

August 2006



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

Inside this issue...

PCO Yellow Badge shock for
radio circuits

Name DaC's new building and
win dinner for four at Brian
Turner's Restaurant

Pedicab licensing:
DaC drivers give their view

DaC's former Chief Security
Guard, Jim Warren, dies

Parking: DaC meet the City of
London Corporation

The other side of the fence?
Ex-DaC driver now serves
diesel instead of using it

DaC calltaker takes bronze at
Hampton Court Flower Show



*It's a tough life for some as Billy gets
paid for watching the World Cup in
Germany. Well, he is the Chairman's son!*



*No wonder Mark looks stunned...
Firstly he traps a job to Morocco and
then goes to meet the Chairman!*



NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

Continuing with pubs and wine bars. This month E1 and E14, plus what's on at the exhibition centres...

Pubs/Bars E1	No.	Road	Pubs/Bars E1	No.	Road
8a	8a	Artillery Passage	Marine Broker	17	Leman Street
Archers	42	Osborn Street	Mercers Arms	34	Belgrave Street
Bar Bed	40	Leman Street	Old Dispensary	19a	Leman Street
Big Chill Bar		Trumans, Brick Lane	Old House At Home	87	Watney Street
Black Bull	199	Whitechapel Road	Oldgate Exchange	133	Whitechapel High Street
Blind Beggar	337	Whitechapel Road	Peacock	145	Aylward Street
Brown Bear	139	Leman Street	Poet	82	Middlesex Street
Captain Kidd	108	Wapping High Street	Poet	9	Folgate Street
Carpenters Arms	135	Cambridge Heath Road	Pride of Spitalfields	3	Heneage Street
Castle	44	Commercial Road	Princess of Prussia	15	Prescot Street
Charlie's Bar	124	Globe Road	Public Life Under	82a	Commercial Street
Chuzzlewits	21	Thomas More Street	Puzzle	94	Middlesex Street
City Darts	40	Commercial Street	R P G Enterprise	123	Shoreditch High Street
Commerical Tavern	142	Commercial Street	Rainbow Sports Bar	72	Shoreditch High Street
Dog & Truck	72	Back Church Lane	Royal Duchess	543	Commercial Rd
First & Last	15	Little Somerset Street	Shooting Star	125	Middlesex Street
Good Man's Field	87	Mansell Street	Slug & Lettuce	9	Stoney Lane
Good Samaritan	87	Turner Street	Still & Star	1	Little Somerset Street
Grapeshots	2	Artillery Passage	Ten Bells	84	Commercial Street
Hungerford Arms	240	Commercial Road	Thomas More	32	Thomsas More Street
Kings Arms	513	Cable Street	Town of Ramsgate	62	Wapping High Street
Kings Stores	14	Widgate Street	Vibe Bar	91	Brick Lane
Knave of Clubs	25	Bethnal Green Road	Vineyard	1	St. Katharines Way
Lane Bar	14	Osborn Street	White Heart	89	Whitechapel High Street
LHT Urban Bar	176	Whitechapel Road	White Horse	48	White Horse Road
Little Star	162	White Horse Road	White Swan	21	Alie Street
Loungelover	1	Whitby Street	White Swan & Cuckoo	97	Wapping Lane

Pubs/Bars E14	No.	Road	Pubs/Bars E14	No.	Road
All Bar One	42	Mackenzie Walk	Lime Bar & Rest.	1	Manilla Street
Bar 38	16	Hertsmere Road	Lord Nelson	1	Manchester Road
Barley Mow		Narrow Street	North Pole	74	Manilla Street
Beluga Cafe	14	Hertsmere Road	Old Ship	17	Barnes Street
Booty's Riverside Bar	92a	Narrow Street	Oporto Tavern	43	West India Dock Road
Brunswick Arms	78	Blackwall Way	Pier Tavern	299	Manchester Road
City Pride	15	West Ferry Road	Porto Azzuro	3	Clove Crescent
Conant Arms	41a	Stainsby Road	Prince Alfred	86	Locksley Street
Corney & Barrow	9	Cabot Square	Prince Regent	81	Salmon Lane
Davy's at Canary Wharf	31	Fishermans Walk	Puzzle	21	Pepper Street
Drummonds on the Quay	3	Heron Quay	Railway Tavern	576	Commercial Road
Ferry House	26	Ferry Street	Royal Charlie	116	Chrip Street
Foresters	253	St. Leonards Road	Slug & Lettuce	30	South Colonnade
Grapes	76	Narrow Street	Spinnaker		Harbour Exchange Square
Greenwich Pensioner	28	Bazely Street	Star of The East	805a	Commercial Road
Hope & Anchor	14	Newby Place	Steamship	24	Naval Row
Jamies	28	Westferry Circus	Tooke Arms	165	West Ferry Road
Ledger Building	4	Hertsmere Road	Waterfront		Marsh Wall

What's On at ExCel, Earls Court and Olympia

Event name	Where	Date
Michelob ULTRA London Triathlon Expo	ExCel (P)	05/08/06 to 06/08/06
British Asians Friendship Festival public	ExCel (P)	18/08/06 to 20/08/06
Intimate London Body & Beach	Earls Court 2	30/07/06 to 01/08/06
Great British Beer Festival 06	Earls Court 1	01/08/06 to 05/08/06
Pure Womenswear Autumn 06	Olympia	06/08/06 to 08/08/06
Barbados Expo 2006	Olympia 2	18/08/06 to 20/08/06

I am producing a free document taken from a number of Nash's Numbers into one useful document that you can print out and keep in your cab. It will only be available by e-mail and whilst not yet ready, to obtain it e-mail me now with the following: Name, Call Sign, Badge number to – nashsnumbers@tiscali.co.uk. To all those who have e-mailed me already for the document, please be patient, it will be coming soon.

from the editor's desk



photo of my grandchildren or of the happy couples when my kids got hitched! But I've never written about my brother-in-law before and as I write this (*July 19*), he is celebrating a rather special day worthy of a mention here.

Many drivers with reasonably long memories and who live to the east of London in Green Badge Valley, will remember having Dr David Moss as their GP. Well, David is my brother-in-law and is today celebrating his 100th birthday – and that is certainly worthy of a mention!

One funny side to the event occurred some weeks ago when I went to our local card shop to see whether he had a card for someone of 100? Being the shrewd businessman he is, the shop owner said that no one had ever asked for one before so he didn't stock them. However, he said that if I purchased two 40s and a 20, he would only charge me for two of the three! I said I'd let him know!

The saying: *Doctor heal thyself*, obviously has merit and my congratulations on this momentous birthday go to David...

SatNav and taxis

I think I can honestly say that the *Call Sign* article in last month's magazine on the DaC driver who took me from the Victoria Palace theatre back to Brunswick House using his SatNav system and in doing so took me a way you'd only take someone you seriously disliked, caused more reaction than anything else I have ever published.

I have had numerous phone calls, signed and unsigned emails and been accosted while trying to read a newspaper on EC5! Several had their own system (as I do) but not one stuck up for the driver when carrying out a simple Victoria to Old Street trip.

As one driver, David Marks (R22), simply put it: *East to West, Embankment is best*. I assume he also meant the same for the reverse trip, but sadly it wouldn't rhyme!

The Clarion system that I was fortunate enough to be given several years ago when "road testing" it for this magazine, has never been used for genuine in-London driving, however, I have and continue to use it for when I am out in the sticks and going to another place out thataway.

In this issue, you can read of a road test the BBC set featuring a minicab with SatNav against a taxi without...

Call Sign's advertising policy proved sadly correct...

Deep down, we all get some satisfaction in telling our peers that "we told you so" after being proved right. Well, I have been proved right but get no satisfaction whatsoever in saying it.

Last October I wrote on this page:

"If people choose to gamble, that is their prerogative. If on-line gambling organisations want to advertise on taxis, then neither is that my concern. But if they wish to advertise in Call Sign, then I still have a say in that and my say is NO!"

I confirmed that policy in March of this year and added regarding the dangers that I could see with the spread of on-line gambling:

"...and if you were young and managed to "borrow" a credit card from mum, dad, sister or anyone else? No, if you want to avail yourself of some entertainment, as millions seem to be doing, then fine. But as Editor, I am not prepared to take the chance of even one young person getting booked on gambling after reading an ad in Call Sign."

Now SNP MP **Mike Weir** (Angus) talks of the "growing addiction of on-line gambling" and has called for a limit of £1000 that on-line gamblers can lose in any one-week! He also says that on-line gamblers should be allowed to use just one credit card. This, according to Mr Weir, follows incidents where on-line gamblers have lost thousands of pounds via other people's credit cards.

Not surprisingly perhaps, a spokesperson for the on-line gambling industry, PartyGaming (2005 earnings before deductions \$584million), claims that there could be huge problems with the suggestion. Oh really? Like customers not losing enough, perhaps? A spokesperson for the credit card industry (APACS) agreed with PartyGaming, no doubt afraid of a cutback in card use and supply?

I am not criticising other trade magazine's advertising policy. If they want to accept on-line gaming ads, then that is their concern. With so many trade mags available in London, advertising revenue can be thin at times but that will not change my resolve and following Mike Weir's intervention, it has become even stronger.

As a consequence, no on-line gaming organisations will be advertising in *Call Sign* whilst I am the Editor. I do not care if they offer to pay ten times the going rate,

they will not be appearing in these pages.

And while *Call Sign* welcomes all letters on any subject including this one, please do not bother writing to tell me that you play on-line for free. I know it is possible and that many enjoy it, but sadly not everyone has the willpower to stick to the freeplay system and when they place that first "one-off" bet, they will be hooked and my only concern is that they didn't get the info via *Call Sign*.

Cheaper emission systems?

Call Sign had a phone call earlier this month from a DaC driver who had heard from the garage that regularly serviced his taxi, that the PCO were testing an emission system that could cost up to £1000 less than those currently available.

As his overhaul was due imminently, he had no choice other than to spend up to £3000 on a system, when in his eyes the PCO had the power to save him at least £1000 of it. He was not only concerned, but quite upset and asked me whether I had heard of this new system? Well, I had heard rumours, but I am always hearing rumours! I did say that I would try to get some info for him and the following is for him!

The emission system you refer to is still in the developmental stage with the manufacturers. The PCO are aware of its existence as it has been around for several months, but if *Call Sign's* information is correct – and we believe that it is – this system has not been tested at MIRA* for emissions levels, neither has it been presented at the PCO for the regulation six months road testing, let alone for Approval. I'm afraid that won't help the DaC driver save £1000, but I hope it makes him feel better anyway...

**MIRA is a leading independent provider of product engineering, research, testing, information and certification to the worldwide automotive industry.*

Ton up...

I really try hard not to use *Call Sign* for anything personal, but I'm only human and admit to sneaking in the very occasional

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

Coverage and turnover...

Our work at the moment is extremely rampant and quite honestly, I have never experienced anything like this in the past! You all know that as a company, we have been extremely successful in obtaining new accounts over the recent past, which in turn cements our reputation as being the busiest radio circuit in London.

At the time of writing, our turnover has increased by more than £4m over the corresponding period last year and I am extremely optimistic that this figure will rise in excess of £5m by the year's end.

That represents the upside. The downside is that some of you are not covering as much account work as you should or could! The problem I now face is having staff within Brunswick House who have to placate our customers, leaving our staff that helped to win and set up these accounts feeling totally demoralised, because they feel that members do not appreciate the work that is put in at this end to win and maintain new accounts. There is no question that this organisation is the 'Chelsea' of the cab trade; we lead the way with the technology we supply to our clients, while our competitors just follow in an endeavour to play catch up!

I remember writing three or four years ago in my *End of Year Report* at a time when there was a downturn in trade, how Dial-a-Cab would continue with its Research and Development (R and D) so that we would come out of the downturn with our competitors endeavouring to play catch up and that is exactly what has happened! We are far in advance of our competitors, however, the problem is that some of our members have taken this for granted and assume that the trend will automatically continue. That is not the case, because even with our abundance of 'goodies' that your clients require, if we cannot put a taxi outside the door when they require one, then all the hard work that has gone into this Society would have been to no avail.

The problem is that some of you have become complacent and expect the BoM and staff to win and retain accounts and that you can just cover that account work if you 'fancy it'. Allan Evans has written a piece in this issue of *Call Sign* regarding coverage on the Island and elsewhere, which is pretty self explanatory and you will see that the efforts of some DaC drivers is nothing short of derisory – 39 rejects from the Island to W11, 28 rejects to SW5 – why is that?

In a nutshell, we can do our job at this end, but some of you are not punching your weight, which you can only do by covering enough account work. It is a sad fact - but a



fact none the less - cover the work or lose it! To try and alleviate the situation regarding coverage, we are fitting and training as many vehicles and drivers as we possibly can, this will continue through August in a month that is normally dormant. But the failure by some of you to cover enough work has forced our hand and left us no choice but for the BoM to increase the size of the fleet in an effort to try and service our success.

We have many drivers who do more than their share in order to help cover the work that others are leaving for the sake of earning a quick pound from street work, but they can only do so much and it isn't fair that they should have the added pressure on them put there by those who seem not to care – until it becomes quiet and then they suddenly remember the radio...

PCO, yellow badge drivers and radio circuits...

You are probably all aware that I have regular meetings with the PCO and my last meeting was particularly pertinent to the above topic (*coverage and turnover*). For the fourth consecutive year, the number of licensed Green badge drivers in London has fallen. We now have less drivers than we had in 2003 and at a time when London is extremely buoyant and getting even busier - especially with the run up to the 2012 Olympics.

I have no specific comment to make on the above as you are all capable of making your own minds up, but I am extremely concerned that we will not be giving the public the service they require and the authorities will have to step in and 'change the rules'. If so, it will undoubtedly be to the detriment of our industry.

To prove a point, it has now been decided that in future any of the three licensed radio taxi circuits in London can despatch any of their work to suburban yellow badge drivers providing the radio circuit concerned also registers with the PCO as a Private Hire operator!

Yes, you did read that correctly, but I will still elaborate. In the past, some radio circuits in London have used their suburban yellow badge fleet to service the Island, however, the yellow badge concerned had to be in his/her sector when he/she accepted the trip. What the PCO is now saying is that the driver does not have to be in his/her sector when taking a job – they can be anywhere, accept the trip and go anywhere, so long as the radio circuit that gave him the job has registered as a Private Hire company as well as a Radio Taxi organisation! Consequently, a yellow badge driver from, say Romford, can accept a trip from Berkeley Square to Chiswick and then accept a trip from Chiswick that goes to Hampstead and it will all be legal and above board.

The PCO's argument is quite simple; if a Private Hire driver can pick up anywhere on the radio and go anywhere, why shouldn't a yellow badge driver? Because if he took the hiring off the radio then it is a private hiring – logical?

Now I know some of you are going to put our coverage on the Island and the above topic together and think there is some sort of ulterior motive – there isn't. I was just endeavouring to emphasise the point that the authorities can and will move the goalposts in an endeavour to provide the public with a service. Exactly the same will happen when the London taxi fleet is not large enough to service the public! Yellow badges picking up in town and minicabs ranking in Kingston and both legal? It can never happen? Well it already has!

DaC's new building

Just to keep you all informed regarding our new building. As you know, we take possession on 1 October and we are currently in the process of hiring an independent Project Manager to oversee the whole scenario from refurbishment to the move. When we have decided on the Project Manager we will be using, we will invite a series of contractors to tender for our business. When that exercise has been completed, the work will commence.

Although everything is guesswork at the moment, I think the earliest that we can expect to totally occupy the building will be probably March/April 2007. However, we could possibly move one department into the new building before Christmas, which would then give us the opportunity to enlarge our current Call Centre for the busy period prior to Christmas.

**Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab**

Ever been involved in an RTA where the other vehicle turned out to be uninsured...?

DaC solicitors involved in “landmark motor insurance case”

Dial-a-Cab’s solicitors, Field Fisher Waterhouse LLP have been instructed by the widow of a passenger killed in a car accident to bring a unique claim for damages against the uninsured driver and the Motor Insurer’s Bureau (MIB).

The widow’s husband died from catastrophic injuries sustained in a road traffic accident in August 2002. He had been travelling as a passenger in his own car, which was being driven by an uninsured driver. FFW’s client brought claims for damages arising from the uninsured driver’s negligence. The MIB was joined as a defendant to the claim because the driver was uninsured.

A preliminary hearing took place on 11 May this year in which the High Court ruled that the MIB would be liable to satisfy judgement against the uninsured driver. In its defence the MIB unsuccessfully argued that it should not be liable because the claimant’s husband, who was the owner of the car, knew that the driver was not insured. As the claimant’s husband had this knowledge, the MIB argued he would have been unable to recover damages from them had he survived by operation of an exclusion clause in the Uninsured Drivers Agreement 1999.

However, the Judge held that the exclusion clause clearly applies

to passengers who know that their car was being driven by an uninsured driver. The claimant in this case was not a passenger and so the exclusion clause did not apply to her.

Paul McNeil, clinical negligence partner at FFW, told *Call Sign*: **“This has been a fascinating case to work from a legal perspective. The case considered the wording of the Uninsured Drivers Agreement and in particular on exactly what was meant by the word ‘claimant’. We successfully argued that the term applied to the widow, rather than the husband.”**

Although the Defendants were refused permission to Appeal by the trial judge - Judge Seymour QC - the MIB have decided to seek, much to the widow’s disappointment, permission to appeal from the Court of Appeal.

Field Fisher Waterhouse LLP is a full service law firm based in the City of London. With 91 partners, over 180 other lawyers and over 250 support staff, they assist a wide range of domestic and international clients including DaC with advice across a full range of commercial legal issues. Field Fisher Waterhouse LLP also houses one of the country’s leading personal injury practices.



Paul McNeil

JOHN BOCA’S WIFE DIES

Call Sign was very sad to hear of the death of Ellen, wife of Dial-a-Cab stalwart **John Boca (A64)**, following a short illness.

John’s history with DaC goes back to the very beginning when together with his late brother Alan - who died in June 2003 - and Italian parents, they ran the café opposite our first office in Pentonville Road.

Dial-a-Cab founder-Chairman Bonnie Martyn once told *Call Sign* how the Board of the time used to congregate in what was

known as Alan’s café:

“Without the Boca brothers,” he said, “half of our Board meetings could never have taken place!”

In fact, John is third in DaC’s list of driver seniority behind Alan Lewis (A44) and Bill Tyzack (C06).

In addition to John, our sympathies also go to the couple’s children, daughter Tina – who flew back from her home in Australia to be at her mother’s funeral - and son John.

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Jery's



World



Views on life as seen through the eyes of David Kupkake (Y74) at...

Kupkake's Korner



Back to Horses?

A shift would cost me fifteen quid but now it's up to twenty, the price of fuel will see no lid until the wells are empty...

But I don't despair... not me I know I've got the solution, I think I'll get a **real** Hackney free of ALL pollution!

A great big horse to pull the cab; I'll stable him in the garden, sell his stuff in plastic bags (just after it has hardened)!

A bale of hay, a bag of oats no more being held to ransom, a few pound coins for my float as I drive me Hansom.

A set of shoes, a leather harness a cape and a hat for me, A whip to help him in the darkness Cos we'll only work the City.

Maybe on a Friday night you'll spot me on EC5, plenty of locals - that's alright at least I know I'll survive...

Kopyright Kupkake 2006

Dial-a Cab Credit Union

Ever needed money quickly but were anxious about 'variable' bank interest rates? Well wonder no more! If you are a subscriber, journeyman or member of staff at Dial-a-Cab then you qualify to join the

DIAL-A-CAB CREDIT UNION.

Further more, any member of your family residing at your address also qualifies for membership!

Then, providing you are over 18, have been a member for over three months and have established regular savings, then you can borrow up to three times your total savings with a first-time maximum loan of £2000 or twice your savings total.

The cost?

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There are now even lower rates for loans above £6000.

You can pay your loan back early should you wish.

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AND you usually get an annual dividend on your savings.

The question is: Can you afford NOT to be in it...?

MIKE PARSONS ILL

Many Dial-a-Cab drivers will at some time or other have picked up a job - often a delivery - from Shacklewell Street at the top end of Brick Lane on behalf of Mike Parsons. He tended to use taxis as he felt safer with them.

One of the drivers that picked up there on many occasions was **Gerry Johnston (B09)**. Gerry phoned **Call Sign** to say that all wasn't well with account boss Mike.

He recently accepted a radio job to go from Northchurch Road to the Homerton Hospital and then return. It turned out to be Mike Parsons, who some time before had developed an earache and ended up with meningitis. He is now confined to a wheelchair.

Gerry had met him several times in the course of picking up deliveries from the account address: **"I was shocked when I saw him again,"** said Gerry, **"it really upset me. He had always been so lively and I looked at him in the wheelchair and felt so sad."**

Call Sign has sent Mike some flowers together with best wishes on behalf of all the drivers at Dial-a-Cab

Views on life, love and the laundry basket from the lady behind a DaC driver...

Back Seat Driver



Star signs...

I've just had a row with my daughter who says she is tired of me sneering at people. She told me her friend Jo, a successful radio producer, believes in astrology and I said that lowered my opinion of her. Why would any adult believe that the positions of the stars, at birth or in the week to come, make any difference to anyone's life?

Ok, I know star signs are just a way young people can steer conversations round to the personal and they are better for flirting than asking "what do you do?" You can flatter people or insult them and you can make it up as you go along: "What a lovely house! You Cancerians have such a flair for home-making." Or "I knew you had to be a Gemini, 'cause you're so two-faced - you cow!"

Small talk is one thing, but *believing* in it? Really! My Glen's with me on this one. Anything New Age, spiritual or even alternative is a fairy story to him, pushed to separate the gullible from their cash. If someone starts, he rolls his eyes and changes the subject.

I pointed out to my daughter that she was born on the very same day as Maxine Carr, the girlfriend of the Soham killer, yet my girl has never given a false alibi for anyone - let alone cheated the benefits system, worked in a school or had breast implants.

"Look, don't ask me to defend it, but why can't you just respect other people's beliefs," she countered? Well, I can't...

No director of any company rings a premium-rate phone line for astrological guidance, just the powerless, the dreamers, and overwhelmingly, uneducated women I say. "What about Cherie Blair and Nancy Reagan then," she says?

Ok, you're right, sweetness. But what is it really about? Why do some of you have St Christopher medals hanging from your mirrors when you know it doesn't alter your chances of an accident? Why did Martin Bell wear his lucky white suit in war zones and why did a male trade union official that I know turn his bed around to face west, to channel energy and ensure prosperity? Are they all soft in the head (as Glen thinks), or is it just too cold and scary, always to be a grown-up?

Shakespeare knew a bit about life and in Julius Caesar, Cassius says: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." Brutus listened to that rational advice and met a sticky end. In the same play, a fortune-teller warned Caesar: "Beware the Ides of March." Now, if he'd listened to her, he'd still be alive today, wouldn't he? There you are!

So, I'm sorry I sneered, Jo and I hope you do soon meet that Aries man and that it guarantees a deep affinity and terrific, water-sign babies.

And to all you Dial-a-Cab drivers, be lucky out there and never, ever refuse a gypsy.

Till then...

Love Poppy x x x

LTBAFWD OUTING TO WORTHING



Vera Lynn with 110 year old Henry Allingham - the last survivor from the Battle of Jutland in 1916

The 20 June 2006 saw the 58th outing to Worthing of the London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled. There were 102 cabs - including quite a few from Dial-a-Cab - and 308 veterans.

We all met up at South Holmwood where tea, sandwiches and cakes were laid on along with a few pints of beer! Leaving there, we travelled in convoy to Worthing to meet our guest of honour, **HRH Duchess of Gloucester**, who was celebrating her birthday on the same day!

She met groups of veterans and committee members before making a speech on how wonderful it was to see all the veterans enjoying themselves. Our other guest of honour was **Henry Allingham**, the last survivor of the Battle of Jutland who celebrated his 110th birthday on 6 June 2006. Happy Birthday was sung to both guests...

After HRH left for London, lunch was served after which some went for a brisk walk down to the sea front. Then it was back to listen to a jazz band playing all those favourites of the 30s and 40s and a delicious cream tea. Everyone joined in

a singsong before leaving at 6pm for home.

Our Chairman, **Mike Calvey (B95)** and the Committee would like to thank all the drivers, who without their contribution, this day would not be possible.

**Janet Fox (G35J)
LTBAFWD Assistant Secretary**



L-R: Vera Lynn, HRH the Duchess of Gloucester and LTBAFWD Chairman DaC's Mike Calvey

No *Call Sign* story has ever raised more controversy than that in the July issue which told how a Dial-a-Cab driver met the Editor at the New Victoria theatre and proceeded to take him back to Brunswick House – using his SatNav rather than his Knowledge. The resulting trip ended up going via Park Lane, crossing Oxford Street and hitting Euston Road before going back down City Road and making an illegal left turn at Provost Street.

We had more phone calls on the subject than for any other topic we have ever written about, but not one sympathised with the driver.

Now the BBC have conducted their own SatNav v Licensed taxi driver test following claims by Private Hire entrepreneurs such as Addison Lee and Steve Wright of the Licensed Private Hire Association that the use of SatNav systems has made their drivers believe they are almost as efficient as their taxi counterparts so far as the suburbs are concerned. They agree they aren't quite the ticket so far as Central London is concerned.

So the *BBC News Website* put their claim to the test to see whether the SatNav had indeed "...eroded the Knowledge's superiority." They hired two cabs, a licensed taxi with no SatNav and a red Citroen licensed private hire vehicle that was fitted with the device and dispatched them both from the BBC Radio London studios in Marylebone High Street to Nunhead, SE15. The 8.2mile test was conducted during the evening peak hour

The taxi driver was still a "butterboy" having just recently passed the KoL and likewise, the PH driver had only been working in Central London for a month but had SatNav in his car.

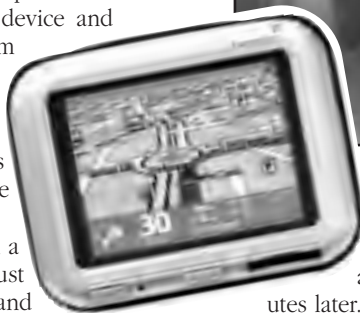
The taxi departed at 5.05pm and went via Hyde Park Corner, St James' Park, Parliament Square, Westminster Bridge and Old Kent Road before turning into Pomeroy Street and

Following *Call Sign's* story on a DaC driver using SatNav rather than his Knowledge...

Licensed Taxis and SatNav - the BBC join in...



John Griffin: "SatNav will help us catch up to black cabs"



But his 27 minutes was underestimated by half! It actually took him 53 minutes – 25% longer than the taxi.

His SatNav took him via Victoria, Vauxhall Bridge, Camberwell Green and eventually New Cross heading towards Peckham High Street where he turned into the bus garage before reversing out and taking the correct street!

His fare at £19 was much less than the taxi, but legitimate minicabs usually disregard traffic when they price a trip whereas the taxi goes by the meter. Proportionally, it seems likely that off-peak times would still see the taxi much quicker but that the fares would be closer.

It is also fair to assume that passengers use taxis because they know they are getting the real deal.

Following the test, John Griffin commented: "A black cab driver who has done the Knowledge might know 8,000 routes through London, but a SatNav device knows 80,000 and that's a huge difference. Minicabs are now in their slipstream and devices such as satellite navigation with us both using the same technology, will help us catch up."

So is John Griffin right? Will the Editor's driver – who was no better than a minicab driver by using SatNav, do our trade a favour or disservice? You tell us...

arriving at the destination 42 minutes later. The fare came to £35.

The PH vehicle left at 6pm – possibly an advantage as the peak hour could be closer to its end. He inputted the destination address into his SatNav and set off. According to the machine, the trip should have taken 27 minutes – which would have left the taxi driver with a rather large amount of egg on his face!

SOUTH LONDON TAXIS 10% DISCOUNT FOR DAC DRIVERS!

If you live to the south of London and are looking for a garage offering quality work for a discounted price, try South London Taxis Limited because if you pull in with a Dial-a-Cab logo on your taxi, you will get a 10% discount on ALL work you have carried out there. And YES – that includes overhauls! South London Taxis Limited are already well known in Croydon, but with the savings on offer for Dial-a-Cab drivers, they must be worth those few extra miles even if you don't live there!

South London Taxis Limited
69 Wortley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 3EB
Telephone 020 8665 1435

This 10% discount offer is available to all new and existing customers who have the Dial-a-Cab logo on their cab doors.



JACQUI CHART BECOMES A MUM!

Congratulations to Brian Rice's PA Jacqui Chart and her partner Adrian Martin on the birth of their first child, a gorgeous baby boy named Jack Dylan Martin.

The baby was born at the Princess Alexander Hospital in Harlow on 22 June with Jack hitting the scales at a healthy 7lbs 14oz.

Call Sign would also like to send congratulations to Dial-a-Cab calltaker and Jacqui's mum, Carol Chart, who is now Jack's proud grandmother.

Brian Rice told *Call Sign*: "We are all tickled pink at the news and send the family our very best wishes and heartiest congratulations."



CALL CENTRE CHAT

Decisions on the Island...

When the new account commenced on the island we thought long and hard how the trips should be dispatched, with or without destinations, as directed or non rejectable? The decision that we eventually arrived at and with which you are now fully aware of, was to let the driver see all destinations except for work after 21:00 hours that picks up from the account address.

The only reason we adopted the genuine 'as directed' way was because of the bank's policy that instructs their staff to physically be in their main reception area to order their taxi from the in-house taxi coordinator. In doing this we had to mirror the procedure of their previous taxi supplier.

The biggest problem we had to overcome was if a trip is dispatched within our system for a individual going to a specific destination, it would be a high risk for us that the passenger first in the queue at the taxi desk would be the person waiting the longest for their taxi to arrive. With the set up time of the account being reduced by three months due to their taxi supplier making the decision not to extend the existing contract, we needed to develop a method of putting the first passenger at the desk into the first cab.

In order for us to give this client a better service than their previous cab company, it now becomes your responsibility. The decision to accept or reject a genuine 'as directed trip' from the E14 area is yours.

And changes in the Call Centre...

A recent change I have made in the Call Centre to help handle our increased workload



may interest you. It involves the finishing time of our evening shift. Instead of going home at 23:30, they are now working until midnight.

We have always had problems handling call volumes between 23:30 and midnight for as long as I can remember and despite introducing an overlapping shift a few years ago to cope with this, we were still finding it difficult to meet demands. Our staff have cooperated and agreed to the change and for that commitment I just cannot thank them enough. Nothing works without people's cooperation and those drivers who book in to assist and take our staff home, remember the staff cabs will now be dispatched 30 minutes later.

Keeping cool?

During the month, the Board received a very embarrassing email from an account manager regarding the appearance of a few drivers. One of our long established clients, who are also based on the island, actually took the trouble to leave a voice message and an

email complaining about the dress of a few drivers. They referred to drivers wearing shorts, dirty scruffy tops, sandals and track suits and felt this was unsuitable attire for drivers to be seen in their reception areas.

I personally thought that with the numerous occasions in the past that this topic has been written about, all drivers would have followed recommendations and improved the situation. Since this complaint was received, we have had some very hot weather and I only hope that those of you who have chosen to wear lighter clothing have done so with this in mind.

Obviously I know this does not apply to every member, but anyone who does choose clothing to try and keep cool, please wear something that does not give cause for criticism.

Signal improvement

The improvements we are making with our signals can be read about in this issue. New hardware has been manufactured especially for us and the fitting is almost complete. In Allan Evan's report you will note that a driver was able to get a strong enough signal to clear a trip in the depths of Hampshire. Before anyone writes into **Call Sign**, we also hope the signals in the centre of town are equally as good.

Even making these improvements will never be able to guarantee 100 % accuracy within the dispatch system, but if we can achieve 95/98% then you will experience a remarkable improvement. It's very similar to the service we offer to our customers.

Keith Cain
Driver Operations / Call
Centre Manager

TOUTS AWAY...

Call Sign was having a chat with Sgt Dave Hillson recently and while Dave was his usual self, we got the impression that someone at the Cab Enforcement Team of the



Transport Operational Command Unit was annoyed at a recent trade article on the work of the unit and even made fun of the subject. As a consequence the usual article from Dave will no longer appear.

However, dissatisfaction with the trade press obviously made no difference to the on-going work they do - ie catching illegal taxi touts, some of which are from the private hire section of the trade.

Sgt Hillson told **Call Sign** that their work would go on regardless as he gave me the figures from his team's previous 4 nights work where they caught 51 illegal touts in the West End and Shoreditch.

Executive 6 Bedroom Villa in Florida

From £395 per week



3 Master Suites, 3 Twin Rooms, 4.5 Bathrooms, 30ft Pool on large extended SW facing deck, Games Room. Luxury Specification. In Remington Golf Community. Within 12 miles/16 mins of Disney. Near Lake Toho. Easily Sleeps 14 in beds.

Contact Andy (P32) on 07904 091278 or 07932 960350

Just think of a suitable name for DaC's new building and...



Win Dinner for 4 at Brian Turners Restaurant!

Most of you will know by now that Dial-a-Cab has purchased Marten House in East Road, but that thanks to the ongoing success of our Society, we did not have to sell Brunswick House in order to facilitate the deal. As a consequence, we will probably not be moving into our new home until later this year or early next.

However, the question now is whether we leave Marten House as the name or change it into something more pertinent to Dial-a-Cab? So *Call Sign* is throwing open the question to our readers (sorry, only Dial-a-Cab drivers, staff or their families).

What should we name our new building? The super prize for the winner will be a table for four people at Brian

Turner's Mayfair restaurant at the Millenium Hotel in Grosvenor Square!

If there is anyone that doesn't know, Brian Turner has long been acknowledged as one of Europe's finest chefs – and you can win a table for four!

Email your entry to **callsignmag@aol.com** or post your entries to:
Dial-a-Cab name competition
Call Sign Magazine
Brunswick House
3 – 11 Brunswick Place
London N1 6DX

Please, please, please, while all members of your family can have a go, entries will have to be sent in separately. Any entry

received with more than one attempt will be disqualified. If you are related to a driver / staff member, please say what the relationship is and send in your own entry. Entries must be received by Wednesday 16 August.

The DaC board will pick the winning name and their decision will be final. The winner's name may not be the one finally chosen for the building...

Brian Turner Mayfair is at the Millenium Hotel Mayfair, Grosvenor Square (entrance in Adam's Row or through the hotel)

Reservations: 020 7596 3444 Lunch: Monday to Friday and Sunday; Dinner: Mon – Sat.

WHO IS THIS LADY?



Does anybody recognise this lady?

There are several people working at Dial-a-Cab who were with us at our previous home at Shirland Road, Maida Vale - home of our famous "Lords" telephone number.

Usually, when *Call Sign* has a meander through its huge photo library and we come across one that we don't recognise, we usually ask Lorraine Carruthers or Denise Zemma. As a back up, we also have Caroline McGowan who is also a whiz with old photos. But on this occasion, all three failed to identify this woman.

The photo was obviously taken in the Shirland Road control room and being in black and white, looks to be from the late 1960s or early 70s. So, if anyone out there recognises this very attractive lady telephonist, *Call Sign* would like to add a name to the picture

THE SALIERI RESTAURANT

376 Strand, WC2

We Invite Dial-a-Cab drivers and their guests to our restaurant where you can partake of the finest food and wine

And as a thank-you for helping our clients come and go over the years, we are happy to be able to offer you a genuine 25% discount on your bill

We are certain that you will be delighted



Please bring along your badge or Bill as ID
 We are also happy to be able to offer you £5 for every passenger you bring to us.
 See Ivan outside the restaurant.

Salieri Restaurant
376 Strand, WC2
Reservations: 020 7836 1318

In 1966, not only did England win the World Cup, but we began the custom of using a "good luck" mascot. That year saw *World Cup Willie* appearing everywhere. Forty years on, our team may have failed to match up to their counterparts from the Alf Ramsay era, but we still had World Cup Willie – oops, I mean we had *World Cup Billy!*

This Billy, however, wasn't a toy mascot, but former **Dial-a-Cab** calltaker and son of DaC Chairman Brian, Billy Rice! During Billy's time at DaC, he became an Assistant Systems Supervisor, but did it whilst also taking Media Studies at University.

When QPR "nut" Billy left DaC several years later, he found himself literally doing the job of his dreams – running the **Queens Park Rangers** official website and in the process, turning it into one of the most popular football websites in the country with more "hits" than most Premier league teams were getting.

It was only a matter of time before he would get noticed by bigger fish, the only question being whether he would be able to bring himself to leave his beloved QPR? He always said that it would take something special to pull him away, but "something special" turned up in the form of Premium TV and editing all the football matches that they were responsible for – and that was an awful lot! He is now a Senior Producer with the company.

But that wasn't all. He was also asked to go to Germany for the complete duration of the World Cup and to put his views onto a website designed especially for the event! His "daily bulletin" pulled in thousands as he was seen and heard interviewing fans of all nationalities and giving his views on England's progress – or lack of it! These interviews weren't the type the BBC and ITV were putting out, these were with ordinary fans

World Cup Billy!



Billy with the Iranian fans
Inset: At work interviewing and filming



with their tears and their laughter, ordinary people who had paid to get to Germany and then paid hugely inflated

ticket prices to go and see the matches.

As for Billy and his "work" of watching the World Cup over its whole one-month tenure including every England game, their penalty shoot-out demise and the Italy v France Final, his only comment to *Call Sign* was:

"Well someone had to do it and I suppose dad was too busy!"

The site should still be up; click on the "video" section at his World Cup website on <http://www.germany2006.tv>

Cover shot: Billy at Gelsenkirchen prior to watching England exit the world cup on penalties...

Thank You DaC Drivers - From Alissa

Alissa Cook, daughter of Dial-a-Cab driver **Alf Cook (A62)**, has asked *Call Sign* to thank all those DaC drivers who sponsored her efforts in the Flora London Marathon in aid of the **Micro Anaphthalmic Children's Society (MACS)**. DaC donations came via the office and from EC5 (before it became non-physical) and totalled over £300. Micro-anaphthalmia and anaphthalmia are rare conditions that affect a minority of children from birth and occur due to a failure of the early eye development causing 'absent eye' (anaphthalmia) or 'small eye' (microphthalmia). The cause of the condition is thought to be predominantly genetic, but research suggests that in some cases exposure to toxins such as pesticides early in pregnancy can be responsible. MACS is an entirely voluntary charity which relies on people such as Alissa to assist it in carrying out such good work in lobbying for increased research into its causes while raising awareness of this rare condition and organising events and meetings to bring families affected by the condition, together.

Alissa's time for the 26-mile course was 4hours 11minutes...

Alissa shows her medical for completing the Flora marathon. The drink was also well deserved!



Thinking about a compensation claim but confused by TV ads promising the earth? Call Sign's legal expert, Hope Liebersohn, is on the Law Society Personal Injuries Panel and offers assistance in this exclusive series ...

CALL SIGN LEGAL MATTERS

The No-Win, No-Fee Deal

Since the end of the advertising ban, most solicitors have had to tout for business just like accountants or plumbers or, for that matter, taxi drivers. Then legal aid was withdrawn for most injury cases, but the government promised conditional fee agreements (CFAs) would ensure access to justice for all.

The CFA, or no-win, no-fee funding, does NOT involve a percentage of your damages being taken by your solicitor, as in the USA. For taking the risk of not getting paid, we are entitled to a success fee when we do win and the loser - usually an insurance company - pays that.

Clients like it because their lawyer has a real stake in their case, unlike the old system where we got paid whether or not you got any payout. Weak cases are now rejected on economic grounds, as solicitors only get paid if you win the case. We are entitled to deduct a small amount from your winnings to compensate us for financing the case, as we may have to wait for years to get paid. Some firms - mine included - do not take advantage of that right and keep only the costs we can collect from the losing side.

No-win, no-fee financing is available for injury claims and some firms offer it for employment, defamation and even commercial cases. The arrangement is not simple. You are given much to read and we have to explain it all to you in person or over the phone, taking half an hour or so. Another drawback is that it doesn't include any disbursements in the case. You still have to pay for your medical records and reports, court fees and so on.

Often, you have to get insurance to cover your liability to pay the costs of the other side should you lose the case after court proceedings are issued. These "after-the-event" policies cost from around £300 for a simple road traffic accident case, to £25,000 or more for a complex and risky medical negligence claim. I try to arrange deferred premiums, where you don't

pay up front, at a cost likely to be recoverable from the other side.

If you have legal expenses cover on your motor insurance, or you are in a trade union, or you have household contents insurance, you may be able to use that for your injury claim. Look at the small print on your household policy - it may well cover you to bring a claim against your neighbour if their dog is out of control and bites you, or to sue your local council after you've tripped on the broken pavement. Surprising, but true!

You will be assigned a panel solicitor if you take advantage of these "before-the-event" policies and your case handler may well be in Liverpool, unqualified and with such a huge caseload that they never return your calls or actually care whether they get the best settlement for you. But it is free, even for disbursements and most insurers will respect your own choice of a lawyer not on their panel.

Sadly for we old-fashioned specialist lawyers, the personal injury market has now been flooded with claims farmers, or managers as they call themselves, offering "no-win, no-fee" services, with the worst of them using hard-sell tactics in shopping centres

and on housing estates. A few encourage fraudulent claims and they get nice commissions from selling the claims onto solicitors' firms, typically for £300 to £700 a case.

The term "no-win, no-fee" lawyer now means shoddy and second-class to a lot of people who have read about the abuses of this kind of marketing. The claims farmers are likely soon

to be regulated, which may help. They say they provide added value as they are more approachable than solicitors, which is why people use them.

If you are injured, think about your options. A qualified specialist will fight your corner - and some of us are perfectly nice people, too!

Hope Liebersohn ; 020-8735-9776; hl@glenisters.com



CONDO FOR RENT

Bahama Bay Resort, Florida

Three beds, high spec swimming pools,

Gym, Restaurant, 10 Minutes Disney Nr

Lake Davenport

Great offers available

Just £325 per week until March 2006

Contact John (M13) on 07921 920743...



Dial-a-Cab has seen a large response from taxi drivers wanting to join the Society since we began advertising in the trade press following the large corporate accounts that have either renewed their contracts or joined us from other circuits. Interviews are often carried out by Allen Togwell and Allan Evans and in this article Allen Togwell writes about...

Interviewing new drivers the DaC way

Unlike our competitors who accept anybody, we at Dial-a-Cab have had for many years a waiting list of prospective new members. Once on that list, all applicants must first sit an interview to ascertain their suitability before being accepted onto our Society. Renowned for being a *Gentlemen's Circuit* (for the sexist - note adjective) and a reputation for being financially, commercially and operationally the most attractive circuit to be a member of, we have a responsibility to our existing members to be sure that all new subscribers are of an acceptable standard.

Of all the occasions I have played the role of inquisitor, interviewing cab drivers (my peers) - particularly those that have a badge for many years - is the undoubtedly the most varied of them. One has to be mindful of the fact that licensed taxi drivers, being self-employed, might not necessarily be used to attending interviews and questions asked must reflect this fact.

I usually start, particularly to those drivers who have never been on a radio circuit before, by emphasising the fact that joining one means losing a certain amount of freedom. It is perhaps a bit like joining a golf club;

there are rules and procedures that must be adhered to and failure to do so could find them getting their knuckles rapped. I then explain what is expected of them from our clients, the importance of image etc and after a further 15 minutes or so - assuming they are still sitting there - I explain the enormous benefits of belonging to the most sought-after radio taxi circuit in London.

I must confess that I find interviewing people interesting. I also occasionally find it a little amusing, especially when you expect a lengthy answer to a question only to get at best a few words and often just a furrowing of the brow and shrug of the shoulders! But this hasn't been the case of late; in fact I've been extremely impressed with many of the applicants answers, especially with regards dress, appearance, manner, attitude and the eagerness to cover account work.

In addition, there are often comments from those hopeful subscribers who are currently with our competitors, which according to

them includes the desire to belong to a radio circuit whose dispatching system is "much fairer than theirs." Also often brought up is the fact that on Dial-a-Cab, the whole fare and gratuity is paid to the driver and equally importantly, that the management don't shut themselves away from the drivers (their words, not mine). And of course, the knowledge that we have the most work per driver.

Cynics will often say that these applicants are giving the obvious answers, but I am not naïve. I consider myself a reasonable good judge of character and compared with some of those who were expelled last month, this recent group of new recruits will - I'm sure - be of enormous benefit to the future of our Society.

So I personally would like to take this opportunity of welcoming them all to Dial-a-Cab and wish them every success...

Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing Dept

Ex-DaC driver Bob Woodford writes a regular column for Call Sign from his new home at Languedoc in France...

Call Sign En La Belle France

Another Wimbledon Fortnight has been and gone - and my regular stint of manoeuvring a cab around the lawns of the All England Club were profitable enough to justify me leaving my post here on the sun blessed Mediterranean.

I have to say that after 19 years of ranking up in Augustus Road in the mornings, then Gate 4 in the afternoon and evenings, this years marshalling was particularly efficient - something I know Wandsworth police will confirm.

We cabbies at Southfields share the marshalling in rotation, but I have to take issue with a Dial-a-Cab driver who enjoyed taking a tenner each time he ran 5 people sharing up to the turnstiles for what would normally be a 3 quid fare! I didn't get the chance to speak to him personally, but with a bit of



luck he might just read this.

Yes Sir, it is a licensed taxi rank for the Championships, but the reason the cabbies contribute a fiver each day is because there is a licensed cabbie directing the public from the station to the rank and another licensed cabbie trying to ensure that you have 5 peo-

ple sharing instead of 3 or 4. Without marshals, so much work would be lost. Therefore the marshals who miss out on those lucrative rides can at least share what is collected to make up their losses.

Hopefully, the DaC subscriber will chill out before the 2007 tournament. Perhaps it might help if he logs on to www.southoffrancelets.com and books a holiday? We will still waive your booking fee despite being behind with your rent at Southfields!

If anyone would like to see what we have in short breaks or summer vacations, just go to our other website which is at: www.southoffranceaccommodation.com. **A bientot.**

Bob Woodford (Ex-P49)
Saint Genies de Fontedit, Languedoc,
France

DaC drivers give thumbs up to Power Pill ...!

As you will all know by now, **Call Sign** has been monitoring drivers' use of the **UBicec Power Pill** since last September, with very impressive results in both increase in mpg and reduction in emissions. Back in May, Power Pill UK Ltd offered all DaC drivers the chance to try the Power Pill for free in return for *before* and *after* data.

Over 140 drivers took up the challenge and were asked to comment on how their cabs' performance varied after using the Power Pill. Well, 8 weeks later, the first results are in and they make very interesting reading.

As you can see from the charts, over **83%** of drivers say that there has been some sort of improvement in their vehicles – whether it was overall performance, power / acceleration, smoother running of the engine, reduced emissions or improved mpg.

"My 290,000 mile engine feels much more willing with less noise and the cab performs better in every way. Fuel economy has definitely improved since using the Power Pill." **Ken Jackman (B29).**

"We drivers do so many different types of journeys within a day with constantly varying weights, so it is almost impossible to say with any certainty what mpg we really get, but I would definitely recommend the Power Pill - any product that reduces fuel costs and emissions definitely gets my approval." **Steven Crisp (D52).**

"Using Power Pill has resulted in the engine running much smoother and has greatly reduced the visible emission from the very smoky TXII." **Jason Burt (E59).**

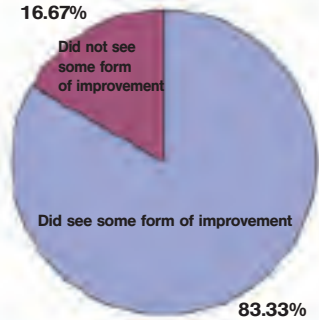
They were just some of the comments and interestingly, almost **75%** of drivers questioned said that they would recommend Power Pill to others.

Leon Warner, CEO of Power Pill UK Ltd told **Call Sign**:

"We have spent several weeks analysing the data collected so far and the overall picture is one of sheer delight amongst our new DaC customers. As mentioned in previous articles, we know Power Pill UK Ltd are never going to satisfy every driver, but our aim is to help the trade in their ongoing battle against having to spend thousands on conversions that may or may not work. Power Pill lowers the most harmful emissions, such as carbon monoxide, by up to 80% while at the same time reducing the hydrocarbon level, proving that more fuel is being used to drive the vehicle instead of being wasted in harmful black smoke coming from the exhaust."

The Power Pill can be purchased from **JVBright** at Southbank Service Station, Great Suffolk Street SE1 or by calling Power Pill direct on 0845 1 30 80 77.

Percentage of Drivers who saw an improvement after using Power Pill



Would you recommend the Power Pill to other drivers?



N18 - City Cab
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N20 - City Cab
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Don't Play Around...

Bank on... Cygnus Taximeters

The Name That London Cab Drivers Trust

City Dealers:

N7 - Mann & Overton 020 7700 9828	SS7 - Just Taxis 012 6879 5895
SW6 - Putney Bridge Taxis 020 7736 8818	W9 - Computer Cab 020 7908 0255
SE17 - Coachline Taxis 020 7277 2200	N18 - S&H Cabs 020 8803 1437
E2 - Framwright Engineers 020 7739 5617	HAB - Edwards Cab Company 020 8951 4590
EN3 - Enfield Taxis 020 8804 5241	E1 - KPM UK Taxis 020 7375 2086
TWB - Camberfield Taxis 020 8568 9643	





- Ⓢ 5 minute average waiting at the 2005 tariff change
- Ⓢ London Taxis International recommended choice
- Ⓢ 11 service dealers at key sites throughout the Capital
- Ⓢ Compatible with all radio circuits and Cygnus receipt printers
- Ⓢ All British-made and PCO and BSI approved
- Ⓢ Exclusive suppliers of Blaupunkt Satellite Navigation and DAB Radio.



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DaC Customer Services/Special Projects

More and more client visits

As you know, Dial-a-Cab is the most successful radio taxi service in London. However, as with any successful organisation, it is inevitable that there will be service issues.

The Call Centre is working flat out to answer calls quickly whilst the *fleet controllers* try to pre-empt possible pick-up issues by monitoring the fleet, arbitrating various trips and informing drivers which zones and what time those trips are to be dispatched. You are given traffic conditions and other information to keep the fleet moving. However, even with all this information drivers are still rejecting trips. This is having a profound influence on our service, especially during the evening.

When questioning drivers about the excessive number of rejects within our system, the answer often comes that there is there is a tremendous amount of cash work on the streets.

Well my friends, that work can dry up very quickly as we all know from past experience. Our account clients, some who have been with Dial-a-Cab for many years, deserve a better service than they are getting at this time. The financial value of account trips offered by DaC is extremely valuable, nevertheless, rejecting account trips offered through our dispatch system in favour of street work is still causing service issues.

Having to visit more clients than



ever, I'm finding it difficult to keep offering the same excuses and commitments time and time again that our service will improve and indeed, it is proving to be tiresome to the customers.

You'll know by now those drivers who were in breach of the 40-job rule and have now been expelled. Surely as a Dial-a-Cab shareholder, reaping the financial wealth would have been a prime goal? We are offering so much good financially rewarding work...

This year has been the most financially buoyant year DaC has ever had. The Board's duty to members is to obtain work. If you are not prepared to take the trips offered, please let me know what you do want and we will do our best to accommodate.

However, we cannot keep offering premiums to entice you to pick up account rides that already have the increased run-in of £4.20 and which are quite costly already due to London's worsening traffic conditions. When the bubble bursts - which it undoubtedly will do - customers will take their business elsewhere.

Russian about...

On a lighter note, I recently took a cruise holiday to the Baltic. What a fantastic holiday visiting Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Estonia and Russia.

Although all the places we visited were wonderful, Russia was certainly an experience. We stayed two days in St Petersburg and visiting some of the former royal palaces was most certainly awe-inspiring. The opulence of the palaces showed the life style of the Tsars and their families at a time when the peasants were dirt poor. No wonder there was a revolution!

Mike Son

**DaC Customer Services /
Special Project**

Ruffles

*The Complete Curtain
Making Service...*

Curtains, pelmets, swags and tails or blinds as well as soft furnishings...

Cushions, quilts and headboards all made to measure using customers own fabric...

One choose from a selection of fabrics and trimmings bought to you in your own home.

Tracks and blinds can be supplied and fitted

**For more information call
Kim on 0208 505 9755
or mobile 07961375418**

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The villa is situated just 20 minutes from all major parks and shopping areas. The villa sleeps a maximum of 10 people and the cost advertised is per week and not per person

The possibility of pedicabs being licensed by the PCO took a step closer to reality recently with the publication of a consultation document. The glossy 46-page brochure sets out wide-ranging proposals that will include the licensing of both the vehicle and the rider as the PCO call them. Licensing would include medical and CRB checks, age limits and a mini (sic) Knowledge test!

The vehicle, otherwise known as a rickshaw, will undergo a PCO inspection to ensure it meets the particular Conditions of Fitness that specify construction, maintenance and road-safety requirements before being issued with a licence. Furthermore, they will have their own appointed ranks, with apparently the possibility that they would be able to use our ranks...!

Throughout the discussion document, references are made to Taxis and PH vehicles and we understand that rickshaws will come under the 1934 Cab Order, hence the constant comparison as a framework of regulation for these cycles.

To gauge the feelings of Dial-a-Cab drivers and armed with the PCO document, *Call Sign* hit the streets to see what our drivers had to say. As a family magazine and paraphrasing a TV show of yesteryear, some of the drivers' words have been changed to protect the Editor from embarrassment!

Ted Bond P4: They are dangerous and should be taken off the street. I can't remember the last time I did a theatre job – you can't get close enough! I'm not happy about the possibility of them ranking with us! The Put-Puts (motorised versions) are in Brighton and it can't be long before they are here too.



Mark Thurbin M96: Quite unbelievable if I hadn't actually seen the PCO document. I'd be very interested to know how they are going to limit the numbers and regulate the fares?

Pedicab Licensing: DaC drivers have their say...

Thanks *Call Sign*, you've made my day!

Rob Creek G25: Don't want 'em! There are all sorts of safety issues and I can't see the PCO actually licensing them. They simply are not safe. Ranking with us? No, definitely not...



Bill Gillett K31: They're a pest and a pain when I'm driving behind them and I think they are illegal because they ply for hire. It's only a matter of time before someone gets killed in them. I can't believe this is happening. Is it 1st April again?



Salvatore Macaluso J63: I can't believe that the Licensing Authority would even consider such a move. What about public safety? And using our ranks? Diabolical!



Jim Moore: Ban them! The Old Bill should nick them when they go down one-way-streets the wrong way or block up the traffic, but they haven't yet, so it isn't going to happen. What about waiting on the pavement outside Hamley's?

Barry McCall G55J: You're joking! Are they taking the p***? What about road safety issues? Insurance? Blocking the roads? Up on the pavement? Maybe my Dad (John) will agree to put his Ben-Hur wheels with the central blades back on again! I feel faint at the thought of it all...



Daren Stratford P8: I'll believe it when I see it! The way TfL / PCO work, the bikes will probably just carry on as they like.



John Vowell T26: This is just another example of the Mayor of London bringing everybody down to the lowest common denominator (*referring to taxi comparisons*). They are just accidents waiting to happen.



Graham Pell A99: Ban them! Get 'em off the roads! They cut each other up and race along the roads. A rank? Absolute madness! The cab ranks will be full and they will steal cab work.



And the last time DaC's Gary played Spurs was in the FA Cup Final at Wembley!

This is the seventh annual event in which ex-professional footballers and guest celebrities - known as the 'Cab Trade All-Stars' - take on a London Football Club's veterans team.

This year's opponents are Tottenham Hotspur's ex-professional and celebrity XI led by none other than Spurs and England legend Martin Chivers. 'Spurs are a team renowned for their charity work and The Cab Trade All Stars, led by manager Dennis Pinching, are grateful to Spurs for taking up this challenge of what should be an entertaining game.

The money raised by the game will help towards the cost of a 'Magical Taxi Tour' to Disneyland Resort Paris. The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers organise a yearly convoy of around 90 London taxicabs carrying over 200 children suffering from a range of chronic debilitating illnesses and life limiting conditions for a weekend of fun and relief from the rigours of hospital routines and treatments. To see the children's faces, you would understand it is a remarkably demanding, but well worthwhile venture.

Among the many who, subject to availability, play for the **Spurs XI** in their matches are Ralph Coates, Phil Beal, Gary Brooke, Jimmy Neighbour, Steve Sedgley, Tony Galvin, Paul Allen and Martin Chivers - who also manages the team.

The Cab Trade

Take on a Spurs XI!

The **Cab Trade All-Stars** also have their share of famous faces if available, including Alan Roughan, Trevor Aylott, John Bumpstead, Alan Dickens and of course former QPR star and now Dial-a-Cab hero, **Gary Micklewhite (R69)**.

Gary began his pro career at Old Trafford under the managership of Tommy Docherty although he never made the first team. In 1979, with Tommy Doc having moved on to QPR, Gary arrived and began a successful spell at Loftus Road for whom, in 1982, he played in both matches against Spurs in the FA Cup Final at Wembley. The following year he gained a Division Two Championship with Rangers. A £90,000 move to Derby County in 1985 began an eight-year spell at The Baseball Ground before moving on to Gillingham. In 1996, he was appointed as QPR's Youth Team Manager. Two years later he moved on to Wycombe as Assistant Manager to Neil Smillie. He "joined" Dial-a-Cab in February 2002...



The last time DaC's Gary Micklewhite played against Spurs was in the 1982 Cup Final at Wembley!

Barkingside (behind Barkingside underground station. Kick off 3pm. See the ad in this issue...

The match is on Sunday 13 August at The Oaks Stadium, Station Road,

Pedicab Licensing: DaC Drivers Have Their Say

continued from page 16

Simon Holman B32: Ridiculous. They are just too dangerous. They go racing down Piccadilly without any regard to road safety. Licence the riders? They're foreign students.. I can't see anybody wanting to do it full-time.

Brian Harris

L30: They're here to stay. You can't get rid of them. Licensing them means they will have to show earnings and pay tax. People who are going to use rickshaws will do so and those wishing to travel by cab will do so. It will be their own choice, although some cab work might be lost due to the novelty aspect of the rickshaws.



JIM WARREN DIES

It took two broken hips and MRSA to get DaC's Jim...

Dial-a-Cab's former Chief Security Guard, Jim Warren, who retired in 1999 due to health problems, has sadly passed away in hospital.

In the February **Call Sign**, we heard from wife Joan

and daughter Rossina that Jim had been beset by ill health and hospitalised since the previous October following a serious accident in his N1 home when he fell and broke his hip.

While recovering in hospital, he caught the MRSA bug and also developed horrendous bedsores before moving to another hospital and making a slight recovery - but he was becoming ever more forgetful. Touchingly, Rossina told us that the one thing Jim never forgot was his time at Dial-a-Cab and at times he even believed he still worked here.

Call Sign sent Rossina every issue of the mag as it came out and she took them into Jim who read the lot!

Then when it seemed that Jim might be going home, he had another fall and broke his other hip. That proved to be one obstacle too far for former war hero Jim and he passed away some time afterwards.



Jim was on the DaC front security desk for almost fourteen years and never made any bones about how much he enjoyed working at Brunswick House.

Brian Rice told **Call Sign**: "Jim was a really nice man whom I respected. He was definitely 'old school' who had morals and principals that

sadly seem to be lacking in many today. We often used to talk about sport and his knowledge on boxing was excellent, which was in complete contrast to mine. Jim was also an old desert rat and served in North Africa, he was always well 'turned out' as you would expect of a man with his background. I was genuinely sad when I learned that Jim had passed away and I would like to send my sincere condolences to Jim's family."

Jim's brother is boxing promoter **Frank Warren**, but Jim was no slouch either in the fame game. Up until 1994, Jim had his own sports program in Jersey on ITV's, *Channel TV*. He used to fly out weekly to Jersey, do the program and then fly back in time to resume his security shift at Brunswick House!

To Jim's family, we send the sincere condolences of everyone who remembers Jim with such fondness...

Jim will be cremated at Finchley (Islington) crematorium at 11.45 on Friday 4 August.

SMILE



Sent in by Steve Shaller
(R75)

A woman went up to the bar in a quiet rural pub and gestured alluringly to the bartender who approached her immediately. She seductively signalled that he should bring his face closer to hers. As he did, she gently caressed his full beard.

"Are you the manager," she asked, softly stroking his face with both hands? "Actually, no," he replied.

"Can you get him for me? I need to speak to him," she said, running her hands beyond his beard and into his hair.

"I'm afraid I can't," breathed the bartender, "Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes, I need you to give him a message for me," she continued while running her forefinger across his lips and slyly popping a couple of her fingers into his mouth, allowing him to gently suck them.

"What should I tell him," the bartender managed to say.

"Tell him," she whispered, "there's no toilet paper, hand soap or paper towels in the ladies room..."

Sent in by David Lessman (D19)
And one for the World Cup...

A man had great tickets for the World Cup final. As he sat down, another man came down from his seat at the back and asked if anyone was sitting in the empty seat next to him?

"No," he replied, "the seat is empty."

"That's incredible," says the second guy, "who in their right mind would buy a seat like this for the World Cup final, the biggest sporting event in the world, and not use it?"

"Well, actually," replied the first guy, "the seat belongs to me. My wife was supposed to come with me, but she passed away. This is the first World Cup final we haven't been to together since we got married in 1966 in London."

The newcomer looked stunned. "I'm so sorry to hear that," he said, "that's terrible. But couldn't you find someone else; a friend, relative or even a neighbour to take the seat?"

The man shook his head. "No," he replied sadly, "they're all at the funeral."

London Taxis lead the Tour de France



The View of the Tour de France that Londoners will see next July



Two specially branded London taxis were navigating French roads during the recent Tour de France to help publicise the famous event's visit to Britain for the start of the 2007 race.

London will play host to the Grand Départ next year, so *Visit London* – the official visitor organisation for London – took part in the traditional promotional carnival as the 2006 tour made its way around France until the Paris finish on 27 July..

Heading the cavalcade of decorated vehicles, including the main London float which featured replica pods from the London Eye with different scenes of London inside, were the two London taxis. The LTI Vehicles TXIIs were chosen because of their immediate recognisability with London. The convoy left Strasbourg at the start of the event and formed part of a cavalcade that went ahead of the cyclists.

A spokesperson for *Visit London* told **Call Sign**: "The Tour de France publicity caravan provided an excellent opportunity for us to promote London to a key audience using specially-designed vehicles. We used the two London taxis to complement the main vehicle creation, as they represent a highly-recognisable London image for the European market."

Following the successful bid by Transport for London, the Grand Départ 2007 will take place in London from 6 – 8 July 2007. The opening ceremony, prologue and start of stage one of the historic race will all be in the UK capital.

Matthew Cheyne, Sales and Marketing Director for LTI Vehicles, added: "London taxis are recognised the world over as symbols of London, so it was important that they formed part of the campaign to promote the start in London next year. We are delighted that *Visit London* chose to use our vehicles and know that their inclusion will help ensure next year's unique start will be a success."

AUGUST TRAFFIC PROBLEMS

Strand

Major resurfacing works in Fleet Street have now commenced - as DaC drivers will have already discovered! The City of London Corporation hope to confine such works to evenings and weekends, but in some cases works will have to take place during the working day due to environmental concerns.

These involve: Eastbound closures (between Strand and Fetter Lane), currently planned for the weeks of 7 to 11 August and 14 to 18 August, from 8am to 6pm each day.

Beech St

The annual tunnel-clean in Beech Street is planned for 8pm on Friday 18 August to 6am Monday 21 August. Specific signage to the Barbican Centre will be set out.

Liverpool St

Minor works have already begun to adjust kerbs in advance of the construction of the major streetscene scheme in Liverpool Street. The scheme's construction will soon require a closure of the eastern end of Liverpool Street by Old Broad Street, planned to commence on 26 August for 6 weeks.

Moving 'traffic offences' in the city

From 4 September, moving traffic offences (ie banned turns, box junctions, pedestrian zones etc) will become decriminalised in the City. They will then be enforced by CCTV camera and drivers committing these contraventions will be issued with a £100 Penalty Charge Notice by post. This enforcement is intended to improve compliance with the current regulations, thereby improving road safety and reducing congestion.

You will all no doubt have read in the trade press by now of the new text messaging service which will relay messages from police during emergencies, such as terrorist attacks, in order to help keep London's transportation system functioning.

The idea is that those London taxi drivers that register will get up-to-the-minute information concerning possible terrorist incidents, security alerts, missing-person reports and major crimes as part of the program called **Cabwatch**

According to Commander Chris Allison, Borough Commander for the City of Westminster, London's taxi service provided an excellent response to the 7 July bombings when only taxis were left to operate in Central London after suicide bombers had struck the city's underground train network. Now Cabwatch will help provide necessary information to taxi drivers should another terrorist incident occur.

It would also, according to Commander Allison, be used to help the battle against crime, missing persons and

Will Westminster's Cabwatch Succeed?

also to pass on messages regarding road closures etc.

Westminster councillor, Audrey Lewis, told **Call Sign**:

"This excellent and innovative service will allow taxis to use their h a r d - w o n Knowledge to play their part in keeping London moving in the event of a major incident."

Call Sign registered for Cabwatch on 21 June and in the following five weeks received just 5 text messages – two regarding a male attempting to climb the London Eye

and that some roads had been closed, two regarding a suspect package at Charing Cross - the second saying that all was now clear - and a fifth message warning drivers not to be distracted when being paid as some quick passengers were stealing stuff through the luggage window and running off!

During that same period, numerous drivers told us that they had received PCNs for doing things that were connected with their work – waiting outside client's addresses etc. Cabwatch is important and we should do all we can to make sure it works in case it is ever needed. It goes above any squabbles we have with the authorities. But it's easy to see why so many feel rather miffed claiming that the traffic is all one way...












To register for Cabwatch, text the word Cabwatch and your badge number to 61626. So if your badge number was 65555, text Cabwatch 65555. Your details will then be automatically registered on the confidential www.communitysafe.gov.uk system.



How Cabwatch will notify you

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Are You For Hire Marrakech

DaC's Mark traps



Customs men in Gibraltar are not used to seeing the inside of a London Cab. Mind you, we've never seen one that looks like that either!

For most London taxi drivers, it was just another normal summer day – traffic, traffic and more traffic with punters popping out from in between the stationary vehicles! Selfridges to Harrods, Moorgate to Waterloo or Cabot Square to Leadenhall Street – yep, just another day for London's finest. Well, perhaps not for everyone...

Mark Thurbin (M96) has been on Dial-a-Cab for almost 7 years of his 14 as a taxi driver and admitted to *Call Sign* that regardless of the traffic and occasional dull/repetitive day, he loves the job.

"A nice trip always helps," he said, "but I just love taxi driving regardless." But some days more than others, perhaps...?

Mark's amazing story began towards the end of June. He was driving along Pall Mall into Lower Regent Street with a passenger in his 4-week old *Gold TXII* when he heard someone calling out to him and saw someone in his mirror chasing after him.

"He looked frantic," said Mark. "He begged me to come back when I had finished the job I had on-board and offered to give me money. I told him I didn't need the money and that I'd come back as I wasn't going far. In reality, I had no intention of returning as my first thought was that he was a bit of a nutter!"

Mark dropped his fare in Swallow Street and suddenly his curiosity got the better of him and he decided to return. Amazingly, the 'nutter' was waiting in exactly the same place. He and a friend had been trying all that morning and most of the previous day to try and hire a new TXII with air-con in the passenger compartment. So far four drivers in that category had refused to take them. Perhaps they too thought that he was acting rather strange and then when the words: "I'd like to go to Marrakesh," came out of his mouth, they considered their first thoughts to be correct.

Mark was slightly different. Not expecting to be asked to take someone to the northwest coast of Africa, he at first thought they meant somewhere near Heathrow.



"You can't park 'ere mate. It's for minicams"

"Your taxi-mind doesn't think of Africa when you misheard. But I was wrong! By now there were three cameras. He explained they were working on a project involved them taking a London taxi to Marrakech whatever was on the meter! After a few seconds, the nutter could come up with a hefty deposit. They said it was for the office. Their only question to me was whether the nutter was real."

Mark was given several hours to prepare and was given a firm his cover, then to *Frankum and Kaye* who drove the taxi that he was really about to drive to Africa, they gave him some mechanics – Mark admitted that when it came to the knowledge of that field was limited to turning the meter.

Then, one last stop – home to get his passport. He had his paperwork and a few bits and pieces together. "Even at that point," Mark remembered, "although

...? Take Me To Marrakesh! ... a job to Morocco!



... only! Mark arrives in Marrakesh....

... you trap a street job and I just assumed that I had three of them – two of whom were snapping away on behalf of an advertising agency and their current client in Marrakesh. Would I be interested? The fare would be £100. I had made up my mind to take a chance if they were no problem and we all trooped back to their car as the air-con worked!"

... was accompanied to *Westminster Insurance* to continue his warrantee work. After finally believing Mark, I gave him some spares and a brief lesson in basic car repairs, he would usually let others do it as his first ignition key!

... With no wife to explain the situation to, Mark got into the car and off they went.

... hgh I was totally convinced that this was to be that



Mark with two of the film crew (they're the ones ON the camels)!!

... one job in my cab-driving life that I would be talking about for as long as I had my Bill, in my mind it hadn't yet sunk in that it wasn't going to be just one very long day. I hadn't really taken into account that this was 2000-miles each way and not just a long-day roader up to Manchester! Now I was off to Morocco and the souk area of Marrakesh and I had never even driven abroad before!"

Mark went on: "By now I knew what was happening. The ad was part of a series of thirty second adds for *Zoo* magazine that was following two young guys doing 'crazy' things with money they were supposed to use for advertising. Prior to taking a taxi off the London street to Morocco, they had previously built the worlds largest Scalectrix and taken a ride in a fighter plane."

They were all ready to go, so how did Mark feel?

"Well, it would be untrue to say that I didn't have butterflies – in fact for those first few minutes you could have danced to my heartbeat, it felt so loud. Then all you really wanted was to see a cab driver that you knew at the traffic lights and for him to ask if you "were going anywhere nice!"

Into la France

Mark's taxi was wired up for cameras and sound, he put the meter on and they began to make their way to the cross-channel ferry at *Dover* where they linked up with a back-up vehicle containing sound and cameramen, a director and a producer. They would be following them all the way.

After an uneventful crossing, the two vehicles drove to *Abbeville* in northern France where they stayed overnight. The second day was much harder with a ten-hour drive south through *Tours*, *Poitiers*, the *Cognac* region and *Bordeaux*.

"If I thought my cab was getting a lot of stares, then it was only a fraction of what was to come as we closed in on Morocco," said Mark. "I slept reasonably well in Bordeaux. Driving such long distances on the 'wrong side of the road' for the first time was pretty zapping!"

The next day – and another hot one – saw Mark and co crossing the French-Spanish border at *San Sebastian*.

continued on page 22

Mike Son recently attended a meeting with the City of London Corporation to discuss the problems DaC drivers have in parking when picking up account clients...

PARKING: DAC MEET THE CITY OF LONDON CORP

During the past year, Dial-a-Cab drivers have received an unacceptably high number of PCNs during the course of their everyday working and at a substantial cost to the Society.

With parking problems in mind, the LTDA and T&G had asked for a meeting with The City of London Corporation, which was called for Friday

21 July. The Attendees were to have been Department of Technical Services Parking Contracts and Traffic Manager and Planning Manager (Corporation of London), Traffic Management Operational Support (City of London Police), LTDA, T&G and of course Dial-a-Cab.

However and rather embarrassingly for the

cab trade, for whatever reason both the LTDA and the T&G didn't turn up. This was rather surprising as it was they that initiated the meeting.

Feeling somewhat embarrassed, I apologised on their behalf and the meeting carried on without them. I informed those present that I was not representing the taxi trade in general, only protecting the interests of Dial-a-Cab drivers and clients.

It was a very informative and frank discussion. I spoke about the problems drivers are having with pickup addresses when in breach of parking regulations and red routes etc.

Trying to resolve the various taxi-related problems, including the issue of Penalty Charge Notices, I suggested that the 2-minute observation time should be increased to 15 minutes when our drivers are picking up clients from problem locations. This would help when Parking Enforcement Officers are reviewing CCTV images.

It was suggested that the Parking Contracts and Traffic Management Team visit the various locations we are having the most problems with and report back as to what course of action could or would be taken. It could involve the removal of parking meters giving us better access for pick-ups, the implementation of single yellow lines instead of double yellow lines or some of the other suggestions put forward to ease the situation.

The investigation will take place sooner rather than later. Nevertheless, even though DaC will continue to pay the PCN fines for drivers on account trips, it is still important to be aware of the parking restrictions that are currently in place, so when picking up passengers please be mindful of them. If a driver totally disregards the restrictions or the Call Centre has not been informed of the driver's correct whereabouts, consideration may be given as to whether DaC should pay the fine.

Remember, when drivers are on an account hiring through the system and receive a PCN, although DaC will pay the fine if it meets the above criteria, we now appeal against every ticket until we have viewed any photographic evidence.

While at the meeting, I was informed that that there will changes to traffic movement in some streets including Throgmorton Street, Liverpool Street and Lime Street which will have an effect on taxi movements.

Please be aware that as from the 4 September 2006, all traffic-moving offences within the City of London including no right turn, U-turn, cycle lane and box junction violations, will be prosecuted. Details elsewhere in this issue.



Who'd have thought traffic wardens would have been the lesser of two evils to CCTV

Are You For Hire?

continued from centre pages

"There in front of me and my trusty TXII," continued Mark, "weren't the rolling hills of a trip out to Surrey, but nothing less than the Pyrenees mountain range! As we climbed upwards with my pedal almost down to the ground and the air-con blowing out cold air to its maximum to combat the searing heat, I could feel the power being drained and for the first time on the trip, I had to ask my passengers to turn the air-con down to give me some power back!"

The cab kept going south passing through *Bilbao, Burgos, Madrid* and through the central Spanish plateau of *La Mancha* with the *Toledo Mountains* on one side and hills of *Cuenca* on the other. This is the area traditionally associated with *Don Quixote*. The group then stopped overnight in *Valdepenas* – unsurprisingly the TXII becoming a centre of attraction with the locals.

Another early morning start saw the TXII and its back-up vehicle driving between the areas of *Seville* and *Granada* down into *Gibraltar* and the ferry that would take them onto the African continent via *Tangiers* in northern Morocco.

"That was one ferry ride I wouldn't be in a hurry to repeat," said Mark. "I'd been warned that the Straits of Gibraltar could be a rough crossing, but this was ridiculous! So bad was it that you could see empty cars bouncing around and almost colliding with each other! I decided to move the cab as far from other vehicles as I could – in itself not quite so simple with all that bouncing up and down! But we finally made it and I was delighted to be able to drive off with no scratches to the vehicle."

And onto Africa...

And so on they drove, ever southwards towards the *Sahara Desert*, through the Moroccan capital city of *Rabat*, the play-it-again-Sam city of *Casablanca* - where they spent the night - *Dar-el-Beida, El-Jadida* and finally down to *Marrakesh* with just the *Atlas Mountains* dividing the TXII London taxi from the living hell of the *Sahara*! And if you don't believe what the Sahara Desert is like, ask **Call Sign's** Bob Woodford, who once ran across it for charity!

"It was just so unreal," said Mark, "to say people were staring would be an understatement. Most of them had never seen anything like it before in their lives! And that was nothing because we then had to get to the souk (market) area where the trip would finally

end. We were almost lifted up by the throngs wanting to touch this strange vehicle."

Amazingly, Mark and the crew then heard a cockney voice calling out: "George, isn't that a London cab over there?" Soon an English couple had worked their way through the crowds and in an amazed voice – but with a broad smile - asked Mark: "How come when we lived in London we could never get a cab to take us south of the river and now we are over here, what do we see but a London taxi somewhat further south than we ever asked for!"

And thus Mark's cab trip of a lifetime ended. They stayed in Marrakesh overnight, where to save any **Call Sign** readers asking, they weren't offered any drugs! The next morning, Mark took his passengers to Marrakesh airport where they caught a flight back to London and he, after deciding not to put on to the rank, started the long, lonely drive back home.

"It wasn't too bad," he told us, "I stopped off in Barcelona to do some sky diving!"

And the details? Well we are not allowed to say what was on the meter, but suffice to say that his meter goes up to £9999.80 and it didn't reach that. In addition, Mark had sensibly decided to fill up with diesel at every opportunity and the total return fuel cost was around £750. The one-way trip took up the best part of five days including the first day with its running around London. Mark collected the outstanding part of the fare on his return after having been given probably the largest tip any cab driver has ever been given. Again, **Call Sign** doesn't want to say exactly how much but it was huge! And his TXII? "Not one single problem," said Mark, "but it did bring my service time round very quickly!"

And his first job on returning to London?

"Well I took some time off to settle back into normality, but eventually went back to work and amazingly, the first job was to take a Spanish lady to Heathrow – which no longer seemed too much of a roader. Speaking to her, she said she was flying home to Madrid and I don't think she believed me when I told her that I had driven through Madrid with my last passenger!"

And lastly, what did girlfriend Alison say about Mark's 'job' to Marrakesh?

"She thought it was great," said Mark. "Mind you," he added quickly, "she did say that she wouldn't be too happy if I did it again – but I think she meant unless she could come with!"

Raoul's is situated between Ledbury Road and Powis Square in W11. With residential parking covering 90% of the area and running up to 10.30pm, the pay and display parking outside the restaurant is a Godsend!

As you enter the light and airy split-level restaurant, you are greeted by the very-smart and friendly staff and in our case, also George the Manager.

Raoul's has sixteen covers outside and sixty covers inside the air-conditioned dining area, which is decorated to and has a Mediterranean feel about it. The soft, Parisian-style music playing in the background gives a relaxing feel. There is also a cocktail bar downstairs.

The set menu is reasonable priced and comprises of 2 courses for £12.50 or 3 courses for

David Kupler (Y74), David Ballard (N28), John Hudson (W34), John Hall (K74) and Alex Constantinou (N05) are Call Sign's restaurant reviewers. These DaC drivers and their guest will visit restaurants periodically and give their honest opinions...

This month, John Hudson visited Raoul's in Talbot Road, Notting Hill...

Eating Out with Call Sign

Suffrajets to go to Number One?



The Suffrajets look to be heading to number one. L-R Alex, Vicky, Gemma, emergency drummer Brian Rice and Claire!

Call Sign's favourite band, The Suffrajets, who were featured on last month's cover with DaC Chairman Brian Rice, have been widely tipped to reach the coveted number one spot in the charts with their August 7 release, Worthy.

The UK's most renowned music paper, NME, gave the track an amazing 9 out of 10. Many of those who have heard the haunting song and lyrics have remarked on the voice similarity to a female John Lennon.

The girls spent much time in the Corsham Street rehearsal studios, which was where we originally caught up with them for the photo shoot.

All we can do is to wish them good luck, but we suspect that they won't need it...

£15.00. There is also a nice à la carte menu and there are usually chalkboard "specials of the day" all of which were tempting, but you can't have everything!

So I chose from the set menu, starting with wild basmati rice, spring onions and olives, surrounded by avocado and plum tomatoes with an olive and basmati vinaigrette dressing. It doesn't just sound delicious – it was delicious!

My main course consisted of fresh sardines, coated in a homemade pesto of garlic, parsley, peppers, and chillies on a bed of fresh green beans. Like the hors d'oeuvres, this too was absolutely wonderful.

And speaking of lovely (she told me to add that bit!), my wife Maria chose from the à la carte menu commencing with a meat mezze platter, which consisted of grilled Haloumi cheese, lamb kofta, hummus, sunblushed tomatoes, tzatziki and of course, pitta bread. Any hunger pangs were already on the way out by the time she made her way through that!

She followed the mezze with a grilled half baby chicken with garlic and oregano accompanied by Mediterranean vegetables and washed down with chilled glass of house white wine. Maria's only comment was that it was done to perfection and that she definitely had no room for any dessert. So on to the desserts!

Manager George recommended the house speciality, 'Pear tarte tatin' served with a

French vanilla ice cream. If, like Maria and I, you are pudding lovers, then this was simply divine!

Raoul's menu is well thought out and has a subtle mix of Moroccan, French and a general Mediterranean influence.

Raoul's also sounds like a lovely place to go for breakfast – especially if you are bargain hunting in the Portobello Road! You can fill-up on dishes such as eggs Benedict or a buffalo mozzarella and grilled aubergine foccacia – or perhaps a brunch lunch where you can try Raoul's 3-course meal for the price of a 2-course from the à la carte menu. It will set you back around £40 to £50 including wine – and for Notting Hill that is very reasonable for such a lovely restaurant.

Raoul's are passionate about ingredients and want them to be the stars of the show. They believe that their name stands for quality and both Maria and I now agree with them!

The restaurant is open daily from 8.30am - 11pm and the menu changes throughout the day.

The wine list is good and judging by the clientele sitting outside eating al fresco, a big favourite.

Raoul's restaurant 107 Talbot Road W11

Bookings: 020 7229 2400

www.raoulsgourmet.com

John Hudson (W34)

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Drivers Operations Update

Hello Ladies and Gents,

Citigroup coverage

I must begin by mentioning the coverage on Canary Wharf during the hours that E140 operates and the new 'Rolling Rank' commences. Having spent numerous evenings at the Citigroup building at Canada Square and also closely monitoring the situation, it is clear to me and the rest of the Board of Management that the increasing number of rejects has a very detrimental effect on the coverage in this area.

Some trips are rejected as many as 40 times, which is totally unacceptable to the account clients that we service on the island and I am sure you must be aware that poor coverage and numerous late arrivals can greatly jeopardise an account.

The recent acquisition of Citigroup is a major scalp, added to the very high profile accounts that we already service in Canary Wharf. Dial-a-Cab now has the largest account database of any circuit in this area and I cannot stress highly enough how important it is to accept the trips as soon as they are offered. I fully understand that we are extremely busy and that traffic conditions - especially the three tunnels in and around the island which seem to cause problems most evenings - is a major cause of late arrivals. However, there are also many occasions when taxis are booked into E140 and still rejecting many of the trips that are offered to them.

Our Society is very successful and drivers

from rival circuits look on us now with envy. Let's all do that extra trip each shift to cover our work and more importantly, make sure that we look after these prestigious accounts.

I am sure there are other service providers that would be only too pleased to step into our shoes. Please don't give them the chance...

E140 – Reminder how it works...

Can I remind you all that E140 operates as a non-physical rank between 9pm and 2am, after this time it reverts to E14C until 6am. It then returns back to normal working (E14C and E14S) and the procedures remain unchanged in that the two ranks are then both physical.

If you accept a trip from the 'Rolling Rank' between 9pm and 1am, the pick up is via the Marshal at Upper Bank Street. For all other prebookings from Citigroup even during these times, you are required to advise arrival and display a name board outside 33 Canada Square. The maximum run in is £4.20 and you do not have to swipe a charge card. The trip is a normal account trip with the meter continually running whilst you are waiting.

Signals update...

By the time you read this article, new base station controllers will be installed at all of the



Dial-a-Cab aerial sites. The error rates are now certainly down and the improved performance of the BSC's and increased capacity will spread the load much more evenly across the London area. This again will improve the signals even further.

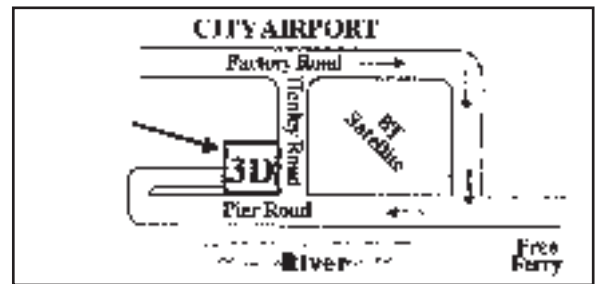
It was quite gratifying to hear that one of our members took a long trip from the Marshal at a Eurostar late train account recently and he phoned me to say that he actually received a strong enough signal in the heart of the Hampshire countryside for him to be able to clear his trip on arrival! He also mentioned that there was a noticeable improvement to the general signals across the normal areas of working.

Work in this important area is ongoing, but things are definitely looking up.

Allan Evans

Allane@Dialacab.co.uk

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Every issue of Call Sign takes a look back at ODRTS history through the pages of the magazines of the time with a...

Dial-a-Cab Flashback

Flashback
1982

This month's Flashback goes back to May 1982 and the Sales Report ...

From ODRTS News and Views – May 1982

SALES EXECUTIVE REPORT Jack Taylor (D19)

It would appear that last month my request for nightmen to look out for business houses that were operating through the night was apparently not very clear, as not even one name and address was forthcoming ... or is it that offices do not work through the night, because I am sure that cannot be true!

I had a complaint from one of our credit customers that an ODRTS driver objected to a passenger smoking in his cab and an argument ensued. As most of you know, I was a heavy smoker and have stopped (this is my 12th attempt). So far I've lasted 4 months, so I can speak from both sides. Although you



may find it offensive for people to smoke in your cab, there is no way that you can tell a radio job - cash or credit - not to smoke in your cab. The customer who complained could not be specific or the driver concerned would have been disciplined.

During the month, I had a meeting with Monsignor Brown who is the co-ordinator for the Papal Visit to England and Wales and was able to set up ODRTS as the official suppliers of taxicabs for the visit. This is something that we should feel really proud of, as I know many other companies were after this. So here's hoping that the visit goes ahead as scheduled as there is some doubt due to the Argentine crisis.

Also in last month's Call Sign, I asked where the *Esprit de Corps* that once existed had gone too? Well I'd still like to know as one of the things that got ODRTS off the ground was an *Esprit de Corps* that was second to none and I hope one day this can be said again.

During the month of April we opened 34 accounts, which is not bad for what is traditionally one of the worst months of the year. As the Chelsea Flower Show appears on the horizon and with it, hopefully, work on the street, I want you to really think of the tough Kipper Season we have just come through and please, please look after our regulars. Then hopefully we will maintain the upward trend in the work.

I know you can do it... you know you can do it ... so let's do it!

Jack Taylor (D19)
ODRTS Sales Executive

EXHIBITIONS BY THE JEWISH MUSEUM

August 2006

Identities 2006: (Camden Town)

To mark the 350th anniversary of Jewish life in Britain, The Jewish Museum presents a new exhibition reflecting minority identities in Britain. Drawing on filmed interviews and photographs, it illustrates the often little recognised diversity of roots and experience among Jewish people in Britain and draws parallels with the life of other minority communities.

Life is Red: (The Sternberg Centre, Finchley)

An exhibition of miniatures, sculptures and textiles created by students from Prague, London and Nürnberg, representing their responses to the Holocaust. The exhibition, created by the Hackney Music Development Trust, is linked to the world premiere of 'Hear Our Voice', an international music education project using the arts to increase awareness and understanding of the demonstrated dangers of prejudice and Holocaust.

The Jewish East End: (Walking tour, Sunday 6 August at 10.15am)

This walking tour, led by Denis Davis, will explore the vibrant area of Jewish settlement along Commercial Road, including the Grand Palais Yiddish Theatre, Hessel Street Market, Oxford and St. George's Club, Fieldgate Street Synagogue and Nelson Street Synagogue. Fee £5 (students and Museum Friends £4).

Advance booking required, as we are unable to take bookings on the day. 020 7284 1997

The Jewish Museum Camden Town: 129-131 Albert Street, Camden Town 020 7284 1997

August openings: Monday - Thursday 10 am - 4 pm, Sunday 10 am - 5 pm

Admission: Adults £3.50, Senior Citizens £2.50, Children/Students/Disabled £1.50, Family ticket £8, Museum Friends free. Nearest underground station is Camden Town

The Jewish Museum at the Sternberg Centre: 80 East End Road, Finchley

Admission is free, but places are limited so please call the Hackney Music Development Trust on 020 8820 7410 to book. Nearest underground station is Finchley Central

Enough to make your eyes water!

If pain was felt by Portugal's Ricardo Carvalho in the 'nether regions' after being inadvertently trod on by Wayne Rooney, then 30-odd million England fans had exactly the same feeling on that sweltering Saturday in July. We bombed out again on the dreaded penalties and left Beckham and Co to pack their bags for dear old blighty to see who could be first home and in the pub!

I, for one, wasn't hanging around either. My unsigned Pelé autobiography in one hand, Gill in the other and the first plane out of Gatwick on Monday morning bound for southern Spain, seemed to be the perfect recipe for my aching heart. That '20-20' vision is great stuff, but every England fan knew that when the squad was announced, our mate Sven hadn't picked enough strikers. Jermain Defoe and Darren Bent should have gone because Michael Owen and Rooney were carrying injuries. Defoe must wonder if his bosses at club and country have real faith, as I believe he should have also gone to Euro 2004 and he is still only 23. On the other hand, Darren Bent at a year younger led the Charlton line superbly all last season and had the pace and energy to play on his own in front of Sven's latest idea of a midfield five. If you're going to win games, then you are going to need goal scorers, please take note Steve McClaren! England managed to get to three quarter-finals under Sven's tenure for the princely sum of £5million-a-year! Was that really good enough after taking over one of the best squad of players England had seen for many a year? Could an English coach not have produced the same or even better results?

We will now have to wait and see if McClaren and his new back room staff - which could include Terry Venables and Alan Shearer - can make a charge for Euro 2008 in Switzerland and Austria. With the main nucleus of the squad now reaching their late twenties, I would hope that we could go further. Let's all keep our fingers crossed and hope we don't get kicked in the 'Carvalho's' again...OUCH!

ZZ Top

Congratulations to Italy for snatching their fourth World Cup win, but what really happened between Zinedine Zidane and Marco Materazzi? When I saw the incident, I automatically thought that Materazzi had made a racist comment. Zidane, over his illustrious career has been kicked from pillar to post, spat at, pinched and punched and sworn at - and this was the only reason I could see why Zidane reacted so violently. Retaliation on the ultimate stage of the World Cup Final was sure to be seen by the cameras, but apparently the only official that witnessed that particular incident was the fourth official. What happened when Figo head-butted van Bommel? It had been witnessed by the linesman and he told the referee. The punishment was a yellow card? I suppose this incident will roll on for a while

More true football/taxi tales from the pen of DaC's Driver/West Ham fan Russ...

Russell's Hall of Footie



with each side throwing accusations at each other, but I suspect that Materazzi was not as innocent as his keeper, Buffon, who was running around screaming!

In my eyes, Zidane will always be one of the greatest players of today's game. Not only did he win the 'Player of the Tournament' at this World Cup, but he has also won two World Cup triumphs, three World Player of the Year awards, one European Championship victory, a European Player of the Year accolade and the prestigious honour of being named the best European player of the last 50 years in 2004! Not bad for the Marseille native of Algerian descent, who worked his way up from the French lower leagues to rightly take his place as the most influential player of his generation.

After coming back from retirement to lead

his ageing troops through a tricky qualifying campaign and group phase in Germany, the maverick midfielder turned on the style in the latter stages of the World Cup to propel the veteran team to a surprise final appearance. But nothing could come as more of a surprise than the closing minutes of extra time. In a moment of madness, Zidane's head-butt of Marco Materazzi ended his reign with a red card and first place in the showers. But after many years of magical football, the retiring Real Madrid galactico can wave goodbye to an international stage that has given him so much, but rewarded his loyal fans a thousand times more.

If he's looking for a fresh start next season, then look no further than Upton Park!

Tottenham Hotspur v Cab Trade All Stars

In this edition of *Call Sign* you will see details of the above charity football match. I hope to see you all turn out en masse. Don't miss the fun!

Russell Hall (G44)

Send your footie tales to Russell at rwball@russtbehammer.fsnet.co.uk or look out for his cab when you are out and about, reg J111 RUS. He loves a footie chat...

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In addition to driving a taxi with Dial-a-Cab, Howard Sales (ex-A11) was a driver trainer with the Society for several years at a time when data terminals in taxis were still a novelty!

He left the UK in 2002 moving to Queensland, Australia, but didn't fancy the lesser job of driving a cab in Oz, so he successfully opened up a service station with a workshop and retail outlet. As a regular online *Call Sign* reader, he recently wrote to us to put the garage owner's view concerning the ongoing hike in fuel prices. He told *Call Sign*:

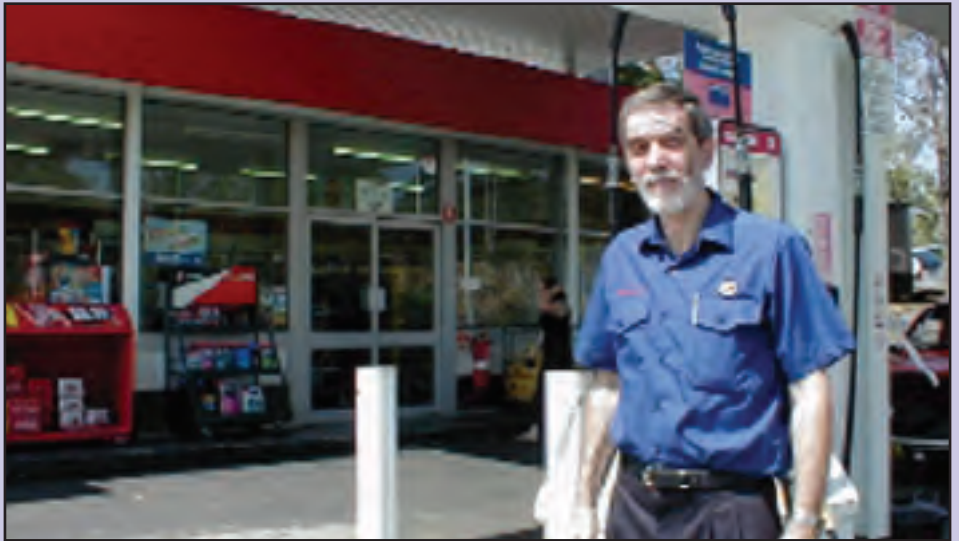
"In the last *Call Sign* you were talking about the rising cost of fuel. When I got my badge in 1978, I was using £3 a day in diesel; when I left in 2002, I was putting in £16 a day. However, my earnings hadn't increased by the same percentage!

Now for the view from a fuel service station owner. We have to purchase our fuel from Caltex and I am currently paying A\$1.42 a litre (56p). They suggest a figure that I sell at to be competitive with the opposition in my area. As this figure is generally less than I have paid, they provide 'assistance' - this means that I make one cent a litre profit on which I pay tax. If I'm allowed to sell the fuel at my own price, the best I can achieve is 2 cents a litre and still remain competitive. The price of fuel here - other than diesel - can fluctuate up and down 3 or 4 times a day, so we are continually changing our price board. The reason diesel remains unchanged until we have a fresh delivery is because there is no 'assistance' on diesel. At present, our diesel purchase price is one cent cheaper than petrol.

LPG - which I don't sell - is approx 55 cents

Rising Fuel Costs?

An ex-DaC driver gives the garage point of view!



Howard at his 'servo' forecourt

a litre (20p), which sounded good until I spoke to one of our customers who drives for Black and White cabs. He and his partner drove a Maxi Taxi, which is based on a Nissan Urvan that when brand new returned a reasonable consumption figure, but as time went on the consumption figures went up until they were putting in an extra A\$100 a week in fuel! They have now gone back to a Toyota diesel and have improved their fuel costs.

Have any of the cabs on DaC that have had an LPG conversion noticed an increase in fuel costs? My theory is that the seals in the pumps and regulators dry out due to the drying nature of the gas and minor leaks develop, hence the reason for running on the alternative fuel once a week.

Look after yourselves downunder...!

Howard Sales (ex-A11)

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I've been really lazy over the past few months as I've not written an article for Call Sign since April, so consider yourselves truly blessed this August....!

Tracing the family back...

I've mentioned previously that my wife and I have both started investigating our genealogy with the help of online resources, in fact it's turned into a competition to see how far we can trace back. My wife insists she's winning as she can currently trace her great grand parents back to late Victorian times, however I keep telling her she's fighting a losing battle; I can trace my family back to the Chin Dynasty who ruled from 265-289A.D... nuff said!

Unlike the England football team, tracing your ancestry can be quite interesting and fun. In fact the earliest census in 1841 has recently been released. Instead of coughing up nearly £70 for an annual subscription, I subscribed for a free trial on www.ancestry.co.uk which appeared to be the most popular genealogy website and I searched and searched - and found nothing! I even searched for my Gran who died in the 1980s, but couldn't find her; I'm sure she existed! We found one possible match for the wife's ancestors, but decided to cancel the trial before they took any of my money as we found the website not very helpful at all.

I'm getting the feeling that it's going to be a lot of paper shuffling and trips to The National Archives in Kew (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/default.htm>) rather than using these websites - always assuming we can dedicate the time...

Can the Internet fill up?

Recently a DaC driver asked me if the Internet can get full up? I must admit I can understand why they asked the question, but the simple answer is no, the Internet will never fill up as it has no end; it's a never-ending network of connected PCs and servers. However censorship, freedom of speech and abuse of position are the real threats to the Internet. Too many countries attempt to censor their people's Internet access - countries such as China, Singapore and the Middle East. Also massive companies such as Microsoft and Google can easily adapt information to suit their own needs.

Taxi websites

I've now been writing for *Call Sign* for nine years and in the very early days most of my articles introduced new UK taxi websites as they hit the web, in fact, to my knowledge, my web site www.taxicab.co.uk was the very first UK taxicab website, although it now just points to my vintage photo and calendar website.

Recently I've been searching the web,



checking-out UK taxi sites and I saw an advert on a cab for <http://www.taxi-mart.co.uk>, so thought I'd visit their site. Taxi-mart.co.uk obviously intends to be number one for black cabs and taxi sales as they appear to be dedicating a lot of revenue to advertising what is a good website.

They have all the normal sections you'd expect to see in a taxi website and more, including Taxi Sales, a Forum and loads of Taxi Resources. Definitely worth a visit.

**Until next time, be lucky...
Vince Chin**

M&O NOW HAVE FOUR CABS WITH NEW TERMINALS

Mann & Overton have four courtesy taxis fitted with Dial-a-Cab terminals and DaC drivers attending the Holloway Road dealership for servicing or overhauls have the chance of a free DaC-fitted TX1 or TXII while their own vehicle is being worked on.

Speaking to Call Sign, M&O General Service Manager Mike Saunders said:
"With the co-operation of the DaC Board who have made available the radio equipment, we are delighted to provide this facility for our Dial-a-Cab customers. It allows drivers to continue servicing account clients while their own cab is here. I would remind everyone though, that these courtesy cabs are subject to availability and not guaranteed."

You can contact the M&O Service Dept. on 020 7700 0888...



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The old passenger joke of "I recognise the back of your head" applies doubly to Dial-a-Cab driver John Moody (D82). As the presenter of ITV's hugely successful afternoon quiz program, *Cash Cab*, not only is the back of his head recognised by his passengers, but also by the one million or so regular viewers that *Cash Cab* enjoys.

"Apparently I have an instantly recognisable voice as well," John told *Call Sign*, "and to think I've lived with it all these years and never knew!"

For those who – like John – work days and don't watch much daytime TV, *Cash Cab* looks like an ordinary cab with John as the driver. The big difference is that when the prospective passengers enter the passenger compartment, lights flash and John's voice informs them:

You're on Cash Cab!

They then have to answer a series of questions until they reach their destination. The questions go up in value and literally thousands of pounds can be at stake going into the last question with as many contestants losing large amounts as winning.

So does John still work on Dial-a-Cab?

"Definitely," said John. "Each series takes 3 weeks to film and we've done 2 so far – although the latest series was interrupted due to the World Cup. They thought that was more important! In fact, I have just invested some of the proceeds I earned from *Cash Cab* into a brand new TXII. I can't just sit on my backside waiting for more Presenter work to appear. I do enjoy TV work, but I also enjoy driving a taxi. And of course,

CALL SIGN TALKS TO DAC'S MR CASH CAB!



John Moody giving away loot on *Cash Cab*
Inset: John's American rival on CBS - 'Gabby Cabby' Peter Franklin...



I don't kid myself. I've been told that I'm a good TV presenter with the easy-going style that producers and viewers like and I do enjoy it, but nothing lasts forever and taxi driving is what I do and I'm as proud of that."

So popular is *Cash Cab* nowadays that at a recent TV awards ceremony held in Cannes, a screen was lowered and before anything else came up, there was John's face speaking from the front of

the cab announcing: "You're on *Cash Cab*!" And even more amazing is that the format has now been sold to 35 different countries – all, of course, with their own presenters.

"My Croatian isn't that good," joked John!

So how did John's TV career begin?

"Well," said John, "I suppose it's all thanks to Tom Whitbread! Around 6 years ago, Tom put out a message on our screens asking for a chatty cabby to be involved in a TV program called *Britain's Worst Roads* and I applied and got the job. Lion TV produced this and when Adam Wood came up with the idea of *Cash Cab*, he phoned Lion TV to ask if they had any chatty cabbies on their books. And here I am..."

John has also worked for America network CBS on their renowned *24 Hours* program. This compared a London cabby to the American version – 'Gabby Cabby' Peter Franklin. John made sure that London won!

What is the largest amount John has given away so far from his *Cash Cab*?

"Late last year, one lucky couple went from Kensington High Street to Waterloo and by the time we arrived, they were £5800 better off! But," added John, "there is also another side to the coin. I picked up 2 really nice, ordinary guys from Cheapside who were going to Stepney. We were almost there and they had to answer one more question to win close on £4000. They failed and I really felt as gutted as they obviously were. But as the producer says, if everyone won, there would be no suspense in the show. I still felt really bad for them."

We assumed that John must now be London's most recognised cabby?

"Well, I do get recognised quite a lot, but not as much as you'd think. That's probably due to the fact that I work days and most of my real passengers who I DON'T give money away to also work days and don't watch daytime TV. Mind you, I do get recognised in the strangest places. For example, I was in a small Welsh village in the Brecon Beacons recently for a rally-driving weekend and we stopped at a hotel for lunch. Suddenly the bar manager in a really strong Welsh accent asked if I had my *Cash Cab* outside!"

What is so nice about talking to John is to find that his feet are planted firmly on the ground. He enjoys TV presenting, but isn't afraid to let anyone know that he is a taxi driver.

Sadly, John's mother passed away in April. "But I'll tell you what; she was so proud to have seen her boy on TV," said John.

E3 TAXIS NOW AGENTS FOR TAXICAT EMISSION SYSTEM

E3 would like to thank all those DaC drivers who now use E3 for their repairs.

We would also like to inform you that we are now Approved Agents for the **TaxiCat** emission system - the all stainless steel exhaust system that fits all models of Taxi and is totally maintenance free. The total price inclusive of Vat and fitting is £2000.

You can book now on 0207 474 6592. Cabs due for plating in July and August will be issued with a 'confirmation of booking' letter to present to the PCO when booking your test date.



Ball - flag - flag - ball - hie!
Which way is the club house
wonders Howard Pears?



Dial-a-Dream, the charity that realises dreams for children with life-threatening illnesses, was founded in 1992 on the second floor of DaC's Brunswick House by Tom Whitbread and Bob Heath. It has made wishes come true for hundreds of children since then. The charity recently had its annual golf day...

DaC At The Dial-a-Dream Golf Day

In the thirteen years that **Dial-a-Dream** has been in existence, we have had to date twelve golf days by way of fundraisers to enable us to continue our work. During that time I don't think we have even once experienced any inclement weather – however, saying that, neither had we ever experienced temperatures up in the 90's. Phew, it wasn't arf 'ot mum!

The West Essex Golf club hosted the day on Monday 3 July this year with 16 teams all waiting for 1.30 to tee off for another great day. Some had already played 9 holes before the buffet lunch.

Among the loyal supporters to field a team were our friends from **Dial-a-Cab**, represented by that doyen of sartorial elegance and as usual dressed as the epitome of designer labels, **Allen Togwell**, along with **Keith Cain**, **Howard Pears** and their corporate bank manager **Ken Kyriacou** - the latter to be congratulated for winning one of the individual prizes.

Even I took part for the first time having purchased a new set of bespoke clubs in Florida last year! They were well-tested as both the 'nearest the pin' and 'longest drive' competitions had to utilise a 7-iron. That can be very off-putting, especially as a drive.

The prize winners were presented with their just deserts after a superb meal and comedian Johnny Cassidy had entertained us with his repertoire of funny stories. Team winners were **Anglo-Irish Bank** with the runners-up coming from **Moss Electrics**.

Everybody had a great day, but as you'd expect the charity was the overall winner with in excess of £15000 being raised on the day.

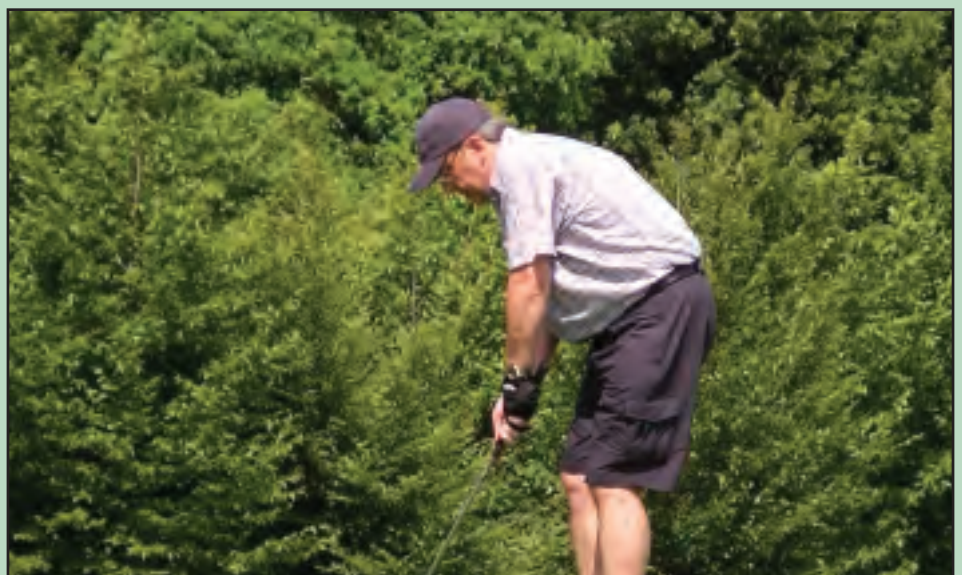
If there are any enthusiastic players and I'm sure there must be some, why not come along next year and join us? We can even guarantee the weather - and the company is great.

Bob 'the dog' Heath (ex-F44)
Treasurer, Dial-a-Dream

You can read about Dial-a-Dream on www.dial-a-dream.co.uk



Decision time for Allen Togwell - hit the ball, trim the hedge or even do both!



Keith Cain's ball was found two days later in Sherwood forest!

On a sunny 12 July, the **London Taxidrivers' Fund for Underprivileged Children** held their annual outing to Southend-on-Sea, taking 300 special needs and disadvantaged children in 100 decorated taxis on a fun day out.

The taxis assembled from 7am at Victoria Park and lovable character **Sonic X** was there to see the kids off. He had been donated by **Jetix UK** who are great supporters of our fund and who do a wonderful job entertaining over 2 million kids every month with an unbeatable line-up of shows. Also there were the two lovable fun characters, Susie and Doug, kindly donated by **Esprit** of Regent Street. Our thanks also go to Clown **Billy Wand** who was on hand to ensure the kids were all laughing and to **Krispy Kremes** for donating doughnuts given to us on the morning. The Mayor of Tower Hamlets, **Councillor Shafiqul Haque**, kindly came to wave us off.

Before leaving the park, Simon Rich and his team from **Westminster Motor Insurance** presented a cheque to the fund's Hon. Chairman, DaC's **David Lessman (D19)** and the Committee are very grateful to them for this generous donation.

The convoy set off at 9.30 and after a half way 'wee' stop at the **Palms Hotel**, continued on our way with many people lining the streets to cheer and wave! Shopkeepers came out to see us and curtains were hastily pulled back with people waving from their homes. Even a man selling wheelie bins on the A127 rushed over to the convoy and made a lovely donation to the charity – how great is that! He could have filled a bin with notes though!

Special mention must be made of the excellent job carried out by outriders from the **Essex and City of London Police** forces. Both the outward and return journeys were so smooth and timed to perfection that not only did we hardly stop, but the taxi convoy, **RAC** and **St John's Ambulance** remained together for the whole journey. On leaving Victoria Park at the end of the day, it was nice seeing many of the drivers stopping to thank the police.

We arrived at the sunny Southend sea front with horns blowing and music playing waking up all the sleeping sunbathers who rapidly left the comfort of their sun-beds to rush up from the beach to give us a wave. On arrival at the **Cliffs Pavilion**, we were served lunch followed by a mad dash to **Adventure Island** for non-stop fun on the free rides! At 5pm it was back to the Cliffs Pavilion for tea and then it was disco time! We were delighted to welcome **Ravens Southend Carnival Court 2006** and we are very grateful to them for coming to join us as we also are to balloonologist **Mr Chippy** who travelled with us making numerous shapes for the kids. We also welcomed Southend's own resident magician, 13-year old Ryan Sholem, who did a wonderful job going round performing his magic. Watch out Paul Daniels!

The fund's Hon. Chairman then made a speech welcoming everyone, including the Mayor and Mayoress of Southend, **Councillor Ron and Mrs Janice Price** who awarded

Sunny Southend welcomes the LTFUC 2006 outing



DaC's David Lessman and Bill Tyzack with Southend's Carnival Concert girls

prizes for the two best-decorated taxis. The first prize, the Terry Stapleton Rose Bowl, went to Stephen Bell with the second prize, the Peter Lucas Shield, going to Ruben Frampton.

The day just flew by and at 6pm it was time to make a mad dash to the loos before our return trip home. Drivers were presented with a stainless steel mug while the children each received a colourful Munch Bunch Rucksack from **Nestlé** to whom we are very grateful. The children were also given a stick of rock and the City of London Police kindly handed their own little goodies to them as well.

On the way home, as we passed Hadleigh fire station the firemen hosed the cabs down and the kids just loved it! Not so sure about the drivers though, as a lot of unsuspecting ones had left their windows down and got a thorough soaking! Our thanks to the firemen...

In addition to the above, thanks also go to **bbh Bartle Bogle Hegarty Ltd** for helping with the sponsoring of lunches and teas, **JET (Conoco Phillips)**, **LTI Vehicles, M&O** and the **JET Service Station** in Clipstone Street for their co-operation in donating diesel for the outing with each driver receiving diesel vouchers. Many thanks also to **London Communications, Catering at Victoria Park (Mark & Jason)**, **DJ Dave Davies** and all our sponsors. Our apologies to anyone we may have missed out.

Last but definitely not least, a great big thank

you to all our brilliant drivers and helpers – we just couldn't do it all without you. Our motto is *none walks so tall as he who stoops to help a child* and what TALL people you all are.

Many people continually praise the work of the LTFUC and comment on what an excellent job we do running such large outings so successfully. It often goes unsaid, but this is because the LTFUC have such an excellent committee who not only run great outings, but also work so hard all year round helping needy children in many different ways and I am very proud, as I am sure all the committee members are, to be part of that team – well done lads and lasses.

Raymond Levy
LTFUC Press Officer

Call Sign

August 2006

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Web Site: www.taxicab.co.uk/dialacabmag

Printers: John Brown Printing 112 Portland Rd,
London SE25 4PJ

Design: Aldan Publications,

Tel: 07958 300 428

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CALL SIGN ON-LINE LIBRARY GOES PDF

Many Dial-a-Cab drivers like to look up *Call Sign* on-line when searching for something specific in the mag rather than re-trawl through real pages! We don't really mind how you read it so long as you do read it! However, one of the problems that drivers constantly tell me about is that *Call Sign* only puts around 20 of its 40 pages on-line.

We do that for several reasons, most of which are because not all items are DaC connected and unlike other on-line mags, we also provide a search facility so that if you want to read the letter you wrote to Mailshot in 1998, you can just type in your name and the *Call Sign* search engine will fish out all mentions of your name and the articles to which it is attached to.

Bearing in mind that *Call Sign* has every issue going back to early 1998 in addition to special issues from 1967 and 1977 on-line, it isn't an easy



procedure and one that takes our computer expert Vince Chin some time to do each month.

But as so many drivers have now requested it, as of the May issue, you now have two choices; you can use the original format with its search facility or you can also see a PDF version of the magazine in its entirety which you can just click on, but it will be as though you are reading the actual magazine. If you aren't sure of something, you can't ask the search engine to find it for you, you'll have to in the words of a well-known TV show, ask a friend!

Yes, it does mean that *Call Sign's* large overseas readership will now be able to read the complete issue, but that is the fault of the Internet and not this magazine. They call it progress. Whether it is or not we'll leave for you to decide...

Alan Fisher

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Call Sign has been contacted by mybookyourbook.co.uk to explain to our drivers and staff just what their online library facility is all about.

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The site, unlike some book sharing schemes, does not rely on the chance finding of books, nor is there a need to provide a matching swap when you find a book you want to read. The ability to order envelopes at a low cost price through the site also means big savings on packaging too.

To join mybookyourbook.co.uk, members must simply submit details of 10 paperbacks they own and pay a sign-up fee. They then have access to the library and can start requesting books from other members via the easy to use automated emailing system. Once received and after a reading period has elapsed, each book stays on the member's "bookshelf" until another member requests it and sends a stamped addressed envelope so that it can be despatched.

One user of mybookyourbook.co.uk is DaC's Network Administrator, **Jonathen Winterburn**. He has been using the facility since its launch in 2005. He told *Call Sign*:

"Mybookyourbook.co.uk is a non-profit company and the low membership fee covers hosting and other such costs. This is a great community to join if you're a book-lover."

Call Sign has been sent a number of bookmarks advertising the website. These are available in the Driver's Reception on a first-come, first served basis.

***Call Sign* readers are also offered a discounted first year's membership fee of £6.99 (normally £8.95) simply by using the code DAC7441 when signing up. Happy reading!**

Call Centre's Georgina Takes a Bronze

At the Hampton Court Flower Show...

Part of this year's
Hampton Court
Flower Show
Inset: Georgina back
in the Call Centre



Popular Dial-a-Cab calltaker, **Georgina Newton**, sounded thrilled as she told *Call Sign* how she had scooped the bronze medal for her vegetable basket at the prestigious Hampton Court Flower Show – where one of the Silver medal winners (in the *Show Gardens* category) was no less than Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone!

Taking place from 4 – 9 July, Georgina and a friend were representing their local **Cable Street Community Garden** group. She told *Call Sign*:

"Many of those from the group gave me their prize vegetables and we arranged them into baskets for display at the show. Taking them all in the car was a nightmare because vegetables don't come in easy-packing designs! But we somehow got them all there without any misfortune."

In addition to Mayor Ken's *Show Gardens* category, there were hundreds of entries for other categories such as *Conceptual Gardens*, *Water Gardens*, *Floral Marquees*, *Rose displays* and Georgina's category of *Window Box and Hanging Gardens*. Georgina admitted that whilst knowing that their display was very

good, expecting a medal against such strong opposition was really clutching at straws – but they did it!

"We were just so thrilled when our name was announced as bronze winners," she said, "it was worth every minute of the hard work that our group had put in. I felt honoured to be the one who was presenting our display."

Georgina's display came under the heading of *Food in the City* and contained any and every vegetable or flower that is eatable, including chrysanthemums and nasturtiums – delicacies that *Call Sign* has yet to send our restaurant reviewers out to test!

And what about the medal? Who gets to keep that?

"We will be putting it up on our notice board because it belongs to every single person in our group," said Georgina with a sound of triumph. "We all earned this."

There were two Gold medal winner's in Georgina's category; they were the South Holland Horticultural Show Society and the Wisborough Horticultural Society.

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The C-word

In a late June report from a London evening paper (I know there is only one, but I refuse to name it as it is so biased against taxis), it was discovered that **congestion** in and around London is no better than before the introduction of the congestion charge. I personally stopped doing day work in the early 70s as it was bad enough then. Doing night work, it became easier to move around and manoeuvre the traffic.

Jump forward 30 years to now and evening traffic is getting worse than ever. We all know of Ken's re-phasing of traffic lights causing gridlock all over the capital. The closure of many side streets in and around the square mile just exasperates the problem, forcing all traffic onto main roads. The furtherance of bus only lanes with not a bus in sight doesn't help the problem. Red routes with parking bays only add hindrance with one lane wasted.

For those of us who live in and around Green Badge Valley, how clever was it to close the Rotherhithe tunnel for a period of six weeks, while at the same time closing one bore of the Blackwall tunnel and leaving only Tower Bridge as the first escape to the south from the city annexe, ie Canary Wharf? At least once a month the Limehouse Link closes, for what purpose I know not. It can't get that dirty with a 30mph speed limit.

On the subject of speed limits, what about the 20 mph at Lower/Upper Thames Street? This was brought about to protect the workforce and scaffolding of one building. The work has now finished, but the speed limit remains with tailbacks to Tower Bridge a regular event. To add to the woes of this bridge, there is a 20 mph limit on there as well and so the tailback even goes further back towards the Island.

Speed humps also contribute to the congestion. Although they may be needed at strategic points, ie schools, Islington Borough seem to have put them in every street and alleyway. Oxford Street, so I am told, during the day is a no-go being filled with empty buses, nose to tail, even blocking the yellow box junctions and preventing traffic crossing the intersections with the worst offenders being the much loved (by Ken) bendy buses.

Cones to protect non-existing work force at night are also a major factor, as those using the Westway know only too well from the regular messages on our DaC screens. And don't try the A4 west as this is usually gridlocked due to the closure of the Hammersmith flyover one way and M4 the other way! Not forgetting, of course, the closure of the Piccadilly underpass at the start of your journey west or end of the journey east. For the northern brigade, Swiss Cottage is always good for a bottleneck, along with the closure of Maida Vale at Kilburn High Road. And just try going north along the Edgware Road from the Marble Arch end!

Speed/gatso cameras - a cash cow if ever there was one - must also feature in

From the front seat of his TXII these are...



The Views of a Grumpy Old Man

the equation with most drivers now watching the speedo rather than the road in front of them! And while 25mph may not be attainable during the day, 40-50mph at 01.30am is not excessive along the A316 with not a pedestrian in sight let alone another vehicle. I'm not advocating tearing around the streets of the capital as if it were a Grand Prix track, but a little discretion and common sense are needed - as in the human factor and unlike the robot that is the speed camera.

Another mode of transport to add to the equation is the bike - pedal or motorised versions. They weave their way through narrow gaps, both with their own distinctive uniform. Cyclists with their gas mask, ignoring traffic lights and one way streets and usually wearing day-glo lycra, where-

as the moped user must have, by law, L-plates and a pizza box attached! The motorbike rider, a latter day Hells Angel, must be avoided at all costs.

The newest addition to the family is of course, the eco friendly Pedicab. Pavements hold no fear for these riders and the constant ringing of the bell is essential.

I do not have the answer to the problem, but I'm sure paying a tax is not part of the solution.

Flying the flag...?

For over 1000 years, St George has been the patron saint of England. Although shrouded in mystery, some say he was Turkish, some a Roman general, while others think that he never

Really existed and is just a myth along with his dragon slaying! It is also reputed that he never even came to this country. The Church of England now wants to replace him with St Alban, from whom that city is named after. Out would go the flag with the Red Cross on a white background and in its place a new flag, with a yellow cross on a blue background - not dissimilar to the Scottish flag of a white cross on a blue background. The reasons given are not only because of George's alleged warlike background, but also that the flag may now offend and cause discomfort to other religions. As a non-Christian, I am not offended by the depicting of the symbol of the cross and have never seen it as such before now.

If as now seems the norm, we must be careful not to offend any groups of people, then why not go the whole hog and make the new flag a white cross on a white background and while we're at it, surrender the country at the same time...?

Chas Kissin (P99J)

LIVERPOOL STREET MARSHALLED TAXI RANK

Trial extended until 31 August 2006

Further to last month's PCO notice *Marshalled Taxi Rank Trial at Liverpool Street*, the trial has now been extended and will run until 31 August 2006. It will continue to operate on the existing days and times i.e. Wednesday and Thursday evenings between 22:00 and 01:00.

The City of London Corporation is pleased with the usage of the marshalled rank by passengers and taxis alike and the reaction by the public to the scheme has been very positive.

The marshals, who are licensed taxi drivers, are responsible for the organisation of the taxi and passenger queues at the rank and for ensuring that passengers are able to get a taxi as quickly and efficiently as possible. The success of the scheme will continue to be monitored throughout the duration of the trial.

The taxi rank at Liverpool Street remains operational 24 hours a day and all drivers are reminded that normal rank regulations will continue to apply at all times.

Call Sign Goes Back To Spain!



Carmelo with his fairway in Zaragoza

The July issue of *Call Sign* contained an article on Spanish taxi driver José M. Basadre Montesinos, who lives in Puerto Real (Cadiz) and who wrote to this magazine in desperation after buying an old FX4R, but not managing to get the driver's manual with it. It was his English – or lack of it – that made a factual article so amusing.

He had originally signed off his first letter with the plaintiff cry of: *"If you or his wife collect something, or they desire some Hispanic object, not doubt in asking me for it, that with pleasure he would send it."*

Fortunately for José, LTI's Head of Overseas Operations, Nigel Walters, also read the article and after gaining his address via *Call Sign*, sent him the manual, which led José to thank him with a heartrending: *"If some Spain wishes to, please, not doubt in asking me for it."*

But we have now heard from another Spanish taxi driver whose preferred mode of business transport is also English – but this time a Fairway.

Carmelo Ruiz López (licence no 25) is the only taxi driver in Zaragoza with a London cab. His city is almost as historically famous as London and goes back to 25BC when it was a Moorish colony. He saw the story of the FX4R manual on-line and let us know that he is also a lover of London-style cabs.

He bought the cab in 1998 when he saw it at an exhibition of cars in the city - La Feria de Muestras de Zaragoza - fell in love with it and decided to buy it on the spur of the moment. The Fairway wasn't for sale, but so desperate was cabby Carmelo to have it, that the director of the exhibition eventually sold it to him.

Carmelo charges the same fares as all the other cabs, but emphasises his unique selling points for Zaragoza which are more comfort as well as travelling in a unique vehicle so far as the Spanish city is concerned.

Because the cab is unique in Zaragoza, companies advertising on the sides of taxis are paying Carmelo much more to advertise than the others get. And as the picture shows, he is not only using, but also advertising the **UBiee Power Pill** along with all the other drivers across the city. Not surprising, perhaps, as Zaragoza is the International headquarters of UBiee, the Internal Marketing Company of the Power Pill.

Kibble's Camera!

One of the hobbies of Dial-a-Cab driver **Bill Kibble (K86)** is "now and then" photography. In this series, Bill has taken photos of places and buildings that have an original version somewhere in the public domain...

This month: Looking at the junction of Vere St and Oxford St in 1901 and the present day



Vere St/Oxford St in 1901



And the junction now

Like it or not, no one can deny that the London Taxi is the most famous vehicle of its kind in the world and 2006 has seen the **TXII** appear in a host of adverts and shows.

Its curved lines and classic styling has given it admirers the world over, in addition to its recognisability which has always made it a favourite for film directors wanting to convey a sense of quality and all that is British.

And it seems that in 2006, this is more relevant than ever with so-called "black cabs" – recently hailed as the greatest British automotive design icon in an Auto Trader survey – rarely off our screens or absent from billboards and magazines.

Kate Moss is finding plenty of room in the back of a cab for a change of clothes and a make-up make-over in the latest **Rimmel London** campaign, while **London Fashion Week** would not be the same without the comings and goings of specially-liveried TXIIs.

Losers on hit TV show **The Apprentice** were seen bundling themselves into a licensed London Taxi each week after falling foul of acid-tongued entrepreneur Alan Sugar and taking the opportunity of sending a quick acidic reply back!

If you had been staying at BBC's **Hotel Babylon** with Tamsin Outhwaite and Max Beesley, the only form of transport you were likely to get on your departure was a London taxi.

And of course **Dial-a-Cab** driver **John Moody (D82)** runs his smash hit TV quiz, **Cash Cab**, from inside a TXII... albeit a rather special version with brighter lights than the rest of us!

More dramatically perhaps, there are always storylines in **Eastenders** involving their taxi driver **Charlie Slater** (Derek Martin) as he comes and goes to and from Albert Square in what some would call an old banger, but which others would describe as a "classic cab" – either way, so easily identifiable as a London taxi.

Even **Supernanny** Jo Frost is using a London taxi to pay visits to families with naughty children on both sides of the Atlantic, while **Vauxhall** are using the taxis in teasers in the run-up to the launch of the new Corsa.

David Crundwell, Business Affairs Manager for Vauxhall parent company GM UK and Ireland, told **Call Sign**: "**The world premier of the new Corsa is in London and we needed something that was inextricably linked with the city. The London taxi is it...**"

A uniquely-styled taxi has also featured on MTV's **Pimp My Ride**. Bez, dancer with 1990s band **Happy Mondays**, saw his 1988 Fairway cab transformed into a deep purple pearl and red snakeskin creation, complete with dancer graphics!

Matthew Cheyne, Sales and Marketing Director for Coventry-based LTI Vehicles which makes the unmistakable taxis, told **Call Sign** that they were popular choices because they immediately conveyed a sense of classic style while being

London's Taxi is a Star!

So what better vehicle to welcome the Motor Show back to London...!



The TXII - a regular star in Albert Square

quintessentially British.

"The London taxi is a shape everyone is a familiar with, everyone has been in one and they immediately convey a sense of being in England," he said, adding "...it also says quality and it says Great Britain. The London black cab has been a popular choice in advertising on TV and in films for as long as I can remember, but they really do seem to be in everything at the moment. It may have been Kate Moss setting the trend or just a coincidence, but it's nice to see that such a classic vehicle in its latest incarnation, the TXII, is that much in demand and a popular choice for so many productions. And, of course, being voted number one automotive icon in the Auto Trader poll makes us an obvious choice for many people."

London taxis also took pride of place in the 16 July parade welcoming the **British International Motor Show** back to the nation's capital after a 30-year absence. Sunny London was thronging with sightseers watching a parade of famous, historic and futuristic cars as they travelled through the West End streets. It was launched by model **Jodie Kidd**.

The organisers had decided that the London taxi – a design inextricably linked to the city and seen across the

globe as a symbol of Great Britain – should play a key role.

As we said, like it or not, the London Taxi is a star...

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Power Pill – Driver's test

I would just like to register my recommendation and results after testing Power Pill. I started putting one in each full tank a few weeks prior to my overhaul and noticed an improvement in the running of my 9 year old Fairway soon after. Over the past 2 years my cab had just scraped through the emissions test, but this time it sailed through with a reading of 1.45 (whatever that is), which I was told is very good. At the next 18000mile service, my mechanic was surprised at how clean the old fuel filter was. Better MPG also followed and all this was before I started the survey in *Call Sign*. The staff at Power Pill were very friendly and helpful with any questions I had. Now I relish any emissions test while I'm out at work.

Give it a try, you won't be disappointed...

Melvyn Harvey (E87)

Melvyn's letter came in response to a special offer in the May *Call Sign* to readers who were prepared to pass on figures re mileage, smoke emission and general performance to Power Pill re their cab's performance both before and after using the pills, which were supplied free to those volunteering ...Ed

Yellow boxes: Buses v taxis

After reading the statistics for yellow box junctions and realising that they must keep a record of such things, would it be possible to find out how many bus drivers have received PCNs and how many cab drivers had? I think we would all put a wager on the bus driver numbers! I have no wish to see a driver lose a days pay through a momentary laps in concentration, but I would like a level playing field and perhaps after the inevitable scream up, TfL might realise that driving in London isn't an exact science and a bit of common sense needs to be applied.

Dave Baker (S07)

Flat tyre

I would like to say thank you to John (K75) who came to my rescue. He took a job to collect my account customer when I had a puncture, however my passenger found another cab, but John didn't mind - he got straight out and began changing my wheel, getting me back working very quickly. Thanks again John, I really appreciated it.

Maggie O'Connor (M72J)

DAB Radios

I have had a DAB digital radio for well over two years now and have had no problems at

all. I would thoroughly recommend having one fitted, especially, if like me you listen to Talk Sport all day. I originally had mine fitted by ComCab at their fitting bay, it is a Blaupunkt system and cost £300.

Ian Skeels (J74)

I have had aerial problems with my digital radio. It leaves some programmes at will and returns when it fancies! However, for ball-by-ball cricket, it is brilliantly super-clear! I had great trouble prior to digi-radio trying to listen on long wave but that is no longer a problem. DAB is making progress but it isn't quite there yet...

Martin Freeborn (C67)

A driver asked in the last issue whether it was worth getting DAB digital radio. The two replies above were as close as we could get to a for and against response ...Ed

Congratulations...

Congratulations on your 100th issue of *Call Sign*. You've done a great job. The only thing you could do to improve *Call Sign* would be to bring back Big Al...

Tom Carter

DaC Software
Morgantown, Indiana

Why thank you kindly sir. From an American who can count up to one hundred, I've just got to be impressed (PS: That was Big Al talking and not me!) ...Ed

And speaking of counting up to 100 – it's Stanley!

First of all, let me congratulate our Editor, Alan Fisher, on reaching 100. So far as I'm concerned he doesn't look a day over 90...!

Replying to the **Bernie Silver (G08)** letter in the July issue, I'm extremely glad that his trip to LTI was so informative. It's a shame that no one asked the question why is the TXII such a load of rubbish and why does it not compare in any way with the Fairway which can possibly do 300,000miles plus with hardly any problems?

Driver **Adam McGann (J09)** seems to contradict himself when he states that he was impressed with LTI's quality control process and then goes on to ask how any drivers can get a cab with faults? The answer to that is quite simple; you don't need Einstein's brain to know that their quality control is useless.

The next time *Call Sign* sends drivers to Coventry, make sure they don't come back with 'brown tongues'. Tell them not to suck up to the manufacturers who are doing the

cab trade a disservice by not producing a vehicle that does justice to all those hard-working drivers who just want a cab that does the job it was built for.

Finally I notice that almost every question that was put to LTI was answered with: "We will look into it."

Stanley Frankel (K46)

Stanley, how nice of you to turn up as I go into my tenth year. I'm sure I don't deserve it! As for the rest of your letter, well, I suppose that no one knows more about the Fairway than you. So tell me Stanley, did you throw a party when your cab reached 300,000 miles. That must have been several years ago judging by how it looked the last time I saw it! It's a pity you can't speak to the drivers that went on the trip to see how "easy" they went on the LTI management, because I don't happen to think that was the case at all. Bernie Silver doesn't suffer fools gladly and went with a whole bunch of questions and came back to tell me that he thought the trip was worthwhile, as did all the others I spoke to. As for Adam McGann's quote, he wasn't contradicting himself at all, but pointed out that the LTI quality Control process seemed so thorough that he was amazed anything inferior got through. It's how you tell 'em!

I'll give you the last sentence. That was my fault when laying out the page. On reflection, I should have listed all the things that LTI took note of and promised to look into rather than give the same answer after each question. You can't change any vehicle overnight, but LTI do look into all complaints - regardless of what you might think. Let's face it Stanley, your letter is based purely on what you have heard others say or read in another trade paper, as you haven't even test-driven a TX1 let alone TXII. I should add that my TXII is now halfway into its third year and other than a tiny leak from the air-con radiator, which was replaced under warrantee, I've had no faults at all. How can that be? Of course there are drivers with genuine complaints, but that doesn't apply to everyone. My only real complaint is as I've always said, only with the price tag.

But Stanley, as always I thank you for your interest and am sad that you are taking a year out to ski around the world backwards. You are... aren't you? ...Ed

SatNavs and digital radio...

Congratulations Al, can't wait for the next



MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 37

100 editions! More Spanish Taxi, more Stanley Frankel.... more frogs on the front cover!

You asked about SatNavs and Digital Radios (*July Call Sign*). Got a SatNav before Xmas. First job was Heathrow to Mill Lane, West Hampstead. Route offered was the M4 to J2 then North circular to Staples Corner and down Edgware Road, turning left at Mill Lane. The screaming in the back would've been horrendous! However, turn the volume down. I had to put the male voice option on, the female option sounds like nagging: "You're going the wrong way! Turn round!" I ignored it and with no route planned it gives you a rolling map, most useful! I'm getting used to putting in routes, mainly using postcodes and it's been a very worthwhile tool. But where it comes into it's own is pick-ups and points or door numbers (although some numbers are not listed) when you are trying to measure your run-in. Not only does it take you to the door, but it also gives a displayed distance to point. And for out of town points eg the Best Western Hotel in Calcot (near Reading) which I went to recently. It also gives you the distance in miles, which allows you to price a job door-to-door. Hammersmith Broadway to Blackheath? Not only does it give you the route, but tells you the mileage, which with a charge of approximately £3/mile tells the customer he needs about £45 to get home. However, it still doesn't stop the punter from telling you to turn left/right when you get all the way to their street without any help or input from them! In fact, 1 or 2 have not been impressed with the final few streets picked out by the SatNav and still tell you 'the best way' and how it'll never replace the Knowledge! It would be really helpful if the Call Centre could give full postcodes at pick up and destination; maybe the BoM could bear this in mind for any enhancements for our own Map and GPS?

But just because you've got a saw and a hammer, it doesn't make you a carpenter, just as having a SatNav won't make you a Taxi Driver!

On the downside, they can be a distraction - just as the Data terminal and mobile phones are - and they also lose the signal and get a bit confused - although not as much as losing the data signal... Discard.... Resend.... Discard.... Resend!

I keep reading in the trade press that passengers won't wait while you input their postcode? Well, that's nonsense! It takes seconds and is best done when stationary because of screen size - but I've not had one complaint. And it's great for those destinations where the passenger has just stepped off a plane with their itinerary telling them the address and how the taxi

fare will be about £10 (or "my friend said..."). In fact, most customers are pleased and want to ask questions about whether they should get one or to tell you about their model!

At the end of the day it's a tool that needs to be used in the right hands, knowing when and if to use it and how!

Digital Radio; I had one put in my cab at a cost of £400 (over 2 years ago) but I'm sure they're cheaper now. The best thing about digital (although it still can operate conventionally with FM/AM) is that there are more stations to pick up and the sound is CD quality, which, for example means listening to TalkSport and 5 Live football commentaries in FM or better. Plus there are extra stations - R5 Live Xtra giving you more football matches to choose from. There are also more music stations and more talk stations. Virgin Groove (Motown / Disco / Soul), Virgin Rock, Planet Rock, Oneworld, BBC7, Chill, Choice, SAGA, LIFE etc.

Unfortunately, the downside is that you still lose the signal, as it seems the signal strength is not at full capacity. Whether this changes in the future, one would hope so as eventually all radios will change from analogue to digital just like TV. There is a current advert on TV showing cars picking up the signal in tunnels such as the Limehouse Link or the Heathrow tunnel. The signal in the advert carries on playing - the signal in my cab, just like our own data signal, does not! Nor can it work properly under the enclosed canopies of T1 or T4 at Heathrow. I read recently in *Call Sign* that Credit Card jobs do not count against the 40 jobs a month. When was this changed? The Society earns a good income from this source and drivers are obliged to wait until they are paid by Dial-a-Cab, when alternatively they could use one of the Chip and Pin machines offered FREE by HALT and get their money quicker. It is a mistake not to count Credit Card trips against the 40 jobs a month totals. Dial-a-Cab could lose a vital source of income and new business. The fact that we charge 12.5% against their 10% is already a disincentive to most DaC drivers. If anything, we should be cutting the charge back to 10%. Has anyone ever seen advertising for the ONE NUMBER promo? By raising our charges to match our competitors, we have lost any advantage we had and it was tantamount to cutting off our nose to spite our face! If Ken Livingstone is serious about advertising our services, why does he not start a campaign on bus shelters, the back of buses and in the Evening Standard - not that freebie from him that no one reads! The silence from City Hall is deafening...!

Mark White (B86)

Brian Rice replies: Mark, Credit Card trips have never counted towards the 40-trip rule. Quite simply, DaC are not interested in the trips you pick up from Heathrow that pay by Credit Card. By you doing that trip, how does that satisfy our account clients?

We have never been busier than we are at the moment and being mercenary about the topic, how does it benefit the members of DaC or the Society that you are completing a Credit Card trip from Heathrow - we need you to do our account work so that we may retain our client base. You say it's lucrative to DaC for you to do Credit Card trips? Well perhaps, but I am absolutely certain that DaC would not be in business very long if all members adopted your attitude regarding Credit Cards and used our terminal simply as a means of clearing Credit Cards. You mention the free Credit Card machine distributed by HALT - then perhaps that is the route you should take (and I never got that from a Sat Nav)...!

From a registered blind TaxiCard user...

I wonder if *Call Sign* could add to the many courtesies I have always received from those associated with Dial-a-Cab by making an appeal to all drivers that when they pick up a person using a white stick or cane, that they should be aware that such a person with sight loss may have difficulty in following them.

Recently I had asked for a cab to take me to the Soho Health Centre where I had an appointment. Having rung the bell and collected me, the driver walked off and seemed to acquire a companion. The two walked down the cul-de-sac where this address is, turned right and began to walk down Mount Street. I followed as best I could (the pavement was fairly well thronged with other pedestrians) and only on reaching Berkeley Square did I realise that I had lost him and that he had lost me! I hastened back and made phone calls to Dial-a-Cab and also to the Soho Centre fearful of being late for my appointment. With their usual high standard of helpfulness, DaC quickly sent another cab and the driver, hearing of my earlier difficulties, refused to accept my contribution to the fare!

Like many who are registered blind, I



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have some residual sight, indeed I count myself fortunate that I have more than many others. I understand that when meeting a passenger who seems mobile enough, that a driver may not be aware of the individual's problems, but I know that similar difficulties have occurred with other blind people.

But again, I pay tribute to the very exceptional standards of thoughtfulness and help that I have always received from Dial-a-Cab drivers and telephonists.

Rev J.L.Raybould
Mount Street, W1

Sorry for the problem, Reverend. I must admit that your letter baffled me at first before realising that because the original driver hadn't accompanied you to the cab, that the person and his "companion" that you had followed was indeed not the driver! Perhaps the next driver to pick up Reverend Raybould would be kind enough to tell him that his letter appeared in *Call Sign* and that we will all now do our best not to lose him again! ...Ed

Rewriting history?

I read in the July *Call Sign* that Brian Rice defends Geoff Kaley against Barry Hooper's article in *Taxi Magazine*. It is well known that those that control the press are able to rewrite history. Brian Rice is certainly right that Geoff Kaley did change the way radio circuits presented themselves. This in itself does not make him a great leader for the cab trade - the whole picture has to be viewed. Geoff Kaley was the head of ComCab when it ran into financial difficulties resulting in the LTDA losing control of the company. He was the first person to impose fixed prices at way under the meter to cab drivers on ComCab. He was the founder of Xeta and that did not succeed. He now works as a consultant for a company that has large minicab interests. I understand that same company has a stake in a minicab school. He has long been a proponent of the need to change the Knowledge so as to reduce the time it takes to complete. This would, he says, result in the Knowledge being persevered and thus standards being maintained. In my view, a consequence if this was implemented would be more cabs on the road.

In conclusion the whole picture needs to be viewed before a correct judgement can be made.

Steven van Gelder (C87)

Brian wrote in his July Chairman's Report referring to the article by Barry Hooper against Geoff Kaley: "What I find particularly distasteful is when these attacks become personal, as was the case with Barry's article." Because the same article went on to attack DaC and was factually incorrect, the DaC

Chairman made the point that if Barry Hooper's comments about DaC were untrue, how did we know that anything he had written about Geoff Kaley was any more true? Brian made no reference to Mr Kaley's leadership or otherwise of the cab trade. Is it not you who are attempting to rewrite history by distorting a piece from *Call Sign*?

Incidentally, Steven, I too feel that without Geof Kaley's time at ComCab, we and RTG would still be pokey little radio companies somewhere - certainly nothing like one of the major players of Europe that DaC has now become ...Ed

More happy pills please...!

Instead of phoning Allan Evans or Keith Cain and having my normal discussions which usually turn out to be about problems that I have experienced during the course of my working day, I thought I would write to *Call Sign* and let you know of some good news for a change!

Firstly, since I've had my new cab - Lucky Sod 06 You're Bloody Lovely - I've noticed

that when I sign on in the morning, I get a signal much quicker than ever before. So if this is anything to do with the way the cab has been wired (aerial in a different position from previous cab aerials) thank you and well done to the guys at Roman Way.

This morning I was very lucky to get a Eurostar job that took me down to the Portsmouth area. I phoned the Call Centre and cleared the job in Portsmouth, but imagine my surprise when I received a signal allowing me to clear the job off my screen and book into S99 when I was in Grayshott Hampshire! Is this the norm you guys in the southwest?

Whilst in a happy mood, I'd also like to say that I, for one, think that Dave Ivers does a great job despatching at night. I like the way he lets you know when prebooked jobs are about to fire out, he's always helpful if you are lucky enough to get stuck out in the sticks and seems to have the right attitude when trying to sell a job. Well-done Dave.

Just about to take some more happy pills. Resend, resend, resend... not anymore!

Dennis Heavin (A01)

See Allan Evans signals update in this issue and the improvements made to our aerial sites ...Ed

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