

Question time for hospital trust at meeting

To find out more about the trust which runs Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton book a place at this month's Annual Members Meeting.

The Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust's An-

nual Members' Meeting will be held at Taunton Racecourse on Wednesday, September 26. The meeting opens at 2pm, with the main event from 3pm to 5.30pm.

In addition to presentations

and speeches, the meeting includes a 'question time' slot.

Places are limited and can be booked by contacting Wendy Burman on 01823 342226, or email wendy.burman@tst.nhs.uk.

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All smiles for this lawn mower racer

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Life in fast lane at lawn mower races

By Ian Mat

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From a distance they look like giants: big, strapping men astride electric razors, mini tractors or bug-fronted towed seats. Their shoulders are so wide they cast triangular shadows.

One of the strange riders noisily pulls his vehicle up at race end by the spectators' line and shuts his engine off. Up close he discards his super-human physique. Polyester fabric is stretched over muscle-shaped motocross body vest.

Beneath the helmet sweat has turned his cropped dark hair into rats' tails. His wife says: "I thought you were going to win." Wiping grime off his glasses and sucking down a bottle of water, the racer says: "I just couldn't see them." This is the competitive world of lawn mower racing.

All mowing is a race. No-one dawdles when trimming the yard. But 39 years ago a group of men in a Sussex pub were despairing over the creep of sponsorship into motorsport that Irishman Jim Gavin decided a new, non-commercial beast was needed. Outside during this lunch hour the



All geared up for action

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groundsman was moving the cricket field.

Now 150 miles due west in Roger Day's field off Old Coach Road in Weare, the British Championship of Lawn Mower Racing has come to Somerset for the first time. Hosting the weird sport is the Rotary Club of Mendip. Organiser Paul Knowles admits the idea came from another Rotary district and when it didn't go ahead they nicked it.

"I heard about it, maybe on YouTube first of all," he said.

"So I phoned the British Lawn Mower Racing Association who had never been to Somerset and we thought we would give it a try."

Paul said: "People have said

they love the racing. I'm very pleased and would hope for better figures at round 11 tomorrow. If we hold this again in future years we would grow on today for this is the first time it's been done."

The race track has been carved out of a field with hay bales from straw supplier Abbott &. After an hour's warm up and a 30-minute heat you would think the track would be shorn down to the bedrock. But for safety and speed all the mowers' blades have been removed.

Car mechanic Mike Thurston is tinkering on his black tractor-style group 4 mower with its bonnet-covered engine between races. Despite the noise that comes out of it he says it is a comfy ride with all its suspension and padded seat.

The wet summer has not been kind to the world of lawn mower racing and so impressed were the racers with the Somerset climate and course they said the Rotary Club of Mendip could have their pick of dates next year.

The club thanks Cheddar Vale Lions, landowner Roger Day, Bridgwater YMCA for the inflatable assault course, Abbott & Co for the bales, Cheddar Tyres for the tyres, Lanes of Cheddar and all who attended.



Trying to overtake on one of the bends

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Number 58 was one to watch

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