



CARDIFF
SWANSEA
TENBY

WG Davies
Servicing South Wales

Customer Newsletter

Q1 2023

Editor's message

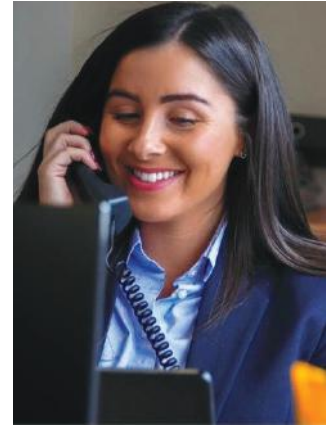
I must have blinked because another quarter has flown by and here is our first newsletter for the year already. As usual you will find updates from our depots, plus parts and sales, alongside some top line findings from the customer interviews conducted and a quick look at our social media activity as well.

For the "Inside Track" this quarter Roger takes the opportunity to talk about OneMAN and our ambition to perfectly align what we do with that of MAN, so that we can present ourselves as one company in all interactions with our customers. We are delighted to include thoughts from Neil

Cox and Dave Hopkins alongside those of Roger to give the article a genuinely OneMAN feel.

For me the centrepiece of this newsletter is the spotlight interview with Martin Jones, Director of Transport Operations at Castell Howell Foods. Martin talks about how his father made customer service his absolute focus - you'll love the scampi story! He talks about how they have built long term and very loyal relationships with their suppliers, as well as highlighting the role their staff have played in their success. It really is a feel-good story that I am so happy to share.

I hope you enjoy the read and wishing you a very happy Easter.
Rachel.



Roger Davies: The Inside Track - Living the OneMAN Philosophy

Recently we have been challenged to understand how the behaviours and values of WG Davies align with those of MAN. It was an interesting exercise and I wanted to share the outcome with you because we found ourselves defining the fundamental beliefs which have guided our interactions with our staff, our customers and of course with MAN over the decades since my Grandfather, "The Boss", started the company.

Working closely with MAN has been something we have done quite naturally, ever since we proudly became an MAN franchisee, because fostering excellent relationships with all contact points at MAN ensures seamless connections between the two companies for our customers and that is the principle which underpins the OneMAN philosophy.

Neil Cox, General Sales Manager at MAN for the past eight years, paid us the highest compliment when he told us, "As we face the customer, MAN and WG Davies are joined at the hip. The contact I have with WG Davies is open and honest, and that means I have the opportunity to work with them to ensure our mutual customer is looked after in a way that is in keeping with a premium brand like MAN. We both recognise that there is common ground for

us with the customer squarely in the middle, and with WG Davies I know we always work to do the very best for the customer - it is truly a OneMAN operation."

We heard similar words from David Hopkins, MAN Direct Sales Executive, who said "When looking after our customers, WG Davies and MAN are one company". David has been working in South Wales for over 12 years and in that time he has seen a growth in the market share above that enjoyed nationally. "This has been achieved by forming strong relationships at all levels with WG Davies," he explained, "we know that without the commitment from the network to look after our customers, we quite simply have no sales department and I know without question that that commitment is there from WG Davies."



We know that these links to MAN need to be nurtured every day and so we will not rest on our laurels. We will always look for ways to serve our mutual customers even better, whether that is through improved expertise in our workshops, better parts availability and investment in our depots and tooling, our drive for continuous improvement underpins everything we do today and in the future.

Customer Spotlight: Martin Jones, Director of Transport Operations at Castell Howell Foods

Castell Howell Foods is a family-owned company which has grown from humble beginnings to become Wales' leading independent food service wholesaler. That success has been achieved by remaining true to the uncompromising desire to look after their customers, as well as attracting and retaining staff who live their values and by working with local suppliers who mirror their culture.

WG Davies is proud to work with Castell Howell Foods and so we were delighted to talk to Martin Jones (pictured right), son of Brian and Elizabeth Jones who established the company back in 1988. Back then 80% of their business was selling poultry to the Co-op, who at that time could buy locally for their meat counters. "It was a good business model that worked well," Martin related, "until they moved to centralised procurement and we effectively lost most of our trade overnight, because we could not supply their stores nationally."

"There was one full time employee working with my parents, he had a young family and he needed the job. That motivated my father to look for new outlets for his poultry. He tried butchers and restaurants and quickly realised he needed to offer more than just fresh chicken, so he sought out suppliers who could add to his offering - it was effectively a new start for the company."

At that time, Brian established the blueprint for customer service which still holds true today. "You could phone him any hour, day or night, and he would respond," Martin told us "a classic example was when Huw Jones, who ran the Travellers Rest on the outskirts of Carmarthen, phoned my father on a Friday night at about 7pm. He said he had a problem, he had just run out of scampi. My father responded with "No problem, when do you need them?" and Huw replied "Well they are just about to finish their starters!" Of course, my father jumped in the car with a box of scampi, passed it through the kitchen window and the customer to this day would not know what had happened behind the scenes".

"My father grew the business from a base of loyal customers, who really saw the value in the service he offered and wanted to give him more business. We knew we could not compete on price but we could respond to our customers in a way that no one else could and that established the culture of the business that still exists today."

Over time the business moved away from farming and into food services but then the next bump in the road was delivered by Booker Cash and Carry. "Many of the dried goods we supplied to our customers; flour, beans and soft drinks for example were bought from Bookers. They quite



suddenly decided we were no longer a customer in their Carmarthen store, we were competition and they would no longer sell to us. Once we had peeled my father off the ceiling, he announced that we would open our own cash and carry, which he did in 1998." And with that the offering went from 2,000 to 6,000 products.

Further investment followed such that today the company is head quartered in Cross Hands, employs c800 staff and turned over c£160m last year. Martin is quick to acknowledge, "The company has grown rapidly and that is due to the quality of the people we have in the business. We have people who want to look after the customer and that culture is and always will be key to our success."

Martin grew up on the farm, he was just 10 years old when the company was established and he describes himself as "either a spectator or involved since then. My first job was washing the lorries on a Saturday morning and then, in the summer holidays, I would go out on the trucks as a driver's mate."

Following a gap year, funded by working the night shift, Martin came back to work full time and today he manages the transport side of the business. Castell Howell runs a mixed fleet of 170 heavy commercials and 35 light commercial vehicles, which deliver 90% of what is sold. "Lately we have chosen MAN," Martin explained. "We took our first MAN vehicles in 2018 and we found them reliable and cost effective to run."

Other than preventative maintenance, we did not spend any money on them and I say that with confidence because I have a P&L on every vehicle thanks to software developed for us by a local company, Vehocheck."

The word "local" pops up repeatedly in our conversation, "We always try to support the

communities we operate in," Martin explains, "we explore local options for products and services, and when we find suppliers who look after us, we will remain loyal to them for as long as they are in business."

Most of Castell Howell's fleet maintenance is carried out by two independent, local garages, with WG Davies supporting with warranty back up, technical advice, diagnostics and parts as required.

Unlike most of the companies interviewed for the newsletter the day to day contact with WG Davies is therefore minimal. "The MAN product has served us well," Martin reports, "but crucially the support when we have needed it from WG Davies has been there, it is a safety belt. People buy from people and Roger is a thoroughly nice person. More than that, what is reassuring is that in the rare times that we have asked them for help, they have helped. This is testament to the way they look after their customers, it shows that even if you haven't got a regular presence in their work shop, they will still go out of their way to look after a customer."

In that respect there is a perfect match between WG Davies and Castell Howell; both companies are totally committed to looking after their customers and both recognise that success comes from looking after loyal staff members, while building long term relationships with suppliers, that are both fair and respectful.



"The MAN product has served us well"

Depot Round Up - Q1



Cardiff, Tom Carroll

It has been a fantastic start to the year, with the whole team; workshop and office based, doing their bit to turn customer's vehicles around quickly.

With so much going on it is good to welcome a new technician to the workshop; Ivor Magee joins us from Tech Trucks with some good experience under his belt already and he is settling in well. With Ivor on board we

now have a full compliment of techs in the workshop, including 13 fully qualified techs and four apprentices.

Most of what has kept us on the go, non-stop until 1030pm Monday to Thursday, is the servicing, repair and maintenance of customer vehicles. Along side that we are starting to see some new vehicles coming through for Forward Waste and one for Gerry Jones with a number more planned for Q2.

Training is always a priority and it has been good to see techs heading off to MAN Swindon to attend courses including the maintenance course, engine repair, diagnostic assistance systems, diagnostics van electrics and diagnostic truck electrics.

Finally we have seen the start of work to create some much needed additional parking space we have here.



Tenby, Sarah Spolton

At Tenby the year could not have started better, we have hit our targets and the workshop is busier than ever.

We are looking forward to seeing another four MAN units from Suttons here soon and that will give us even more to get on with.

With all that going on it has been good to welcome Tomos Evans to the team as a

qualified technician - we've needed the extra pair of hands - and, equally, it is great to see our 1st year apprentice Lucas Banks is progressing well.

It will be a squeeze but training is always something the techs enjoy. We have SLP training booked for April and tanker training for Tomos just as soon as it becomes available.

We are a small team in Tenby and we love a challenge, so we are grateful to our wonderful and very loyal customers, we always try to do our absolute best for them and are we are looking forward to doing just that in Q2.



Swansea, Dan Jones

Busy is our normal here at WG Davies in Swansea although we are not complaining, it is great to see the team work so well together to achieve our targets.

It has been an interesting mix of repair and maintenance, as well as some PDI's with 11 shiny new TGE vans going out to a variety of customers and four new MAN TGX's for

Right Freight alone.

With so much going on I am happy to welcome our new HGV technician apprentice, Aidan Eales-Davies, who started with us at the beginning of March. Aidan has already shown great interest and aptitude in his new role and he undoubtedly has the right attitude to go far here.

On the subject of training, the majority of staff members have now successfully completed the forklift course and the remaining few staff members are due to complete theirs in Q2. Josh Eynon is set to attend a TGE course in Swindon at the end of March and Craig Vyner will join the TG3 electrics course in May.



It takes more than a bit of rain to dampen our enthusiasm

In the meantime, all staff appraisals have been carried out and it has been refreshing to hear such positive thoughts and feedback. All that remains is for me to say thank you to the team for pulling together during such a busy period and for keeping customer satisfaction our number one priority.



Swansea MOT and Light Servicing, Michelle Kidwell

We are always busy with MOT testing and the servicing of smaller vehicles. In fact we wonder how we ever managed the workload before we extended the opening hours to match the HGV side of the business! We

have been working from 6.00am to 4.30pm for just over a year now and we have needed those extra hours in Q1, with lots of motorhomes going through their MOTs - clearly after Christmas a lot of people are looking ahead to brighter days and holidays.

The team is nicely settled now, with our three technicians Chris, Paul and Josh having passed their Class 5 MOT Light testing and they are working hard to keep up with demand.

Q4 Parts Update - Alun Taylor

Q1 of 2023 has been a slow build for us in parts; we started off steady, got busier in February and March has been pretty full on.

We carry a stock value of c£500,000 across the three depots and we understand the critical role parts play in ensuring customer vehicles are out on the road. So it is frustrating to report that we are still experiencing some challenges in respect of parts availability from MAN but we are working hard to do our very best for our customers.

In respect of looking after our customers, we are very happy to welcome Thomas Green as a Parts Advisor to the award winning team in Swansea. Thomas is working alongside Mike and Colyn to ensure both Swansea and Tenby workshops have the parts they need. We also have a new parts van on the road to help with parts deliveries.

The long wheel base MAN TGE will run out of our Cardiff Depot and proudly carries the WG Davies and MAN brands around South Wales.



John Hiles with our new delivery van

Customer Service Interviews

Feedback from our customers on the service we give and specifically our ability to accommodate your vehicles when you need us.

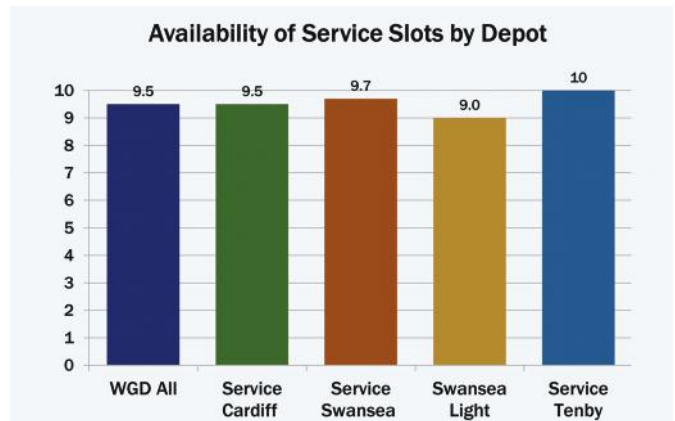
We know there is no better way to understand the service we offer - what works well and what could be better - than by asking our customers. The time they give us is an investment in our mutual relationship and we always treat that feedback as a gift.

Our customers use their vehicles to move everything from fuel to food, parcels to pharmaceuticals and people, as well as some very specialist operations like mobile chemotherapy treatment.

Alongside that we have emergency services as well. For each application we know our customers' vehicles need to be on the road, working hard and so we look to keep the visits to our depots as short as we possibly can.

That has been the prompt for us to ask customers to rate a new KPI this year; our ability to offer the service slots you need, when you need them?

Across the 27 interviews with customers who use our service departments we were delighted to be rated 9.5 out of 10, with a stunning 60% of those interviewed rating us a perfect 10.



Clearly that is an endorsement that we are humbled to receive and we promise we will not rest on our laurels, we will work hard to move it up a notch over the coming months.

Sales Scoop, David Hopkins

A busy salesman is a happy salesman, so while lead times are still considerably longer than we would like, Dave is delighted to report that new vehicles are landing now and he is looking forward to more than 80 deliveries this year.

Dave tells us, "The order book is open for most models and we are quoting for and winning orders - not at the levels we were used to but it represents a slow return to normal and we are grateful for that."

In quarter one WG Davies PDI'ed and delivered the first of two new vehicles for Forward Waste Management (pictured right), four vehicles for Right Freight Ltd, plus one each for Gower Plant Hire and Ammanford Recycling.

In addition to that, we have prepared and delivered Top Used vehicles to Stone Supplies Wales, Darlow Lloyd Construction and Liquitherm Technologies.



Q1 Social Media Matters

We take the time to celebrate our apprentices and Debbie's birthday

We know that apprentices are the life blood of our industry and the future of our business at WG Davies, so we have taken the opportunity to celebrate them on our social media feeds. With an apprenticeship at WG Davies and the right attitude, there is no limit to how far you can go:

- ✓ Eight of our 28 technicians have gained their qualification via an apprenticeship programme with us
- ✓ Four of our management team started with us on a mechanical apprenticeship and have now gone on to run their own depots.

We also took the time to wish Debbie Davies a very happy birthday. Debbie is the wife of our Managing Director, Roger, and she has worked alongside him for 24 years.

We have also advertised new job opportunities, welcomed new starters and congratulated the achievements of our staff as they gain new qualifications.

Join in the conversation or just follow us at:

www.instagram.com/wgdavies www.facebook.com/wgdavieswales https://twitter.com/WG_Davies

