

ALLEN MOTOR SCYTHE

TECHNICAL HISTORY

The Allen Motor Scythe was a finger bar mower of British manufacture. The publication "Fifty Years of Garden Machinery" provides the following information.

Finger bar mowers pulled by horses or tractors have been used on farms for more than 100 years. Smaller machines for garden and smallholdings, either hand-pushed or self-propelled, normally with a 3ft. cutter bar, were introduced in the early 1930's.

The 3ft. cut self-propelled Allen Motor Scythe was made by John Allen & Sons at Oxford for nearly 40 years, from 1935 to 1973. The Villiers engine with a cast iron cylinder and piston was rarely any trouble. It sometimes refused to start if there was more than a trace of fuel mixture in the crankcase. This problem was solved by draining it from a drain plug under the engine. A 1.9hp. Villiers 2 stroke was used exclusively until 1955 when there was a choice of this engine or a 1.9hp Villiers Mk. 15 4 stroke power unit. A third option was added in 1957 with a 2.9hp Villiers Mk.25 4 stroke engine. Both the 4 stroke engines were splash lubricated and the Mk. 25 could be converted to run on kerosene.

The large diameter pneumatic tyred wheels with ratchets in the wheel hubs were driven by a worm and wheel and a pair of reduction gears. The cutter bar was driven from the worm shaft through an enclosed crank to an oscillating spring steel arm located in a socket on the knife back and protected from overload by a safety clutch.

The Allen was much more than a motor scythe for cutting long grass and scrub. Front mounted attachments included a toolbar, hay sweep, rotary brush, snowplough, yard scraper and cylinder mower. The toolbar was bolted to the cutter bar bracket and could be used to plough, hoe, cultivate and drill seeds. Ancillary equipment for hedge trimming, chain sawing and sheep shearing could be used with either an engine driven 400 watt generator or a flexible shaft, vee belt driven from the crankshaft pulley. Orchard spraying was another job for the Allen Motor Scythe and a trailed seat with a drawbar was used to tow gang mowers, a hay rake and trailer.

An advertising slogan for the Allen declared "*Wherever a man can walk, an Allen will cut*".

WORKING HISTORY

Nothing is known of the working life of this implement or of what needs to be done to make it operational