached by a show which takes place on exactly the dates we needed to fill. Whilst we've not yet closed the deal, what I can say is that this is another Westcountry steam fair, so fingers crossed.

Failing that, whilst we don't exactly have a vast *reservoir* of back up venues, we may be able to *dip* into one if needed...

April

23-24th Spring Live! RH17 6TL

May

7-8th Cow Pie Show, RH7 6JL

21-22nd Reservoir Dip, RH14 9DA

June

4-5th Double 4, SO24 1HW

18-19th Godstone Farm, RH9 8LX

July

2-3rd Heddington (W/C), SN11 0PL

16-17th Venue TBA

August

13-14th 12 Hour, Venue TBA

27-29th Cheddar, BS26 2JB

September

3-4th Blacklands Farm, RH19 4HP

17-18th Capel RH5 5HG

Website

I'm sure that many would agree that our website leaves a little something to be desired.

Updating a website sounds fairly simple and in general it is; however what sets ours apart is the commercial side of things—the memberships, the shop and crucially the race entry system; which allows you to create a profile, populates our entry lists, links transponders and integrates with MyLaps.

It cost us a lot of money several years ago, but as is so often the case with these things—technology has moved on and the platform it is based on is no longer supported.

We now require various changes, as race entry and payment has become very labour intensive; Carl has been in contact with our current service provider and has secured a highly discounted rate (honestly!) for the upgrade, which in fact will be a complete rewrite onto the current platform: £11,000...

We are therefore looking at our options, which include exploring alternatives for the cleverer things that the site does; for example we're looking to use an online supplier such as 'Teespring' to deal with club branded merch, which also solves some of the other issues we have (how much stock do we order, where do we store it, what sizes do we need, who's going to deal with it and what do we do with these unsold 2013 teeshirts?!) whilst potentially increasing the variety of items available to members.

We're also looking at the race entry system—the easy answer would seem to be to copy other clubs; 'TeamApp' being the obvious choice as the NWLMRA have been using it for some years. We're experimenting with this as we know some find it frustrating to use and we need to be sure that it will fulfil our needs.

Another option is to talk to other clubs and look into developing a platform that we can all use so we can share the burden. It may well be that £11k is good value, but it would completely wipe out what's left of our 'rainy day fund'!

It's all very much in the air, and we're fast running out of time to implement something for this season. If you have any bright ideas or use a particularly good entry system in other spheres, please get in touch!



Group 4 at Winchester in 2021

Other Endurance Meetings

Also worth noting is that the WMLMRA have moved the date of their 555 to 28-29th May and so it no longer clashes with other fixtures around the country including our Double 4—this should benefit both clubs, allowing members of both clubs to enter both meetings.

Rounding out the season, as is tradition, the NWLMRA have pencilled in 8-9th October for their 6 hour—ideal for those who still haven't had enough!

Camping Only Membership

As discussed at the open forum at Five Oaks last season and formally announced at the AGM (despite having already been opened on the website), we now have the option of a camping only membership.

This offers a discounted membership rate to those who wish to come along and join the festivities, but without the hassle of racing.

Whilst this and the camping fee in general have been criticised by some, many have warmed to the idea when it's been explained that this fulfils two purposes—firstly it ensures that a box is ticked for our public liability insurance, and secondly, and more importantly, it helps spread the burden fairly across everyone that enjoys our activities.

Trying not to sound like a broken record: times have changed and venues and all that go with them are a lot more expensive than they used to be. It seems to us only fair that everyone making use of those facilities should help towards making them possible in the first place. It is after all still a cheap weekend away!

One thing that does need clarifying though, is that racers will always take priority when space is limited, and we may need to restrict the numbers of non-racers at some venues when directed by the land owner (e.g. shows).

In these instances, event entry for camping only members will only open once race entry has closed, i.e. mid-night on the Monday night preceding the meeting.

More Loncins!

Following the success of our 2021 sales, we are now able to offer another batch of Loncin 413 engines—and despite everything else in the world going up in price, we will not be increasing the price from £400 each!

As shown in the figures given in December's Cuttings, these sales dramatically helped our financial situation, with the modest profits going straight back into the club. Hence once these units are sold we will be reviewing whether future purchases are viable at the tail end of the season, as we believe that this benefits everyone.

If you are after one, please get in touch!

The World Championships

Having been absent since 2019, the World Championships will be back in 2022!

This fast paced meeting has been pencilled in for July 2-3rd at the Heddington & Stockley steam fair in Wiltshire. As usual it will also feature the Toowoomba trophy relay race, the Champion of Champions race and the European Tractor Cup.

Usually a fun weekend in its own right, we have for a number of years suffered from a lack of space and a tired surface. The organiser had previously said that the ground has been given some love during its year off, but owing to the prestige of hosting the Worlds, they have promised us more space and a grander location!

Email Addresses

Although all club emails carry the www.blmra.co.uk domain, these actually mask a number of Gmail accounts.

Currently and for many years we've used this service free of charge, however as of July, Google will begin charging us £9 per month per address!

Because we've had 50 free addresses to play with, we've created quite a few over the years—but clearly we're going to need to rationalise unless we can find a more affordable option.

First to fall will be all personally maintained addresses, including committee members and HVPs—so if you have one of these, please look to back-up any important data and migrate any linked accounts (e.g. Zoom, blmra.co.uk logins and so forth) as soon as possible.

We will then look to reduce the number of generic mailboxes (committee@, homologation@, technical@, engines@ etc.) to just a handful, which are yet to be determined and will be communicated as and when the changes are put in place.

In conclusion

All in all then, things are shaping up pretty well. There is plenty going on, but plenty still to be done behind the scenes. With a great calendar, including several shows and new venues, some promising groundwork has been laid for the 2022 season and it's up to all of us to make it a great one.

So what can we expect to see this season?

Have we seen an end to Cresswell dominance in Group 2? The smart money is on no! Mike is still at the top of his game and Jenson is poised to take the reins, having more than proven himself worthy racing as a junior in 2021—with both youth and his Dad's 25 years' experience on his side, he is definitely one to watch! As is young Mr Thurston—with a proven machine under him, it won't take him long to earn his spurs and show us how it's done.

Can Dean continue to dominate Group 3? The gap between Dean, Sean, Stuart and Pete closed significantly over that in 2019 and it has been tight for a number of years, so it's anyone's game! The numbers were down in Group 3 last year, so perhaps a new contender will step up to the plate? Perhaps an old hand will make a comeback? Charlie?!

2021 saw a lot of Group 4 racers tempted by the Murray Widebody and accordingly I think we'll see quite a few more hit the track this season as more people chase the flavour of the month. Alfie may have his work cut out—but he does have a head start on his side. Will Gary or Dan reclaim the title? Will Kenny or Posh take their first? Will Posh be too busy with poopy nappies to notice? After a year off, does Darren Tebbutt now have a mower for every meeting?!

Let's also not lose sight of the World and Endurance Championships that are set to return this season. The Worlds will undoubtedly reflect the British, but remember that everybody has the odd bad day and it takes very little to change your fate in such a fast-paced event! Has Les's last minute win on the Endurance championship given others an idea?!

There remain risks from pandemic, petrol and precipitation – which are totally out of our control, but what we can promise is the usual levels of family, friendship and fun!

Take care, and see you at Ardingly! (Entry is now Open!)