



THE WAY WE ARE

It has been a very good year for the Research Network in 2024 for enjoyable, well attended social events, growth in membership and sound finances. These are covered in the AGM report.

There is a review of our most recent Autumn Lunch, and a full schedule of our social events already planned for 2025, with firm dates for you to save in your diaries. We have an exciting new restaurant for the Spring Lunch, with tried and trusted familiar venues for the Summer Party and Autumn Lunch.

We have our regular features by Peter Bartram and Jane Bain (Nature Diary) along with obituaries for John Barter and Mary Goodyear.

Our general interest articles this time are varied and fascinating accounts of the ups and downs in our members' lives and careers, by Jane A'Court, Jackie Dickens, Hilary Parker, Keith Bailey and Ivor Millman. Who would have thought that things could go wrong with overseas projects and fieldwork?

Please feel free to contribute interesting or amusing articles for the next newsletter in August. Any topic is welcome via editor@research-network.org.uk.



SPRING LUNCH: 29 APRIL AT THE STOKE HOUSE

The Stoke House is a new venue for us — a smart, modern British steak house restaurant in Victoria, specialising in food cooked over wood. Its website says that all of its meat is “smoked and cooked on site using a great blend of woods to bring about a unique and delicious flavour”.

It has a comfortable restaurant and bar and a pleasant terrace for drinks in the pedestrian area outside.



We have exclusive use of the ground floor restaurant as well as non-exclusive access to the terrace. The price for members will be £45 (£55 for non-members and guests) and this includes a welcome drink and a set lunch with wine.

The restaurant is a very short walk from Victoria Station, through the Sir Simon Milton

Square, the pedestrian precinct in the Nova development. Its full address is The Nova Building, 81 Buckingham Palace Road, SW1W 0AJ.

THE WAY WE WERE

More recollections compiled by Peter Bartram

In this column two years ago, I suggested that 1983 was the high water mark for the research industry in terms of our collective commitment and enjoyment. I now think I must adjust that, as digging through my old pile of MRS Newsletters from exactly 40 years ago, 1985 may have a better claim to be our peak year. For instance:

- Six months into his MRS Chairmanship, John Samuels reported on progress by writing that...
 - ◊ The Christmas Lunch was sold out two months in advance
 - ◊ The Winter School was also fully booked two months in advance
 - ◊ Attendance at MRS Education Courses was running at record levels
- In October 1981, an NOP survey had found 64% of the public thought market research was “a good thing.” When that survey was repeated in February 1985, this had risen to 75%.
- Later, John Samuels also reported that in the previous 8 years there had been...
 - ◊ 103% growth in Associate Memberships
 - ◊ 204% growth in people eligible for the MRS Diploma
 - ◊ 72% growth in the size of the book of Abstracts
 - ◊ 225% growth in the size of the MRS Newsletter
- Further evidence of robust commitment was shown by the many MRS-sponsored sports activities:-
 - ◊ The six-monthly Darts Tournament was assembled with 32 teams sporting creative names such as ‘Stan Dart and the Deviations,’ ‘The Toxophilites,’ ‘The Research Rats,’ and ‘The TN Tornadoes’
 - ◊ The MRS Squash Tournament was held weekly with both men and women’s teams at Lamb’s Squash Club in London EC1
 - ◊ The MRS Angling Competition was held in March with five hours’ fishing in the Thames followed by food and drink at “a suitable location”
 - ◊ An MRS Snooker Competition was held in April
 - ◊ The MRS Golf Tournament was being held in May at the RAC Club near Epsom
 - ◊ The MRS Badminton Tournament was held in May at the Wimbledon Squash and Badminton Club
 - ◊ An MRS Bridge Club meeting was held in May at the Charing Cross Hotel
 - ◊ An MRS cricket match against the Government Statistical Service was played in July at Roehampton
 - ◊ The NOP Fun Run coincided with the Brighton Conference in March
 - ◊ Furthermore, a Wine Tasting Session was organised by Conal Gregory who, as well as being a Master of Wine and MP for York, was our own representative at Westminster
 - ◊ And the MRS Christmas Lunch was described as “the largest gathering of market researchers in Britain or even the world.” Guest speakers were comedians Mel Smith and Griff Rhys-Jones (who “consumed virtually nothing—barely a mouthful of bread and half a glass of water, but before performing still needed two trips to the loo”)
- To end on an even lighter note, when discussion took place to decide whether the Annual Conference should in future be organised by paid professionals, Pym Cornish asserted that “Conferences are one of those things that are better done by amateurs—like making love”

AUTUMN LUNCH AT UNION JACK CLUB

Our Autumn Lunch was held on 22nd October 2024 and was a very special experience, as we were only given access to this private club for serving and ex-serving military personnel of His Majesty's Armed Forces due to Jane Gwilliam's family connections.

Sixty-nine Research Network members and guests had booked to attend and the attractive venue was conveniently located adjacent to Waterloo station.

Our lunch was held in the spacious and recently refurbished Gascoigne Suite and was excellent value at £60 for Network members. Following welcome drinks on arrival, the first course comprised Cold Poached Salmon, Golden Beetroot, Daikon and Horseradish Salad. The main course was Beef Shoulder Steak Marchand de Vin, Seasonal Vegetables and Colston Pommes Aligot, followed by a Chocolate Truffle Torte dessert with Berry Compote. Very exotically described on the official menu!

Below is a small selection of photos from the day. Many more images of this highly sociable and enjoyable event can be viewed in the Network website [gallery](#).



RESEARCH NETWORK: ACTIVITY UPDATE

Membership Development

We have made good progress on increasing membership during the last two years thanks to Jane A'Court and our eight Champions. However, two more volunteer champions are required to maintain these positive results. Another very favourable result has come from Network members bringing guests to the lunches, who then decide to join.

- 22 new members joined in 2024, including some younger working researchers.
- The last two years have seen membership increase from around 160 to nearer 200, with a retention rate of 90% from those joining since Autumn 2022.
- In addition, the Network will continue our promotion through the MRBA and Research Club, as well as our stand at the MRS Conference on 11th March 2025.
- Our LinkedIn site, developed by Andrew Smith, is also becoming a very positive promotional tool.

Oral History Project

At the AGM, Frank Winter reported that Paddy Costigan has now edited interviews with Lawrence Bailey and Peter Hayes, so these audio files have been uploaded to the AMSR website. There are now 46 interviews available to listen to; an invaluable record of important people who have worked in the market research sector over the last 50 years. And this has proved to be of great interest to marketing academics and students.

We are planning additional interviews during 2025 to include representatives from data processing, recruitment and continuous panel measurement, along with qualitative research, ethnography and semiotics. At the same time, our intention is to increase representation of female members of the industry, to do justice to their major industry contributions more accurately.

Social events for 2025

Jane Bain and Jane Gwilliam have worked exceptionally hard to research a wide range of both familiar and new restaurant venues in terms of value for money, menu quality and their capacity to cater for around 70 guests, in these times of relatively high inflation.

From an extensive list of potential venues, we are going to a new restaurant for the Spring Lunch. For the summer party we are staying with Doggett's, as nowhere else matched its value, indoor and outdoor spaces and ideal position overlooking the Thames.

And we are very pleased to return to Brasserie Blanc at Southbank for our Autumn Lunch following two very successful events in previous years, and also because they have held their prices for us to a similar level as before. Very impressive, bearing in mind the pressures which are being felt by the hospitality industry.

Please save the following dates:

Spring Lunch – Tuesday 29th April 2025

The Stoke House, The Nova Building, 81 Buckingham Palace Road, SW1W 0AJ

This is opposite Victoria Station and is a modern, stylish British steak house, specialising in food cooked over wood fires. We have exclusive use of the ground floor restaurant and there is also an outside terrace. The price for members will be £45 (£55 for non-members and guests) and this includes a welcome drink and a set lunch with wine.

Summer Party – Wednesday 2nd July 2025

Doggett's Coat and Badge, Blackfriars Bridge Road, SE1 9UD

As usual, we will have the recently refurbished third floor Terrace Bar, inside and outside, overlooking the Thames. The cost will be £35 for members (£40 for non-members and guests). This includes a welcome drink and a generous buffet lunch.

Autumn Lunch – Tuesday 14th October 2025

Brasserie Blanc, 9 Belvedere Road, Southbank, SE1 8YP

Our more special venue is directly behind the Festival Hall, close to Waterloo Station. Lunch will be in the private inter-connecting dining rooms with their own bar. Their 3-course set lunch, following a welcome drink, will include wine. Members will pay £60, the same as on our last visit, with non-members and guests paying £70.

For all these events, Gill Wareing will send out invitations 6-8 weeks in advance and the venues stipulate that they need to know the number of guests at least 14 days beforehand, so please don't delay in confirming your place if you are able to come along.

CHRISTMAS PARTY AND AGM

This year's AGM was held on the 5th December 2024 at Ipsos Mori's offices at 3 Thomas More Square, near Tower Hill Underground Station. We very much appreciated their generosity in allowing us to use their 4th floor meeting area. Almost 40 Network members attended and the meeting was designed to spend around 35 minutes on the updates by Adam Phillips, Gill Wareing (Treasurer), Jane A'Court (Membership Development), Jane Bain (Events) and Frank Winter (Oral History Project).

Afterwards, the attendees could socialise while enjoying drinks and buffet food. Photos can be found on the [gallery](#) and a small selection appears below.

As an overview, 2024 was a good year for the Research Network, with Jane A'Court and our other Champions significantly increasing our membership to around 200 and retention levels of 90% among our new members since Autumn 2022.

A very modest annual membership fee increase from £30 to £35 was agreed at the meeting; the first increase for several years.

Financial Update

Gill Wareing gave firm reassurances that membership fees are above budget and overall finances are positive and stable. An increase in new members and sponsorship of two events in 2024 certainly helped to boost our income, so many thanks to Alligator, Edge Advisory and Perspective for their support.

There are modest financial reserves and so we have agreed to donate £500 to the Market Research Benevolent Association (MRBA).



A BAD DAY AT THE OFFICE

Jane A'Court

In this occasional series, members recall episodes at work that might, with hindsight, have gone better. Here, Jane A'Court describes no fewer than three of her own 'bad days at the office'.

Dear Readers, you are going to get three for the price of one!

The first bad day in the office was an extremely bad day for most of London. This year sees the 20th anniversary of the 7th July 2005 bombings. The previous day had seen London win the bid to host the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. On that Thursday morning I had already travelled from West London to our Field office located near the Borough and Elephant & Castle tube stations. Between about 9:30 and 10:15 am we started seeing the news about the dreadful attacks.

Thankfully, everyone in the office had arrived without incident. However, we were very concerned about the interviewers booked to work that day. Because of the type of work that we undertook—either having working status quotas or visiting pre-selected addresses multiple times—most interviewers started later in the day to be more successful, but we still needed to check whether they had started working or if still at home, to tell them not to work that day as no-one knew whether there would be any more bombs.

The mobile networks were jammed with everyone doing the same thing, but we had landline numbers as well. Fortunately, we managed to contact all booked interviewers, an amazing job done by the office-based field staff, both in the office above and the Harrow office, plus the home-based Regional/Area Managers. It was a very stressful day for all, and it was quite late before we left to go home. I, for one, have no memory of how I got home that evening.

Being the atrocity's 20th anniversary this year, I'm sure you will join me in sending our thoughts to everyone directly affected by that day.

The next bad day happened when I was working in South Africa running F2F fieldwork for a well-known company. In the early 80s, we ran a dustbin audit with a large panel of consumers. In urban areas the panellists kept a separate bin to their normal bin where the categories we collected data on were placed. Interviewers visited every month to audit what was in the special bin and sent the information to the office (using questionnaires with optical mark reading answer sheets).

However, in very rural areas, permanent interviewers drove company vans into these rural locations which had very few roads, and this meant getting to the homes (rondavels) by driving on the land itself. Panellists were only visited every 2 months. In the rural area of the Transkei this was predominantly rolling hills. Here the panellists used just one bin for everything as it was not practical for them to sort their rubbish. The interviewer then sorted the contents for the categories he wanted, recorded the data and then burnt everything.

As with all data collected, we needed to undertake quality control checks. The vans had tachographs installed so we could see where the interviewer had been, but we also needed to check the auditing process and giving of incentives. As running F2F Field was new to me, I decided I wanted to accompany one of these interviewers.

So, I drove from Durban down the coast to get to the Transkei (this has since been incorporated into the Eastern Cape), for about 3 hours. I met the interviewer in a safe place where I could leave my car. I then drove with him for the day. It was very interesting meeting the panellists and I admired the ingenuity of some people running radios and even TVs, using normal small batteries.



By Charles J. Sharp - Own work, from Sharp Photography, [sharpphotography.co.uk](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=104214653), CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=104214653>

Half-way through the day, we drove up to the next panellist's home. The bin was kept outside and the interviewer started to empty it as normal, with me at his side. Out came a leguaan; my screams could be heard a very long way away. A leguaan, also known as a rock monitor, is the largest lizard in Southern Africa, and can be 1.5 to 2 metres long! This one was about 1.25 metres long so probably a juvenile or a female. They are carnivores and how it got into the bin and left the bin standing was a puzzle, but something must have smelt interesting.

Some people living with the HIV virus in parts of Uganda have been reported injecting themselves with the blood of rock monitors, which they believe to be a cure for the virus. Many are reportedly discontinuing anti-retroviral therapy to pursue this



anecdotal treatment. Luckily this was the only fright that day...

The last bad day at the office was also concerning F2F fieldwork in South Africa. We had a great field force, and I had introduced equal pay for all interviewers of all types. Again, there was some reluctance for office-based people to go into some urban areas to ensure that Supervisors were doing their back-checks properly, so I decided to lead by example and go myself.

The Supervisor responsible for Soweto took me into the township in her car. We were spot-checking interviewers as we knew which sample points were being worked. The day was going very well until late in the afternoon when we moved to yet another sample point and heard shouting, beating drums and other loud noises, plus could see fires and smoke; it was a riot. I was bundled into the back of the car and had to stay in the well under a blanket for quite some time until we had left the township. Very scary and uncomfortable...



THE STUPIDEST THING I DID IN 2024

Jackie Dickens



There were a fair few stupid things to choose from—certainly in the eyes of the younger generation. For example, asking what is 'Blue Tooth' and why should anyone give it that name? What does it do?

Then just when you think you are catching up with technology, you get a setback. My little laptop completely died on me in November. I rushed to the Apple Store in Kingston at opening time, but was told that my laptop was 'obsolete' and could not be mended or have a new battery.

It was only six years old. All I could do was buy a new one.

Whilst there, I asked them about getting a clip-on charger for my iPhone. But my phone was too old for that.

I was beginning to feel obsolete myself.

Having said all this, people can be very kind to us oldies—offering seats on crowded trains, helping with luggage and so on. But with regard to possible stupidity, you tend to be called 'love', spoken to in a loud voice and so on.

However, back to the stupidest thing I did in 2024.

I am not a 'car enthusiast' and have the smallest Hyundai, which I love. I was driving one day to the Art History group I belong to, when an ambulance approached. I swerved on to the nearby pavement and punctured a tyre.

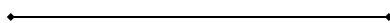
I only had a mile or so to get to my destination and thought that surely the punctured tyre could manage that.

But I started to hear a nasty noise as I was driving—which got worse. I was waved down and shouted at by another driver, so I stopped. I saw that my tyre had broken into shreds and bits were hanging off the wheel.

The damage to my car was extensive, including destroyed electrical systems and major bodywork damage. I just paid the bill for fear that if I claimed on my insurance, no company would ever cover me again.

I encourage anyone with an 'I was stupid' story to contribute for our amusement, especially at this time of the year. After all, 'Christmas letters' just extol the virtues and successes of family members!

I wish you all a Happy 2025.



NATURE DIARY

Extracts from Jane Bain's Nature Diary: July–December 2024

My fears that there are far fewer butterflies and other pollinators this year are confirmed when the Great Butterfly Count in August finds the lowest numbers on record. Natural England reports that the cool wet spring contributed to this sudden reduction in insects, but this comes after many years of longer-term decline.

July: The dismal weather continues. On a rare summery day I come across a blackbird making the most of the unexpected warmth for a spot of sunbathing beside the path around the reservoir.



Given the lack of insects generally, it is a lovely surprise to find a cloud of bumblebees buzzing around a faded poppy head. Never the best of flyers, they jostle and bump as they search for pollen and nectar.

August: It has been wet in France too. The beaver lake beside my friends' house is full and has attracted a host of unusual waterfowl. Aptly named stilts are small, elegant waders with the longest legs imaginable.



There is a *ragondin* (coypu) nest with an underwater entrance in the bank of the stream which feeds the beaver lake. Quite a large family group live there and I enjoy watching their coming and goings.

September: Although fewer in numbers than usual, the Wetland Centre still attracts a wide variety of dragonflies. A female common darter rests briefly on a stone before skimming out over the reedbed in search of insects.



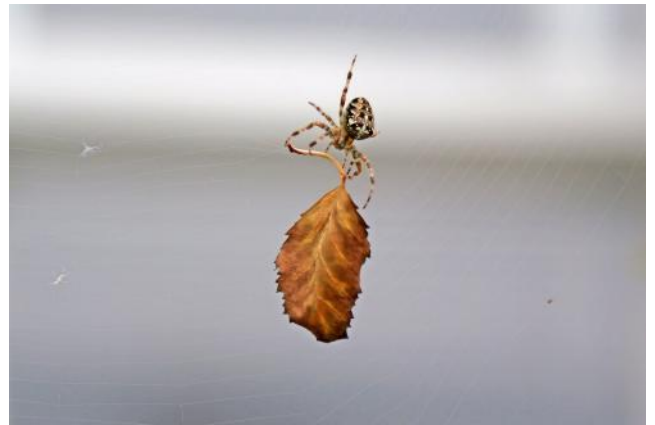
Circling and swooping overhead there is a rare treat. A hobby, a small falcon, has come to the reserve to hunt. Its diet consists of small birds and insects. And today dragonflies are on the menu, one of its favourite foods.

A tiny fleck of red in the undergrowth at the reservoir catches my eye. It is the final 'instar' (moult stage) of a rather rare Ramburs shield bug. A few days later I manage to find a black and white adult (inset picture).



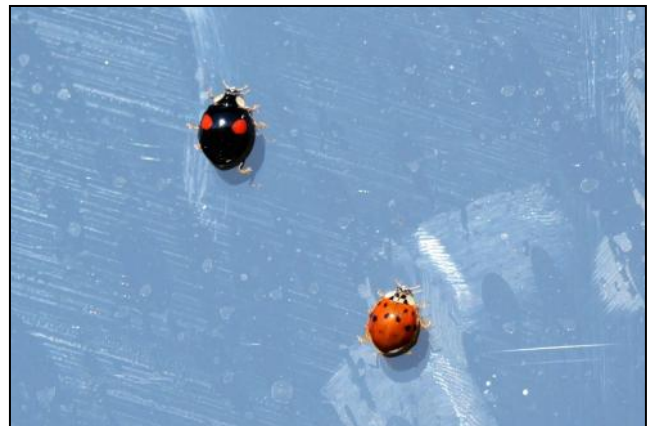
October: At high tides, the water comes almost up to the river walk on Corney Reach. A juvenile great crested grebe fishes for baby flounders just a few feet below me.

Passing a front garden I notice an odd sight, a small leaf has become trapped in a spider's web. The spider is deftly removing the leaf, which it then drops clear of the web, before repairing the resulting tiny hole.



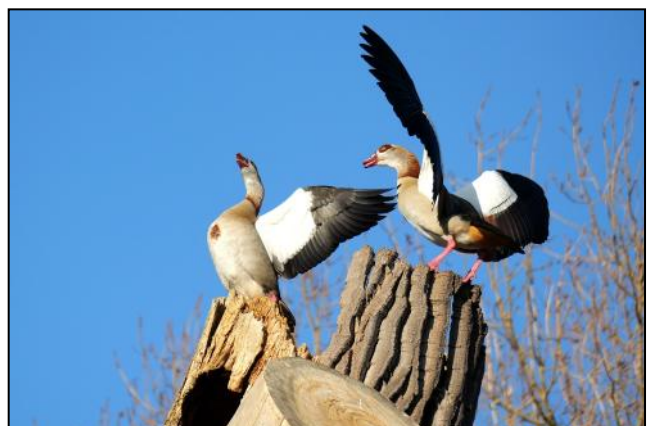
November: A beautiful grey seal is visiting this stretch of the river. The seal is also partial to flounders, but it prefers catching much larger ones, which it holds deftly in its flippers while eating them.

The south-facing wall of one of the hides at the Wetland Centre has attracted a large number of ladybirds. They scurry over the glass door pane, presumably searching for warm crevices in which to hibernate.



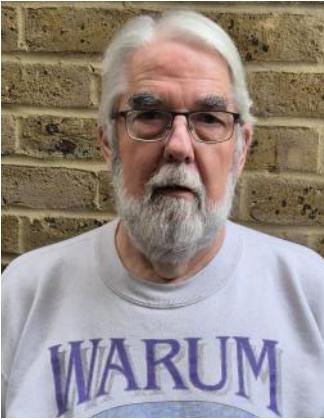
December: In the avian world, thoughts are already turning to the coming nesting season. Parakeets investigate all manner of small holes in their search to find the right cosy home.

Egyptian geese use the tall black poplar stumps by the river to perform their elaborate and extremely noisy courtship displays and to fiercely defend their territory.



A LIFE OF RESEARCH MISHAPS

Keith Bailey



I studied German at Leeds University and was obliged to spend my third year living in Germany. Like many of my fellow students I took the easy option of taking up a post as an English language assistant in a German secondary school. Apart from generating an abiding dislike of Terry Jack's Seasons in the Sun (used as a teaching aid), that year taught me that I did not want to go into teaching as a career, which had seemed a possible path after university.

Wanting to use my languages, I started looking at Marketing as an option, but soon realised that I had only a minimal understanding of what Marketing involves. So, I took myself off to do a post-graduate Diploma in International Marketing at North Staffordshire Polytechnic. That enlightened me as to the basic principles of Marketing, but it also introduced me to the discipline of Market Research. Students on the course were required to undertake a market research study in a foreign country, with the exercise sponsored by a British business (International Paints in my case).

I found myself trying to size the German market for the coatings used on the inside of tin cans to stop acidic products such as rhubarb, cola or whatever, from eating their way through the metal. So in 1976, in the days before mobile phones or e-mail, I found myself on a train deep in the Black Forest en route to interview the managing director of a family run can-making business. I duly presented myself at the factory, only to be told that my respondent had passed away the previous day and none of the rest of the family could be bothered to humour this timid student who had practiced all the can-making terminology, but was stumped at trying to express his condolences in a foreign tongue.

I beat a hasty retreat to my hotel and composed a telex to my tutor, this being about the only way of informing him of the unfortunate turn of events. The project stood me in good stead on completion of the course when I successfully applied for a job with Metal Box Packaging, at the time, one of the UK's leading can makers. I was assigned to the international team, and among the projects that have stuck in my mind, was one that had me driving a pool car to and around Belgium picking up examples of any and every item of packaged automotive products for the export team to see what opportunities there might be to enter the market with our packaging solutions. So I filled the boot and the back seat with cans, bottles and aerosols full of various oils, grease, polish, brake fluid, shampoo, anti-freeze etc. That led to one of many interesting encounters with HM Customs & Excise on returning to the UK.

On another occasion I was sent to Greece to interview bottlers about the screw caps they used on bottles of olive oil, tomato paste, fruit juices and the like. I was first sent on a crash course in Greek with a girl from the BBC's monitoring station at Caversham Park which enabled me to say hello and good-bye—if not to express my condolences at somebody's death. Most usefully, I learnt the Greek alphabet and was able to decipher town names on road signs—although I might well have passed the junction by the time I figured out that I wanted the other fork. I had a hire car to reach a couple of bottlers in the Peloponnese; these two were on opposite sides of the peninsula and the hire company's map showed a small, narrow road cutting across the mountains and seemingly saving a lot of kilometres over the alternative route around the coast. I made out the signs and found the road but met very little traffic apart from a couple of donkey carts and old folk gathering firewood. The road ascended rapidly and deteriorated at the same time with numerous single-track sections and many hairpin bends. Then it started snowing. I attempted one hairpin only to find myself skidding through 180° and heading back down the mountain in the direction I had just come from.

For one project, I was seconded to the consumer research team who were running a series of hall tests with a new design of baked bean can. At the time, ring-pull lids were only available on aluminium drinks cans—and were a source of litter as the tabs used to tear off rather than being retained as they are now. A lot of work was being undertaken to develop a ring-pull lid for steel food cans and a trial run had been filled with baked beans. The hall test was to assess housewives' ability to open the ring-pulls and get their opinions on the development. I was deputed to fill a pool car with boxes of canned beans, deliver them to the supervisor running the hall test, and observe how a hall test was managed.

All was going swimmingly until there was a scream and cries for a first aid kit—one lady had managed to cut herself on a can. Having applied a plaster (and remembering this was pre mobile phones), I decided the best thing to do was call it a day and head back to the office with the remaining cans for advice. I was interested to note that Marketing subsequently positioned ring-pulls as safer than traditional can lids as you didn't need a can-opener that created jagged edges on which you might cut yourself...

All those learnings were achieved in the 'obligatory' initial two years in my first job, but I felt the need to move on and switched to Wiggins Teape papermakers. One of the flagship products was Idem carbonless copying paper. Having dismally failed my Latin O-level, I was lost in the arguments as to whether it should be pronounced aye-dem, ee-dem or id-em. This didn't stop me getting dragged into a time-and-motion study to provide the required proof to substantiate advertising claims that using Idem was quicker than using traditional carbon paper. Remember, this was in the days of the typing pool and way before laser printers. We had one of the typists fill out an invoice, carefully inserting sheets of carbon paper between individual pro forma invoice sheets, typing the detail, then taking the carbon paper out again all while our time-and-motion man wielded his stopwatch. Having done this a number of times, she was then made to type the same details on to a preassembled three-part invoice form (glued together along the top edge).

At that time, the paper industry lived under the threat of 'the paperless office' although in reality paper consumption continued to increase, but with a switch from specialist papers to bog-standard 80 g/m² copier paper. I imagine e-mails, electronic data exchange and working from home all mean it's a different picture these days. I couldn't quite shake off my packaging heritage and found myself in an interesting encounter with German Customs at Frankfurt airport when carrying an enormous, empty A0 cardboard box. A0 is sixteen times the size of A4 and measures a whopping 1,189 by 841 mm—quite unwieldy and I'm not sure where I managed to stow it on board the plane.

Printers print (printed?) those three-part invoices 16-up on A0 and then guillotined them down to A4. This meant they then had to procure A4 boxes to pack the printed forms in for delivery to the customer. My A0 box was not only unwieldy, it was also fragile as it had been perforated in such a way that the printer could knock out blanks to create A4 boxes from the A0 carton in which they received the paper—thus sparing him the purchase of new boxes as well as reducing packaging waste. I managed to find sufficient vocabulary to explain all this to the customs officer and he waved me on my way.

At this time, we were sending questionnaires by telex to foreign agencies for translation. A secretary would laboriously type the text on to punch-tape for transmission from the telex machine in reception. The translated version was received in the same manner. Sending corrections was a nightmare as the typist did not know the languages and was typing everything letter by letter, meaning there was ample scope for errors. On a project for Rank Xerox, we were offered the use of their new fax machine to send the questionnaire to their Milan office. I duly took the questionnaire to the Xerox London office and handed it over for faxing, only to be told later that the pages which emerged from the machine in Milan were totally illegible.

For one project being conducted in the UK, France and Germany we needed to show a selection of carbonless papers of differing whiteness and needed some typing on the form to test the legibility against the white paper. For the English samples, there was an obvious piece of text containing every letter of the Roman alphabet and was accordingly ideal for testing the legibility of the various characters:-

- The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

But what to use in the other two countries? I asked our translation agency for the equivalent 'pangrams' that typists are trained on, using every letter on their keyboards. However, I was not happy when I got their responses starting:-

- Le renard brun et rapide..., and
- Der schnelle, braune Fuchs...

Further enquiries eventually unearthed texts genuinely fulfilling the pangram requirement:

- Portez ce vieux whisky au juge blond qui fume, and
- Jener quadratische große schwarze Stein namens Onyx befindet sich bekanntlich im Besitz des Papstes

That said, this was all pre-Google, and Google doesn't seem to recognise the German onyx example, preferring:-

- Victor jagt zwölf Boxkämpfer quer über den großen Sylter Deich

– which is much shorter and contains the umlauts too. But I fear I digress...

It was while I was at Wiggins Teape that I met the late, lamented Sue Nosworthy. Indeed, having delivered a project debrief to us one day, she announced that she was leaving the agency (the equally late-lamented Communication Research Limited (CRL)). I said, half-jokingly, that I should apply for her post and the next thing I knew I was having lunch at the Oxford & Cambridge Club with the Network's Colin McDonald and his fellow directors who saw fit to offer me that very post.

CRL did a fair amount of automotive work including car clinics. In April 1991, I was appointed to accompany a group of British respondents who we flew to Frankfurt for a car clinic. (It's one date I can quote with certainty

as we were all given sweatshirts with the partners' logos and the dates—see accompanying photo.) I was asked to get some details from the driver of where we were travelling to in our coach from the airport and what was to be seen through the windows. I wasn't convinced that my German was up to translating any commentary the driver might be able to provide, but I needn't have worried as he was a Gastarbeiter, a foreign worker, with poor German, no English, and absolutely no knowledge of the locality or the few notable buildings that we passed on the Autobahn.

Back in England, at one point we set up our own car clinic in the Fosse Way retail park outside Leicester. This entailed hiring various car models from local hire companies who were perplexed at our request for white, black or red models in an attempt to provide some standardisation among the dozen or so cars we were exhibiting.

Another project involved testing a new design of 5 litre oil pack. This time, a couple of hire cars were parked on a filling station forecourt in East Grinstead and a local schoolkid was hired as a 'grease monkey' to remove the drain plug and capture the oil as respondents poured it into the car's engine. Almost every respondent failed to read the instructions on the pack and poured the oil from the opposite side of the pack to the one which was intended. This resulted in as much of the oil going over the engine as went into it. We filmed all of this on an early Betamax video camera. We didn't have the ability to edit the video, but we found that simply running the tape through on Fast Forward quickly demonstrated to the client the confusion caused by the new pack—and the dreadful mess in the engine bay and on the forecourt under the car!

Nor was that the end of the story. The grease monkey stowed the remaining oil and the various drip trays we had used in the boot of the hire car for the trip home. He can't have tightened the cap on one of the packs, as when unloading, I was faced with an oily spill on the boot liner. I'm not sure what the hire company made of that when they came to open the boot.

Another death nearly derailed a project looking at the market for 'rainwater goods'—essentially guttering and downpipes. I had engaged a freelancer to do some desk research and executive interviews with leading players. All went well and the (somewhat corpulent) consultant came to our offices to deliver his report. He huffed and puffed his way up the stairs, took me through the draft report and headed home. A couple of days later, I called him with a few queries and to request some minor edits. I was taken aback to be told the poor chap had suffered a heart attack after visiting our offices and had not survived.

It was while at CRL that I first started researching mobile phones. We were running a hall test of various models including a prototype of Motorola's iconic StarTac clamshell phone at the Great Eastern Hotel near Liverpool Street station. We arranged to leave the phones at the hotel overnight with the instruction that they should be locked in the hotel's safe. Needless to say, that didn't happen; and that was almost the last we saw of the dozen or so competitor phones and the prototype. However, the prototype was seen a little later by an eagle-eyed Motorola security officer in the window of a dodgy phone store on Tottenham Court Road.

I subsequently joined Nokia and developed my expertise in mobile phones. They say it's OK to make a mistake so long as you learn from it. I soon learnt to put police officers on the exclusion list for any phone research after having one introduce himself as such in a focus group where respondents were to discuss in-car phone use. This rather inhibited the discussion, as of course, not all behaviours were safe—or legal. I also learnt to check on the quality of the phone signal in any viewing facility before confirming a booking. Having to send participants out on to the fire escape to be able to get a signal and complete a task we wanted them to undertake was not ideal.

For one project, we had several dozen handsets specially built with additional software installed that was designed to count which features of the phone were used. Respondents were recruited to use the phone and to send us the 'counter' data at set intervals. All went well in Denmark, but the phones destined for China were impounded by Customs because of some supposed discrepancy in the accompanying paperwork. We never did complete the Chinese fieldwork. It was six months before the phones were eventually released on payment of a hefty customs charge and substantial demurring. On another occasion, Chinese fieldwork was cancelled when SARS hit and the research team couldn't enter the country.

For safety, we preferred to carry stimulus phones by hand rather than entrust them to a commercial courier. But flying with a briefcase full of different phone handsets could be an interesting experience and again involved some interesting exchanges with Customs officers. Occasionally, we would offer staff a weekend in a foreign city if they would act as a courier and deliver the phone stimuli to the local research agency. This generally worked well except when one of the 'couriers' chose to lock the briefcase without ensuring that he had the code to unlock it. My briefcase has never been the same since, because Customs insisted on prising the locks open with a screwdriver.

Another international transit failed when the UK delivery driver taking the phones to a colleague booked to fly to the US on Boxing Day, and decided to clock off early on Christmas Eve leaving the stimulus phones in the back of his van for the duration of the festivities. And I've not forgiven another researcher flying to the States

to run some groups, who saw fit to put the one precious stimulus phone in his checked baggage—which eventually turned up two days into scheduled fieldwork. My own travels were also not without challenges; we were to attend a conference in Bangalore but the direct flights were all full. Faced with having to make a local connection, I suggested seeing a bit of the ‘real India’ by taking the train. A couple of colleagues opted to join me on a flight to Chennai and then the train to Bangalore. We made our reservations and got our tickets via the Internet, only to be let down by British Airways whose flight was some three hours late, meaning we missed our train and had to get a connecting flight after all.

The twilight of my research career saw me join Transport Focus, the passenger watchdog. Maybe I had learnt from my previous roles, but as far as I recall, Transport Focus produced few research disasters. Asking people to do something they’re not used to can be interesting. We sent several motorists to follow a signposted diversion route across the road network, filming their experiences on a dash-cam. Their stream-of-consciousness observations on the diversion route signage were fun (if not printable!) and we watched a driver encounter one particular roundabout three times before identifying the correct exit.

There were inevitable instances where fieldworkers were refused permission to work on a bus or on a station concourse, but generally the letters of authority we provided worked well. Although on one occasion, a fieldworker was sent away for (supposedly) being under the influence. One thing that never failed to surprise me was passengers’ and often—perhaps more of an issue—many research execs’ poor knowledge of the geography of the British rail network. This was not helped by some idiosyncratic station names—passengers will say they travelled to Victoria without saying whether that’s Manchester, London or even Southend. There’s a Waterloo on Merseyside and a Charing Cross in Glasgow as well as their namesakes in London. Then there are the train companies with both Great Northern and simple Northern, as well as the Underground’s Northern line being apt to cause confusion when attempting to code passengers’ journeys.

But at the end of the day, it all adds to the fun of research and provides opportunities to demonstrate our problem-solving skills. I shall miss all of it...

THE PERILS OF WORKING IN WEST AFRICA

Hilary Parker



As a freelance qualitative researcher in the mid 1970’s, my office tended to be wherever I was at the time. In early 1976, I was back in the UK after living in Lagos for most of the previous year. My good friend, Jane Gwilliam, had let me stay in her flat in Parsons Green. Thinking that I would only be in the UK for a couple of months, I was taking on any short projects I could find, often via Research Bureau Ltd’s qualitative unit where I had previously worked.

I had just finished twenty depth interviews for Michelin about car tyres and had done a quick debrief to the client. I was now due to return to Lagos. I packed the interview tapes in my hand luggage and planned to write the report back in Nigeria. Full reports with lots of quotes were the norm in 1976. But I had not expected to be doing this under hotel arrest in a different country altogether.

On Friday 13th February 1976, Jane kindly drove me to Heathrow for my Ghana Airways flight to Lagos via Accra. I should have known Friday 13th was not a good day to fly. I checked in at just after 9 am and took off at about 11.30. Meanwhile, in Lagos at just before 9 am, the president of Nigeria, Murtala Mohammed, was assassinated while he was sitting in one of the city’s infamous traffic jams. My future husband, Barrie, was stuck in the same traffic jam only four cars away from the shooting. Luckily I didn’t know that. He and his driver were very shaken but safe.

As we were approaching Accra, the stewardess asked us to close all the window blinds for military reasons, an unusual request. When I asked if the problem might affect my onward flight to Lagos, I was told, “I don’t think you will be going to Nigeria” today. On arrival at Accra, the ten of us destined for Lagos were held in a departure area and not allowed to pick up our suitcases although we could keep our hand luggage. The ten included a Nigerian doctor and his three little girls, aged 6, 3 and 8 weeks. Their mother had flown to Lagos the previous day. There was also a Swiss National, who was a lot of fun and two Germans, who didn’t see the funny side of this at all and spoke little English.

The airport authorities were decidedly unforthcoming about what was going on. In 1976, there was no publicly released international news at Accra airport, but the Swiss guy somehow discovered that there had been a coup in Nigeria. It struck us that we were being treated as if anybody trying to fly to Lagos that day was a suspect. After sitting around for two hours, Ghana Airways took us to a hotel in the western suburbs of Accra. We had not been allowed to pick up our hold luggage. The doctor, however, needed the baby’s nappies and

Ghana Airways reluctantly agreed to let him and his baby back to the airport to collect his bags. I offered to and was allowed to accompany him. We returned to a now almost deserted airport. There we saw several men in military fatigues and were later told that one of them was Colonel Dimka, the leader of the coup. How or why he travelled through the closed border I will never know! Within hours he was back on Nigerian radio announcing the coup.

We were kept in this hotel for ten days and told that we were not permitted to go out. It was not a very comfortable experience. Electricity was in minimal supply with long power cuts several times a day. There was a shortage of fresh food and I felt slightly lucky to be given small servings of fish or chicken with potatoes each day. There was nothing to do, and no television. Some of the other passengers spent hours staring at hotel walls. But in my case, I could listen to hours of research interviews about car tyres and handwrite a report. I was unusually grateful for this. When I ran out of batteries, I managed to escape without the manager's notice to a nearby market to buy batteries, paper and a new pen. I also helped to look after the three small girls, the youngest of whom actually grew a few inches during our stay.

The phones weren't working properly, not an unusual occurrence in West Africa in the 1970's, and no international calls were possible, so nobody knew what had happened to us. The hotel manager tried to contact the British High Commission but rather typically we thought, it was closed for redecoration. The Swiss and German embassies didn't want to have anything to do with their countrymen. But after nearly a week, we did manage to contact the Nigerian High Commission who were prepared to take up our case.

As the days went on, the hotel manager started getting a bit stressed about who was going to pay our hotel bills. The passengers had neither the funds nor the inclination to pay. Staying in this hotel had been neither our choice nor our fault. The manager threatened to call the police and said we would be probably be thrown into jail. It all became a little tense. We thought that Ghana Airways should be responsible for our bill as they should have known about the Lagos coup in enough time to stop us from taking off from Heathrow. But the airline refused to pay. Eventually the Nigerian High Commission in the formidable personage of the Third Secretary came to our rescue. She accompanied the doctor, his now nine and a half week old baby daughter and myself to a meeting with the Finance Director of Ghana Airways. We attempted to persuade him to pay the hotel bill for the ten stranded passengers. At one point I cajoled him into holding the baby and joked that we wouldn't take her back until he agreed to pay up and organise our onward travel to Lagos. This seemed to do the trick!

I was surprisingly relaxed about the whole awkward and potentially dangerous situation, more worried that I wouldn't meet the deadline for my report (I was so very keen in those days!) than I was about my own personal situation. I rather naively assumed that someone at home eventually would find out where I was. To my surprise, Unilever had been quite concerned about my disappearance and sent out a search party from their Ghana office to find me. They eventually found me just before we were allowed to leave and generously took me out for a much appreciated meal on my last night in Accra!

It was a considerable relief to arrive finally in Lagos, although I was rather alarmed when I heard Barrie's story about escaping from the assassination location and about the fighting around our house over the following few days. Government troops regained control within days and after a three week manhunt, Dimka was caught, tried and executed.

I now try not to fly on Friday 13th. And I always carry a book and a pack of cards in my hand luggage.

SOME SCENES FROM A FORMER LIFE

Ivor Millman



On Monday August 18th 1968, this life began. Earlier that summer I had gone into the original red brick building of fast expanding, post Robbins report, Liverpool University to have a careers advice meeting. The advisor suggested market research. I had never heard of it but I thought I would give it a go (and I have for over half a century). I had the MRS handbook with the details of research agencies. Since we lived relatively centrally, that summer I went round the agencies in person to see if they had a vacancy. I went to one in Victoria called Group Market and Research/GMR and hit lucky. A research executive was about to leave and they wanted someone to start immediately. I became that someone.

GMR was the in-house full-service research agency for the Rank Organisation at a point when that conglomerate was one of the largest and most successful companies in the country. Indeed, such was its reputation that when two young brothers were starting their advertising agency, they tried to buy GMR. Our boss was flattered by the Saatchis' approach but had to say that it was not possible.

So on that Monday morning, I arrived and was introduced to the other staff, including the late Geoff Allan with whom I was to share an office and who was presumably pleased no longer to be the most junior person there. I was assigned to work on the leisure accounts:-cinemas, bingo clubs and the like.

What to do with a new trainee assistant (about as low as a title can get)? How about percentaging? The results of surveys had been tabbed, maybe even mechanically, but needed to be percentaged. I spent my first two or more weeks doing that for survey after survey. On arrival, I had been given my company cylindrical slide rule but I had never used one before and no one was going to show me how to use it. I had learned on a linear (bar) slide rule and had my own beautiful new one that my parents had bought me for my 21st birthday. I also had my log tables. In the end, having that sort of brain, I found it easiest to do the job in my head with mental arithmetic. When I had completed the lot, I had to start all over again to exclude the 'don't knows'- no one had told me about that.

Years if not decades later I was chatting to someone about my job and they asked me what I had researched recently. The truth when I thought about it was 'nothing'. I had been involved in running major projects and our JIC, as well as general management, but research projects? In those distant years I was actually doing research and one satisfying aspect was to see the results of 'my' research soon in action. The film titles that I (well, our sample) had preferred were soon being used. The film posters that I (well, our sample) had preferred were seen within days on the Underground.



The Rank Organisation had a very strict corporate style and colour. Rank green was about as dull as a colour can get. Bingo clubs were banned from advertising, so much of building club membership depended on the 'front of house' look. Dull green was all wrong for this. Finally, the big boss relented and I was asked to research alternatives.

The winner was bright blue and yellow in a more visible script and soon 'my' signage was to be seen all over the land.

I recall doing a survey which rapidly made the company lots of money. Bingo cards were printed on one side only. Would players accept it if they were printed on both sides? That would save thousands of pounds. The survey results were positive for the change, and it was made. I suppose had players been negative to the change, the survey would have been equally valuable in stopping the company making a big mistake.

One day we had a big new project. We were trying to move ice cream sold in cinemas into a new era. We had a new super ice cream product, but would consumers accept it? After all it was breaking a price ceiling. We found that cinema goers would buy a special ice cream even when it cost as much as 3/6d.

In 1971, the new health secretary wanting to progress the shift to no smoking, asked us to research that for cinemas. It is indicative of the world then versus now that the big issue was whether smokers would accept that a part of the cinema (in fact then just the first few rows at the front and side) would be non-smoking. The views of non-smokers were not decisive. Smokers said yes in our research and the rest you know.

Much of what we did involved trying to forecast. How many people would be likely to come to see the new film next week? That would determine how much effort to put into promoting it. How many people would join a new bingo club if we opened one in that location? In those distant days, we used basic likelihood questions and applied simple factors to calculate outcomes. Then I grabbed a chance to test this. We wanted to open a new bingo club in Norwich. No GDPR or anything remotely like it. I already knew interviewers in the area and hired them; I wrote and had my questionnaire printed. I arranged all the fieldwork and analysis, I did my calculations and wrote my report. We opened the club. I had all the questionnaires with respondents' names and addresses. I asked for and was given the list of club members with their names and addresses, so I compared the two. Whilst the overall figures might have not been too badly aligned, so many of the respondents had behaved exactly opposite to what they had said previously (in both directions). It was a step on my lifetime rhetorical question 'Can you believe a word they say?' and how can you try to improve measurements beyond accepting what respondents say at face value.

Changes in legislation, and especially the Gaming Act of 1960, provided the basis for Top Rank Bingo. At that time, Bingo clubs were legal but strictly controlled as to the games, prizes and any publicity. New ones had to show that there was a demand for them. That is where research came in. When we wanted to open a new club (usually in a former Odeon or Gaumont) we had to go to court to get a licence by showing that there was demand for our new club. Sometimes we wanted to prevent competition, so we had to show that there was not any significant demand for our competitor's proposed club. We researched all this in each location. I travelled all over the country appearing in court as the expert witness. I smile now at the idea that this little chap in his early 20's was seen as an expert witness, but he was.

I recall the time we wanted to turn a cinema in Ealing into a bingo club. We found ourselves in the Crown Court at Middlesex Guildhall. This building, now housing the Supreme Court, sits across Parliament Square from the Houses of Parliament. As is their wont, at a point during our case the various learned friends were

debating what Parliament meant with some of the wording in the Gaming Act. Lots of discussion, no doubt at £mega per hour. I was cheeky enough to think the following, but not so cheeky as to actually say 'Gents I'll just pop across the square and ask them'.

During these years, we were learning and in effect teaching the courts by our experience. What is a market research survey legally? Our opponents would argue that it is just hearsay and thus of little or no value as evidence. To deal with this, we would bring the questionnaires into court. Then we would offer to bring survey respondents into court having first recruited them for this.

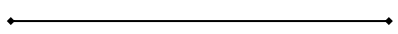
We learned how different Scottish law can be pre-devolution, even when it is a UK-wide law that is involved. We wanted to turn the Motherwell Odeon into a bingo club. There was an existing club nearby in Wishaw which objected. The research was done and presented in court but we lost. In England, you could immediately lodge an appeal and we prepared to do that in person. Then we were informed that in Scotland the right to appeal was not automatic but would have to be argued for in court. That was going to lengthen the whole process. However, it was August, so I took a week off while the lawyers did their stuff, bought myself a 7-day railcard and went north into the Highlands. Given the circumstances, we wanted to do as much as we could to be ready and that included getting as many positive survey respondents as possible to come to court in Lanark to testify for us. With two internal legal executives, we drove around the area to do that job with mixed results. Sometimes we would come to a location, look at the roughness of the area and wonder if it was such a good idea for three blokes from London to go up to the 16th floor of the tower block (if the lift was working), to ask the residents if they would like to come to court. However, we finally won the case.



Our work also involved group discussions before they had been termed focus groups. It was not always easy. I recall arriving at the then top hotel in central Leeds to lead and record the discussion, only to find that three pin plugs and sockets, as is the UK norm now, had not yet got that far north. The experience was not always positive. I remember another occasion when I had lugged the reel-to-reel tape recorder on the train up to a snowy Barnsley to lead a group discussion about bingo. I arrived at the supervisor interviewer's home only to be told by her that I would have a good session because she knew all the participants and they would be eager for the discussion. The heart sinks.

The Rank Organisation was an authoritarian state. Sir John Davis was not as bloody as Henry VIII or Joseph Stalin, but not for want of trying. He had a deserved reputation for firing people on the spot. He was to be feared and the more senior you were, the more he was to be feared. Many senior people in one of the divisions which I was serving, were promoted, rubbed Sir John up the wrong way and were thus fired all within a few days. So numerous were these folk that they had their own club:- The Rank Outsiders. I was far too unimportant to experience any of this, but I could still get my comeuppance via more senior people. Graham Dowson was Sir John's number two, and they had worked together for years. His area of responsibility and direct reporting included us. Towards the end of 1975, there was a big falling out between the two of them. Nothing to do with the company. It was a personal dispute and centred around their current wives. Both Sir John and Graham Dowson had been married numerous times. The dispute hit the tabloids and I recall the headline one day which said 'Rank wives count hits nine'. I think between them, we now know that was an understatement. Anyway, in the end Sir John forced Dowson out and then proceeded to wreak vengeance on those reporting to him. Our boss was too near retirement to walk out, so he was humiliated but retained, and all his staff, including me, were fired much to the inconvenience of those for whom we were doing research. The law was different then; no payoffs. I think we were given four weeks' notice and our pension contributions back. I got £300 which was not much even then.

I learned a lot during those years, including of course, all aspects of doing a survey. My numeracy was exercised and enhanced. But that was not all. In those days I regularly travelled all over the country briefing interviewers, speaking to customers and overseeing the start of surveys. It was in the nature of what I was researching that I was usually working in the evening. When would I have my meal? I prefer to eat later rather than earlier. In provincial towns and cities over a half century ago, where could you get a meal at say 10 pm or later? Almost certainly not in your hotel. Restaurants were probably closed or closing by then. Dining pubs belonged to the future. However, I could expect to find a Chinese or Indian restaurant open for me late in the evening. That developed my love for these cuisines and has remained with me ever since.



JOHN BARTER 1934–2024

Peter Bartram writes:

John Barter, aged nearly 90, died peacefully at the start of September in his home near Horsham in Sussex, supported by his wife Valerie, their son Graham and daughter Judith.

Immediate reactions to this sad news among those who worked with him showed he was universally remembered in a very positive way, for instance being described as 'such a lovely man', 'an exceptional man', 'very kind and generous, the epitome of integrity.'

He was born, lived and schooled in Norwich, and after graduating from the LSE, qualified as a chartered accountant before joining the RAF until 1961. He then joined NOP as its fourth employee, and in 1966 became Joint MD along with Frank Teer, at which time it was developed from an opinion poll subsidiary of the Daily Mail Group into a leading full-service market research company. He remained there until 1991, having become full MD after Frank's earlier retirement.

He served on several MRS committees and was MRS Chairman from 1979-81. He did many things to promote good research in Britain, and as Chairman of AMSO, among other things persuaded its members to launch the Interviewer Card Scheme (ICS), which subsequently led to the world-wide adoption of the ISO 20252 industry standard. He also worked extensively as a consultant and expert witness in legal proceedings involving the use of survey data in evidence.

His whole career brought great credit and success to the research industry and he is very much missed by all those who knew him.



MARY GOODYEAR 1943–2024

This obituary first appeared in Research Live. Andrew Long writes:



Mary Goodyear was one of the leading practitioners of qualitative market research from 1965, when she and her husband, John, set up Market Behaviour Ltd (MBL) until it was sold as part of a much larger group in 1997, with offices in the Middle East, India and Southeast Asia. She had studied psychology at University College London from 1961.

She overcame early scepticism about the value of in-depth consumer opinions and the role of intelligent, articulate women in business, and over the course of her career, Mary proved that well-conducted market research could make a huge contribution to marketing and businesses in general.

Her strategy was 'to put science into qualitative research', via detailed exploratory approaches learned from Bill Schlackman, typified by 'asking the right questions to the right people in the right way'.

She was a hard worker and kept up to date with innovations in marketing, communication strategies and social science. As her business grew internationally, she worked personally in many different cultures during the 1970s, many of which had no local qualitative research operations, so she and her own research team had to be highly adaptive.

She also wrote a range of award-winning papers, delivered training courses and was the first female president of ESOMAR. She retired to Guernsey in 2000.

Apart from her major contribution to promoting business acceptance of qualitative research as a well-established industry, she remained an intuitive person with a good sense of humour.

STEERING GROUP

The Research Network is directed by a Steering Group consisting at present of Adam Phillips (Chairman), Jane A'Court (Membership), Jane Bain (Website Editor and Events Co-organiser), Jane Gwilliam (Events Co-organiser), Linda Henshall (External Liaison), Nick Tanner (Website News Editor), Gill Wareing (Secretary-Treasurer), Frank Winter (Oral History and Data Protection) and Graham Woodham (*Newsletter* editor). Their names, addresses, phone and email details are in the Research Network Membership Directory. Please feel free to contact any member of the Steering Group on matters relevant to the areas they cover.