

# FARM AND HORTICULTURAL EQUIPMENT

## EDITORIAL

### Tractor World 2010

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend Tractor & Machinery's Tractor World event at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire over the weekend of March 6 and 7 but, having been in conversations with a number of people who did, the show was, as one has come to expect, a great success with attendance figures up on previous years.

The horticultural classes (ride-on, pedestrian-controlled and garden implements) were well supported with exhibitors coming from far and wide. Indeed, the section steward Graham Smith had his hands full fitting them all in the allotted space.

There was one minor difference on the site layout this year; this saw the Vintage Horticultural & Garden Machinery Club stand being located with other club stands, not in the immediate proximity of the horticultural exhibits. A little inconvenient maybe, but I am sure this did not spoil anyone's day out.

Vintage auction sales are always a good crowd puller and the Saturday auction organised by HJ Pugh & Co was no exception. There were over 1,700 lots on offer, including a selection of items to interest *F&HE* readers.

Looking at the sale results posted on the Pugh website, I note with interest that a low-bodied Opperman Motocart sold for £1,000;

this set me wondering if the two recently published articles in *F&HE* on the Opperman Motocart had created increased interest in this marque.

Incidentally, thanks to additional material being supplied by readers there will be third instalment on the Opperman Motocart in the not-too-distant future.

A report on Tractor World can be found elsewhere in this issue.

### Gremlins strike

The Gremlins were at play in the April issue; the caption for the front cover picture should have read: "David Elmes is seen here with his Ransomes crawler tractor and plough at the Tracks Across the Field ploughing event a couple of years ago."

### Cover picture:

George Holt, co-organiser of the Anzani Iron Horse Ploughing Championships in action under the watchful eye of horticultural ploughing master Andy Ford. More photos can be found on page 109 (Photo: Shane Parry.)



## Electric garden tractors

By Colin Beazley

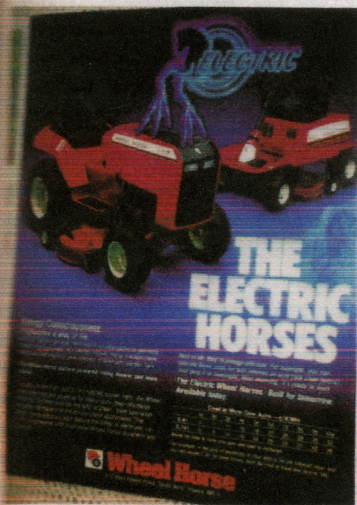
I noted that the March 2010 issue of *F&HE* featured an Elec-Trak electric powered garden tractor and thought that readers might be wondering about the origins and history of such a vehicle, so I decided that some research on the subject was in order. There follow the main points of my findings.

In the early 1960s the General Electric Company in the USA set up an outdoor power equipment division to provide equipment with an alternative power source in response to the likelihood of an oil crisis, fuelled by unrest in the major oil producing countries. General Electric, in particular, developed and tested over a period of time a range of battery-powered electric motor-driven garden tractors; these were built at





In 1969 three models were offered: the Elec-Trak E12, E15 and E29. They were all driven by electric motors powering Peerless 2300 series multi-speed transaxles. The E12 competed with petrol machines in the 12 horsepower range, whilst the E15 and E20 competed in the 14 and 16 horsepower classes.



An advertisement for the Wheel-Horse E-141.

The General Electric Company not only built tractors for sale as part of its own power equipment range, but also for the agricultural equipment manufacturer AVCO New Idea Products as the 18 horsepower EGT200 and for Wheel-Horse Products Inc as the Wheel-Horse B-145 Elec-Trak.

In the early 1970s falling sales resulted in the General Electric Company seeking a buyer for its ailing Elec-Trak division and, after the collapse of an employee buy-out, Wheel-Horse Products Inc, on 23 July 1973, announced that it was purchasing the assets of the General Electric Company's outdoor power products division.

Elec-Trak-style tractors with the Wheel-Horse name and livery were produced up to the end of the 1970s. The last of this style to be built were the B-145 and C185, of 1977.

In 1980 Wheel-Horse produced two new electric



The Wheel-Horse B-145 tractor.



The AVCO New Idea Products EGT200.

powered machines, both based on modifications to its then-current product range. The smaller was a ride-on type based on the 'A' series known as the E81 with five forward and one reverse speeds, powering a fully floating 32in side discharge cutting deck.

The larger model was based on the 'C' range series 5 garden tractors of 1980-1984 and was designated

the E141. This tractor used many of the same parts as the petrol engine-powered models, including the same chassis and uni-drive transmission and powered the same 36in three-bladed mower. The only major difference to its petrol-engined brother was a wider and higher version of the box-like 5 series bonnet.

After 1984 major changes to the range and style took

place within the Wheel-Horse grass care range, which resulted in the end of production of the Electric Wheel-Horse.

Since the purchase of Wheel-Horse Products Inc by Toro, electric powered machines of the walk-behind and hand-held types have appeared, but a ride-on machine has yet to be seen. Sorry about the poor quality of the pictures.