



THE WAY WE ARE

The Research Network has had a positive and buoyant year in 2025, with well attended and highly enjoyable social events and well-managed membership growth by our Champions. These are all covered in our update features. Our finances have also been stable; we continue to support AMSR and we will make a financial donation to the MRBA.

This edition of the *Neewsletter* is also previewing an excellent social event summary for 2026 with the usual lunch and NED Talk plans.

We have our regular contributions by Jane Bain (Nature Diary) and Peter Bartram (The Way We Were), along with interesting features and news updates by qualitative researcher Lucy Banister and Simon Chadwick, plus Phyllis Macfarlane's AMSR news summary.

As always, please consider contributing your own articles on any topic for the next newsletter in August via editor@research-network.org.uk.

SPRING LUNCH: 28TH APRIL AT EV

In 2026, we are pleased to return to Ev Restaurant (part of the TAS Turkish restaurant group), owing to its excellent, good value cuisine, friendly staff and space for socialising before and after the lunch. This will be on Tuesday 28th April at 12.30pm.

Ev is at The Arches, 97–99 Isabella Street, London SE1 8DA, near Southwark Underground Station and a fairly short walk from Waterloo and Blackfriars stations. It is located below a set of railway arches positioned behind a well kept terrace with trees and bushes, creating a pleasant setting for a central London venue.



The lunch will be a three-course meal with wine. The restaurant defines its cuisine as Anatolian, with a meze starter and choice of main and dessert courses.

Gill Wareing will send out an official invitation with the agreed price as soon as possible, but please note the date in the meantime.

THE WAY WE WERE

A collection of personal recollections by Peter Bartram

Having covered in previous issues the most usable stories from past MRS Newsletters, I hope readers will not mind if I now refer to my book, published three years ago: 'The Life in Research', whose content largely consists of 50+ anecdotes provided by 40 helpful researcher friends. This was very well reviewed by industry leaders including Ben Page, Jane Frost, Phil Barnard, John Samuels, Geoff Wicken and not least, Patrick Barwise, Chairman of the AMSR Trustees and Professor of Marketing Emeritus at The London Business School. He said his favourite contents were:

- The ex-RAF executive's expectations of instant obedience from a young Cockney printer (Keith at NOP in the sixties, who told him to "Get stuffed and f**k off")
- Research company RSL's self-perception as 'the Athens of the North Circular' (as described by Pym Cornish after moving from their classier offices in Soho)
- The 'Logger' chocolate bar – a brand that must have disappeared very quickly (on account of a mainly northern tendency to associate it with lavatorial habits)
- A Swedish multinational's request to subsidiaries in other countries for 'number of employees broken down by age and sex', received a reply from a far-flung location: "The number is zero – our main problem is alcohol."
- The varied life in fieldwork: one interviewer seeking a Mr Jones for an interview was told "Certainly dear, come on in" only to find him deceased, in a coffin in the next room. And another targeted respondent was described as "queer in bed under the doctor"
- The US government job candidate who thought: 'Do you favour the overthrow of the government by force, subversion or violence?' was a multiple-choice question
- The bosses of the small company who said their objective was "to be happy". "Good for them!" said Paddy. (This refutation of the usual pursuit of great wealth was contributed by Jane Bain).

Phil Barnard, former CEO of Research International who was so sadly lost to us less than a year ago, wrote "What a splendid read! Greatly enjoyed the book. It not only provided a very amusing meander down memory lane, but also contained some really helpful tips and context for anyone pondering a research career. It made market research appear (correctly) as a valuable contributor to commerce, democracy – and fun."

This book is still available from Amazon but a quicker way to get it, is to write to me at peter.bartram56@gmail.com, paying £15 with all such proceeds donated to the Archive of Market and Social Research. And these stories will hopefully be amplified by contributions from the audience in a NED talk I will be giving on Tuesday 24th March on 'The ways our lives have changed across the last 50+ years.'

AUTUMN LUNCH AT BRASSERIE BLANC

We returned to this venue after our highly enjoyable last visit in October 2023 and this 2025 event certainly met and surpassed our expectations. The private dining area behind the public restaurant was comfortable and ideal for our 64 members and guests: spacious for mingling and then with comfortable table layouts for conversations over lunch. The restaurant is located at 9 Belvedere Road, Southbank, London SE1 8YP, near the Royal Festival Hall.

Following the welcome drinks, the three-course lunch menu, with wine, was excellent. We started with a cheese souffle, miraculously served to everyone on time to a consistently superb standard. How this can be achieved by the kitchen staff is a mystery. The main course was boneless chicken leg with mushroom sauce, truffled celeriac mash and extra wild mushrooms. The dessert was a delicious crème brûlée, vanilla with a caramelised sugar topping.

The cost was £60 for Research Network members—superb value thanks to the generous sponsorship by InsightX Research Solutions.

Even our sound system worked well this year, and following Adam Phillips' introductory welcome, we enjoyed a talk by Phyllis Macfarlane about the AMSR's current educational and Archive activities. Her speech is included in this newsletter for those who could not attend the lunch.

A selection of photos from the lunch appears on the page opposite; please visit the [Research Network website gallery](#) for more photos of this event.



RESEARCH NETWORK: ACTIVITY UPDATE

Membership Development

Jane A'Court will unfortunately be standing down as head of membership development at the end of 2025 due to other commitments. She has certainly made a really positive difference during her time in the role. Jane has written a review of membership development over the last four years, which is featured separately in this newsletter.

As part of the ongoing membership development strategy, we need to effectively communicate to potential new joiners that the Network enables members to keep in touch with others in the research and insight industry and to provide the opportunity to meet new colleagues. In terms of membership balance, it would also be beneficial to have more clients and qualitative researchers as members.

There will be no increase in the annual membership charge of £35 in 2026.

Social Media

Thanks to the leadership of Andrew Smith, we now have 300 followers on LinkedIn, but considerable efforts are always needed from all our LinkedIn members to reference our member communications as a hyperlink or URL: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-research-network-uk/>.

Recent posts which gained the most responses related to our Autumn Lunch and NED Talks.

Oral History Project

After many years of successfully managing the Oral History Project, following on from Lawrence Bailey, Frank Winter is transferring leadership responsibility to Sheila Byfield from the beginning of 2026. He will, however, stay on the Steering Committee.

Recent completed interviews with Jane A'Court, Ivor Stocker and Lynn Chapman are now accessible on the AMSR website, and a further interview with Graham Mytton is currently being edited. We continue to plan for 6-8 new interviews to be conducted during 2026.

Sheila Byfield will also review the interview format to ensure adequate coverage of the evolution and effectiveness of different research disciplines.

Social Events for 2026

There will be two NED Talks in early 2026. These are 30-40 minute talks on Zoom, usually starting at 5.30pm with questions and discussion by attendees up to 7pm.

The first is on Tuesday 10th February 2026, when David McCallum will talk about his experience of setting up a weekly music programme on 20th Century Songwriters for a local radio station in Australia.

Then, on Tuesday 24th March, Peter Bartram will discuss his recollections and insights into the evolutionary changes in the research industry over the years, based on his book: The Life in Research.

Spring Lunch

EV Restaurant, The Arches, 97-99 Isabella Street, London SE1 8DA

Date: Tuesday 28th April 2026

As many of you will know from previous visits, this is an excellent Turkish restaurant at a leafy location under railway arches near Southwark Tube Station. There will be a set menu including wine, with a meze starter, a choice of main course dishes and a dessert. There is plenty of space for socialising before and after the lunch.

Summer Party

Doggett's Coat and Badge, 1 Blackfriars Bridge, London SE1 9UD

Date: Wednesday 1st July 2026

Once again, this popular venue from previous years is hosting our summer party on the 3rd Floor Terrace Bar, overlooking The Thames. Following the positive reactions at the AGM at the end of December 2025, we will be having a buffet, augmented by barbecue meat, chicken and vegetarian foods cooked outside and brought in for the guests to choose at the self- service tables. This will be confirmed nearer the time.

Autumn Lunch

Casa do Frango, 32 Southwark Street, London SE1 1TU

Date: Tuesday 13th October 2026

This is a new venue for us, found by our experts Jane Bain and Jane Gwilliam, which is close to Borough Market, very near London Bridge Station. We will have lunch in the ground floor restaurant, which is an

attractive open space for meeting up, with welcome drinks. The cuisine is Portuguese and we will have a three course Tapas-style 'feasting menu'.

Gill Wareing will be sending out official invitations 6-8 weeks in advance and details will also be posted on the Research Network website. Please save the dates and book as soon as you can because restaurants typically ask for final numbers of attendees 14 days in advance.

And if any sponsors are willing to contribute, then our ticket prices will be subsidised as generously as possible.

AGM AND CHRISTMAS DRINKS

At the AGM, generously hosted for us on 2nd December 2025 by Ipsos, at 3 Thomas More Square near Tower Hill, we had 43 attendees. Adam Phillips gave his review of another very positive year for the Research Network, with our membership approaching 200, three very successful lunch events and his own NED Talk, summarised elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Steering Group has greatly benefited from the recent addition of Andrew Smith to help with membership development by promoting our social media presence on LinkedIn.

Our event sponsorship by InsightX has been vital to maintain our excellent value social events and to acquire a new PA system. New sponsors are sought for future support in keeping event prices low for members.

We would also very much appreciate more assistance with our marketing and publicity, along with technical website and newsletter updates.

Apart from our social events, the Oral History Project has been very effective over 15 years, initially thanks to Lawrence Bailey and then under Frank Winter's management. The uploaded interviews with notable industry alumni have very much enhanced the AMSR Archive for the benefit of academics and other active participants in the research and insight industry.

Adam then gave a topline overview of our latest Research Network membership survey, conducted during August 2025. This too is reported on by Nick Tanner elsewhere in this newsletter.

Financial update

The Network's finances were reported on by Gill Wareing as being positive and stable, and we are donating £500 to the MRBA at the end of 2025. Obviously, we are a non profit-making organisation, and so making viable financial transactions with just a modest overall annual deficit keeps us healthy and sound in monetary terms. Our agreed policy is to try to maintain sufficient reserves to cover a minimum of half a year's running costs. We can confirm that this target is being met.

Once again, we are very grateful to InsightX, which has been a generous sponsor during 2025, to ensure we maintain sound financial reserves after discounting the price of our social events for members.

The AGM was followed by Christmas Drinks: a selection of photos is shown here, with more available on the [website gallery](#).



NATURE DIARY

Extracts from Jane Bain's Nature Diary: July–December 2025

The warm dry spring turns into a hot dry summer. Paths are dusty and wildflowers burnt and brown. Trees drop their leaves early and some berries ripen in August, raising concerns about winter food stocks for the birds which rely on them. At the end of the year, 2025 is crowned the sunniest and warmest year on record.

July: In France it is hot and dry too and I retreat to my room to avoid the midday heat. I have a companion, a small lizard lives in a crevice in the stonework by my bedroom window. Up here it is safe from the hunting cat and there is ample food for it in the thick wisteria.



Walking near the river, I come across a big hare nibbling grass beside the path. I stand still and watch it as it lollops slowly towards me, pausing just a few feet away, before turning and quickly retreating into a field.



August: Back in London there is still no rain and the water levels in the reservoir have sunk exceptionally low. Little egrets come to fish in the shallows, dramatically plunging to snatch their prey.



Yew berries are already ripe and the low branches of a tree beside the towpath are covered in red sticky fruit. A young parakeet is enjoying this feast, seemingly unperturbed by the walkers and runners passing by.



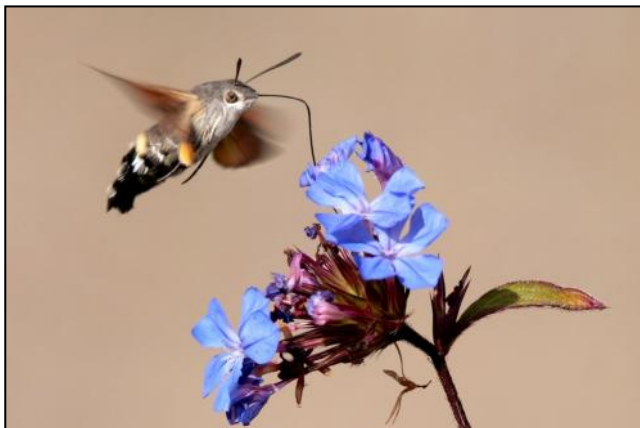
September: There is a recently built community garden in a local park which has become a sanctuary for wildlife as well as people. A large white butterfly feeds on the last of the summer flowers.



The garden's small ornamental pond is home to all sorts of creatures. Dragonflies skim over the surface and dragonfly nymphs and other aquatic insects living in the water make a healthy meal for this grey wagtail.

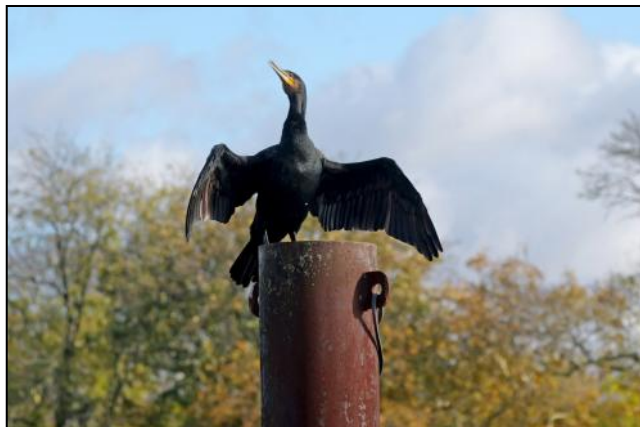


October: A large flock of swans live on the river near Barnes Bridge. Groups of them occasionally commute downstream to Chiswick Eyot and it is always amazing to see up to 30 swans all airborne at the same time.



The weather is still unseasonably mild, but nevertheless it is surprising to find a hummingbird hawk-moth feeding on flowers in a garden in Chiswick Mall. It is very unusual to see these creatures here in late October.

November: Pausing to rest on a low wall in Chiswick Cemetery, I notice a slight movement just above my head. Looking up, there is a green woodpecker clinging to the tree trunk, trying to evade detection.



Cormorants have to dry their wings between fishing trips. At high tide, the tall piles in the river near Chiswick Pier make a perfect perch.

December: Black ivy berries are now ripe, but eating them requires considerable gymnastic skills. A male blackbird repeatedly flies to the ivy, snatches a berry on the wing, then lands back on a small branch to eat it.

Flocks of long-tailed tits forage in the trees by the reservoir. They are often joined by other small birds which find safety in numbers, like this tiny goldcrest.



One of the Charing Cross Hospital peregrines perches at the top of a tall crane on a nearby building site. A few days later, this bird will be seen in a starring role in David Attenborough's 'Wild London' TV documentary.



NED TALK: SAILING ROUND TIERRA DEL FUEGO

Adam Phillips

On 12 November, Adam Phillips gave a NED talk on a sailing trip that he took some 20 years ago around the southern tip of South America. The journey was made in a 42-ft yacht owned by a friend of his. The following is a summary of the talk; a full recording is available here: [Adam Phillips NED Talk 19 recording](#).

Tierra del Fuego is a large island separated from the rest of South America by the Straits of Magellan. It is the same size as Scotland. The region consists of a number of islands. At the bottom of the map, you can see that Cape Horn itself is an island.

We started at Punta Arenas in the Strait of Magellan, sailed the red line through the islands out into the Pacific and back through the Beagle Channel to Puerto Williams. From there we sailed the green line down to the Isla Hornos, round Cape Horn and back to Puerto Williams. The trip was in January when the weather was likely to be at its best.



There is no harbour in Punta Arena, just a single jetty for medium sized ships, ferries and fishing boats. We had to anchor in the 'roads'. On our last evening in the town, we dined at an expensive restaurant. The meal consisted of carpaccio of beaver, ostrich casserole and chocolate mousse with two dollops of strawberry jam. We saw beavers later, but never any ostriches.

Even in Summer the weather in Patagonia changes all the time. You can get sun, rain, a gale and snow all in one day. Fortunately, we didn't get snow although it was very cold and very windy at times.

The Andes continue into Tierra del Fuego as the Cordillera Darwin with some significant mountains and glaciers. The glaciers come right down to the sea and melt in contact with the water, causing small avalanches into the water as you can see from the photo below left.



Puerto Hope is a very pretty and snug little bay just off the Magellan Strait. We were at anchor having a cup of tea at about five in the evening when a red fishing boat, with three wetsuited rough looking fishermen on board, motored into the bay and tied up alongside us, saving them the effort of having to drop their anchor. They were clearly poachers since it was the closed season for crab fishing. They offered us a bucket of crabs in exchange for a bottle of Pisco, which is the local white rum.

As we approached the Pacific Ocean, the most westerly part of our trip, the wind was still moderate but there was a big 2-metre swell breaking on the rocks around us as we turned south and wiggled our way into a tiny, very sheltered hole opposite a tall island to the west. This is called Caleta Brecknock and is well known in the ocean sailing world as one of the snuggest anchorages on this part of the coast.

After a break to explore, we sailed out into the Pacific and anchored in another group of islands at the entrance to a wide channel called Canal Ballenero. This runs down to the Beagle Channel. The charts are poor in this part of the world. Sailing out was not a problem, but finding our way back later in the day when we were searching for the correct narrow channel, between the islands and submerged rocks, was a lot more difficult. We used a mixture of radar and the echo-sounder to locate the correct passage. It was quite exciting when tacking into the wind, which was blowing hard.

The entrance to Seno Pia was rather shallow and the charts we had were unreliable. We had to feel our way into this beautiful, sheltered and rather green and flowery bay opposite a big glacier.





The sun came out and there were impressive views of the Cordillera Darwin as we sailed down the Beagle Channel North of Isla Gordon. It felt a bit like sailing through the Alps. Superb waterfalls, awesome glaciers, lots of penguins and arctic terns. Typical Patagonian weather meant that about an hour after these pictures were taken a squall came through with rain and strong winds.

We arrived at Puerto Williams, having been delayed for 24 hours by gale force winds that had closed the harbour. A third member of our crew joined us the day



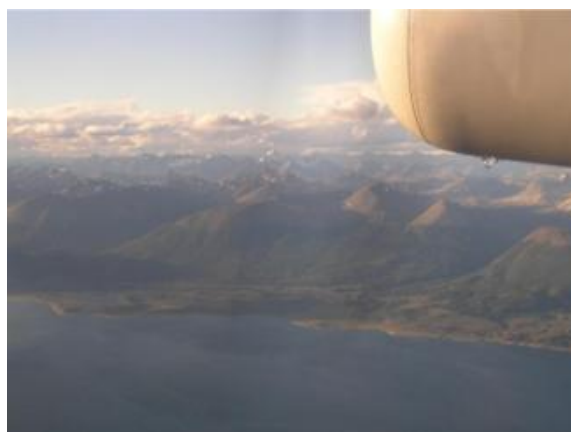
after we arrived. Laurence had been forced by work to miss the first part of the trip.

Cape Horn is really a group of islands. The horn is about 60 miles due south of Puerto Williams as the crow flies. The actual trip is about 250 miles. The green line shows the route we took.

It took us two days to sail down to Cape Horn, spending a rather uncomfortable second night in an exposed bay on the Isla Deceit northeast of the Horn. In the morning we sailed the last 15 miles to the Cape in a stiff NE breeze. We were sailing with the wind, so this was fast and fairly comfortable apart from the 2-metre swell. As you approach the Horn, the first thing you see is the coastguard station above the bay and the landing stage for visitors. If the weather is calm, you can climb the stairs to the coastguard station and get your passport stamped.

The jetty was being rebuilt, and we would have had to land on the beach. There was quite a big swell, so we carried on towards the Cape.

The Horn looks suitably ugly. We took photos and had a glass of champagne to celebrate. The images below are of Mount Darwin and Cordillera Darwin, flying back to Punta Arenas in a Britain Norman Islander.



Noel sailed down to the Antarctic Peninsula the following year. Unfortunately, I couldn't go with him. I had just been promoted and could not get away from work for another six-week holiday.

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OVER THE LAST 4 YEARS

Jane A'Court

I was Head of Membership Development on the Network's Steering Group for the last 4 years. I have now stepped down from the SG due other voluntary commitments. I am delighted to announce that Diego Correa will join the SG and take over this role.

We thought it would good to summarise what has happened to Membership over my time in the role, which had previously been vacant for a couple of years through Covid. When I took over, we had 40 active members fewer than the pre-Covid period. I thought that some form of snowballing could be successful and in the late Summer of 2022, I started to identify and approach potential Recruitment Champions. The Champion's role was to invite guests to the lunch events who they thought would enjoy the social networking these events offer. So, from the lunch in October 2022 onwards, the Champions recruited guests, most of whom joined the RN. Retention of those new members has been very good.

Huge thanks to the Champions who have now stepped down from that role: Jo Cleaver, John Kelly, Liz Norman, Ginny Monk, Jade On, Bob Qureshi, Paul Russell, Andrew Smith, Chris Smith, and myself.

Our new Champions are Diego Correa, Jack Murray, Izzy Nurdin and Ian Wright. We will need to identify at least another 2-3 Champions for 2026. If you would like to be a Champion, or volunteer someone for the role, please let Gill Wareing or Diego know.

We monitor lunch invitees, new member recruitment and retention. We naturally lose 12-15 members a year, predominantly older members. We also re-energised members to bring guests who could be potential members. Here is the trend over the last few years:

Year	New Members	Active Members
2020	2	172
2021	3	183
2022	23	178
2023	27	186
2024	22	200
2025	15	193

Most of the ‘Other’ new members below were guests of existing members. The source of our new members is as follows:

Year	Source of member: Champions	Source of member: Other	Total
2022	12	11	23
2023	16	11	27
2024	12	10	22
2025	7	8	15
Total	47	40	87

If we ignore the members lost though age, we moved from 165 active members in mid-2022 to 193 at the end of 2025, which is a 17% increase. So, our Champion strategy has been very successful.

I wish Diego good luck taking over this role in 2026. Thank you for everyone’s support over the last 4 years.

NETWORK MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Nick Tanner

A survey of Research Network members was conducted in August 2025. This report summarises the findings of that survey.

Objectives

- To understand more about our members:
 - why they attend our events and whether we are meeting their expectations
 - whether the profile of the membership has changed in the last 3 years
 - if there is anything we can learn from lapsed members or recent guests who decided not to join.
- This information will help us decide on a development path for the Network for the next 5 years.

Method

- Online survey conducted among Research Network members in August 2025.
- Fieldwork and data processing were conducted free of charge by Cobalt Sky.

- Sample universe: 213 members and associates with a valid email address
 - Email invitation followed by one reminder.
- Sample achieved: 102 interviews (48% response rate)
 - Lower than 2022 (59%) and 2016 (72%)
 - Unlike previous surveys, the universe included 16 associate members, which may have reduced the response slightly.

Conclusions

- Members are still predominantly male and drawn primarily from research suppliers. The effects of increased recruitment activity in recent years (see Jane A'Court's report in the previous article) are evident, however: one-quarter of members have joined the Network in the last five years. Membership is younger and includes more full/part-time workers, now representing over a quarter of the total.
- Nonetheless, no major shifts are found in behaviour or attitudes since the 2016 survey; the 2022 survey was affected by COVID lockdown and showed some differences, but few if any have proved to be lasting.
- The vast majority are satisfied with services overall; the few who are less satisfied are almost all older, long-standing members.
- Conclusion: *either* new members join only if they are content with the Network as it currently is, *or* those who are less satisfied quickly leave again rather than trying to promote change.
- Membership is seen as good value at £35. On lunches and parties specifically, only three respondents spontaneously called for less expensive events. Demand for evening events was also quite limited – again, perhaps members join (or stay) only if they find current prices and timings acceptable.
- There seems to be widespread satisfaction with all the individual services – events, Newsletter, website – offered by the Network.
- The Network's LinkedIn presence is noticed principally by younger members and those still in work; among retired members, nearly half do use LinkedIn but most of these do not follow the Network there.
- Of course, it is possible – indeed likely – that anyone seriously dissatisfied with the events or other key aspects of the Network would already have left, or not joined in the first place. About a quarter of the last five years' new recruits subsequently left again and we have been unable to research their attitudes. Most, though, have stayed.
- As with any survey, we cannot tell whether the attitudes of non-responders to the survey are different from those of our responders. Our overall response rate was 48% and among newer members only 33%. We might deduce that lack of time among those still working is a factor in the latter figure but this has to remain speculation.



ARCHIVE OF MARKET AND SOCIAL RESEARCH (AMSR)

A progress report by Phyllis Macfarlane

The following is drawn from Phyllis's speech at the Autumn Lunch in October.

I look after the Contents Committee at the AMSR and one of our main responsibilities, as a committee, is to promote usage. I would give you some user statistics at this point, but being researchers, you would immediately be rather sceptical of them, and you would be quite right, because rather embarrassingly, one of our reports (to do with a Tamil sex education series!) has recently gone viral, and our growth in user numbers appears so very, very good that we have beaten all our targets several times over, and even I can't pretend to pass it off as real! Nevertheless, we are sure that our numbers of users are growing steadily, and Adam has asked me to talk about what we are actually doing to promote a) usage of the archive for education and b) the profile of research among young people... because our other objective as an archive is to promote research as a potential and interesting career.



The History of Research during WW2

But first of all I'll start with history, mainly because we have recently received a donation which describes the '**History of GfK Group 1934 – 1984**' (1) which told me a lot of things that I didn't know about GfK, and also, something that I hadn't even thought about before, i.e. the difficulties of conducting research during the

war. The report tells us that Georg Bergler (Director) was responsible for running GfK during the war. He himself owed his position to some extent to his boss having been arrested and liquidated by the Gestapo in 1934 because they believed he was involved with a left-wing plot to seize power. The story goes that Herr Bergler was summoned to the Gestapo HQ in Berlin. The interview did not go well. I imagine that 'we have ways of making you talk' was one of the phrases used. Here's what the report says:

A verbatim account of the Gestapo hearing has survived. Bergler has described walking down a long corridor lined with sinister black flags to reach the room of the senior Gestapo investigating officer. The interview did not go well. Eventually Bergler in virtual desperation said:

"The work we do is based on the theories of Professor Wilhelm Vershofen." "Vershofen?" replied the Gestapo officer, "he was my professor. He is harmless enough. In that case you may continue."

Not only that, throughout the remainder of the War, whenever a GfK correspondent was arrested, a telephone call from Nurnberg to this Gestapo officer secured the correspondent's release.

Now I'm sure that, as they say on The Rest is History, we're absolutely certain that this really happened – and it's a great story. But we do always have to be aware that history is frequently re-written to suit people's ends, and one of the things about AMSR is that no-one has ever re-written the reports. They are as they were recorded at the time. It seems a slightly strange thing to say, but it's amazing how much history isn't really true at all.

The History of Everyday Life

My favourite quotation from one of our Academic users is: "*The Archive of Market and Social Research is a brilliant and under-sung resource of social history. You can see the history of everyday life unfolding before your eyes... Sometimes hilarious, always illuminating, AMSR gives you a glimpse of history in a state of emergence*". **Ben Highmore**, Professor of Cultural Studies, University of Sussex

That strikes me as a very interesting point about research being '*the history of everyday life unfolding...*', and I love the phrase '*history in a state of emergence*'. Of course, market research does tend to be present at times of change; how else are companies to understand and make sense of what's going on? And so we reflect those times accurately in our reporting in order that our clients can decide how to respond to those changes.

Because of these somewhat philosophical reflections on research's relationship with history, we're rather pleased that one of our current collaborations is with two History academics: Prof Marcus Collins and Dr Ben Clements, who are passionate about reinterpreting history using data from the Opinion polls. The whole point of Opinion Polls is to record 'actual' public opinion across the whole of the public at the time. Not some political or media driven interpretation.

And they also have a plan to develop a teaching module for Pre-GCSE to teach Social History using trend data. This should help with children's grasp of numeracy.

Curating the Archive to fit the A-Level Curriculum

We are also very actively promoting the Archive for A-Levels. We've recently conducted some research with teachers who say that they do like and appreciate the Archive very much – BUT, we do need to make it VERY EASY for them to use.

Our response is to curate our content to line up directly with the curriculum of various A-Level subjects. You'd be amazed what we have that does fit. For example, a key point in the Sociology curriculum is '*To what extent are roles and relationships within families changing?*'. Now obviously we can go on about the changing roles of women, and the effect that has on family life ad infinitum, but we also found '*Parents and Kids – changing relationships*' (2) Peter Cooper, 1988, for Fisher Price Toys looking at Fisher Price's advertising. Discussing how the old model of parenting (promoting Self Expression) was out of date, and the new thinking was 'Self-reliance, parent involvement and competence in Social Relations'. We found pre-1988 and post-1988 advertisements to demonstrate the effect of the research on Fisher Price's advertising. It was an excellent and exciting case study. And to help teachers, we also suggest Learning Activities for the pupils – in this case to look at more recent toys and ads for toys and to think about current models of parenting.

Also, since a lot of Sociology A-Level content is about Research Methods, we do make suggestions about how students could do research for themselves, for example, replicating studies in the Archive, or using Opinion Poll questions, and comparing results then and now.

Lesson activities: Research, Evidence and Information Sources

The key point is that we are helping **Teachers**; making their very busy lives easier by aligning our content closely with the curriculum and suggesting lesson activities, often including research, but we are also helping **Pupils** directly—firstly, because we're free, digital and easy to use, and we are showing them content directly related to what they need to know for their exams. And secondly, because we are giving them easy access to experience using external information sources, which is a skill highly valued by Universities. We found from our early pilot work that 17 year-olds found the concept of Archives rather 'scary', but after using AMSR they had the confidence to go on to using other sources like the Churchill Archive. This experience will be of considerable value to them in their university entrance and future career.

In addition, by giving them real experience of research methods and results – and their impact on the commercial and social world, along with their historical value, we may inspire them to work in the industry and/or to value it in their careers.

Supporting the Archive: What it costs and how you could help

I wanted to talk to you also about what it costs to run the Archive. We're mostly staffed by volunteers: market researchers have the most wonderfully developed skill-sets, and everything is done with all the care and attention to detail, that we brought to our careers—but we do have quite substantial costs to run the Archive software, scan the bigger collections, store the material in the right conditions, develop the website... We raise money from individuals and agencies and we get by on what we raise – but if we had more funding, then we could progress more quickly. We could get more material sorted, curated, scanned and uploaded faster. We have a lot of material and more comes in constantly. Do think of us when you're having a clear out. That study on a new idea or product that you were so very proud of, can have a new life and wider appreciation in the Archive. It secures your own legacy and the heritage of the sector that we've spent our working lives in.

Also, if you can donate funds, please do—every little helps, as they say. Or even better, you can do as Adam and I have done, and leave AMSR something in your will. You've no idea how helpful Judy Lannon's legacy has been in stabilising us, helping us to develop our charitable purposes and grow more quickly than we would have achieved without it.

You may ask: why would I do that? I can obviously only answer for myself. Some people favour animal charities, some support healthcare charities or environmental charities or But for me it's always been about people, and it's always been about opportunity. If I can feel that a charity is offering someone – especially a young person – a chance or an opening in life that they wouldn't otherwise have, then to me, that's genuinely a worthwhile cause.

Most of us are able to relate stories of the people who gave us personally a chance/a nudge/a push or just an opportunity to see how interesting market research can be – and, in my view, that's what we should now be passing on to others.

Sparkling Young People's Interest in Research

Richard Collins told me it was watching Bob Worcester on television that first sparked his interest in research. Bob was a legendary communicator and a great supporter of the Archive. I wonder how many others he inspired throughout his career?! We hope that we continue to fulfil that same role of communication with young people in education, and that we just make them think about the real world, what makes it tick, and about the role of market and social research in understanding it. And we also hope that it helps them get better A-Level results and better degrees, by broadening their outlook beyond their textbooks and encouraging them to do research of their own.

The more we get involved in A-Level education, the more we see that subjects like History, Politics, Sociology and Media Studies are all simply trying to get children to understand why the world is the way it is. And isn't that what we've been doing as researchers all our lives? It makes complete sense for us to share our experience with them through our historic work, and maybe light that spark for them. Do think of helping us, if you can.

References

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A WINDOW ON BRITAIN:

What 30 years of focus groups tell us about how our world has changed

Lucy Banister

In August 2024, Oasis announced their reunion tour and 90s nostalgia, already a powerful cultural phenomenon, went into overdrive. Everyone, it seems, was looking back to 90s culture, 90s music, 90s TV, 90s fashion. There's even been a trend for 90s technology; check out the revival of cassette tapes, although the biggest attraction of 90s technology is probably the fact that there was so little of it.

I had my own personal reasons for looking back to the 90s, to 1995 to be exact, because it was then that I began my career as a qualitative researcher. Reflecting on my first days out on the road dragging an art-bag of material up and down the country made me realise how much has changed (there aren't any art-bags any more for a start) and also what a perfect microcosm of societal change qualitative research offers.



The process still involves talking to groups of about 6–8 people, roughly similar in age and outlook for around 2 hours about a specific topic for which they have been selectively recruited, but within that framework there have been some pretty fundamental societal shifts.

Let me take you back to the world of the 90s focus group and you'll see what I mean.

We'll start with the housewife. Household products (whether bleach, detergent, food) still described its target market as a 'housewife', conjuring up a very un-90s picture of a 50s housewife with a pinny and a smile. Most women I spoke to who were at home with their children and didn't have a job would still refer to themselves in group introductions as housewives. Because this was 1995 and not 1955, many were embarrassed, 'just a housewife', and clearly often felt they should be doing something more glamorous and aspirational. Their self-deprecation was often reinforced by the side glances of the working mums sitting next to them in the group, who viewed themselves as superior. So much so that we often split our samples by working and non-working women to avoid that tension.

In 2025, the rigid definitions of 'full-time', 'part-time' and 'non-working' have been blurred by technology, more flexible working patterns and extended maternity leave (never referred to as 'mat leave' in the 90s). Now, mothers of young children introduce themselves in focus groups as 'a stay at home mum' or 'at home with the kids', with a side hustle on Vinted or Etsy.

In 30 years the housewife has completely disappeared from the lexicon, but her role and responsibilities have been re-imagined and re-interpreted on Instagram as 'cleanfluencers', 'declutterers', 'food influencers' and even 'tradwives' for all those 'at home with the kids' to scroll through.

There's less judgment, less disapproval and a ready acceptance that some people really do just love to clean their kitchens.

Back in the 90s, housewives were not only segmented by working status, they were also segmented, as was everyone else, by that great fault-line of British society: class.

As a rookie researcher, one of the things I had to learn was the meaning of the mysterious letters of the socio-economic classification system that proceeded logically from A to E but with the letter C inexplicably split into C1 and C2, and into which every person could be slotted by dint of the occupation of their head of household.

I was told how important it was not to mix Bs and Ds in the same focus group (they would never get on, I was informed; one would be inhibited by the presence of the other. How could you have a solicitor and a bus driver in the same group?). You were told you could just about get by with C1C2D, but even that was a bit of a stretch.

Our qual recruiters were often still recruiting in the street and would set off to large, detached houses to find Bs and council estates for Ds. They would make swift, instinctive judgements based on accent and clothing—group cohesion was everything—you couldn't have one person in a suit sitting next to someone else wearing overalls.

In 2025, people speak more like each other and dress more similarly. We live in a world where PhD students (who in the past would almost certainly have ended up in AB occupations) are working as baristas (social class D). Plumbers (social class C2) could easily be earning more than double what a trainee barrister makes (social class B).

2025 isn't yet a world without class, but it is certainly a world where money counts for more.

Our focus groups have also provided a window on the revolutionary changes that have occurred in the status of marriage and family formation. At the introduction stage of a group, we ask people to tell us who's at home with them. If you're in a couple and you're not married or planning to be married, the word you use is

'partner'. But back in 1995, people struggled.

Our sample specifications referred to 'married/co-habiting' although no-one ever used the word 'co-habit' in ordinary conversation. The default labels of boyfriend/girlfriend seemed all wrong for couples over about 25 who were living together.

In 1995, the proportion of couples who co-habited rather than were married was around 6%, interestingly about the same as it had been in 1985. But by 2005, it had doubled and by 2015 it was up to about 18%. In the 90s, 'partner' was always used in a business context, or for gay couples, and as civil partnerships were not legalised until 2005, not many of our participants could have been that open about their living arrangements. It is one of the most positive changes in the last 30 years that we can now have people in same sex relationships refer to 'husbands' and 'wives' in their introductions: something that would have seemed inconceivable back in the 90s.

This change means that the meaning of 'partner' has flipped and now we all assume 'partner' means personal and that it's in a business context where you need a qualifier to avoid embarrassing misunderstandings.

If there has been significant societal change in the way we look at sex, class and ethnic diversity, there seems to be much less of a dramatic change when it comes to age.

Whether it's 1995 or 2025, marketers still seem very little interested in anyone over 55.

Media briefs usually stop at 55 and as a result, we rarely speak to anyone over that age in our research groups, unless we're researching funeral-plans or cruises. It's stayed like that for a long time, even though the over 55s have changed dramatically (not least by becoming extraordinarily more wealthy than any generation preceding them, and probably succeeding them too).

If you were 55 in 1995, you would have been born in 1940 at the height of WW2 and you would have been 14 when food rationing finally ended. You hadn't technically become an adult until the age of 21, and could easily have got married before you became an adult. You were probably a grandparent by 1995.

Those older people felt a long way off to the generations below them. To me just starting out, they felt ancient. The only time I talked to a group older than 55 in the mid-90s was a project on Liquorice Allsorts which had a special place in the hearts of those who vividly remembered sweets coming off rationing in 1953.

This older group consistently referred to brands as 'makes' and dismissed advertising as a waste of money. They found it a lot harder to talk about brand image and struggled much more than younger people to extrapolate from stimulus material to a finished idea.

In contrast, a 55-year-old in 2025 will have been born in 1970 having never known anything but a world of consumerism. They reached adulthood in 1988 and probably co-habited before marrying at around 30 (with a wedding video to mark the occasion). They're unlikely to be a grandparent as their first child will be still at university.

Today's 55-year-olds probably do still feel old to the young researcher of 2025, old enough to be their parents but the way they talk about the world, about brands and marketing, and the way they interact with their own children is light years away from those old people of the 90s. They're still not included in many research projects though...

One of the underlying themes in many of the changes I've observed in the last 30 years is a sense of greater flexibility and inclusiveness. What were rigid demarcations in the past (of class, of age, of sex) have now relaxed, leading to a more open and varied approach to designing research programmes, and an expansion in the ways we explore what people are thinking and feeling.

Looking back at the groups I ran in the 90s, we seem to have been focused more on who we shouldn't allow in the groups, rather than on those we should. We sought group harmony and cohesion, even if it meant excluding those who did not fit the specifications but could have contributed much to the sessions.

We focused on the mainstream. We looked at concepts and creative ideas aimed at the majority of the population and worried about the effect on the group of including those with different cultural experiences and minority outlooks.

It's not just in the context of relationships or generational cohorts that society has changed dramatically. It is all over the discourse now, but back in 1995 the word 'diversity' was used more in the context of gardening than anything else. We certainly didn't think much about getting a range of ethnicities in our research groups, and it wouldn't have occurred to us to question a lack of diversity when we had an all-White British group. Thirty years ago, we were wary of too much atypicality in any element of a research specification, and indeed, we saw less of it.

In the 1991 census, the country was 95% White British/Irish/Other, but by 2021 it was 76% and in London 37%. Back then, we didn't even see much diversity within the regions. You might have had an occasional Mancunian or Scottish respondent in a London group but people always sounded like the place where they had grown up in (still a real challenge for any Southern moderator grappling with Belfast or Glaswegian accents).

I remember a Domestos group with housewives where one of the women was German (it was unusual in 1995 to have anyone from another European country in a focus group). She used vinegar to clean her toilet. The rest of the group were fascinated and horrified in equal measure: "Why would you want your toilet smelling of fish and chips?" asked one mystified woman. These days any cleaning influencer worth their salt extols the power of vinegar and celebrates all kinds of toilet hacks, but more importantly, our focus groups now comprise people from all kinds of different cultures and we insist on representative ethnicity in all our recruitment screeners.

We were also concerned that if we had people in groups raised in a different country, they wouldn't understand the creative ideas we were showing them—"What if they don't get the references?"—so we were keen to have participants who were 'culturally fluent'. The last thing we wanted was a group blown off course by a person who didn't know who Morecambe & Wise were, or had never watched Blue Peter.

In 1995, those people would indeed be outliers—thirty years ago, every person in a research group would have grown up with Blue Peter. Research specifications required that every participant had a TV so we could feel confident that we had a mainstream group. In 1995, when ads were developed for mass audiences, that mattered.

Now, with fragmented media come fragmented audiences. What would be the equivalent of Morecambe & Wise (whose Christmas Special in 1977 was watched by half the population)?

In the 2020s, we are all minorities now. We exist in our own media bubbles and we are hyper-aware of our own individual identities.

Looking back to 1995, perhaps that is the biggest change of all.

Perhaps it's as much the desire for connection and sociability that is driving 90s nostalgia as it is watching Friends and listening to Wonderwall.

We will do well to remember that 'social spark and togetherness' are the very reasons we use focus groups in the first place and I'm very much hoping that because of that, we will still be using them in 2055.

Lucy Banister kindly adapted this article for us from her 30 from 30 (Thirty insights from thirty years in qualitative research) feature in the AMSR Review (Issue 1, October 2025) with the approval of Richard Asquith, AMSR CEO.

"CONGRATS, YOU'VE BEEN VOTED INTO THE HALL OF FAME"

Simon Chadwick

It was a wet February morning last year and the lady on the phone—one of the most prominent media researchers in the US—was excitedly uttering something that made no sense to me whatsoever. It probably doesn't to you at this point, so let me back up and give you a little context.

Halls of Fame are a curiously prevalent form (in the US at least) of saluting people who, in the opinion of their peers, have made a singular contribution to the industry in which they belong. Where the market research industry is concerned, the Hall of Fame resides in, and is managed by the Market Research Council (MRC).

"Who?", you ask. Well, the MRC is actually the oldest market research body in the world. It will celebrate its centenary next year, having been founded in 1927 as a members-only club for market research pioneers to come together and debate the future of this nascent and weird industry/profession. As such, it has had its hand in the development and birth of many of the key methodologies still in use today. Indeed, it can claim responsibility for entire segments of the industry—for example, media research as we know it today, was born after Arthur C. Nielsen heard an MIT engineer describe a new system for measuring and recording individual radio listening at an MRC meeting!

The Hall of Fame itself houses many iconic names—both Niensens, Gallup, Roper Starch, Parlin and Ogilvy being some of them. What the lady was telling me was that I would be occupying a seat alongside these and others much more worthy than myself—and that I was to be the 109th person to join the club.

'Shurely shome mishtake', as Private Eye would have it.

Having been assured that this was indeed no mistake, I had to prepare for the induction ceremony and lunch, which was to be held at a very swanky, large restaurant in Manhattan. First off, who to invite and how many? At around \$1,000 for a table of ten, this was no small question, even if it was tax deductible. Since I felt I was in this position solely because of all the amazing people and teams with whom I had worked, it was very important to me to ensure that as many parts of my career were represented by the human beings who had



made them possible. As such, invites were soon winging their way to all parts of the world. Sadly, in the end, the UK and Italy were under-represented, not only because of distance and cost, but also because of age and the policies and behaviour of the current resident of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Nevertheless, twenty colleagues spanning thirty five years (many of them not seen in decades) arrived on the day to celebrate – a joy beyond description.

The next thing to decide was who to invite as the person to introduce me to the assembled throng. Four people were due to receive awards that day, two of which were Hall of Fame inductees and the other two being recognised as either a hugely significant innovator or an ambassador for the research industry and profession. Each of us would be introduced by a chosen luminary, after which we would respond with speeches of thanks. In the past, introductory speeches had generally been a recitation of the contributions of the inductees to the industry/profession, with perhaps a little humour thrown in here and there. I wanted mine to be different – perhaps more along the lines of a ‘roasting’, rather than a recitation of wisdom and brilliance. I needed someone creative, irreverent and funny.

So, I chose Lucy Davison—ex-RI, founder of Keen as Mustard, great storyteller and all-round humourist.

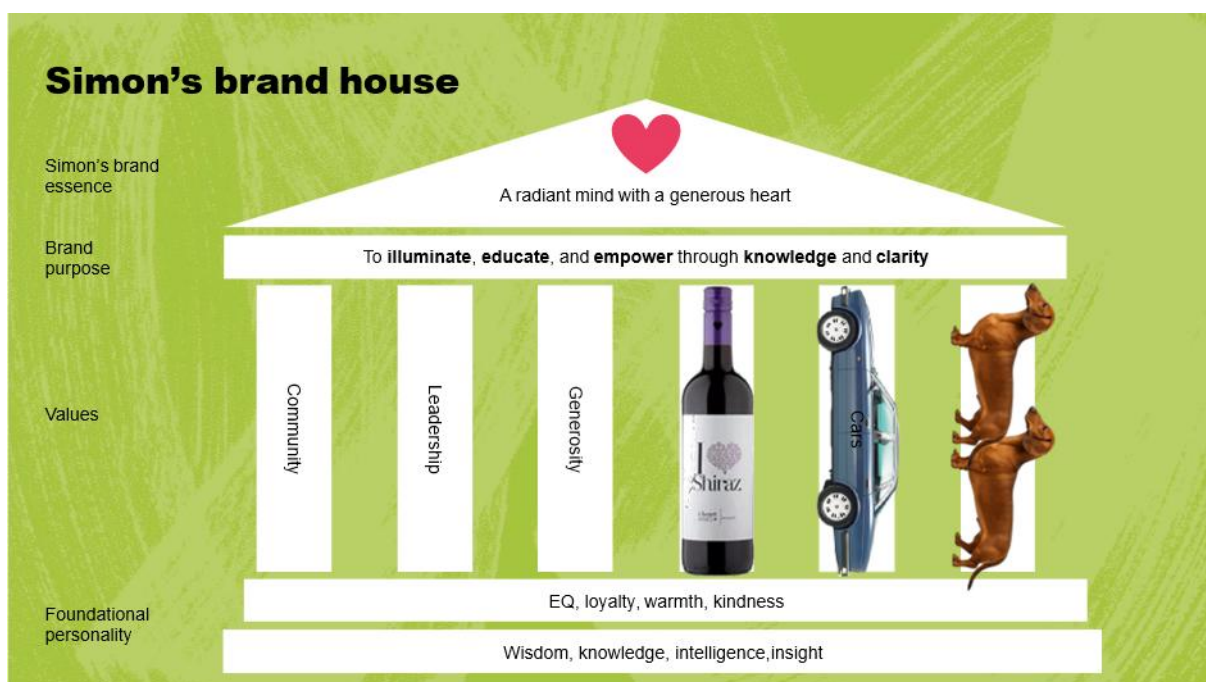
The audience didn’t know what had hit them! Armed with a brilliant presentation based on interviews with no fewer than forty of my colleagues and friends from times present and past, Lucy proceeded to present “Brand Simon Chadwick”. Some brief findings:

What animal would Simon be? 22% said a bear, which I still haven’t decoded fully, but I’m not sure it’s all good. Others said an owl, an eagle or an elephant, all of which I can live with. But I would still like to find out who had said “a monkey”.

What would be Simon’s mind-blowing superpowers? Apparently, mind reading and foresight. OK by me—and I will buy the person who answered “eliminating idiocracy” a very nice bottle of wine!

And what would be Simon’s archetype? The Sage—leading through wisdom, truth, expertise and insight. It’s at this point in the presentation that I thanked my lucky stars for the huge honorarium I had slipped Lucy a couple of months before I asked her to do this in the first place.

Lucy then ended with a slide depicting my Brand House. This was filled with extremely nice things, but showed its real depth of knowledge by portraying three of the pillars as a bottle of wine, a Jaguar and a pair of dachshunds.



Damn, this woman is good!

The entire event represented a milestone that I never expected and felt very humbled to have experienced. Lucy then came along and put the proverbial icing on the cake in the most wonderfully British way possible.

Thanks, MRC—and thanks, Lucy!

MAURICE MILLWARD 1931 – 2026

Gillian Williams writes:



Maurice Millward was born in 1931. From Sheffield Grammar School he went to Oxford to study history. His first job was in the Market Research Dept at Reckitt and Coleman in Hull and then he went to General Foods in Banbury as head of their MR Dept. This provided Maurice with a clear insight into the world of marketing and what consumer research should provide to aid companies to develop their marketing strategies.

In 1973 he set up Millward Brown with Gordon Brown, who worked with him at General Foods. They made their headquarters in Leamington Spa. Things were tough for a while. The country went on to a 3-day week due to the miners' strike. The Leamington location was not conducive to the image of a switched-on MR

Agency. "Who are these people in this town in the Midlands? Research agencies of any note are in London." It was also unusual that the founders were not from the agency world.

Gradually the reputation of the company grew, with companies like Cadbury Typhoo, Cadbury Confectionery, Kraft, Beechams and Weetabix joining the client list, and of course word of mouth was very important. A quote from Sheila Robinson, then a Senior Research Executive at Cadbury Foods: "I recall the Whitener's U & A which Maurice presented to the Cadbury-Typhoo marketing team. It more or less changed the entire strategy for Marvel from convenience to slimming." Such word-of-mouth comments were invaluable.

In 1976, Millward Brown launched the Continuous Advertising Tracking Study. From working in marketing companies, they were aware that despite spending millions on advertising their products, particularly on TV, there was no standardised research methodology available that answered the key questions of how many consumers were aware of this advertising, could they describe the advertising, particularly what brand it was for, and what was it telling them about the brand. The Continuous Advertising Tracking Study was designed to answer these questions. Continued development followed, leading to the concept of the awareness index, a measure of an ad's efficiency in generating awareness, and the linkage of this data to actual sales.

The learning from the Tracking Study data led to the development of Link, an advertising pretesting method to predict likely performance on these key measures. Maurice had a razor-sharp mind and brought new thinking to the Market Research Industry.

Despite his business success, he was always very personable, approachable, and unassuming. He was a devoted family man. His wife Sheila was an accomplished artist and he had three daughters and two stepsons. The other great love of his life was classical music.

Maurice retired from Millward Brown in 1992 and continued to live in Leamington. However, he was not idle after he retired. In 2001, he acquired a failing music shop in Leamington, Presto Music, which just sold classical CDs. Although he employed a retail manager, he was very much involved in the running of the shop and developing its potential. Using his immense business skills and his knowledge of classical music, he increased the range of the offerings to include sheet music and musical instruments, but particularly to build an on-line presence. Today the on-line site is one of the leading classical music sites with a worldwide reputation.

Maurice was a very generous supporter of the Arts. He made donations to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, to Glyndebourne and to many local music events in Leamington.

Sadly, Maurice died suddenly at the beginning of January 2026. A life well lived.

STEERING GROUP

The Research Network is directed by a Steering Group consisting at present of Adam Phillips (Chairman), Jane Bain (Website Editor and Events Co-organiser), Sheila Byfield (Oral History), Diego Correa (Membership), Jane Gwilliam (Events Co-organiser), Linda Henshall (External Liaison), Andrew Smith (Membership and Social Media), Nick Tanner (Website News Editor), Gill Wareing (Secretary-Treasurer), Frank Winter (Data Protection) and Graham Woodham (*Newsletter* Editor). Their contact 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.