Two of the biggest names in fine turf machinery will come under the same ownership if a recommendation to shareholders by the board of Ransomes plc to accept a bid of £137.1 million for the company from American giant Textron is accepted.

Textron already owns Jacobsen.

The sale, which is expected to be ratified by shareholders, comes at the end of an extended period of speculation regarding the Ransomes, Cushman, Ryan, during which time the rumour mill had linked them to a number of other companies.

Ransomes' Chief Executive Peter Wilson said that he didn't expect the sale to be completed until the end of the year at the earliest.

On the future of Ransomes he said it was early days but it was his understanding that the company would continue to operate alongside Jacobsen.

"Textron has stated that we shall become a part of a $800 million group with others including Jacobsen and E-Z-GO," he explained, from Ransomes' Ipswich base.

On the matter of another well known British company being sold abroad he was a realist.

"There is more to a company than who is the owner and whether it is British or American but it is important to have the security of having someone who is a UK based supplier of the product.

"Up against huge companies which are well financed and extremely diverse it was thought better for Ransomes to join with a bigger player rather than risk the economic vagaries of going it alone. We have to consider the shareholders and our employees," he explained.

Mary Lovejoy, Textron's Vice President of Communications and Investor Relations, based in Providence, Rhode Island, said the acquisition of Ransomes would be a great addition to the Textron group of companies, which already includes Cessna aircraft and Bell helicopter companies as well as E-Z-GO, Iseki and Jacobsen.

"We feel that there are a great many products within the ranges of Jacobsen and Ransomes which are complementary. Ransomes offers a great deal in the commercial market, not just the fine turf market, which will strengthen our position.

"The fact that Ransomes offers a manufacturing base which we do not currently have in the UK will give us much greater flexibility and we will be looking at the options that brings us. Importing product is extremely expensive," she explained.

She added that brand name was important to Textron and that the Ransomes name, which has a strong reputation and links with some prestigious venues including Gleneagles, St Andrews and Pebble Beach.

"Obviously as the deal has not been completed it is too early to speculate on how Ransomes' name would be incorporated into any new company title."

---

One of the great figures of British greenkeeping retires at the end of the year.

Bill Lawson, Course Manager at Heswall GC since 1965, and a former Chairman of EIGGA, Vice Chairman of BIGGA and latterly a Trustee of the Association, has been instrumental in the rise of greenkeeping to the stage that it is today.

In the '70s and early '80s Bill was at the heart of discussions between Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers on how greenkeeper education should progress.

"The sound nature of those discussions backed by forward thinking golf clubs like Heswall have proved to be right," said Bill, who worked closely with Reaseheath College.

Bill is quick to pay tribute to his own golf club which has had only one Chairman of Green in the last 18 years: "It has been a privilege to work with Dr Frank Harkin who has been so forward thinking in working along with me in setting up the working and training programmes at Heswall. The emphasis is on working on five year programmes with Head Greenkeepers or Course Managers and Chairman of Green who will be there throughout."

A measure of that is the number of people who have moved on to top jobs from Heswall.

Among them, Raymond Hunt, from Forest of Arden; Marc Lewis, PGA European Tour; Kevin Roe, Pannal; Paul Pearce, Stockport; Norman Pearce, Lofenfield Heidelberg; Ian Farrall, Caldy; Nick Bower Hoylake; Neil Toner, Wirral Ladies, Reg Sommers, Head Groundsman at Liverpool FC and Guy Cannings, the new Course Manager at Heswall.

Bill sees a need for the educational standards to continue to improve. "The pressures are far higher today that you could even have imagined 30 years ago. Then if you had a dozen cars in the car park it was a busy day. Now you can have 150 people playing by 10.30 in mid November.

"These pressures are here to stay and will only increase as golf continues to grow in popularity. This makes our work as professional greenkeepers more important than ever and makes BIGGA even more central to the future of every young greenkeeper."

He has enjoyed his time at a genuinely friendly golf club which offers up superb views into North Wales and out into the Irish Sea. He can look back at his work on the course which has included a general tightening up of fairways, the construction of new bunkers and a tree planting project which has involved the addition of 2,800 new trees.

Bill will spend more of his new found spare time on the riverbank indulging his passion for fishing.

Picture by Ian Birch.
Around the Green

Cleveland
John Chanthill, ex Teesside GC, has moved to Lilleshall GC, in Staffordshire, and is very happy in his new appointment. His old boss, Tony Smith, has now completed mound building and tree planting as a sound barrier close to the A19 and A66 and Parkway motorways. Over the past two years 10 new tees have been built and bunkers altered at four greens, Teesside GC.

At Bedale, Ian Pemberton, the Head Greenkeeper moved house from Middlesbrough but his wife has not settled in Bedale so they are to return to Middlesbrough to live and he will travel daily, while Kevin Scarce, the Assistant at Bedale is on a training course at Askham Bryan College, York. Bedale are to install irrigation to six tees and have started an extensive tree planting programme. The 6,000 trees will certainly create interest to the golfers in the future!

Dinsdale Spa GC have re-laidd two greens to USGA specifications using their own greensstaff. The surrounds and mounds have been newly shaped and turfed to complete the job.

SISIS held a machinery demonstration at Eaglescliffe GC in October. Sixty greenkeepers attended a successful day of excellent equipment. Two courses have now taken advantage at Houghall College this winter, NVQ 3 and NVQ 4.

George Malcolm, at Brass GC, Middlesex has replaced his sand in the bunkers with one which is firmer for both the player's stance and for the ball to sit on the sand rather than sink in. Bruce Burnell

East of England
The annual match again the Secretaries Association took place at Market Rasen. Head Greenkeeper John Hewson and his staff had prepared the course in its usual excellent condition. The result went in favour of the Secretaries 5-3. There was talk around the dinner table that the Secretaries had had their Spring meeting at Market Rasen to practice in preparation for this match as they lost to the Greenkeepers last year. The event was sponsored by Chandler's Machinery, thanks to Jim Carr for the company's help. The longest drive was sponsored by Phil Wilkinson, of Fieldcare, and was won by the big hitting Jim Carr! nearest the pin was won by Eric Coombes, of the Secretaries Association.

While I am on the thank you trail I must thank John Brown, Secretary of Market Rasen, for allowing us all courtesy of the course and thanks to the caterers for an excellent meal (but get something different next year)

The East of England Section results were:- Jim Birkett & Phil Wilkinson lost 3&1; Dave Griffin & Andy Richardson lost 1 down; John Scootney & Les Purdy lost 3&2; Peter Fell & Dave Hornsey won 3&2; Ted Lake & Fred Cobb lost 3&2; Norman Hewson & John Hewson won 7&5; Richard Smith & Graham Bontof lost 2&1; Graeme Macdonald & Jim Carr won 3&2.

Next year's match has been provisionally booked for Toft GC.

Anybody interested in attending a Chainsaw Course at Woodhall Spa on February 3, 4, 5 and 6th then contact me on the number below.

That's all for this month apart from saying hello to Jim Brown, a Northern BIGGA member, who always reads this Section.

Contact me if you have any news from around the Region or Section on 01636 626564.

Graeme Macdonald

Midland
The much awaited educational trip to Sunningdale and Wentworth took place on October 13 and proved to be very enjoyable for all of the members who took part. To be able to see behind the scenes of these two well documented courses was of great interest and the time given to us by Brian Turner and Chris Kennedy was much appreciated. The timing of our visit to Wentworth was not the greatest: being the day after the World Matchplay and many thanks go to Chris for his co-operation.

I would also like to thank Richard Minton, of Miracle/Scotts, and Nigel Tyler, of County Crops, for their sponsorship of the day and the main and drinks and lunches, thank you.

We are also looking to organising another trip to Turnberry but this will involve an overnight stop and there could be a round of golf. There would obviously be a small cost but if we can get enough numbers there would probably be some kind of sponsorship. If you are interested please contact me on 01384 292396.

Finally I would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year and hope every greenkeeper has a successful 1998.

Welcome to this new member "Dave" to the syndicate, Robert Coxall, Steven Lloyd, Adrian Haddock, Michael Gash, Robert Mason and Michael Trotman.

Jonathan Wood

BB & O

The golf day at Lambourne was a great success with a full field yet again. The weather was a bit on the miserable side but this didn't affect the enjoyment on the day. Sadly there were no surprises when it came to the winner again! He must be in the running for sports personality of the year!
The results were: - 1. S. Putt & M. Timms, 61 pts (boring); 2. T. French & B Walker; 3. L. T. Anderson & T. Smith (a prize at last!); Longest Drive - E Walker; Nearest the Pin – the M. Timms; Wooden Spoon - B Wall & D. Winterton. I won't embarrass them by revealing their score as neither of them would speak to me again... on second thoughts I'm sure it was approximately one point per hole!

The day was sponsored by Avoncrop Amenity Products which was much appreciated by all. My special thanks to Richard Haynes for his organising on the day and also to Joe Feltham for presenting the prizes on behalf of the company. Thanks to Tony French and his team for providing an excellent test of golf and many thanks to all concerned at Lambourne for their hospitality on the day.

One other golf tournament is drawing to a close at a club that is a mighty Taylor Fourball Knockout. B. Bennie and C. Milard have coasted into the final having disposed of P. Plater and J. Lee with ease. They will play R. Clark and C. Jacobsen who knocked out last year's winners T. French and G. Wheeler 3&2. The results of the final will be posted in next month's magazine. There are some Winter Lectures...
approaching so please make a note of the following dates in your diary:-

Berkshire College; January 14 – Communications, February 4 – Golf Course Design, March 4 – Irrigation. These all commence at 7 pm and run until 9 pm when refreshments will be served.

Warren Farm College; January 28 – Health and Safety, February 25 – Irrigation and Conservation, March 25 – USGA Specification. These also commence at 7 pm with refreshments to follow.

Please try and attend as many of the above as possible, the colleges need to see some support from our Section.

I would like to end by wishing all of you a Happy Christmas and a drunken New Year! See you in 1998.

L. T. Anderson

Mid Anglia

Our Autumn golf tournament was held at the end of October at South Beds Golf Club over 18 holes. Although the first frost of the year arrived prior to the tournament, it quickly disappeared in the autumn sunshine and didn’t spoil anyone’s fun.

The golf attracted an entry of 32 people, seven of whom were trade members. This was down considerably on last year’s corresponding fixture at Collingtree Park. Those who did enter however seemed to enjoy a good round, with good scores evident on the day. The results were as follows: 1. Gary Boulton, Dunstable Downs, 41 pts; 2. Leon Cant, Brocket Hall, 39 pts; 3. Eddi O’Hanlon, Chesfield Downs, 39 pts; Longest Drive – Jon Moorhouse, Brocket Hall; Nearest the Pin – Gary Boulton, Dunstable Downs; Trophy Prize – John Donaldson, 44 pts.

Our thanks go to our main sponsors for the day, Driving Force Leisure, represented by David Murphy, and also to Kings Horticulture who sponsored nearest the Pin.

Thanks also to the other trade members who supported us on the day and participated in the golf. My personal thanks to South Beds for the excellent choice of meals and hospitality shown and also to my staff for preparing the course.

The AGM of the Mid Anglia Section was held after the prize giving and in the absence of our Chairman, Stewart Boyce, Vice Chairman Mark Ellis chaired the meeting. The Secretary, Gerald Bruce reported that the Section now had 242 members and that the Hayward National Tournament will be held at South Beds. The meeting was also crucial to the success of the £500 Mid Anglia Prize which was won by Gary Boulton from Dunstable Downs.

East Anglia

This year’s Rigby Taylor East Midlands v Midlands Section golf match was played at the delightful venue of Whittington Heath GC on October 16. Despite a wet start to the day things eventually improved, not long into the greensome matches, with the Section taking a 3-2 lead. The afternoon format of matchplay singles started very badly for us with us losing five of the first seven games with the only winners being Anthony Foulds and Adie Porter.

Needling to win the final three games was left to Steven Heap, Mark Bindley and myself and all members of the Midland Section should go to Steve Blackman and the rest of the Rigby Taylor team for sponsoring a really enjoyable day.

The Team on the day consisted of the following members:- Pete Billings, Dave Leather, Anthony Foulds, Dave Mitchell, Steve Goode, Adie Porter, Ian Needham, Antony Bindley, Mark Bindley and Steven Heap.

As Chairman of the Region I was fortunate enough to represent the Greenkeepers Team at the Kubota Golf Challenge, held at the Bellry GC on October 14-15. After losing in the semi-final to the eventual winners, the EGU the team performed well in the third place play-off defeating the Golf Foundation by 6.5-1.5 points. Thanks should go to Kubota for sponsoring an excellent day competition.

This month I would like to wish all members of the Section a Merry Christmas and a Happy 1998. Remember this year starts off with the BTME at Harrogate, where hopefully as many members as possible will attend.

I would also like to thank all the companies who sponsored the Section throughout the year:-

Spring Tournament – E T Breakwells, Autumn Tournament – Charnwood & Highmeres Horticulture, AGM Tournament – Vitax Ltd, Christmas & East Midlands v Midlands Sections – Rigby Taylor and Scotts and ALS for sponsoring the Pairs Tournament, your support is greatly appreciated.

Two dates for next years diary,

Spring Tournament – Beeston Fields on May 13 and the Autumn Tournament at Scraptoft GC on September 2.

Antony Bindley