

The History  
of  
Mechanical Grazing:

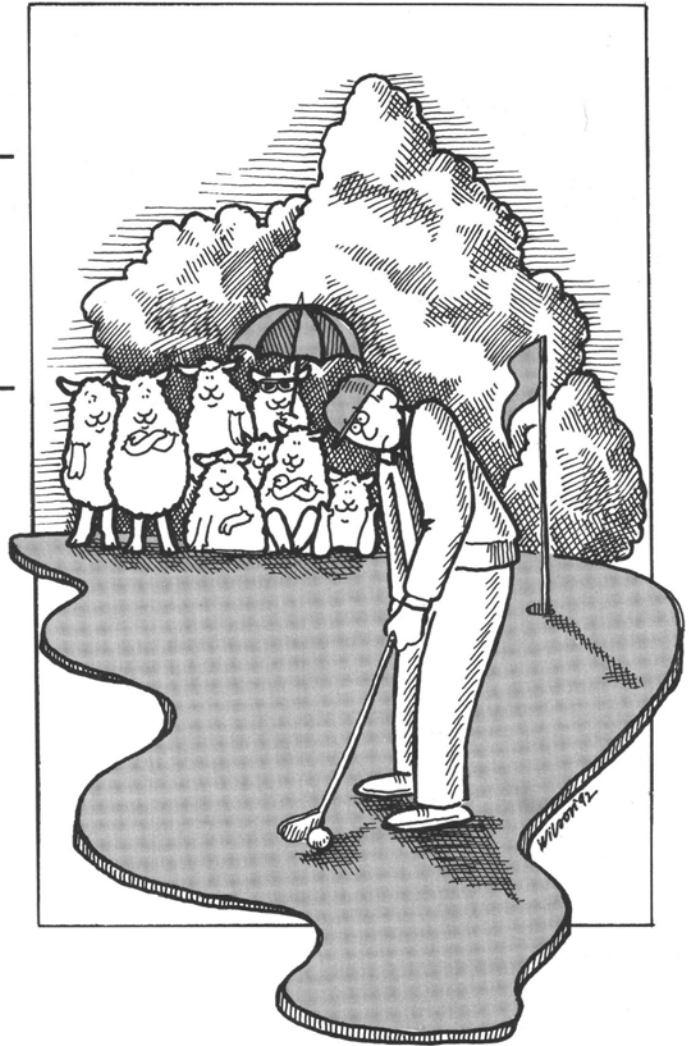
# THE LAWN MOWER

Early history of golf often cites the clipping of the greens by nature's grazer, the sheep. In fact, within the past 20 years the practice was observed by your Executive Secretary in New Zealand and Scotland. Obviously uniformity of cut, control of the mowers and cleanliness of the 'machines' leaves something to be desired. Why and where did our modern machines develop?

Edwin Budding, a foreman at a Gloucester, England textile mill, developed the reellawn mower in the 1820s; he intended to use it to cut nap off cotton cloth. By some accounts, workers resisted the labour-saving idea and Mr. Budding turned his attention to mowing lawns. In 1832, he advertised the mechanical mower as a 'dry' cutter (when scything, grass must be dampened to give it body) and said 'country gentlemen will find using my machine an amusing, useful and healthful exercise.' Judging by sales, they didn't.

The early mowers were large and heavy: Gardeners in the 1860s experimented with horse-drawn models to manicure lawns, but hoof marks and manure detracted from the desired effect. (As recently as 1907, a "Willing Worker" mower was being made that 'would take an elephant to shift' the Guardian said in its account of the world's first lawn mower museum, which opened last week in Southport, England).

By the 1880s, the cost and weight of hand-pushed mowers dropped sufficiently that they became popular in Britain and North America. The manual machine beat out a rival technology, the steam-driven lawn mower.



In 1919, Edwin George, a U.S. Army colonel, took the motor from his wife's washing machine to produce the first gasoline-powered lawn mower. It helped create the middle-class vogue for manicured lawns.

In 1955, the British government decided against requiring driving licences for lawn mowers. In North America, people have been charged with operating mowers while impaired. In 1975, New York cops were using unmarked lawn mowers as roadside radar traps. □

(Gleaned from the Globe & Mail)