

MANWEB TEAM IS A KNOCKOUT



Right: Making a splash. One of the team members gets a soaking on the inflatable slide.

Below: A knockout performance from the Region 3 team.



Hard on the heels of their success in the Manweb 'It's a Knockout' competition during the summer, a team largely made up of staff from the Regional Customer Service Centre at Rhostyllen went on to give another knockout performance in an inter-company event.

Although they were ultimately pipped at the post by a team from Greenall Whitley, Manweb stormed into the finals after qualifying over two heats.

Held at Woolston Leisure Centre, Warrington, the 'It's a Knockout' competition was held in aid of the charity Child Victims of Crime.

There was also a guest appearance from Warrior and Falcon, of Gladiators fame.

The Manweb Region 3 team, led by Paul Cormack of Agency Services, comprised: Matthew Harman, Rhys Powell, John McMahon, Brian Carman, Dawn Billington, Karen Callaghan, Sarah Kemp, Michelle Rigby and Karen Harvey.

Fitness Centre opens

Geoff Abel, Manweb's Director, Distribution Operations, flexed his muscles and tried out some of the exercise equipment when he officially opened the new state-of-the-art Fitness Centre at Prenton Depot. Similar centres, linked to the Wellscreen health programme, have also opened at Rhostyllen, Warrington and at the new Head Office in Chester. Queensferry Depot will also have a Fitness Centre early next year. Geoff is pictured with Lifescan Fitness Consultant Rob Drillsma (right) and some of the Fitness Centre users.



Joint outing

Manweb and ScottishPower anglers are busy organising their first joint outing, with 30 August next year the likely date.

Seamus Cronin, of Crewe Depot, and Brian Stark, of ScottishPower, are handling arrangements for the event, to be held at Llyn Brenig in north Wales, a former venue of the world fly fishing competition.

The lake can accommodate 84 anglers in 42 boats, and it is expected that these will be shared evenly between the two companies.

Diary date

The next meeting of the North Wirral (Electricity) Retired Staff Association will be held on 8 January 1997 at Manweb's Prenton Depot, starting at 2.30pm.

A speaker has been arranged. Anyone interested in joining the Association is welcome to attend.

CONTACT

NEWSLETTER FOR MANWEB PEOPLE

NOVEMBER 1996

TRIPLE WHAMMY

by Sarah Batley

Staff have achieved a triple whammy for Manweb by gaining prestigious awards for their quality of care to customers.

Customer Service staff in Rhostyllen and Warrington, along with their outposted Credit Control technician colleagues, have gained the international quality award ISO 9002, the mark of a team that works together towards set standards.

In addition, the Settlements Operations team, also based at Rhostyllen, has officially been recognised as Investors in People.

These latest awards come hot on the heels of the news that Manweb has regained the Charter Mark for excellent customer service.

ISO 9002 is the recognition which staff deserve, said Ray Hall, Regional Customer Service Manager at Rhostyllen.

"It is a brilliant achievement, especially as we approach 1998 and the competitive market.

"It is the staff who have gained this distinction and who have come up with the procedures needed. They have all worked very hard to devise best practices."

Delight

His delight is echoed by Kevin Mawdsley, Regional Customer Service Manager at Warrington.

He said: "We aim to provide top class service to all our customers and this award recognises that the achievements of our people are second to none."

The Investors in People award, gained after assessment from Wrexham-based Business Advance, means the Settlement Operations team has been measured against national standards. They made a commitment in February this year to gain the standard within a year, but achieved it in just nine months.

Settlement Operations Manager Andy Jarvis said: "Investors in People is about the company's commitment to its employees and their development from a personal and business level. It is about making sure people are kept informed and know where the company is going. It is also about regular briefings and reviews of people's needs."



Manweb Team Supervisor Val Hughes meets Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine at the Charter Mark award ceremony in London.

Mark of approval

Val Hughes, team supervisor at Chester Customer Service Centre, joined Chief Executive Charles Berry and Community Relations Manager John Kennedy in London on 2 December to receive the prestigious Charter Mark, which Manweb has been awarded for the second time.

Val was chosen to attend the award ceremony because she was closely involved in the Charter Mark assessments, having met Lord Blyth of Rowington, Chairman of the Government's Advisory Panel, and assessor John Dobson, when they visited Chester. Continued on page 3.



Teamwork is key - pg 6 Going underground - pg 4 It's a knockout - pg 8

HOOK, LINE AND SINKER!

by Sarah Batley

Freezing mud, falling darkness, a rising tide and high winds all failed to daunt a team laying the cables which will carry mains electricity to a tiny island.

It now looks likely that Ynys Gorad Goch, in the Menai Straits off Anglesey, will have power in the New Year, which means it can take on a new role as an outdoor pursuits centre for young people with disabilities. The island is already used as a base for water sports and outdoor pursuits for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Once the power is finally switched on, a boat winch will be installed so access can be gained all the time.

At the moment the tides, which can fall 30 feet, limits when people can get onto the island.

Tides

The first part of the work has been achieved by a team from Manweb, the volunteers who run the island, and BICC Cables at Wrexham. On 4 November they laid the cable on the estuary bed across the Straits to the island.

A trench was dug across fields from the main supply. Then, using boats and divers, a cable was floated out to the island. But the weight of the cables meant they kept falling from the buoys and had to be re-attached.

Once they were in place, the 200 metres of cabling was attached to the estuary floor using a quick-setting form of concrete. In all, 740 metres of cable have been laid.

Now the Manweb team faces two challenges - firstly designing a small substation to house the 11kV to LV transformer. There



Above: Connections Manager Arthur Rowlands with Ynys Gorad Goch in the background. Left: Divers guide the electricity cable across the Menai Straits.



is limited space on the island and the substation has to blend in with the beautiful surroundings.

The second challenge is taking it across the water in a barge. When there, it will be lifted by crane onto the island, along with the equipment to install it. Once energised, the cables and joints will have

to be fully tested before the final big switch on.

High voltage test equipment will be used to trace any problems during the test phase, or in the future.

Caernarfon-based Arthur Rowlands, Connections Project Manager, said it is one of the most unusual jobs that he has been involved in.

"It was a very wet and windy day and we were governed by the tide. It was also extremely muddy," he said.

The island, in a stretch of water known locally as the Swellies, has been inhabited since the Middle Ages. Then it was used as a fishery centre but it has never had mains power or water.

Guard is attacked

A security guard on mobile patrol at Manweb's New Crane Street depot was knocked unconscious by intruders who attacked him with an iron bar.

Andy Daly, of Wardell Security, suffered head and stomach injuries and was taken to the Countess of Chester Hospital, but later allowed home.

The intruders, who smashed the back window of a Manweb van parked in the depot, got away with a plastic tool box containing a few tools of minimal value. Police are investigating.



The cable laying team, comprising Manweb and BICC staff, and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme volunteers.



Duke does the honours

The Duke of Westminster unveiled a plaque in the Reception area to commemorate the opening of Manweb's new Head Office at Chester Business Park on 28 November. The Duke then joined other guests, including Murray Stuart, Chairman of ScottishPower, and local civic dignitaries for a guided tour of the building and a brief reception in the Board Room. Pictured (l-r) are Chief Executive Charles Berry, Councillor Bill Leathwood, Chairman of Cheshire County Council, the Duke of Westminster, Councillor David Evans, Deputy Lord Mayor of Chester, and ScottishPower Chairman Murray Stuart.

CUSTOMERS SHARE IN SCOTTISHPOWER SUCCESS

ScottishPower has announced half-year results which not only demonstrate improved financial performance by the group, but also see benefits for Manweb customers.

The ScottishPower group, which now, with Southern Water, serves one in five of all British households, has announced an increase in turnover of £471 million to £1,248 million, including, for the first time, a full six months contribution of £347 million from Manweb.

Operating profit for the group, at £230 million, includes £50 million from Manweb and £34 million from Southern Water.

The group's pre-tax profits rose by 31 per cent to £167 million, after taking into account reorganisation costs.

Strengths

"These financial results show good growth by Manweb, clearly identifying the underlying strengths of the Company. Viewed alongside continued improvements in customer service and the renewal of our Charter Mark, this is excellent news for our region," said Manweb Chief Executive Charles Berry.

The six months to September 1996 have seen a series of benefits for Manweb customers with small businesses receiving their first price cut in three years of up to 10 per cent on October 1, alongside a 4.6 per cent reduction for domestic customers.

Capital expenditure in this period of £23

million contributed to a considerable improvement in operational performance in the electricity network, with planned customer minutes lost down by over 30 per cent compared with the second half of the last financial year. Targets were also exceeded in meeting Offer's guaranteed standards for customer service with payments down by almost 70 per cent.

Within the local community, the ScottishPower Learning business was launched in July in partnership with the Trade Unions to provide job-related training for up to 150 unemployed people over the next two years and 24 young trainees are already on board.

And Manweb is providing further help for unemployed youngsters through stronger links with the Princes Trust Volunteers programme, with the two organisations running community training programmes in north Wales.

Announcing the results, ScottishPower Chairman Murray Stuart said: "We have three strong regional bases serving some five million customers, or one in five of all British households.

"It is our view that the successful utility companies of the future will be those able to provide a high level of customer service while, at the same time, enhancing cost efficiency."

Mark of approval

Continued from page one.

Regaining the highly valued Charter Mark is the culmination of a great deal of hard work for a host of Manweb staff.

To achieve the honour, Manweb had to show a continual improvement on standards set when the Charter Mark was first awarded in 1993.

There were nine criteria by which the assessors judged Manweb's submission:

- Standards of service
- Information and openness
- Consultation and choice
- Courtesy and helpfulness
- Putting things right
- Value for money
- User satisfaction
- Measurable improvements
- Our plans for the future.

Lord Blyth, in his letter congratulating Manweb on regaining the award, said: "Of particular note is the link of the long term incentive plan with the OFFER published customer service standards. This appears to be a genuine move to link performance in customer satisfaction with reward, a rare example in the public or private sector.

Praise

"All customers interviewed during the visit had only praise to voice. Several times customers compared the fine service of Manweb with that of some other public utilities.

"Staff training and personal development, including customer service education, is good and represents a significant investment by the company."

Val Hughes, of Chester Customer Service Centre, who received the award on behalf of Manweb, said she was thrilled when she learnt we were among the 320 public sector organisations to receive the Charter Mark this year, out of the hundreds nominated.

"For staff, the Charter Mark has given clear objectives and aims, a standard to work to. When we sat down to look at the Charter Mark papers closely, we realised that we were doing all of these things - we just had to show how we were doing them.

"I feel that we all give a good standard of service. We are friendly faces and voices who can help our customers," she added.

GOING UNDERGROUND

By Jackie Unsworth

Nestling in a sheltered cove on the north coast of the Lleyn peninsula in Wales, the 18 houses and pub that make up the tiny village of Porth Dinllaen look as pretty as a picture.

With its white sandy beach and breathtaking views across the bay, the village is a haven for walkers, and scores of visitors head there each year to enjoy the tranquility and sample the stunning scenery.

The only blot on the landscape is the jumble of electricity lines and telephone wires that criss-cross the hillside above, punctuated by ugly television aerials.

But all that is set to change, thanks to a project being co-ordinated by Manweb's Caernarfon office.

Keen to improve the local environment, the village's owner, the National Trust, is working closely with Manweb on a jointly-funded scheme to underground the electricity lines.

In addition, a single community aerial linked to a cable system will reduce the visual impact of television services to the village.

Environment

Manweb's Caernarfon-based Connections Project Manager Brian Davies said: "We have agreed to share with the National Trust the cost of this scheme, which will greatly improve the environment for villagers and visitors alike. At the same time, running the electricity cables underground will enable us to provide a more reliable service.

"We will be liaising with the other utilities as it will keep costs down for the National Trust if we can use the same route - probably along the beach - for all the services, and we will be saving costs further by using trenchless technology."

The partnership approach helps public sector groups to achieve grant funding from the Government.

The first phase of the £55,000 project, which is due to get under way early in the New Year, is to provide the village with an electricity substation.

The National Trust is currently working with Mike Thomas, of Manweb's Consultancy Section in Prenton, on the design of the building. Mike said: "One of the considerations is ensuring the



Picturesque Porth Dinllaen - but the hillside above the village is criss-crossed with electricity and telephone lines, as the photo right shows.

substation blends in with the rest of the village. The type of substation agreed is a GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) kiosk, and the Trust has been looking at the possibility of building an outer shell with stone cladding and a pitched Welsh slate roof."

The National Trust also hopes to use this outer building as a wheelchair store for a disabled resident of the village.

Access to Porth Dinllaen is difficult for small vehicles, let alone a crane, so lifting the GRP substation and equipment into place is likely to be a tricky job for Manweb. One of the options being looked at is to transport the equipment across the beach from nearby Morfa Nefyn, rather than use the narrow track which is the only other route into the village.

Approval

The scheme has met with approval from the villagers themselves, according to the National Trust's Land Agent Nick Wynne.

He said: "This is a beautiful area, spoilt only by the mass of overhead power lines, telephone wires and television aerials. The villagers are very positive about the improvements planned.

"The National Trust is also planning to improve the car parking facilities, tarmac the access road, connect to the main sewerage system several houses that are currently not connected up, and provide visitor information signs."



Safe haven on the coast

Classed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on 'heritage' coast, Porth Dinllaen was bought by the National Trust in 1994.

Previously owned by the Porth Dinllaen Harbour Company and the Sarn Estate, the village dates back to the 16th Century.

Sheltered from the prevailing wind, Porth Dinllaen is one of the few safe anchorages on the north coast of the Lleyn Peninsula.

For this reason the village was once in the running to become the main packet station to Ireland, but Holyhead was ultimately chosen.

Access by car is difficult, and motorists have to negotiate a winding

and usually muddy track across a private golf course to reach the tiny village car park at the top of a steep hill, before completing the journey on foot. But this access is often closed and visitors have to leave their vehicles on a larger car park a mile or so away and approach Porth Dinllaen on foot, across the beach.

Anyone thinking of leasing one of the National Trust's cottages in the village is in for a disappointment.

According to the Trust's Land Agent Nick Wynne, the villagers have long term leases on the properties and he has had enough enquiries from would-be residents to "fill a telephone directory".

Secret diaries take Jim on a journey to remember

A'Journey to Remember' would have been forgotten if it's author hadn't disregarded Army rules. The book, subtitled 'The Diary of a Liverpool Soldier', was written by former Manweb employee Jim Gonzales.

But it was only possible because he secretly wrote down his war time experiences with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Now the book is on sale with a moving foreword from the Right Hon. Earl

Kitchener of Khartoum, who says: "The descriptions of battle are skilfully interwoven with those of the relaxation provided by ENSA (Entertainments and National Service Artists), films and the best opera."

The idea for writing the book stemmed from a chat between Jim, who was a Draughtsman in the Drawing Office at Liverpool, and some of his colleagues in the 8th Army Veterans Association.



Jim Gonzales, wearing his medals and Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers dress cap, with copies of his book.

The book describes the long journey of the 8th Division by sea and road to the east of India and back via the Persian Gulf and Iraq, and the Division's part in the invasions of Sicily and Italy.

Liverpool-born Jim, who started in the electricity industry in 1935 at Clarence Dock Power Station, returned to Manweb's former office in Hatton Garden after the war and finished his career at Lister Drive in 1963.

An opera lover, Jim has furnished a music room in his Walton home, where he relaxes listening to some of the 1,000 classical 78rpm records he has collected and catalogued.

He has also chronicled a musical history - 'The Gramophone In My Life', in which he mixes interesting facts and comment about the gramophone with his favourite recordings - especially the singing of Caruso.

Fit and in good health at the age of 81, Jim still keeps a diary. "I've got to these days or I'll forget everything!", he said.

Copies of 'A Journey to Remember' can be obtained from Jim at 18 Graylands Road, Liverpool L4 9UJ, price £7.50.

TEAMWORK IS THE KEY

Teamwork was the key to restoring power to thousands of Manweb customers when north Wales was battered by blizzard conditions in mid-November.

Gale force winds and heavy snowfall left much of the electricity network in tatters, snapping wooden poles and pulling power lines to the ground, resulting in the loss of supply to more than 23,000 customers in Gwynedd and the Vale of Clwyd.

Over a three-day period, Manweb engineers and linesmen - including teams from other unaffected areas of the Manweb region and from ScottishPower - worked round the clock to carry out extensive repairs and gradually get the power back on.

Wales Regional Manager Alan Laird said: "The weather was exceptionally bad and much of the electricity network in the worst affected areas needed to be completely reconstructed.

"We were also hampered by the snowfall which had blocked many major and minor roads, preventing our staff from reaching the faults.

"The continuing bad weather prevented us from carrying out helicopter patrols, but with the help of the Royal Air Force, we eventually managed to get airborne and, once the extent of the damage was known, additional resources were immediately mobilised from other areas within Manweb and Scotland."

Extra Customer Service staff were brought in to man the call centres to deal with the enormous number of enquiries from people off supply. During the three days 53,000 calls were handled, and a

by Jackie Unsworth

further 43,000 follow-up enquiries were received during the rest of the week. In a normal week, Manweb's call centres receive around 50,000 enquiries.

Meanwhile staff based at Manweb's Rhyl and Caernarfon depots also dealt with a flood of enquiries from local people and set about liaising with the local Social Services to provide help for elderly housebound customers.

With the help of Gwynedd Council, feeding facilities were set up at two schools unaffected by the power failures, in Deiniolin and Bethesda, where customers off supply could call in for a free hot meal, courtesy of Manweb.

Similar arrangements were put in place, on Manweb's behalf, by Denbighshire County Council, at the Brookhouse Mill Tavern, Denbigh, and the White House Restaurant, Rhualt.

Problem

The only problem was that both these eating houses were without electricity!

Manweb Contracting Services Senior Contracts Manager Bryn Morris came to the rescue, quickly locating and despatching a portable generator to one of the restaurants. A second generator was supplied to the other restaurant by Distribution Operations.

Back-up in the form of a mobile catering firm to deliver food to housebound customers was organised by Brenda Stevens, Administrative Assistant in Personnel Services at Rhyl.

There was also the problem of feeding the Manweb staff working long hours,



Manweb linesmen carry out repairs to the damaged overhead network.

and Rhyl canteen staff offered to work late into the night to serve hot food.

A mobile fish and chip van was despatched to Llandyrnog, to feed the cold and hungry Manweb 'troops', and 'take-away' meals were also delivered to linesmen and engineers working in appalling weather conditions in other remote areas.

Chief Executive Charles Berry, who visited some of the worst affected areas (including Llandyrnog where he joined staff for a fish and chip supper), said he had been impressed by the team effort of everyone involved and paid tribute to their hard work and commitment.

"This teamwork stretched from the people out there in the field, to operational control and the call centres and to those in supporting roles," he said.

"This spirit of co-operation included our colleagues in Scotland, with a team of linesmen and engineers coming down to join us - demonstrating one of the benefits of being part of a much wider group now."

Help for smokers

Manweb will become a smoking-free organisation from 1 January 1997, when the company's new 'no smoking' policy comes into effect.

Help is available to staff who wish to stub out the smoking habit. Smoking cessation courses are being run by Manweb's Occupational Health Department. Call 703 2032 or 2033 for further details.



GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Keeping your workplace in good order is an essential part of your job if accidents such as slips and trips are to be prevented.

This applies wherever you work, whether in an office,

workshop, store, vehicle or yard. By keeping desks, aisles, walkways and shelves clear of loose items of equipment and waste, you are not only keeping your workplace tidy but also reducing the risk of accidents due to slips, trips and falls.

Keeping your workplace in good order isn't only about storing materials safely, but also keeping it clean and hygienic by cleaning up after you finish your task, wiping up spills and disposing of rubbish.

Spending a few minutes keeping your workplace clean and tidy every day will prevent a small problem from becoming a big mess. Too often materials are left lying under desks,

in walkways or in depot yards, growing unnoticed until finally it becomes unsafe and causes an accident.

Safety

* Safe working by staff at Queensferry warehouse is paying dividends for

local charities. Having reached a new milestone of 500 accident-free days, the staff have 'earned' awards of £100 each to five charities, the latest recipients being the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals and Chester-based BIRD, the organisation which works to rehabilitate young children with brain disorders.

Logistics Manager Don McRae is pictured (centre) with, to his left, Warehouse Foreman Graham Lewis, presenting a cheque to the PDSA, and, to his right, Safety Co-ordinator Peter Allen, presenting £100 to BIRD, watched by colleagues.

Police praise trio in car rescue

Cheshire Police have praised three Manweb employees for their "invaluable assistance" during a rescue drama in Chester.

Driver David Stokes (32), Craft Attendant Stephen Hallmark (32), and Overhead Linesman Neil Mason (26), who are all based at New Crane Street depot, stopped to lend a hand when they spotted police and fire officers trying to recover a submerged vehicle from a pond on farmland in Guilden Sutton.

Although it subsequently transpired that the vehicle was empty, the rescue team had to assume someone was trapped inside. The Manweb trio offered to help carry a dinghy from a nearby address to the pond, so that police officers could row out to inspect the vehicle, and then used the winch on their Manweb vehicle to haul the car, which turned out to be stolen, out of the water.

Chief Inspector Robin Corrie, of Chester Police, said: "At the time it was not known whether anyone was still in the vehicle. A recovery vehicle was summoned, using the Police call-out system, but great difficulty was experienced nonetheless. David Stokes, Stephen Hallmark and Neil Mason were present with a Manweb vehicle and rendered considerable help. Without their assistance it would have been a much longer and more difficult task."

Geoff Jones, Team Leader at New Crane Street, said: "The lads did a great job and are a credit to us."

Commitment to the environment

Manweb's commitment to the environment has been demonstrated by a series of training workshops which, to date, have been attended by 650 staff - 35 per cent of the Distribution Operations workforce.

Held at locations throughout Manweb, the one and two-hour environmental workshops are aimed at industrial staff, managers and team leaders, and have been developed to underpin the requirements of the Distribution Operations business Environmental Policy.

Energy and Environment Manager Geoff Ravenscroft said: "It is important for everyone within Distribution Operations to comply with the requirements of the policy. The policy also extends to anyone who works under contract for the business, which means that they have to comply with the procedures in exactly the same way as our own staff."

Manweb has a number of environmental objectives which target a continuing improvement in environmental management. These include:

- completing environmental risk assessments of the risk of oil pollution at all grid and primary substations.

- Further refining the Environmental Management System in preparation for certification.

- Targeting a further three per cent reduction in building energy costs and undertaking environmental awareness training for 20 per cent of staff.

Manweb's Environmental Policy, signed by Geoff Abel, Director Distribution Operations, in June this year, states that:

"The Distribution Operations business is committed to conducting its activities to provide a high quality service whilst ensuring that environmental factors are fully taken into account. We will:

- > meet or improve upon relevant legislative and regulatory requirements and codes of practice.

- > set objectives and targets, and publish our achievements.

- > complete regular audits to ensure we comply both with our policies and legislation.

- > exploit opportunities for waste minimisation.

- > promote the efficient use of resources, energy and fuel.

- > refine the Environmental Management System.

- > educate staff to carry out their activities in an environmentally responsible manner.

Compliance with the aims of this policy will ensure a continuous improvement in environmental performance and recognise the need for sustainable development."



Chief Executive Charles Berry (right) with one of the teams from Scotland sent to help out in Wales during the emergency situation.