

material into wheelbarrows, and a team of between two and six people was needed to push the wheelbarrows (depending on the distance of the spoil heap from the machine). The efficiency of the machine could undoubtedly be improved by using it in conjunction with two dumper trucks, but the nature of the terrain at Beddington precluded this.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Because the machine is hired out on a self-drive basis, it is possible to have a driver who knows the nature of the site very well, which gives a much greater degree of control over the work than with a hired driver. The machine can be manoeuvred through narrow spaces (with the front legs folded inwards it has a minimum width of 71cm; 28in), and being relatively light in weight it can be used in areas inaccessible to larger machines. For small and/or delicate excavation jobs, and on excavations with a small budget but a sufficient labour force, this machine would prove much more economical to hire than a JCB, particularly since many plant hire firms are reluctant to hire out a machine for only one or two days.

The disadvantages of the machine must also be considered, the major one of which is that the machine uses the digging arm to push or pull itself along while it is in use. The weight of the machine on the bucket could compact archaeological layers, and the teeth on the bucket could cut through the layers. In practice it was found that there was no noticeable compaction, as would be the case with a JCB, although there was a danger of the teeth on the bucket penetrating the surface by 5-8cm (2-3in) if insufficient topsoil was left as a protection against this. The teeth on the bucket cannot be removed but the underside of the teeth and the

underside of the bucket are in the same plane (the teeth are not offset as on some machines), and so with care it is possible to cut a smooth surface without leaving ridges made by the teeth.

With the front legs in the splayed position, the machine is very stable in use, but with the legs in the forward position, the machine can very easily topple over sideways. In most situations, however, there is ample room to have the legs in the splayed position and so the problem rarely arises.

Another disadvantage is that the digging arm is positioned so that the bucket can undermine the front legs. This is not serious if only a small depth of soil is being removed, but if a deep trench is being dug (the machine can excavate up to a depth of 1.7m; 5½ft), there is a real danger of a careless driver undermining the front legs to such an extent that the machine and driver could fall into the trench. One minor design fault is that the position of the driver's seat cannot be adjusted, and so a driver with even slightly longer than average legs has to adopt an uncomfortable position in order to operate the controls.

Despite these disadvantages, many of which can be overcome or avoided by using the machine carefully, this machine is a very useful addition to the range of mechanical excavators available for use by archaeologists; on excavations where the only alternative is to remove the overburden by hand, the use of the micro-excavator could greatly speed up a hard and boring task for a relatively small amount of money.

The "Powerfab 125 micro-excavator" is manufactured by Powerfab Ltd, Unit 20 and No. 7 factory, Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate, Tredegar, Gwent.

Local Societies - amendments

THE SIXTH SET of amendments to the list of local societies (Vol 3, No. 12, 318-9) is as follows:

Beddington Carshalton & Wallington Archaeological Society; Sec. Mrs J. Clark, 7 Beech House, 57 Woodcote Road, Wallington, Surrey.

Egham-by-Runnymede Historical Society; Sec. R. Wykes, 1 The Crescent, Egham, Surrey.

Enfield Archaeological Society; Sec. Mr J Stevens, 3 Scarborough Road, Edmonton, London, N.9.

Hendon & District Archaeological Society; Sec. Mr Brian Wrigley, The Mermaid, 21 Woodcroft Avenue, London N.W.7 2AA.

Orpington & District Archaeological Society; Sec Miss Carol Springall, 18 Mickleham Road, St. Paul's Cray, Orpington, Kent, BR5 2RL.

Surrey Archaeological Society; Secs. John & Marian

Leveson Gower, 28 Gingers Close, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 7JL.

The Wimbledon Society (formerly The John Evelyn Society); Sec. Mrs R. Colman, 4 Helme Close, Lake Road, SW19 7EB.

Change of address:

Wembley Historical Society; Sec. T.A.C. Lomas, 43 Jordan Road, Perivale, UB6 7BJ.

West London Archaeological Field Group; 273A High Street, Brentford.

Correction:

Pinner Local History Society; Sec. Mrs. C. Baker (*not* Haker), 10 Pinner Green, Pinner.

Stanmore & Harrow Historical Society; Sec. Mrs. W. E. Cunningham (*not* Cunningham), 71 Barn Rise, Wembley Park, HA9 9NH.