

Why Hire?

E. J. Huxley, Huxleys Garden Machinery, Staines and Alresford.

We recently invited Huxleys Garden Machinery to contribute a short article on the hiring side of their business. What follows is their response.

I feel I cannot open this article in a better way than by quoting from the front cover of my firm's Hire Brochure: "... obviously if you can find a use for a machine during most months of the year it will pay you to buy . . . in this Brochure we have listed some machines which you may find more economical to hire from us (without operator) for various reasons—high capital cost—limited use—high maintenance costs". This was the theme on the front cover of the first Hire Brochure we produced, in December 1970, and the message remains the same on the cover of our latest issue which lists over 50 different pieces of equipment. Our Hire fleet now numbers some 200 machines (we operate 7 Ryan Greensaires, plus a standby machine, for example).

During the latter part of 1970 we were looking for some means of expanding our business which for years had been a specialist one, concentrating mainly on sales and service to the professional users, such as Golf Clubs, Sports Clubs, Local Authorities and Estates. We had two businesses established in good areas—Middlesex and Hampshire. The tendency amongst most of our competitors seemed to be to look for something to manufacture or import: somehow this did not seem to fit in with the

way we were going. We decided that the short-term hire of specialist equipment had great possibilities **provided it was done properly**. It is now apparent that we took the right decision because the hire side of our business has progressed over the last three years in a very satisfactory way: what about the advantages to the customer?

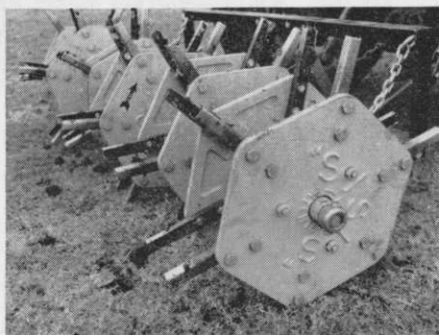
Nowadays the purchase of expensive machinery must be justified: even for so-called 'wealthy' Clubs it hardly makes sense to lay out a large sum on the purchase of a piece of equipment which will only be used for a week or two each year. The expense is not confined to the original purchase—other factors such as storage space, depreciation and maintenance must also be taken into account. No Club could afford to keep the large range of equipment which we offer for hire. It is pleasing to us to realise that in our small way we are contributing to improvements in the condition of many Golf Courses and Sports Grounds. Our turf maintenance equipment, for instance, is in great demand in the Autumn and Spring and Clubs are able to make great improvements in the quality of their playing surfaces by hiring machines from us for use by their own skilled staff—machines which would certainly be beyond the reach of most Clubs to purchase. We do not hire to Contractors, incidentally; it is a condition that our machines must only be used by the hirer or his employees. We offer to instruct the operator in use and maintenance: indeed with certain

machines we insist that this is done.

There is a limit on the distance we travel; all our charges are inclusive of collection and delivery within 30 miles of Staines or Alresford and we do go up to 50 miles at an extra charge. All our equipment is maintained in tip-top condition (we always start with new machines) and machines are serviced in our workshops after every hire. In this way breakdowns are reduced to a minimum. Generally we hire by the week although some machines are available for a minimum of two days. Medium and long term hires can be negotiated in advance at special rates. We have tried to make our terms and conditions as simple as possible . . . e.g. on the subject of liability we say only "the hirer's liability includes responsibility for loss or damage caused by fire, theft, neglect or misuse, but the hirer is not responsible for normal wear and tear".

Our hire section is now in its fourth year and in that time we have learned a lot. We have made mistakes, of course, but hiring is now an established part of the business and it has, I think, made my firm quite well-known in the South East of England. I think I can claim without boasting that we are providing a valuable service to the customer.

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