

August 2007



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

Inside this issue...

Brian Rice looks at Congestion Charging's fifth annual report

No cold war at DaC as Moscow director come to work here!

Open? Closed? Just what is going on at the Limehouse Link!

London bombs and PH mystery?

DaC for sale? Call Sign asks the Chairman...

New breed of CCTV: Now they LISTEN as well as watch!

Caroline's 25 years with DaC

DaC and the Evening Standard



Is there something he isn't telling us? See DaC at the Nomura 'It's a Knockout day'



Why is Tony Welch hanging onto his cab bonnet?





NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

This completes hotel chains until there are significant changes. Note that the Conrad Hotel was a Hilton, but is now Wyndhams Chelsea Harbour. If anyone would like to suggest future articles, please email me - alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk. To those who have made suggestions in the past and not been acknowledged or seen your suggestion appear, please email me again as many stored emails were lost a while back when my old email address was cancelled...

SWISS HOTEL		Howard	Temple Place, WC2R 2PR
THISTLE			
Bloomsbury Park	126 Southampton Row, WC1B 5AD	Royal Horseguards	2 Whitehall Court, SW1A 2EJ
Selfridge	Orchard Street, W1H 6JS	Bloomsbury	Bloomsbury Way, WC1A 2SD
Charing Cross	The Strand, WC2N 5HX	City Barbican	Central Street, EC1V 8DS
Euston	Cardington Street, NW1 2LP	Gatwick	Brighton Road, Horley, Gatwick, RH6 8PH
Heathrow	Bath Road, Longford, UB7 0EQ	Hyde Park	Lancaster Gate, W2 3NR
Kensington Gdns	Bayswater Road, W2 3HL	Kensington Palace	De Vere Gardens, W8 5AF
Kensington Park	De Vere Gardens, W8 5AG	Lancaster Gate	Lancaster Gate, W2 3NN
Luton	Arndale Centre, Luton, LU1 2TR	March Arch	Bryanston Street, W1H 7EH
Piccadilly	Coventry Street, W1D 6BZ	Trafalgar Square	Whitcomb Street, WC2H 7HG
Victoria	101 Buckingham Pal Road, SW1W 0SJ	Westminster	Buckingham Palace Road, SW1W 0QT
TRAVELODGE			
Battersea	200 York Road, SW11 3SA	Covent Garden	10 Drury Lane, High Holborn, WC2B 5RE
Farringdon	Gwynne Place, WC1X 9QN	Gatwick	Church Road, Lowfield Heath, RH11 0PQ
Harlow N. Weald	Tylers Green, North Weald, CM16 6BJ	Heathrow Eastbd	Moto Service Area, M4 Motorway, TW5 9NB
Heathrow Westbd	Phoenix Way, Heston, TW5 9NB	Kew	North Road, High St Brentford, TW8 0BD
Kings Cross	Grays Inn Road, WC1X 8BH	Kings X - Royal Scot	100 Kings Cross Road, WC1X 9DT
<i>(Make sure you go to the correct Kings Cross hotel)</i>			
City Airport	Hartmann Road, E16 2BZ	Liverpool Street	1 Harrow Place, E1 7DB
Docklands	Coriander Avenue, E14 2AA	Park Royal	614 Western Avenue, W3 0TE
Marylebone	Harewood Row, NW1 6SE	Wembley	North Circular Road, NW10 7UG
Wimbledon / Morden	Epsom Road, Morden, SM4 5PH		
WYNDHAMS			
Chelsea Harbour	Chelsea Harbour, SW10 0XG	Conrad Hotel:	
		No longer a Hilton	

What's On at Excel – and not a lot!

EVENT	TYPE	START	FINISH
The Michelob ULTRA London Triathlon Expo	Public	04/08/07	to 05/08/07
The Michelob ULTRA London Triathlon	Public	04/08/07	to 05/08/07

VISIT www.nashsnumbers.co.uk for this issue and all previous issues back to 1997 in PDF format for good quality prints.

REGISTER for the UID (Useful Information Document), packed with information you will need on a daily basis. Email alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk with the Subject as "UID" (essential, otherwise it may get deleted thinking it's junk) and the body of the message containing your name, call sign, badge no, email address and mobile number, which will only be used if I have problems with your email address.

Paul's the New Market Development Executive for LTI

LTI have appointed Paul Kelsey to a new post as their Market Development Executive. Paul, who is 45 and lives in Warwickshire, comes from a background of sales and management in the Birmingham area.

This post at LTI Vehicles will see Paul looking at new business markets for the iconic black cab. Paul, who began his career as a mechanic with the Co-operative Society, told **Call Sign**: "It is very exciting for me to join a world-renowned company with such a distinctive and unique product. The purpose-built taxis produced by LTI Vehicles are not just a familiar sight on roads in the UK, but also and increasingly, abroad in places as diverse as Germany, China, USA and South Africa. I'm looking forward to the challenges ahead and pushing further the success of the company."

Paul arrives at Holyfield Road at a time when its latest model, the TX4, has broken all sales records making it the most popular LTI taxi ever...



LTI's new market development Executive Paul Kelsey

from the editor's desk

Back to front...

Well, well, well! What a to do! If nothing else, the last issue at least told me that an awful lot of drivers read the mag – something I'm truly grateful for because no one wants to write for readers that don't want to read it!

If you were one of those whose magazine came through with no problems, then you won't have a clue as to what I'm on about. But if you were one of the 250 drivers that got pages 35 to 38 at the front and pages 3 to 6 at the back, then you'll know a little bit about how I felt when the phone calls started and failed to stop for 3 days!

The issue had already been delayed by a one-day postal strike which, falling on a Friday, meant that the mag couldn't be posted until the following Monday when it then hit a backlog and lost a further day (or even two in some cases).

At the time of writing, the printers were still trying to find out what happened. We know it went to bed correctly because my first batch came back as they should have – with my smiling face on the correct page 3. We also know that a further 2000 copies came through ok, but what caused the other 250 to have the pages going in back to front?

The printers only excuse (thus far) is that it's the first time anything like this has happened to **Call Sign** in my 10+ years, but I can tell you that I still wasn't overly pleased and even though the printing and stapling is out of my hands, that didn't stop me feeling rather embarrassed. So now you know...!

Grant me an answer...

I've had several drivers asking me the same question and in truth, I haven't a clue about the answer. Month after month, LCDC Vice Chairman and Dial-a-Cab driver, Grant Davis (L39), has a pop at DaC or the radio circuits as a whole in his regular column in *The Badge*. The July issue had a piece on radio circuits and minicabs and as he never excluded DaC from his comments, we must assume that his reference to 'the way circuits treat their drivers by giving work to minicabs is scandalous', also includes this Society. Everyone, of course, is entitled to their views.

He also wrote about a *summer sale at Dial-a-Cab* where he claims to have been "informed" that DaC have three prospective buyers out there. He adds that once the best offer has been sorted out, then the sell off will begin.

Call me silly, but as an article in this issue explains, what is so unusual about successful companies such as this one being targeted for a buy-out? Is it not a compliment and are there just three who are interested in us?

The point is that even if there were 100 prospective buyers out there, the final word on selling will come from us – the drivers. If we say no, then it will not be sold. If any offer should sound interesting, then drivers may decide to look at it. It is entirely up to us. The Board can act for us but only if we say yes, so isn't it rather presumptuous for people like Grant to think they have to give us advice because we are incapable of mak-



ing up our own minds? Well that is exactly what Mr Davis thinks.

My belief – although I don't know – is that someone, somewhere will make an offer and we eligible drivers will have to decide. We don't need anyone telling us what to do thank you, we're big boys and if we don't like any offer, we'll just say no thank you and goodbye. No one can sell our company except us.

And the question that drivers keep asking me? If it's that bad here, why doesn't Grant Davis try his luck elsewhere? Could it be because it is by far the best of all the circuits and as a side issue, why would anyone who would financially profit from a sale, want to leave?

Mickey's mate!

Call Sign's music man, **Mickey Lappin (E46)**, interviewed someone he thought had a future in the music world in the May issue of this mag after he'd written and sung a poignant song with a strong message about the July 7 bombings. It was his first piece and also his first interview. Now Mickey tells me that **Call Sign's** very own discovery **Dan Raza** had his own slot on *BBC Three Counties Radio* on Sunday 22nd July at 5 pm. As Mickey says with a touch of pride showing through: "How cool to have his first-ever interview in **Call Sign**?"

Chamber of Commerce survey

Is there the chronic shortage of licensed taxis on Saturday evenings that the recent Chamber of Commerce and Industry survey claims it has discovered after speaking to 200 licensed taxi drivers?

Well the answer in the West End must be yes. If you have ever tried to catch a taxi in Shaftsbury Avenue or any of the surrounding streets after 11pm, you'll know that it's probably easier to spot the first alien landing on top of Nelson's Column! If I want one, I phone DaC and usually have little problem. I sometimes have to wait 20 minutes, but for a Saturday night I consider that to be acceptable.

However, it must also be said that most other parts of town do much better and getting at cab in Holland Park or Kensington

High Street is nowhere near as difficult until you get beyond the midnight hour when you can see the number of cabs begin to dwindle.

It is a fact that today's drivers finish earlier than did the drivers who passed out in the 60s and 70s. Perhaps they are more spoiled and don't feel the need to do the 14 hour shifts that those who needed the money used to put in. Nowadays, they take their money and want to go home.

To be honest, while I can see the above as having much truth to it, I could have written it without the 200 driver survey.

Why? Well it does seem to be factual that our trade is ageing and that being the case, a larger proportion of the fleet will have paid up their mortgages and to put it bluntly, not need as much as they used to. So do they stay out to their regular time or come home early when they have taken what they need? I think the latter and hence the drying up of taxi supplies after midnight, whilst many wives and partners would rather their other half didn't work on a Saturday anyway.

But – and it is a big but – if we don't provide that service, will private hire be legally allowed to do what **Call Sign** has written in fear many times, either be allowed to ply for hire or more probably, be given West End ranks? Either way would be bad news.

The survey recommends more drivers "sharing" cabs so that they are on the road longer, the PCO handing the Knowledge over to a private firm, more marshalled taxi ranks in the centre and the most controversial issue, fast tracking of Knowledge students.

This page has said time and time again that four years (or even the 40 months the survey quotes) is too long for the KoL and if a student is good enough to do it in 12-15 months, then great. Many are but seem to be held back. In the short term, more cab drivers means less work for the rest, but once passengers realise that they have a good chance of catching a "real" cab, they'll try for one and demand will pick up quickly. Otherwise by the time the Olympics hit London, PH will be plying for hire and totally swamping us.

Two things: I am totally against any minority group being given preferential treatment while doing the KoL. Everyone should have an equal chance and a fair one of progressing quickly if good enough. Secondly, I would have felt more comfortable with the survey had not the Chairman of a north London radio circuit been a member of the Chamber of Commerce with a survey that he could almost have written himself.

Make no mistake, once private hire get a foot in the door with ranks, plying for hire will soon follow and then our trade really will be dead. The time for expansion is now whilst London is buzzing. Provide an excellent service and we'll always be in demand – and please don't tell me how long you waited on a rank at 1030 in the morning. It's late afternoons and evenings where PH are taking their ground. We have to fight back and start from now...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

The year so far...

By the time you read this, business should have calmed a little and we'll be in the midst of the holiday season. It will also give us the opportunity to regroup as we get ready for the manic period between early September and Christmas.

We are recruiting Customer Service Representatives as quickly as we can and our two in-house trainers are frantically training those CSRs and new members alike as we endeavour to increase the size of the fleet to improve coverage during busy periods. There is no point increasing the number of call takers to allow us to take more work if we do not have the mobiles to accommodate the increase in the volumes they produce. In contrast, there is no point increasing the number of mobiles if we do not have enough work for them.

We have always operated a policy of supply and demand at Dial-a-Cab. We will not increase the size of the fleet until we are confident we have enough work for them, otherwise we will lose members. Alternatively we must have enough mobiles to fulfil the client's wishes otherwise we will lose accounts due to bad service! I am sure you can understand my dilemma as we endeavour to operate a fine balancing act between clients and members!

Dial-a-Cab has experienced enormous growth in recent times, but nonetheless we are endeavouring to compete in the market place with a Society that has an antiquated structure. We have done extraordinarily well given our circumstances and I am not sure how much further we can progress under the current situation and given our structure. Could this be as good as it gets?

However and in the meantime, I am absolutely thrilled with the progress we have made during the current financial year. As you may recall, last year was the best this Society had ever experienced with our turnover increasing by in excess of £5.6m or over 15% - a phenomenal achievement.

However, this year I am very optimistic that we will move from a medium-sized company to a large company by exceeding the £50m threshold and if the year-to-date is an indication of how things will be, then I am confident that by the end of the current financial year this Society will be trading as a large company.

As you are probably aware, the start of our financial year is 1 September, however, the year-to-date has been quite extraordinary, with turnover increasing by a massive £5.7m up until the end of May! This represents an increase in excess of 18% over the previous financial year. Consequently, we could experience an increase in excess of



£12m over a two-year period; an achievement that everyone connected with this Society should feel justly proud of!

The new building...

At the time of writing we have been in our new building for just over two months and everything seems to be going well. We are gradually getting the building to a position where it is a far better working environment for your staff than Brunswick House. The signage has been erected and you will see that we have called it Dial-a-Cab House - very unusual! Anyway, before someone writes in to tell me that *Call Sign* ran a competition to name the building and the winning entrant, Mike Pollington (K17), did not name the building Dial-a-Cab House, it was stated at the time that the winning name might not be adopted.

The whole reason for the competition was that we were hoping a driver somewhere would come up with some sort of wonderful

name that no-one here had thought of. Alas that was not to be, so here we are with Dial-a-Cab House - probably the best name so far as identification is concerned!

London Congestion Charging - Fifth Annual Report

I've just had a quick glance at the above recently published report - is it really more than five years since the congestion charge began?

Anyway, there are one or two statistics that might be of interest to you. When the charge was increased in July 2005 by 60% from £5 to £8, it had very little impact on congestion and traffic levels in the capital increased in 2006 as opposed to 2005 (due to an increase in road works according to TfL).

However, congestion in 2006 was 8% lower than in 2002, but in 2003 the initial fall in traffic levels was an amazing 30% against the 2002 level, so it shows that congestion is on the increase once again - what a surprise to you all!

One other amazing statistic that TfL have admitted to has been in reducing London's road capacity since 2004 - again, what a surprise! They claim to have done this for the benefit of pedestrians, yet the percentage of pedestrians being injured in the congestion zone has increased, whereas outside the zone it remained the same - of course there must be some sort of conclusion we can draw from that, I'm just not sure what it is!

Brian Rice
Chairman, Dial-a-Cab

THE GROOMER FOR MEN



Barber shop now open at 1 St Bride Street EC4
With a special price for Dial-a-Cab drivers!

Usual Price	DaC driver's price
Wash/ cut/ blow dry	£14.00 £11.00
Dry cut	£11.50 £9.00
Clipper cut (with wash)	£9.50 £7.00
Beard trim	£4.50 £4.00
Long hair (with wash)	£17.50 £15.00

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED!

Tel: 0207 353 1649

We are next door to Subway

In the 1960's, the phrase 'The Russians are coming' was just another sign of the cold war heating up! Nowadays – even with the few current blips along the way - the inference means something quite different and that difference is usually connected to business.

It probably came to British attention when Roman Abramovich bought out Chelsea Football Club. Russian businessmen Vladimir Potanin and Oleg Deripaska are famously pouring billions of dollars into various companies and now Dial-a-Cab are entering the Russian arena via the EU funded Manager's Training Program (MTP).

The MTP is organised by an EU bureau known as TACIS – *Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States* – and is responsible for policies involving the former Soviet states of Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. The Manager's Training Program has been running successfully since early 2000 with almost 3,000 candidates across Europe, over 500 of whom have trained in the UK.

So where does **Dial-a-Cab** come into it? Well, under the scheme, this Society is offering a 3-month internship (October 1

The Russians Are Coming!

Moscow cab co director coming to work at DaC!

until December 7) to Sergey Pietnev, the Commercial Director of a large taxi company in Moscow that employs some 380 staff.

Sergey has a Masters Degree in Transport Management and rather fortunately for DaC, speaks good English! His DaC internship means that MTP can offer him a definite place on the program, which in turn will enable him to obtain an appropriate visa.

Dial-a-Cab Chairman Brian Rice told **Call Sign**: **"If you think of the licensed radio taxi organisations in London, the fact that such a prestigious EU organisation should come to DaC is a huge compliment to this Society and the reputation it has made for itself."**

Details of the scheme can be found on www.tacis-mtp.org.

A group of Russians on the MTP scheme



Foreign Motoring Convictions Now Affect UK Driving Licences!

As the holiday season gets underway, legal expenses insurance market leader DAS is urging motorists to check whether their motor legal protection policies include foreign prosecution defence in addition to similar protection in the UK.

"If convicted abroad," solicitor Rhian Gait-Parker, Advice Services Manager for DAS told **Call Sign**, **"new laws allow greater exchange of motorists' details across Europe that could affect driving licences in the UK. Additionally, exercising the right to testify in a native language or coping with unfamiliar procedures and surroundings may prove difficult and costly without legal expenses insurance."**

Half of all European holidays from the UK are now by car. All motor legal protection policies from DAS extend across Europe, cover every passenger and are supported by 24-hour helplines. Prosecution defence is an optional addition to standard cover such as DASDrive Plus. You can find out more about DAS at www.das.co.uk.

But whether you choose DAS or another company, make sure you check as to what you are covered for before you leave.

TAXI

MORTGAGES ESPECIALLY FOR LICENSED TAXI DRIVERS

RECOGNISING THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF LICENSED TAXI DRIVERS AND IN CONJUNCTION WITH MAJOR UK BANKS WE HAVE ACCESS TO EXCLUSIVE MORTGAGE SCHEMES INCLUDING:

- No proof of income up to 95% LTV
- Recently Qualified
- Fixed rates and cashback available

To find out more about these schemes and other services I can offer, please call Peter Griffin of Griffin Financial Consultancy on

01322 293600/07702 302863 (mobile)

peter@griffinmortgages.com

Peter Griffin, Mortgage Adviser, 1 Market Street, Dartford, DA1 1EY
YOUR HOME MAY BE REPOSSESSED IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON YOUR MORTGAGE

Griffin Financial Consultancy is an Approved Representative of Openwork Ltd. Openwork Ltd. offer insurance and investment advice on products from a limited number of product providers and advice on mortgages representative of the whole of the market.

Jery's World



"I hear lumour the Flench will buy Dial-a-Cab in Rundon, but I also told it possibly someone flom Lussia and another flom Lome and one man flom Lecklinghausen in Germany!"

"Ah so! But what plice honourable Japanese company buy it? Even Chairman has nice name...Mr Lice!"

DaC Help Sponsor WCHCD Founders Day Ball

The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers held their annual *Founders Day Dinner* at the HAC in City Road. Liverymen, Freemen and their guests were welcomed to the Charity Ball by the Master, Patricia Stanley and her Wardens.

The reception was held in the brand new £6.5 million venue opened by HM the Queen just a few weeks earlier. Dial-a-Cab were pleased to have sponsored the event along with ComCab and RTG.

The Master gave a wonderful speech saying how proud she was to have been Master of The WCHCD during the past year and spoke of some of the events she had attended, including the War Disabled trip where she took three veterans whose ages totalled 260 to Worthing. Pat also thanked Mary Whitworth, the Clerk to the Company and the Beadle, John Sheen, for all their hard work throughout her year.

A raffle was held during the course of the evening, which raised a large sum for charity. Following dinner, everyone enjoyed dancing to the excellent band, appropriately called Good Company. Deputy Master, John Beesley, thanked

Patricia, the first lady Master of the Company, for all her sterling work during her year.

Master elect, Alan Parker, chairman of the Company's Awards Committee, presented this year's Charity Award to cab driver Mr Siddharth Adatia. He is the father of a child who travelled on the first Magical Taxi Tour to Disneyland Paris. Mr Adatia's daughter touched the hearts of everyone involved on the trip and was allowed to switch on the Christmas lights at Disneyland Paris. During the brief weeks of her life following the trip, his daughter talked of nothing else and her excitement inspired her father to later give up his job and do The Knowledge, so that he could put back something into the taxi trade as a thank you for the enjoyment the trip had brought into their lives.

Sadly his daughter passed away, but Mr Adatia joined Malcolm Linskey's Knowledge School and passed his Green Badge some six years ago. Since gaining his badge, Mr Adatia has been involved with many of the different taxi trade charities that involve children.

Report compiled by Sandie Goodwin

SUPERIOR 5 BEDROOM EXECUTIVE VILLA IN ORLANDO. FLORIDA FOR RENT

3 master bedrooms, 2 twin bedrooms,

3 bathrooms (sleeps 10/12)

30ft private swimming pool and Jacuzzi

Fully equipped kitchen

Cable TV in every room

Just off the I-4 - 15 mins from Disney

Close to local shops and golf courses

From £500 per week (late deals available)

For further details and availability go to
www.dovevillas.co.uk

Or contact Derek Donnelly (V47 on 07951 130 154.

Prices are for the villa per week and not per person

Late deals and special price for DaC members.

As new vehicle sales figures for June 2007 published by *The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders* showed that for the eighth consecutive month since the launch of the new TX4, sales continued at record levels, London's Brewery Road main dealers, M&O, announced their 1000th TX4 sale - that honour going to London taxi driver John Clarke.

The sales team at M&O were naturally delighted to have clocked up that 1,000th sale and specially presented the keys to Mr Clarke. John has been a London taxi driver for 12 years and told **Call Sign**: "I did not need to test drive it before I bought it, I just knew I had to have one. It is the future." John, who previously drove a Fairway, added: "A few other drivers had bought a TX4 and said it was fantastic and I agree. It is like driving a Rolls Royce compared to other vehicles! It's a pleasure to go to work in and makes me feel like I want to put in more hours! It is so smooth, with lots of torque and amazing visibility. Many of my passengers have commented on how good it is, particularly tourists. But I must say it is an honour to be driving M&O's 1,000th TX4! When the dealer called me to say it was a landmark vehicle, I was quite taken aback."

The TX4 has a Euro IV-compliant VM engine so it meets the latest emissions rules. It also has anti-lock brakes as standard, reworked suspension for a smoother ride and enhanced air conditioning, but retains the distinctive London cab shape.

Peter Rigden, M&O's General Manager told us:

As M&O sell their 1000th TX4

Sales continue to boom...

"Since its launch, the feedback we've had on the TX4 from drivers has been overwhelmingly positive. To pass our own 1,000 sales landmark so quickly is incredible. John is delighted with his TX4 and we wish him all the best in it."

Sales of the Coventry built vehicle in June showed a 23.3 per cent increase with 296 new vehicles hitting the roads of Britain. So far this year 1,819 new TX4 taxis have been delivered to customers, an increase of 45.29 per cent over 2006, which was also a record year for sales.












You can find out more about the TX4 at www.mannandoverton.com or www.lti.co.uk.



M&O Sales exec Peter Kenrick with John Clarke and Sales Manager Marino DiVito (right)

Martin Cordell & Co ACCOUNTANTS

Does your accountant supply you with the following?

-  Over thirty-five years of experience with the Licensed London Taxi Trade.
-  Processing of Self-Assessment Returns.
-  Advice on trading as a Limited Company with its tax advantages and potential pitfalls.
-  Preparation of accounts.
-  Initial consultation dealing with loss of Earnings Claims (due to accidents on the road etc.)
-  Letters to banks, building societies and other lenders.
-  Specialist in house facilities to deal with Inland Revenue enquiry cases,
(This is expensive and time consuming - Ask your accountant how much he will charge should this unpredictable event occur).
-  A three hundred and sixty five days a year service.
-  A 'nightshift' service.
-  Offices in North and East London.
-  First Consultation Free of Charge.

Martin Cordell & Co....DO!

All for one yearly fee

The London Taxi Trades Premier Accountants

(24 hour answering facility for prompt service)

020 8980 7161

(24 hour answering facility for prompt service)

1/5 Alfred Street, Bow, London E3 2BE also at

Front Office, First Floor, 9 Church Road, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 4AS

www.martin-cordell.co.uk

In the March issue of *Call Sign*, we published an article on the collapse of a building at the western end of Commercial Road and asked via Dial-a-Cab driver **John Addis (K97)** why the Limehouse Link had remained closed for its usual routine maintenance when the traffic heading eastbound was almost gridlocked?

In fact John took it as far as complaining to Jim Fitzpatrick, the MP whose constituency includes Canary Wharf, the area suffering most from the constant closure of the Link tunnel. **John also wrote to Transport for London who eventually responded with a nonsensical piece of political gobbledegook that even Jim Fitzpatrick called a non-answer!**

John outlined his frustrations to the MP by explaining that he had been watching the signs posted around the tunnel giving 30 March as the date when the maintenance repairs were to finish – except that when that date arrived, the signs magically altered to 30 May!

Then the work seemed to end – except that the 30 May signs stayed and then in June, more work commenced! But all wasn't too bad... at least the signs had changed saying work now finishes 25 July!

But Jim Fitzpatrick's office had found yet another date. After dealing with a problem on behalf of a constituent of theirs, they then heard that the completion date had moved to 7 December!

John Addis told *Call Sign*: "The Limehouse Link situation has become farcical, with not even the MP in whose constituency Docklands falls being informed as to the true situation. I suspect that the real reason is because TfL

Just what is going on at the Limehouse Link?



Of course it is open sometimes!

don't have a clue themselves as to what is actually going on in the tunnel. I think I should have realised that when the TfL spokesperson who responded to my original letter regarding the tunnel not opening to help clear the traffic following the building collapse, came back with some inane rubbish."

And what did that spokesperson, the Customer Services Advisor at Surface Transport Communications (Transport for London) tell John at the time? Well other than telling him that the collapse of a building in Commercial Road caused a large traffic hold-up, Stuart Towne went onto "explain" why they didn't reopen the Link to help clear that traffic. He wrote:

Despite the best efforts of the London Traffic

Control Centre (LTCC) to mitigate the congestion, the number of changes to the diversion plan meant that the Limehouse Link Tunnel scheduled maintenance did proceed. Had the situation not been as complex and the closures static and perhaps, clearly defined earlier, a different course of action would have followed.

Thank you for contacting us regarding this issue and I trust the above information clarifies the situation.

Well er, yes Mr Towne. We at *Call Sign* think TfL mean that had things been different they would not have been the same... er, or possibly not depending how similar they were to something that was different. We can sleep now, thank you...

Chamber of Commerce taxi report: LTI issue a statement



"LTI welcomes the recent LCCI report and survey on the London Taxi trade. We have always supported the London taxi trade and want to safeguard the *Gold Standard* quality of service that the drivers provide. This standard of service is in part a result of the *Knowledge*, which gives a driver the ability to navigate across and around London and LTI do not want to see this service diluted in any way whatsoever. However, we do understand that the method of testing for the *Knowledge* can be improved.

LTI are pleased to join in the debate that has been provoked by the LCCI report, but do not want to see any detrimental action that might threaten the quality of service of the London Taxi trade or the ability for a driver to run a profitable business. Choosing to become a London Taxi driver must remain a career that is fulfilling for the driver, whilst still delivering the highest level of service for the customer possible. LTI want to work with the trade to continually improve that service."

LONDON LEGEND Limousine Taxis



London Legend specialises in wedding transport. Our magnificent Asquith Limousine Taxis and Landaulets with drop hoods are replicas of the legendary 1930's Austin Low Loader Hackney Carriage. Special rates for Dial-a-Cab drivers on mid week and out of season weddings. We cover all areas of London and the south east.

Tel.: 01628 471632. Mob.: 07974 348974.

We all know that two Mercedes containing petrol, gas cylinders and nails failed to explode in central London in the early hours of Friday 29 June.

The one **Call Sign** is concerned about was the one left outside the *Tiger Tiger* club on Haymarket, where the bomb was defused after police were alerted by an ambulance crew who spotted smoke inside the car.

Dial-a-Cab's **Tony Arnold (F03)** was one of several drivers to phone **Call Sign** to pass on the astonishing news that he believed the Haymarket Merc that could have caused total carnage "...had a private hire licence sticker on both front and rear windscreens."

We checked every available press photo and searched through the internet, but no photos gave a clear enough shot of either screen to clarify whether Tony and the other four DaC drivers that phoned us were indeed correct.

Call Sign then tried several different arms of the police who apologised but told us that type of information would be unlikely to be given out.

It takes very little for **Call Sign** to have a pop at Addison Lee's John Griffin or Steve Wright of the Private Hire Association, but in a matter as serious as this - should the DaC drivers be correct - we feel certain that they would be as mortified as we are.

Tony Arnold told us: **"I watched the video footage carefully on both Fox News and CNN and saw the PH roundels quite clearly. I think it is a disgrace that these can be obtained so easily and believe that the Mayor should now step in and question the**

Car Bombs and a Private Hire Mystery



The Haymarket car bomb is towed away

whole legality of the private hire system. As Taxiwise says: Know what you are getting into."

If the situation is as Tony and the others claim, then it surely is a disgrace and shows once and for all the ludicrous ease with which these licenses are obtained. It is irritating enough spotting a window cleaner's van with ladders on the roof sporting roundels in order to avoid congestion charging, but this, if confirmed, is a step into the unknown...

Call Sign

August 2007

Editor: Alan Fisher

Address: 39-47 East Road, London, N1 6AH

Tel: 0207 251 0581 Fax: 0207 553 7293

E-mail: callsignmag@aol.com

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

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

Design: Aldan Publications,

Tel: 07958 300 428

Email: danny.fresco@dsl.pipex.com

Views and opinions expressed in Call Sign must not automatically be assumed to represent those of the Editor or Board of Management. No part of Call Sign may be reproduced either manually or electronically without the express permission of the Editor

E₃TAXIS

LOGO CARRYING DAC DRIVERS

the following offer is for

YOU!

AT E₃ TAXIS – 50% DISCOUNT! ON SERVICING

Some of our other services include:-

- ★ Overhauls ★ Tracking/4 wheel alignment ★ MOT testing on Class 4 vehicles ★ Smoke Test
- ★ TXII Timing Chains/Belts ★ TXII Heater Control Valves ★ Tyres Supplied and Fitted

We are also fitting the new PCO Approved Tyres MAXXIS, as well as DUNLOP & MICHELIN

We can service your TXII from new without affecting your warrantee

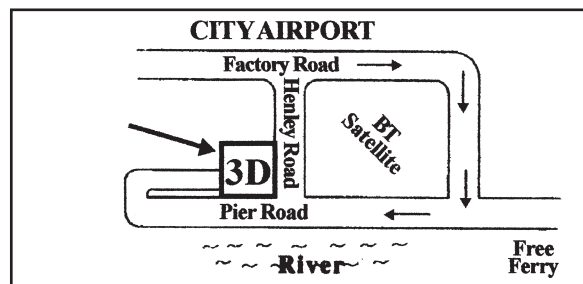
And we will advise on any warrantee work needed

To book: Ring Christine on 0207 474 6592 and mention that you are on DaC

E3 Taxis Unit 3D Standard Industrial Estate, Henley Road, E16 2ES

Open Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.30pm, Saturday 9am – 1pm

WE ARE ALSO A PCO APPROVED EMISSIONS FITTING AGENT FOR THE TAXI CAT SYSTEM



Rumours have circulated around Dial-a-Cab and the trade in general following a driver on the Eurostar rank picking up an executive from the French cab network *Taxis G7* and taking him to **Dial-a-Cab's** City office. The driver told everyone he met that this executive was going to make an offer for DaC! The story was then picked up by an internet list where rumour suddenly became 'fact'! A short time later, LCDC Vice Chairman and DaC driver **Grant Davis (I39)** - also a member of that list - told **The Badge** readers that "...DaC had three prospective buyers for the Society and that many drivers are wondering why the current Board at DaC are so insistent on selling the company off?"

Within days, rumours had began spreading like wildfire and **Call Sign's** phone started ringing with drivers asking whether what they had heard was true - Brian Rice had just sold Dial-a-Cab to *Groupe G7*, the owners of *Taxis G7*!

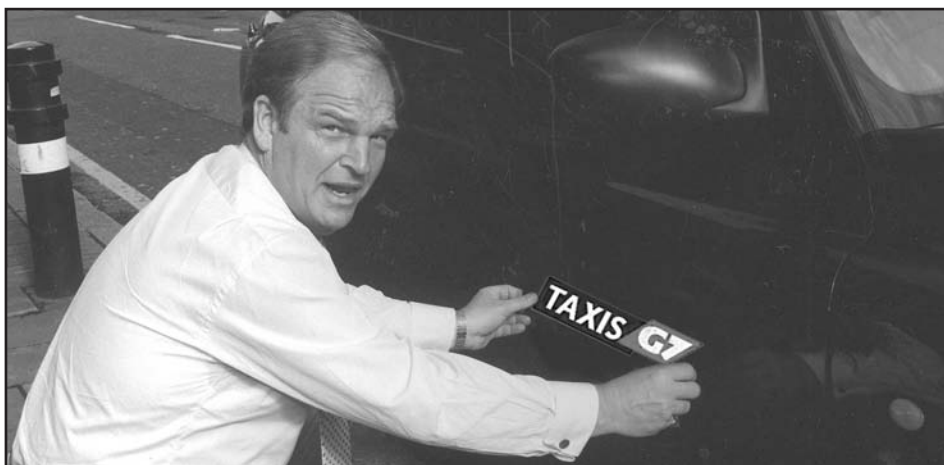
Certainly G7 presents a valid European opposition to DaC with its fleet of 3000 taxis, in addition to a smaller "fleet" that rents out cabs to independent drivers. *Garage des taxis G7* has around 750 vehicles to rent in addition to running a taxi school.

It does appear that the "battle" between G7 and their closest competitors, *Taxi Alpha*, is all but over with G7 taking the unofficial championship de Paris! Several years ago, **Call Sign** took a group to visit *le Taxi Parisien* at Alpha, but now could it be that *Taxis G7* would be coming to see us as our new owners before this mag gets the chance to organise another trip to the French capital? There was only one way to find out, so we asked Brian Rice whether he was in the process of selling DaC to G7?

"I don't think it would be particularly professional of me to mention names of MD's or companies," replied the Chairman, "but I can tell you that several offers for Dial-a-Cab have been made in recent times. Surely no one should be surprised that the most successful radio taxi organisation in the country is wanted by others?"

Brian went on: "However, contrary to what anyone says, whether it be on EC5 or one of the internet chat lists who seem to

Dial-a-Cab For Sale? I'll Have it Pour La Belle France!



Brian Rice: "Surely no one should be surprised that the most successful radio taxi organisation in the country is wanted by others?"

grow their own rumours, I cannot sell Dial-a-Cab. This Society is owned by its members and ultimately they would have to decide. What I, as Chairman, have to do is to decide whether any prospective buyer is actually making a genuine offer. Enquiring is not the same as putting an offer onto the table."

The Chairman continued: "If an offer were to be placed on the table and I believed it to be serious, then I would have a duty to inform our members, they would then have to vote on whether they wanted the Board to investigate the matter further and should that vote be a yes, there would then have to be a further vote on changing our status before any deal was forthcoming. And as no one has received any such letters, you can assume that nothing has happened along those lines!"

And, asked **Call Sign**, if DaC were to be sold, where would that leave Brian Rice?

"To be honest," replied the DaC Chairman,

"every enquiry to date has stipulated that any deal would have to include me as well! It may sound bigheaded, but it's not meant to be and means that any deal would still involve me being the person in charge at DaC. But as no definite offer has yet been made, it is all still totally irrelevant!"

Call Sign had one final question; how much would constitute a reasonable offer?

"I won't know until such time as someone makes an offer, but it would have to be a substantial one," said Brian, "in the meantime, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to buy a French bread sandwich...!"

Editor's Note: In case any readers are not sure, the above photo has been doctored!

Eco-Power Emission Reduction System Extended...

The PCO have announced that it has extended its approval of the **Eco-Power emission reduction system**, an emission reduction solution in support of the Mayor's Taxi Emission Strategy. The system has a cooled Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) circuit and a combined catalyst and partial flow filter unit. It was originally approved for installation on the **Euro 1 LTI Fairway**, which then became Euro 3 compliant.

Following further product developments, independently assessed by the Energy Saving Trust (EST), this system is now approved for installation on the **Euro 2 LTI TX1**, which would then becomes Euro 3 compliant.

CONVERT ANYTHING TO DVD OR CD

We can convert anything to DVD or CD And at an affordable price!

Vinyl long playing records to CD...	£4
Cassettes to CD...	£4
(VHSC 8mm Hi to DV) to DVD...	£4
VHS tapes to DVD...	£4
Reel to Reel...	£4
Super/Standard 8/Cine film to DVD...	£5
+ Vinyl records professionally cleaned...	

All quotes include DVD discs, CDs and sleeves

Pick up and delivery is possible for a small fee and a minimum of 4 copies

Call for more information

020 8518 8765

In July 2004, *Call Sign* was surprised to hear of the retirement of this magazine's former editor and current brilliant cartoonist, Gerald 'Jery' Craig.

Gerald told us at the time that he had been on Dial-a-Cab for 38 years and at 67, still feeling fit, decided to hang up his licence and begin to do some of the things he had always wanted to, but just never had the time because of the need to go to work!

His wife Barbara remembered that first day of his retirement well:

"He went into our garden shed and spent several hours doing some sculpturing – something he used to love but just stopped having the time for. It didn't take much working out to see that he intended to enjoy his retirement!"

Now, three years down the line and having reached 70, Gerald's artistic hobby has turned into a successful business – but with paintings rather than sculptures. He has been selling his artwork periodically over the years, but only in the last six months has he taken it that seriously that the artist's bible, *Art Business Today*, after seeing his work recommended him to online publisher and retailer **ID-wall.com**.

Jery's new works are perhaps difficult to describe. *Art Business Today* describes them as modern day doodles and to some they could appear that way, but these are no ordinary doodles. What Gerald does is to tailor an individual watercolour to a person's life. People approach him to create an original watercolour to give as a gift when celebrating a special event in someone's life.

Jery Craig's 'Doodle Pix' are a hit with the art world



One of Jery's masterpieces

"I've had people buy them to celebrate weddings, barmitzvahs, graduations, retirements and most things that you

could think of deserving a special commemoration."

Gerald gets the buyer to fill in a form that gives him details of the person to whom the gift will be made. He then paints a watercolour that will feature almost every event in that person's life, with the end result makes a totally unique gift showing numerous events in that person's life – and the more you look, the more you see!

You can see examples of Gerald's unique work on **www.ID-wall.com**, although they do not represent what he can do on an individually tailored watercolour. You can phone him on **020 8428 3036** and he'll be delighted to explain what it's all about.

And of course, you can still catch Jery's cartoons in every issue on page 6...

DaC Threesome at the WCHCD Golf Day



A threesome representing Dial-a-Cab were among the 20 players at the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers Golf Day organised by Court Assistant Brenda Bartlett and held at Nazeing Golf Club. The day helped to raise money for the Charitable Trust.

An interesting and challenging course was enough to provide some good competitive rounds of golf with Company Beadle, John Sheen, keeping a watchful eye on the proceedings.

The contest winner was Bobby Norris, closely followed by Rick Stacey with the third prize going to Alan Burnham. As well as winning a golf bag as contest winner, Bobby Norris also won the prize for nearest-the-pin.

DaC's team consisted of **Duncan Hope (R52)**, **Allen Togwell** and **Howard Pears**. A great day was enjoyed by all and hopefully next year's event will attract even more golfers.



KENT & EAST SUSSEX
RAILWAY COMPANY
TENTERDEN ~ NORTHIAM ~ BODIAM



The famous Hop-Pickers Weekend 8th & 9th September



Enjoy the atmosphere of bygone days when Bodiam was at the heart of the hop industry and trains from London brought many people for their annual hop-picking 'holiday'

DEPARTURES FROM
TENTERDEN DAILY
AT: 10:40, 11:45, 13:15,
14:20, 15:30 & 16:35

Recreated Hoppers hut
Period motor vehicles
Live entertainment



Bar, BBQ & tea tent
Saturday night
entertainment &
camp fire

087 060 060 74

www.kesr.org.uk

Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

We have only been in our wonderful new building a couple of months and for me Brunswick House is already a distant memory. Helped in effect by the exceptionally smooth transition from one building to another, as the Chairman mentioned in his report last month, and also the fact that the interior design of the new premises was superb and completed to everybody's satisfaction before we moved in, with one small exception being the drivers and staff reception entrance, which because of the layout of the area available and the need for maximum security, a little extra thought was needed to meet a number of requirements.

All of you I'm sure are now familiar with the location of your new building, as no doubt are many of the public who use the busy East Road into the City, which should generate interest when they realise the name and logo on our building is that as seen on the side of our 2000 plus vehicles.

The next question being asked of course is: what are we going to do with Brunswick House?

If it were my choice I would wipe it off the face of the earth. Moving out of Brunswick House was I believe for some an occasion for mixed emotions. In my case there was absolutely nothing mixed, instead it was one of sheer delight to move from what I considered to be one of the most depressing and uninspiring building I've ever had the misfortune to work in, and I have worked in some bleak premises in my time!

Whoever discovered Brunswick House must have been influenced by a weird desire for abject failure, because that is exactly what that depressing building was plagued with for so many years, absolute failure, until against all the odds, success was eventually achieved, culminating in not only the purchase of a fantastic new premises, but doing so without having to borrow a single penny.

The Return to Brunswick House

Several weeks after the last person leaving Brunswick House turned off the lights, I had cause to return to search for a missing item and whilst there, I was for some inexplicable reason, drawn to wander the various floors and empty offices. And in doing so to pause and reflect on the day I arrived as a new board member twenty odd years ago and dwell on many of the events that followed, the highs, the lows but more significantly the dramas.

Our Society had been in Brunswick House just two years by the time I joined the board and construction work was still in progress and the fact it was being done piecemeal and without any noticeable planning, it more or less never stopped. Shape wise it wasn't the most practical of buildings. Its original purpose being light industrial, it was far too narrow from front to back to offer much by way of office design, so the open plan system was the only option, the exception being the boardroom floor where offices were essential for privacy. I've lost count of how many times partition walls were pulled down, put back

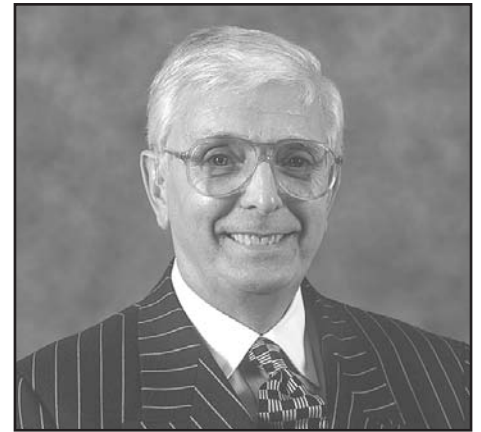
up, pulled down again, moved a yard one way then a yard the other way to fit whoever needed the office space most.

Having served with four different Chairmen and twenty-one different board members, seven of whom sadly have since died, I've witnessed firsthand at Brunswick House the politics and drama surrounding the implementation of data despatch and near tragedy when we were on the verge of closing our doors, added to which was a working environment consisting of conspiracies, plots, counter plots, back stabbing, animosity, bitterness, board members collaborating against board members, recriminations, Chairmen physically threatened, Chairmen ousted and board members being forced to resign. It's only when one realises the ludicrous manner under which this Society once operated can one truly appreciate the remarkable success that has been achieved in spite of it. And perhaps why when I walk into our new premises, do I feel such a sense of awe.

And I speak not only of business, economic and technological success but also of the quality, attitude, ability and professionalism of the present administration, the staff, the subscribers, the board and the Chairman in particular that has made it happen.

As I continued to wander from floor to floor, office to offices that were once occupied by those who I once had the pleasure and displeasure to call colleagues, I sat for a while on the floor where much of the drama took place - the boardroom - and allowed my mind to compare the difference between the way the present board conducted business, with how it was in the past when board meetings for example not only lasted several days because much of what was debated was so mundane, but the manner in which those meetings took place. Which part explains why the Society was stuck for so long in a time warp.

When I first stood for the board, I did so believing I had something to contribute. Unfortunately my idea of how a business should be run, to that which I had just joined, differed somewhat. From the very beginning when I saw board members arriving for work and attending meetings dressed in jeans and trainers etc, I knew my time on the board was going to be difficult. Which was soon confirmed when being a non-smoker I found myself near nigh choking to death sitting for ten hours in a smoke filled boardroom with no ventilation or air conditioning with walls and ceiling covered with nicotine from a chain smoking board of management one of whom smoked cigars. Added to which was the sight and smell of dogs pee and worse from an unhouse-trained hound whose board member owner was allowed with the consent of the board to bring the wretched thing into board meetings! Had the Society been in existence only a short time, I might have made allowances, but we had been trading for more than thirty years by the time I had arrived. So I expected at least a modicum of professionalism already being applied. The reason this was not so was attributed mainly by the lack of continuity of board members, many of whom had little or no business experience, the man-



ner in which they were and still are elected, low remuneration, lack of commitment and the most significant of all was a profound fear of introducing or proposing anything the drivers might disagree with. Being the new boy, the attitude was I had a lot to learn, not the other way round. So when I proposed for example that board members should wear suits, shirts and ties when in the office (because if I was going to try and persuade our members to improve their image then it was necessary the board should lead by example), it was one of many that was to fall like lead balloons.

Afraid of drivers!

Another was a prime example of the fear the board had of the drivers. During what was going to be a lengthy board meeting, midday had arrived when suddenly all the board started to put money on the table and the then-Chairman began making out a lunch list of various burgers to be ordered from McDonalds. Firstly, I don't eat burgers and secondly, as it was a working lunch I could not understand why the board members were paying for the food themselves? So I asked the then-Chairman if I could make a proposition? Which was that a fish lunch be ordered for the board from a local fish bar, together with a side order of salad and rolls etc and several bottles of white wine, the cost of which should be met by Dial-a-Cab. The response to that request was a deathly silence, then a gradual mass sucking of breath and bulging of eyes and I swear I was about to witness multiple heart seizures. Needless to say my proposition didn't even get as far as a vote, so I excused myself quickly for fear I might be needed to administer oral resuscitation and had lunch in a local restaurant, something which I've done ever since. I smile when I think back to that episode now, but at the time and for many many years afterwards when I drove to and from Brunswick House, I was to continually despair at the lack of progress and wonder how on earth was this company ever going to be a success? So many radical changes were necessary and it was going to take a very strong-minded board to make it happen. And miraculously that is exactly what did happen, when by chance after a number of turbulent years a board came together led by a forward thinking Chairman, all pulling in the same direction which in turn permeated throughout the membership and

continued on page 13



Struggling to see potential fares in the dark, in poor weather conditions or in very busy streets is set to change with the launch of an innovative new product by London taxi driver Tony Brady and his business partner, product designer Chris Cullen. The innovative handheld *Taxi Hailer* will revolutionise the way people hail cabs in the future - not only in London, but also in New York and eventually many other capital cities with licensed taxis.

The device is designed to benefit both drivers *and* passengers. Passengers will be better able to be seen and picked up in poor weather conditions or in circumstances where it's difficult to be spotted; a real safety benefit, particularly for women in the evenings and at

How to Hail a Taxi or spot a passenger!

The Taxi Hailer is here...

night. It will also help elderly or disabled people who face challenges of their own in hailing or competing for a taxi at the roadside.

Tony told *Call Sign*: **"I knew from my own experience how difficult it can sometimes be to see potential fares. Listening to passengers' tales about how they often struggle to be seen by drivers convinced me that there was a problem that needed addressing."**

Taxi Hailer is the size of a credit card, folds easily away into a pocket or purse and at £9.99 probably costs less than the price of an average cab ride. Its powerful bright orange flashing light is powered by energy-efficient LED technology and research shows that Taxi Hailer makes identifying potential passengers by taxi drivers up to five times easier - even in the very worst of driving conditions. Passengers can still see cabs from a distance, but Taxi Hailer means that drivers will now be able to spot their potential passengers from a distance as well - a win-win situation.

Tony and Chris have already begun to market and sell their innovative new product through their website www.taxihailer.co.uk, which sells direct to both the public and corporate buyers. Taxi Hailer are currently giving cab drivers a special one off deal; by quoting this *Call Sign* editorial, you can buy up to 4 taxi hailers at a cost of £7.50 each inclusive of P+P. This offer is limited to postal purchases. Cheques / postal orders should be made payable to Taxi Hailer Company Limited and addressed to Taxi Hailer Company Limited, 362 Gander Green Lane, Sutton, Surrey, SM3 9QZ. Credit card orders by phone to 020 8644 0129. Offer ends 30 September.

Initial trials of the product have been so successful that significant interest has been generated in New York, home of the iconic yellow taxicab and where the product is also being introduced. As the device becomes increasingly recognised by cabbies, the Taxi Hailer is en route to become an essential item for city dwellers worldwide.

Allen Togwell's Marketing Place (continued from page 12)

ultimately led to our Society becoming a success. Little could be done with improving the state of Brunswick House, but everybody knew with success would eventually come new premises. There is of course still much to be accomplished, the advantage being it will be achieved in a bright, spacious modern building that lends itself to achieving success. So leaving Brunswick House has for me personally caused no heart ache whatsoever and as I said at the beginning I sincerely hope the future owners - whoever they might be - demolishes the building completely and with it every trace of the Society's ignominious past.

And health matters...

Whilst on the subject of our new premises, a situation occurred recently that gave me slight cause for concern. One of my duties is interviewing new applicants wishing to join our Society, these together with other drivers I had reason to speak to accounted for a number of drivers visiting my office, which is on the 4th floor, during a week when our lift was out of order, so it necessitated the use of the stairs (64 stairs to be exact). Hence the cause for concern because such was the state of almost every one of those drivers when they eventually reached my floor, I genuinely considered installing a supply of oxygen. We all know sitting in a cab all day breathing in exhaust fumes is not a healthy occupation. Made worse by those who are overweight, who smoke, who think a healthy diet is anything with chips and whose idea of regular exercise is shuffling out of the cab to fill up with diesel.

Neither is it healthy drinking insufficient amounts of water and not emptying the blad-



July 1984 and DaC begin converting this part of our then new building into a control room. We opened for business the following month, but Allen Togwell never liked it!

der regularly. Because irregular bladder habits, including having to go during bedtime hours, could be an indication of something far more sinister. I won't dwell on this subject except to say Prostate Cancer has the highest number of deaths in men. So please think about it.

Also something else to think about, when was the last time you had your blood pressure taken? Many chemists now offer this service. 130/70 or under is normal. Up to 145/85 is acceptable, above that see your GP.

Now what about your Cholesterol, because this is the babe that can really get you into doing something about your life style and preventing heart disease. A reading below 05 is

what you should be aiming for. Above that, change your diet. Finally get out of that cab as often as you can, even if it's just opening the door for your passenger, which will also impress our clients. Better still get into a habit after finishing your days work by taking a 30-minute brisk walk in the fresh air. Just fast enough to raise your heart rate, expand your lungs, and exercise those joints, it's enjoyable and it's free.

Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing
allent@dialacab.co.uk

On Saturday, 23 June, an enthusiastic group from Dial-a-Cab made the journey to Richmond Athletic sports ground to take part in a Nomura-sponsored charity-raising event for the NSPCC.

Arriving in bright sunshine, they booked in and received their goodie bags - which included a towel. Little did they know this would be the most used piece of equipment throughout the day! They were given a talk on health and safety and the look of apprehension said it all.

The games started with great passion, team members not realising that certain muscles had not been exercised for several years. Adding to the hazards of the day, rain clouds suddenly gathered and the monsoon season arrived in Richmond! This was to be the order of the day, with the rain pouring down every 90 minutes!

The first game had four team members using one pair of skis in unison, but unfortunately for Dial-a-Cab our lead person had a problem distinguishing his left from his right, causing considerable mayhem!

The rest of the day was taken up with contests involving inflatable obstacles, buckets of water and liquid soap! But despite the rain, spirits weren't dampened and everyone had a great time. The winning team came from Nomura, who it must be said had previous

DaC at Nomura's "It's a Knockout!"



DaC's intrepid volunteers were up for everything thrown at them...!
pic: Tom Whitbread

experience of this type of contest. Although Dial-a-Cab came eleventh out of twelve, we have vowed to return next year and do better.

More importantly, lots of money was raised for the NSPCC for their 'Full Stop' campaign to combat cruelty against children.

DaC driver's narrow escape!

"I definitely don't like white transit vans," says Lee!

Lee Menzies (K45) is beginning to get a phobia about white Transit vans! In September 2005, his cab-at-the-time was written-off after having been seriously shunted. Now in June 2007, a Ford Transit that had jumped a red traffic light in the Swiss Cottage area demolished his TX1 taxi.

Now fully recovered from his accident, Lee explained to **Call Sign** the circumstances surrounding the incident.

"It was midnight and I was travelling west along Adelaide Road NW3 with a passenger on board and approaching a green traffic light at its junction with Primrose Hill Road. As I was crossing the junction, a white Transit van came flying over the intersection heading north-bound from Primrose Hill Road and hit my cab broadside along the nearside doors. I only remember seeing a white flash of light and a loud bang."

Taking a deep breath as the memories came flooding back, Lee continued:

"At that same moment, I recall hearing my female passenger screaming as we spun 180° in the roadway with the force of the impact. Several witnesses came forward, including a couple of motorists who had been stationary at the very same red traffic light that this idiot had crossed! Once I realised that



thankfully neither I, nor my passenger were seriously hurt, I managed to calm the young lady down and also got myself together. Mind you, it was three days before I got back onto a cab," he said thoughtfully.

"Seeing the damage to my cab and the force of the impact, I firmly believe that it was the strength of the vehicle we drive which saved both our lives," Lee added.

"The central door pillar and both front and rear floors of the cab buckled under the impact and my passenger was sitting in the near-side seat, so her legs were very close to that caved-in rear

Pic left: The remains of Lee's Cab after yet another white van man hit him

door and could have been crushed as the van hit us," he speculated. "That we survived such a force is testimony to the strength of LTI's

product," he beamed!

"I've got a brand new TX4 now and my advice to everyone is to avoid white van man at any time of the day!"

© Call Sign Magazine MM7

Dancha Designs

Professional & Personal Web-design

"...Dancha Designs work with our clients to deliver exactly what they want, how they want it, when they want it. It is integral to what we do..."

for more info visit:

www.danchadesigns.com

Or call: 0701 741 5000

Call Sign's Alan Nash (A95), who has been in every issue of the mag with his informative *Nash's Numbers* since 1997, recently underwent an operation for the removal of a cancerous prostate. The op was a complete success and Alan wanted to take the opportunity to pass on some advice to Dial-a-Cab drivers...

"What have Rickie Gervais and Bob Monkhouse in common? If 'both are comedians' is your answer, you have no chance. If your answer is that they have both recently appeared in advertisements for Prostate Cancer you have a better chance, but how many of you have taken heed and had a finger poked up your bum? Probably very few of you.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men. We see the statistics, but it won't be me - I have no symptoms. They are the best symptoms to have to be tested.

My brother-in-law died from prostate cancer, but did I get tested? No, it won't happen to me. This, my male colleagues, is a male thing. I only got tested thanks to a routine blood test after breaking my wrist. The blood test indicated possible cancer, a finger up the bum showed possible cancer, a biopsy proved it was cancer, an MRI scan showed it hadn't spread and a radial prostatectomy (the removal of the prostate organ) has cured my cancer sub-

'Nash's Numbers' in Successful Prostate Cancer Op



Alan Nash: Well on the way to recovery

ject to 15 years of checkups. No, this wasn't pleasant, but neither was it too painful. Just 6 days in hospital for me, but often less. The alternative, however, was less pleasant... death.

The moral is not to wait. If you are over 50, ask your doctor for a PSA blood test, it could save your life. Whilst I am no expert, I have been through the process and if you want to ask me anything, please email me at alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk. I'll be happy to tell you all I know."

Ed's note: And he STILL didn't miss this issue! Well done Alan...

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

Kupkake's Korner



Tour de where?

Who with an IQ close to naught, decided that London was the place for sport?

A cycle race to a southern port, great publicity, but expensively bought!

With no regard for native's needs, a showcase born and hatched from greed.

An idea from one elected to lead, to Londoners with mouths to feed...

So was this farce just a dry run, for 2012's Olympic fun?

A taste of what we've got to come, once the chaos has begun.

The Olympics should be held in Greece, they've got the space and the police.

Historically the Golden Fleece, is to be found on Grecian streets...

All nations could help with the expense, the Hotels and the marquee tents.

The barriers and security fence paid for by donations sent...

Kopyright Kupkake 2007

REVISED LICENCE FEES

TfL has approved the following new taxi fees with effect from 2 July 2007

	Current fee	New fee
Taxi driver application	£25	£50
Taxi three-year driver licence	£224	£199
Taxi application/inspection	£107	£107
Taxi annual licence	£35	£71

The taxi annual licence fee has been increased by £36 to provide for the cost of mid-year safety inspections to be introduced with effect from October 2007.

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**.

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

Then, providing you are over 18, have been a member of the Credit Union for over three months and have established regular savings, 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?

Just 1% per month on the outstanding balance (or APR of 12.68%).

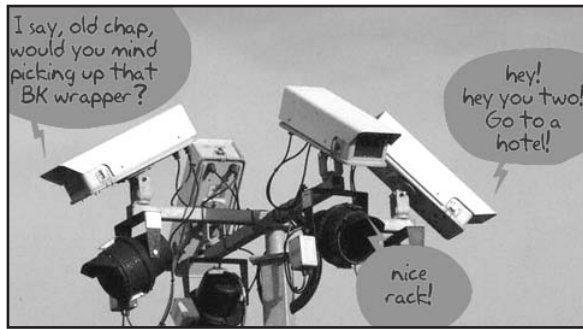
There are now even lower rates for loans above £6000.

You can pay your loan back early should you wish to.

All savings and loans carry free life insurance.

AND you usually get an annual dividend on your savings.

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



Not just watching now, listening too!

CCTV Calling DaC Driver: "Pick up That Rubbish!"

Hands up if you thought that things had got as bad as they could when comparing London with George Orwell's classic see-all, know-all Big Brother? Well you'd be wrong, because several London councils are now experimenting with closed circuit television cameras that not only watch your car speeding (whilst taking a photo of the driver) or being illegally parked, but that can actually talk to you!

The new cameras are in addition to

It's 1984 at last as CCTV's begin talking...

ones we already have and plans are for them to be placed wherever there is a higher-than-average possibility of hooliganism, street crime, excessive littering or even in places where people talk too loud!

There are now 22 areas across the capital that have the new CCTV cameras and

whilst the consensus of opinion from most of the councils is that even if they do not like the idea of Orwellism spreading, it is an evil necessity.

Some councils have claimed that talking cameras are ideal for noisy people in local libraries, however many of those against the idea are concerned that private conversations will be overheard between people standing in a quiet street just having a chat.

While the CCTV's see all, the voices will be human coming from main control centres where those operating the directional guides will be able to hear everything and if they deem it necessary, issue a verbal warning through the cameras. That could even lead to someone caught on camera throwing down a cigarette end with video evidence possibly leading to a fine.

There can be little doubt that like them or not, CCTVs have proved to be a useful addition to the battle against terrorist activities. The question is whether the benefit Londoners will get from this new breed will counteract the total loss of privacy and just how long it will be before it becomes compulsory to have them in our homes?

Recommend two new drivers - get one month FREE subs!



Allen Togwell:
"You can get a month of free subscriptions and as many times as you like provided your recommendations are accepted as members"

Dial-a-Cab drivers recently received a letter signed by Allen Togwell on behalf of the BoM in which he said that due to our larger premises, with its state of the art call centre giving us the ability to answer calls far more quickly and efficiently, it would mean more calls and added business.

"Naturally," said Allen, "additional business means a need for more mobiles to ensure we retain a quality of service expected of a company of our standing. At DaC, we have always taken great care when recruiting new members hence the reason we, unlike our competitors, insist on all new applicants first satisfying an interview process before being accepted."

Mr Togwell, just as a Chancellor of the Exchequer would do, came to his 'goodies' package at the end!

"For a limited period," he continued, "all DaC drivers have to do is send in the details of two 'green badge' Hackney Carriage licensed drivers who they believe would like to become full members of Dial-a-Cab."

And the goodies? "In return for every two new drivers that you have recommended to apply for membership and who are accepted, you will be awarded one month's free subscriptions."

Allen ended by stating the obvious, that all applicants had to be of good character, smart appearance, courteous, helpful and of course be owner-drivers with non-liveried taxis.

Recommended applicants would still have to pass an interview, but the Board are assuming that between our drivers, we know the kind of applicants who DaC would like to represent them and that those people would probably enjoy working with the trade's premier radio taxi organisation.

As Allen wrote in the letter, this offer is only for a limited period and if you believe you know some green badge holders who fit our bill, then the operative expression must be – in Allen's own word and one that puzzled many drivers – PDQ. That means *pretty damn quick* if you want to enjoy the benefit of one month of free subs. Neither is there a limit as to how many recommendations you can make!

In addition to the cards that came with the letter, there are additional cards available in the driver's reception...



- Roadside Repair
- Roadside Assistance
- Running Repair
- Recovery
- Accident Recovery
- Pay as you go to Membership
- Credit Card taken at Roadside

0845 094 5307

We make the wheels turn
so you can earn,



THREAT OF A ONE-TIER TAXI SYSTEM?

London Taxi Board ask: Is this the future for London?

The New Northern Ireland Assembly is examining a Taxi Bill that aims to establish a one-tier licensing system across the region. The Bill will merge Hackney Carriages with Private Hire Vehicles potentially destroying the livelihoods of 450 Hackney Carriage drivers by allowing 2,000 Private Hire cars to pick up on the street in Belfast. Taxis traditionally in the UK can be hailed on the streets and at a rank, whilst Private Hire Vehicles must be pre-booked and cannot tout for business or use taxi ranks.

Three weeks ago, the Belfast City cab trade were allowed by authorities to protest outside

Stormont. A group of over 200 drivers turned out to protest against the proposed Taxi Bill. The Minister of the Environment, Arlene Foster, realising this was an important issue agreed to talk to the T&G representa-

tives who had organised the protest and has now agreed that they should be allowed to give evidence to the Environment Committee, who are looking at the details of the Bill.

Northern Ireland is the only taxi licensing area that until recently was run by the UK Government. The re-establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont has meant that the new Assembly now governs this licensing district. Prior to the re-establishment of the Assembly, policy officials at the Department of Environment (DoE) decided that it would cease to differentiate between Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles, effectively combining the two very different services.

Should the Bill be implemented, not only are individual Hackney Carriage drivers having their livelihoods threatened by Private

hire operators taking their work away, but they are also going to be required to be a 'taxi operator'. This would mean every fare will have to be recorded by every driver and a record

kept of the name of the passenger and pick up and drop off point. Fines for not doing this will run to thousands of pounds if this requirement is not adhered to!

If the UK's mainland taxi industry thinks this is an 'across the water' issue and why should they worry about it, well, perhaps they should think again? UK licensing regulators have indicated they have wanted to simplify licensing conditions and to them a one-tier system would in theory make sense! There has already been talk in Scotland about the simplicity of having a one-tier system and should the controversial Northern Ireland legislation be approved, it would not be too difficult for Scotland to follow suit. This could then happen in England and Wales and in particular in London, which is renowned for having the finest taxi system in the world.

The London Taxi Board, currently under the Chairmanship of Brian Rice, is extremely concerned by these developments and is currently actively involved in assisting the licensed taxi trade in Northern Ireland in ensuring that this misguided element, of what is otherwise a not unreasonable review of taxi legislation, never reaches the statute book.

Taxis Becoming Less Recognisable?

Taxiwise sends out a warning...

Taxis are becoming less recognisable as the choice of vehicle for use as a cab becomes more diverse, according to leading taxi safety campaigners, Taxiwise. The organisation believes that if passengers are not clear on what type of vehicle can be licensed as a taxi and what can't, they are more likely to fall prey to an unlicensed rogue cab driver.

It has renewed its call for a nationwide standard for the type of vehicle that can be used as a cab, so everyone knows what they are getting into and councils across the country have the same rules.

The comments came after the recent *Private Hire and Taxi Exhibition 2007*, held at the Ricoh Arena in Coventry, which showcased the latest vehicles that can be used in the taxi trade. These ranged from Far Eastern rickshaws to huge van conversions.

Taxiwise spokesperson, Celeste Clarke, told **Call Sign**: "The variety of vehicles on offer is quite staggering and the standard is generally high on the surface – but they are doing nothing to help public safety. There are different rules in each council area and while some of these vehicles could be licensed as Hackney carriages in one area to pick up people off the street, they might be banned in a neighbouring area or be only for use as private hire in

another." She continued: "There needs to be a nationwide standard – in both quality and recognisability – that all vehicles have to match up to. Only then can the risk of a member of the public inadvertently getting into an unlicensed cab be minimised. A prime example is London. The only vehicle which meets the strict guidelines on quality, safety and accessibility is the traditional London-style taxi. Therefore, anyone jumping into a London cab in London can be as sure as possible that it is properly licensed to operate as a Hackney carriage, picking people up off ranks and being hailed on the street. If another type of vehicle stops to pick them up without being booked in advance, it would be doing so illegally and should not be taken."

Ms Clarke ended by saying: "Having such strict guidelines across the country would make it very difficult for rogue drivers to operate. While the models on show in Coventry were very impressive, there was only one model that looked like a taxi – the traditional London-style cab. It served to highlight the difficulties passengers face every day in recognising what is a taxi and what is not."

To learn more about Taxiwise, visit www.taxiwise.com



FLORIDA DISNEY EXECUTIVE 4 BED 2 IDENTICAL MASTER SUITES

Have a look at our websites:

www.housebymouse.co.uk or
www.floridavillas2book.com

**FOR MORE EXECUTIVE POOL HOMES / CONDOS
FROM £350**



FLORIDA DISNEY VILLAS 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7+ BEDS

★ Gated communities

- ★ Overlooking conservation woodland/lakes
- ★ Air conditioned throughout. ★ Pool heating available
- ★ Excellent management companies on hand if needed

All enquiries please contact Lisa Rogers

01227 360388 / 07946 374420 or email:

enquiries@floridavillas2book.com

Or call Steve Rogers (H82) on 07951 829959

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
1984

This month's Flashback goes back to August 1984 and comments from DaC drivers of the time on their move from Shirland Road, Maida Vale to their new home - a building in Brunswick Place called Allington House - soon to become Brunswick House...

From Call Sign, August 1984...

We're Moving!

On 4th and 5th August 1984, Allington House / Brunswick House was opened for members and their families to look round. Phil Messias and Kenny Burns were on hand to explain the ins and outs of our new control room.

Drivers comments:

Cyril Barnett (A47): In a word, fabulous! Nothing like Afflick St or Shirland Rd.

Sydney Fairhead (E92): I am very impressed.

Adrian Landau (B69 dayman): The building is very spacious; I am just concerned about parking space.

John Addis (S58): Quite impressive.

Norman Shultz (E66): I was worried about the old phone number but understand that it will still be used for another year together with the new one. It's all very good, so much room for whatever plans we come up with in the future.

Dennis Sanders (D36): From what I've seen, the control room looks very worthwhile but I would like to see it working.



Our new home, Allington House, now renamed as Brunswick House

Frank Pearce (L83): Fantastic! Coming from Shirland Rd to here, what a difference! With an HQ like this, once men see it they'll have a reason to cover all our credit work and be proud of it.

David Kirby (L03): It's like going into a different dimension – from the Victorian era to modern times.

Warner Harris (D88): Very nice control room, no complaints.

Dennis Samuels (F25 and dispatcher): It's the difference of getting aggravation in more pleasant surroundings!

Alan Fisher (F07): That's a big desk for just one receptionist!

SMILE

Arthur was getting his hair cut prior to his trip to Rome and mentioned the trip to the barber: "Why would anyone want to go there," he asked? "It's

crowded and dirty and full of Italians. You're crazy to go to Rome. How are you getting there?"

Arthur sat comfortably in the chair while the barber started to cut.

"Were taking British Airways," he said, "we got a great price."

"BA is a lousy airline," said the barber while flying round the sides with his clippers, "their planes are old, their flight stewardesses are ugly and they're always late! So where are you staying in Rome?"

"We're at the International Marriott," said Arthur.

"Oh no," said the barber, "not that dump! It's the worst hotel in Rome. The rooms are small, the service is surly and they're grossly overpriced! What are you doing when you get there?"

"Well," said Arthur, "we're excited! We're going to the Vatican and hope to see the Pope."

"Some hope," laughed the barber, "you and a million others trying to see him. He'll look the size of an ant! Good luck on this lousy trip of yours. It sounds like you're going to need it!"

A month later, the man again came in for his regular haircut and the barber asked him about his trip to Rome.

"It was wonderful," said Arthur. "Not only were we on time in one of BA's brand new planes, but it was overbooked and they upgraded us up to first class! The food and wine were wonderful and I had a beautiful 23-year-old stewardess who waited on me hand and foot!"

And the hotel! Wow, was that great! They had just finished a £15 million renovation and now it is the finest hotel in Rome. They were also overbooked, so they apologised and gave us the presidential suite at no extra charge!"

"Well," spluttered the barber, "I bet you didn't get to see the Pope...?"

"Actually," said Arthur, "we were quite lucky. As we toured the Vatican, a Swiss guard tapped me on the shoulder and explained that the Pope likes to meet some of the visitors and asked if I'd be so kind as to step into his private room where the Pope would personally greet me. Sure enough, five minutes later, the Pope walked in and as I knelt down, he even spoke a few words to me."

"Wow" said the barber, "what did he say...?"

"Well" said Arthur, "he asked me where I got this lousy haircut from...?"

Power Pill

DRIVE FURTHER CHEAPER
CLEANER GREENER

Benefits of Power Pill

- Improves fuel economy
- Increases engine power
- Easier start-up
- Lubricates valves
- Cleans entire fuel system
- Slashes smoke emissions
- Saves on servicing costs

What DaC drivers have to say...

*Fuel consumption is lower and engine runs smoother
I could hardly believe it, it's suddenly like driving a new cab!*

1 Pack £19.99
5 Packs only £14.99 each

**Special Dial-a-Cab Offer of
10 Packs at £14.99 each
and receive
2 extra free packs**



Available from Power Pill UK Ltd on **0845 1 30 80 77**
or by visiting **www.powerpilluk.com**
Entering Promotion Code **DaC12**

JVBright - Southbank Service Station, London

iPods

At last Alan has let me write for *Call Sign* again! It's been 6 months and I've been getting withdrawal symptoms!

My kids, especially my daughter, begged me for an iPod last year and I flatly refused to buy one explaining to her the intrusion of privacy issues with the iTunes / MiniStore software that was in the press at the time; see <http://www.theinquirer.net/default.aspx?article=29089> and http://www.boingboing.net/2006/01/11/itunes_update_spies_.html.

Although Apple denied the invasion of privacy accusations, they still changed their MiniStore product after the public outcry... nuff said! So, when last month I was lucky enough to win a 30GB iPod, I wasn't overly enthused about it and in fact pondered on whether to accept it at all. But I'm glad I did, as after two weeks of using the iPod I've given it away!

I've used other MP3 players and / or MP4 players such as the Archos and I've found them much more usable and friendly. Considering Apple's legacy of producing software that's supposed to be easy to use, I can honestly say that I found it painful. **In fact I'd go as far to say that their iTunes product is complete rubbish and I'd like to describe it in stronger terms, but can't as Call Sign is a family magazine...**

I just couldn't believe that to transfer music to the iPod involved synchronising it and that this synchronising process changed the names of the mp3 files on the iPod. And also that the iTunes and iPod have a one-to-one mapping with one PC. Are you serious? I can understand their concerns regards software piracy, but I can't understand the policy of treating all users as villains. I now use my Windows



Computer Chinchat

from Vince Chin

Mobile device to play music, it's better and more usable.

Taxi sites and Charles Dickens!

Occasionally I search the web to see what new cab related sites have appeared and recently I found a great article at <http://www.taxi-library.org/dickens.htm>. It's an interview by Charles Dickens of a Four Wheeler Growler cab driver on 25th February 1860 and taken from Dickens own magazine, *All the Year Round*. A good friend of *Call Sign*, Norman Beattie from Winnipeg, Canada, put it onto the net and it's an excellent read. Charles Dickens went from "...I was led to consider that their hands were against every man and every man's hand ought to be against them in self-defence," to "...making me take a more charitable view of the business and trials of cab-driving."

Read it and I'm sure, like me, you'll appreciate life in the cab trade nowadays.

Family ancestry

Since February, my wife has been investigating her family history online using web sites such as www.ancestry.co.uk and www.genesre-united.co.uk and I've simply been shocked at the amount of information people are making easily available online, including date of births, mother's maiden name, marriage dates of living people etc. I agree that if you spend enough time hunting around, you'll find some of this information available online, but if you consider the security questions you're asked by banks and building societies you'll see where I'm coming from...

Anyway, be lucky and see you next month...hopefully!

Vince Chin
Call Sign on-line

PORTRAIT AND WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

Looking for a present? There is nothing quite as personal as a picture of you and your loved ones in a frame. I do portrait shoots in the comfort of your own home or on location.

Are you getting married? If you want something a bit different and contemporary, then look no further. My specialty is to capture candid moments and the story of your day will be presented in a stylish coffee table book.

As a regular **Dial-a-Cab** client, I will offer you a special deal on portraits: £50 with a CD of all your images (not normally included) and 8% discount on the wedding package.

Please check out my portfolio
on www.anjaking.com
Enquiries: email:
anja@anjaking.com



Taxi Driver of the Year Dinner/Dance

*The 35th Taxi Driver of the Year Dinner and Dance will be held at
The Britannia Hotel, Marsh Wall E14, 1st December 2007,
reception 6.15pm, dinner 6.45pm*

Tickets: £59 each and include a 4-course meal/ half a bottle of wine per person!

Don't miss one of the great nights out! Come and enjoy good food and great entertainment. An enjoyable and memorable occasion for all!



Please complete and return to the Hon Chairman:

Russell Poluck MBE, 5 St Brides Avenue, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 6BT
Please make cheque out to T.D.Y.C.F. and print your details...

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Number of tickets reqd: _____

Dietary requirements: Veg _____ Fish _____ Meat _____

Dress: Smart

For further info contact: Russell Poluck 07850 056 765 - Tel/fax 020 8952 1357

Registered with the Charities Commission No: 1000761

With the recent introduction of a UK-wide 'No Smoking' ban in enclosed public areas and work places, Call Sign went out into the now increasingly smoke-filled streets to gauge DaC drivers opinions on how the first few days of the new law had been received.

Some were still unaware of the regulations regarding where people can and cannot smoke, particularly regarding the workplace - which in our case is the taxi! Some thought passengers could still smoke if the driver was agreeable, while a few believed they could light up while driving home after their shift. No such dispensations exist and penalties are severe if you are caught either smoking in the cab or allow others to do so. This is what our drivers said...

Joseph Magri (B91J):

I haven't smoked since 1977 and the ban suits me fine! I used to let passengers smoke in my cab but have become sensitive to the smell of smoke and I am delighted with the new law. No smoking stickers on the windows saves people asking if they can light up!



Joseph Magri

John Hayes (I48):

I haven't smoked in 13 years and I think the new law is a good idea. It will save the NHS millions of pounds but I was unaware that the stickers were compulsory!



John Hayes

Salvatore Macaluso (J63):

I used to smoke but stopped 17 years ago when I found my breathing was aggravated by inclement winter weather. Nowadays I try to avoid smoky atmospheres so as not to worsen any breathing problems. The DaC no smoking attribute was wonderful anyway!



Salvatore Macaluso

Scott Green (N71): I have never smoked, but was subjected to passive smoking when living

with my parents. Cigars, fags, the lot! Thankfully, I'm not bothered by the smell of cigarette smoke because no matter what I say, my parents will not give up! Personally, I think there should be pubs etc where people can smoke if they wish and those premises should have signage clearly stating that they are smoking establishments.



Scott Green

Jim Rainbird (T25): I'm a non-smoker but think the whole thing is a complete overkill, a bit like cracking a walnut with a sledgehammer. I think it's outrageous that a driver going home after work cannot have a ciggy if he wishes to.

Peter Clark (M48): I stopped smoking 19 years ago and tend to avoid smoky atmospheres as it can affect my asthma. I used to let passengers smoke on longer journeys if they asked, but this new law has blown that option out of the window, just like the cigarette smoke used to! I used to spray the back of the cab with an air-freshener after a smoker because I didn't think it fair on the next passenger.



Peter Clark

Bob Hewett (S09):

I've never smoked and feel uncomfortable in smoky atmospheres. I had the PCO no smoking' stickers up in the cab long before this new law. Prior to that, I would let passengers smoke, but only on longer journeys and even then only with the window open. For short journeys they got a very firm but polite no! With this new enforcement, pubs, clubs and restaurants will be better suited to non-smokers and it should have been brought in earlier.



Bob Hewett

Terry Brosnan (V77):

I quit smoking 5 years ago because I wanted to and think that this new ban is a good idea. I never really minded if passengers lit up during a long journey such as coming from the airport, as



Terry Brosnan

my cab was probably the first chance a smoker would have had to have a puff. I have not had the no-smoking stickers on the windows until now and so far the question of 'can I have a fag?' has not arisen.

Michael Lappin (E46): I'm a non-smoker and think the ban is fair enough in the confines of a cab, but it is really an infringement of people's human rights. Smoking is not illegal, so how can you ban something that is not illegal?

Clive Adkins (K41):

I've been smoking on and off, for 40 years! I gave it up this last May Bank Holiday and haven't touched a fag since. I think it is a very good idea and should have been done earlier. It has certainly done me a big favour.



Clive Adkins

And at last... a DaC driver who smokes!

Bob Geach (M77):

I've been a regular smoker since aged 15, but now it's a bit like being in a leper colony! I can sympathise with people who get into a smoke-filled cab and I only used to light up if my passenger lit up first. I never had the no smoking window stickers until I had to. I was a chauffeur for 30 years and learned how to keep a car clean regardless. Just because it's a smoking cab, that doesn't mean to say it has to smell like an ashtray! It was marvellous to be able to smoke in the cab prior to the ban, but that's life...!



Bob Geach

Our thanks to all those who took part in this survey.

© Call Sign Magazine MM7

TAXI AIR CONDITIONING

**All makes and models
Serviced and Repaired
Mobile Service –
We Come to You!**

**Call Mick Wheeler on
020 8715 0079
Covering London and the
Home Counties**

ASCOTT CAB COMPANY & SALES LTD

Victoria Wharf, Grove Street, London SE8 3NW

Telephone: 020 8692 1122

Friendly Staff & Quick Service

For All Your Running Repairs & Overhauls ...

Phone Now To Book An Appointment 020 8692 1122



TXI Service

Standard Service
£44.65 inc VAT

ASCOTT CAB CO.

ONE STOP CAB SHOP

Book On Line
www.ascottcab.com

Minimum
5 Days
In Advance



TXII Service

Standard Service
£75.20 inc VAT

Major Service
£116.33 inc VAT

TX4 Service

Standard Service
£88.00 inc VAT

Major Service
£129.00 inc VAT



If you thought you saw Scooby Doo chasing after Powerpuff Girl 'Blossom' whilst driving past east London's Victoria Park on the morning of Wednesday 11 July, you were not imagining it.

These wonderful characters were there to greet over 300 special needs and underprivileged children being taken in a convoy of 100 decorated cabs on the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children's legendary outing to Southend-on-Sea (our 79th anniversary year).

The drivers started arriving as early as 6.30am and in no time a dull and dismal park was brightened up with the sight of so many balloon decorated cabs. Grateful thanks go to Victoria Park and to Firetuck for providing a breakfast of hot dogs and bacon rolls for the drivers and helpers and to Krispy Kreme for kindly donating yummy doughnuts for all. Each driver was given a voucher for diesel and thanks go to the anonymous donor.

The Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Councillor Ann Jackson, saw the convoy off and the Fund sends its grateful thanks to her and also to the City of London Police outriders who escorted us safely from Victoria Park to Southend and back to London, staying with us all day. Special thanks must go to Sgt. Martin Warner for pulling out all the stops and getting a Police minivan to join the convoy at the last minute after finding ourselves with a small surplus of children without cabs, some drivers failing to turn up without letting us know. The Police saved the day!

The Mayor of Havering, Councillor Georgina Galpin, met us by our 'wee' stop at the Palms Hotel to greet us and took great delight in talking to the children and waving us on our way and we thank her. Thanks too for the Palms Hotel in providing much-needed refreshments. We were then joined by the Essex Police outriders who joined the City of London Police in escorting us safely to the Cliffs Pavilion. Our grateful thanks also go to the RAC and St John's Ambulance teams who made sure we had no unforeseen problems.

As usual, many well-wishers had lined the streets waving to the convoy and a passing motorist even stopped and ran over depositing a £20 note in a driver's cab for the children.

At the Cliffs Pavilion, the children were greeted by Southend FC's two mascots, Sammy the Shrimp and Elvis J Eel and after lots of cuddles with them, the children were taken inside and given lunch with their drivers and helpers. The fund's Hon. Chairman, **David Lessman (D19)**, made a speech welcoming everyone and thanked all the people who had made the day possible. Then lunch and Adventure Island with transport laid on to ferry everyone down to the sea front from the cliff top. We were lucky that after all the recent bad weather, Southend remained dry and even the sun came out. Each child had been given £3 by the LTFUC to spend and with all the rides being free, the children had a wonderful time. We gave drivers and children our yellow baseball logo caps to wear, so it was easy to spot them and all you could see were excited, happy smiling children dragging



LTFUC 2007 Trip to Southend



Er which one did you say was David Lessman?



DaC's Bill Tyzack, the LTFUC Hon President, with some happy kids

reluctant drivers onto large rides!

At 5pm it was back to the Cliffs Pavilion for tea and a disco and yet more fun. Fantastic DJ, Dave Davies, had the children up and dancing in no time and Salvo the Clown, young magician Ryan Sholem, Keelie's Facepainting and Balloonists Mr Chippy and Tony Hanscombe were all on hand to make sure the children were kept entertained and a great job they did!

David Lessman then welcomed the Deputy Mayor of Southend, Councillor Gwen Horrigan MBE and thanked her for joining us. After making a speech welcoming us all to Southend, she presented prizes to the winners of the two best decorated cabs. First prize (Terry Stapleton Rose Bowl) went to Steven Bell who was driving a Pink Rabbit and second prize (Peter Lucas Shield) went to Ruben Frampton. His cab was decorated with cartoon characters, furry animals and blaring speakers! Both were brilliant!

All good things must come to an end and a conga was formed leading the children out of the hall and before leaving, each child was given a stick of rock by Paul of Van Looy's in Southend and we are deeply grateful to him for his kind donation.

As if this wasn't enough, there was still more fun to come! Hadleigh Fire Station was eagerly waiting for the convoy to pass by on the return journey, when the firemen immediately turned their hoses on them! Regular drivers had their windows up, new ones weren't so lucky! The children squealed with delight on seeing some drivers getting a soaking!

Police on their bikes were also drenched, but like real troopers entered into the spirit of the moment!

I'm glad to say that through the tireless efforts of the LTFUC committee, the children were treated to another highly successful Southend outing full of non-stop fun from start to finish.

Special thanks to the following in addition to those already mentioned above:

BBC London and the anonymous donor of the St George's flags, Clipstone Street service station, the RAC, Cartoon Network, London Communications and all our generous Sponsors. We sincerely apologise to anyone we have omitted.

Last but not least, our deepest and grateful thanks go to all the wonderful drivers who gave up a day's work to put some sunshine into these children lives. We are truly indebted to you and all the wonderful helpers for giving the children such a great day.

In 2008, the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children will proudly be celebrating 80 glorious years of helping thousands of needy children and many wonderful events are being planned for that year, so watch this space and our website! You can find photos of the Southend Outing in the Picture Gallery on our website at www.ltfuc.org.uk.

Raymond Levy (Press Officer)

The Knowledge v Sat Nav

Just who would the PCO believe?

It began in 2006 when **Call Sign** Editor, Alan Fisher, wrote of the Dial-a-Cab driver who took him and wife Linda from the New Victoria theatre to Brunswick House via Park Lane, Grosvenor Square, Wigmore Street, Portland Place, Euston Road, past Kings Cross Station and then down City Road to the old office. Alan later realised that the driver was

using a SatNav and perhaps even stranger, that the route wasn't that far out – except that it went through far more traffic than you'd expect, even at 10.30pm. Alan wondered at the time whether most drivers not using a SatNav would have taken the Embankment route?

Ever since that article, many DaC drivers have asked **Call Sign** for clarification on what would happen should a passenger complain to the PCO about a route taken.

The debate has continued as to the merits of using Satellite Navigation systems as an aid to the Knowledge, or to the fact that cabdrivers seem to be using them increasingly frequently – sometimes almost in preference to the topographical skills they learned to gain their Green Badge licence to drive a London taxi.

SatNav undoubtedly has its benefits when a journey takes you into unfamiliar territory or possibly even into an area where you've just forgotten? We're all human. But what about in central London?

Call Sign wondered what view the PCO might take if a London cab driver, relying on his SatNav instead of his Knowledge, slavishly followed the route that TomTom et al thought was better than 'East to West Embankment's best' etc and then the driver subsequently found himself the subject of a complaint from a member of the public to the PCO?

In an exclusive interview with **Call Sign** magazine, **Tony Bishop**, Knowledge of London Head Examiner at the Public Carriage Office told this magazine:

"Any complaint against a cab driver from whatever source, is fully investigated on its own individual basis, the facts established and the matter dealt with accordingly."

He continued: **"I am unaware of any law stating that a SatNav system cannot be used in a taxi, but we do have to ask ourselves why, if a driver has done the Knowledge, would he need one around central London? Yes, we sometimes get letters from members of the public**

stating that a driver took a particular route from A to B instead of going so-and-so route. But when we investigate, we find that the driver has perhaps simply complied with a one-way system for example, which the complainant has

not mentioned for whatever reason, or there might have been other factors to consider which may have had a bearing on the route taken. Under those circumstances, we would probably write back to the complainant without even involving the cab driver at all."

"Equally," he added, "if we thought that there were grounds to take the matter further, we would invite the driver concerned to come to the PCO in person or write in explaining his version of events. Only after the full facts have been determined, would we take any appropriate action we felt necessary. It might turn out that the driver is blameless, or may face a complaint of 'lack of knowledge' but I must stress again that every criticism is dealt with on an individual basis."

The answer appears to be that if you go in a reasonably straight line, there can be no real complaint. But would it not be better if we were to use our Knowledge as a weapon against Private Hire and kept SatNavs hidden until needed, rather than leaving them on display so that passengers assume that we, like PH, actually need them?

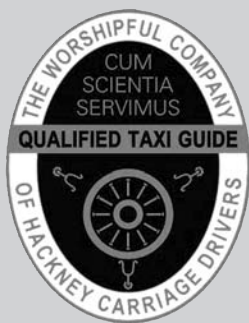
Our thanks to Tony Bishop for taking the time to talk to us in what was a very busy day for him...

© Call Sign Magazine MM7



**Tony Bishop, Head
PCO Knowledge
Examiner**

New Taxi Guides Course Beginning



The all new Taxi Guide course run by *The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* begins on 3rd September 2007 and has been specifically designed to show drivers how to carry out a concise, informative and entertaining tour. Do not forget that tourism in this fair city of ours is the second biggest growth earner after financial institutions.

The course will run for 8 Monday evenings from 6-8pm with classes held at Knowledge Point in Caledonian Road. Course tutors are Graham Woodhouse, Malcolm Linskey, Paul Taylor, Kevin Jenden, and Bryan Gorin who have a wealth of knowledge and experience to help drivers gain the best from the course.

Students will learn from guest speakers about The City, Westminster, Borough and Bankside, lost London rivers and place names, great fires (there was more than one) and the longest continue licensed public transport system in the world...OURS! And much more too!

This newly designed course will, for the first time, take students out of the classroom. Sunday morning walks have been arranged to get students actually looking at those places we drive past and have ignored since finishing the Knowledge. These begin at 10.30am and last about an hour and a half.

The City University are again giving the course full accreditation, so it will be recognised as a professional Guiding qualification. At the end of the course, students will have to show by both a written and practical exam that they have achieved the required standard as laid down by both the WCHCD and City University.

For more info contact Graham Woodhouse: Tel 07968-791-117, email: info@cabguide.com

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

I hope that when you attend the Roman Way Rest Home to have your radio equipment checked or repaired, that you notice the changes. We have tried to get the standard of cleanliness higher than it has been; this includes the canteen, toilets and service bays.

Then whilst enjoying your free tea or coffee, you can read current taxi trade publications and keep yourself fully informed... or just amused at their fairy tales about our Society!

There are some building changes being completed during July and August to hopefully improve conditions even further for staff and drivers, so please bear with us during this rebuilding and changes.

Drivers who attend the depot are continually ignoring the signs not to enter unless given permission. This is very dangerous and against our *Health and Safety* regulations. This being the case, I will not tolerate our staff being put in danger by the possibility of getting struck by a taxi due to a few drivers who can't be bothered to read signs. Some are also parking in the depot entrance, not only blocking it as an entrance, but also as our fire exit. So please do not commit this inconsiderate act.

The staff working at Roman Way know their jobs well and are friendly until drivers upset them by trying to talk down to them. They will repair your equipment, but cannot complete miracles such as improving signals to the standard that drivers want. If you want better signals, don't overload the system by non-essential data traffic. Drivers are using the *reject* and *queue position* button far too often during their course of work. The short space of time between the *QP* button being constantly pressed by some drivers, gives the impression they are possibly suffering with short term memory loss!

New & second hand taxis

Drivers have been experiencing problems in getting delivery of their new taxis or the passing of second hand ones. This is after they have booked a strip-out or refit, but they then do not contact the Roman Way Depot or just tell the main office. If we are not informed at Roman Way, it means that two fitters are standing around scratching their a**s. If we are informed, then we can try to contact another driver on the waiting list to get them in and save the time being wasted.

If you have a problem, do not contact the main office. Phone Roman Way immediately and give us as much time to re-arrange and get another driver in, this way you will not have to wait so long when arranging the fitting of your new taxi. The telephone numbers to use are: Main depot 020 7700 4443, or if you cannot get through try my line on 020 7607 6403. That one is not always manned. By using common sense and abiding by simple rules, it will assist us in providing you with a much improved service.

Telephone bravery?

You will have read in the last issue of *Call Sign*, the results of the last complaints hearing. These were the last ones that I had instigated as Complaints Officer to the point that they were ready for presenting to the committee by my successor.

Due to the outcome of one of these complaints, I received vile messages on the answer phone at Roman Way by a very brave driver who would not identify himself. I thought that taxi drivers had a bit of courage, not like this

Tom's Roman Way Rest Home!



coward who hid behind an answer phone in the middle of the night. I can also assure this coward that I am not a "ponce" and as far as "getting myself a decent job," this is the one the Chairman asked me to do.

I suppose that as I am a licensed taxi driver, the same as him and the other 2000+ drivers on the circuit, by his first expletive he included all of our drivers and himself. I think the majority of our drivers are hard working and honourable people and far from being ponces.

The matter is now in the hands of the BT abusive calls team and the police. If that brave caller thinks I'm joking, he should try calling again using his foul mouth.

I would at this time also like to thank all the drivers who had spent time phoning up to thank me for my years spent as the Complaints Officer to the Society and hoping my good health continues.

passing the time!

Whilst residing in the rest home, it has allowed me plenty of time to peruse the newspapers and see what events are happening around the world. Well, we have a new Prime Minister of our great country, but is it going to do us any better than the last one? I very much doubt that it will going by his past record as Chancellor of the Exchequer. This one seems to want to give piles of the money collected by us to other countries for useless projects, whilst the money is sorely needed in England.

He sent £5 million to Africa to teach some children geography, children who most probably will never move out of their villages. Yet we have English soldiers getting killed daily because they have Land Rovers that are not equipped for the job. We also have 40 year old transport planes that are grounded due to lack of funds, so they cannot transport much needed equipment to our soldiers on the front line of battle.

The new and old Prime Minister both said they would do more to combat crime figures. So what do they do - let thousands of criminals out of prisons early because they do not want to build more prisons. They also make laws which cannot be enforced as we do not have enough police, how many more drivers do you see on mobile phones since they brought in the law banning you from using them whilst

driving - unless hands free? They have wasted money on Community Officers who are about as much use as a chocolate fireguard. But when they give you the figures for the number of Police Officers, they count these make believe ones in as fully trained officers.

We now have a Secretary of State and Justice who wants criminals left out in the community and not put in prison. It is no wonder, as one of his family committed a criminal act over drugs and he let his official chauffeur drive well over the speed limit with no penalty. This is a great CV for the person in this job. If you do not know his name - it is Jack Straw.

Where is your money going? Well some more of it goes to Mudassa Arani, a Muslim solicitor who made £1.6million from 2004 to 2007 defending Islamic extremists on legal aid. These are the people who leave bombs on buses and trains in London and give a bad name to all those peaceful Muslims who just want to live a normal and quiet life.

This money could well be used to improve the state of our filthy hospitals or the condition of our roads. Or how about channelling the money up to Hull to assist our fellow countrymen who have been flooded out of their homes? If those floods had happened in Africa or the Far East, Gordon Brown would not be able to act quick enough to send food, tents and medical equipment paid for by the English tax payer. Why wasn't money sent straight to Hull to assist these people in their plight and the local hospitals that we know must have money problems? But then press coverage would not be as much and the television coverage would be minimal.

I remember seeing pictures of the Prince of Wales attending the flooded area, but did Brown or Cameron of our political parties go up there? Mind you, after you have the catastrophe of being flooded out of your home, would you want another catastrophe of both of these turning up for a photo shoot!

Getting well...

Some of you may know that in my last job as Complaints Officer, I used to send out get well cards to drivers who had a serious illness or lost a loved one. That is if I was informed of their problem.

Well most of you will not be aware, but the Editor of this magazine, Alan Fisher, went on holiday back in June. Just before his return, his wife, Linda was taken ill. Since that holiday, Alan has been unable to get back to driving his taxi as he has been acting as nurse and comforter to Linda 24 hours a day. So can I take this opportunity, as I'm sure all drivers would like to join me, in wishing Linda a speedy recovery. Linda always sticks up for me when I have an argument with Alan, so come on Linda get your strength back soon!

Tom Whitbread
DaC Roman Way Manager

Continued from July...

"We became the legal owners of our very own Italian stone farmhouse with an acre of land in May 2005. It needed a lot of work but the upstairs was just about habitable and we were willing to rough it for as long as it took to restore. During the first year, we spent as much time as possible in Italy and enjoyed lots of holidays. However, the restoration work was proving to be very slow - in fact very much following the Italian pace of life!

With our two daughters just finishing at university and spending as much time as they could traveling around the world, we began to wonder why we didn't also take some time out?

I have been driving a cab for 30 years as a night man and been on Dial-a-Cab for over 20. My wife is a teacher and works with children with special needs. We both work long hours and after much deliberation we decided that we deserved some time for us. That's when we thought about the idea of taking a year off. Fortunately, the nature of both our jobs meant that it wasn't too difficult to arrange.

We rented out our house and my cab for the year and on 1st August 2006 left England for Italy! This definitely wasn't just a job to Canary Wharf! We put some of our belongings in storage and loaded some onto a truck to take with us.

Le Marche is, as yet, an undiscovered area and there are very few people that speak English. We had been to evening classes for a year picking up some basic vocabulary, but nothing could prepare us for the difficulties that lay ahead.

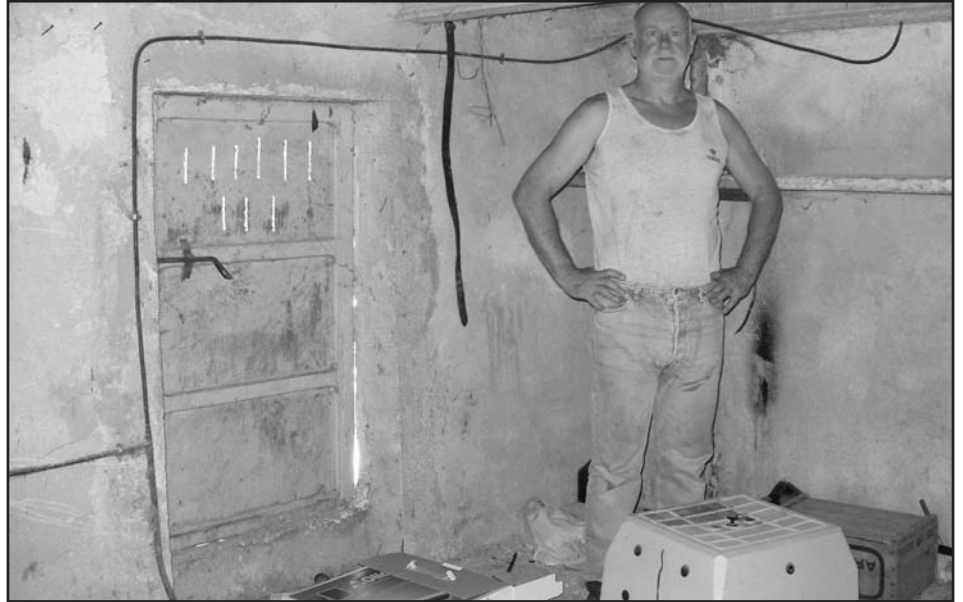
Happily, our nearest neighbour, Maria, has taken us under her wing. She speaks no English but doesn't let this get in the way of communication! She carries on talking - as do most of the locals - despite our retorts that we only speak a little Italian. Most days we are invited to Maria's for coffee where we are always offered an Italian treat and enter into the local gossip. Maria, by the way, is 72 years young and looks after her father who is 98! We have come to know some of her family quite well including her son, daughter and a few of her many brothers and sisters.

The previous owner of our house was Maria's brother, Alvio. After the sale was complete he took us out for a meal in a local restaurant. It was a rather grand affair where we were offered around 10 courses! A fantastic introduction to some of the local delicacies including truffles and wild boar!

In order to undertake the restoration of the house, we had to employ a *geomedra*. This is someone who is a little less qualified than an architect - and not quite so expensive - who can advise on structural work and liaise with the local commune with regard to permits and habitation certificates. We were warned by 'Italian John' (**John Rubini F55**) that things would take time, but were still unprepared for just how long.

Ever fancied buying a run-down farmhouse in another country and then taking a year away from the cab to renovate it? Well that's what DaC driver Tony Holmes (C09) and his wife Lesley did! Tony tells Call Sign about their adventure...

A DaC Driver's Year in Italy



Dial-a-Cab driver Tony Holmes in what used to be an Italian stable!



The stable now converted into a modern room

Part of our *geomedra*'s job was to oversee any works that were carried out on the house. However, and in true Italian fashion, we did not see him for weeks on end. When he did eventually turn up, he would act as though we had seen him just the day before!

Not all of our building work has gone smoothly and in fact we had to dispose of our first builder when I made him an offer he couldn't refuse! Now all the major struc-

tural work has been completed, we are able to carry out most of the remaining work ourselves. We have spent a lot of time on things like plastering - a newly learnt skill - and repairing the stonework, which is very rewarding. It certainly is like a million miles away from London when I'm working on the house or landscaping my Italian garden.

Concludes next month...

Tony Holmes (C09)

Greater London Assembly member Vice Chairman, Brian Coleman, has been criticised by the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, after spending £10,334 on his yearly taxi bill. Mr Livingstone called it a staggering bill with little benefit for Londoners.

A report put out by the Greater London Authority's Audit Committee gave the average taxi expenses claimed by London Assembly members over the period between April 2006 and March this year as being £845 – almost £9490 less than Mr Coleman's total fares. Like the rest of the committee members, Mr Coleman had been given the option of using an annual all zone travelcard.

Ken Livingstone said: "Brian Coleman's cab bill is an example of extravagance for no purpose. It is a staggering £9488 more than the average Assembly member's expenses. Whilst Mr Coleman was busy being chauffeured around, he was voting against mea-

Mayor Criticises Taxi Expenditure of GLA Committee Member

And then asks for £7000 raise!

sures which cut the costs of living in the capital for the poorest Londoners, including free bus travel for under 18s in full time education and paying cleaners a living wage of £7.20 an hour."

The Mayor ended by adding: "Rather than swanning around London in a chauffeur-driven car, Mr Coleman should try cutting down on the receptions, lunches and dinners and set an example to Londoners by using buses, the tube, or even walking occasionally."

In response, Brian Coleman said: "I'm not going to apologise. It's very good value and I'm not ashamed of it at all. I was Chairman



Brian Coleman

In a world where technology moves at an astounding pace, DaC Network Administrator Jonathen Winterburn takes an occasional look at the latest gadgets...

John Ask What's New?



I don't have a PDA or Blackberry and do you know why? Because I hate the tiny QWERTY keyboard on the Blackberry (is it designed for leprechauns?)

and I'm driven mad by the incessant tap-tap I hear from users of PDAs on my daily commute. That isn't to say I wouldn't like one! While the world waits for the iPhone to come down in price, the only alternatives are the aforementioned gadgets. But no more awkward keypads with the advent of the Bluetooth Laser Projection Keyboard...

This gadget has been out for some time (you might have seen it in an episode of CSI - that's where I saw it!), but only recently has it become widely available in the UK. At a hefty £149 RRP (around £100 online), you really need to be a heavy user to warrant spending so much on a keyboard, but the flexibility it offers is second to none.

The virtual laser keyboard works by using both infrared and laser technology to produce an invisible circuit and project a full-size virtual QWERTY keyboard onto any surface. The virtual PC keyboard behaves exactly like a real one; direction technology based on optical recognition enables the user to tap the images of the keys, complete with realistic tapping sounds (argh!) that feed into the compatible PDA, Smartphone, laptop or PC via Bluetooth.

Wanna look like a hacker from the movies and make your friends jealous? Then get one of these...!

Jonathen Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator



Virtual keyboard complete with tapping sounds

of the Assembly at the time and attended 169 Chairman's appointments."

Mr Coleman finished by saying that the Mayor's taxi bill had been £35,501 with his deputy Nicky Gavron clocking up £22,732.

The Mayor's spokeswoman later said that the numbers weren't comparable. "The Mayor has a great number of responsibilities, one of which is promoting London abroad. It's partly due to his work that the city has overtaken New York as the number one financial centre in the world. This is hardly the same as having a taxi waiting outside the house."

In the meantime, the Mayor has asked for an increase in his salary of £7000 up to £145,000.

FOUNDLING MUSEUM

Britain's original home for abandoned children and London's first-ever public art gallery...

Free entry to Dial-a-Cab drivers on production of your badge or bill

Tues-Sat 10am-6pm, Sun 12-6pm (closed on bank holidays)

Usual admission £5, concessions £4, children up to 16 years free

The Foundling Museum is at 40 Brunswick Square WC1

Tel. 020 7841 3600

Visit their website at

www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk

**Black smoke?
BP Ultimate
could cut it by
up to 80 percent!**



***London taxi tests
prove it!***

The amount of sooty smoke that pours out of some of London's taxis could easily be reduced, a group of licensed taxi drivers have just demonstrated. Drivers found that black smoke emitted from their exhausts was reduced by as much as 83 % after just a couple of tankfuls of using a cleaner diesel fuel. And this is no new fuel. **BP Ultimate Diesel** has been available at BP forecourts all over the country for almost four years!

Andrew Barnett, MD of *Ubiquitous Taxi Advertising* in London, whose drivers took part in the test, told **Call Sign**: "We were all astonished by the results. Perhaps it's time that cab drivers were incentivised in some way to use better quality fuel all the time."

Tests were carried out around London by five cab drivers who had the black smoke emissions from their cabs tested at a regular Kwik-Fit MOT test centre before and after filling up with two tanks of BP Ultimate Diesel.

BP Ultimate Diesel is an advanced premium fuel formulated to clean the inside of the engine and together with its high cetane, helps it to run more efficiently. This can lead to lower emissions and better fuel economy when compared to ordinary fuels. The five cabs tested were all TX2s registered between 2002 and 2006.

Based on this independently run study, the average reduction in black smoke recorded for BP Ultimate Diesel was just under 50 per cent (46%), but one of the cabs registered an astonishing 83 per cent drop compared to ordinary fuels.

BP spokesperson, Sheila Williams, told **Call Sign**: "If reductions of this magnitude were recorded in relatively new black cabs, imagine what the effect could be in some of the older vehicles that we see on our roads today? Black cabs are mostly driven by owner-drivers who tend to keep them for a longer period of time, that means there tends to be many older-tech, higher polluting cabs on our roads."

Brian Kent (55), from Buckhurst Hill in Essex who has driven a taxi for 18 years told us:

"I can normally see clouds of black smoke in the mirror when I'm stuck in a jam - but after using BP Ultimate Diesel, I couldn't see any at all."

Caroline McGowan: 25 Years at DaC...



Caroline: 25 years with DaC

On 22 July 1982, a young, shy girl walked into the Maida Vale headquarters of ODRTS and asked Company Secretary of the time John Bernardout if there was a job going as a telephonist - call takers not having been invented yet!

It wasn't the best time to ask for a job, Chairman Peter Fennymore was on holiday, there was a rail strike in the capital and the Society were focussing all their energy on their exclusive short-term account – ferrying the Pope's staff around while the Pontiff was on an official visit to London. And on top of that, we were still looking for new premises closer to the city in addition to thinking of a new trading name. ODRTS was considered too old fashioned and the name Dial-a-Cab hadn't yet been thought of. AND a Board member, Mickey Gee had just resigned! But **Caroline McGowan** got the job...

On 20 July 2007, DaC celebrated Caroline's 25 years at DaC with a surprise luncheon in the Boardroom. That same "young, shy girl" has been one of our senior Account Managers for years and is on first name terms with many leading account holders. She still looks young, but certainly not shy!

Caroline told **Call Sign**: "**I can't believe it's been 25 years already!**"
Congratulations Caroline on a momentous achievement...

Continued from July

'Red' Ken Livingstone, the very same Mayor of London and birth giver to TfL with its mixed marvels and wonders, lowered bus and tube fares in the 1960's which helped make main roads comparatively free of traffic, although to some of us they also appeared free of semi-suburban taxi fares!

Then we had a long awaited fare tariff increase of around 30% that totally decimated our work. These days came to be known as the start of the 'Bingo Card' era. This huge fare increase took its toll with long waits at stations, hotels and other ranks becoming the norm.

Even my beloved ODRTS radio work slowed down, but certainly not as badly as the street work did.

Then along came the period when London Transport buses went on strike for six long glorious weeks, while the Underground workers began working to rule in support of their fellow trade unionists. Suddenly the doldrums were over; you could work almost anywhere, around the clock and take some serious money.

But all good - and even bad times - come to an end and after those six golden weeks, the buses and tubes finally returned to working normally.

One major problem with fare increases in those days was that taximeters could take up to two years to be changed over to the new tariff! Many unfortunate mistakes were made, especially at night with confusion in trying to work out what the meter showed and translating the fare across the Bingo Card. It all seemed to be great, as often the fare-paying passenger was what financiers called 'floating' so it was a good time, so long as you didn't get caught!

Around this time, ODRTS credit account work really started to grow along with the usual moans and groans from those radio cab drivers that only wanted to cover cash work. These moans slowly changed as it became obvious that many of the better and longer jobs were coming out on the radio as credit work and so coverage improved.

However, let the Committee or Board of Management, containing such ODRTS stalwarts as Jack Russell and Bernie Lyons

Picking up receipt pads and other bits n' pieces!

With the driver's reception area in the new Dial-a-Cab House now almost complete, members should feel free to go just behind the reception desk to the driver's section where they can pick up their receipt pads and trade newspapers etc without seeking permission from security. Unfortunately, because of the space available and the necessity for maximum security, there was little choice but to put the drivers section behind the security desk.

Allen Togwell

"Sunset Strip" has now handed his badge and bill back to the PCO after 50 years - much of it with ODRTS. These are his memories...

Fifty Green Years...



ODRTS 1960s stalwart Bernie Lyons

who were then as today drawn from members of the radio circuit and were working cabdrivers, let them dare to suggest allowing or recruiting more members

- who were desperately needed to improve coverage - to keep work from going to what was to turn out as the London taxi trade's biggest threat, unregulated and unlicensed minicabs. What minicabs did was to make more cab drivers realise that the need for well run and managed radio circuits was greater than ever, as customers could now phone for a ride from the comfort of their home or hotel, prearrange to be picked up from stations, airports, clubs, pubs and theatres and without standing in the street hoping to see an empty cab come along. No, now they could wait inside in comfort and be kept advised when the car arrived; well that was the popular impression. Reality was often very different when frequently what turned up was a banger with a driver that resembled Fred the Thug rather than Friendly Frank...

Continued next month

Sunset Strip

Until the new Driver's Reception area is completed and a notice board put up, Call Sign will be taking cabs for sale ads etc. Please bear in mind that Call Sign comes out on the 1st of each month. Email callsignmag@aol.com...

Call Sign Classified ads Call Sign Classified ads

P Reg Fairway to rent, excellent condition, exceptionally well maintained, first rate backup service, AA cover, replacement vehicle available. Full flat £170.00 per week. Non radio. Telephone Mike (C13) on 07779 336 612...



Moving home
Commercial property
Property disputes
Family - divorce, co-habitation and children
Wills and Probate
Personal Injury - accidents at work, on the road, at home, criminal injury claims

Television House
269 Field End Road Eastcote
Ruislip Middlesex. HA4 9LS

Tel: 020 8368 4343

7 King Street Cloisters
Clifton Walk King Street
London. W6 0GY

Tel: 020 8735 9770

Call Sign has now taken 5 groups of **Dial-a-Cab** drivers to LTI's Holyhead Road factory in Coventry to watch the TX4 being built, but word must have spread to the continent of Asia because we have now been followed by a delegation of journalists from China!

The journalists were from Science and Technology Daily, Economic Daily, Zhejiang Daily and the Xinhua news agency.

Like the vast majority of DaC drivers on our trips, they were all impressed at the amount of expertise and dedication that goes into the TX4, a taxi that has broken all sales records since its October launch.

Yuan Xu, of the Zhejiang Daily, told **Call Sign** that both she and the Chinese people as a whole see the vehicle as an icon of Britain.

"This is the first time I have visited an automobile factory and I am impressed by the workers," she said, "many of them have worked in the industry for 20 or 30 years and they are very skilful and professional. They are focused on what they are doing."

She ended by saying: "We see the London Cab on television and in films and it's a very noble vehicle."

Ma Guihua from the Xinhua News Agency was impressed with the attention to detail of the manufacturing process. She told us: "When they finish the vehicle, they test it extensively to ensure its quality. They take it very seriously. It's also a huge symbol in China."

Following their tour, the group attended a civic reception at the Coventry City Council House where the Lord Mayor, Cllr Dave Batten, talked about the history of motor manufacturing in Coventry and the heritage that LTI Vehicles and the city shared.

He said: "We are very proud of LTI Vehicles. They have been based in Coventry for a long period of time and have made a significant impact on pro-

Chinese Journalists follow Call Sign to LTI factory!



The Chinese group of journalists with the Lord Mayor of Coventry

duction and jobs that are important to our city."

He made no mention of why Call Sign's group had to put up with LTI sandwiches!

There is now a link between LTI parent company Manganese Bronze and Chinese

car Geely Automobile Holdings, who have come together to form the Shanghai LTI Automobile Company. The aim of the company is to produce London taxis in Shanghai, as well as a limousine style variant of the London taxi and two large saloon cars.

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...

Or 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**

CONDO FOR RENT

Bahama Bay Resort, Florida

Three beds, high spec swimming pools,

Gym, Restaurant, 10 Minutes Disney Nr

Lake Davenport

Great offers available

10% discount for Dial-a-Cab drivers

Contact John (M13) on 07921 920743...

DaC driver **Tony Welch (D85)** recently had a narrow escape from death when his cab was stolen from right under his nose, while he was only yards away making an account delivery.

At around 8pm on the evening of Monday 2 July, Tony was taking a package to Canonbury Park North and left his cab outside the delivery address.

Tony takes up the story of the job that turned into a nightmare...

"It was pouring with rain that evening. As I got off the cab with the parcel under my arm and made my way towards the delivery address, I noticed a man crouching down on the other side of the road and creeping towards my cab. At first I thought he was disabled and just crossing the road, but he suddenly sprang up and jumped into the drivers' side of the cab! I ran back across the pavement towards the cab and tried to open the drivers' door, but chummy had set the central locking, so it appears he knew what he was doing.

"Incensed at what was happening, I stepped out in front of the cab thinking he would stop. Instead, he drove towards me and so I jumped onto the bonnet and clung on for dear life. The cab accelerated away and then suddenly braked, throwing me off into the road.

To my horror, the villain then drove towards me, aiming my own taxi at me! At the last second he swung away and drove off at speed.

There was one moment of humour though, that was when a passing motorist, having seen what was happening, stopped to ask why that cab driver tried to kill me!

"It was then that I became aware that I had the package to be delivered still under my arm. The motorist was very kind and phoned for the police who were with me in minutes. PC Johnson was excellent. He calmed me down and took details including whether the cab had a tracking system? I was so shaken that it took me several minutes to realise it would indeed be possible to trace my taxi's movements and that's when P.C. Johnson's

Tony's cab gets nicked and almost runs him over...

But Hayley and Steve at the DaC Call Centre track it down!



Tony reminding DaC drivers not to do as he did and leave the cab with keys in the ignition

colleague called the DaC Call Centre for an update. With DaC now on the case as well, we jumped into the police van and, with the two-tone horns blaring, headed northeast towards Kenninghall Road, Clapton. Throughout this high-speed chase, **Haley O'Connell** monitored the cab from the Call Centre and directed us to its position. When we reached Kenninghall, there were already

3 other police vehicles on the scene, while a couple of police dogs retrieved a few items of my personal property. The music radio had been completely removed and my moneybag and other documents were also missing, but at least I'd got my cab back intact after one hour of going AWOL! **Steve Tyson**, the Call Centre evening supervisor, was also very helpful and kind during a most stressful experience. The cab was taken away for forensic investigation and the police are considering a charge of 'attempted murder' when the perpetrator is caught. The police promised to keep me posted."

Puzzled as to how a thief had driven off with Tony's cab so easily, **Call Sign's** reporter asked him...

"I was silly enough to leave the key in the ignition," he replied dejectedly, "it was entirely my own fault, but I've learned a hard lesson and I want others to be wiser than me in future," he said. "When you leave your cab even for a minute, take out your keys and lock it!"

Tony would like to thank all those who got involved that ghastly night, including our own Steve Tyson and Haley O'Connell for their sterling work in the Call Centre and to PC Johnson and his colleagues from Enfield Police Station for their gallant efforts out on the streets. Oh yes... and not forgetting the police dogs that found some of Tony's personal effects and didn't eat them!

Call Sign Magazine MM7

Warren Smith and the Troubled Bankers

Dial-a-Cab members of staff and suppliers besieged our Financial Accountant, Warren Smith, recently in his office when a glitch in the banking process meant that wages and invoices did not get paid on time.

"It was like New York Grand Central Station in the rush hour," sighed Warren to our reporter!

"Irate staff members were coming down to me saying they had not been paid their wages, but had their own bills and standing orders to pay out, relying on their salaries being paid into their bank accounts as usual and on time."

He continued: "Everyone thought it was my mistake! One lady called me at least 18 times in the same morning, but many other members of staff were also desper-



Bank problem-buster Warren Smith

ate to know what was going on because they reckoned they would incur bank and overdraft charges through no fault of their own. Things got pretty scary in this office while I phoned around to discover what had gone wrong. Eventually I got hold of someone at the bank who promptly

blamed 'third parties' and it took me many more calls to discover that the fault lay with a system called *Bankline*, which had well and truly screwed up!"

Warren ended by telling us: "I have now been assured that an official apology is forthcoming and have insisted that we be given details of how our staff can make representations for redressing any bank charges they may have incurred due to the *Bankline* cock-up. Trouble was, I was also told that could take up to a week.

"It's funny how the banks manage to take their own charges immediately, yet when it comes to paying us back, they somehow find a way of taking considerably longer reimbursing their customers - us!"

On **16 July**, *Evening Standard* Motoring correspondent, **David Williams**, detailed an LCCI taxi report put out by the *London Chamber of Commerce and Industry* that was based on the low availability of taxis during the evening and on Saturday nights.

Dial-a-Cab Chairman **Brian Rice** wrote to Mr Williams pointing out that some of the information given was incorrect. Brian asked that the correct figures be printed. This does not appear to have been done although Mr Williams did respond privately, promising to look into the discrepancy.

Call Sign, courtesy of the Evening Standard, is republishing the article together with Brian Rice's response at the end of it. We are also publishing two letters that the ES did decide to publish...

Late-night taxi shortage as cabbies stay at home

By David Williams

London's status as a thriving 24-hour city is being threatened by a severe shortage of night-time taxis, a major report reveals today. While there are enough cabs during the day, too few taxi drivers are willing to work at night, particularly on Saturdays.

The *London Chamber of Commerce and Industry* report, based on interviews with 200 cab drivers and 129 London company directors, says the supply of cabs is 'inversely proportional' to when Londoners need them. This means that late night revellers are increasingly forced to rely on minicab operators.

It says that between 5pm and 7pm, black cab availability is 'poor' while fewer than one fifth of London taxi drivers now work later than 9pm once a week. Only six per cent work past midnight.

The report concludes that the reluctance of taxi drivers to work when late-night social activity is at its peak is now a major barrier to developing London's growing late-night economy. It blames the problem on the fact that many drivers are getting older and too few young people are joining the fleet.

"Our research reveals a worrying trend towards older drivers working fewer hours, particularly during the evenings and reaching a peak at the capital's busiest time, Saturday night," the Chamber warns. Some 98 per cent of London taxi drivers are now aged over 30 - with the oldest driver on the books aged 92.

It adds that new recruits are being deterred by the 'bureaucratic' and over-demanding nature of the legendary *Knowledge* exam, with up to 80 per cent of candidates dropping out.

The time needed to complete the test has soared from 11 months in 1970 to an average of 40 months now, making it increasingly difficult for candidates to juggle existing jobs with training.

The Chamber says the 2012 Olympics and major projects such as the new Terminal 5 at Heathrow make it crucial that aspects of the taxi trade are overhauled. Its recommendations for change include:

- More 'fast-tracking' of trainee cab dri-

Brian Rice replies to the Evening Standard

Evening
Standard



vers, as well as roadshows and 'financial incentives' to attract applicants.

- The Public Carriage Office, which runs the industry, should hand over *Knowledge* testing to an independent examination provider and produce a detailed annual audit on the trade.

- Incentives to encourage drivers to share taxis, making it less likely cabs would be parked up at night.

- More marshalled taxi ranks in central London at weekends.

Bob Oddy, General Secretary of the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association, said he believed the report had been driven by Chamber members who had a 'vested business interest' in benefiting from expanding the licensed taxi trade.

He said 2,500 new drivers had qualified in the past year, taking the number of black cab drivers in London to 25,000. Mr Oddy also pointed out that 96 per cent of survey respondents had said they were satisfied with the availability of cabs during the working day.

"The number of cabs working at night has considerably increased in recent years; there are currently 9,000 applicants on the Knowledge of London course," he said.

* * * * *

Brian Rice responded:

Dear Mr Williams

I write in response to your article concerning the alleged shortage of taxis at night in London. There is no question that London has the best qualified and most professional taxi drivers in the world, the standard should be maintained at all costs. They are without doubt, as you state, the 'Gold Standard'. However, there is little doubt that during the night there is a shortage of taxis in certain parts of London due to the fact that we are not attracting young drivers into our profession that are prepared to work these unsociable hours when they could be more at risk.

Unfortunately, the statistics that were quoted were not correct. Between April 2006 and March 2007, 545 new All London Licences were issued, however 560 were returned making a net loss of 15 - the licensed taxi fleet in London is actually shrinking.

The Private Hire industry with their lower standards are already twice the size of the taxi industry, unless ways are sought

to attract the young blood into our industry who are prepared to study for a reasonable amount of time in order to attain that 'Gold Standard', then the licensed taxi industry in London, the best in the world, will become a tourist attraction similar to the Gondolas in Venice!

Kind regards

Brian Rice

Chairman, Dial-a-Cab

And two letters the Evening Standard DID decide to publish...

Letter 1. *One major factor is missing from the London Chamber of Commerce's conclusions about the late-night taxi shortage; those black cabs found waiting every evening outside City law firms and banks for customers to emerge, and those driving around with their For Hire signs off as they respond to bookings. I have long felt they are contravening the spirit of their Hackney Carriage licenses, which require their availability to the public.*

David Leonard, E1

Letter 2. *London has never been a 24-hour city thanks to its lack of late-night tube services and the slackness of its taxi operators. Thank goodness for the unregulated cabs that ply their trade after midnight. Mostly they are driven by polite and hardworking people who have scant regard for officialdom standing in the way of a punter's desire to get home. They fulfil an important late function despite the bleating of the black-taxi lobby.*

Nigel Harper, Windsor

Call Sign comment...

How strange that the ES refused to publish a letter from Brian Rice, the respected Chairman of a licensed taxi company, in which he corrects an obvious mistake in the reported figures, yet were happy to publish two other letters; one from a Mr "David Leonard" who must live close to John Griffin, MD of Addison Lee, as he gives his oft repeated and long-held views regarding us. And secondly, also publish a letter which seems to advise "punters" to break the law by using "unregulated cabs that ply their trade after midnight."

Strange time indeed...

Alan Fisher

Last month I wrote about money and this month I feel I've really got some – but only because Art and Mady – my American visitors – are (unusually) so full of envy! Their dollar buys nothing these days in London and even their salaries no longer seem gigantic. Mine does! Added to that, now my friends are getting older they have to worry about increasing medical costs. Their healthcare plans only cover a proportion of their costs. For example, my brother had to pay all his nursing home fees after a serious illness, because his plan only covered hospital care – goodbye \$30,000 for one month while the prescriptions ran into the thousands. They have to be sure across the pond that their retirement savings can bear the burden... and whose can? Hearing these things makes me feel like kissing my local hospital administrator – and I'm not sure many people do that.

Art and Mady love my DaCman Glen's taxi tours and think the fold-down seats in the back of the Metrocab are great fun. I think they're hard and bumpy! Glen took them to Postman's Park near St Pauls, which charmed them. Then to Brick Lane and the Roman ruins in the City. *Wows* and *gee whizzes* all round. Do they learn from The Simpsons or are The Simpsons not fiction at all?

My visitors walked over the Millennium Bridge to the Tate Modern, which everyone loves, but were also impressed by the Famous Cock at Highbury Corner. Art had a Kodak moment there and posed near the sign with his hands outstretched, in case his friends can't imagine just how big it must be, to be so famous. (*Ed's note: Not sure I should let that go!*)

Visitors help you see your city and your

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

Back Seat *Driver*



Partridges in Chelsea. His five-star recipe of the month, say my guests, is this dessert, adapted by Glen from a Waitrose recipe card:

Blackberry & Lemon Parfait

2 Tbsp Caster Sugar
2 Tbsp Grand Marnier or Cassis
20 gm Fresh mint chopped
300 gm Blackberries
750 ml Carte D'Or Vanilla Ice Cream
200 gm Millers Lemon Biscuits crushed

Line loaf tin with cling film. Place sugar, Grand Marnier, mint, 2 Tbsp water and half the blackberries in a saucepan and simmer for 4 minutes. Blend in a food processor and then sieve to make a smooth coulis.

Leave ice cream in a large bowl for 10 minutes to soften but not melt. Chop remaining blackberries and add to the ice cream with crushed biscuits and half the coulis. Fold together to get a mottled effect.

Spoon the mixture into the lined loaf tin, cover with cling film and freeze for 4 hours. Remove from freezer 15 minutes before serving with the remaining blackberries and coulis.

And of course...enjoy!

Till then...

Love Poppy x x x

Former Dial-a-Cab driver, Bob Woodford, writes a regular column for Call Sign from his home in Languedoc, France...

CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE



Life in Languedoc

I was going to call this piece *property prices in France falling* but I changed the title to Languedoc, because France has so many regional variations I would need a huge spreadsheet to show the results – also I live and work in Languedoc.

My personal observations on sales made last month in Languedoc are that prices are not rising, although a lot of properties which have sold have been bought at the asking price.

The market is buoyant and there are a lot of buyers here at the moment, but there are a lot more properties on offer and a huge volume of new buildings. Interestingly, in most areas of Languedoc, higher priced properties have had stronger growth than the average.

My theory is that in Languedoc there is a big investment and a lot of incentives to build new housing plots, land has been



released on an unprecedented scale and tens of thousands of villa/bungalow type homes are being built at the moment.

Every village seems to have fresh fields of homes growing as fast as the grapes are on the vines this year. This is making the classic landowners 19th century houses in town centres a scarcer commodity and may be one reason for the disparity in price levels.

What I'm also seeing is a lot of overpriced property on the estate-agents books, owners are very optimistic about what their property will sell for and seem to pluck numbers out of the air, agents then put their commission on top of this and end up with a fat portfolio

of overpriced offers.

It is very tempting for owners to do this as prices have been steadily increasing for over ten years and with that sort of track record it is too tempting to think it will go on for ever, but average sales prices for most properties have dropped over the last three months so a property put onto the market with an optimistic price tag is unlikely to shift.

So, it's still a 'buyers market' in my view and still a better and more affordable investment than the Costa Brava just across the border.

Check our site out at www.immoboulevard-herault.com. We'll be happy to show you round...

A bientot

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



Well here we are with the long awaited holiday season upon us and kids bursting with summer holiday excitement. August is a very pleasant month because we have got over the worst, with the best to come and a holiday in between! It's also a milestone for me because it means I have been a regular **Call Sign** writer for a year now - doesn't time fly? What began with a few letters and a single article, has surprisingly kept me pretty busy over the months. Contrary to what people think, it's not easy to write on a regular basis and whilst I am in no way comparing myself to famed journalist John Simpson, he said on a radio interview recently: "Sometimes it just flows, other times its hard to tell the good stuff from the bad." Not a truer word spoken and I hope all readers of this excellent and top cab trade publication; have enjoyed my contribution thus far...

Spitting...

Like thousands of cab drivers, I'm a listener to the *Robert Elms* show on *BBC London* and even though the programme is based on a simple format, it is extremely interesting and educational at the same time. I had a lot of sympathy for Mr Elms when he told of how he was spat at whilst riding into work on his bicycle that morning, because I too have been spat at on numerous occasions myself. Being a former Fireman and first aider, you are taught the dangers contained within other peoples body fluids and the ways it can enter your body.

One way is through the eyes as well as through the nose and mouth. Personally I cant think of anything more disgusting than being spat at, but you only have to look at sports stars on the TV or take a look at people walking along the pavements, who set the example.

Today it seems that spitting has become an acceptable form of communication - a sad reflection on society. Even though it is little used, a person caught intentionally spitting at someone else can be charged with assault. In some areas of Scotland, spitting has become intolerable, one example being the front line train guards on Scotrail and bus drivers in Edinburgh. These workers were issued with "Spit Kits" which were used to collect spittle of offenders. The evidence left on them helped work out their DNA profiles and police have so far managed to make two successful prosecutions. A simple but very effective deterrent...

Bus driver's road skills...

Yes, things do change and one of the biggest changes I've seen of late are the driving standards of London bus drivers, National Express coach drivers and motorcyclists. Buses used to wait to be let out, now they just pull out. I don't know

With so many issues involving the licensed taxi trade, DaC driver Richard Potter takes a look at some of them. His views do not necessarily reflect those of Call Sign or DaC...

A DaC driver's views on life and everything



whether TfL take less time to train their drivers, but I have lost count of the number of times a bus has overtaken me, only to then cut in front whilst pulling into a bus stop. I spoke to a fellow Taxi driver who told me he had an argument with a bus driver who claimed that under the Highway Code, he had a right to pull out because it says "...let the bus pull out."

Well maybe his bosses have told him that to help timekeeping and to keep the public happy, after all bus companies are under pressure to improve their services. However, I believe the bus driver has been badly advised.

Section 198 of the Highway Code says: "Give priority to buses when safe to do so," ie if you are driving along in the moving traffic, it is up to YOU whether you give the bus priority or not and it is clearly wrong for the bus driver to pull out, make you brake or swerve or to compromise your safety. Wherever you can, let a bus into the moving traffic but as you are part of the moving traffic, the bus is obliged to wait to be let out. Also remember the courteous coach drivers letting you out rather than pushing you off the road whilst hooting like crazy, or the commuter bike riders who have swapped train cushions for a seat on a Honda 500.

Does this sound familiar, lights turn green then a crunch of gears? Whatever happened to the mechanically sympathetic riders who would allow a split second for the bike clutch to stop spinning before tapping it into gear?

Not a lot of allotments!

Finally, having lived in the Home Counties for some time with land values at a premium, I was greatly concerned that local land set aside for allotments was likely to be

turned into a car park by the local council. I have always fancied an allotment and this was the perfect time to take one up. With young children, I thought that it would be beneficial for them to see how things grow organically and in a natural environment. You don't need a cheese cutter cap nor to breed ferrets to take part, just a joy for outdoor living and a will to grow your own.

Allotments holders are on the increase, however in central London allotments themselves are on the decline. Not because of a lack of interest - most London allotments have a waiting list - but because developers are using brown field sites as new builds. A recent publication by the GLA's Peter Hulme Cross explains the current state of *London's disappearing allotments*. Published in October last year it is well worth a read if you want to do your bit to keep "digging for Victory." There are many benefits to holding an allotment, just ask anyone who has one and if you get the opportunity to take one up, have a go before they disappear forever.

As always, if you want to contact me please e-mail callsignmag@aol.com putting Richard Potter in the subject line.

Richard Potter (T51)

Smoking and the TX4 ashtray

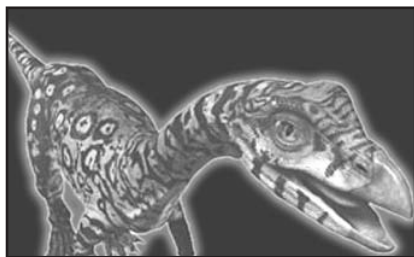
In response to the recent smoking ban and following requests by drivers who object to having to empty the rear ashtray of rubbish, LTI are considering deleting the passenger ashtray altogether and are asking Dial-a-Cab drivers whether they consider this to be a good idea or not?

Email callsignmag@aol.com with your answer together with your name and callsign and we'll let LTI know your views.

In addition and out of interest, if you want to keep the passenger ashtray, please let **Call Sign** know your reason.

AS Dial-a-Cab's kids get ready for their summer break...

WHAT'S ON AT THE SCIENCE MUSEUM?



Dinosaurs feature in the IMAX 3D movie

As usual, the Science Museum in Exhibition Road has a full schedule of entertaining exhibits. Some of them are listed below, but you can get the full list by going to their website at www.science.museum.org.uk.

Until September 2007 sees the **Summer Club** at the Science Museum. Check the website for full details, but for 8 days during August (8, 9, 13, 14, 20, 21, 30 and 31) the Museum is throwing its doors open for a unique summer learning experience. Children age 8-11 will be able to get involved in a range of fun activities, including science experiments, gallery tours, make and take workshops and podcasting as well as an IMAX film. Booking is required and there is a £25 entry charge. The day runs from 11am till 4.30pm. Only 5 children per adult (paying £5). Credit card bookings: 0207 942 4749.

Plasticity – 100 years of making plastics.

This free exhibition runs through till January 2009. The first completely man-made material, Bakelite, was discovered 100 years ago and the Museum looks at Leo Baekeland's world-changing discovery and display just some of the cornucopia of new plastics and products which followed, from nylon stockings to Tupperware and Ekco radios.

Another free exhibition is **Penicillin: A Story of Triumph and Tragedy** running until 9 September. It looks back over 50 years and explores changing attitudes to antibiotics.

For the younger ones again there is **Build it with Bob live at the Science Museum**. This runs until 7 September with Bob the Builder starring in his first ever live interactive show.

The fun and engaging 45 minute show – aimed at 3-5 year olds – features Bob the Builder with Wendy and Spud in Sunflower Valley interacting directly with children who learn about structures, water flow, patterns, numbers and the all important 3Rs. Entry charge applies.

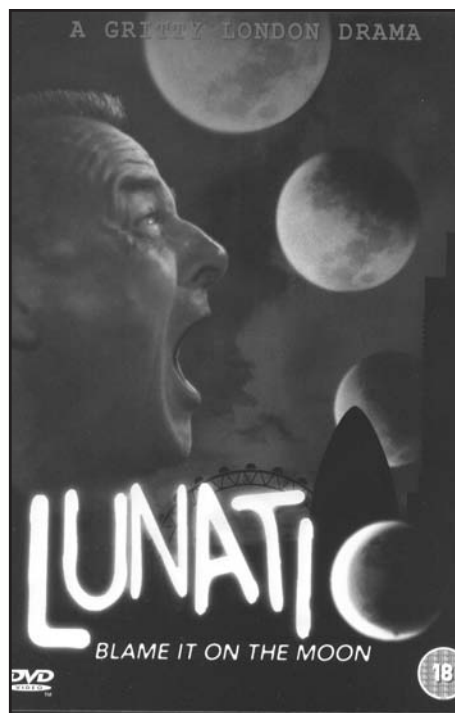
Dinosaurs Alive! 3D (PG) i8 is one of the new and amazing **IMAX** films on show at the museum, see the website for an updated list. Through the magic of 3D computer-generated animation, the film allows viewers to see fossils found by the team transformed into scientifically accurate 'living' dinosaurs on the giant IMAX screen. Entry charges apply.

The **Science of Spying** exhibition is on until Sunday 2 September 2007 and is the world's biggest interactive exhibition examining the secrets of modern espionage. Curious young minds and intrigued adults alike can test their ability to crack codes, gather information, and use the technologies of real life spies as they embark on an undercover mission to penetrate enemy HQ.

There is much more than just the above. Check out www.sciencemuseum.org.uk...

A Lunatic on Dial-a-Cab?

Well blame it on the moon...



Who'd have thought it – a movie starring Dial-a-Cab driver **Grant Davis (L39)**! Certainly **Call Sign** has no intention of calling his DVD release, **Lunatic: Blame it on the moon** (*Supersonic Films cert 18*) rubbish in order to have a pop at the former boxer, just because Grant and this magazine do not always see eye to eye.

In all honesty, the first two minutes of the movie are good; it's the following 84 minutes that let it down.

The success of the film is in the fact that Grant stars in it and he is as good – probably better – than any of his three co-stars. The not-so-good part is that the movie genuinely is rubbish. It sounds as though the actors have been given a plot and were allowed to make up their own script as they went along. And that script sounds much like any four guys at the Royal Oak having a natter.

Another spoiler is the swearing with literally every other word. It becomes extremely boring and certainly any shock value departs along with the shepherds pie and chips.

Partly filmed in what looks like someone's kitchen that has been used by a Knowledge boy with his map up on

the wall, there is a great shot of a DaC logo where a cab – looking very much like Mr Davis's – is parked, however not necessarily a logo that would instil pride after watching this movie!

Such plot as there is involves a bunch of small time crooks, how they get their money and some strange events by which time you weren't particularly bothered whether they appeared or not. But as we said at the beginning, a movie is a movie and a starring role is a starring role, so congratulations to Grant...

Not for the young (middle aged or old, come to that)!

SUNNY LIFE

Spanish Property

For holidays, retirement or investment

Steve Shaller

Shaller9@aol.com

www.sunnylife.co.uk

35 Gaysham Hall longwood Gardens

Ilford Essex IG5 0EP

Tel. 020 85039318 Spain 0034 965321122



Jenny with her DaC lover Sam messing about in their hotel room. Fresh cream or shaving foam? We'll never know!

M&O HAVE FOUR CABS WITH DAC TERMINALS

Mann & Overton have four courtesy taxis fitted with Dial-a-Cab terminals and DaC drivers attending the Brewery Road dealership for servicing or over-hauls have the chance of a free DaC-fitted 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 the radio equipment available, 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..

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 (minimum of two persons).

Salieri Restaurant
376 Strand, WC2
Reservations: 020 7836 1318

This is the *true* love story of a Dial-a-Cab driver and a Californian beauty who met and fell in love on the Internet in 1998. Sam lived in London and drove for DaC, while Jenny lived on the USA west coast. *Call Sign* is publishing Jenny's story exactly as she sent it and with her permission. For obvious reasons, their names have been changed, but any photos are genuine...

L♥ve On the Internet

Continued from July

Two days later it was time for us to part...I knew how much I would miss his arms around me while we slept at night, we would sleep this way all night long, just holding each other...

I knew how hard it would be not to wake up in the morning to songs from Rod Stewart such as *If we fall in love tonight* and *For the first time*. We had put Rod's CD onto the hotel's CD alarm clock and it had woken us up every morning for the last 7 days. To this day, I can't listen to those songs without thinking about those wonderful mornings when I woke up next to my wonderful **Dial-a-Cab** driver and lover.

Sometimes we wouldn't leave the hotel room for hours after waking up, we'd just stay in that bedroom and enjoy each other's company. It really was great!

But the time for leaving came and on that night I drove the hired car taking Sam to the air terminal he was leaving from. He didn't want me to stay alone and have to take the rental car back by myself, but he needed to be there two hours before the flight departing time and we were running late. We hugged and kissed. Someone took our picture. We both had tears in our eyes but were trying to be brave, so we held the tears and just smiled...

Parting from Sam was the hardest thing ever for me. I had to go and take the rental car back and then go to the American Airlines terminal to fly back home. After I left Sam at his terminal and started to drive away, I just had to stop and park the car on the side of the road, I couldn't hold my tears any longer. I just cried, I felt so sad. He was going away, so far away from me again. Would I ever see him again?

When I got into my airplane and sat on my seat, all I could do was think about him and where he would be at this time. I already missed him so much and needed to feel his touch again. I cried myself to sleep. I had fallen in love with a man who lived so far away from me in London while I was in California. I loved him with all my heart and I knew then I would love him for the rest of my days...

This is a poem I wrote for Sam after we first met online:

You're My Guest In Thought...

Once a day and sometimes more,
You knock upon my daydream door,
And I say warmly, "Come right in,
I'm glad you're here with me again!"
Then we sit and have a chat,
Recalling this, discussing that,
Until some task that I must do,
Forces me away from you.
Reluctantly, I say good-bye,
Smiling with a little sigh,
Though my daydreams bring you near,
I wish that you were really here!
But what reality just can't change,
My dreams and wishes can arrange,
And through my wishing you'll be brought,
To me each day... a guest in thought.

Continued next month when the love struck couple meet in London...

Are you interested not so much in the taxi business, but more in the history of the vehicles we have driven throughout our history? Then the London Vintage Taxi Association could be of interest to you.

For your £25 a year membership (plus a one-off joining fee of £5), you will get a glossy bi-monthly A5 magazine, access to events that the LVTA organise (an average of five per year) ensuring a truly social gathering of members and their families, together with the chance to view some rare specimens from around the ranks. They also notify members of any other relevant events.

If you have an old taxi that is no longer used for the purpose but purely for your enjoyment, the LVTA can assist with vehicle insurance, technical advice and the opportunity to advertise free of charge in their newsletter.

There is also historical information for museums and researchers, notification of changes in legislation affecting historic vehicles, opportunities to purchase taxi-related regalia eg books, badges, models and greetings cards.

The strength of the LVTA comes from the whole membership and they invite their members to provide some input wherever they can. They also encourage members to write articles or letters and provide photos of their preserved taxicabs for the magazine, share technical knowledge and skills with other members, support the LVTA at events - especially to assist with the organisation and running of events, plus much more.

In addition to the UK section, there is also an American section run by John Freeston and a Dutch one with Hans Dooren (who deals with the admin side of things for the Euro section). **Dial-a-Cab also has several members including Dave Joseph (A82), who rebuilt an FX3 and LVTA (UK) Chairman Keith White (A16) with his original Metrocab. There are probably others from this circuit as well.**

If you are interested, go to <http://www.lvta.co.uk>. There is no doubt that the London Vintage Taxi Association help to preserve an historical legacy that few others can claim to have...

Dac and the London Vintage Taxi Association



KPM HAVE DIAL-A-CAB TERMINALS

On loan cabs for bodywork repairs

LTI main dealer KPM have three taxis fitted with Dial-a-Cab terminals that they are happy to loan to Dial-a-Cab drivers who take their taxis to the East London dealership for bodywork repairs. That means that DaC subscribers can now order a replacement cab with a terminal and continue working with a radio under their own badge number should they be unlucky enough to be involved in an RTA.

It can be difficult for those used to working on radio to get used to a period without, while their taxi is off the road, so KPM's DaC taxis with terminals will be very welcome by their DaC customers. Offer subject to availability...

Call KPM on 0207 247 7266 or 0207 377 2182...

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.

MAILSHOT

**Either write to Call Sign at
Dial a Cab House or email us
at - callsignmag@aol.com**

Five trips for a Code 3

Can I please ask Keith Cain how is it that after doing around 120 credits rides last month, I've done 10 hours at work today doing 4 account trips and 1 scrub, there are around 120 trips in EC5 and E140, yet I can't do a Code 3 to get a trip home? How that helps coverage, I don't know?

In addition, with the current changes to E140 making trips As Directed, if you think I'm running back to the Island to accept a trip blind that could go around the corner, well no...

With more drivers who haven't done 5 trips for a Code 3 and more accounts being AD only, drivers nearing their finishing time don't want to accept for fear of going miles away from home. Again, I just don't see how this new procedure helps coverage?

Jon Robinson (E88)

Keith Cain replies: Jon, I cannot comment on what happened during your working day except to say that we have instructed IT to reprogram the system to include those scrubs that a driver has received payment for. That will help the situation for the future.

The reason for making changes has been solely brought about because of the continuous criticism being received from clients regarding service. It was some two months ago that the Board finally made the decision to implement these changes - changes that they felt would improve the situation. It may not be the decision every driver wants, but if we had not done something and a major client had been lost, then members would have asked what did the Board do to save the account?

Our service has been written about for a very long time and any improvement required all members to play their part. But because the situation did not improve, the Board had to do something. It is interesting to note that after the first week, we have already seen a remarkable difference...

Signals...

The signals are absolutely appalling, I will say once again that this system in its present form is hazardous and a real danger to drivers, it must be on par with using a hand held mobile device surely? Well actually at least you can stare straight ahead using a mobile, with DaC's MDT you are constantly glancing left, pressing resend, I honestly believe that unless it is sorted out, someone somewhere will have a bad accident. The year is 2007, have a look at the technology out there! A system that works and is safe for drivers is paramount, this should have been dealt with before a move to new fancy offices!

I had my cab without DaC for 8 days whilst awaiting a new one. I got in, put my

light on and went to work. It all seemed rather simple and stress free....now I am back to booking in and out of zones and pressing resend/discard all day long. I thought, or at least it used to be, that having a radio in your cab was meant to make your day easier? Now I am not too sure.

Daniel Priddle (N96)

Brian Rice replies: I know signals are your pet subject, Daniel, and that you have written to the magazine twice in the past. Your most recent letter was in February 2006 and the same answer applies today as it did then. The only difference is that work increased last year by £5million (15%) and so far this year by 18%, that will mean that by the end of this financial year, we would have put an extra £12m of extra work through our system in the past two years, no wonder our system is creaking sometimes with the number of rejects going through - that is our problem! Anyway Daniel, this is my answer to your last letter and as I stated earlier, it still applies today...

From February 2006: Brian Rice responds: That is fair comment, Daniel. The signals are bad when it is very busy - they always have been except that we tend to look back at the past through rose tinted glasses. The thing that exacerbates the situation is the amount of 'rejects' going through the system. During some busy periods, we have had up to 200 unmatched trips with, on average, each trip being rejected ten times before it is accepted. Can you imagine the amount of unnecessary pressure that is put onto the system? Incidentally, we have just come through the busiest trading period this Society has experienced in over 52 years. Did you try sending a text message on your mobile phone at midnight on New Year's Eve when the system was busy - it was taking literally hours for messages to be delivered, assuming of course you could get on the network to send a message in the first place? We are dealing with our problem; we have moved aerial sites, installed new digital land lines and fitted filters to our aerial sites, we have even re-written software for the modems, but still our problems persist. But no one can accuse us of not trying to improve the situation. I thought it was quite interesting that you believed we should change our despatching system to one similar to ComCab. We have operated a zonal system for over sixteen years and our members like it because during quiet periods, they can be assured of receiving a trip. I find it quite intriguing as to what attracted you to us two years ago? After all, if ComCab have a better despatching system and their signals are better, why were we more attractive - so much so that you were enticed to leave ComCab and join us? Finally, I was extremely disappointed to learn that you turned the equipment off for five days; perhaps that is why we had so much uncovered work?



If black was black...

In response to Michael Beevor's (N76) letter (Black is black, August Mailshot): 'If' is the biggest word in the English language. If the trade would have stood up against the press 45 years ago when Sylvester and Welbeck put their Private Hire cars on the road and called them minicabs and the press started to call us 'Black' cabs, we today would rightly be called London Taxis regardless of colour.

When I was a child, London did not have one black taxi. All our taxis were hand built and were dark blue, light blue, brown, red, green, even yellow - and I may have missed some colours out. The only thing black was the wings (mudguards). Black came about after WW2 when all cars were black because of the Utility Regulations. So when Nuffield built their first post war taxi, it was black and a short time later M&Os put the FX3 on the road - that too was black! However, later on drivers wanted taxis in the colours they had before the war, so as production had to be stopped, buying a coloured one cost extra. My first new coloured one WMM 491G was metallic bronze and was the first factory built metallic FX4. Bill Lucas, the MD of Carbodies saw it and a car version (FL2) was built in the same colour.

At that time, Carbodies were building Humber Shooting Brakes for Rootes in that colour.

As I said at the AGM, I am not a black cab driver, I am white Jewish and proud of it and I do not drive a black taxi, it is a red LPG Metro.

As for other Cities imposing a colour or color for New York, it was done so the police can spot out of town taxis that try to steal work. I have photos of NY taxis before they went yellow, including an early Yellow and Black FL2 (FX4) working in that city.

Incidentally, 20th August will be the 110th anniversary of the first mechanical cab. This was a Bersey (Humming Bird) run by the London Electric Cab Co in Juxon Street, Lambeth. The cabs were yellow and black, the same colours as David Davies cabriolets of 1823. So much for black!

Stanley Roth (Y53)

The debate on whether we benefit by the name 'black cabs' that has been imposed on us or find it to be an insult, is still open ...Ed

Is Bill's Bill a Bill?

I want to warn other cab owners who are thinking of renting out their taxis. I recently rented out my P Reg Fairway to Bill Francis. He was a nice enough person and paid me the required deposit and made regular and prompt weekly rent payments into my bank account. He was obviously a taxi driver, but there was something not quite right with him

MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 37

He told me that his Bill was being renewed and showed me his PCO temporary licence to prove this. He talked like a cab driver and even had taxi stories to tell. But after 7 - 8 weeks of constantly asking him for his Bill without any joy, I decided to call the PCO. They had never heard of him or his address or telephone number. I asked him for my cab back and he kept arguing his innocence, but no Bill was produced. So I reported my cab stolen to the police.

Thankfully, he returned my cab back to my garage - albeit on a Sunday when there wasn't anyone there. But I was glad to have the cab back in one piece and not damaged or sold on. I notified the police the same day that my cab had been recovered. They said they would remove my cab from their stolen vehicle registry.

For 3 weeks after this, my temporary cab drivers were stopped daily in the city and I received numerous calls telling me that the police had recovered my cab. I really felt sorry for the innocent drivers. Finally, my cab was taken off the police stolen vehicles registry. I've subsequently received several letters from the police telling me they are pursuing Bill Francis for the various serious offences committed. However, yesterday a Detective Inspector rang to tell me that although they could easily trace Bill Francis from his mobile telephone number, they didn't have the manpower to do so. And even if they did find him, what good would it do? The Inspector told me that I had suffered no loss. I got my cab back and no money was owed. I pointed out that if had there been an accident or an injury, my insurance would have been invalid. The Detective Inspector wasn't interested and put the phone down.

So my warning to you is always see and keep the drivers Bill and ask to see other forms of ID before you go through the same traumas as I did. The police wouldn't hesitate to prosecute a genuine taxi driver, but if you are an impostor you'll be ok...

Mike Coleman (C13)

Back-to-front Call Sign

Nice one Alan! Whoever did last month's back to front *Call Sign* cock-up should be sacked...

Gary Heath (W42 and ex-compositor)

Gary was one of 250 drivers out of the 2200 who received their copy with the two inside sheets sewed in back to front so that half of Mailshot appeared in the front and half at the back! Even worse, it also meant that the Chairman's Report appeared at the back instead of the front! Luckily he has a sense of humour! Fortunately the majority received their copy intact, but believe me, the printers got a rocket in a place you wouldn't want anything sharp and have issued an apology inside this issue. I too apologise on

behalf of the printers, their only saving grace being that it's the first time they've cocked up in my ten years as Editor. Hopefully it will also be their last ...Ed

And speaking of printer's error...

Please accept our sincere apologies for the pagination error in the last issue of *Call Sign* (July). Unfortunately human error happens sometimes and although we make every effort to avoid mistakes, occasionally we fall down.

Once again please accept our sincere apologies for the error and any embarrassment and inconvenience this may have caused.

**Phillip Brown
MD, John Brown Printing**

DAB radio

Re Kevin Went's (N19) letter on driver's views of DAB radio (*August Mailshot*, is *DAB the best radio for a taxi*), I've had a DAB radio for the past three years and thoroughly recommend it, particularly if you like comedy (BBC7), extra football (5Live extra) as well as improved reception when AM reception is poor in town.

Nicholas Fielding (O52)

And more DAB...

I have had a DAB radio fitted to my last 3 taxis and think they are really great, but there is a problem with signals. Places such as Conduit St / Bruton St and again going north in Finchley Road from the Swiss Cottage. My supplier has tried various aerials including one on the inside top of the windscreen, but the problem is still there. I believe there is another one to come and I will wait till I get my next cab to try that.

If like me you enjoy Radio 5, Capitol Gold and Test Match Ball-by-Ball on AM, then DAB is for you. The sound is great and I feel sure that the radio industry will come up with a solution.

And finally gents, please keep accepting and not rejecting jobs.

Martin Freeborn (C67)

Well done DaC...

DaC client Lady de Zulueta called to compliment **John Murphy (F77)** for the trip he did for her recently. She said he was very clever, very helpful, the best driver she's ever had and to quote her, it was Dial-a-Cab at its best and she would like the pat on the back to be passed on to him.

Since people tend not to offer compliments nowadays, I thought I would let you know so that you can do the honours.

**Jago Delangen
(Sup 511, DaC Call Centre)**



Thanks for letting me know Jago. Passengers tend to expect perfection and rarely offer praise. But of course, if there is a reason to complain... Ed

Complaints

The July edition of *Call Sign* was as usual, a good read, but what I found most interesting was the Complaints Results section. Here we had a driver who was found to have made racist remarks. Another had been expelled because he 'has taken the same trip at different times. Driver also brought passenger into work'. But the one that caught my eye the most was that a driver, who I assume was once a *Call Sign* columnist and had stood for election to the BoM, had been accused of 'using threatening and intimidating towards the Chairman of ODRTS'.

I and I'm sure others would like to know more about these incidents, because they affect the whole of this Society. So can we have some more information please?

Yaqub Rafiq (O28)

Brian Rice replies: I am more than happy to furnish you with details as you request Yaqub, however as you are probably aware, I am not privy to what occurs at a complaints meeting as I am not present. I am only there if a complaint goes to Appeal but in the instance where the 'Racist Remarks' went to appeal, I did not chair the meeting as normal - probably the only one I have not chaired in the past eleven years as I was out of the country on holiday - so again I was not privy to what occurred. Consequently, other Board Members would be far better placed than I to answer your queries as they sat on the Appeal.

However, re the complaint where a member used threatening and intimidating behaviour towards me, I can tell you exactly what happened. When the member concerned endeavoured to seek election to the BoM earlier this year, he produced and distributed literature to the membership, part of which contained the phrase that the BoM lived in a 'comfort zone'. I took great exception to that phrase, as I am also part of the BoM and thought it a disgraceful remark to make particularly as this Society has never ever been so successful. Consequently, I telephoned the member concerned and gave him a piece of my mind, telling him exactly what I thought. This was in a private telephone call between two members, however, I was not aware of the fact that the member was taping the telephone call, which as I'm sure you know is illegal unless all parties are aware of the situation, (which probably says a lot regarding the member concerned).

MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 38

Although the call was heated at times, I certainly said nothing that I should be ashamed of.

I subsequently saw the member at our last AGM and nothing was said, however, after the meeting I received a very complimentary email from the same member congratulating me on the way in which I had handled the AGM, something I thought was quite nice. The telephone call that I had made on 3 January this year (the date according to the member) had long been forgotten by me - especially as I had seen him and received that complimentary email.

Then on 18 May, a taxi was ordered to pick up a client - who is also an adviser to the Society - and myself from the office and take us to an appointment. When the taxi arrived, it was the member I had spoken to on the phone regarding the distributed literature 5 months earlier.

Again, as it was by now many months past, I didn't give the previous incident a second thought. When we went to enter the taxi, the member opened the door and shook hands with the client who then entered the cab. As I went to enter the taxi, I also offered my hand to shake his, but instead of accepting it he pointed his finger to within a couple of inches of my face and stated in a threatening manner: "Don't you ever talk to me like that again." I replied that he shouldn't speak to me like that and asked the client to leave the taxi. We then ordered another one and later proceeded on our journey.

I was particularly upset regarding the situation as it was apparently done to intimidate and - even more importantly - to belittle the Chairman of ODRTS in the presence of a client apparently to prove what a 'big man' he was. I was extremely embarrassed by the situation and had to apologise profusely to the client.

Although the conversation between the member and myself was extremely short - although very intimidating, belittling and embarrassing for the Chairman of the Society (the fact it was me was irrelevant) - I decided to make a complaint. It went to a complaints meeting where the committee gave him a two-week suspension. The member then appealed and the BoM upheld the sentence, something I learned when returning from holiday.

So there you have it Yaqub, that is what happened and I have to say that in my view, the member concerned is extremely fortunate to still be a member of ODRTS. Can you imagine any large organisation allowing someone who threatens the Chairman to remain with that company?

Mike Son also replies: Yaqub, I do understand your concern with regard to the outcome of various complaints you highlight. Firstly, the case of the driver who admitted he used a derogatory term that I will not mention. The passenger concerned did not wish to make a formal complaint, but a third person made the complaint by phone. Due to the seriousness of the complaint, the Complaints Officer asked for a statement in writing. After numerous calls to the passenger and the third person, for whatever reason, this was not forthcoming.

Listening to the driver's verbal evidence, the committee took account of his admission of using said unacceptable terminology, which he stated was not directed at the passenger, plus he was remorseful and claimed he used the term when describing to the passenger a person and an incident that took place previously. The Committee also took account of the apparent verbal apology to the passenger and the driver's 30 years service with Dial-a-Cab, so it was decided to reduce the expulsion to 4 weeks suspension (mistakenly entered as two weeks in the July *Call Sign*).

As for the other complaints, Brian Rice has offered his thoughts within this issue on the complaint he made. The complaint relating to the expulsion of the driver who allegedly was making jobs his own, I don't believe needs further explanation, although it should be noted that all complaints come from ODRTS.

In conclusion, if you are not already a member of the group of drivers who have put their names forward as Complaints Committee members, please consider doing so.

More Call Signs...?

Not just because I was featured in your last issue (*Second Generation*), but I do really believe that it could be in the best interests of Dial-a-Cab if we were to print a one-off extra 3000 or so copies of *Call Sign* to hand out to non-radio drivers. Reading our magazine and seeing what DaC are like could encourage some drivers who had perhaps thought about going on radio but never drew up the courage, to make that first move.

This would be a big help in recruiting extra drivers to assist in the coverage for evenings. It will also give them a decent magazine to read for a change...

Gary Cox (O46)

Allen Togwell replies: Hello Gary, over 2000 Call Signs are distributed. Perhaps it could be suggested that once read it should be passed on to a non-radio driver or left in the back of the cab for the passengers to read? Passing it over to a

non-radio driver would give an indication as to the response and if it were positive, there would be a strong argument to take it a step further.

Dial-a-Cab PLC?

Having read your interesting Editorial in the July issue of the *Call Sign*, I wonder whether it is now time for the PLC issue to be debated once again? At least then the genuine DaC members (shareholders if PLC status is voted upon) could at least look forward to some financial reward / return at the end of the financial year. Your Editorial asserted:

"It is our society...should we not at least look as though we care?" Let me take that one step further and say if it is our society (company?) should we not at least look forward to a financial return? Maybe, just maybe this would encourage more drivers to undertake more account work? I am aware that you may not be in a position to address these points, hence perhaps it's time that the matter was once again debated?

In order to increase the coverage of work at particular times in particular zones, have the Board considered making more jobs non-rejectable, once booked into a zone?

Louie Christian (A48)

Thanks Lou, there's nothing like a non-controversial letter - and that is certainly nothing like a non-controversial letter! Should we convert to PLC and make account work non-rejectable? Two nice quiet subjects! Anyone like to comment on either? ...Ed

No smoking signs and private hire...

Can *Call Sign* tell me whether private hire need the same 'no smoking' stickers as us and also whether they are allowed to put the company name under the stickers, as I have seen done with Addison Lee?

Bernie Silver (G08)

Call Sign asked Colin Wren at the PCO Policy and Standards department. He told us that any private hire vehicle is considered to be a "workplace" just as licensed taxis are. If they fail to have them, they are in breach of the regulations. As for the name below it - definitely not ...Ed

LTFUC trip to Southend

I have just watched the cavalcade of taxis on their way to Southend, just by Basildon on the A127. I have nothing but admiration for the drivers that have taken time out to drive the kids to Southend. When people complain about taxi drivers getting in the way in London, perhaps they should come and see some of the good these guys are doing. Keep up the good work.

Adrian Clarke,
Plaistow E15



It's Showtime



The TX4 is now fitted with an advanced MP3 compatible stereo system

Now "that's entertainment"

Conders Garage Ltd - Peterborough tel: 0870 850 5457
KPM UK Taxis PLC - London tel: 020 7377 2182
Mann & Overton - Manchester tel: 0161 831 3434
TBF Thompson Ltd - Belfast tel: 028 9084 8371
John Paton Ltd - Edinburgh tel: 0131 558 8005

John Paton & Son Ltd - Glasgow tel: 0141 553 4000
Mann & Overton - Birmingham & West tel: 0121 322 0700
Smith & Humphrey Ltd - East Sussex tel: 01424 210 746
Mann & Overton - London tel: 020 7700 0888
Taxiflix Ltd - Liverpool tel: 0151 482 5101



Vehicles

© LTI Limited reproduced with permission. Fairway & TX shape are registered designs. Fairway™, TXII™, TX4, the LTI device, the LTI logo and the London Taxis International logos are all trademarks of LTI Limited.

HAILED THE WORLD OVER.