



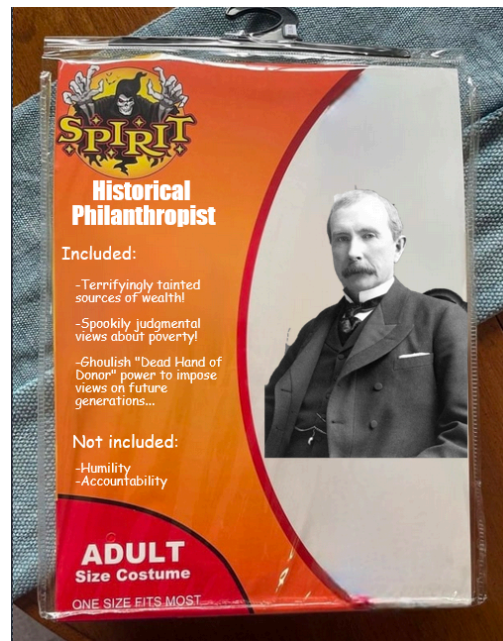
Welcome to the October 2025 newsletter

Hi there philanthropoids,

I hope all is well. As I write this intro it's Hallowe'en morning, so I'm just gearing up for an exciting evening of accompanying my daughter on a trick-or-treat expedition around the neighbourhood and seeing whether her lust for Haribo will be sufficiently strong to overcome her arachnophobic terror of all the giant spiderwebs that seem to be the decoration of choice around these parts this year. A fitting end to the traditional half-term juggle, I would say.

Philanthropy-wise, things continue to be busy: lots of events on, lots of reports out, lots of news to stay on top of (most of it not great, unfortunately, but the occasional bright spot here and there).

I decided not to attempt to make the whole newsletter Hallowe'en-themed (as I think that would get quite tiresome quite quickly), but so you don't all feel short-changed, here's a couple of bits of philanthropy-themed spooky nonsense for you before we get going.



Right, on with the newsletter. MWAHAHAHA! (etc. etc.)

Rhodri

PHILANTHROPY IN THE NEWS

(Anti)Christ on a Bike: Peter Thiel's thoughts on philanthropy

It was reported this month that Peter Thiel, the billionaire tech investor and “One Voted Most Likely to End Up Living In a Hollowed-Out Volcano and Holding Humanity to Ransom” in his graduation class, [gave a series of private lectures detailing his theories about the imminent coming of the Antichrist](#). (And no, I’m not making this up. I really wish I was). In the course of these lectures, Thiel revealed that [he had urged Elon Musk to pull out of the Giving Pledge and to stop giving to charity in order to save up money in order to "battle a future Antichrist"](#).



Image credit: [Gage Skidmore, CC BY-SA 2.0](#))

It isn't exactly news at this point that billionaire tech bros are often deeply problematic, and that an increasing number of them seem to take a dim view of philanthropy for various reasons. (Musk, for instance, has previously declared that "[empathy is the fundamental weakness of Western Civilization](#)", and has suggested that "[all of my companies are philanthropy](#)"). However Thiel's latest series of ramblings about the antichrist does seem like a step up again; and whilst it is tempting to dismiss them as the paranoid millenarian fantasies of an increasingly eccentric billionaire, it would be a mistake to do so given the level of political and cultural influence Thiel wields. However far-fetched his ideas sound, we need to understand where they come from and what the implications might be for philanthropy and civil society in the future.

To that end, if you want to read more then please do check out the WPM article I wrote this month on "[Peter Thiel and Philanthropy in the End of Days](#)".

Tax Attacks: Trump's attempts to weaponise the IRS

We reported in [the last newsletter](#) (and, indeed, in pretty much every other newsletter this year come to think of it...) about the Trump Administration's ongoing efforts to attack and delegitimise philanthropic funders and nonprofits; including repeated threats to remove their tax-exempt status. Until now these threats were largely empty, since - as experts have pointed out - the government doesn't have the power just to strip the nonprofit status of organisations just because it wants to: The IRS is an independent entity and there are well-established criteria for initiating an investigation,. However, [it was reported this month that the Trump administration is seeking to overturn these norms by installing loyalists in the IRS](#), so that it can exert political control and weaponise IRS investigations against its enemies. (In particular, the administration's ire right now seems to be aimed at George Soros and his Open Society Foundations).

Trump is by no means the first US President to want to do something like this: [Richard Nixon and his associates sought control of the IRS back in the 1970s](#) so that he could use it as a means to go after his long list of political enemies. However, whilst in the past the system of checks and balances has held firm, and presidents have not been able to convince others to go along with them in trashing norms, it is not clear that we can assume the same will happen this time, since the political logic seems to have shifted quite fundamentally. If Trump is able to push this through and turn the IRS into a political weapon the administration can wield against nonprofits, that will be very bad news.

US and Them: major foundation pauses US grantmaking

There was some interesting evidence this month of the impact the Trump administrations attacks on philanthropy and nonprofits are having outside the US; with the news that [the Childrens' Investment Fund Foundation \(CIFF\) – the major UK funder linked to hedge fund billionaire Chris Hohn – is to pause its grantmaking to US-based NGOs and nonprofits](#).

Image credit: [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, CC BY 2.0](#)

CIFF cited uncertainty and lack of clarity around the US policy environment governing donations as the primary reason for the decision. In reporting this news, the *Financial Times* also noted that CIFF has recently been singled out for criticism by US conservatives tank for its ongoing commitment to climate action and DEI principles, which suggests that there is a pre-emptive element to this move too, since CIFF may suspect that it is likely to find itself drawn further into the firing line and thus minimising its direct exposure to the US makes practical sense.

It will be interesting to see whether other non-US funders that make grants in the US respond in similar fashion (or whether they choose to reframe their activities so as to avoid drawing the ire of the Trump administration, in order to keep making grants).

Unknown unknowns: the impact of Trump administration data cuts

In terms of some the less obvious indirect impacts that the Trump Administration's policies are having on nonprofits and philanthropy (in addition to the obvious direct ones), there was [an important story in the Chronicle of Philanthropy this month about how changes to the ways in which various federal agencies collect and share data is having a potentially seismic impact on the work of many nonprofits.](#)

Most of these changes are ideological in nature, designed to reshape the work of federal agencies to accord with the Trump administration's worldview, rather than primarily to cut costs: such as the Bureau of Justice no longer including questions on sexual orientation and gender identity in the National Crime Victimization Survey (thus making it far harder to track hate crimes against LGBTQ people), or the Environmental Protection Agency moving to scrap its Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program, which currently requires major polluters to disclose

emissions. The challenge for many nonprofits and funders is that they heavily rely on these data sources to understand and track trends in social and environmental issues, and to assess the impact of different interventions. Without this data, as one expert quote in the article puts it, those organisations will be “flying blind”.

The reality is, of course, that data are never neutral: the information we choose to collect and how we choose to use it will always – to some extent – reflect our own world view and biases, so nonprofits have always had to be careful when making use of data from other sources. But the blatant politicisation of data we appear to be seeing now represents a different kind of challenge: a deliberate effort to airbrush out inconvenient facts in order to control the political narrative and reshape reality. As with other cuts being made by the government, nonprofits and funders then have choices in terms of how they respond: do they come out and challenge what is being done directly? Or do they try to mitigate the effects by stepping in where possible to maintain or replace existing data collection infrastructure? We are certainly seeing the latter happen in some cases: the article notes, for instance, that the Robert Wood Johnson swiftly committed \$55m following the inauguration earlier this year to ensure that endangered data sets could be archived and preserved. Initiatives like this are hugely important over the short-term, but as in so many other instance, philanthropy cannot (and arguably should not) attempt to cover gaps left by the withdrawal of government funding over the longer term, so there will also need to be concerted advocacy and political action to repair the damage that has been done.

GoFundMess

The crowdfunding platform [GoFundMe came in for heavy criticism from US nonprofits this month, after changes to its policies led to the fundraising pages it had created on behalf of charities suddenly appearing higher in search results than the charities' own websites.](#)

GoFundMe launched the new fundraising pages for 1.4 million nonprofit organisations earlier this year, claiming that it would make it easier for donors to find organisations on the platform. At that point most nonprofits didn't seem to have a problem with what GoFundMe was doing (probably because many of them were unaware of it, and those that were aware just thought "cool - a free fundraising page"), but in the last month the platform took the decision to add search-engine optimization to the fundraising pages so that they now regularly appear above nonprofit's own websites, and this has brought to light wider concerns.

One is that the fundraising pages were (initially, at least) opt-in, rather than opt-out; so any nonprofit organisation that didn't want GoFundMe to create a page on its behalf would have to go out of its way to request this. The other, even more fundamental, issue raised by nonprofits is that in many cases the fundraising pages created by GoFundMe were riddled with errors and inaccuracies. Which would be annoying at the best of times, but when those pages have been created without the nonprofit asking for them and they are also appearing as the first results when people search for information about the organisation, that is understandably a source of great concern for organisations worried about losing control of their own messaging.

Following the initial barrage of criticism [GoFundME has responded](#) and made an effort to address some of the concerns raised by nonprofits, first by removing brand logos from unclaimed fundraising pages, and subsequently by flipping the system to an opt-in default (so the pages will now only appear if a nonprofit has actively given its consent). Which is presumably all a good thing, but one can't help but feel that this whole situation could have been avoided with a bit more care and thought (and, crucially, engagement with the actual nonprofits themselves).

Rage Against the Machine?: New philanthropic partnership launched to combat AI harms

[A major new coalition of philanthropic foundations, under the moniker HumanityAI, announced this month that it would be committing \\$500 million to support work that places humans at the centre of AI development.](#) The [coalition is led by the MacArthur Foundation and the Omidyar Network](#), and also includes the Doris Duke Foundation, Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Kapor Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Mozilla Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and Siegel Family Endowment. Coalition members are committed to making grants within at least one of five agreed priority areas: advancing democracy, strengthening education, protecting artists, enhancing work or defending personal security.

AI is undoubtedly having a major impact on society already, so this is definitely needed. Some might question, however, whether it is still feels bit like too little, too late. \$500 million is a lot of money, but it pales in comparison to [the amounts of money that tech companies are currently ploughing into AI development](#) (which is, in itself, fuelling [growing concerns among many experts that we are in the latter stages of an economic bubble that is about to burst in dramatic fashion](#)). Likewise, plenty of people have been calling for philanthropic funders and nonprofits to step up to the plate and ensure that the voice of civil society gets heard in debates about AI development for quite some time now. (Indeed, [I wrote a piece for the World Economic Forum back in 2018 saying precisely that](#)).

Mildly churlish grumbles aside, however, this new partnership is clearly good news. Apart from anything else, the [existential torment at OpenAI in the last few years over its attempt to break free of its nonprofit origins show the challenges of trying to combine profit and purpose when it comes to AI development](#), and the risks inherent in leaving it up to tech companies to ensure that the technology serves humanity's best interests. So having an entity that is driven by nonprofit motives and is

able to amplify the voice of civil society to a level where it can get heard could be hugely important.

Letting the GenAI out of the bottle?

In other AI news, it was [reported in the Guardian](#) this month (following on from [a comment piece in The Lancet](#)) that a growing number of international NGOs and aid agencies are using generative AI tools to create imagery for campaigning and fundraising material. Concerns have been raised that this will lead to “a new era of poverty porn” as ‘AI slop’ images which replicate and amplify problematic depictions of people in poverty around the world become more and more common.

(AI-generated image from the stock photo site Freepik, in response to the query "poverty").

As the original Lancet comment piece acknowledges, it is easy to see the temptation of using GenAI when the costs are so low, and to some extent ethical issues about using photos of real individuals are circumvented. But there are real risks when it comes to perpetuating stereotypical images of poverty and Global South communities (and these risks are probably higher than they are currently, as LLMs are more likely to replicate past biases rather than recognising them and avoiding them). There are also important wider questions about what the use of GenAI tools in this way might do to notions of authenticity and to trust in NGOs in future. Not to overclaim any Nostradamus-like powers of prediction, but here is what I wrote about this issue in [a chapter for the Routledge Handbook of AI and Philanthropy last year](#):

“Cause-based organisations may also face direct ethical issues if they use generative AI tools to produce content as part of their fundraising. Charities and nonprofits have always used emotive imagery and storytelling to appeal to people via the heart as well as the head, and this has sometimes drawn criticism. In the context of international aid

and development, for instance, there is a long-standing debate over whether depictions of aid recipients are patronising and overly negative, and whether this reflects problematic attitudes of “white saviourism” (Pieterse, 1992; Bhati, 2021). Similarly, disability rights campaigners have at times been vocally critical of the depiction of disabled people as objects of pity by nonprofit organisations (Longmore, 2015). These concerns will apply equally to content created using generative AI. In fact, they may even be exacerbated, as there are concerns that current AI image generation tools demonstrate worrying levels of racial and gender bias, so their use may lead to further perpetuation of problematic stereotypes (Lamensch, 2023; Small, 2023; Thomas & Thompson, 2023; Turk, 2023).

The capabilities of generative AI will bring other challenges too. The fact that it is now possible to generate photo-realistic images or deepfake video that are indistinguishable from real photos or video has led to concerns being raised about the potential impact this might have on notions of trust and authenticity (de Ruiter, 2022). For cause-based organisations the risk of using generative AI content is that if done badly it may have a significant negative impact on the perceptions of supporters and the wider public.”

You've Been Served: OpenAI using subpoenas to bully nonprofits

There was yet another depressing development this month in the ongoing saga of OpenAI's attempts to shed its original nonprofit status, with [news reported in *The Verge* that nonprofits which have been critical of the company's efforts have found themselves served with subpoenas demanding that they provide details of their funding sources.](#)

Ostensibly this is part of OpenAI's efforts to build its legal defence case in response to a lawsuit brought by Elon Musk, who was one of the original funders of OpenAI and has sued the organisation in an attempt

to stop its transition from nonprofit to for-profit. (Musk even went as far [as calling OpenAI's plan "a textbook tale of altruism versus greed"](#), which for anyone who is familiar with Musk's own track record in philanthropy may well come across as chutzpah of gargantuan proportions...)

OpenAI's claim is that it wants to establish whether any of these nonprofits were funded by Musk, with the intention (presumably) of casting doubt on their legitimacy and at the same time making Musk's motives look more murky. However, as the article notes, legal experts have argued that the demands made by OpenAI – which in many cases involve specifying *all of an organisation's funding*, and not just any that has come directly from Musk, as well as turning over documents relating to the advocacy work of the nonprofits - are unreasonable, and have questioned whether this information would be pertinent to the case even if OpenAI does obtain it. Hence, the decision to issue subpoenas looks more like a heavy-handed and blatant attempt to intimidate and silence a bunch of relatively small and resource-strapped nonprofit organisations that have had the temerity to speak out against the company. Concerns were immediately raised about what OpenAI is doing, including from the company's own "Head of Mission Alignment", who posted on X in response to a message from one of the nonprofits that had just been served a subpoena: "[At what is possibly a risk to my whole career I will say: this doesn't seem great.](#)" (And I would suggest that, in turn, it doesn't seem great that he felt compelled to have to say that).

This is a really worrying example of 'lawfare' being waged against nonprofits: when the legal system is deliberately weaponised in order to shut down criticism and stifle debate. It also offers an illustration of the likely scale of some of the challenges that the new HumanityAI coalition highlighted above is going to face in its efforts to keep tech companies in check when it comes to the frantic race for AI development.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

This is the section where I provide a bit of an update on what WPM has been up to over the last month.

Philanthropisms Podcast

There were two episodes of the podcast this month. The first was the 11th in our partnership series with ERNOP, so we heard from more academics about their research on philanthropy and civil society - this time featuring Maria Jedicke, Georg von Schnurbein, Tine Faseur and Tine de Bock. The other episode of the podcast this month was a brilliant conversation with Sonal Sachdev Patel, the first ever Philanthropist-in-Residence at the Marshall Institute at the LSE, reflecting on what she has learnt from doing and thinking about philanthropy over the past decade and more.



Philanthropisms Podcast

ERNOP: Connecting Philanthropy
Academia & Practice #11



Philanthropisms Podcast

Sonal Sachdev Patel: Reflections of a
Philanthropist in Residence



[Listen to the ERNOP episode](#)

[Listen to the episode with Sonal](#)

Philanthropy Impact article: “What Rich Donors Wish Other Rich People Knew About Philanthropy

I did an article for *Philanthropy Impact* this month, highlighting some of the findings of my recent book with Beth Breeze and Theresa Lloyd *Rich Expectations: Why Rich People Give*. So check it out if you want a sneak peek of some of the insights on offer (and then go and buy the book, obviously).

[Read the article](#)

Article for Directory of Social Change: “What motivates rich people to give (and keep giving)?”

If your appetite for articles based on the findings in *Rich Expectations* is not yet sated, then I've got great news for you, as I also wrote another piece this month for DSC about what motivates rich people to give (and to keep giving).

[Read the article](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS:

I've got a couple of public events coming up this month that might be of interest to some of you.

RSA Fellows event

On Thursday November 13th
(6pm to 7.30pm UK time) my co-author (and now head honcho of Harris Manchester College Oxford) Beth Breeze and I will be teaming up again to talk about

our book *Rich Expectations* for an online RSA Fellows event.

[Sign up for the event](#)

In Conversation with David Sloan

In a similar vein, on 26th November (at 8am-9am UK time) Beth and I will be “in conversation” with David Sloan, talking about the book and getting an Aussie perspective on some of the findings about why rich people give. (I cannot promise that my cat Hamish will make an appearance as per the event flyer, but I will do my best).

[Sign up here](#)

Denbigh Voluntary Services Council AGM

And if you happen to be in the North Wales area on 20th November and fancy saying hello in person, I will be popping down to the lovely town of Ruthin to speak at the Denbigh Voluntary Services Council AGM (I'll be speaking at about 11.30am, I think).

OTHER GOOD STUFF

This is the bit where I share other philanthropy-related things I have come across this summer that might not quite count as news but are definitely worth checking out. Strap in, cos there's quite a lot of them...

The Modern Philanthropist:

A report out this month on "[The Modern Philanthropist](#)", commissioned by Barclays Wealth Philanthropy Services, offered some interesting insights into trends in HNW giving in the UK. It appears that donors in the UK are giving more on average than they did a few years ago (the median donation has increased from £5,500 in 2019 to £12,000 in 2025), and that they are giving to a wider range of causes than in the past. The report also highlights the importance of good advice, with a large majority of the donors surveyed (81%) saying that it is extremely important that advisers proactively raise philanthropy with their clients.

[Read more](#)

A Dialogue on Identity, Strategy & Philanthropy:

Inside Philanthropy this month published an absolutely [fascinating debate between their editor David Callahan and Tynesha McHarris](#) of the Black Feminist Fund (following on from their articles on the same

topic last month, which we covered in the last newsletter), about whether progressive philanthropy should move away from a focus on identity in the current US political climate, or lean further into it

Both Callahan and McHarris make some really compelling points (and they certainly aren't particularly pulling any punches!) so this makes for a really thought-provoking read about the balance between pragmatism and idealism. Which has always been one of the fundamental tensions within philanthropy, but feels even more so right now IMHO.

[Read the article \(\\$\)](#)

New book about the Garland Fund:

I heard this month (via [a review in the LA Times](#)) about a new book called [*The Radical Fund*](#), telling the story of the American Fund for Public Service (AKA the Garland Fund). I immediately ordered a copy, as [I've referenced Charles Garland and his time-limited foundation many times over the years](#), and it remains one of the most fascinating experiments in C20th philanthropy so I can't wait to read more.

(It is also important to note that Garland is still the holder of the hotly-contested title of "Number One Historical Hottie Philanthropist" that I bestowed on him some years back. And if you don't believe me, just check out the pic below for evidence: total thirst trap, I think we can all agree).

[Read the LA Times review](#)

[Buy the book](#)

Large-scale experiment in Native American-led participatory grantmaking:

There was a [really interesting article from the Associated Press this month about a large-scale bit of participatory grantmaking](#), in which Novo Nordisk Foundation (one of the world's biggest funders) and Newman's Own Foundation have worked with Native Americans in Philanthropy to give a group of young Native Americans the power to decide how a \$720K pot of grant money should be given out. The pilot has apparently been deemed enough of a success that it is going to be repeated next year with \$1 million, which just highlights the power of this kind of approach to grantmaking. (NB: if you want more on participatory grantmaking, check out [my conversation with Natasha Friend and Maria Ahmed from Camden Giving for the Philanthropisms podcast](#)).

[Read the article](#)

The Gates Foundation and WHO:

An [article in the Financial Times this month](#) reported on [new research published in the British Medical Journal](#) which analyses the contributions of the Gates Foundation to the World Health Organisation (WHO). The authors of the paper highlight the increase the Gates Foundation's funding for WHO between 2000 and 2024, and raise concerns about the level of reliance the organisation has on this single funder and what that means in terms of the influence the Gates Foundation has over WHO's priorities. In particular they note that a large proportion of Gates Foundation funding has been focussed on polio, and question whether this has come at the expense of WHO focussing fully on other important health issues. These sorts of critical questions are important, as when philanthropy operates at this kind of scale - even when it is done with the best of intentions - it can exert a gravitational pull which has unintended consequences in terms of skewing the direction of other funding and of policy development, and we need to be aware of these risks.

[Read the FT article](#)

Read the BMJ paper

Corporate Philanthropy and Arts & Culture in France:

There was a really interesting piece in *The Art Newspaper* this month looking at [the increasingly prominent role that philanthropy – particularly from companies – is playing in supporting the arts and cultural sector in France](#). Philanthropy doesn't always seem like an easy cultural fit in France – a country that has a strong history of prioritising the role of government – and it is clear from some of the quotes in the article that not everyone is thrilled by this development. However, at a time when the political climate in France is increasingly turbulent, there also seems to be some pragmatic (albeit at times grudging) acceptance that a greater role for philanthropy is a matter of necessity rather than choice.

Read the article

Thoughts from a NZ Philanthropist:

I like to keep track of philanthropists in different parts of the world doing or saying interesting things, so I was intrigued to read [an article in the New Zealand Post this month about some remarks made recently by Sam Morgan](#) – the founder of Trade Me (NZ's biggest trade and auction site). Speaking at a recent event, Morgan said that philanthropy was “the only sane choice for the wealthy” and urged fellow NZ philanthropists to think in a more connected way so that the nonprofit sector in the country didn't remain trapped in a cycle of scarcity. All things I have heard before, but I do like imagining them in a Kiwi accent.

Read the article

Altruism is Holding Britain Together:

There was [a decent comment piece in the *Observer* this month](#), arguing that at a time of political and social division, and increasing atomisation, “altruism is holding Britain together”. Like a lot of comment pieces, it slightly skirted across the top of the issues it touched on and perhaps tried to tie together one too many things in the course of crafting a narrative, but I enjoyed the dual emphasis on the value of the outputs that charities and volunteering deliver, as well as the role that they play in maintaining and strengthening the bonds of associational life. (And yes, don’t worry, Robert Putnam does get a namecheck).

[Read the article](#)

Biodiversity Philanthropy must look “far from home”:

In terms of my own personal interest in issues that philanthropy addresses, biodiversity loss would be right at the top of the list. (Indeed, in the unlikely event that I somehow become a big money donor, I would probably focus the majority of my giving on addressing this issue). I was really interested, therefore, to read a piece in *Stanford Social Innovation Review* this month arguing that biodiversity philanthropy needs to ‘look further afield’, and that donors in the Global North, in particular, should question whether they are better to focus on initiatives in their own countries and regions, or on supporting work in global biodiversity hotspots further afield. At a time when there seems to be an increasing emphasis on giving closer to home (largely for positive reasons of recognising the value of place-based action, but also for less good reasons of charitable nationalism/ethnocentrism), an argument for giving further from home might sound slightly jarring, but the article makes a compelling case that for biodiversity donors who want to maximise their impact, this is the way to go.

(Yes, that is me. In 2009 in Gunung Mulu National Park in Borneo, looking up at a Very Big Tree).

[Read the article](#)

Should Philanthropy Fund Narrative Change via film and TV instead of news?

A [fascinating piece in *Inside Philanthropy* this month posed the question of whether philanthropic funders should give up on trying to save journalism and news media, and focus instead on funding narrative change through other forms of film and TV.](#) The article makes loads of interesting points about the waning consumption of traditional news and the power of fiction to set societal narratives, but at the same time it definitely left me conflicted. On the one hand I totally agree that fiction is a tool that has been underutilised by philanthropy, and that at its best, a piece of fiction can have a greater impact than a thousand news items or policy reports. But on the other hand, I'm not sure that the answer to the decline of news is simply to give into it. Given the state of the information landscape today – with people increasingly able to existing in entirely siloed online worlds, misinformation and disinformation running rife, and a sewerage leak of deepfakes and generative AI content about to pollute the waters further – it feels like the ideal of quality journalism and news media that can gather and disseminate factual information is still very much worth fighting for.

[Read the article](#)

AND FINALLY...

This might be a bit substantive and worthy to count as a proper “And Finally” story, but I couldn't find anything news about celebrity philanthropy or people doing charity fundraising dressed as crabs this month, so it will have to do. And it's genuinely interesting IMHO.

[It was reported in *Turkiye Today* that archeological excavations at the ancient city of Sillyon in Anatolia have recently uncovered the tomb of a Roman-era woman named Mendora, who was apparently renowned for her philanthropy.](#) Her philanthropic deeds came to light a few years ago, when a tablet bearing an inscription detailing her contributions to the city was unearthed at the same site: they included financing public buildings (which was a very popular pastime for the wealthy in Ancient Rome) as well as establishing a foundation for children (which was far less common). Mendora was know for the scale of her wealth (she was reputedly one of the wealthiest women in the Mediterranean region at the time), as well as for the scale of her generosity (experts estimate she might have given 300,000 denari during her lifetime, which is – technically speaking – absolutely loads). Like a lot of modern philanthropists, Mendora’s giving appears to have been shaped by her own personal experiences; in particular the tragic loss of her husband and son, after which she dedicated herself to civic life.

Was Mendora the Mackenzie Scott of the ancient world? I’m not sure (although if anyone subsequently calls her that, I call shotgun on the copyright). But she does seem like an intriguing figure, and I’m certainly glad to have found out a little bit about her.

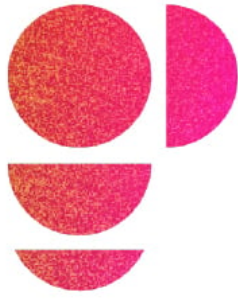
(Image created using Google Gemini)

[Read the article](#)

Right, that’s your lot for another month. As ever, if you made it all the way to the end, feel free to award yourself a special prize. I’ll be back next month with plenty more of this sort of thing.

Best,

Rhodri



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