

Can you give me 50 Cent's phone number? 2019's most unusual requests from Brits abroad



As 2019 draws to a close, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) has released details of some of the oddest requests, demands and enquiries it has received from Brits abroad this year and highlighted what it can and can't help with when British people run into trouble abroad.

Of the 330,000 calls taken by the FCO this year, ten of the more unusual ones were:

1. A man rang to complain about the aeroplane food on the way to his holiday destination, asking us to change him to a different airline for the return journey.
2. A customer calling from Nigeria wanted to speak to the rapper 50 Cent and asked the British Consulate to share his phone number.
3. A woman emailed to ask if she could buy 30 sheets of A4 paper from the British Consulate, as she couldn't find any where she was in Texas.
4. A caller rang to say they had left their headphones in their hotel room in France and asked if Embassy staff could pop round and see if they were still there.
5. A couple thinking of moving to Portugal contacted the British Embassy to ask how removal companies got large items of furniture into small flats in Lisbon.
6. A caller wanted to ask about getting British nationality for his son, who had recently been born overseas. He hoped the child would qualify for citizenship on the basis his parents were certain he'd been conceived in the UK.
7. A man rang to ask us to provide a television for his friend who had been hospitalised in Australia because the one in his ward was broken.
8. A woman rang from Qatar to ask how we could help deal with a make-up artist for her wedding as she wasn't happy with the service she'd received.
9. A woman calling from Sweden had been invited to an event at Windsor Castle and wanted advice on what to wear for it.
10. A couple in China who had engaged the services of a sperm donor wanted

to know if our staff could verify the nationality of the sperm as British.

While the FCO cannot help with the types of problems listed above, we can help British people who run into trouble abroad in a number of ways. These include:

- Issuing an Emergency Travel Document (ETD) if people lose their passport. We issued more than 27,000 ETDs in 2019.
- Visiting people who have been admitted to hospital. More than 3,400 people contacted us after being hospitalised abroad in 2019.
- Offering advice to people who have been imprisoned. More than 5,000 people asked us for assistance after being jailed in 2019.
- Getting in touch with family or friends if people can't contact them themselves.
- Providing details of local services such as lawyers, interpreters and doctors.

Sadly, more than 20,000 calls received by the FCO this year were from people ringing to intentionally waste our time or be abusive to staff members.

An FCO spokesperson said:

While we can't hand out famous rappers' phone numbers, collect your lost property or advise on Windsor Castle's dress code, our dedicated consular staff are there to help Brits who run into trouble when they're abroad.

Read our travel advice before you go away, make sure you have appropriate travel insurance, and if you get into difficulty, you can call the nearest British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate.

Notes to editors

- In the 12 months to December 2019, the FCO received 17 compliments for every 1 complaint from people who received consular services.
- If you are in the UK and worried about someone overseas, you can call the FCO on 020 7008 1500.
- British people in another country who needs our help should call the nearest British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate. Contact details are here.
- We recommend people read our travel advice before going abroad. It is available here: [FCO Travel Advice](#).

Further information

Published 28 December 2019

World going crackers for British cheese and wine

As the UK tucks into cheese platters and pops bottles of bubbles this New Year's Eve, the UK cheese and wine industries are celebrating a decade of growth and innovation.

Both have grown from strength to strength, with the UK cheese export market now worth £675 million and 130% more English and Welsh wine produced in 2018 compared to 2017.

Over the past decade, English and Welsh wine has become one of the UK's fastest growing agricultural sectors, with [hectarage planted in Britain growing by 194% in the last ten years](#).

The industry has also raked in the accolades, with English Sparkling Wine producer Nyetimber winning the 2018 International Wine Challenge (IWC) trophy for Sparkling Winemaker of the Year – the first time the award has been granted to both a woman and a winemaker outside of the Champagne region.

With Wines of Great Britain (WineGB) predicting UK wine production will reach around 40 million bottles by 2040 – and with famed French Champagne houses Taittinger and Pommery buying land in England's south – the future continues to look bright for this burgeoning industry.

Cheese production in the UK increased steadily by 7% since 2015, with 465,000 tonnes of British cheese produced in 2018 alone. Whilst British Stilton, Caerphilly, and Wensleydale continue to be some of the UK's most popular cheeses, cheddar reigns supreme as one of the UK's top exports. In the US, UK cheese imports are worth £50 million, with 90% of UK dairy exports to the US being cheese. In China, demand for UK cheese is growing by 20% each year.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

One of the great opportunities of Brexit is the chance to expand exports of our world-renowned food and drink, and the growth of our innovative cheese and wine industries is testament to this.

As we prepare to leave the EU, we will always champion our fantastic farmers and producers, to ensure their produce continues to be enjoyed not only at special events such as New Year's Eve – but all year round”.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

The festive season really highlights the quality and innovation coming from businesses in the UK's agriculture sector. This is evident in the growing demand in major markets such as China and the US.

Consumers around the world will be enjoying some of the best cheese and wine coming out of the UK this New Year's Eve and I look forward to seeing businesses like Belton Farm and Nyetimber make strides in new markets in 2020.

Chairman of Wines of Great Britain (WineGB), Simon Robinson, said:

The UK's traditional method sparkling wines have been gaining international recognition over many years now, and as our success continues, we anticipate even further growth overseas in the years to come.

Wine tourism in the UK is flourishing and we are producing some still wines which are earning their place on top wine lists. We are proud of the ongoing success of this industry and are looking to the future with confidence!

[The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board \(AHDB\) reports that the increase in popularity of UK cheese](#) is due to a growing demand for more natural and authentic dairy products.

As home to the International Cheese and Dairy Awards, the UK's cheese continues to win gold with Belton Farm, a family-owned cheese manufacturer based in Shropshire, dubbed the 'Supreme Champion' at the 2018 International Cheese and Dairy Awards.

Over the past year, total exports of UK food and drink reached a record £22.5 billion. As part of the ongoing Food is GREAT campaign, government and British industry are aiming to boost British trade in food and drink exports to £23 billion over 2020, and will continue to work with exporters to help them tap into new markets.

[Dstl staff member receives New Year Honour](#)



Dr Norman Govan, of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), has been recognised in Her Majesty The Queen's New Year Honours 2020.

Dr Govan, who has worked at Dstl and its predecessors for more than 20 years, has been made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE). He receives his OBE for his many years of expertise in the decontamination of chemical weapons, including the development of methodologies and specialist skills to safely and effectively manage the hazards arising from these agents. His contribution was vital in the recovery process following the Salisbury and Amesbury incidents in 2018.

Dr Govan, who is a fellow – a technical expert – within the Chemical Biological and Radiological Division at Dstl said: "I am truly humbled by this award. I was immensely proud of what the recovery team achieved getting Salisbury and Amesbury back to normal. I had the privilege to work alongside some really incredible people during the operation and I am delighted to accept this on their behalf."

Gary Aitkenhead, Chief Executive at Dstl added: "I offer my sincere congratulations to Dr Govan. It gives me great pride to see our people recognised in this prestigious way. The award is a deserved recognition of his dedication, professionalism and technical excellence."

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[The Military Division of the New Year Honours 2020](#)

ROYAL NAVY AWARDS

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST HONOURABLE ORDER OF THE BATH

As Knight Grand Cross

Admiral Sir Philip Andrew JONES, KCB, DL

As Companions

Major General Timothy John BEVIS, CBE

Rear Admiral Timothy Charles HODGSON, MBE

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

As Commanders

Rear Admiral Martin John CONNELL

Commodore Andrew CREE

Captain Timothy NEILD

Brigadier Matthew Fraser PIERSON

As Officers

Commander Andrew Michael DONALDSON

Commodore Henry DUFFY

Colonel Garth Stuart Cunningham MANGER

Colonel Paul Andrew MAYNARD

Captain Michael Alan SALMON

Commander Daniel Douglas Harold SIMMONDS

Captain John Edington VOYCE

As Members

Warrant Officer 1 Engineering Technician (Communications Information Systems Submarines) David Kevin ANNAN

Warrant Officer 2 Brian DENT

Commander Justin HAINS

Commander (Acting Captain) Royal Naval Reserve, Mark HANKEY, RD

Commander Andrew Barry PERKS

Commander Justin Robert Ernest SAWARD

Lieutenant Commander (Acting Commander) Suzanna Jane SEAGRAVE

Warrant Officer 1 Engineering Technician (Marine Engineering) Nicholas
Richard SHARLAND

Colour Sergeant Samuel SHERIFF

Lieutenant Royal Naval Reserve (Sea Cadet Corps) Janice SPICER

Lieutenant Commander Adam James SPIKE

Warrant Officer 1 Coxswain (Submarines) Stephen Richard THORPE

ROYAL RED CROSS

As an Ordinary Member of the Royal Red Cross, First Class

Commander Ian Christopher KENNEDY

QUEEN'S VOLUNTEER RESERVE MEDAL

Lieutenant Royal Naval Reserve William BENBOW

ARMY AWARDS

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST HONOURABLE ORDER OF THE BATH

As Knight Commander

General Patrick Nicholas Yardley Monrad SANDERS, CBE, DSO, ADC Gen

As Companions

Major General Ian John CAVE

Major General Paul Anthony Edward NANSON, CBE

Lieutenant General Richard Edward NUGEE, CVO, CBE

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

As Commanders

Brigadier Christopher James BELL, OBE

Brigadier Richard Martin CLEMENTS

Colonel Andrew Paul Longstone DAWES

Colonel Clare Patricia PHILLIPS

Colonel Paul Terence TEDMAN

As Officers

Lieutenant Colonel Nicholas David Guise COWLEY, MBE, The Queen's Royal Hussars

Colonel Michael Terence DUFF, TD, VR, Army Reserve

Lieutenant Colonel John HANSON, MBE, Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Anthony HARRISON, Corps of Royal Engineers

Acting Colonel David James KANE, Army Cadet Force

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas MORAN, Royal Corps of Signals

Lieutenant Colonel Linda Elizabeth ORR, Royal Army Medical Corps

Lieutenant Colonel Simon Andrew RIDGWAY, MBE, Royal Tank Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel Kehinde Adetunji Oluseyi Olajuwon SORUNGBE, The Royal Logistic Corps

Chaplain to the Forces (2nd Class) Reverend Antony James FELTHAM-WHITE, Royal Army Chaplains' Department

Lieutenant Colonel Tracy WRIGHT, Adjutant General's Corps (Staff and Personnel Support Branch)

As Members

Major Christopher David AYRES, Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

Sergeant Guy Fitzroy Oronde LOWE-BARROW, The Royal Logistic Corps

Warrant Officer Class 1 Nigel Vincent BLACK, Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

Major Jason William BUCKLEY, The Royal Gurkha Rifles

Captain Patrick William BURGESS, Royal Tank Regiment

Major Daniel Laurence KRAUSE-HARDER CALTHORPE, The Parachute Regiment

Warrant Officer Class 1 Jamie Donovan CLARKE, Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

Captain Christopher Edward CROMPTON, Royal Corps of Signals

Major Christopher John DEED, Royal Army Physical Training Corps

Acting Major Joanne ECCLES, Army Cadet Force

Captain Nigel Stuart GARDNER, The Parachute Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel James Ronald Murray GOWER VR, Royal Regiment of Artillery, Army Reserve

Major Michael GREEN, Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

Sergeant Saroj GURUNG, The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment

Major Benjamin Thomas HAWES, The Royal Anglian Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Kevin HUNTER, TD, VR, The Yorkshire Regiment, Army Reserve

Major Ashley JEYES, Royal Corps of Signals

Major Emma Claire JUDE, Royal Army Veterinary Corps

Major Steven KEIR, Royal Regiment of Artillery

Major Stephen LORD, Royal Corps of Signals

Captain Colin MACNAB, VR, The Royal Logistic Corps, Army Reserve

Captain Shaun William MAJOR, VR, Royal Army Medical Corps, Army Reserve

Major Richard Graham MARSH, Corps of Royal Engineers

Lieutenant Colonel (now Major) Richard James McCORD, The Royal Logistic Corps, (now Army Reserve)

Staff Sergeant Craig John McDOUGALL, Royal Army Medical Corps

Captain Christopher Graham McROBBIE, The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Major Jonathon Edward MOORE, Royal Regiment of Artillery

Captain Alexander MORRISON, Corps of Royal Engineers

Major Maikali William NAWAQALIVA, The Royal Logistic Corps

Major Jolyon Ashton PATRICK, VR, Adjutant General's Corps (Staff and Personnel Support Branch), Army Reserve

Warrant Officer Class 2 Andrew Mark PICK, VR, Royal Regiment of Artillery, Army Reserve

Major Stephen Richard ROBERTS, The Royal Logistic Corps

Major David James ROBINSON, The Royal Anglian Regiment

Sergeant Emma Kay SMITH, The Royal Logistic Corps

Lieutenant Colonel Simon James STEVENSON, The Royal Logistic Corps

Captain Luke William TOWNSEND, General Service Corps, Army Reserve

Sergeant Jonathan Ian WHITMORE, Royal Corps of Signals

Lieutenant Colonel Derren Mark BATTERSBY-WOOD, The Royal Logistic Corps

Corporal Jemma Tracy YOUNG, Intelligence Corps

ROYAL RED CROSS

As an Ordinary Associate of the Royal Red Cross, Second Class

Warrant Officer Class 2 Emma Jane JOLLIFFE, Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps

QUEEN'S VOLUNTEER RESERVES MEDAL

Major Erik Radman Charles BRODERSTAD, VR, The Rifles, Army Reserve

Major Michael Craig JAMISON, VR, The Royal Irish Regiment, Army Reserve

Major William George MURRAY, VR, Royal Regiment of Artillery, Army Reserve

Warrant Officer Class 2 David PERRING, VR, The Royal Logistic Corps, Army Reserve

ROYAL AIR FORCE AWARDS

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

As Knight Commander

Air Marshal Julian Alexander YOUNG, CB, OBE

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST HONOURABLE ORDER OF THE BATH

As Companions

Air Vice-Marshal Alastair Norman Crawford REID, QHP

Air Vice-Marshal Simon Peter ROCHELLE, OBE, DFC

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

As Officers

Wing Commander (now Group Captain) Simon Edward BLACKWELL

Wing Commander Tracey BOTTRILL

Wing Commander Gareth John BURDETT

Wing Commander David James Peter CROOK

Wing Commander Timothy John RAND

Wing Commander Marcus Edward Allan STOW

Group Captain Matthew James STOWERS, MBE

As Members

Squadron Leader Howard Robin BAILEY

Squadron Leader Roger Charles BEECH

Flight Sergeant Michelle Claire CROLLA

Warrant Officer Marie CROSS

Squadron Leader Andrew Lawrence Clive EDGELL

Sergeant Daryl William GORDON

Flight Lieutenant Thomas Edward PARTRICK

Flight Lieutenant Christopher John STRADLING

ROYAL RED CROSS

As an Ordinary Associate of the Royal Red Cross, Second Class

Squadron Leader Scott Joseph FITGERALD

QUEEN'S VOLUNTEER RESERVES MEDAL

Warrant Officer Norman Frank Alexander DAVENPORT

Warrant Officer Leslie George HOTSON, MBE

[Andy Green awarded CBE in New Year Honours](#)

The New Year Honours list 2020 recognises the outstanding achievements of people across the United Kingdom.

Andy Green was President of Ukspace for a decade before stepping down earlier this year. He was instrumental in the development of the Space Innovation and Growth Strategy, which set the UK space sector on its current growth trajectory.

Last year, in his role as Chair of the Space Sector Council, Andy set out a

new vision for the sector – [Prosperity from Space](#) – which explained how the sector can create 30,000 new high-skilled jobs by 2030.

Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

I'm sure that everybody in the UK space sector would join me in congratulating Andy Green on this honour, and thanking him for his tireless work to promote and support space in the UK.

During Andy's time as President of Ukspace, our the sector has grown by 60%, employing 42,000 people across the country and supporting £300 billion of the wider economy with the provision of satellite services.

Andy Green is also a member of the Digital Economy Council, a CBI Board member, a trustee of ABESU and a Companion of the Chartered Management Institute. Andy was appointed Chairman of the Digital Catapult in June 2013. He chairs IG Group plc, a global leader in online trading, is a Non Executive Director at ARM Holdings plc, the world's leading microprocessor IP company, and Avanti plc, a global broadband satellite operator.

Andy was CEO and a member of the board of Logica from January 2008 to August 2012. Prior to joining Logica, he was a board member at BT plc. During his 21 years at BT, Andy held several senior positions, including CEO of BT Global Services and CEO of BT Openworld.