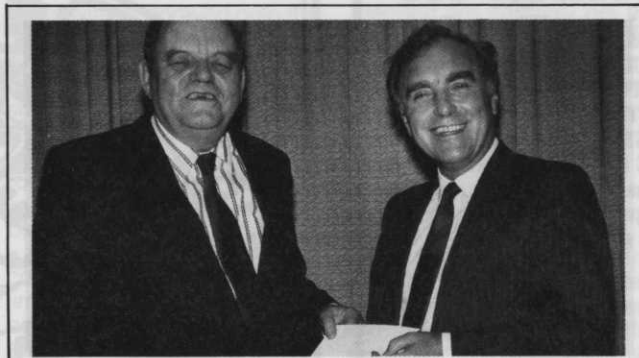


# PERRY CREWDSON

*After a lifetime of service with Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies, Perry Crewdson has just retired. Latterly he held the post of Public Relations Manager and it is probably in this role he is best remembered. Greenkeeping Management is delighted to publish this interview and wishes Perry every best wish in his retirement.*



*Perry Crewdson receive a cheque from Group Chief Executive Bob Dodsworth.*

“**E** DUCATED at Wellington College, before leaving I had to make up my mind what I wanted to do. Unlike to-day there were only three choices. Should I join the Army, Navy or Air Force?”

“For no reason other than my father being a regular soldier I decided to join the Navy and was accepted as a potential Fleet Air Arm Pilot. Upon joining the Navy I was told, along with many others, that we were excess to requirements.

“I became a Coder and was sent out to Malta. As a Coder/Translator, I was about to join the Commandant du Boc, leader of the French 1st Sloop Flotilla, due to sail for Saigon, when the Japanese war came to an end. I saw her alongside in Toulon but never went on board.

“I remember my days in the Navy for the odd duties in MFVs and Landing Craft but mainly for the amount of tennis and hockey I played while serving on a Naval Air Station in Malta. I was too young to have coded in anger!!

“Joined Ransomes as the first post war special Apprentice at the age of 21. Following 18 months on the shop floor I became Assistant to the Plough Works Manager.

“Although I thoroughly enjoyed being involved in works management my aim was still to get into the Export Dept. Had it not been for the war and the changing nature of the world I may well have become an Agricultural Officer in the Colonial Service.

“I joined the Export Dept. as the Lawn Mower Export Rep. Before being let loose to the outside world I accompanied lawn mower service/demonstrators in the London area and took over the North of England.

“When considered fit to

represent the company overseas my first trip was to Belgium, followed by nearly six months in Canada and the U.S.A.

“I had hardly returned from N. America when I was sent out to Asia where I represented the company's lawn mowers, farm machinery and electric trucks. Adapting to the contrasting environment took some doing - I had to slow down and not get impatient.

“When the Marketing Divisions were formed I became the Farm machinery Area Supervisor for Asia and Africa. A large territory to cover but I was in my element.

“I was the first person from Ransomes to visit Japan after the war and the first to fly the polar route. In those days flying the polar route was something new and I was presented with a certificate which is held in the company's archives. In those days we used to sell some 700 field mowers a year in Japan, as well as ploughs and lawn mowers.

“An achievement of which I'm particularly proud was, after spending about 3 weeks in Rangoon, we won an order for 500 disc ploughs from the Burmese Government.

“Three of my most 'hairy' times were in Africa. Getting out of Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo 3 days before Independence, flying across the Sahara, with 2 engines shut off, making for Rome and leaving the runway while taking off in Lagos.

“One of the more amusing times was when asked to bring up the rear of a Hindu Procession in Madras with a Fordson tractor and Ransomes plough. The Procession also included Holymen, highly decorated elephants, cattle, water buffalo, goats and numerous 'hangers on'.

“Of all the countries I visited in Asia and Africa, despite having read about them first, they were never as I had expected. At that time many were going through periods of great change combined with the inherent problems. However, despite representing a colonial power, on no occasion was I confronted with animosity from the locals - only courtesy and friendship. This is something that has always amazed me.

“While in my early thirties my wife Clare, gave birth to our twin son and daughter. I found it hard leaving her on her own with them for periods of two months and more. I was very fortunate in being offered the position as the company's Publicity Manager which included, amongst other things, the press advertising and PR functions.

“The first thing I had to do was learn the jargon. I didn't even know the difference between a half tone and line block and hadn't a clue about writing a press release. I was, however, very fortunate in having an understanding and helpful staff. In addition Bob Garnham, the Farm machinery Sales Manager, and Guy Catchpole, the Grass Machinery Sales Manager, were more experienced in such matters and extremely helpful.

“To begin with, I confess to having wondered what I had let myself in for, but as I gradually learnt more about publicity and PR I became absorbed and no longer regretted having given up overseas selling. It is, however, something I consider myself very fortunate to have done.

“In my mid-forties, when each Marketing Division became responsible for its own publicity, I was appointed Sales Promotion Manager of the Electric Truck Division which has taken over the

marketing of Ransomes made fork life trucks from the Hyster Co. The materials handling industry was very different to what I had been accustomed to and I admit to having found it difficult to work up enthusiasm for the economics and means of moving pallet loads of goods. My heart remained with farm and grass machinery.

“Prior to the company selling the electric truck business, some ten years ago, I returned to PR for the Grass and Farm Machinery Divisions. I have never felt one man should be responsible for both press advertising and PR and the last ten years of my working life have, I'm pleased to say, been devoted solely to PR activities.

“Although I had been out of the grass and farm machinery business for some six years only, I could count the faces among the Press I remembered, and who remembered me, on one hand.

“When a Lawn Mower Demonstrator nearly 40 odd years ago, never in my wildest dreams did I think such sophisticated equipment would be used to maintain turfgrass. The introduction of hydraulics and hydrostatic drives have, in my view, revolutionised grass cutting. I don't think it had even entered my mind 40 years ago that mowers would one day be powered by water cooled diesel engines.

“It really does date me having seen a horse drawn triple gang mower in regular use in the London area.

“Of my outside interests, I have had the greatest pleasure from being a member of the National Turfgrass Council and of the Advisory Panel of Whitehouse Enterprises, the workshop for the disabled in Ipswich. My one regret is that time hasn't allowed me to do more with the NTC in recent years.

“I count myself extremely fortunate in being able to look back at an interesting, fulfilling and enjoyable working life. There have, of course, been the bad times, but without them, one wouldn't appreciate the good ones to the full.

“I shall miss, not only my friends at Ransomes, but also those I have been privileged to know in the turfgrass industry and the Press.”