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The Weekly Round-Up: 19.11.04

By [silicon.com](#), [silicon.com](#)

"I dropped my mobile down the toilet pit at the Glastonbury festival."

As confessions of tech woe go this admission from Dan in Cambridge - one of the UK's many mobile phone losers - is among the nastiest... and it gets worse.

"I tried calling it but there was no answer."

No! Really? You mean the bog troll was busy Dan?

The Round-Up is genuinely astounded that Dan thought he may have had some joy with this tactic.

Just how would that conversation go?

"Hi, how can I help you?"

"Well I think you may be speaking on my mobile phone at the moment?"

"Yeah I am, it just hit me on the head and then a minute or so later it started ringing."

"Well any chance you could do me a huge favour and bring it back up to the surface?"

"I'm not sure - given what hit me on the head seconds after your phone you're really not my favourite person right now..."

Even if there was somebody, or some thing, down there is it really likely to be somebody you want to meet? Wouldn't you rather give the phone up for lost?

"Thank you so much for returning my phone.... I could kiss you!"

...on second thoughts maybe not.

But Dan's story did indeed have a happy ending, against all odds (as Phil Collins once sang - though presumably not at Glastonbury, ever, or anytime soon.)

"About four months later my Mum was called by the guy who sorts the stuff dropped down there. He had found it and taken the SIM card out, called the entry saying 'Mum' and then put the SIM in the post - so I got all my contacts back!"



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WOAH THERE! Wind the story back a line or two... there is actually somebody who is charged with shovelling through the contents of Glastonbury's giant cess pit, searching for lost property? And it takes him at least FOUR MONTHS to do?

It doesn't happen often but the Round-Up is genuinely lost for words.

And then, when you think this tale can't get any worse, Dan actually thinks it's a good thing that somebody placed the world's most foul-smelling SIM card, with four month's worth of engrained odour, into an envelope and sent it to his own mother!

But it isn't just 'Dan, Dan the toilet man' who has such a nasty tale to tell – it would seem there is something about the simple task of 'having a sit down' that is very conducive to losing mobile phones.

Another customer at Retrofone.com, who compiled these horror stories, admitted his mobile slipped out and fell into a hole which he had considerably dug in a field in order to answer a call of nature. (The only call he answered in while, given the fate of his handset.)

He only noticed the fact his phone was missing after he had filled in the hole again and walked away.

So somewhere in the wilds of England there is a mobile phone buried in a pit of human waste... The Round-Up would like to see that episode of Time Team... Tony Robinson will never see it coming!

If the person responsible for that story, Jim in Hampshire, has any sense of humour he'll give Channel 4 a call and tell them he's just found a Roman coin somewhere in the vicinity of his phone's dirty grave.

Retrofone.com also revealed this week that more than half of us (54.5 per cent) go through at least one mobile phone each year and [for many that isn't by choice](#), with 52 per cent of us having lost a mobile phone in the past three years.

More than a quarter of us (26 per cent), the Round-Up included, have lost more than one during that period.

Retrofone is servicing this phenomenon by offering cut-price replacements for some of the most popular handsets from the past few years. As the name suggests there is nothing too cutting edge on offer but many consumers learn the hard way that expensive handsets, while fun, are inevitably more costly to lose.

All in all it's been quite a week for admissions of tech stupidity. Data Recovery experts OnTrack this week published a list of their most 'interesting' customer queries. (For 'interesting' read 'frighteningly demonstrative of the fact mankind will be its own undoing'.)

In truth these are people who have probably heard it all. Like a triage nurse barely batting an eyelid at a child with a saucepan on its head, there is probably very little that can make these guys raise a quizzical, 'How did that happen?', eyebrow.

But that's not to say they can meet every enquiry with common platitudes such as: 'Don't worry, it could happen to any of us'.

Like the customer whose laptop "got run over by an aeroplane".

It got what!?

How literally are people taking the sales pitch of the 'work from anywhere' Wi-Fi-enabled laptop manufacturers?

What did he tell them? "So there I was working out a few spreadsheets on the North runway at Gatwick when this bloody great aeroplane lands right on my laptop. Well, to say I was surprised is an understatement."

(OnTrack didn't provide names but the Round-Up is guessing this chap's name was Dan and he lived somewhere in the Cambridge area.)

Then there was the construction crew who took the laptop containing all the plans for the office building they were putting up to the site with them... and left it



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precariously positioned beneath an unsecured iron girder.

Whatever could happen next? That's right, the girder fell and obliterated the laptop.

Sounds like a ruse to get out of work while the data was recovered if you ask the Round-Up.

Still, it show's a bit more invention than just going on strike...

Less inventive but showing an observance of some of the classic signs of 'adult male tantrum syndrome' was the man who destroyed his laptop by chucking it into the toilet and flushing it. Twice.

The Round-Up is pretty sure it made him feel better but it's a bit cruel to toy with the Bog Troll like that. It must have thought it was going to get a new laptop to go with its mobile phone.

Also wrestling with technology issues this week was a Microsoft exec who advised shoplifters operating in the age of RFID-chips to [wear tinfoil trousers](#) when they head out to steal items such as razor blades which are likely to include the radio-frequency ID tags.

Steve Riley said: "If I'm stealing something, I'm going to put aluminium foil in my pant leg. I'm going to wrap it around these razors I'm stealing."

He also claimed that an RFID tag could be 'killed' by popping it in a microwave for five seconds.

Eagle-eyed store detectives should therefore be on the look out for suspicious characters moving shiftily around the store, looking for a power point, with a microwave under their arm and a packet of razor blades in their hand. Should be easy enough to spot... or alternatively listen out for the 'ding!'.

For the record, the Round-Up would advise against putting razor blades in a microwave - somebody is likely to get hurt. But perhaps not fatally.

For mortal woundings we need to head over to Texas where a website has been launched which will enable gun-crazed web surfers to hunt animals from the comfort of their own armchair. Making use of a webcam linked to a manoeuvrable rifle, visitors accessing the site from anywhere in the world will be able to take pot-shots at animals on a Texas ranch.

It is quite literally a killer application.

Currently the Live Shot website only offers target practice using the web-linked .22 calibre rifle but soon the ranch owner will be putting deer, antelope and wild pigs in front of the camera. (The Round-Up, knowing how unreliable and prone to delays webcams can be, wonders which animals will be favourite among virtual hunters - the incredibly fleet-footed deer and antelope or the big fat, slow-moving wild pigs/pork-flavoured cannon fodder.)

Lawmakers in the Lone Star State are currently scratching their heads and rubbing their red necks in confusion, not sure what to make of the site.

The site's creator, John Underwood, said he got the idea when visiting a website where users could take advantage of remote cameras in the wild to take pictures of animals in their natural habitat and download the images.

"We were looking at a beautiful white-tail buck..." said Underwood, getting sentimental about the beauty of fauna, resplendent in its natural habitat... "And my friend said, 'If you just had a gun for that'."

"Then a little light-bulb went off in my head," added Underwood.

The Round-Up could easily improve on that sentence simply by swapping some of the words around.

"We were looking at a beautiful white-tail buck," said Underwood. "And my friend said, 'If you just had a little light-bulb for that.'"

"Then a gun went off in my head," added Underwood.

But the Round-Up is being unfair, because it turns out Underwood is actually a great campaigner for equal opportunities, as the site "could be popular with disabled hunters" according to one US report, and those "who cannot afford a trip to Texas".

Aw! Bless! Killing for all, it's a lovely sentiment. On behalf of all the deer, antelope and particularly the wild pigs out there in Texas, 'Thank you internet'.

Perhaps Underwood could create a premium-content section of the site where visitors can shoot rare and endangered species such as pandas, gorillas, tigers and red squirrels (for the real keen shot) - perhaps throw in the occasional monkey.

The site does say that if there is a particular animal which visitors have a yearning to shoot they can submit a request.

Underwood is also keen that the carcasses don't go to waste (what a guy!). An attendant – who will clearly be putting a lot of faith in the refresh rate of the camera - will go out onto the range and retrieve shot animals for the shooters, who could have the heads preserved by a taxidermist (creating much-needed work for the practitioner of a diminishing trade, see – and the Round-Up is sure the head of a wild pig would make a wonderful trophy on any wall).

Virtual-hunters could also have the meat processed and shipped home, or donated to animal orphanages.

And just how do animals become orphans, John? It's certainly a puzzler.

And finally: "Today London, tomorrow... Kent!"

With those words Apple boss Steve Jobs could have announced the opening of London's first Apple Store and the plans to build a second at Bluewater in Kent.

As it was he wasn't even there but fortunately for you silicon.com was and we even took some photos so you too can join in the fun, ahead of the store's official opening tomorrow.

As shops go we have to admit, it [looks pretty cool](#).

Read the full article [here](#) and marvel at the nutter with the [Apple-themed haircut](#) who has clearly gone to some lengths to lay the stereotype of lunatic fanaticism to rest. (Imagine how wrong things could have gone if this chap had been William Tell's son.)

Until next week remember, if you're queuing up outside the Apple store tonight, waiting to be first in on Saturday morning, wrap up warm. If nothing else the extra layers should protect you from anything hurled at you by the drunks at 3:00AM... by which time even you may be starting to realise it's possibly quite a sad thing to be doing.

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