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WIN A WALTHAM RADIO RECORDER



Competition Closed: see p 4

Manweb STAR

GALA OPENING FOR BIRKENHEAD SHOP

All set for a bright lights and fun New Year occasion!

Manweb EARLY BIRD OPENING OFFERS



HAPPINESS IS... A WORTHY TEDDY!

Contact

February 1979

Reading all about it!
(see page 36)



District Officers with some of our Mid-Cheshire long-service men who received their Certificates from Group Manager Norman Maden (seated centre).

Long Service

in Mid-Cheshire . . .

40 Years Service Messrs. G. Breeze (*chargehand electrician*) and T. D. Martin (*jointer*).

30 Years Service Messrs. E. Benyon (*electrician*), G. Blundell (*clerical assistant*), H. Cornes (*meter reader/collector*), A. Dickens (*jointer*), J. Harvey (*chargehand linesman*), T. H. Jones (*linesman*), J. Kerley (*linesman*), B. A. Kimpton (*2nd engineer*), N. Oakes (*meter reader*), K. Sandlands (*driver*), D. Tomkinson (*chargehand linesman*), and T. Watthey (*clerical assistant*).

20 Years Service: Messrs. P. F. Baldwin (*electrician*), J. A. Dean (*linesman*), P. J. Edwardson (*foreman*), A. Horrocks (*senior salesman*), E. C. Jones (*meter*

reader/collector), R. Martin-Paton (*courier driver*), P. O'Neill (*administrative assistant*), M. P. Potts (*1st eng.*), H. Snape (*electrician*), B. Tench (*jointer*) and W. B. Walker (*shop supervisor*).

. . . and Mid-Mersey

40 Years Service John Sherwen, (*P.A. general services*).

30 Years Service Lew Bowler, (*installation inspector*) Cyril Butterworth, (*mains foreman*), Robert Martin (*P.A. consumer accounts*), James McKague, (*meter fixer*), Bert Scott, (*chargehand mech. fitter*).

20 Years Service George Davison (*sales assistant*), Norma Fawcett (*clerical assistant*), Stuart Gates (*energy sales rep.*), Derek Goff (*electrician*), Frank Kelly (*senior energy sales rep.*), Brenda Molyneux (*1st assistant sales*), James Povey (*driver*), Trevor Robinson (*cashier*), James Smith (*s.s. attendant*).

A happy group of long-service staff from Mid-Mersey pose for our picture with Norman Maden (Group Manager) centre, and District Officers.



Contact

THE STAFF MAGAZINE
OF THE
MERSEYSIDE AND
NORTH WALES
ELECTRICITY BOARD

Vol. 31 No. 2

February 1979

On other
pages . . .

Customer Care is catching on!	28
'C.C.' Training Courses	29
Computastars from MANWEB	30
Windmills of the mind	31
Talking Notes	32
New Supershop at Birkenhead	36
Cash Handouts for New Ideas	38
Long Service—Oswestry	40
Obituary	40
Visit to France	41
Retirements	42
Ideas Competition	44

WINDMILLS AND WAFFLE

AT SOME time during the 1980s the simmering debate over the pattern of Britain's future energy supplies is almost certain to come to the boil. The crunch may well come with firm proposals to construct a commercial-scale fast breeder nuclear power station. In retrospect the Windscale inquiry may look like the deliberations of a genteel debating society.

Our worst Winter for many years has brought home to us all the importance of reliable and adequate energy supplies. The unreliable nature of imported fuel has been unpleasantly highlighted by the current situation in Iran. Already there are gloomy forecasts of yet another giant leap in the world price of crude oil. One does not need a crystal ball to predict the impact of such a development on the economies of the developed oil-importing nations. We have seen it all before.

Any proposals for substantial expansion in the generation of nuclear-fuelled electricity will doubtless meet with resistance from the individuals and groups which constitute the "anti-nuclear lobby." In recent times their proposals for utilising what are commonly called "renewable energy sources" have received unmerited and unbalanced publicity.

While not dismissing the sun, the wind and the tides out of hand, our industry's leaders have repeatedly warned that such sources can make only a marginal contribution to our future needs.

This number of *Contact* contains an article on the subject of windmills, reproduced by permission of the *Daily Telegraph*. It is refreshing to see one of our more responsible newspapers putting this particular subject in its true perspective.

Editorial Staff

Keith Baldwin 2164
John F. Perry 2167
Sam Doughty 2166

Please let the Editorial staff know of any large-scale or unusual engineering schemes or commercial projects going on in your department. We are interested in people too! Contact us about your interesting personalities with a story to tell.

Customer Care

is Catching on!

OUR *Customer Care* programme, now gathering speed, is obviously catching the imagination of our staff, especially those who have the job of dealing directly with the public.

Meetings of small groups of staff, being held throughout the Board's Districts and Departments, are providing the opportunity for some frank talking, with colleagues doing all kinds of different jobs seizing the chance to let us know what they think.

One-day courses on the *Customer Care* theme, organised by the Education and Training section, are being run in all Districts and at Head Office.

Meanwhile the *Customer Care* 'think tank', led by Board Secretary John Scudamore, are grappling (ice-bags on heads!) with a flood of ideas and suggestions from all quarters. The most recent meeting of the Customer Relations Working Group considered reports from District officers and Head Office departments, largely based on the results of discussions with staff.

The first wave of recommendations from the Working Group, resulting from these reports, includes the following points:

- Districts and Departments are reviewing all standard letters and forms with the object of making them as easy as possible for the customer to understand.
- Our *Customer Care* handbooks, illustrated by cartoonist Bill Tidy, have been distributed throughout the Board.
- All documents asking customers to give the Board notice to carry out specific tasks are being examined with the object of cutting down on the annoyance caused by broken appointments.

- The question of improving our understanding of each other's work is being studied, with a view to eliminating "paper jams" and producing a smoother work-flow between sections.
- Future Sales Training courses will give more emphasis to answering customers' queries.
- Our brand-new Birkenhead shop includes a special area set aside for discussions with customers. If successful this idea will probably be extended to other MANWEB shops.
- The Board's "Live Line Panel" will investigate the possibility of more live line working in rural areas especially vulnerable to supply interruptions.
- The question of people queuing in shops to pay their electricity bills is being looked at by the Management Services Department.
- *Customer Care* will be a major topic at all the next round of LAC staff conferences and the 1979 Commercial and Management Conferences.

Mr. Scudamore told *Contact*:

"We are absolutely delighted with the way the *Customer Care* programme is going, and with the sincere interest being shown by so many colleagues doing a very wide range of jobs.

"These are early days, but already we are almost snowed under with suggestions and ideas. I would like to assure everyone that we shall work through them all, and that they will all receive the most careful consideration.

"There is no doubt that if we all work together, leaving no stones unturned, confidence and trust between our customers and ourselves will be much enhanced during the next year or so."

Representatives

New members of the Customer Relations Working Group—appointed to represent the Board's District Officers—are, from left to right: Dennis Hodgetts (Mid-Mersey District Administrative Officer), Bob Hodson (Liverpool District Commercial Engineer) and Dick Owen (Oswestry District Engineer).





A group 'in session' at North Mersey District. From left to right: Linda Cornforth (prepayment accounts) Alison Lyon (customer liaison), Ken Jones (supervisor, outside control), Alice Hughes (dept control), Mary Clarke (prepayment accounts), Freda Evans (zone supervisor, amendments) and Kath McDonough (Commercial work control).

Customer Care Training Courses

As part of our *Customer Care* programme a series of one-day courses—two for each District and two at Head Office—are being held before the end of March.

Groups of selected staff—all dealing directly with the customer in one way or another—are the 'pupils.' The 'teachers' are Eric Richardson and Dick Storer

of the Education and Training section—but Eric and Dick would be the first to admit that they too are learning a good deal along the way. Some of our front-line troops are making it quite clear that grannie knows a good deal about sucking eggs!

The pattern of the courses is the same—a broad general discussion on the whole Customer Care theme with Eric in the chair, followed by sessions on telephone and letter writing techniques, joint exercises, and an *Open Forum* session at the end.

The emphasis, inevitably, is on sincerity, courtesy, clarity, and tact—with attention paid to the art of smoothing the ruffled feathers of irate customers. *Contact* sat in on one of the first courses—at North Mersey District. If that was anything to go by then the series will prove useful and informative—and the information will all be fed back to the Customer Relations Working Group for examination.



Listening to Dick Storer (exec. officer E & T) are, from left to right: Kath McDonough, Isobel Hartley (computer amendments) and Pauline McGregor (Engineering clerical).



Teaching telephone techniques. Eric Richardson (p.a. E & T) instructs, from left to right: Linda Cornforth, Bob Lewis (supervisor work control) and receiving the call, Ken Jones.

MANWEB COMPUTASTARS

Two teams in National Competition

IN THE wake of the popular "Superstars" Competition comes "Computastars"—an international tournament on similar lines organised by "Computer Weekly" and a firm of computer consultants.

Two MANWEB teams—one male and one female



Our gallant team of Men from MANWEB, from left to right, seated: Emyr Jones (programmer), Joe Norris (project co-ordinator), and John Macadam (programmer). Standing: Joe Pugh (project leader) and Mike Edwards (project co-ordinator). Dave Tomlinson (programmer) played in the heats but missed the finals.

—were entered among hundreds of hopefuls, and months of hard work and dedicated exercise paid off at the finals at Crystal Palace Sports Stadium when the men came 11th out of some 300 entrants while the ladies did even better, taking fourth place and only just missing the medals.

The men's events included the 100 metres, 800 metres, press-ups and squat-thrusts, shot putt, throwing the cricket ball, kicking the rugby ball, 'Frisbee' throwing, and a sack race. Ladies' events consisted of 800 metre hurdles, netball, 'sit-ups', shot putt, long jump, hockey ball hitting, 200 and 600 metres, discus, and drop-kicking a Rugby ball!

In the Liverpool Region heats our ladies' team came first and the men's team second. These successes were followed by three months training, culminating in the finals at Crystal Palace.

Both MANWEB teams (sporting 'Think Electric' tee shirts) sailed easily through the morning qualifying rounds, and in the semi-finals the men's team came 11th—with ten teams to go into the finals! The



Near misses in the grand finals. Our lovely ladies team, from left to right, seated: Viv Ellins (programmer), Cheryl Hunt (project leader), Liz Jones (programmer) and, standing, Jane Perry (programmer from Capenhurst).

ladies' team easily qualified for the finals, to go on to take 4th place overall.

Ultimate winners of the finals were the "Yorkie" team from Rowntree Mackintosh (men), and a team of girls from Swedish Airlines who came over specially to take part.

Congratulations for a dedicated effort and a very creditable result are due to all our representatives.

Some notable performances were the domination by the Men from MANWEB of the 100 metres (winning four out of five races) and good results in the 800 metres. The MANWEB ladies dominated the running and gymnastics events, with Jane Perry winning the ladies Individual Competition.

Retired Colleague

Mr. Harold Greaves, aged 77, who prior to his retirement in 1966 was well known throughout the Board as an agricultural and horticultural specialist based at Rhostyllen, recently met and later wrote to former colleague Mr. Eric Matthews who now works at our Dee Valley District office.

Harold mentions that both he and his wife are just recovering from bouts of ill health. He would dearly like to get in touch with other friends—still at work or among the ranks of the retired—who may not know of his move to Southport.

His new address is 17 Brentwood Court, Park Crescent, Southport PR9 9NJ, Merseyside. If you remember Harold and feel like making him happy, drop him a line or give him a call on the telephone, his number is Southport 40763.

Windmills of the mind

by ADRIAN BERRY

I WAS recently the target of a finger-wagging lecture from Prof. Sir Martin Ryle, the famous radio astronomer, on the alleged evils of nuclear power. Sir Martin feels that nuclear power stations are potentially so dangerous and take so long to construct that instead we should build windmills in large numbers.

Sir Martin's knowledge of the remote parts of the universe is so profound that I would not argue with him about it. But on matters of terrestrial energy, this learned man seems on much less certain ground.

He tells us, for example, how in 1966, a metal plate broke loose in the Enrico Fermi nuclear reaction outside Detroit, and that the accident "led to emergency plans to evacuate Detroit 48 hours before the emergency was over."

This is technically true, but is a wholly misleading statement. If the reactor had lost its coolant (which it didn't) the emergency core cooling system would have supplied it.

If the emergency cooling system had failed, the containment building would have contained the radio activity. And if it hadn't (although it is hard to see why), the radio activity would have dispersed harmlessly in the atmosphere.

And if the radioactivity was prevented from dispersing by a temperature inversion, a strong wind in one unlikely direction would have been needed to blow it all the 30 miles to Detroit.

For Sir Martin to use this minor

incident, which hurt nobody, as the central part of his argument that nuclear power is excessively dangerous shows that he simply does not understand the technology which he is criticising.

Nuclear power is not absolutely safe. No large-scale energy generating system ever can be. But a well-constructed nuclear reactor has so many back-up systems, so many emergency—within—emergency procedures that go into action if the next one fails that it is a far safer system than any other.

Sir Martin's enthusiasm for windmills I can only call eccentric. Sir Fred Hoyle calculated that 20 million windmills would be needed to electrify Britain with 240 of them per square mile if they were land based.

But Sir Martin says that Sir Fred's figure is "absurd", and that one per square mile would be enough, with the rest apparently to be built on off-shore rafts.

The land-based windmills would be no bother, he assures us. They would be no worse than pylons.

But is this so? Pylon wires do no worse than make a loud humming noise if you happen to be standing beneath them in a strong wind. But windmills? Let Sir Fred Hoyle, who is something of an expert on the subject, describe what they would be like:

"When in full operation such an ensemble of mills would make an appalling roar, and the number of serious accidents they would cause would run into hundreds of thousands each year." (*Energy of Extinction*, 1977.)

A horrible tragedy in New York gives some idea of what such a "serious accident" might be like. A helicopter on the roof of the Panam Building fell on its side. A whirling blade fell to the street below, and cut a girl in half.

Let us dispense with windmills. The human race has grown out of them. They make charming subjects for paintings, but they should not be a matter for the consideration of serious grown-ups in 1979.

The power source of the stars is nuclear, of a more advanced form than we have yet achieved. It would be more appropriate if the astronomer Sir Martin urged us to strive towards attaining that power rather, than turning back to primitive epochs.

With acknowledgement to *The Daily Telegraph*

Letters . . .

From a Bangor (Gwynedd) lady
"I would like to thank you for your attention in arranging for a meter to be installed, connecting up the off-peak storage heaters. I appreciate also how promptly my application was attended to."

* * *

. . . and a note of thanks from a Chester customer:

"I must tell you how pleased I am with the shower installation at my bungalow . . . if the craftsman

who carried it out is an example of the men you have in MANWEB you can be justly proud . . . his method of tackling the job was perfect and the execution was excellent, and in addition he had a most pleasant personality."

* * *

. . . and from an Abergele gent:
"Thank you for the excellent response to our power cut this morning. My call was handled in a most courteous and friendly manner . . . the engineer who came was also most helpful."

Talking Notes

BADMINTON TOURNAMENT

PROVING the popularity of the fast moving game of badminton, despite atrocious weather conditions, over 60 players turned up at the Christleton Leisure Centre in Chester to take part in a tournament organised by **John Foster** (System Engineer) from our North Wirral District.

It was encouraging to see a group of young apprentices from our Hoylake Training Centre join enthusiasts from Head Office and the North Mersey, Liverpool, Mid-Mersey, Dee Valley and North Wirral Districts.

A tight programme of matches was completed in a very keen and friendly atmosphere. The eventual winners, based on the average number of points gained by each player, was Head Office with Dee Valley District as the runners-up and Liverpool District in third place.

As in past badminton tourna-

ments, players were seeded so that those of county and league standard competed against each other while local club players and beginners had their own matches.

By being placed in different groups some interesting and exciting matches resulted in making the afternoon most enjoyable for players and spectators.

Learning from the problems arising from the close timing of this year's event, it could well be that an extra hour or so will be added to next year's tournament allowing for more 'breathing space.'

With this in mind, the organisers would be pleased to see players from the rest of our Districts taking part in what has become a very successful annual event.

So, if you play badminton and would like a competitive game with someone at your level of play, then get in touch now with John Foster in our North Wirral District (telephone extension number 241).

Appointment

Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection, Mr. Roy Hattersley has appointed **Mr. Moreton Hayes** as Deputy Chairman of the Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Consultative Council until 31st December 1981.

Mr. Hayes of Gwernymynydd is a National Trade Group delegate of the TGWU; Member of the Mold/Buckley Trades Council; member of DHSS Appeals Tribunal, Wrexham; elder of the Welsh Methodist Church; active in OAP work, is a magistrate, a member of Mold Voluntary Services and Chairman of Co-ordinating Committee. He has served on the Consultative Council for eighteen months.

Diamonds are Forever

With many marriages in this day and age breaking up after the odd year or so, to find two people still together after more than 60 years, and still obviously very happy in each



A representative trio from the successful Head Office badminton team proudly display the winners shield. They are, from left to right: Joe Pugh, Marion Barlow and David Booth.

others company, is something worth reporting.

In the beautiful village of Lostock Gralam near Northwich, we met **Ernest** (83) and **Bessie** (81) Mather a few days after they had celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary.

To mark the occasion, **Graham Zeiher** (District Engineer) and **Tom Cash** (former Production Engineer) went along to present Bessie with a bouquet of flowers and Ernest with a bottle of sherry.

The couple still live in the same house within a few yards from the church in which they were married. They were in the same class at school where, we hear, Bessie fell in love with Ernest when he was 13.

Ernest worked as a gardener before joining the army in the first world war—spending eight months as a prisoner-of-war in France.

On his return home he married Bessie then took the job as foreman in the local chemical works. Here, in a tragic accident, Ernest lost his leg.

With determination he got used to his artificial limb and came to work in the electricity

supply industry as a substation attendant in 1936. After 25 years' service—all over the Northwich area—he retired 18 years ago.

In his youth Ernest played football for Lostock Gralam and now, following 40 years as a committee member with the Club he has been made a life member. He also played football for the Northwich and Witton Albion teams.

Bessie is still as busy as ever looking after her partner and their home which she keeps spotlessly clean.

We join with the many friends they have made over the years in wishing this very nice couple good health and even more happiness together in the years ahead.

Blankety-Blank!

One of our colleagues at Head Office had endless trouble in starting his car engine on the cold and frosty mornings. Then he was advised to throw an old blanket over the engine to help retain some of the engine warmth and soak up any condensation.

The next morning he 'phoned in to say he would be late for

MID-MERSEY DISTRICT

**Sports & Social Club
Golf Section**

challenge any other District within MANWEB—or even a team from Head Office—to a match to take place in June, the firm date and venue to be agreed upon.

Take up the gauntlet—or driver—by 'phoning **Reg Whitfield**, Mid-Mersey District, Extension 369.

work as he was again having car problems.

It had started on the first turn of the ignition key but he had broken down a couple of miles from home.

On lifting the bonnet he then found the remains of a blanket enmeshed in the fan belt and generally choking his engine to death!

My Dad

A neatly-printed letter from a child who declared her age as eight years was received at our Head Office recently.

It read as follows:

Dear M.A.N.W.E.B.,

You mite of heard that a man in Wale's has got a medle for Working round the Clock you shud give my dad one.

(Signed).

Pay Day Again!

Staff in our Liverpool District seem to be well on the ball when it comes to putting on their thinking caps and submitting workable ideas in the Suggestion Scheme.

Yet another meter mechanic at Lister Drive, **Harry Kirkwood**, has recently pocketed a £20 local award and a £50 District award for his idea for prolonging the life of coin

The happy couple, Ernest and Bessie Mather with their visitors from MANWEB, Tom Cash and Graham Zeiher.





Man of ideas
Harry Kirkwood.

barrel pinions in Ferranti FMP meters.

He may yet pick-up more cash for this suggestion as it is now up for consideration for an award at National level.

Neither does he rest on his laurels for Harry already has another suggestion in the pipeline which he hopes will make for more efficiency and economy while at the same time bringing him further financial reward. This time he has designed a simple tool to enable easier fitting and removal of front cover nuts on electricity meters.

Get Well Soon

Colleagues in North Wirral District send their best wishes for a speedy recovery from her recent illness to **Kath Doran**, a principal assistant in the Debt Recovery section.

What's in a Name

The husband of a member of our staff was recently made redundant from his work with a chemical manufacturer. He went along to his local employ-

ment office to sign-on where a young lady clerk expressed doubt at his finding another job as he was over 60.

She asked what his job was. "A pharmacist," he replied. "Well," she went on, "I can't send you after any jobs from here because of your age, but if you really want to work, why not try yourself, there are plenty of farms locally who might take you on!"

To Good Use

For many months last year, members of our North Wirral District Sports & Social Club were encouraged to put their loose change into a large bottle placed strategically on the Club bar counter.

Recently, the organiser of the collection, **Denis Cloney** (jointer) emptied the bottle and, with the addition of a little more cash from the Club funds, was able to give a good

night out to fifty needy and orphaned children from the Birkenhead area.

With the names provided by the local Department of Social Services, the happy youngsters were given sweets and then taken by bus to see the pantomime 'Aladdin' at the Floral Pavilion in New Brighton.

Thanks go to Denis for his thought and industry and to the members of the S & S Club for their generosity in giving "The Year of the Child" a good send-off at North Wirral.

Frustration

Recently one of our meter readers called at a house and was confronted with the following message pinned to the door:—

"Key at number 43. Please do not let BLACK cat OUT or GINGER cat IN," Many thanks.

MANUAL WORKERS' BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

Are you a member of the

MANWEB Manual Workers' Benevolent Society?

If not, join today! Your contribution of TWO PENCE A WEEK will go towards helping a present—or former—colleague who finds himself in need.

It could of course be YOU!

Details of how to join from your District Administrative Officer or your representative named below:

North Mersey: R. Dutton, R. Fallows, L. Morris.

Liverpool: F. Mathews, M. Sharkey, T. Smith.

Mid-Mersey: W. E. Done (*Runcorn*); N. Gabbott (*St. Helens*).

Dee Valley: H. D. Jones and A. Royle (*Crane Street*); D. Owens and R. Williams (*Legacy*).

North Wirral: W. H. Bell, F. J. Slee, G. Wood.

Mid-Cheshire: E. Worrell and F. Baldwin (*Crewe*); R. S. Scott (*Northwich*).

Clwyd: R. Collinson (*Llandudno Junction*); W. G. Foster (*Rhyl*); G. Hughes (*Conwy*); E. E. James and C. E. Parry (*Mold*).

Gwynedd: T. W. Jones (*Bangor and Caernarfon*); R. O. Williams (*Pwllheli and Blaenau Ffestiniog*); A. E. Griffiths (*Anglesey*).

Oswestry: E. J. Brierley (*Oswestry*); T. A. Owen (*Newtown*); H. Huxley (*Whitchurch*).

Aberystwyth: J. Parrott (*Aberystwyth*); M. Rees (*Dolgellau*); J. Cowley (*Machynlleth*).

HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

New six-berth luxury caravan with own toilet and shower. Sited among cork oak trees on gently sloping picturesque park a few minutes from St. Tropez, Cote d'Azur. Facilities include large swimming pool, bar, restaurant and mini-market. From £45 per week inclusive of fuel. Reduced cost channel crossing fly/drive and holiday insurance available. 'Phone Culcheth 3820.

Llandudno. House to let. Three bedrooms (sleep five), one with washbasin. Lounge (TV), dining room, kitchen, bathroom. Nice quiet position facing park (tennis and bowls) and hills. Near beach, shops, theatres, swimming pool. Inspection invited. 'Phone: Llandudno 49239 evenings. Special terms for MANWEB and Norweb employees.

HEAD OFFICE SNOOKERMEN

For the fourth time draughtsman Emyr Miles has won the MANWEB (Chester) Sports and Social Club Snooker Championship and our picture, below, shows our bearded winner receiving his trophy from Club Chairman, Harry Foreman. Emyr also won a second trophy, this time for taking the Pool Championship, held for the first time this year—and it was the first time that Emyr had played this particular game. On the right of our picture are Dave Croston and Brian Sheppard, the winning doubles partnership. The trio on the left are, from left to right: Dowell Jones and Mike Mole, the losing doubles finalists, and Tony Murphy, defeated singles finalist. Pool runner-up, Mike Edwards, missed our photo-call.

Llandyrnog, Denbigh. Comfortable bed and breakfast, evening meal optional. Peaceful countryside. Ideal touring-walking centre. Mountains, sea.

Adults only. For details send stamped addressed envelope to Mrs. A. Massey, The Spinney, Llandyrnog, Denbigh, Clwyd.

FOR SALE

Honda 400/4 motorcycle. 10,000 miles, excellent condition. £550 o.n.o. 'Phone 051-678 3981.

Opel Manta 1.9 S.R. Coupe, "S" registration. This beautiful car in red and black has a fitted vinyl roof and sunroof. It has covered 13,000 miles. Dinitrol rust protection, headlamp wash/wipe system. Usual refinements, immaculate condition throughout. £3475 o.n.o. 'Phone: Crewe 841676 (after 6.00 p.m.).

A SPONSORED JOG

has been organised by the MANWEB (Chester) Sports and Social Club who invite members of the staff, with their families and friends, to take part.

The Date — Thursday, 17th May.

The Place — Head Office

The Reason — As this year, 1979, is "The Year of the Child" all monies raised will be donated to various children's charities.

So, come along and join the joggers—the circuit is only a quarter-of-a-mile long!

You can jog individually or as a member of a District group or as a family team.

Full details and sponsorship forms are available from **Gren Roberts, Welfare** 'Phone: 2142.

By jogging, YOU will benefit and so will a CHILD IN NEED.





Outside the new shop at Birkenhead we see two of our North Wirral District electrical design team, Alan Littler (2nd engineer), left, and Graham Houghton (1st engineer).

Supershop opens at Birkenhead

THE Board's new supershop with its neat and attractive frontage on Milton Pavement in the Birkenhead Shopping Precinct was opened a few weeks ago. Recently, our 'Girl from MANWEB', Miss Lynne Joyce, went along to meet the staff and heard from shop supervisor Mr. Keith Leonard that their first week's trading was over 300 per cent up on the average weekly takings at the former premises in Grange Road West.

"This is a tremendous boost for the staff who, obviously, have been very busy," said Keith. "On the accounts side too, we have had a big increase in the number of customers."

He went on to say that the new shop provided much better conditions for both staff and customer.

The Head Office design team, from left to right: David Brown (2nd engineer—Civil), Dennis Perrin (2nd engineer—Tech. Drawing Office) and Howard Walton (Regional Sales Controller).



"It is ideally situated in the magnificent Precinct where all shopping can be done in a comparatively small area."

Our new shop is spacious and houses a wide range of electrical appliances with bargain offers prominently displayed. Both interior and frontage have been designed by the Board's specialist staff from the civil engineering department and the Drawing Office.

Mr. Leonard joined the Board straight from school in 1965 and worked in the Liverpool District at the Garston and St. Johns Precinct shops before moving to the Birkenhead shop in Grange Road West, taking over its supervision in 1976.

SKY HIGH

In a joint MANWEB/Hoover venture, hundreds of balloons were released to mark the opening of the new superstore. On each balloon was a card asking people to return it with the information on where the balloon was found. Some finished up only a few yards away in the Gas Board showrooms but the winner, with the balloon travelling the longest distance, was a lady from Longford in Gloucester, who wins a voucher from Hoover Limited.

The first electricity showrooms in Birkenhead were opened on this site on 23rd October 1925 for the former Corporation Electricity Department. Some modifications were carried out in October 1964 but in recent years it has been increasingly obvious that new and more spacious premises would have to be found to cater for customer demand. This can now be satisfied with our move to Milton Pavements in the heart of the town's shopping area.

OUR COVER PICTURE shows Lynne Joyce, our "Girl from MANWEB" with Keith Leonard (shop supervisor) on the occasion of her visit to the new shop.



Shop supervisor Keith Leonard, *centre*, is backed by members of his staff, *from left to right*: Rita Richards, Doreen Rushton, Dot Kent, Don Ross, David Langley, Dot Birchall and Dot Monks.



Happy in their new surroundings are, *from left to right*: Betty McCrae, Dot Birchall, Barbara Grant and Shiela Hughes.



On her recent visit to the new shop Lynne Joyce, our "Girl from MANWEB" met Doug Wilmott (District Sales Supervisor) and, *from left to right*: Ruth Walton, Peggy Martin and Shirley Robinson.

The special area set aside in the new shop as an experiment which may be introduced into other MANWEB shops. Here we see Norman Carew helping a customer with her enquiry.



Staff Suggestions bring in the cash

OF the many members of our staff working in offices, shops and depots, up poles or down holes, wiring premises, reading meters, delivering appliances or performing any one of the 1,001 tasks which constitute the Board's daily work, nearly all, at one time or another, give some thought to ways and means by which their particular job—or other work associated with theirs—could be done more efficiently, effectively and often, more economically.

Most of the time, simple, yet brilliant, ideas never see the light of day because the person who thought of it takes no further action.

Sometimes however, an idea is pursued, carefully thought out, then written down on paper and submitted for consideration by the Local Advisory Committee under the staff Suggestion Scheme.

An assessment is then made by people who are especially selected for their wide knowledge and experience of the work covered by the suggestion. If the idea is new—or even if it is an improvement on an old way—then it could qualify for an immediate cash award of up to £20.

The idea could then go forward for a further award of £25 or more and, if it can be adopted by other Board's, a National award of not less than £50 could be made.

Looking around MANWEB, we selected, at random, three of our colleagues who had found the Suggestion Scheme rather lucrative in addition to giving them a great deal of satisfaction in having their ideas accepted and put into practice for the benefit of the Board and its customers.

METERMAN EVAN

The first man we met was Evan Nelson, a meter mechanic at Lister Drive, Liverpool. Evan's well thought-out idea was to recover single-rated pre-payment meter covers and with his invention, modify them to take two-rate coin calibration. Like all good ideas, the solution was so simple. All that was required was the means to take a small piece of bakelite from the old cover.

Evan's prototype machine was a small wooden box housing an electric drill driving a round file-bit guided by dual templates to shape out the bakelite cover.

Immediate cash savings, in the first year, are estimated at around £5,000 and further savings will accrue over the next few years until all meters on circuit have been modified. In addition to the



Dave Crangle (*meter test engineer*) examines a meter fitted with the modification thought up by **Evan Nelson**, right. Also interested is **Margaret McKie** (*clerk*), a member of the Local Advisory Committee.

immense satisfaction of seeing his idea working and accepted as useful, Evan has received a £15 local award and a £75 District award. His suggestion has now gone forward for National consideration and possibly a further cash award.

Born and bred in Maghull, Evan left school to work in a local garage. He stayed there for three years before taking up hotel work for the next nine years in beautiful Grange-over-Sands. In 1952 he joined us at Lister Drive.

He is married and his spare time hobbies include the repairing of radios and TV's and he is keen on coarse fishing. With his £75 award, he bought a 'fridge for his wife and a fishing rod for himself.

MORE IDEAS FROM GERRY

Over to Queensferry where we find Gerry Hickson, a chargehand fitter in the garage. While carrying out the servicing of the huge container vehicle trailers Gerry hit on an idea. He came up with a device for the speedy and foolproof testing and checking of all the electrical circuits.

Gerry knew the procedure having previously received a cash award for one of his suggestions. This time he submitted three ideas, including the electrical circuit tester, but in their wisdom, the Suggestion Scheme panel joined two of his suggestions together as one submission.

His ideas were then accepted and he received local awards amounting to £30 and a further award from District amounting to £100. His joint suggestions are now up for National consideration.



Group Manager Jim Barraclough, left, hands over a cheque to Gerry Hickson as yet another payment for one of his many ideas taken up in the Suggestion Scheme.

Gerry, a Cestrian, lives with his wife and 13-year-old son at Saughall. He started his working life as a motor mechanic with a Chester firm before joining MANWEB in 1965 at New Crane Street. He later moved over to his present job at Queensferry. He is a keen darts player and is a member of the Electricity Council (Capenhurst) team playing in a local league. He also enjoys a spot of sea fishing.

RAY'S IN THE MONEY

The last of our trio we found moving into his 'new' home just outside Machynlleth. Ray Pugh, a linesman, noticed that it usually took three or four hefty men to lift and dress a pole. So, he designed a simple device which required only one man to lift, quite safely, even the heaviest 33-kV pole.

Ray has also invented equipment for lifting conductors when a damaged insulator has to be replaced. His ingenious unit is fixed to the crossarm on the pylon or pole and the conductor is

set in a runner which is then mechanically lifted, on the same principle as a car-jack. When clear, the damaged insulator can be replaced and only one man is needed to do the whole job.

Our man from Machynlleth has already picked up one or two cash awards and has other ideas in the pipeline. One is for getting a rope up a pole without having to climb the pole first. Magic!!

Ray started his working life as a farm labourer who really loved the lambing season. He realised that staying where he was he would never own a farm of his own so he left to become a labourer with MANWEB in 1959. He worked with construction gangs on the final stages of the rural development programme, but every Spring, he yearned to be back on the farm for lambing time.

His dreams have now been partially realised for his new home, a former public house latterly converted into a small farm, has about six acres of land attached. Ray has waited twelve years to acquire this property and the first thing he is going to do is get some sheep in his fields.

While chatting with Ray, he said that when a member of our staff submits a suggestion in the scheme, if those who consider it think that modifications would help, then the 'inventor' should be consulted before anything further is done.

While Ray demonstrates his idea for lifting conductors, Maldwyn Evans (*System Engineer*) shows how easy it is to lift even the heaviest pole using the simple device invented by Ray.



LONG SERVICE RECOGNISED

Oswestry District staff completing 30 and 20 years' service in our industry were presented with their Certificates by Group Manager Norman Maden. Our picture shows, from left to right, front row: Mrs. E. M. Gittins, Miss Jean Evans (clerical supervisor) 20 years, Mr. Maden, Mrs. D. A. Jehu (who received 30-year Certificate on behalf of her late husband whose death is reported below), and Mrs. G. Purslow. Back row: Mr. Morley Gittins (foreman), 30 years, Mr. Clwyd Parry (chargehand meter reader/collector), 20 years, Master Robert Jehu (accompanying his mother) and Mr. Geoff Purslow (2nd engineer), 20 years. Mr. Jim Austin (driver), 20 years, was unable to attend the ceremony.



Obituary

It is with deep regret that we record the following deaths:

Marion Ashton, aged 49, an audio typist at Head Office. She joined the Board in 1969 and had for many years had worked for the Board's Legal section, producing this demanding work meticulously.

Dennis H. Bolas, aged 44, a storekeeper and courier in Oswestry District. He was fatally injured when carrying out courier duties between Whitchurch and Oswestry. He joined the Board in 1971.

Edward K. Clarke, aged 55, was the Electricity Council's Regional Safety Officer. He was a C. Eng., A.M.I.E.E. and a Corporate Member of the Institute of Industrial Safety Officers. He had served the Electricity Industry for nearly forty years.

Arthur C. Davenport, aged 58, was one of the senior sales staff in St. John's Precinct shop, Liver-

pool. He had served the Board for over 20 years, having started in the former Old Swan shop.

A close family man, Arthur was in his earlier years a keen amateur operatic singer.

Robert G. Jehu, aged 50, was a chargehand linesman in Oswestry District, based at Newtown. He had joined MANWEB in 1948 and was one of the hardy gangs of linesmen who carried out the Board's rural electrification programme in Mid and West Wales.

Ronald H. Morley, aged 54, was the District Engineer in North Wirral, a position he had held since 1963. He joined MANWEB at the former Liverpool North District two years earlier as 1st assistant District Engineer from the South Eastern Board.

Ron was highly respected and popular with his colleagues being a leading member of the Sports and Social Club, serving as chairman and deputy for many years. A keen golfer, he was

secretary of the Merseyside Electricity Golfing Society.

Among his community interests he was a school governor and a member of the Crime Prevention panel. He was also an accomplished pianist.

Ronald G. Patterson, aged 64, was an executive officer in the Superannuation Section, before his retirement due to ill-health, four years ago. He was a nationally respected authority on superannuation schemes in the Electricity Industry and was a member of the committee for the staff scheme.

He had also served as treasurer of the local branch of the Electrical and Electronic Industries Benevolent Fund for about 25 years. He was a distinguished and long serving member of the Scouting Movement.

We extend our sincere sympathy to all the relatives and friends who have suffered the loss of these, our former colleagues.

Exchange visit to Electricite de France

by
GEORGE PYE
Student Engineer

(now studying
at Aston College,
Wrexham)



After an overnight stay in London, we made our way to Paris by coach, then hovercraft across the Channel and coach again. We were met in the French capital by a representative of Electricite de France who arranged for us to be taken to our hotel by a fleet of taxis owing to a coach strike in Paris.

Over the next three days we alternated between visits to the usual tourist spots and attending lectures on the French electricity system. We learnt from these lectures and our subsequent visits to the various establishments that there were considerable differences in their supply industry and ours.

Electricite de France were responsible for generating and distribution electricity and the organisation had no commercial department as we know it, no contracting or selling sections, their responsibility and interest stopped at the meter.

The generating stations are much smaller than ours with 300 megawatts being about the usual size, and the majority were situated in the south of the country, whereas the most power is consumed in the North. There is a national grid, but when the demand in one area starts to exceed the supply, the whole area is cut off until demand falls again.

Electricity is supplied to consumers at voltages varying from 220 to 380. Non-payments of accounts is met with automatic disconnection, however, non-payment is a rare occurrence in France.

Although there is no commercial department, the E.D.F. do offer advice to consumers on the best refrigerator or cooker for their needs, but they do not supply them.

After our stay in Paris we travelled by overnight sleeper to Marseilles. The compartment was first class but this did not compare with British Rail's

second class, with four to a compartment where there would normally only be two on this side of the Channel. The second class sleeper had six people crammed into it.

About fifty miles from Marseilles is the village of St. Tulle, where the E.D.F. have one of their training centres. Here the linesmen and jointers had their eighteen months training.

The trainees were 16 and 17 years old, and received no pay during training, just board and lodging in the military style compound and protective clothing. They were supported by their parents.

On completion of training they became paid staff of the E.D.F. For the 180 places at St. Tulle, they had 4,000 applications. Working for the electricity industry in France is a prestigious occupation.

From Marseilles we visited Arles and the Camargue, attending a mock bull fight, and naturally went swimming on one of those famous beaches of the South of France. Two hydro-electric schemes, were on our itinerary, about a quarter of French electricity is generated by water power, one of these schemes was in the rugged Verdon Gorge.

Our party accepted a challenge from the French lads to a football match which we allowed them to win 2-1, all down to the *entente cordiale*, and the fact that the referee played 55 minutes in the first half and 50 in the second, and they scored in the last few minutes of the match!

An evening barbeque concluded an enjoyable visit to the South of France. After an overnight rail journey to Paris, we attended a final lecture and visited a French factory before leaving for home.

Two major differences struck me about our two countries, the prices in France were far higher than here, both for food and clothes, a pair of jeans that would have cost about £14 here were about £20 in France.

Eating and meals was a different way of living. For breakfast we had bread and jam and coffee at about 7 a.m., then nothing till 1 p.m. The lunch was a four or five course feast lasting about two hours. Dinner was a similar affair at about 7 p.m. It was a case of starving, then being overfilled twice, instead of balanced meals.

The French take their meals very seriously, and it is made quite an occasion, and laughing and joking are not looked on favourably.

George, aged 21, has been with MANWEB for just over four-and-a-half years. He is currently studying for his Higher National Diploma. He enjoys reading, playing cricket and, as a keen supporter of the Liverpool Football Club, is a fully paid-up member of the 'Kop' choir.

RETIREMENTS

Mr. T. W. JONES

Many engineers, young and not so young, in our Mid-Cheshire District have had cause to be very grateful to Mr. Tom Jones, an engineering foreman of long standing, for his innovative and experienced capacity to advise them of many aspects of distribution work.

Tom, who has been a foreman for over 30 years, worked at the Hafod colliery before joining our industry in 1935. He served with the former North Wales Power Company on overhead line construction, much of his time being spent on the rural development programme. For a while he worked around Welshpool and Ruthin and would bicycle there from Nantwich every Monday morning, stay the week and then bicycle back on Friday nights.

Many interesting stories are told of his great ingenuity—especially of the time when he came to work with a horse which he used to pull the 33kV overhead conductors up to the correct tension-sag.

Latterly he has worked as a multi-functional foreman around the District. He is extremely capable and well-liked and he somehow manages to find time to look after the welfare of friends and colleagues in poor health or having personal problems.

At a small informal gathering, Mr. Graham Zeiher (*District Engineer*), on behalf of the District staff, presented Tom with a sum of money to purchase a greenhouse heater. All joined in wishing Tom and his wife many years of happy and healthy retirement.

Mr. C. W. HOUGH

Friends and colleagues of Mr. Charles William Hough, a painter based at Crewe in our Mid-Cheshire District, gathered recently to wish him a long and happy retirement coupled with good

The popular Tom Jones from Mid-Cheshire District, right, receives his retirement certificate from Graham Zeiher.



wishes on his 65th birthday.

From 1929 to 1940, Charlie served his apprenticeship and worked as a painter with a local firm. Then he joined the Army and was in North Africa when captured and transported to Austria as a prisoner-of-war. For the next two-and-a-half years he had some very unpleasant experiences.

On his return home he was self-employed for a while until he joined MANWEB in 1954.

At a special ceremony to mark the retirement, Mr. Graham Zeiher (*District Engineer*) presented Charlie with one of the first of the new style service retirements certificates. Also, on behalf of friends in the District, he handed over a sum of money with which to buy a farewell gift.

Mr. W. B. DAVIES

One of the few members of the Board's staff able to complete 50 years' service in the electricity supply industry, Mr. W. B. (Wilf) Davies (*1st engineer*) has now retired from his job in the Transport Section at Head Office.

He began his working life half-a-century ago as an apprentice mechanic with the former Chester Corporation at their Crane Street garage. His weekly wage at that time was 8/6d (that is 42½ new pence!)



After a lifetime of service in the industry, Mr. Wilf Davies said his farewells to colleagues at Head Office. Our picture shows just a handful of his friends gathered as Jack Hill (*principal engineer*), left, gives a parting handshake to Wilf.

During the last war he served with the RAF as a flight engineer and flew on many missions over Germany in Stirling and Lancaster bombers.

He returned to the Corporation and soon became foreman mechanic. Following nationalisation, Wilf was appointed as Transport Officer for our former Area 3 and later Area 2/3. On the reorganisation of the Board he took up the post from which he has now retired.

Friends subscribed to purchase a travel clock and a set of binoculars, farewell gifts which were presented to him by Mr. Gerry Haughan (*Deputy Chief Engineer*) who wished Wilf and his wife many happy years in retirement.

Mr. J. CULLEY

A book on model railways was the farewell gift from the Local Advisory Committee, and a sum of money from his workmates to purchase a memento on the occasion of his premature retirement, was handed to Mr. Jim Culley, a jointer's mate in our Mid-Cheshire District by Mr. Graham Zeiher (*District Engineer*).

Jim, who unfortunately had to retire because of ill health had served the industry for over 37 years. Friends and colleagues joined in wishing him happiness for many years to come.

Mr. P. JENKINS

A most popular person working in our North Mersey District, Mr. Peter Jenkins has now retired.

Pumpfields garage staff in Liverpool, say their farewells to colleague Jack Joynson, centre left, as he receives their parting gift from Ron McShane.

He joined the mains gang 18 years ago, but a leg disability forced him to take light duties about three years ago and has now led to his early retirement.

Peter is an accomplished photographer and has a talent with radios, which he put to good use when the District Sports and Social Club was being established. He is also a capable 'do-it-yourself' man which no doubt will keep him very active in his retirement.

At a farewell party held in the Sports and Social Club, Peter was host to his family and guests from North Mersey District at a chicken supper. Warm and meaning sentiments were expressed by his colleagues for Peter to enjoy many years of happy and fulfilling retirement as they presented him with a number of personal gifts and an amount of cash for a farewell present of his own choice.

Mr. J. JOYNSON

A man who has repaired and changed thousands of tyres for all types of MANWEB vehicles being driven around Merseyside, Mr. Jack Joynson from our Pumpfields depot, has now taken early retirement following an illness.

He worked for a private company in Liverpool before joining the Board where, with his dry humour, he has made a host of friends.

Many of these gathered at the depot to wish Jack improved health in retirement. Mr. Ron McShane (*2nd engineer-Transport*), on their behalf, presented him with a farewell gift of a radio.



'Contact' Customer Care

IDEAS COMPETITION

As MANWEB's *Customer Care* programme gathers momentum we now ask YOU—as individuals—for the benefit of your experience and ideas.

How do you think we can improve our service to the customer, and so improve our reputation? Do you think you can spotlight something in our working methods that gets the customer's back up? Can you see a bottleneck, a failure of communication an out-of-date bureaucratic practice which builds up barriers between ourselves and the public?

Tell us what you think! Every suggestion will be carefully examined by representatives of the main Customer Relations Working Group, and ten nominal

prizes of £5 will go to the best suggestions . . . BUT there could be further substantial cash awards for any ideas which are capable of widespread application throughout the Board.

You will be told if your idea is useful, and if it is not considered practical then you will be told why.

This competition is open to all MANWEB employees and pensioners. Use the space provided on this page (or a sheet of plain paper if you wish). Address your entries to: The Editor, Contact, MANWEB, Sealand Road, Chester, CH1 4LR, marking your envelope 'Customer Care'. Closing date for receipt of entries is 31st March, 1979.

THE 'CUSTOMER CARE' PROBLEM:-

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MY SOLUTION:-

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Name

Job and workplace

Home address (if a pensioner)

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