

THE BRIGAND



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Happy New Year!

There's a lot to celebrate in this issue. Pride of place goes to the Legacy. There's an article about it which lists the fourteen organisations which benefitted from the first £50,000 we released together with all the people without whose help it simply wouldn't have happened. That it did happen and that it was all such an enormous success is cause for celebration. There was wonderful publicity for all who received awards and also for Harrogate Brigantes Rotary. The culmination of all the hard work was the Legacy reception held at Oakdale Golf Club which was



President Bill with representatives of the fourteen Legacy beneficiaries

a memorable evening for all concerned.

Since the last issue we've also had our annual Special General Meeting at which officers for next year are agreed. All the main offices have been filled and we're grateful to all those members who have undertaken to give up their time in the service of Brigantes.

We've talked for a long time about improving the way we publicise what we do. That was one of the main reasons for investing in a new website but, of course, a website is only as good as the material it contains and it's crucial that it's kept up to date. So we're delighted that Graham has taken on that role. If you have anything that you'd like to appear on the website, do let him know. We've also admitted in the past that, apart from a few exceptions such as the legacy, we've not been very good at publicising what we do via social media. Hopefully that will change as Tim Grainger will be making sure we make the most of our media accounts.

Publicity for what we do is, of course, critically important. It encourages people to support us, it means that more people know who we are and what Rotary is about and crucially it lets people know about the projects, great and small, that we undertake. And there's a further consideration. Publicity's fine but it begs the question as to what we do with it and specifically how it enables us to attract new members. Two of the articles in this issue address exactly that challenge and give us food for thought as we plan our future. Already we're delighted to announce that we have a new corporate member in Verity Frearson Estate Agents and we need to explore how we can add to them and how we can work in new ways with new types of members.

So one of our resolutions for 2025 needs to be how we can build on the successes of 2024. Nothing less than the future of Brigantes may depend on it.

Peter Wood

Perfect Pitch

Our latest theatre visit courtesy of Moya was 'Perfect Pitch' by John Godber. It's a tale of Matt and Rose whose quiet weekend camping is interrupted by Grant and Steph who arrive with their pop-up tent after which things are never quite the same again. By turns funny and unsettling, it brought the prejudices of each character to the surface. The Brigantes contingent joined a full Harrogate Theatre for a great evening's entertainment.

Thanks Moya.

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The Much Easier Quiz

Tony's Impossibly Difficult Quiz of last year which left brains steaming was quickly forgotten when his Much Easier Quiz made landfall. We had 'Say What You See' – so 'Gra 12" ve', which stumped most of us was 'One Foot in the Grave' and NOW IN HERE was 'In the Middle of Nowhere'. Geddit? No more spoilers. Other rounds included 'Animal and Bird Groupings. So, A Charm of Goldfinches? No, I didn't either. And, for daytime telly addicts, a round of film stills.

Once we knew we were vouchsafed a rare sighting of Ian Bainbridge the game was up before we'd started. His uncommonly large team came in first but quizmaster Tony had a novel tiebreaker which was designed to ensure that all teams finished level (don't ask) but made it even more novel by giving us the answer alongside the question. So chaos ensued but all was resolved as Haribo sweeties were doled out to all competitors.

So, an unusual quiz but wholly enjoyable. Thanks Tony.



All winners (sort of): Runners and Riders for the Much Easier Quiz

Special General Meeting

At the Special General Meeting on 26th November, the following officers of Brigantes were elected for the year beginning on 1st July 2025:

President: Diane Stokes

President Elect: Les Ellington

Treasurer: Mike Hammond

Club Secretary: Bill O'Rourke

Minutes Secretary: Peter Wood

Social Secretary: Moya Prichard

Programme Secretary: Tony Doveston

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Thoughts on Harrogate Theatre



Moya on stage at the Crown

Moya gave us a potted biography, including meeting Keith at a 21st birthday party, as a background to her main theme – her background in drama and in particular her time spent at Harrogate Theatre. She didn't really want to come 'up north' when Keith was invited to open an office in Leeds for the company he was working for in Jersey. She'd already done a bit of stage work, producing 'Cinderella' and starting a choir in Jersey but when she and Keith moved to Harrogate in 1976 she joined St Andrew's Players and made her stage debut on the back row of the chorus for 'Annie Get Your Gun'. She graduated to Stage Director for 'Fiddler on the Roof', a role she enjoyed. She had complete control of the performance and went on to do the same job for nine subsequent productions, becoming Chair of St Andrew's Players along the way.

Eventually she joined the board of Harrogate Theatre which at that time had Andrew Manley as its Artistic Director. For Moya this was a steep learning curve. Andrew was an exciting person to work for but money was tight and, to complicate matters, someone (no names) was persistently leaking confidential information to the local press. Moya became Chair of the Board in 1995 and oversaw the subsequent refurbishment which gave us the theatre as we see it today. Her role brought her into conflict with the Performing Rights Society as well as local politicians.

Subsequently she handed over responsibility to Jerry Mass and the theatre re-opened with a Music Hall with none other than our own David Hoskins as MC.

Moya is still a Trust member and Harrogate still has its theatre though it no longer has a repertory company. However, as our visit to 'Perfect Pitch' showed, it's still possible to see a good play well acted in the wonderful surroundings of our theatre and for that we are indebted to many people, not least Moya Prichard.

So thanks Moya for that and for your fascinating talk.

Harrogate Bowling Club

The Bowling Club are great friends of Brigantes. Twice a year they allow us to defile their hallowed turf by projecting bowls from variable heights, setting them on the wrong bias careering across the green in mad parabolas and generally inserting a maelstrom of chaos into what is normally a sedate pastime. I exaggerate but only slightly. And after all that they welcome us to their clubhouse for fish, chips and general bonhomie.

It was our turn to offer hospitality this time when Eric Smith from the Bowling Club and himself no mean bowler – it took a while for us to tease out of him that he had played for Yorkshire – gave us a potted history of the Club. Founded in 1931 it didn't have a great deal going for it. Situated next to the Valley Gardens, it suffered inevitably from spring water which its situation at the bottom of a slope did nothing to alleviate. In short, it was very wet and, by 2000 it also needed some investment in its facilities. In 2001 a National Lottery grant, augmented by loans from members, enabled them to replace the clubhouse which was 'quaint' but inadequate. They needed to increase their income which meant recruiting new members so they placed large posters all over town and initiated public open days. In five years their membership jumped from 90 to 150 and it has remained there ever since. Anything we can learn from that?

In 2009 a loan from Bowls England enabled them to install a metal equipment shed to replace the old wooden sheds which lacked the necessary security. In 2012 they dug up the green, installed hard-wearing grass with better drainage and improved the surrounds. Each day they change the 'heads' which means that the direction of the rinks alternates, thus preventing worn patches developing. Such is the quality of the green that lots of people, including the County, want to play here.

New members continue to be welcome. There is public coaching every Tuesday morning. The first session is free and thereafter it's £3 per head. After six weeks there's an option to join the Club. There are various teams but if you wish you can simply turn up and play with whoever else turns up. It's all very sociable and this aspect is enhanced by a healthy social programme.

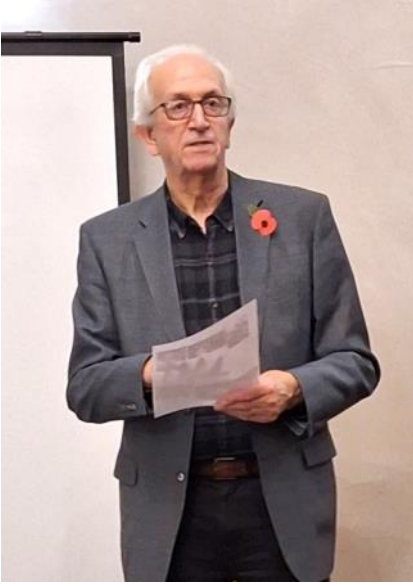
The season's over now but come the Spring when the sap rises there could be worse things to do than presenting yourself one Tuesday morning and giving it a go. Go on!



Eric bowling along

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Remembering the War



Peter and Guy, in what has become an annual ritual, brought us powerful reminders of Remembrance Sunday.

Peter told us of his father's war service. He has an impressive record of letters, photographs and memories which have been passed down and Peter read from them.

His father was conscripted in 1940 at Farnley Park near Otley and trained in various parts of the country until he embarked for the Middle East when his mother was eight months pregnant with Peter. Subsequently he did not see the family again for three and a half years. Peter read a letter sent to him on his first birthday which was very moving and thoughtful. A unique record indeed.

Peter's father, Norman, also a teacher, served in the Eighth Army in the Middle East, fought at the Second Battle of El Alamein, and went on to the invasion of Sicily and the Italian campaign. He was a tank driver and, Peter told us, much preferred the American Sherman tanks to ours.

Peter told us of the very arduous nature of the fighting but his father did find time on leave to take photographs in Rome and Venice, and visited La Scala in Milan. He said the Monte Casino campaign was particularly difficult. They saw a wounded German soldier by the roadside and did what they could to help.

Throughout his talk Peter read poems from the war illustrating powerfully the nature of events.

Guy for his part in the dual presentation told us of his detailed research for the piece David would read on Remembrance Sunday.

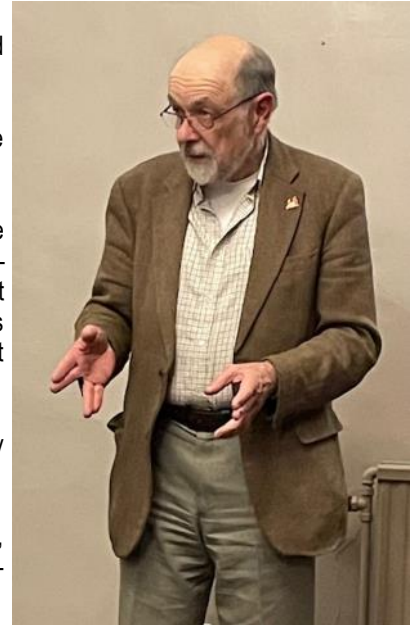
He told us of the four and a half million Dutch people on the brink of starvation in the famine because the Germans withheld supplies to punish them.

He also told us of Private Henry Moon of the Green Howards who served in Egypt and then in the invasion of Italy, and then in operation Market Garden in Holland. He was killed in 1944 but his remains were only found and buried this year and were identified by DNA. Guy's description of what it was like to get into a plane time after time, knowing you had a good chance of being killed was graphic indeed. He called the planes death traps, and indeed that is what they were for so many, but they did it with great courage time after time.

The stark reality of war that Peter and Guy shared with us brought home to us the sacrifice so many made.

Remembrance Sunday continues strongly. We might have thought it would fade with time but not so, and we at Brigantes can be very proud of more than a quarter of a century of Remembrance Services we have organised.

David Hoskins



Jemima at the Christmas Fayre

Jemima made her return appearance at this year's Harrogate Christmas Fayre. She donated many of her feathers in a good cause and, although the day was a chilly Monday, she and we turned in a profit of £217 so many thanks to everyone who helped to staff the stall..



Jemima with two of her seasonal minders

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Remembrance Service

There are larger Services of Remembrance around the country but few, I suspect, with the singular atmosphere of the one at Stonefall, organised by Brigantes Rotary each year.

There are many reasons for this. Guy's immaculate organisation ensured it had the gravitas and ceremony such an occasion requires. As always the Harrogate Band was immaculate, from the subdued "O God our help in ages past" to the ringing tones of the Last Post. Representatives of the Army Foundation College gave us "For the Fallen" and the Kohima Epitaph ("When you go home tell them of us"). The young soldiers from the Army College were in attendance as usual and twenty two wreaths were laid as the band played in the background.

But what really makes it different for me is that it takes place amid over a thousand war graves lovingly tended by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. As the wreaths are being laid, school students from Ashville and junior soldiers from the Foundation College lay a red carnation on each grave. Each year I cannot escape the fact that it is a truly remarkable few minutes.

David's thoughts were again memorable, based as they were on Guy's detailed research. The story he told was of 20 year-old Flight Officer James Robert Harrison, Canadian pilot of a Halifax bomber returning to Skipton-on-Swale following a raid in France. With the starboard outer engine out of action, he attempted to land but the plane went into an uncontrolled and sharp turn. It crashed into an elm tree on the village green. Flight Officer Harrison was killed instantly. Another crew member died of his injuries but the other five survived. Tragically five-year-old Kenneth Battersby, playing in his garden, was struck by metal fragments and killed.

Flight Officer Harrison is buried at Stonefall and the Canadian flag flew proudly over his grave. And that's what really makes the Stonefall service different. We are among those whose sacrifice we commemorate. We have come to their final resting place and we have remembered them.



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Legacy Reception

The wonderful evening at Oakdale was the climax of a series of events that started when Denis Smith was so impressed with what Brigantes did that he left us £150,000 in his will. It isn't every night you get to donate a lot of money but we gave away £50,000 and fourteen organisations benefitted. As each of them came forward to receive their award we heard what the award was for and then they said what they were about as an organisation. It made you appreciate the variety of work, much of it voluntary, that goes on in the Harrogate community and how many wonderful people there are who spend so much of their time in the service of others. It was an occasion that was at once both inspiring and humbling.

Particular thanks are due to our friends from other organisations: Nicola Stamford and Matt Reeder from the Big Bamboo Agency, Matthew Stamford from Verity Frearson Estate Agents, Frances Elliot from HADCA, Sharon Canavar from Harrogate International Festivals and photographer Gerard Binks. Thanks also to all those from Brigantes who helped to make sure the Legacy process worked so well: President Bill O'Rourke, David Read, Peter Wood, Charlotte Gale, Tony Doveston and Honorary Rotarian Tim Grainger. It was truly a team effort.

Congratulations to the following organisations which received awards:

- Coppice Valley Primary School
- Follifoot Park Disabled Riders Group
- Happy Wanderers Ambulance Organisation
- Harrogate Hospital Radio
- Harrogate Skills 4 Living
- Independent Domestic Abuse Services
- New Beginnings Peer Support
- Resurrected Bites
- St Michael's Hospice
- Sensory Days
- Taking Baby Steps
- The Forest School
- Time Together
- Woodfield and Denepark Community Centre



Photos by Gerard Binks

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North Star

Susan Rogers, formerly Assistant District Governor, came to talk to us about the thorny subject of membership. North Star is Rotary's name for its membership expansion project which began last year. It grew out of a realisation that the concept of passive organic growth is no longer fit for purpose. Clubs may attract new members but they are insufficient to replace losses. Already this year five clubs have been lost in District 1040. Unless we do something about it, the direction of travel for clubs individually and Rotary generally will remain unchanged.

Hence North Star. In a sense there's nothing new about it. We know about declining numbers, the need to enlist younger members under new arrangements and the importance of what we do being project-led. We know that the people we're wanting to attract will not be what the late Howard Rayner called the "knife and forkers", people who enjoy simply meeting weekly for a meal and a speaker. We know that the kind of new members North Star points to will be semi-detached, meeting elsewhere and less regularly. We know it because we had it ten years ago with the Catalysts (remember them?). I suspect if we had them now we would cherish them.



Susan pointing the way forward

So the thrust of Susan's argument was that we need to make ourselves more relevant, to identify projects that will appeal to people in, say, the 30-50 age range and then let them get on and do them. She talked about Fellowship Clubs, Business Breakfast Clubs, Interact, Satellite Clubs (cause- or interest-based), Corporate Membership and Impact Clubs. There's overlap between these ideas but the basic thrust is that they involve younger people identifying and carrying through projects under the Rotary banner either as part of an existing club or as a separate group. There would also be reciprocity whereby they would be available to help with existing club projects.

Susan made another important point. Many people haven't heard of Rotary and, if they have, don't have a clue what it does. This is where Brigantes may just have a temporary advantage. The legacy has given us an opportunity to work with business partners, to show ourselves as a charitable organisation and to garner more good publicity than we've had in years. It won't last but while it does, we should run with it and use it to develop new ways of working.

Shakespeare's Local

November's Book Club was in festive mood with party hats and Christmas jokes. "What do you call an old snowman? Answer: "Water". Boom-boom! The title of our book was, we admitted, a bit of a con – but the author Pete Brown admitted it, so that was OK. The 'local' in question is 'The George' in Southwark and although it was standing in Shakespeare's day and it's close to the Globe theatre there's not a shred of evidence that the bard ever popped in for a swift pint en route to treading the boards.

Nevertheless most of us really enjoyed the book. It's essentially a celebration of the English inn, using the George as an example. It's been there since the 14thC in a variety of shapes and guises. Its glory days were when the stagecoaches ruled the transport roost – in fact a relatively brief period which came to a swift end with the coming of the railways. It was one of many inns in Borough High Street at the southern end of London Bridge – the one with the houses and shops on it and traitors' heads boiled in tar and stuck on a pole as an added entertainment. Speaking of which, a bit of bear-baiting or dog- or cock-fighting could spice up a dull afternoon as an alternative to a visit to one of the many brothels or 'stews' some of which were owned by the Bishop of Winchester. Never a dull moment in Southwark!

So the book was certainly entertaining. But it was also very well researched and written in an engaging, personal tone. Some of this may have been down to the fact that poor old Pete Brown lost his laptop with most of the completed book on it (not backed up). He had to re-write in four months what would normally have taken him three years, so it does read as a slightly out-of-breath, occasionally repetitive but never less than utterly committed account. Humour plays a big part in the book. Pete Brown is a proper historian but he wears his learning lightly and carries you along with his relentless enthusiasm.

Two of our number know the George and could empathise with its quiriness. It's much diminished in size now, it's hard to find the entrance, never mind the bar, but, miraculously, it's still there, a survivor of the ages, developers and the London blitz.

And I'll certainly be making a pilgrimage when I'm next in London.



Festive mood at the Book Club

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Revolution!

Kit Lacey is a Revolutionary; he's also a Rotarian. Now there are two words you'd never have thought you'd see in the same sentence. He's a parent, a business owner in "the automotive and electrification field" (me neither), a church member and a Knaresborough town councillor. You wouldn't have thought that would leave room for much else until our good friend Hazel Haas came calling. "How would you feel about starting up . . . ?" she began. She was after the elixir we all seek – new, young Rotary members – and she had struck gold.

Kit and a friend quickly attracted a like-minded group and they met at the Mitre in Knaresborough. They had no pre-formed agenda but they looked at the talent around the table and began to talk about projects. What did the town need? There were concerns around about anti-social behaviour so they began to look at youth provision. It existed but not always where it was most needed. Their solution? To buy a bus, turn it into a 'Youth Bus' and take the provision to the people rather than the other way round. They managed to find the £35,000 required to buy a bus already doing a similar job. They're still in their early days with it and are teaming up with 'Yorkshire Youth' who use it two nights a week as well as with other groups who use it around the town. And they have a manager for the bus.

All this begs lots of questions and we weren't shy about asking them. Number One was the relationship between the Revolutionaries and the 'established' club. This still touches a raw nerve for us because we were hereabouts ten years ago with the Catalysts. That interface between the two elements of the club is key. The Revolutionaries are full Rotary members but they're under no obligation to attend the weekly meetings. They're on a long lead and, as Kit admitted, there are people on both sides who aren't entirely happy about that. They do help the established club with stewarding, heavy lifting and suchlike. They don't particularly like being asked but they do it because, after all, they are one club.

Number Two question had already been answered – as it has been numerous times. The key to the success of a Revolutionary-type development, whether it involves add-on membership, corporate membership or some other version, is to find a project that people want to do. That's the Revolutionaries' calling card. They're in it not because they like the idea of joining a Rotary club but because they've found a project they want to do and around which they can unite. And it's ongoing, not a one-off. They want to do it and they want to keep meeting and that's the key.

"Why then Rotary?" we asked. Kit was honest. There are grants, there's insurance and the other benefits (recognisable brand, established group, contacts) that Rotary can bring. The main thing is that it seems to be working in and for Knaresborough, the Rotary club and the town.

So Hazel's words have borne fruit an hundredfold. It's a model they've worked out for themselves and it suits them. Any other club would need to invent their own model but the underlying priorities and practicalities would remain broadly the same elsewhere.

There is, perhaps, an elephant in the room: How does the development of a new group help the established one, getting older and smaller, to survive? I don't know the answer. It may be about Rotary changing to something completely different or it may be that one group can reinvigorate the other. But what I do know is that the Knaresborough model, and others like it, are certainly better than the alternative.

Perhaps it's just time to be brave.



The Revolutionary Kit

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Tsunami

On Boxing Day 2004 Brian Souter took a break from Christmas celebrations and turned the television on. What he saw was horrific. That morning there had been an earthquake under the sea off the west coast of Indonesia. There had been movement along the line where the Indian and Burmese tectonic plates meet. The quake was huge, measuring 9.3 on the Richter scale. It caused 100 ft waves to power across the sea at 500mph and to cause utter devastation when they hit land. Over 227,000 people died. Buildings and infrastructure were destroyed. It was one of the deadliest disasters in recorded history.

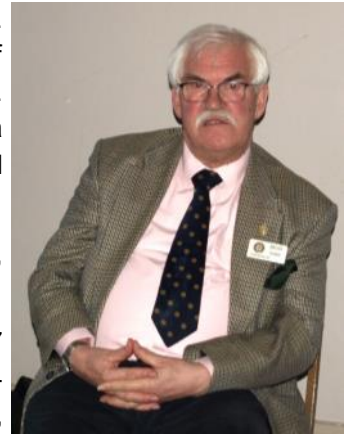
We can all remember it. Some of us will have known people affected by it. Brian, from Knaresborough RC, told us what Rotary did about it.

It was a remarkable collective effort. Our Rotary District 1040 collected £225,000 in three weeks, sent 227 ShelterBoxes and 229 Aquaboxes. In Sri Lanka 168 schools had been destroyed. Rotary worldwide undertook to re-build 25 of them at a cost of \$12m. In December 2005 the first new school opened. Another, christened 'The Yorkshire School' was paid for by District 1040 with matched funding from Rotary Foundation. It has 17 teachers and over 300 pupils.

Brian and others from our area travelled to Sri Lanka. They met the President whose government was wrestling not only with the effects of the tsunami but also the major distraction of a long-running civil war. They joined other Rotarians who were civil engineers, architects, accountants, tax advisers – all people at the top of their professions who gave their services free. Rotary replaced not only buildings and infrastructure but supported the regeneration of small businesses and all the grants it made were repaid in full.

Brian's message was simple and powerful. Rotary is a unique organisation. It spans the world, it contains experts in many fields, it has an unrivalled capacity to raise money and to act at speed. In that way it can be much more effective than larger charities.

We often talk about the Rotary 'family'. The aftermath of the 2004 tsunami showed just how effective it can be.



Brian tells us the story of the tsunami

Christmas Party

Brigantes saw in the festive season in style with our annual party at the Crown. Entertainment was provided by a jazz quartet from St Aidan's school. There was festive poetry and David Hoskins gave us his seasonal thoughts. A thoroughly enjoyable evening all round and many thanks to Tony Doveston who organised it all.



**Wife texts husband on a cold winter morning:
"Windows frozen, won't open."
Husband texts back: "Gently pour some lukewarm water over it and then gently tap edges with hammer."
Wife texts back 10 minutes later: "Computer really messed up now."**

Four Catholic ladies are having coffee together.

The first one tells her friends, "My son is a priest. When he walks into a room, everyone calls him 'Father.'"

The second Catholic woman chirps, "My son is a Bishop. Whenever he walks into a room, people say, 'Your Grace.'"

The third Catholic woman says smugly, "My son is a Cardinal. Whenever he walks into a room, people say, 'Your Eminence.'"

The fourth Catholic woman sips her coffee in silence.

The first three women give her this subtle "Well...?"

She replies, "My son is a gorgeous, 6'2, hard bodied stripper. When he walks into a room, people say, 'Oh my God...'"

Statistics Don't Lie

Average Duration of a Phone Call:

Boy to Boy	00:00:59
Boy to Mum	00:00:50
Boy to Dad	00:00:30
Boy to Girl	01:23:59
Girl to Girl	05:29:59
Husband to Wife	00:00:03
Mum to Married Daughter	10:50:59
Wife to Husband	14 Missed Calls

I dropped a £10 note in the wind earlier and chased it for miles, I never caught it, but I had a good run for my Money 🏃🏻‍♀️ 😂



Pro Tip: Save business cards of people you don't like. If you ever hit a parked car accidentally, just write "Sorry" on the back and leave it on the windshield.