

MARKET REPORT

BRITISH Gas owner **Centrica** was fired up $\frac{1}{2}$ p to 236 $\frac{1}{2}$ p as it signed a new liquefied natural gas supply deal with Qatargas.

Speculation that credit card giant **MBNA** could be a takeover target for Santander UK cast doubt over the Spanish-owned bank's previously flagged interest in acquiring over 300 branches from **Royal Bank of Scotland**, down $7\frac{1}{4}$ p to 197p. **Lloyds Banking Group**, $1\frac{1}{4}$ p overdrawn at 59 $\frac{3}{4}$ p, has also been linked with a bid for MBNA.

Agriculture and engineering firm **Carr's Group** grew 16p to 161p after announcing the disposal of its food division to flour milling business Whitworths for £36million. It will return £16million to shareholders through a special dividend.

Healthcare IT firm **Instem** improved $1\frac{1}{2}$ p to 259p after its earnings enhancing acquisition of France and US-based Notocord for up to £3.5million.

Nickel copper explorer **Amur Minerals** struck it 0.24p richer to 3.42p after lining up a deal with Russian-based IG Copper which could see the two companies own a joint processing plant.