

## Phone tycoon John Caudwell calls in Diana Ross for birthday

Good for John Caudwell, the mobile telephone tycoon, for keeping alive the tradition of grand gestures in Gordon Brown's grey and cheerless Britain.

Tim Walker

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The Phones4U founder flew in Diana Ross by private jet to serenade his girlfriend, Clare Johnson, on her 40th birthday at Caudwell's Grade I-listed Broughton House in Staffordshire. Caudwell, 53, has a weakness for singers: last year he paid Whitney Houston a reputed £1.7 million to sing at a London charity event.

The tycoon has an estimated fortune of £1.6 billion and is one of Britain's richest men.

Caudwell quit his 'A' Levels after just one term for an engineering apprenticeship at the famous Michelin Tyre Company in 1970, eventually becoming a successful car dealer. However, he made more money by venturing into the then fledgling mobile phone industry in 1987, becoming the biggest independent owner in Europe.



Singer Diana Ross performs at Wembley Arena last year Photo: GETTY

In 2004, John sold his Singlepoint customer billing firm to Vodafone for just £405 million and in 2006 auctioned off his Caudwell Group (which included Phones4U) for an extra £1.24 billion.

He's since invested some of his windfall into a leisure company and with these proceeds and other assets he's valued at around £1.6 billion.

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