



Leave your phone at home day

Being without your mobile for 24 hours would suppress the need for instantaneous responses and stop **Richard Barr** from pocket dialling family across the pond



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Empathise with our dogs. From time to time, they are rebuked for doing things that come naturally, like barking at the postman, or eating the cats' food. When they are told off, the dogs look suitably contrite, hang their heads in shame, and tuck their tails between their legs for the required five minutes before resuming normal boisterousness.

And I do the same when I am given a telling off from various members of the family after performing some public duty, like doing the shopping at Sainsbury's or walking the (said) dogs. Once I have hung my head for several minutes and assumed my best hangdog expression, I nervously enquire what I have done this time.

'You know, don't you? Why did you ring me, my mother, and your

aged aunt in America – and woke her up at 3am Eastern Standard Time?'

'I didn't, I didn't, and I certainly didn't.'

'Produce your phone, then.'

And there was the evidence – all calls were recorded under recent.

The last time I wrote an article about telephones was at the beginning of 1993 when technology was more basic.

Then, mobile phones were a relative rarity and there was still even some excitement about fax machines. Several firms had yet to be convinced they were worth buying. It was only in the late 1990s that the partners in the firm I was in at the time could be persuaded it would be useful for fee earners to have computers on their desks.

Mobiles have since gone through an evolution – gradually reducing from looking like a brick to the size and shape of a packet of cigarettes, or even smaller, so that only those with delicate fingers or pointed finger nails could ever dial with accuracy.

Yes, dial. The expression is still with us, but telephones have not had dials for years. I am sure there would be a market to satisfy those with nostalgia for the past for a mobile to be produced with a proper dial on it and, preferably, buttons A and B to accept or reject calls.

I say so particularly as the miniaturisation trend has now

reversed, with mobiles becoming bigger again; there would be plenty of room for a dial on your average tablet.

And so we come to 2015 and my iPhone 6. Like all modern phones, it does everything you can ever dream of wanting a phone to do. Now, you can get your phone to prepare your family tree, tune your violin, or be a spirit level.



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For many solicitors, the mobile is also their office, performing tasks that in the past were undertaken by bulky office machines. For those who want to play, the possibilities are endless.

However, my phone is too keen. It will cleverly turn on if it recognises my finger print, but won't stop making calls when not needed. When I have had a summons from on high to get more milk or the papers at the supermarket, I end the call with

a 'Yes, dear' (to my wife, not my iPhone), and put it in my pocket. That is when the phone gets to work. Snug among the coins, random washers, leaking pens, and ink-stained handkerchief it tries to help as much as it can, and quietly but persistently dials number after number from my list of contacts. When they reply, all they hear is the sound of my footsteps as I scour the supermarket aisles or whistle the dogs.

Back in 1993, I complained about the ubiquity of the telephone. I said: 'The "I want it now" mentality means that we have to respond instantly to all demands. Often we do, but how much better our efforts would be if we had been given three days of reflection.'

Those considerations are truer today, when most people cannot go anywhere or do anything without repeatedly peering at their phones.

I advocate that once a week we should have a 'leave your phone at home' day. The world will not end if you go for 24 hours without using it. More importantly, there will be one day when I not only do not disturb my wife, my wife's mother, and my ancient aunt in America, but also when I do not need to assume my hangdog expression – at least for making unnecessary calls from my pocket (though I may be in the dog house for other reasons). **SJ**