

Birds — of a feather !

The family business of R. S. Bird Ltd., of Cowbridge, South Glamorgan, distributors of Ransomes grass machinery in South Wales and Herefordshire recently celebrated 49 years of trading with Ransomes with a visit to the company headquarters in Ipswich.

Three generations of the family made the trip; Chairman Ralph Bird and his wife, and his sons, Managing Director Roger Bird and his wife and their two children, and Director Rodney Bird with his wife and their two children. Jeffrey Bird, 17, the oldest of the youngsters, had been to Ipswich on a course and as it is likely that all the children will enter the business, the visit enabled them to get to know the company with which they will be linked. This 49-year connection is typical of the continuing relationships of Ransomes and their distributors, and Mr. Ralph Bird said that in all the time he had dealt with Ransomes, there had only been three different representatives covering his area—a continuity he values considerably.

After receiving a commemorative plaque from Mr. P. L. Johnson, director of Ransomes grass machinery division, Ralph Bird reminisced about the association. In 1926 the company (then known as B. S. Bird & Co.) first started to sell Ransomes mowers. The partners were Bruce and Ralph Bird. In 1935 Bruce opened up successfully at Stroud.

Business was less complicated before the war and an annual one-day visit to Orwell Works sufficed to iron out the year's problems.

A break-through occurred in 1928 when the Miner's Welfare Commission standardised on Ransomes machines for the large number of playing fields which they controlled in the area.

Birds family business was founded in 1796, only a few years later than Ransomes, and still occupies its original premises in Cowbridge. Recently new depots have been opened—at Bancyfelin in W. Wales 18 years ago, at Hereford in 1962, and the latest, a "mini-depot" at Pontardulais near Swansea. Ralph Bird is now 77. Five years ago he retired as Managing Director and handed over to his sons; however he continues as Chairman of the Company. The visit to Ipswich marked the 25th year of Roger Bird's association with his father's company. When Ralph Bird first dealt with Ransomes, most of the gang mowers sold were horse-drawn. The golf course tractor was unknown—ordinary motor cars often being used. "Who could have foreseen that grass cutting machines could cost three or four thousand pounds today?" amused Ralph Bird.

Birds have diversified in recent years within the horticulture industry—establishing a garden centre, but the Ransomes franchise is the most important sector of the business.

Ralph Bird often quotes a saying of Henry Deck, Ransomes Sales Director in 1926 when the two companies joined up; "Good understandings make for long partnerships". This has proved to be true in the case of Ransomes and R. S. Bird Ltd.

The Bird family on their visit to Ransomes.

