

March 2007



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

Inside this issue...

Metrocab emission strategy:
Has April Fools day come
early? A new engine? Are you
sure?

PH marshals: Brian Rice
explains...

Do DaC drivers ever suffer
with road rage?

Yet another record year for
DaC!

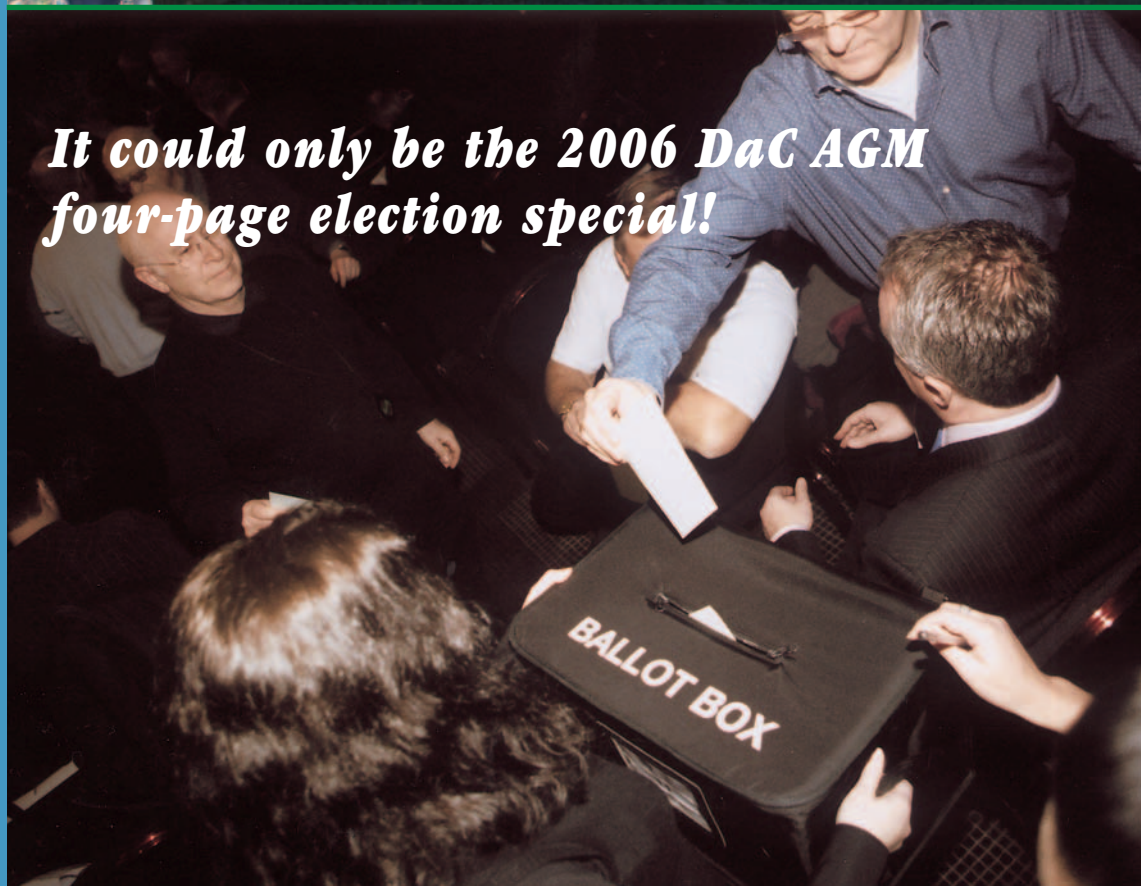
Call Sign goes out with the
Tout squad!

Tom Whitbread and the
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Call Sign meets the CPS...



***Brian Rice presents each of the three
DaC Xmas incentive winners with a
brand new Peugeot 307***



***It could only be the 2006 DaC AGM
four-page election special!***



NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

Continuing the updating of hotel chains. I have now included available postcodes for those with SatNavs. If you can't wait for the complete list visit www.nashsnumbers.co.uk and click on U.I.D...

HILTON			
Conrad	Chelsea Harbour, SW10 OXG	Canary Wharf	South Quay, Marsh Wall, E14 9SH
Croydon	101 Waddon Way, Croydon, CR9 4HH	Docklands	265 Rotherhithe Street, SE16 5HW
Euston	17-18 Upper Woburn Place, WC1H OHT	Gatwick Airport	South Terminal, Gatwick Airport, RH6 0LL
Green Park	Half Moon Street, W1Y 8BP	Heathrow Airport	Terminal 4, Heathrow, TW6 3AF
Hyde Park	129 Bayswater Road, W2 4RJ	Islington	53 Upper Street, N1 0UY
Kensington	179-199 Holland Park Avenue, W11 4UL	Metropole	225 Edgware Road, W2 1JU
Mews	2 Stanhope Row, Park Lane, W1Y 7HE	Olympia	380 Kensington High Street, W14 8NL
Paddington	146 Praed Street, W2 1EE	Park Lane	22 Park Lane, W1K 1BE
Stansted	Round Coppice Road, Stansted, CM24 1SF	Tower Bridge	5 More Tooley Street, SE1 2SZ
Watford	Elton Way/ Sandy Ln, Watford, WD25 8HA	Trafalgar	2 Spring Gardens, SW1A 2TS
Waldorf	The Aldwych, WC2B 4DD	Wembley	Empire Way, Wembley, HA9 8DS
HOLIDAY INN			
Bexley	Southwold Road, Bexley, DA5 1ND	Bloomsbury	Coram Street, WC1 1HT
Brent Cross	Tilling Road, NW2 1LP	Brentford Lock	High Street Brentford, TW8 8JZ
Camden Lock	30 Jamestown Road, NW1 7BY	Ealing Hanger Lane	Western Avenue, Hanger Lane Gyratory, W5
1HG			
Elstree M25 J23	Barnet by-pass, Borehamwood, WD6 5PU	Gatwick Airport	Povey Cross Road, Horley, RH6 0BA
Heathrow	Sipson Way, W.Drayton, UB7 0DP	Heathrow Ariel	118 Bath Road, Hayes, UB3 5AJ
Heathrow M4	Sipson Road W.Drayton, UB7 0JU	Kensington	100 Cromwell Road, SW7 4ER
Kensington-Forum	97 Cromwell Rd, SW7 4DN (Courtfield Rd)	Kings Cross	1 Kings Cross Rd. WC1 9HX
/Bloomsbury	1 Kings Cross Rd. WC1 9HX	Mayfair	,3 Berkeley St. W1 8NE
Oxford Circus	,57/59 Welbeck Street. W1 9BL	Regent's Park	Carburton Street W1 5EE
Shepperton	Felix Lane, Shepperton, TW17 8NP	Sutton	Gibson Road, Sutton, SM1 2RF
Luton-South M1 Jct9	London Rd, Markyate, St Albans, AL3 8HH		
IBIS			
Barking	Highbridge road, Barking IG11 7BA	City	5 Commercial Street, E1 6BF
Docklands	1, Baffin way, Preston Road, UK, E14	Earls Court	47 Lillie Road, SW6 1UD
Euston	3 Cardington Street, NW1 2LW	Excel	Royal Victoria Dock, E16 1AB
Gatwick	County Oak Way, Crawley, RH11 0PF	Greenwich	30 Stockwell St., SE10 9JN
Heathrow	112-114 Bath Road, Hayes, UB3 5AL	Luton	Spittlesea Road, Luton, LU2 9NH
Stratford	1a Romford Road, E15 4LJ	Thurrock	Weston Avenue, West Thurrock, RM20 3JQ
Wembley	South Way, Wembley, HA9 6BA		
IMPERIAL			
Bedford	83 Southampton Row, WC1B	County	Upper Woburn Place, WC1H OJW
Imperial	61/66 Russell Square, WC1B 5BB	President	60 Guildford Street, WC1N 1DB
Royal National	38-51 Bedford Way, WC1H	Tavistock	Tavistock Square, WC1H 9EU

What's On at Excel, Olympia and Earls Court in start date order

EVENT	VENUE	START	FINISH
Regenex	Earls Court 2	27/02/07 to	01/03/07
FORM London	Olympia National	01/03/07 to	04/03/07
Sounds Expo 2007	Olympia 2	01/03/07 to	03/03/07
The Homebuyer Show	ExCel (Public)	02/03/07 to	04/03/07
One Life Live 2007	Olympia Grand	02/03/07 to	04/03/07
IPTV World Forum	Olympia 2	05/03/07 to	07/03/07
La Dolce Vita 2007	Olympia Grand	08/03/07 to	11/03/07
The Baby Show in association with Bounty	ExCel (Public)	09/03/07 to	11/03/07
Daily Mail Ideal Home Show 2007	Earls Court 1 & 2	09/03/07 to	01/04/07
The London International Dive Show	ExCel (Public)	10/03/07 to	11/03/07
Law London 2007	Olympia 2	14/03/07 to	15/03/07
MOVE IT Dance London 2007	Olympia National	16/03/07 to	18/03/07
Viva Espana 07	Olympia Grand	16/03/07 to	18/03/07
IFE07 (International Food and Drink Exhibition)	ExCel (Trade)	18/03/07 to	21/03/07
Pro2Pac	ExCel (Trade)	18/03/07 to	21/03/07
Job Scene 07	Olympia 2	18/03/07 to	19/03/07
Off-Price Spring 07	Olympia 2	18/03/07 to	19/03/07
VolP	Olympia National	21/03/07 to	22/03/07
Landlord Show Olympia	Olympia Conference Centre	22/03/07 to	22/03/07
Stitch & Craft 2007	Olympia 2	22/03/07 to	25/03/07
British & International Franchise Exhibition 2007	Olympia Grand	23/03/07 to	24/03/07
Growing Your Own Business Exhibition & Conference	Olympia Grand	23/03/07 to	24/03/07
Careers & Jobs Live	ExCel (Public)	25/03/07 to	26/03/07
London Footwear + Leather goods	Olympia National	25/03/07 to	27/03/07
Business Continuity Expo, the Risk Management Expo	ExCel (Trade)	28/03/07 to	29/03/07
The Vitality Show 2007	Olympia Grand	29/03/07 to	01/04/07
A Place in the Sun Live!	ExCel (Public)	30/03/07 to	01/04/07

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from the editor's desk

TfL treating taxi drivers as mugs?

If you read this and the next item, you could be forgiven for thinking that this is **Call Sign's** bash the PCO day! We have never been ashamed to admit our support for the PCO believing that it was their administration of the licensed taxi trade – however unpopular – that differentiated us from the opposition. However, that support never continued over to Transport for London with the problem being that the PCO and TfL are now one.

As an example, you will read in this issue that vehicle licensing (ie passing overhauled cabs) has now been transferred from Penton Street to three different SGS passing stations in the north, south and west of London.

Soon after the announcement that SGS were to take over the passing element from the PCO was originally made, came the “suggestion” of a mid-year mini-overhaul as well, something the trade has come out as being against. We were asked for our views, much as a parent asks their child if they are tired? The kid's response is irrelevant – it means they are going to bed! So it was with us. What do you think of the idea? Tough, you're getting it anyway.

But just to make sure, suddenly a report is leaked to the **Evening Standard** (7 Feb), which claims that 50% of all licensed taxis going for their pass are rejected. Not only that, but a spokesperson for the TfL's London Transport Assembly Committee, Geoff Pope, comes out to tell Londoners how disgusting it is that our taxis are in such bad nick and that “...given this failure rate, six monthly tests are long overdue.”

A typical piece of TfL connivance. Ok, so we apparently can't do much about it, but please Mr Pope, even if you are speaking for his highness the Mayor of Cuba – sorry London – don't treat us like mugs. You know as well as we how high the standard of London's taxis are – much higher than the standard of TfL lackeys dragged out for the occasional quote to save Mr Livingstone dirtying his hands further! He wants us to have the same number of vehicle examinations as private hire – one every six months – but no doubt doesn't know how to overrule our resentment of the suggestion. Hence the report in the Standard, but not sent out to the trade press. Why is that? It isn't too difficult to see why the trade press have become reluctant to publish TfL / PCO press releases...

Metrocabs emission strategy – April Fools Day comes early?

Call Sign supported the PCO recently when their emission testing results came under attack by a trade organisation. We stick by that support; however, we have to wonder whether April Fools Day has come early at Penton Street when it comes to the long-awaited Euro



3 taxi emissions strategy for Metrocabs?

In common with the rest of the trade press, we have been sent (another) PCO press release that is supposed to “assist” Metrocab owners comply with the Mayor's emission strategy and reach Euro 3. Unless we have read it incorrectly – and there are not too many ways of reading it – then that “solution” is for them to have a Nissan engine conversion fitted with the STT Emtac CleanCab system. The PCO's long-awaited answer for Metrocab owners will then serve a dual-purpose; not only will it make the owners of Metrocab Series I, Series II and Series III taxis Euro 3 compliant, but it will probably bankrupt them at the same time.

Call Sign asked a respected east end garage owner for his views. His first word was “crazy!” He went on to query why the PCO would pass an engine that then needs to be converted with an emissions system? And cost? He estimated that with fitting and VAT, you could be looking at £6 – 7000. “And that,” he added, “would write the cab off if it were accident repairs.”

We have waited a long time for the PCO / EST answer to the Metrocab problem. Surely this wasn't the best they could come up with? We aren't experts, but we have two answers for the PCO.

Firstly, ask the Mayor to cancel his proposed Cuba celebration in 2009 to “cheer” 50 years of Castro dictatorship that will cost Londoners around £2million. Instead, ask him to use that money to buy new Nissan engines + emission system for all the affected Metrocab owners. A fixed charge of £250 per cab in return sounds fair.

Our second answer is to provide all Metrocab owners with a non-stop supply of the Power Pill. That won't do quite as much as a conversion, but it will greatly assist until such time as the cabs are ready to come off the road permanently – perhaps a 15 year maximum lifespan would be fair in the circumstances. After all, most of the affected vehicles are closer to the end of their working lives than the beginning and natural wastage in this case sounds reasonable.

Call Sign will take a bet with anyone. The Nissan engine + emission system will come across problems as soon as it is fitted.

It was brilliant in the Fairway, but just wasn't designed for a Metrocab...

The situation is ludicrous and the PCO have turned Metrocab owners into laughing stocks. If this is the best they can come up with, then they should hang their heads in shame...

Cabtivate drivers “ripped off?”

Several Dial-a-Cab drivers are currently locked in a four-year finance agreement to pay for the no-longer-working Cabtivate TV equipment that has been left to rot in their cabs. The TV advertising company are now in liquidation with drivers wondering why they signed up to agreements for in-excess of £3000 when it seemed glaringly obvious that the equipment + fitting came to nothing like that?

Sadly, whatever the reason, these drivers now have to pay £104 a month for four years with absolutely nothing in return (they were originally told they would get around £192 a month back). Yet none of those drivers signing for the system asked why they just couldn't take the difference of £88 each month without having to sign those 4 years away?

It seems that no other connotation can be put onto the whole episode other than the drivers were ripped off. It becomes even worse when you realise that Cabtivate's finance director had resigned on December 4, yet screens were still being installed into cabs later that month!

Is there an answer? According to a solicitor **Call Sign** spoke to, the chances aren't very good that any money will come back and the only answer we can think of is for those drivers concerned, to go down to Cabvision at **KPM**, explain the situation and ask nicely if they can have one of their screens that cost the driver absolutely nothing and pay you not much less than the Cabtivate drivers were promised after parting with £3100. That, at least, would help with their finance agreement debt.

And to the drivers who signed up – two of whom **Call Sign** spoke to and who seem like genuinely nice guys – keep away from financial agreements promising the earth without first checking out what it is you are buying. Peter DaCosta at KPM had showed that it needn't cost the driver a penny, yet you all signed up for £3100. Come on guys...

AGM

Well, another AGM has come and gone. **Call Sign** estimates that there were around 118 drivers in the hall of whom 40 hadn't yet voted via postal ballot. As usual, several drivers tried to insist that attending should be made compulsory, with one suggesting a possible EGM to decide. But sadly, it is patently obvious that the vast majority don't want to attend and no one can force them to. That is a sad indictment of drivers who are quick to say they own the Society, but who don't want to put anything back into it...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

AGM

Another AGM has come and gone and I must say that I thought it went very well. There were just over 100 members present and for the most part it was all very good humoured, but then again it should have been after the excellent results that were returned last year!

As you are probably aware, the same BoM were returned, but I would personally like to thank all members that submitted their name for consideration at the AGM to become a Board Member. I believe there is a full report regarding the AGM elsewhere in the magazine.

Tariff increase

There will be a 3.2% tariff increase on the 14 April and as a matter of interest, I thought some of you might be interested in how the figure was arrived at. Each year the authorities have a list of 'index components' that are used in the calculation, basically a 'shopping basket' of assorted costs. These include such things as vehicle cost, parts, tyres, servicing, fuel, insurance and even the Knowledge. This year, some of the index components actually had a negative impact on the changes in tariff, for example fuel and insurance costs both decreased during the past year.

The total of the index components contributed 0.79% to the total cost and as the average national earnings increased by 2.37%, the combined total was 3.16% - which was rounded up to 3.2%. Incidentally, the same formula is used every year.

Private Hire and Northern Ireland

You may remember that several months ago I wrote about the position in Northern Ireland whereby it was suggested that a trial was going to take place allowing Private Hire vehicles ply for hire off the street, but that the only vehicles that could use a rank would be vehicles that had wheelchair accessibility. I'm led to believe that there are something like 300 taxis in Northern Ireland with 2000 Private Hire vehicles, with only Private Hire being on radio and not the taxis.

Although there is not a limitation on taxi licences, it was always envisaged that the community could only support 300 taxis. I am now led to believe that Orders will be issued and 'rubber stamped' by Parliament to allow this scenario to take place. 'Orders' apply to Northern Ireland and not Bills as we have here.

The responsibility for licensing in Northern Ireland falls to the Department of the Environment (DoE) and they were in favour of a two-tier system (so they say), however, a public consultation exercise was undertaken and the public were in favour of a one-tier system. I am not aware of the questions that were asked or indeed how they were asked, most of us being aware



that depending on how the questions are asked, enables you to come up with any answer required! It will certainly be very interesting to see what actually transpires in Northern Ireland and what effect it may or may not have on us here on the mainland. I will keep you informed of the situation should other developments unfold.

Largest account and marshals...

I have had several letters and emails regarding our largest account; there is actually a letter in this edition that applies to that same account. It appears that our client is having a trial with a Private Hire company - who has always serviced them - in which the PH company supply them with more cars in the evening and also supply them with a Marshal to supervise the pickups, as indeed we do.

This stems back to last November when our service was severely stretched and the

client decided they would endeavour to give more work to the Private Hire company in an attempt to improve their service. Now it seems that some of our members - and indeed some of our Marshals at that account - appear to feel alienated by this latest attempt to commandeer some of our work and do not wish to service the account.

What you must realise is when you are at the top, there are always those that wish to bring you down and what we must do is try even harder and improve our service even further, as I am convinced that the Private Hire companies cannot compete with us for service unless you all have a fit of pique and allow them to have the game all to themselves. It is simply a matter of who is going to crack first? I know for a fact that at this moment in time they are taking between 20-30 trips per evening from that account on reduced rates and supplying a Marshal. They cannot sustain this forever - unless you capitulate and let them have everything for themselves. Then, obviously, it would have paid off handsomely for them. Remember, everyone is a good Captain in a calm sea!

Lydia leaves...

Our former Sales Manager, Lydia Foulkes, has now left our employment and gone to work for a Private Hire company (not the one above). I would like to thank Lydia for her contribution during the past five years and wish her every success in her new role. No doubt our paths will cross in the future...

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

CYGNUS THREE PEAKS - OVER £900 RAISED



Julia du Plessis of the NSPCC receives a cheque from Cygnus MD, Dorian Franklyn

The September *Call Sign* reported on Cygnus Automotive's brave representatives completing one of the world's toughest endurance races, the Three Peaks Challenge! The money raised was donated to the NSPCC and the County Air Ambulance. They managed to collect £903 from donations for the Three Peaks Challenge and Cygnus Automotive put to auction last year their legendary mini-car. One of their dealers, Graham Hutchinson of Chalkwell Park Motors in Leigh on Sea, snapped up the car for a bargain price of £300. This greatly helped the donation to the NSPCC and County Air Ambulance and enabled Cygnus to give them £601.50 each. Well done Cygnus...

Regular readers of Vince Chin's *Call Sign* column, *Computer Chinchat*, will have read his February contribution where he introduced what was then a new initiative from 10 Downing Street – on-line petitions.

Under the general heading of *sending online petitions to the PM*, Vince told of a beta website launched some two months earlier (<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk>) that had been set up specifically for submitting petitions directly to the PM online!

Vince thought it was a great idea, with the PM gauging public opinion immediately with regards to any possible legislation. He then wrote of the first petition he had taken part in on the site: "*Scrap the planned vehicle tracking and road pricing policy.*" At the time of Vince's article coming out (28 January), 354,818 people had taken part in the petition and he wrote that it would close on 20 February 2007, so by the time you received the February issue of *Call Sign*, you would still have time to participate.

Within 3 weeks, the number taking part in the petition and signing up against the policy had risen to an aston-

Online Petitions: Call Sign's Vince Leads the Way!



ishing 1.2million and added another 500,000 by the end! The PM had to reply to every one!

Soon after Vince pointed the way, Sarah Kennedy picked it up on Radio 2 and this was followed by emails doing the rounds warning of this

Government's outrageous policy – not just to charge drivers for each mile they drive, but to also be able to track you at any time. But only one person warned of the danger first and pointed to the petition – Vince Chin!

In a statement, Transport Secretary Douglas Alexander told *Call Sign*:

"I understand the public's concern. Frankly, if we were proposing what the petition suggests, I would share their concerns. Unless motorists and families can see the benefits of bringing in a national road pricing system, then it simply won't happen."

Vince is taking this month off in case the PM wants to question him – possibly in the Tower! But he'll be back next issue with all the latest news from the Internet...

Emission Strategy for London Taxis (Metrocabs)

The following is a press release from the PCO. *Call Sign* disagrees with its content but is publishing it so that Metrocab owners can know the situation. Our comment is on page 3.

In order to assist Metrocab owners comply with the emission strategy, the PCO will be announcing which systems have been approved upon completion of independent field trials and testing to Euro 3 level.

Nissan engine conversion fitted with STT Emtec CleanCab system

The PCO has now approved the Nissan engine conversion, fitted with the STT Emtec CleanCab system, an emission reduction solution in support of the Mayor's Taxi Emission Strategy.

The Nissan Engine conversion is fitted with the STT Emtec CleanCab system comprising of a Diesel Oxidation Catalyst, a cooled Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) system, an air-to-air intercooler and a turbocharger. This conversion can be installed into Metrocab Series I, Series II and Series III taxis, which then become Euro 3 compliant.

Further details about this conversion can be obtained from the London Central Cab Company on 020 7501 9998.

This system has been independently tested by the Energy Saving Trust (EST) and has undergone at least 6 months on 'in-service' durability testing.

As of 1 July 2007 any Metrocab taxi that is of a Pre-Euro, Euro 1 or Euro 2 standard will, when presented for their annual licensing inspection, be required to have either PCO/EST approved emission reduction equipment fitted or an approved conversion to run on alternative fuels as a requirement of licensing.

Dave Stock
PCO Head of Service Delivery

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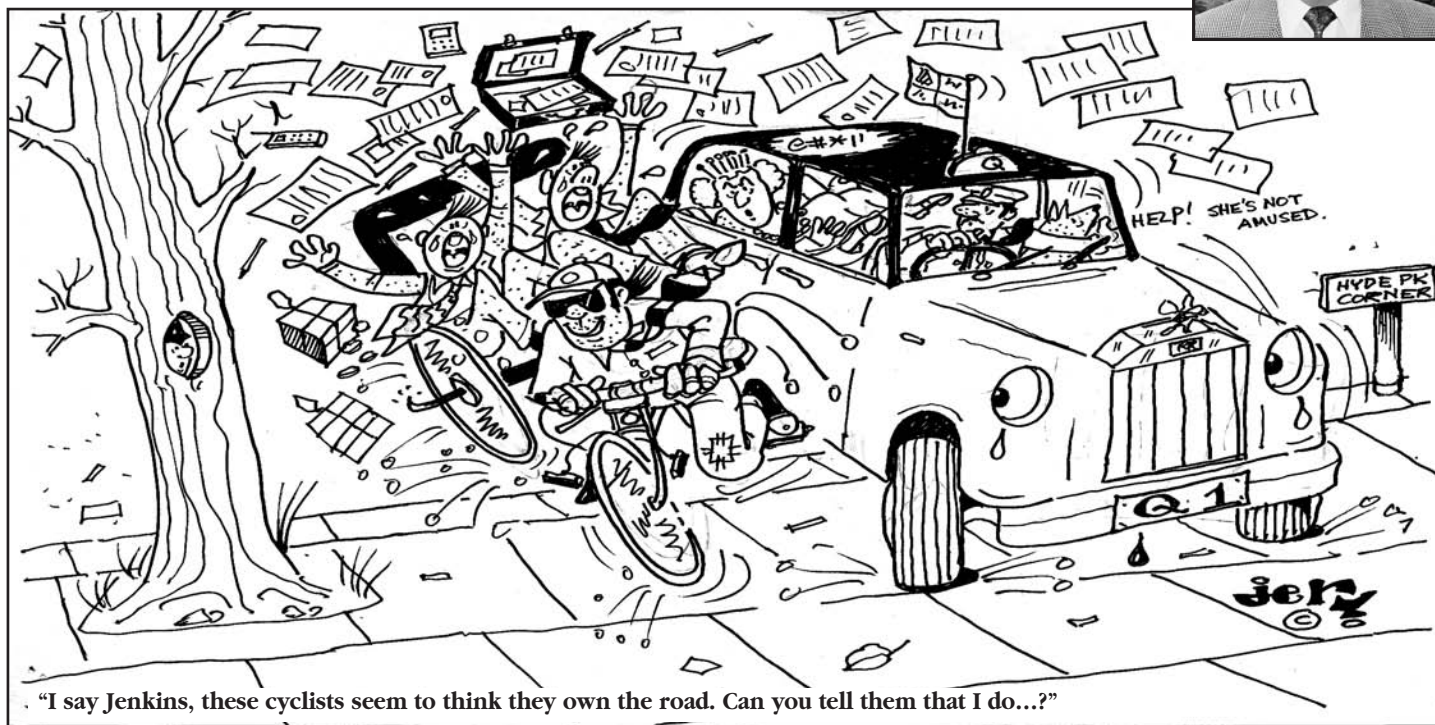
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Jery's World



Darren Running For St Francis Hospice



Darren (r) with his friend, the late Colin Starr on a taxi charity outing to Maldon

Dial-a-Cab driver, **Darren Dennis (W65)**, will be running in the **Brentwood half-marathon** later this month (25 March) to raise funds for **St Francis Hospice** in Havering-atte-Bower, Essex. He is also running in memory of a former DaC driver and friend, **Colin Starr**.

Darren has already competed in the London Marathon and Great North Run and told **Call Sign** that St Francis' Hospice does such a lot of good work to help those with terminal illnesses.

"Their aim," Darren told us, **"is to alleviate suffering regardless of whether it is physical, emotional, social or spiritual so that they can give patients the best quality of life possible, for however long that life may be."**

St Francis Hospice cares for more than 1,400 patients and their families each year and takes up to 17 patients each day, whilst at any one time up to 200 patients and their carers will be supported in their own homes by their team of 7 community nurses who give hands-on nursing care to patients who wish to remain in their homes during the final days of their illness.

It costs £4.9 million each year to run all the St Francis services to help someone's loved ones get the care they need 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you would like to help Darren, you can phone the hospice on 01708 723593 and their fundraising staff will help you to make an instant donation or you can send a cheque to:

Saint Francis Hospice.

Freepost: The Hall, Havering-atte-Bower,, Romford. RM4 1BR

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

Kupkake's Korner

Getting Home

When the Tubes go down
it's on us they focus,
they roam around
like hoards of locusts...

Each desperate in his quest
to get some transport home,
to find a cab before the rest
talking to his mobile 'phone!

And when at last a taxi's found
and they've figured out the doors,
they get inside and look around
testing each switch and more!

The heaters on, the windows down
the intercom light flashes,
the small jump seats, just for their feet
the ashtray for their ashes.

With mouths agape they watch the clock
calculating the final fare,
and at every red light stop
they look outside and stare...

They might even question your chosen way
as if they know another,
there's nothing we can really say
in fact I rarely bother!

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Driver Operations

Hello Ladies and Gentleman,

Can I begin by thanking those of you that had confidence to vote at the recent AGM elections for me to represent you for a further term in office. As I said in my address on the day, as a member of the elected Board I have the enthusiasm, commitment and experience to assist and help keep our Society ahead of all competition. It is flattering to know that most of you feel that the existing Board of Management under the leadership of Brian Rice is your choice to see us through this ever-demanding market place.

Can I again reassure you that we are all team players and fully committed to the task ahead over the next two years...



be increased and it will invalidate the warranty on the battery if the wiring is altered or the system bypassed.

Cabot Square

Please remember that Cabot Square operates the same at weekends as it does during the week. The only difference is that E14S is disabled up till 9pm on Saturday / Sunday and only E14C - which is a physical rank - is in operation until E140 kicks in at the normal time of 9pm. And don't forget that you must be within the security cordon of Canary Wharf at all times when booking into E140.

Allan Evans

0207 607 6403

Allane@Dialacab.co.uk












TX4 and Code 3

Many of you have recently re-invested in the new TX4, but may not be aware that LTI have introduced a power supply cut-off so that if you leave the vehicle for thirty minutes or more, the power from the battery is temporarily isolated until you turn the ignition back on. This means that the power to the Dial-a-Cab terminal will also be stopped and will in effect mean that it has to be re-booted.

As you know, to enable the *Reject Disable* facility, there is an eight-hour sign-on period that could be interrupted. Roman Way will not alter the wiring unless specifically asked by a member to do so. Only the factory can disable this facility, the present time settings cannot

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M&O TX4 sales going through the roof!

It is an old saying that a new home brings a new baby – and **Mann & Overton's** new premises at Brewery Road certainly brought along a new baby in the shape of the TX4. The new taxi, which was launched in October 2006, has been an instant success with London's taxi trade as well as across the country. By the end of January, the M&O sales team had sold their 500th TX4 since the launch and the impetus has continued to the present day.

The sales team has now settled into their new premises and are enjoying the benefits of the modern and spacious new showroom - as are the taxi drivers.

Marino DiVito, the General Sales Manager at M&O, together with Barry Chandler, Used and Fleet Sales Manager, have made some significant changes to their sales teams. Marino, who many drivers already knew from the previous premises at Holloway Road, told us:

"It is great news that the team have sold 500 TX4s so quickly – London's drivers are certainly seeing the benefits of this fantastic new taxi for themselves. Our sales team here is full of enthusiasm and I am confident the team will continue to grow our ever-increasing numbers of satisfied customers. Our new premises mean we have a state of the art, up to date dealership in which drivers can talk business with us. The facilities here have been well designed and thought out, also offering drivers the chance to see a range of 100 used vehicles."

One member of staff who has also recently been promoted is Ali Tarkan-Ali. Ali has been a familiar face at M&O for over 4 years from when he first started in the Sales Department. He has now been promoted to New Sales Manager and is really enjoying his new role. Ali said:

"I am relishing the many challenges my new role brings. The new TX4 is proving to be extremely popular with the taxi trade across London and I am proud the team here has now sold in excess of 500 new models. I am sure this will continue as more and more drivers take their test drives and like what they see in the new generation of London taxi."

Marino DiVito also recently introduced

Lorenzo Bugliari to the sales team. Lorenzo had previously worked for another London LTI Main



**The M&O Sales team at Brewery Road:
L-R Ali, Lorenzo and Simon**

Dealer for a number of years and told us that he was really enjoying his new job with M&O.

"These are exciting times at Brewery Road. I've already seen some of my old customers – I was looking forward to meeting new customers, but seeing some old familiar faces is an added bonus!"

Lorenzo ended by confiding that he needed to be selling lots of cabs as he was getting married in July – so good luck from **Call Sign**!

If you want to talk to Lorenzo about buying a new TX4, his direct line is 020 7700 9887. Sadly that still won't get you an invite to the wedding though!

The new premises at Brewery Road are easily accessible and the Service and Parts Departments are also a huge improvement on the previous premises. Together with the improved parking facilities, Brewery Road makes choosing a new or a used cab easier and more convenient than ever before and with a wealth of cab trade experience, the knowledgeable sales team at Mann & Overton have years of experience to help drivers make the right choice.

Sandie Goodwin

Using a Mobile Phone Whilst Driving

Now it's £60 AND 3 points...!



This is now illegal

As of February 27, the use of hand-held mobile phones whilst driving has become illegal and if caught, drivers will be fined £60 – up from the previous £30. In addition and far more importantly, they will also have three points put onto their licence. That means that were you to be caught 4 times speaking on the phone while driving, you could lose your licence and with it, your livelihood.

It has been estimated that prior to the new law coming into operation, some 10million drivers a year were ignoring police instructions not to use their mobile phone whilst in charge of a vehicle – that includes waiting at traffic lights etc. From that number came prosecutions totalling around 75,000 per year, with the latest DfT figures available (2005) claiming that 13 people died as a result of drivers being on their phone and around 400 were injured.

According to police, they are planning to "blitz" motorists using hand-held phones while driving and enforcing the new regulation until the message sinks in. Their message is that you cannot do two things at once as well as doing it on its own - that cryptic message referring to phoning and concentrating on the road at the same time.

You are allowed to use hands-free phones, but that means that you will be breaking the law even if you have an ear-piece but still have to physically pick up the phone (dialling etc).

Information from the DfT says that a phone is considered to be hands-free if it is in a cradle with the earpiece inserted before the journey has begun and the only action needed by the driver being to push a button to begin or end the call. Any action needed to pick up the phone will constitute an offence. Consequently, if your phone is left in a cup or on a ledge or seat and you make or take a call, you will be liable for prosecution.

No one will ever be able to prove whether any or all of the 13 deaths or 400 injuries caused while drivers were on the phone would have occurred anyway, but there can be little doubt that those who had a phone in their hand whilst resting their arm on the window ledge and having their left leg resting on the cab luggage partition, haven't helped and many complaints have been received at **Dial-a-Cab** over the years testifying to the above.

The only answer now is to make sure your phone has a cradle...

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Children

Why do people take their children all the way to the supermarket to slap them? I have become an old busybody who glares at parents who ignore their toddlers crying, as it's often obvious what is going on – the child is boiling hot, overdressed and given sweets instead of a drink of water, for example. Or they are strapped into pushchairs for hours on end, convenient but cruel – they have to be able to run and stretch while some lazy parents treat them like parcels.

While I'm clucking and disapproving, my DaCman, Glen, is trying to ignore them while others are saying: "When I was a child, I wouldn't have been allowed to make such a fuss."

Your point of view all depends on whether you've actually raised children and whether you are female. Most mothers remember their own adorable darlings and sympathise with the child. Fathers may sympathise with their own children, but other people's are just snotty brats when they play up! If you've never had any – like Victor Lewis-Smith of the Evening Standard – kids are just "short, stupid people who don't pay rent."

Your friends change as soon as they reproduce. Old drinking pals suddenly tut-tut about permissible units and passive smoking. The more time they have, the more they imagine it really matters if baby food is organic or if they can get "Baby Einstein" educational DVDs in England. Americans follow theories about child-rearing slavishly; my old friends said it was abusive to go out for

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

Back Seat *Driver*



an evening if their child cried at the prospect, paid the babysitter and cancelled their evenings out more times than I can remember.

Some London mums have separate nannies for each child, so they get enough attention. My (American) cousin never used a pushchair for any of her 4 children, as she said body contact was necessary for them to grow up feeling secure. She made me carry my 9-month-old round the shopping mall, but he was huge and heavy; security for him and disc slippage for me. Twenty-seven years later, her baby has become a fundamentalist rabbi and mine is a normal lad with loads of friends, so I'm not sure who is more secure.

My take on child-rearing, since you

ask, is to stop training them to impress our friends, stop obsessing about food altogether and just love and enjoy them while they still want to be with us and laugh at our jokes. Take them to the dentist twice a year and make it fun! Don't pay them for school results, just teach them to do their level best and be proud of all their achievements. Get them to school on time and don't take them out to help you at home or for holidays – school is their job and has top priority. Level with them about sex. Give them weekly spending money from age 8 and no handouts – give extra money only for jobs well done. Expect as much from boys as from girls and make sure girls get every opportunity for the adventures that boys do.

You may want them to be professionals, as mine and Glen's dads did for us since they worked in shops. But if they follow in your footsteps and earn their badge, they too can end up advertising their houses in the sun, like the ones I see in *Call Sign*. They can be independent and comfortable if they work hard. And they have given you the honour of imitation, the surest sign of your success as a parent...

Till then...

Love Poppy x x x

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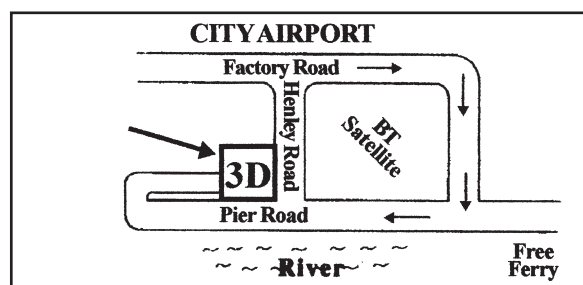
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PUBLIC CARRIAGE OFFICE

Background

PCO Notice 41/05 announced the outcome of the review of taxi licensing inspection services. It confirmed that TfL had decided to transfer PCO main taxi licensing inspection services to SGS subject to further discussion and agreement on practical and contractual issues. This Notice is to confirm the new arrangements that will be introduced...

* For inspecting taxis whose licences are due to expire on or after 2 April 2007

* For inspecting new vehicles requiring licensing on or after 2 April 2007

* The transitional arrangements and key dates that will apply between now and the transfer

New Inspection Centres

With effect from 2 April 2007, SGS plan to inspect taxis from the following three centres:

* **Hanworth:** Unit 9, Links Industrial Estate, Hanworth, Middlesex, TW13 6JE

* **Tottenham:** Unit 1, Lockwood Industrial Park, Mill Road, London, N17 9QP

* **Deptford:** Unit 2, Deptford Trading Estate, Blackhorse Road, London, SE8 5HY

Licences due to expire on or after 2 April 2007

Approximately 6-8 weeks prior to the date of the expiry of the licence, SGS will send a reminder letter to the licensee reminding them of the date of the expiry of their licence. This letter will also:

* Offer a provisional date, time and place for the licensing inspection

* Instructions on how to confirm or change the date, time or place of the inspection

* Explain the options for making payment

* Provide detailed information about the scope of the inspection (which will be based on the current standard) and advice on how to pass first time

The vehicle owner, or an agent acting on their behalf and with their authority, will be entitled to confirm or change the provisional booking. Should there be no response to the initial reminder letter, a further reminder letter will be sent to the licensee at least 14 days in advance of the provisional inspection date offered in the first letter.

New vehicles requiring licensing on or after 2 April 2007

In order to arrange for a 'new' vehicle to be licensed (ie a taxi not previously licensed by the PCO), the owner (or agent acting on behalf of the owner) must contact the SGS call centre on **0845 378 2345** and ensure that they are able to provide:

* Full name and address of the registered keeper as recorded on the V5c or, as an alternative, the AFRL Certificate (in the case of vehicles being registered for the first time, confirmation of keeper details supplied to the DVLA)

* Details of the vehicle as recorded on the V5c

or, as an alternative, the EEC Certificate of Conformity

* Payment details.

The person making the application will be given a confirmed licensing appointment at a date, time and place that best meets their particular requirements.

Taximeter installation and testing

* Vehicles being presented for licensing **after 2 April** will be required to present a taximeter installation certificate issued by a PCO approved taximeter installer as part of the licensing inspection.

* Details of PCO approved taximeter installers will be provided to vehicle owners at the time a provisional licensing appointment is offered. In practice, it is not envisaged that the service already provided to owners by taximeter installers will change from the current procedures. The primary difference is that the taximeter installer will (for vehicles being inspected after 2 April) now check the accuracy of the meter, seal it and issue a certificate to the vehicle owner confirming that the meter fitted is accurate.

Transitional arrangements and key dates

* The PCO want to ensure that the transitional period leading up to 2 April is managed as effectively as possible and that any disruption of our licensing services is kept to an absolute minimum. To help us achieve this objective, vehicle owners, drivers and overhaulers are asked to take into account the following key dates during the transitional period:

Friday, 23 March: The last days for full annual licensing inspections carried out at Penton St
Monday, 26 March – Wednesday, 28 March: These days are to be reserved for the following types of inspection to be carried out at Penton Street:

* Clearing annual licensing 'reject notices'

* Clearing 'Unfit Notices' issued in respect of on-street enforcement

* Replacement plates (eg because original plate has been stolen or damaged as the result of an accident).

Prioritisation of licensing appointments before 2 April 2007

The PCO will want to ensure that all vehicles whose licences expire before 2 April 2007 are given the opportunity of having their licences renewed **before** the last annual inspections are carried out at Penton Street on 23 March.

To this end, the PCO will, with immediate effect, give priority when allocating annual licensing inspections to those vehicles where the current licence is due to expire before 2 April.

Consequently, it may not be possible to accommodate vehicle owners wishing to bring forward annual licensing inspections where the licence is due to expire after 2 April. Those

owners will need to wait until such time as they are offered a provisional licensing appointment by SGS.

Further information about this Notice

If you are a vehicle owner who might be directly affected during the transitional period or if you require further information about this Notice, you can contact us on the following contact numbers:

Taxi Licensing Appointments

0845 602 7000

Barry Cook, Senior Vehicle Licensing Manager
020 7126 1964

Senior Public Carriage Examiners

020 7126 1980

Ray Biggs, Senior Project and Contracts Manager
020 7126 1924

Luke Giles, Project Support Manager

020 7126 1861

Dave Stock
Head of Service Delivery

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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



Ian Running Marathon for Children's Cancer Charity

Ian McCarthy (R064) is one of several Dial-a-Cab drivers running in this year's Flora London Marathon on 22 April. Ian is hoping to collect at least £2500 in sponsorship to help the work of **CLIC Sargent**, one of the UK's leading children's cancer charities.

CLIC Sargent supports children, young people and their families every step of the way when the unimaginable happens. It cares through nurses, social workers, play therapists, home from home, research, financial support and advice and holidays. You can help Ian's efforts with sponsorship in several ways. You can email him on

www.justgiving.com/imccarthy leaving your name, address and tell him how much



you want to pledge. Or you can donate online at www.justgiving.com/imccarthy. You can also email Ian and he'll be happy to send you a sponsorship form that your friends may want to contribute to.

Football mad Ian at Old Trafford with son Charlie. Now he turns to the London Marathon to help CLIC Sargent Children's Cancer Charity

PICKING UP THE WRONG ACCOUNT PASSENGER

Dial-a-Cab Customer Service Manager, **Caroline McGowan** has asked **Call Sign** to help publicise a problem. She told us:

We are continually getting queries where wrong passengers are getting into taxis that display a name board. Can I please remind all our drivers that in addition to having that name board on your window and confirming the passenger's name when they approach you, can you also confirm the account holders name - especially if the destination has changed. Quite often it turns out to be the wrong passenger and the driver has set down at the destination when the correct passenger calls back to say they are still waiting for their taxi.

Caroline McGowan – Customer Service Manager

"Some Jobs Are So Wet!" -DaC's David..



David's phone captured where the terminal told the pick up was!

Even though Dial-a-Cab's terminals are getting on a bit, they are still better than many newer systems – especially the facility of getting an instant "where is it" when you can't quite picture where the pick-up point is.

DaC driver **David Joseph (A82)** had one such job recently when offered a trip in Docklands. "There are so many new developments going up in the area," David told **Call Sign**, "that it isn't always easy keeping up. When I was recently offered a job in the area and couldn't think where it was, I pushed the terminal button to show it to me before accepting it. When I saw the map, I declined the job as it hadn't mentioned anything about providing water wings with it! It looked a bit wet to me...!"



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Allen Tagwell's Ma

May I start by thanking those who gave me their vote for a further term in office to serve you as diligently as I have done in the past. Once again there was an exceptionally low attendance at the AGM due, I can only guess, to the fact that the majority of those who didn't attend are content with the direction their Society is going at this time. The months preceding elections are always disruptive with projects being put on hold, but now we can concentrate on the tasks ahead - included in those tasks will of course be the imminent relocation to our new premises.

When I first joined the Board, we had just moved into Brunswick House and renovations were still in progress. The difference then was that it involved very little technology, in fact I was the first Board member to have a PC, a second hand Amstrad with a monitor so small it wasn't much bigger than the 'bins' I wore in those days - I looked like Brains out of Thunderbirds! Now, almost 20 years on, we are on the move again and the bulk of the renovation is likely to concern little else but the sort of technology more suited to Cape Canaveral. It's going to be exciting times for Dial-a-Cab and I'm sure everybody will be pulling out all the stops to make the transition as smooth as humanly possible without having too much effect on our normal business.

Writing of those early days prompts me to comment about the Editor's reply last month to the driver questioning what benefit Dial-a-Cab derived out of **Call Sign** sponsoring a football team? It reminded me of a marketing campaign I undertook when I first joined the Board. At the very next Board meeting when I gave an update on my activity for the month, several Board members voiced their concerns at my inability to furnish the financial return expected from the campaign, which involved a mailshot where the outlay for stationery and postage alone was in excess of £200. I tried without success to explain that apart from the pittance that the project cost by my producing it totally in-house, marketing is not the same as buying and selling a sack of potatoes and that promoting a product, be it by advertising, sponsoring, PR, direct or indirect marketing, is well known to be the most difficult to quantify since there can be a long delay between customers viewing a branding and a purchase. And to prove that point, several months later I received a phone call from a large company in the City urgently requiring me to visit their office with a view to opening an account with DaC.

At the meeting, I was told that a driver from their-then taxi suppliers had upset his passenger - who happened to be the MD's wife - to such an extent that the MD demanded their account be terminated immediately. The procurement manager, who had only been in the job a few weeks, promptly set about searching for an alternative taxi company when by

chance he came across some colourful literature in his office from Dial-a-Cab. When I enquired as to when his company had received this literature, the date on the accompanying letter was the mailshot I had sent out four months earlier! Terms were quickly agreed and within the hour a taxi account with DaC was active. That, incidentally isn't an unusual way of winning and losing business in our industry, emphasising what I've said on many occasions in the past, that it can take several months of hard work to procure a new account and one driver just five minutes to close it.

But returning to the original issue, Dial-a-Cab is practically a household name in London and this has been achieved, particularly over the past 10 years, by raising our image through usage amongst the business

Yes, of course our members cover the work, exactly as the small group of drivers did when the Society was first formed, but little if anything else has changed with regards driver cooperation since those early days in 1953.

and the public sector, carrying our branding on vehicles, networking, advertising and sponsoring various events and activities. In marketing parlance, it's known as the 'awareness factor' and to give just one small example of what 'awareness' can achieve, on the 13 occasions the Evening Standard has published cartoons involving taxis, they have always put the Dial-a-Cab logo on the vehicle. This may seem insignificant to the driver in question, but I can assure him, such recognition, particularly in our industry, is priceless.

Reading **Stanley Roth's** Letter in **Call Sign** last month re drivers doing their bit, was also interesting particularly when looked at in the broader context. Dial-a-Cab is entering into its 54th year of trading and heading for what is likely to be another successful year. But for how much longer do we envisage enjoying this success? How much longer can we rely on being led by the Board with no guarantee of a united support from the shareholders? Yes, of course our members cover the work, exactly as the small group of drivers did when the Society was first formed, but little if anything else has changed with regards driver cooperation since those early days in 1953.

There are many of you, I'm sure, who would be surprised at how extensive tender documents are that we have to complete when trying to procure new business. There are occasions when they look as large and as complex as the Maastricht Treaty, with questions covering all manner of subjects - many of which we often wonder what they have to do with supplying taxis! Most of the questions we can answer with confidence, then we get to areas that are totally beyond our control such as those appertaining to 90% of our work force and all of the vehicles that we supply, which is



controlled entirely by you the shareholders.

Fortunately, up until recently the positives in our tender replies far outweighed the negatives to the extent they were never a great issue, environment being just one example. But this is changing rapidly and not by choice as the Government, society as a whole and the business sector in particular are being forced into action.

You don't need me to tell you the effect minicabs have had on our industry over the past 30 years and the lack of response to that effect by the majority of cabmen, due one would assume to the generally accepted cab trade malaise - apathy. But is it apathy or is it simply an inability to self motivate? Whilst driving a cab can become a pretty mundane occupation, I could never envisage Mr Roth, for one, ever being the type to say: *"The cab is just a workhorse, who cares about PGN, I get paid no matter where Joe Public takes me and as I'm answerable to no one, I needn't bath for a month and can go to work dressed in jock strap and slippers if I wish - am I bothered? I make a living, why change?"*

Fortunately Mr Roth **is** bothered by the environment, the general perception of the cab trade, the future of the cab trade and the drivers doing their bit to protect it. And I sincerely hope there are many within our ranks that think likewise. To those that are not bothered, perhaps the following might be of interest...

Most of you I'm sure will have read or heard about the effect on the plumbing industry in this country by the intake of Polish immigrants. Since 2004, official records show that 230,000 Poles have immigrated to the UK (the British governments original prediction being between 5,000 and 13,000 a year). What the unofficial figures are is anybody's guess and a phenomenal amount of these Polish nationals put plumbing as their means of employment. Personally, I have no particular view on the rights of immigrants choosing the UK to work in, but you don't need the brains of Einstein to realise the effect on any industry when a sudden influx of foreign labour is prepared to work for 50% or less of the normal going rate. Although in this instance, when the going rate is usually an arm and a leg just to change a washer, I cannot imagine many of those

Marketing Place

requiring a plumber complaining! Nor can I imagine many amongst the general public complaining if a similar situation affected the cab trade.

I mention Poles in particular because I recently saw an article supported by photos of a taxi knowledge school in Prague, and because of the growing interest in this school amongst their neighbours Poland, the company running this school is about to expand into that country. So what may you ask is so special about other countries having taxi knowledge schools? Well ordinarily, nothing, except in this case the knowledge is not of their local town or City - but in fact of London. Yes, apparently they are teaching the Knowledge of London in the Czech Republic and Poland! In the photograph was a class of well-dressed students, all wearing the obligatory white shirt and dark tie, emphasising the first strict rule that to be successful when driving a taxi in London - is to be of smart appearance plus fluency in the English language.

The average salary in Poland amongst adults is 460 (£316) a month, so it isn't difficult to see why they are so attracted to working in the UK and London in particular.

Industries suffering at the hands of immigrants is nothing new and will continue to happen. The fashion trade I was involved with for many years in which the vast majority of the workforce were Jewish, many of them being descendents of immigrants, was affected enormously by the surge of Asians in the early 70's and from which it never really recovered. In part, that was because the majority of those running the antiquated sweatshops were stuck in a time warp, very much like the cab trade and rather than meet the challenge brought about by the Asians and investing in modern equipment, raising their standards, working conditions and above all attitude, they were eventually forced out of business. I was in Germany at the time, living in Munich and later working in various towns and cities all the way up to the Baltic and saw first hand how successful the fashion trade can be when a proper attitude, investment and the determination to succeed is applied.

Mr Roth mentioned Asda selling two-piece suits for £19. These suits incidentally are made in Bangladesh. They are not exactly top quality and so not meant to last, but it is still a garment in which to look presentable. And as cheap as these suits are and an example of how there will always be competition whatever the product, there is a very large firm in Hong Kong that visits the UK every fortnight that will actually make you a hand made suit for £129 including a fitting and in a wide range of quality fabrics.

I mention this only because there are many amongst our members who appear to be oblivious to the fact that to be successful you have to compete. Be it on cost, quality or service, we no longer have a monopoly on the taxi industry. The only thing we appear to be

left with is tradition. With minicabs already double our size and constantly eating away at the practices once applicable to our vehicles only, how soon will it be before they are using bus lanes, carrying branding and picking up

With minicabs already double our size and constantly eating away at the practices once applicable to our vehicles only, how soon will it be before they are using bus lanes, carrying branding and picking up off the street?

off the street? And when that happens, what will the cab trade have been doing to protect their industry? The answer is zilch...

But that's the cab trade as a whole, a trade that has nobody to lead it. We, on the other hand, at DaC do have an advantage, because we work as a group all sharing a common objective, with technology, experienced hands-on management offering guidance and feedback on what's being demanded amongst the business sector.

We have clients who spend in excess of several million pounds a year on taxis. With that sort of expenditure, they have the right to expect more than just four wheels arriving outside their door. If those millions were spent on any other commodity, they would most certainly be expecting the highest quality and a discount. We don't give discounts, quite the opposite; we demand a compulsory surcharge. But is it deserved? Could it be visually improved? I think you all know it can, I believe you are all astute enough to know

what our members need to and can do to prove to our clients how much we care about their business. To those who don't, then I should remind you that there are an awful lot of big money men in London investing in all types of industries.

The PH industry for one is getting bigger and bigger, proof that it must be considered financially viable. So much so that how long will it be before the truly mega money boys start to take an interest? Let's just suppose a certain gentleman in SW3, who amongst his toys is a premiership football club and who has enough smash in his back pocket to pay off this country's national debt, decides he's had enough of petulant over-priced pansy footballers and hankers towards respectability along with a gong, bought or otherwise, by becoming a major player in one of the capitals oldest institutions? He decides to obtain by various persuasions known only to

Russian oligarchs, a renowned licensed radio taxi circuit with the largest account database of top blue chip companies and the most advanced dispatching technology. He inserts a management team of the most experienced in our trade, buys 10,000 unprinted TX4's and run on LPG fuel, plus several thousand or so Hybrid cars, all driven by English speaking, smartly dressed, courteous Polish immigrants.

If it were to ever happen, how long would it be before not just the radio taxi industry as we know it, but the cab trade in London as a whole would be consigned to history? Impossible, I hear you all say, pigs flying and all that. How many once said the same about a mediocre football team who had never won the league in 50 years, suddenly winning it two years on the trot...?

Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing
allent@dialacab.co.uk

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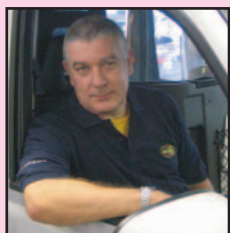
A recent survey of over 1000 motorists by breakdown specialist, Green Flag, has come to the startling conclusion that road rage affects eight in ten drivers, with one third admitting being affected by road rage at least once a week!

Road works, traffic jams and the general pace of everyday living puts people under all sorts of pressure in which even the normally calm, slow to anger individual can snap! There cannot be a DaC driver who has not experienced the irate *I'll miss my train /plane / meeting* passenger! With our usual professionalism, the DaC driver can smooth the situation with diplomacy and safe driving around the busy streets of London by being seen to make every effort to get the passenger to their destination on time.

In a home environment, it is called domestic violence, but out there on the streets the irate motorists' antics are referred to as road rage. We asked DaC drivers for their views...

Guy Gaunt (H24):

"Yes, I should think every taxi driver has experienced road rage in some form or another but I'm not the type to hit back, I'm too small! I might keep parallel to them on the road or not let them out, that sort of thing."



Bernie Silver (G8):

"It happens all the time, but I just ignore it and go about my own business otherwise I'd end up with a heart attack and that isn't very smart."



Theodore Cassano (G86):

"People cut me up or force their way out of side roads, but I don't take any notice. If they are violent I drive off and leave them alone, or maybe I'm tempted to take the number and mention it to my Sicilian 'friends' back in Italy...!"



Paul Churchill (A4):

"I have been driving a cab for 10 years now and yes, it does crop up from time to time. But the best thing is to just let it ride over you, other-



ROAD RAGE!

Do DaC Drivers Get it?

wise you'd have a heart attack by the time you're 40 - and I'm 35 now! I was once attacked while in a car by a lunatic wielding a wheel-brace, but thankfully it has not happened while driving a cab."

Terry Hatt (J88):

"Thankfully, I've never been assaulted, only the odd 'V' sign or verbal abuse. You see so much of it all the time that you have to learn to keep quiet and stay calm. Just ignore the idiots and stay cool."



Simon Wallis (M11):

"Yes, it was about two years ago. A courier pedal cyclist flew out from a side street right across the cab. I beeped him as a warning that I had almost hit him. He had a huge security chain, the sort of thing people use to lock motor cycles and he swung it at my door mirror, breaking the mirror and base from the cab door. I chased after him, but didn't catch him due to the heavy traffic. It cost me £170 to get the mirror repaired. Yes, I know about road rage all right..."



Alan Green (E52): We see it all the time between motorists, but cab drivers do not usually rise to the bait.

I do recall some years ago though, I was following an erratically driven car through Regents Park. There was traffic behind me and I was concerned at being shunted in the rear myself as every time the plonker in front touched the brakes, I had to respond. So when the opportunity arose, I roared past the idiot and gratefully thought I'd seen the last of him. When I stopped at the Gloucester Gate traffic lights, I was shocked to see a fist banging violently on my driver's window. It was the lunatic that I had earlier overtaken! He was red-faced and screaming with rage, repeatedly thumping the window and swearing at me. The few seconds at that red stop light seemed like an hour. His last words to me as I moved away on the green light were 'I'll meet you again in a dark alley sometime'. Incredibly, this moron had a



young child in the passenger seat, so goodness knows what sort of message that sent to the child. I later reported the incident to my local police station. The incident also proved testimony to the strength of LTI glass!"

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TAXI FARES INCREASE

Taxi fares are to increase by 3.2 per cent on 14 April, sending the price of a so-called average fare jumping 32p from £10.25 to £10.57 with Rate 3 seeing an average increase of around 40p on the current £12.57 night-time average.

The minimum fare remains at £2.20, which includes the 20p environmental charge introduced three years ago to encourage drivers to fit systems that meet the new green emissions guidelines. The fare will continue to rise in 20p units.

The additional £2 levy, which is added to journeys from Heathrow airport to destinations in greater London, will now also apply to journeys outside of the 33 boroughs. In addition, TfL is also making it easier to share a cab from Wimbledon tennis championships, just as is done at Paddington station and Buckingham Palace garden parties.

Ed Thompson, Director of Taxi and Private Hire at the PCO, said: "These new taxi fare levels take into account the growing costs of running a black cab. Taxi drivers are self employed, meaning they earn less if operating costs increase."

Mr Thompson added that the increase would mean London taxis continue to offer good value for money.

It is now compulsory to issue a receipt if required.

The latest TfL figures show that there are 24,678 licensed taxi drivers in London...

Call Sign

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Pedicabs and emissions...

With the controversial issue of pedicabs continuing, TfL have now decided to introduce a licensing system for them instead of making London streets safer without these tin metal death traps. I agree with the LTDA statement, which is well thought out - and with the crash test evidence, very convincing. I think we all agree that the *status quo* should have remained, however, when the LTDA took it upon themselves to speak "on behalf of the trade" I believe this issue was lost. Had the LTDA joined forces with the London Taxiboard - as explained by Brian Rice at our AGM - the outcome might have been very different.

Again we have seen in the pages of *Call Sign*, the differing arguments regards Cab emissions. Yes we are washing our dirty linen in public again and to our detriment. Surely whatever the issue, the arguing should be done behind closed doors and then once an agreed way forward is achieved, move onwards. Is compromise really such a difficult thing to achieve? Is there really much point in one or two trade reps speaking for all, when others are sidelined? Personally, my view was that the GLA Transport Committee just paid us lip service when really they knew all along they would get their own way against a weakened cab trade. There is a real possibility that PH will be allowed to use bus lanes and with our current situation, we will be in no fit state to do anything about it.

New Eurostar...

On the evening of Tuesday 13 November this year, Eurostar trains will roll into Waterloo International Station for the last time, bringing an end to 13 years of trains to and from Paris, Brussels and even EuroDisney. Eurostar services at St Pancras, under the new name **High Speed 1** replacing **Channel Tunnel Rail Link** (CTRL), will start the following morning. To their credit, the new line has been built under-budget and will include the new station at Ebbsfleet as well as the existing one at Ashford. Trains will run under the Thames near Dartford, then roughly alongside the A13 for a while before stopping at Stratford, the **Olympic Station**. The new high-speed line will cut 15 minutes off the time between London and Paris to 2hrs 15 minutes. North Kent commuters are also set to benefit because the line will eventually run domestic services as well as HS1 services.

Personally, I liked the quick access and proximity of Waterloo to the City with St Pancras being a more difficult place to get into even when traffic is good! The right turn from Euston Road into Pancras Road will reopen, but with traffic skirting around the Congestion Charge zone, the journey time will be longer and more difficult than previously.

It seems a very long time ago that a fresh faced, 23 year old Royal Mail driver - me - drove through the front arches at St Pancras at 4am to take the night mail back to Bromley after meeting the TPOs (travelling post offices). How things change! In a world where traffic congestion and emissions are frowned upon, I always thought it bizarre that all of Royal mails distribution network went on the road. Not long ago, all of London's main line stations used to have extremely busy bag handling sections, up the ramp at London Bridge being one of them. Are there any ex-posties - now cab drivers - who

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



remember the M&T - disbanded by Royal Mail for regularly bringing them to a standstill?

East Euro car washes!

Recently, London has seen an influx of Eastern Europeans looking for work and the cab trade has definitely benefited. The number of hand car washes in the capital has increased 4-fold in as many years. I'm proud of my cab and like cleaning it myself, but have given in to the ease and timesaving available if someone else does it! Having tried most of the cab washes in the central area, the one in Chamber Street E1 is, in my opinion, the best value. They don't rush and the

wash is always good. It costs £7 in-and-out with wheel dressing and inside wheelchair step washed at no extra charge. Very handy for night drivers or if you get your cab soiled, because it's 24 hours.

Concierge and ComCab...

Since taking on the Citigroup account at Canary Wharf, occasionally when picking up from there I have spoken to passengers about how the services of DaC compares with ComCab. All have mentioned that the best thing is the "one stop shop" which is Concierge and how it makes their life so much easier. When we won this account, I found it pretty rich of ComCab to have a go at DaC and our Chairman, accusing him of putting "more work into cars." Let's face facts, the real reason they were upset was because we invested in new technology and beat them to it. Our challenge now is to improve the Concierge system and stay ahead of the game, because I can guarantee that when this account comes up for tender again, ComCab will have their own version of Concierge all ready to go, promising to put "work into cars," into car companies they already own...

Richard Potter (T51)

Call Sign tests the Stoplock Strongbox

...now passed by the PCO

The opportunistic theft of takings from taxi drivers - especially in the E14 area - is on the increase and police forces are advising cab drivers to keep the bulk of their takings secure with only sufficient cash for change being readily available.

But how can cash be protected? The Public Carriage Office has recently approved a solution - the *Stoplock Strongbox*, manufactured by Stoplock, the market leaders in vehicle security. *Stoplock Strongbox* is a tough metal safe that can be secured to any fixed point in a vehicle using a security cable that locks into the Strongbox itself. It has PCO approval for use at three points in a licensed taxi - in the boot or under or behind the driver's seat, depending on model, where it can keep large sums of money secure and out of sight.

Stoplock Strongbox has an anodised aluminium casing, with a slide out inner tray made of tough steel. The tray is large enough to easily hold a day's takings and can also be used to store other valuables such as Sat-Nav units or radio facia when the vehicle is left unattended.

Call Sign tested out the *Stoplock Strongbox* on four Dial-a-Cab drivers. All agreed that they would feel safe leaving their money locked in it while leaving the cab unattended. Three of them preferred leaving the box in the boot with the fourth feeling quite happy with the box behind his seat.

Phineas John (N47) was one of the first drivers to be attacked and robbed in E14. He



DaC Drivers believe the stoplock Strongbox helps improve security for driver possessions and it is now passed by the PCO

suffered a broken finger in the attack and admitted to *Call Sign* that he still felt nervous. However, he said following the test period, he would feel that anything he left in the *Stoplock Strongbox* while leaving the cab, would still be there on his return.

Colin Jenkins (Y22) also said that he felt the strongbox provided protection for personal possessions left unattended in the cab. He preferred leaving it in the boot for easiness.

The *Stoplock Strongbox* is available from Halfords and leading in-car accessory retailers. It is priced at around £40...

Dial-a-Cab have announced 2006 as their most successful year since first trading in 1953! Call Sign, asked Chairman Brian Rice for his thoughts on the achievement. He said:

"We are absolutely delighted with the figures. Our turnover of almost £43million was up by more than £5.5million over the previous year, representing an increase of over 15% - an achievement that everybody associated with Dial-a-Cab should be justly proud of. We returned just under £1million of surplus and depreciated just over £900,000 making our bottom line before depreciation just under £2million, which for a taxi organisation boasting the lowest subscription rates for its members by a mile, is a truly excellent achievement."

Brian continued: "We are quite used to making a surplus at DaC, in fact we have made one in each of my 10 years as Chairman. But whilst I've watched our latest set of record figures growing throughout the year, seeing them together in our 2006 Annual Report gave me a real buzz and hopefully that buzz has also been felt by all our subscribers and staff, because it has been a real team effort!"

"This past year has seen the Society bring in new in-house built systems of distributing work that our competitors can only envy and attempt to play catch-up with. I have no doubt in my mind that at this moment in time, not only is DaC the number one radio taxi organisation in London, but also the whole of the UK."

The Chairman was asked about DaC's job distribution engine (*Concierge*). The system caused some controversy when first built and then put into service by DaC because it involved clients selecting which private hire and taxi companies they wanted to use - although naturally, Dial-a-Cab had to be one of them!

Brian explained: "First of all, it's important to realise that those PH companies were the ones that our account holders were already using. We didn't select them and in all probability those companies are getting much the same trips as they were before, the only difference being that the car is ordered via the one system - Concierge."

He continued: "Concierge is not a dispatching system; it is a stand-alone job distribution engine with Dial-a-Cab being another vendor on it - and needless to say when you see how much extra revenue this JDE has made the Society and drivers, it's one we are very proud of."

And how much is that extra revenue? "Well 2006 saw a total of £10.4million turnover go through Concierge of which £5.3million went to 6 car companies and one licensed Taxi Company and £5.1million in its entirety came to DaC. We also estimate that we attracted over £2million of extra income thanks to Concierge and in addition to that, we also get a service charge for every job that is distributed via Concierge in addition to our normal service charge."

And is Concierge likely to continue its current financial position? "No," said Brian smiling, "I have no doubt that it will increase and

Another Record Surplus for Dial-a-Cab!



Brian tells Call Sign of another record year

anticipate that the £10.4million turnover I wrote of earlier, will rise to between £15 and £20million by the end of the current financial year. In addition to the extra revenue it brings to the organisation itself and to our drivers, I also consider that our clients that currently use the system, are less likely to want to look elsewhere because they like Concierge so much."

Brian ended by saying: "I'm delighted that our financial position has now enabled us to expand even further and we will be moving into our new, larger premises by the end of the first quarter of this year when we will have the largest taxi call centre within the UK. This will bring our members even more work and

we intend continuing to expand with more mobiles as our workload increases. Our clients already know that DaC is by far the most technologically advanced taxi system in the UK where they can book their cabs online or via Concierge, or if they so choose to be answered quickly by a calltaker who because we have remained in London, will answer with a voice they can understand and one who understands London.

"Of course," said Brian finally, "you can have all these things and the clients may love them, but the bottom line is that when they order a taxi, one arrives at their door in a reasonable time. We believe that Dial-a-Cab has it all and we are justifiably proud of it..."

COLLETTE NOW RUNS BELL & HORNS

Those green cab shelters have over the years, become an ever-rarer haven for taxi drivers to stop and eat at modest prices without the worry about parking problems. Their history goes back to the time when cabmen sat high up at the back of their horse-drawn chariots in all weathers and the shelter was their only refuge from the cold.

Today, dotted around London, there are just a handful of these 'rest rooms' left, maintained by charitable institutions and run by a dedicated group of hosts and hostesses. So they deserve all our support before they too, like the Dodo, become extinct.

One such sanctuary from the pressures of traffic and the pangs of hunger is the Thurloe Place shelter (sometimes known as the Bell and Horns), recently taken over by Collette who runs the place like a 5-star cordon bleu restaurant, having honed her culinary skills under the watchful eyes of Pat and Julie who themselves run the Warwick Ave bijou.

Situated in the heart of Knightsbridge and close to several cab ranks, the shelter is ideally placed for a quick bite before getting back to work from the busy South Kensington Rank, the Sloane Rangers abode or of course, the top people's shop!

Collette offers a warm welcome and even warmer food, so when you're in the area pop in and try for yourself...



Collette at work in the shelter

Continued from February...

We have sent each other stuffed animals, a bear and a doggie so that we can hug them when we go to bed at night and won't feel too lonely. I also sent him a golden key on a string, which I told him was the key to my heart!

Sam is the owner-operator of a real London taxi. He works for a company called **Dial-a-Cab** and I was very impressed when I found out their drivers must go through an intensive three years of schooling in order to operate the licensed taxicabs in London. Only 30% of those taking this course actually pass! Sam must be very smart! It doesn't exist here in the US.

That's how I came to know about Dial-a-Cab when I sent them a letter saying how impressed I was with their operation. Alan Fisher, the editor of **Call Sign** wanted to print my letter in the magazine, so he sent me an email asking if that was ok with me. Of course I said yes. Sam is very happy with Dial-a-Cab, he says it's the leading taxicab company in London. I even managed to get a DaC logo to put onto my car!

For Sam and I, we are the first thing we think of in the morning and the last thing we think of at night. Sam even gave me a song by Irish singer Daniel O'Donnell called *you are the first thing that I think of in the morning*. Sam sent me the whole tape. I listen to it all the time and it makes me smile...

Sam and I are now planning to meet in October of this year in New York City. We thought it would be best for us to meet the first time somewhere in between London and California with no friends or family to get in

This is the true love story between 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 her story exactly as she sent it several years ago...

L♥ve On the Internet



Jenny waits for the day when she is to meet Sam

our way. If everything goes ok, which I know in my heart it will, then he will come to visit me here in California and I will go to see him in London. I'm so excited! I can hardly wait to meet him in person, I hope he won't be disappointed when he sees me. No, of course he won't!

After we meet, we'll take it from there, but no matter what happens, at the end we will always be the very best of friends and soul mates. We have promised each other that. I can't speak for Sam, but I know I will always keep my promise to him no matter what. After all, a promise is a promise. I will always be here for him, if it's not as a lover - then as his friend.

Sam is loving, sensitive, romantic, caring, very intelligent and very funny as well, we are always making each other laugh. I think that laughter is very important in a relationship. I am crazy about this man, I have never "met" anybody like him before.

In one way the Internet is a great way to meet someone because you really get to see that person's soul through his words. We could always tell if the other one was happy or not, just by the sound of our voices and even by our words if we happened to be chatting online. We could always feel each other's moods. That's how close we became. So yes, I certainly believe in soul mates and I feel very lucky that I have found mine.

We have counted the months, the weeks, the days and the minutes till October 1998 – and the day we are to meet in person is finally here. Sam and I were going to finally meet face to face...

Continued next month

DACS ACCOUNTANT HITS 50!



Congratulations from all at Dial-a-Cab and **Call Sign** to the Society's Financial Accountant, Warren Smith, who recently celebrated his fiftieth birthday by coming into work as usual!



*Yep, he's right!
we can't tell the
difference...*

Warren told us that he has hardly changed from schoolboy to adult – so we put him to the test!

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With so much recent publicity concerning licensed taxi drivers allegedly being reported for touting, **Call Sign** was invited for our second visit to join the **Transport Operational Command Unit's** (TOCU) anti-tout squad to see for ourselves what was happening on the streets.

Our reporter was given access to observe how the anti-touting teams operate and we also saw how PH cars - proudly displaying their stickers - blatantly flout the law by stopping of their own accord to pick up would-be passengers standing by the roadside.

On the Friday evening we went out, several teams of dedicated police officers were deployed at various 'hot-spots' where touting is rife and simply stood at the kerbside as if they were looking for transportation to another destination. It didn't take long before an elderly red Nissan car eased into the kerb alongside the officers and wound down his nearside window to speak to the plain-clothed police.

This was a clear-cut case of touting and the driver - wearing some form of I.D. tag around his neck - was instantly arrested and driven off to the custody suite of Charing Cross police station! He displayed a look of utter surprise! Our reporter noted that this particular car did not have any PH stickers displayed, so we await the outcome of the individuals' court appearance from Sgt. Dave Hillson, who has said he will update **Call Sign** in due course.

During the evening, we observed numerous cars - the majority of them with PH stickers - stop for the 'pretend punters', only then to be summarily arrested for touting and whisked off to Charing Cross nick.

Our reporter specifically looked to see whether the police showed any indication of provocation or intent, showing out with arm or hand gestures for example, but they simply stood at the kerbside, seemingly looking for a cab, so if a car or for that matter a taxi stopped for them and made himself available, he / she is touting - end of story!

And yes, in fact our reporter did see a taxi in the distance - his 'for hire' light out - stop for a couple that got into the cab. The 'hire sign' flickered on momentarily as the meter was engaged - so it wasn't a radio job - and he drove off into the night. Whether it was a booked job is unclear, but the cab did not display radio circuit logos, so it is possible that he too was playing 'the high game'. To pretend that it's illegal for PH but ok for us would be wrong.

With all the anti-tout teams now fully occupied having arrested a number of car touts, Sgt. Hillson suggested our reporter join another team, also from TOCU, touring the streets looking for cars in breach of Public Hire offences - perhaps with dodgy or tampered stickers - and something **Call Sign** is continually being sent photographic images of by our drivers. At no time were taxis or taxi drivers mentioned as a target.

So Call Sign joined Sgt. Paul and PC Keith in their van looking for suspicious cars and it wasn't very long before we found one...

We were cruising through Soho and PC Keith decided he didn't like the look of a little Mercedes Benz in front of us.

"Can't put my finger on why," he said when **Call Sign** asked, "call it a Coppers Nose!"

The two officers got out to chat with the driver who by now was standing at the kerbside, his passengers remaining seated in the back of his car. PC Keith spoke to the driver, while Sgt.

EXCLUSIVE! Call Sign Goes on Patrol With the Tout Squad



Anti-tout squad officers question a driver who it turns out is wanted for outstanding court fines

Paul had a few words with the passengers. The story was that the driver was a friend of the passengers and he was giving them a lift home after a night out. All seemed straightforward enough until PC Keith decided to run a check on the driver. The police van's radio crackled with a perfect description of the driver, who was standing casually by the side of the car.

"Warrant out for arrest by the Court for non-payment of fines," the lady dispatcher croaked.

Before our reporter had blinked in amazement, the driver found himself handcuffed and placed under arrest. Sgt. Paul re-interviewed the passengers sitting in the car, who stuck to their original story, but eventually realised they would have to find alternative transport home as the car driver was ushered into the police van. Under caution, the driver admitted he had picked up the people from a club and had agreed to take them home for money.

With our prisoner sitting comfortably in the back of the police van, we headed back to CX police station. En route, we spied a car with PH stickers stopped at the kerbside talking to a couple of young girls. It was obvious he was chatting to get them into the car and Sgt. Paul, pulling his van alongside the car.

"Excuse me Sir, could you please move on," he told the driver firmly who then took off like a scalded cat, leaving the two teenagers standing bewildered on the pavement.

Sgt. Paul then spoke to the two girls: "Never enter a car you don't know," he advised the girls in a sort of fatherly tone, "always get a proper taxi to take you home safely or catch

the night bus." They nodded. Hopefully they will accept his advice - not to give us more work, but for their own safety. The two officers told our reporter how they often stop unlicensed or unsafe vehicles and will flag down a passing taxi to take the otherwise stranded car passengers to their destination.

"Our main concern is for the safety of the public and we usually get co-operation from the taxi drivers when we explain the situation and ask them to take punters onto their destination," PC Keith added.

To sum up an eventful night with the anti-tout squad, numerous car drivers were arrested for illegal touting. More worrying was that many of those cars had PCO PH stickers on their windows, suggesting an air of legality to mislead the public. God only knows what will happen if PH is allowed to use bus lanes - everyone will get one! Call Sign would be happy to publish a PCO / TfL response.

One driver was re-apprehended after a court warrant had been issued for his arrest, but the tout squad stopped no taxis, nor did any taxi drivers stop beside them, which would indeed have been touting - not to mention embarrassing for us if they had not had their For Hire on!

Our view? The tout squad have a never-ending job out there, which they do well. Are they after licensed taxis? Not particularly, but if you flout the law under their nose, it's their job to pull you up, but percentage-wise, PH hugely outnumber us when it comes to being nicked.

In February 2005, TV viewers watching a program called *The Dragons' Den* in which a team of judges considered the viability of new business schemes, heard **Cabtvate** MD Mark Greenhalgh told that his new business of placing TV screens in the back of taxis "would never work." He later said that the TV experience had been sheer hell.

"In a single hour," he said, "I was reduced to a sweating and stuttering wreck and felt as if my entire business plan had been unravelled and left in pieces on the studio floor."

His Cabtvate system had programmes running on timed loops depending on the length of the average taxi journey and involved installing a flat screen mounted onto the partition behind the driver's seat, with the content being remotely updated as many times a day as required. It could also be updated when the taxi was passing a specific location – film trailers when passing a cinema for example or shopping ads while passing a department store.

Many taxi drivers in Scotland signed up – the company were based in Edinburgh – but only around 20 in London where most who wanted a TV system had already signed up or gone onto the waiting list of KPM's successful **Cabvision**.

But unlike Cabvision, which charges the driver nothing and financially rewards them via direct debit every three months, Cabtvate signed up drivers to an agreement where they paid an incredulous £3500 at £88.50 + VAT each month (around £104) for four years via a reputable finance company, with the apparent assurance that they would receive back around £190 per month after advertisers paid. Now they have no programmes but have to still pay the 4 years of £104.

One **Dial-a-Cab** driver who signed up, **Mark Lane (N97)**, told **Call Sign**: "It sounds silly now when you compare it to Cabvision, but it seemed like a good investment at the time – getting back almost twice what you paid each month. But looking at the sums involved, it wasn't really that much more than what Cabvision pays its drivers without the risk. We should have questioned why an LCD screen cost £3500!"

Now Cabtvate has been put into the hands of the liquidators. Ken Pattullo of Manchester-based *Begbies Traynor* said that Cabtvate had been in financial difficulties for some time and that it was their job to investigate the company's affairs. Some of those affairs involved Cabtvate running into cash flow difficulties. He added: "We are focused on whether any of the company's assets, which are mainly intangible, have any value at all. The prospects don't look very good."

Last March, Cabtvate claimed it had fitted its 100th screen and had also broken through £1m of turnover barrier. Mark Greenhalgh said at the time that he "knew we had a winning idea and a winning product and I have been proved right."

By October 2006, Greenhalgh told Scotland's Sunday Herald that Cabtvate had broken into the Manchester area as well as Edinburgh and Glasgow and had won 350

Liquidators called in to Cabtvate...



Scottish driver Graham Nicoll with his now worthless Cabtvate screen which has cost him £3500

advance orders from London cabs worth "thousands of pounds." He forecast a £1.2m turnover in the year to March, rising to £3.4m this year, with licences to operate in six other English cities. He was also said to be keen to expand internationally and claimed to be in talks with two cab operators in South Africa and one in the Netherlands. None of it came to fruition.

The finance director of Cabtvate, Iain Mackenzie, resigned on December 4, while cab drivers were still being signed up for the four-year agreements. Another director, Sara MacLean, resigned on January 7 whilst remaining directors Mark Greenhalgh and James Neilson petitioned for liquidation on January 22.

Signed up and 5 days later £3500 went down the drain...

One of the 50 Glasgow taxi drivers who signed up was Graham Nicholl. He was persuaded to sign up on November 23, but did not have the screen installed until December 20. He was asked on January 5 by the finance company if he was happy to go ahead. He had no reason to say no and agreed, but just five days later he heard that Cabtvate had

"...gone bust. Now I'm legged for four years," he said.

Accounts of the company, which was based in Forth Street, Edinburgh, show that in its last financial year it had an asset deficiency of £375,000 after seeing losses more than double from £466,000 to £957,000. Amounts owing to creditors had risen from £312,000 to £483,000 during the year. Secured creditors were then owed £171,000, but the final debt to principal backer Bank of Scotland was said to be around £300,000.

Lancashire based **Haydock Finance**, who did the finance for over 100 of the cabbies – including the few from Dial-a-Cab – said through director John Blanchflower:

"We do have sympathy with the position the drivers are in, but our message to them at the moment is that they have a leasing agreement with us which is divorced from any contract which they may or may not have had with Cabtvate. They should keep the agreement up to date while the dust settles. If somebody picks the business up, it all runs ahead. If that doesn't happen and you are not in arrears, we will probably come to some mutually acceptable settlement process."

Ken Pattullo said that prospects for creditors still looked poor, but there had been industry suggestions that a buyer might be found for Cabtvate's software and system.

Call Sign also spoke to a London solicitor. He told us that the agreement did seem binding and that the finance company were unlikely to have known that Cabtvate were in such a bad financial state. He added that the drivers would not be recognised as consumers under the terms of the *Consumer Credit Act* but were acting as businesses. He agreed that a negotiated agreement with a reduced amount could be the best and possibly only way out and also warned that the matter could well be dealt with under Scottish law, which differed from English...

SADNESS FOR TWO DAC DRIVERS

With the death of Ivan Gold...

Call Sign has to report a double-sadness with the passing of Ivan Gold just as he was approaching his 80th birthday. Ivan was the father of Dial-a-Cab driver Barry Gold (S52) and also the brother to long-term subscriber Sid Gold (E20).

To Ivan's wife Ida, his three children and to their families we send the sympathy of all at DaC and the traditional Jewish greeting of 'long life'...

CALL SIGN AT THE M

Along with 700

Sunday 28 January turned out to be a beautiful sunny and mild day. Had it been torrential rain, it wouldn't have mattered to the record 700+ children attending the 36th annual London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children's **Mad Hatters Ball** at the Great Room of the **Grosvenor House**, because they were determined they were going to enjoy themselves. And boy, didn't they just, wolfing down enough food in one day to have kept the hotel going for a year, then taking to the dance floor and staying there all afternoon to enjoy the entertainment.

LTFUC Treasurer **Gerry Dunn (S84)** told *Call Sign*: "The day is really hard work, but that's nothing compared to the work that goes on behind the scenes to get it all together. Then you look at the happy kid's faces and you think to yourself that it was worth every minute!"

The Fund's Chairman, **David Lessman (D19)**, agreed and told us with a sense of pride: "When you watch those young and often disadvantaged children enjoying themselves so much, any hard work involved suddenly feels irrelevant."

Introduced by **Dave Davis**, on the bill were jailhouse rocker **Elvis Shmelvis** and some amazing **Strictly Come Dancing** kids who wowed all the parents and helpers not just their with skill, but also their amazing outfits. The Spidermen incarnate **Bournemouth Carnival Band** were again there playing their brilliant swing music and getting everyone to join in even though their leader had been rushed into hospital just prior to the event. The band certainly never let him down.

Also popping in was former WBC Heavyweight champion **Frank Bruno**. One of our most popular boxers ever, Frank won 40 of his 45 contests and although only scheduled for a flying visit, along with **Elvis Shmelvis** ended up staying all afternoon, signing autographs and posing for photos with the kids.

Also there were three young ladies called **Envy**, who did a live set which included their latest recording, *Money*. They went down a storm - not just with the



Wife Brenda leaves the room and Brian pulls!



Kids join The Cheeky Girls on stage



The Deputy Mayor of Westminster with David Lessman, Mike Son and Bill Tyzack (C06)



Gabriela prefers David Lessman to fiancé Lembit Opik – but which one is Gabriela?

MAD HATTERS BALL

screaming kids!

kids, but also with the sudden surge of male helpers pushing their way down to the front!

Lots of other celebs popped in including members of the **Eastenders** cast. When their music played the kids all dashed to the front. So much for adult soaps!

Topping the bill for their fifth year at the Mad Hatters - and also singing live - were **The Cheeky girls**. Monica and Gabriela did a 30-minute set while getting a huge pop from the kids as they sang all their hits and amazingly, every one of the kids seemingly knowing the words with several jumping up on stage to join them! No bouncers at this gig! Having put on a few ounces, the girls looked and sounded great.

Call Sign asked Gabriela why her new finance, flamboyant Lib Dem MP **Lembit Opik**, wasn't there? Smiling and in excellent English, she told us she preferred David Lessman!

That led to the Dave Davis disco and last but not least, a visit to the Grotto room where every child came away with a bag of goodies.

Wearing a pair of floppy ears, Deputy Lord Mayor of Westminster, **Jan Prendergast**, told **Call Sign** that the whole afternoon had been amazing. "People just don't realise..." she said.

Also enjoying the afternoon with wife Brenda and daughter Carla, DaC Chairman **Brian Rice** summed it all up when telling **Call Sign**: "You come here knowing that it's going to be a wonderful afternoon - and it always ends up even better!"

On behalf of the LTFUC, **Call Sign** was asked to thank everyone who gave their time and of course, not forgetting the Grosvenor House who donate the Great Room every year with very little publicity other than a lot of very grateful kids...



Elvis Shmelvis and fan practice autograph signing!



The kids enjoy Envy singing their soon-to-be released single – Money



Brian's daughter Carla with Eastenders' Deano (Matt di Angelo)

Wearing his other hat as a Board member of the *GoSkills* council, Dial-a-Cab Chairman Brian Rice recently accepted an invitation to take an early look at Heathrow's new Terminal 5 along with Peter Huntington, the *GoSkills* Chief Executive. Brian told *Call Sign*:

"GoSkills thought I'd be a good representative to view the new terminal 5 because of my obvious links with licensed taxi drivers, a trade that work there regularly."

No one else from the taxi trade was invited – although Steve Wright, Chairman of the Private Hire Car Association and a *GoSkills* Stakeholder also accepted the invitation.

Brian went on to say that the official opening is scheduled for March 2008, with current estimates claiming the new terminal will be able to handle around 30million passengers a year and size-wise, could hold 50 theoretical full-sized football pitches! It has a length of 400 metres, width of 200metres and a plunged depth of 20 metres into the ground. The completed building will take up four floors!

Brian added:

"It looks as though the whole of British Airways – currently using terminals 1 and 4 - will be moving operations to T5. There will be a rank for 12 taxis with a buffer rank for a further 18 taxis, which will be fed from the feeder park via CCTV."

"When terminal Five is completed, next on the agenda will be another development known as *Heathrow East*, which will take the place of the current terminal Two and Queens Building."

The trip lasted around 4.5 hours and Brian described it as very interesting.

The DaC Chairman was invited to join the Board of *GoSkills* in 2006. The organisation is the recognised authority for businesses working in the UK passenger transport sector. Its aim is to develop the skills and status of passenger transport including taxis, buses, trains, aviation and others. *GoSkills*, in consultation with other operators, acts as a conduit advising on how the skills issues affecting industries can best be tackled by the sector. An employer-led government-backed organisation, *GoSkills* assists employers and operators in improving their business performance through people and skills. Its team of business advisers work across the UK and provides advice on recruitment and retention, employee development plans, developing individual skills, identifying specific training solutions and access to funding for them.



Brian Rice and Peter Huntington and the almost-completed terminal 5



GOLFERS!



**10% discount for all
Dial-a-Cab drivers!**

*Why not take advantage of our March madness at
the Hertfordshire Golf & Country Club?*

*Come down and try out this amazing golf package on our
superb par 70 parkland course and you will be treated to:*

- Coffee and a Bacon Roll
- 18 Holes golf
- AND a fast snack lunch from our varied menu!

All this for only ~~£25.00~~ £22.50 per person!

**This amazing offer is valid
any weekday from**

**1st to 31st March 2007
(Minimum 4 players)**

**To book call now and speak to our sales coordinators
Elaine Or Mick On 01992 466666 ext 233**

Nostalgia ain't what it used to be...

Last month I officially became a member of the G.O.M. Club. The first rule of entry is that you must be of a certain age, this year's qualifying year being the year of your birth as 1947. Other rules include being nostalgic, to see things as you remember them and always through rose tinted glasses. You must definitely not be a today person. There is no website, as technology is something we have not yet come to terms with.

It seemed as though no sooner you learned one thing - ie how to transfer your records onto an audiotape - the manufacturers stop producing both items and made something called a CD. Now we have iPods, whatever they are. As for computers themselves, they are beyond comprehension with the idea that to switch them off, you actually have to push *start* and the only floppy disc I ever had was when I melted my parent's old records and made plastic vases out of them. Apart from receiving and sending emails, which are usually old jokes, what good is a computer? Pen and paper with ring binder folders marked "contents" are so much easier to manage, but whenever you put them onto a computer, they seem to disappear.

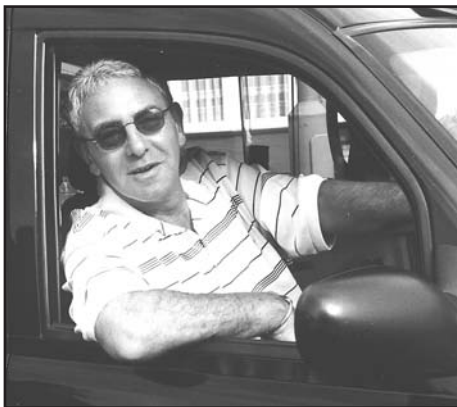
It just seems that nostalgia ain't what it used to be. Remember when you went to the pictures, saw not just two films, but a newsreel as well as a travel documentary - not to mention the trailers. Not only that, but when the National Anthem was played at the end, everyone stood to attention, as opposed to today when it isn't even played.

Variety programmes on the TV were just that, variety - from novelty animal acts to jugglers to a top-of-the-bill singing star. Today's equivalent would be Z-list celebrities sitting in a mock house, shouting at each other and the whole world asking who should be evicted. For those who did not have the new fangled dangled entertainment box in the corner of the room, a wireless was a must, with the Light programme being just that, light entertainment and the Home service being a pre-runner to Radios 3 and 4.

Even the money was different, we had pounds, shillings and pence, not to mention half crowns, threepenny bits, tanners and my favourite, the ten bob note. Nowadays we have just pounds and pence and yet still some shop assistants can't work out the change needed!

Transport was different then as well. No bendy buses to clog up the streets (although trolley buses did a good job when the poles came adrift) and there were no yellow or red lines to decorate the streets either. A taxi was something taken once a year to take you to the station for your yearly holiday to the sea-side. Not many people travelled abroad

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



The Views of a Grumpy Old Man

then and a steam train usually took you to your destination. Most Londoners spent their holidays at Southend or Brighton, maybe even Margate, with the evenings spent at either the Kursaal or Dreamland. Topless pictures in the newspapers were unheard of and the nearest thing to sexy magazines was *Health and Efficiency*, a supposed health book for naturists - so parents who forbade us looking told us!

And woe betide the girl who became pregnant "out of wedlock." She was usually sent to live with an aunt miles away for the duration. This seems strange now,

as most families never moved but two turnings away from each other, but such was the shame brought upon the family. How times have changed when now it is the norm for children not to have two parents that are married to each other...!

Flying green tax ...

A new green tax was introduced recently, which according to Prudence, will help to save the planet. It involves charging passengers to fly on aircraft, but at different rates. Short haul flights are not as expensive as long haul flights, but first class and business class passengers pay more than economy class. This has nothing to do with the service received, but allegedly for the emissions sent out by the aircraft. Why or how someone in first class uses up more is beyond me. We are not talking leg-room here, but emissions from the plane! Someone once said that you can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time. Gordon sure is trying! As sure as eggs are eggs, this is a tax that will go to the Chancellor to help plug the hole that he has created - and not the hole in the ozone layer. There is more chance of Elvis doing a farewell concert at the new Wembley stadium than this money going towards helping to save the planet. Heaven help us all if he should inherit the job from Tone. Will the last person leaving the island, please turn the lights out.

Chas Kissin (P99J)

THINKING OF HOLIDAYING IN FLORIDA?

15% discount on our luxury villa for Dial-a-Cab drivers!



If you are thinking of going to Florida for a holiday, why not take up the opportunity of this luxury 4 bedroom, 3 bathroom villa available for rent. The Villa was built 2 years ago and has its own swimming pool. It is spacious and luxuriously equipped for your perfect holiday.

Further details and virtual tour, www.cubberleyvilla.com or call 07752 330263

Please note that for all bookings made through Call Sign, quote that as a reference when making your booking and you can deduct 15% from the advertised price!

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

Compliance Officers Report

AGM and a smear attack...

I must begin with a big *thank you* to the 1122 subscribers who voted for me at this year's AGM. That still leaves about 1000 I apparently failed to convince I've done a good job as a Board Member over the past two years! Or does it mean that many of the drivers who fell foul of the complaints procedure over the past two years failed to vote for me? If that is the case, does it mean that I am very competent in the job as Compliance Officer, therefore if they can get me out of the job then they can get in a much weaker person? If you get a weaker person, then you also get more crooked subscribers taking an unfair advantage over the majority of our subscribers who are honest.

There was also the most vicious smear attack I have ever witnessed in my 30+ years on ODRTS and it was no surprise that they directed it at me. One of the culprits admitted his involvement in supplying and distributing leaflets to another Board Member. I am used to this type of campaign against me, but they also involved the Treasurer of Dial-a-Dream, a children's charity of which I was a founder many years ago.

The sad outcome is that because of this ex-subscriber, the Treasurer has decided to relinquish his position on the charity – and who can blame him? So it is not just my colleagues on the charity and myself that will suffer, it will also be the children who are suffering with terminal illnesses.

These children look for us to make a last wish in their short lives become a reality, but now we will probably have to divert funds to pay for accountancy support that we used to get free. Thank you to that ex-subscriber – for nothing...

This same ex-subscriber also wrote to the PCO to get my bill revoked because he claimed I had undergone major heart surgery. But I hadn't; I had preventative surgery to my arteries. I have now agreed with the PCO to undertake the Bruce Protocol (treadmill test).

When I last wrote about my surgery, I had never seen any paperwork in the 30+ years that I have held a badge, telling me what the PCO expected me to do after treatment. But after I'd spoken to them, a printed sheet suddenly appeared in my post. Surely every badge holder should have already been sent this sheet of paper so they can know the rules they are supposed to adhere to when having any of this modern treatment?

I cannot name this ex-subscriber at the moment as legal proceedings are in place against him at this time, but when the time is right I will allow you the information.

One of the seconders of another candidate who failed to gain a position on the BoM this year also tried a smear campaign at a recent past AGM. At that AGM he went



to the lectern and stated that I owned a minicab firm in opposition to Dial-a-Cab before scuttling off to the back of the hall.

Yes, I do own a company that used to supply chauffeurs to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. I still hold the Royal Warrant for this prestigious position. I could have at any time joined with ODRTS and you would have been the only taxi company in the world able to carry the Royal Crest. But with these types of subscribers on Dial-a-Cab, I could not take the risk.

So the persons who suffer are the children who are dying of incurable diseases and the honest subscribers who work with pride on Dial-a-Cab.

Over the years I have built up a reputation with our subscribers, other circuits and the PCO. They consider that we have the fairest – albeit the strictest – complaint's system in the taxi trade. But there have been three occasions during my time as a Board Member when the Board has instructed another member to take over the complaint's department. During those times, the faith in the department dropped and when I returned I had an uphill struggle to restore that faith and goodwill.

New drivers I have spoken to when they have come in for their training, have told me that they are happy to get onto our circuit because we run the fairest system. Rumour has it that some drivers on other circuits constantly manage to get choice journeys, but on Dial-a-Cab we scrutinise patterns much more closely, so that cheats are wheedled out.

Sir and Madam?

I read with great interest **David Kupler's** letter, which you can view in the Mailshot pages of this magazine. I have known David, his mother, father and sister since they worked for us in Shirland Road; sadly some have now passed on. He posed me a question in that letter that I should have guessed could not be an easily answered one! In the situation with your bladder full and a rude client, David wants to know how would I have handled the situation!

Well David, after all the years you have

spent driving a taxi, do not take anything for granted because sods law says it will go wrong and in your case, you could end up with wet pants! If the call of nature is there, answer it, do not take a chance. It could have been that the passenger came straight out saying: "I'm sorry, but I've missed my train – could you go straight to Chelmsford in a hurry." What would you have done then?

David, I know you can be the most awkward person in the world, but I also know that you can be charming and diplomatic. So why lower your standards to the level of this ignorant and arrogant little person? Act like the intelligent person I know you are and don't lower those standards to the gutter. Even if you want to insult them, still end it with Sir or Madam. You deflate their ego. Don't tell me you have never used that option when being stopped by the constabulary for a misdemeanour?

I remember a time many years back when Dave Kupler used to take his Old English sheepdog to work, sitting him in the luggage compartment. One night he was dropping off a cash ride at Shepherds Bush when the punter did a runner. Quick as a flash, David opened the luggage door and told Boris to get him! Off shot Boris into the alleyway by the side of the Shepherds Bush Theatre. Then three yards in he stopped, up went his back leg and he relieved himself as the bilker sped off. Seems like Dave and his dog both wait too long to go to the toilet and it can cause problems!

Are we doing enough?

I am continually sending out complaint letters to drivers who are not completing the minimum number of 40 data-despatched credit trips per month. Street Credit Card pickups do not get included in the count, just trips that clients phone us for at Dial-a-Cab.

I do not pick on a subscriber because he/she has not completed 40 jobs for one month; I have built up a record of all the subscribers' jobs that count month-by-month since January 2005. That is, of course, if the subscriber was on the circuit in January 2005.

That means that if a driver has been on since the beginning of my records and not completed the minimum amount of jobs, they could have a total of 25 complaints to answer. It is one complaint for each month, as the official rulebook states you have to complete the 40 every month. We get drivers who have a week off due to a holiday or overhaul during the month and they say due to that, they could not reach the minimum. But on the other hand we have many drivers who complete the 40 jobs in one week, if it were not for these drivers we

Continued on page 25

Camden museum 75th anniversary

The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall visited the Jewish Museum in Camden Town on Tuesday 13 February to help mark the Museum's 75th Anniversary.

Prince Charles has become Patron of the Jewish Museum in support of the celebrations, this being his first patronage of a Jewish organisation and his first visit to the Museum's flagship location.

The Prince and Princess toured the Museum's galleries, including the History Gallery and the Religion Gallery, which houses one of the world's finest collections of Jewish ceremonial art and awarded *Designated* status by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council for its outstanding national importance. They also saw the special exhibition *Champion of the Child - Janusz Korczak*, which tells the inspiring story of a pioneering Polish Jewish doctor, writer and educator who was a leading advocate for children's rights and devoted himself to their needs and plight, regardless of nationality and religion.

The royal pair met local schoolchildren as well as hearing about the Museum's exciting Development Project, for which it has been awarded a Development grant and an approval in principle totalling £4.2 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project will triple the space available in Camden Town, combining the Finchley museum with the existing site and creating enlarged exhibition galleries, new education facilities, a state-of-the-art auditorium, hands-on displays for children and a café.

Prince Charles Becomes Patron to Jewish Museum



Museum curator Jennifer Marin shows the Royal couple a fine example of a silver Hanukkah lamp. Photo courtesy The Jewish Museum

The expanded museum, due to open in 2009, will provide London with a world-class, vibrant, forward-looking museum of regional, national and international significance.

Rickie Burman, Director of the Jewish Museum, told **Call Sign**:

"We are honoured and privileged that His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales has most

graciously agreed to be our Patron for this anniversary year and delighted that both he and the Duchess of Cornwall were able to visit The Jewish Museum. It is a welcome recognition of the Museum's importance in highlighting the heritage of one of Britain's oldest minority communities and in contributing to interfaith understanding and dialogue."

Compliance Officers Report

continued from page 24

would have a lot more scrubs and accounts in jeopardy.

I Love our country...

Some months ago, I wrote an article about the lowering of standards in England due to the influx of persons being allowed in via the EU or illegally. There were just a few letters, mainly from people who do nothing to assist the Society or were on complaint and who wanted to class me as a racist. But I had many more letters and phone calls from subscribers, subscriber's wives and other readers of **Call Sign** agreeing with my views. I have even met some of those who made comments either way about my views and I think they now know the real me. I do not want to carry on in that vein as it scares the life out of the Editor! I'll just say that problems that have happened since the articles came out, have proved me correct.

Even as I write this article (17 February), another person has just been shot and the street in Homerton ended up like the American mid-west. This was but 2 miles away from us! The Home Secretary has now announced more prisons are soon to be built.

There is also an increase in the penalty for using a mobile phone whilst in charge of a motor vehicle - £60 and 3 points on your licence. This is still not enough, how many times have you seen mothers on the phone

while driving - and with young children in the car! Not to mention drivers of 38-ton lorries also holding their phone...

In the past month, we've had Judges who wanted to deport rapists and murderers, but couldn't because their hands were legally tied. We had adults claiming to be minors to try to get lower sentences with authorities being unable to get proof either way of their age. There were also minors murdered in their own homes - they may have had a criminal record, but did they deserve to die?

Do you think that politicians also read what I put into writing in Call Sign magazine, because they are now agreeing with me?

We also have a Chancellor of the Exchequer who wants to send £500million to Africa to combat malaria. Excuse me, but doesn't that money belongs to the English taxpayer? Maybe he has forgotten that our young and old people are going into hospital for treatment and it is a lottery as to if they catch MRSA. Why? Because the English hospitals are filthy. Mr Brown, please sort out our country first. And then we have the Transport Minister who wants to charge you for every mile you drive, do you not both think that the English are already too highly taxed and the money needs to be used to

improve the lives of the English? Oh, I am sorry, you are both from Scotland, which governs its own country!

Argos the final episode

Anyone who subscribes to *Which* magazine, may be surprised to see an article reporting on my successful tussle with Argos. It should be in the March issue and after you have read the article, you can use the photograph to keep the children away from the fire...

A subscriber's humour

A subscriber sent me a text message on Valentine's Day explaining his present to his wife. It read: "I bought my wife a lovely bag and belt for a Valentine's Days gift and now the Hoover works great."

Speaking of Valentines Day, I sent my wife three cards on Tuesday, 13 February, posted at the corner of City Road and Shepherdess Walk. This is 2 miles from my home. We are still waiting for any of them to arrive at my house! I must thank the Post Office for their abysmal service and the problems it caused in my household...

At a meeting arranged by the CPS and subsequently by Board member Tom Whitbread, **Call Sign** participated in a discussion between the Dial-a-Cab Complaints Officer and two representatives of the CPS. We were asked not to use their names for professional reasons and have acceded to that request.

There were two main points on the table. We were interested in getting more help for the series of attacks on licensed taxi drivers in the E14 area of London, while the CPS were interested in ensuring taxi drivers called as witness to court attended so that cases did not get unnecessarily dismissed.

The Crown Prosecution Service is the government department that prosecutes most of the criminal cases in England and Wales following investigation by the police. That includes motoring offences. The CPS have to decide whether there is sufficient evidence and whether it is in the public interest to prosecute a case in the courts.

The CPS representatives at the meeting were part of a special team – the only one in the country that specialised in prosecutions against the police. As the meeting went on, the CPS request became clearer as it transpired that several taxi drivers had made complaints against members of the police. As DaC drivers can imagine, if you have a legitimate complaint against one or several members of the police force, then getting action against those you believe to have committed an offence against you as a victim or even a witness, might not be easy. However, the CPS claim that they try to make sure that should you be in the position where you have levied a complaint against the police or are needed as a witness for a prosecution, they will assist you in your evidence – even if that means giving your evidence behind a screen, where relevant.

The CPS told us of a recent intended prosecution where a taxi driver promised to give evidence against a passenger who had verbally attacked and abused him and in the process also damaged his taxi. After the driver had reported the attack to the police, it turned out that the passenger was also a serving police officer and that he had gone on to verbally abuse an engineer at the local railway station where police caught up with him. He had been drinking.

The CPS decided that besides anything else, as a police officer he should have known better. In addition, his attack had been on a public servant ie a licensed taxi driver going around on his lawful business and another transport representative at the railway station. The intended prosecution would also have been to get compensation for the damage to the taxi and also to help instil confidence that even if the person in the wrong is a police officer, then justice will still need to be seen to be done.

However although they had spoken to the taxi driver at the second court hearing prior to the actual trial reaching court, on the day that he was really needed, the cabbie never turned up.

"We tried phoning his mobile," said the CPS representative, "we phoned his home address and even got local police to go round to his house, but he wasn't there and as hard as we tried, we couldn't make contact with him."

She went on to add: "A conviction was obtained separately regarding the engineer's attack and he received compensation, but

Call Sign Meets the Crown Prosecution Service



The male half of the CPS visitors with Tom Whitbread

although we had put a lot of work into the case involving the taxi driver and were very hopeful of him receiving compensation not just for the abuse, but also for the physical damage to his taxi, we were left with no alternative but to drop the case.

"We could have obtained a witness summons – something we often use in cases involving domestic violence where we believe a witness might be too afraid to attend court, but we didn't do it in the case of the taxi driver, as we had no information about any fears. His decision not to attend was also a shame because there was a good chance that he could have been reimbursed for his losses. The defendant turned up and it was decided that as the taxi driver hadn't (he actually also missed the first hearing, but attended the second), the cost involved in arranging a further case as against the relatively small amounts involved, could not be justified. The magistrate then took the decision to dismiss the case irrespective of the CPS application to apply for an adjournment."

Tom Whitbread asked whether the driver might have been afraid to turn up, but the CPS rep responded that the officer would not have known where the driver lived and even though Tom reiterated that as a police officer, he could have had some sway with TfL and possibly obtained the info, the CPS thought that scenario to be very unlikely.

Ending this part of the discussion, the CPS representative added: "Please be assured, to all **Call Sign** readers and drivers on DaC – and any other taxi drivers reading this – we do take complaints of this nature against police officers seriously, but if you do not then turn up in court, it is unlikely that any result will go in your favour."

And E14...

Whilst we were at the meeting and unbeknown to us, three separate terminal messages were being sent out: "6 kids wearing hoods waiting for you as you exit the Limehouse Link by Jardine Rd (H038)," followed by "2 kids on bikes mugging cab drivers by Narrow St and The Highway (P16)" and the most worrying of all at 17.26 and just after our meeting had ended: "Driver just been mugged at gunpoint at Leamouth Rd junction with Commercial Rd around E14." Unsurprisingly in the heat of the moment, that driver obviously mixed up Commercial Rd with East India Dock Rd. The following Friday had the shocker: *2 black men holding up cab drivers at Britannia Village (Silvertown Way E16).*

Call Sign pointed out that to the CPS that we had already been given one phone number which should have enabled us to get instant access to a police officer familiar with the E14 situation should any incident suddenly come to light, however, there was never any response to it other than a voicemail message.

Whilst the two CPS representatives were very concerned to hear about our problems in E14, there wasn't a great deal they could actually do at the meeting, however they promised to get some contacts for Dial-a-Cab to work with and within a day they sent us two contact details – one for the police and another from the CPS in that area.

"We need to get a feeling of confidence back into the taxi trade," the CPS rep told us, "you deserve the protection that you are entitled to."

The meeting ended after 90 minutes with both sides feeling that some progress had been made...

The Dial-a-Cab computer has drawn the winners of the drivers Christmas incentive scheme.

Last Christmas, Dial-a-Cab gave away a brand new 'gold' spec taxi to **Richard Barford (R39)** whilst **Terry Goldsmith's (R74)** won 6 weeks of luxury holidays with Golden Years Holidays PLC, so how could DaC top that?

Well this year they did just that by offering 3 Peugeot 307 1.6 'New S' models for the first 3 drivers selected automatically by the computer – provided they had completed their minimum of 40 jobs per month!

Drivers were offered points for coverage with extra points for various times of the day when coverage was more difficult. The winners were **Stephen Pluck (M17)**, **Leon Singer (D92)** and **Mark Thomas (A67)**. All were naturally delighted...

Stephen Pluck has been on DaC four years but has never won any competitions anywhere before! "When I was told I'd won, I thought it was a wind-up," he told *Call Sign*, "but I have to believe it now!" I still feel thrilled and it was also at a time when I was thinking of buying a new car too. I think the idea of an incentive is brilliant. It certainly encouraged me to do more work than I would have otherwise done, but I never thought I'd win!"

Leon Singer has been on DaC for many years and told *Call Sign* that he liked the idea of an incentive. "It gives DaC the high profile that they deserve," he said.

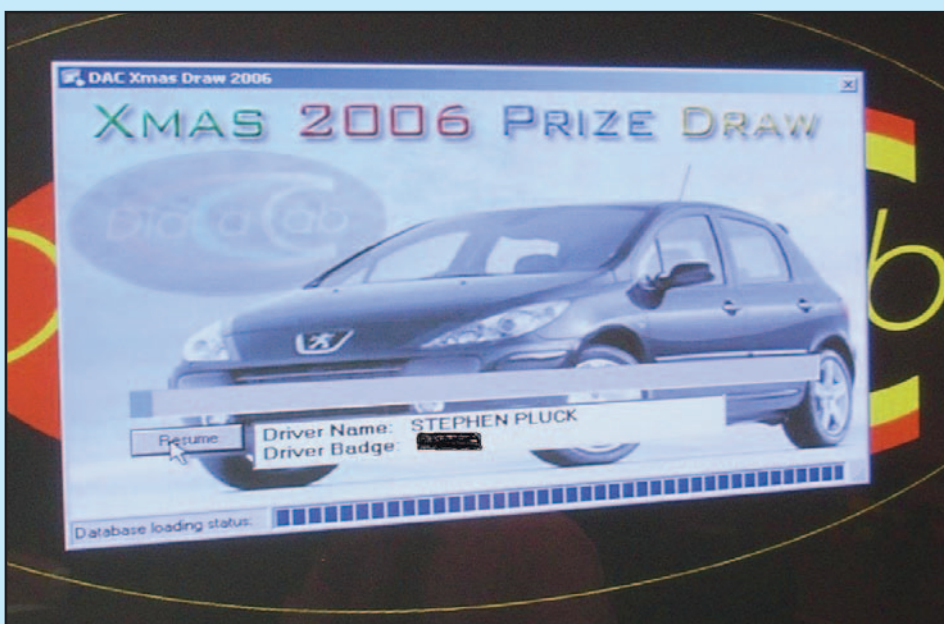
Mark Thomas was previously on Radio Taxis but left there 3 years ago. "They still send me post," he told us, "including a survey asking me which circuit I preferred! Well sorry guys, but I'm afraid you don't hold a candle to DaC!"

And the car? "It was rather funny," he

Driver Incentive Winners Collect Cars!



3 lucky winners with their cars



How the winning draw showed up on the Boardroom Computer

said, "I'd forgotten about the incentive because between 9pm and 3am I only do credit work anyway. Then one day I had a call from Brian Rice and as I'd never spoken to him before, I wondered if I'd done something wrong. When he said I had won a car, I thought it was someone pretending to be him! But it's absolutely brilliant to

have a win like this. DaC was always the best circuit anyway - that's why everyone wants to come here - but now...!"

One amazing coincidence. Two of the three drivers have their cars serviced at Stanway Engineering in Chingford – just a tip for next year! Well done to all three winners...

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Ivor Belkin Golden wedding Anniversary



Brian Rice and Keith Cain present Ivor with a bottle of bubbly to celebrate his and wife Estelle's Golden Wedding

On a summer day in September 1961, a young man was making his debut as a dispatcher in the ODRTS 'front room' overlooking the not-quite-so-busy Pentonville Road. He had previously filled in for the odd shift when the regular dispatcher went sick, but now he was full-time.

"I wasn't too sure if I'd enjoy being full-time," **Ivor Belkin (C97)** told **Call Sign** in 2001 when celebrating 40 years of working for ODRTS and Dial-a-Cab, "but I seem to have stuck it out!"

But since that day, Ivor has rarely missed his Saturday shift – even on Saturday 10 February 2007, the date when he and his lovely wife Estelle celebrated their Golden Anniversary!

"Someone has to do it," Ivor told us with a smile!

Happily, the occasion didn't pass unnoticed! Firstly, DaC Chairman Brian Rice and Call Centre Manager Keith Cain surprised Ivor with a celebratory bottle of Champagne, whilst on the following Sunday week, Estelle and Ivor were the centre of attraction at a family party held in their honour.

And how does Ivor feel about Estelle after 50 years?

"I love her as much as ever," he told us...

The congratulations of everyone at Dial-a-Cab go to Estelle and Ivor...

DaC's Will runs for the kids!

Dial-a-Cab driver **Will Jones (B38)** is now into his third month of training for his first attempt at the *2007 Flora London Marathon* on 22 April. He tried to get into the list of runners for last year's event but failed. Although around 40,000 runners take part, even more have their applications rejected. But this year, Will made it!

"I was absolutely thrilled when I got my acceptance letter," Will told **Call Sign**. **"I will be running for the UK-based disabled children's charity KIDS.ORG and running in the Pingu team along with my best mate, Neil Richardson. We're aiming for the very optimistic time of 4 hrs - although realistically I'd be happy with anything under 4½ hours!"**

Will added that the charity was based in Berners Road behind the Business Design Centre in Islington **"...which makes it as close a charity to DaC as you can get!"**

Call Sign is sponsoring Will's effort in the 26-mile race and he asked us to mention to DaC drivers and staff that if you would like to help him raise money for this very worthy cause by sponsoring his efforts, then call him on **07957 906166** and leave your name and how much you'd like to sponsor.

"Any sponsorship anyone can give will be greatly appreciated no matter how small," said Will. **"Not only is it a really worthy cause, but it is also a local charity."**

Kids is a national charity that provides an extensive range of services to over 6,000



disabled children aged 0-19 and their families in 5 regions across England. *Kids* is unique because they work with children with all types of disabilities. The charity provides services that focus on the child's educational, social, developmental and emotional needs while also providing vital support to their parents, carers and siblings. No other organisation provides such an extensive range of services for disabled children, young people and their families. Their goal is to enable disabled children and young people to fulfill their potential, realise their hopes and contribute as full members of society, as well as supporting their inclusion into mainstream activities and facilities.

Will Jones and the Pingu team consist of 42 runners who between them are hoping to raise over £50,000 to support *Kids'* work with disabled children, young people and their families...

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.

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

DaC drivers give their view of England and Steve McLaren...

This month I gauge your feelings about England's poor performance against Spain last month and look forward to the Euro Qualifiers against Israel and Andorra under Steve McLaren.

First is **Tom Quigley (Y33)**. "Losing to Spain in a friendly is not the concern, as they have one of the strongest squads in European football. Their coach, Aragones, seems to have learnt from his World Cup mistakes in team selection and tactics, putting out a team which played to their strengths of good ball retention across the field, aligned with constant movement from the attacking pair which drew England's centre backs out of position. Look at Woodgate in the right back position for their goal! McLaren set the tone before the game started, moaning that he had only 88 Premier players to choose from! If you take out the 4 or 5 goalkeepers, that still leaves 7 squads of Premier League players!

A coach should earn his money by picking what he thinks is the best squad available, adopt tactics and instil motivation to make them play at their best. I do not believe McLaren has the persona or the tactical nous to change things around during a game. England looked like they wanted to score a goal by luck and never sustained any pressure on the Spanish to make things happen. As for the future, I fear that Israel is a developing nation with good technique and will gain a great deal from this game. Andorra? You should be able to put your mortgage on an England win, but I wouldn't put mine!"

Next is **John Biddle (D73)**. "I never believed that McLaren was the right man for the England job. Having served under Sven for many years, it seems to me that he is making the same mistakes as Sven. He believes the 11 best players make the best team; this puts players in a comfort zone. He believes that good players can play anywhere, but at international level they can't. Greece won Euro 2004 and Italy won 2006 World Cup, but both teams were not regarded as the best in the competitions, yet both were well organised and each player knew his job. I believe you have to look at what makes your best players tick at club level. Steven Gerrard is a cert because his strength is power and pace, but he needs to know that when charging forward he is not leaving massive gaps behind, so surely the best anchorman we have is Owen Hargreaves.

Wayne Rooney is another definite. Look who he plays with at Man United - Saha or Larsson. Both are very clever and calm in front of goal and can hold the ball up for Rooney, who plays in the hole behind. The best I've seen is Darren Bent. I think you should always play the players 'in form'. My team would be, James, G.Neville, Terry, Ferdinand, Bridge, Lennon, Hargreaves, Gerrard, Downing, Rooney and Bent. I'm not convinced about Lennon or Downing, but you must have players who are comfortable in the position they're playing. Will we qualify? Probably, we normally do, but it won't be because we have the right coach!"

Last is **Tony Boosey (W19)**. "Why pick a squad that is tried and tested? It's a friendly! Why aren't we trying potential England players to see if they can step up to the plate? What's the use of playing Phil Neville; he's had his day

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

Russell's Hall of Footie



and is *old school*. We never seem to pick players that are performing consistently for their club. We're picking players who are supposed to be tried and tested, yet don't deliver! We're supposed to have the best talent in the world, but put them together and they can't play as a team. This is our biggest problem and has been for a while. We should build a midfield around Gerrard. Omit Lampard; he's not good enough on the World stage. He's an average player who gets by in a good team, who happen to have a good anchorman in Makele. Put Gerrard in with Hargreaves as the anchor and stick with it, because our other problem is these players are

not playing together enough to get used to each other's game. So we must experiment in friendlies and pick a tried and tested team for the important games. Another problem we have is that we are too predictable. The English game is too easy to defend against. Playing with Crouch up front encourages the 'long ball' game and is easy to defend against. If you cut out the service from the flanks, the only option we have is a long ball from the back. Crouch should be part of *Plan B* if all else fails. McLaren is not the man to lead, he is not tactically aware and should have left with Eriksson. Our best option would have been Harry Redknapp, but as previous FAs have done, they overlooked the best man for the job. They've always taken a 'yes' man and this is no exception. The games with Israel and Andorra? We'll scrape through, as usual, play crap football that's boring to watch and when we get to the finals, a quarter final place beckons and that's our limit on the big stage."

By the way, if you fancy watching a REAL game of football, you can come along and watch Fairway Vets take on the Met Police on 10th March at 2.30 at the Met Police Sports ground, Chigwell Road. I'll be playing, so it should be a good laugh. Oh - and mines a laager!

Russell Hall (G44)

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

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DaC Wembley on a Roll!



DaC driver Lee Pearce is hoping that his recent clean sheets for DaC-Wembley will continue!

After a puzzling 6 – 0 thrashing at Reading Town – of which **DaC-Wembley** goalkeeper and Dial-a-Cab driver **Lee Pearce** told **Call Sign** three were well offside and a fourth was a disputed penalty, player / coach **Ian Bates** gave the team some home truths. Being the best footballing team in the *Combined Counties Premier League* and just because they had defeated the runaway leaders, Chipstead, didn't mean that other teams would just roll over! The result? Three clean sheets in the next 3 matches in which the forwards scored 7 led by on-loan striker, **Takrim Ake** who knocked in three of them including one amazing 35 yard volley! DaC-Wembley may miss this Japanese striker when – and if – he returns to Hendon.

Still in second place behind Chipstead, DaC-Wembley play **Merstham** for a place in the League Cup semi finals later this month. A report next issue...

Another Spurs Supporter Arrives on the Scene!



L-R Harry, Martin, Amanda and new arrival Alfie Jack

Martin Hizer (M47) and wife / Guv'nor **Amanda** celebrated the birth of new son **Alfie Jack Hizer** on January 30th at the Portland Hospital, thanks to all of the extra credit work coming out from Dial-a-Cab account clients over the Xmas period! More seriously, Martin asked **Call Sign** to thank BUPA.

Alfie, like his 5-year old brother Harry, is set to be another depressed Spurs fan and because of this, some of Martin's friends have threatened to report him to the NSPCC!

Both mother and child are doing well and yes, Martin did nick a few jobs in between hospital visits!

Martin would like to thank the Holiday Inn in Carburton Street for the day-long use of their rank and the wardens of Westminster for being too dumb to spot an opportunity!

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The Anniversary Page

The First London Taxi Meter

March 15, 2007 marks the 100th birthday of the introduction of meters in London taxis. On that date in 1907, according to Phil Warren: "500 Renault taxis, the largest fleet of motor vehicles anywhere at that time assembled, left the premises of the General Cab Company Ltd on the corner of Brixton and Camberwell New Road in South London, to ply for hire in the streets of the capital."

The GCC had been ready to launch their fleet of French-built Renaults for some time, having experimented with a meter-equipped taxi in 1906. However, the company was unwilling to go ahead until the government mandated compulsory meters. In 1906 a select committee at the House of Commons recommended that taximeters of the *Horo-Kilometric* type be made compulsory on motor cabs and optional on horse cabs. The provision was drafted into a Bill which, though briefly held up in the House of Lords, passed into law on August 28, 1907.

The Bill gave the Home Secretary powers to set fares, but on the supposition that existing legislation already gave him that power, he issued an order on March 15, 1907 setting the fare at 8d for the first mile and 2d for each additional quarter mile. This order enabled the GCC to launch their fleet of taxis and they did so on the very day the order was issued...

Later it was revealed that Renaults did not meet Scotland Yard's 1906 Conditions of Fitness for motor cabs, conditions which required a major redesign that effectively delayed new cab production by British manufacturers. When this was pointed out to Scotland Yard's Assistant Commissioner, he blandly replied that the 500 Renaults were "experimental" and that it was in the public interest to give them a trial.

One major impact of the meters was to change the way drivers were paid. Instead of renting cabs and keeping whatever they took over and above the rental charge, drivers were now paid by commission, which in 1912 was set at 25%.

The select committee had recommended a fare rate of one shilling a mile, but the Home Secretary's order allowed only 8d a mile - the first fare increase since the 6d a mile rate had been set in 1869. This was a severe blow to the GCC and other cab companies who soon found themselves in financial difficulties.

When later Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, denied a fare increase in 1911, the owners demanded that the "extras" (which drivers had hitherto pocketed as their right) be included in the taxi's total take and subjected to the commission rate. The extras were surcharges for luggage



Pic left: Growlers galore around Piccadilly Circus as the 19th Century came to an end - their time with no meters was also about to end...

Mile Index, a large clock face with the equivalent of hour and minute hands pointing to miles and fractions of miles, was demonstrated on a *Growler* in 1847, but neither it nor the *Kilometric Register* - patented in 1858 - won favour with London cabbies.

In 1899, the *Taxameter Syndicate* equipped six han-

som cabs with the new meters and stationed them outside the Hotel Cecil along the Strand (now Shell House). The experiment lasted for less than two years, largely due to the opposition of the Cab Drivers' Union, which denounced the meter as a "German toy" and declared that anyone driving a metered cab was a blackleg!

Unlike these early efforts, the successful introduction of the taximeter in 1907 was a truly revolutionary event. Its lasting impact on the London cab trade can be seen in any modern taxi. And while the cabby or passenger of 1907 might be baffled by the everyday tools of today's Dial-a-Cab driver - the radio, the computerised dispatch system, the mobile phone - he or she would likely have no trouble identifying the 2007 descendent of that durable piece of 1907 technology.

Norman Beattie

Sources: Philip Warren: *The History of the London Cab Trade from 1600 to the Present Day* (London Taxi Trade Promotions, 1995). G.N. Georgano: *A History of the London Taxicab* (New York: Drake Publishers Inc., 1973).

and additional passengers beyond the first two. The demand arose from the fact that the new meters could record those extras and enable owners to estimate the surcharges as amounting to £50,000 per year for London's taxis.

On October 31, 1911, a National Cab Company driver named Bryant was suspended for refusing to turn over 4d in extras. The same day, 600 drivers went out on strike and by the time both sides agreed to arbitration on November 23, 15,000 drivers had stopped work! The strike was settled when arbitrators ruled that the extras belonged to the drivers.

The modern meter was perfected in 1891 by W.G.Bruhn of Hamburg, who was soon supplying them to cab companies in Berlin, Paris, Vienna and Stockholm. Cab owners were naturally interested in getting an accurate picture of earnings, but drivers saw the meters as a threat to their incomes and independence. A posse of irate drivers ambushed Bruhn at Frankfurt-am-Main and showed their displeasure by tossing him into the river!

Meters had actually been installed in London cabs long before 1907. The *Patent*

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All you need to know about the 2006 DaC AGM

Sunday 11 February 2007 saw the 2006 Dial-a-Cab AGM held again at the Brewery in Chiswell Street.

What follows are not the official minutes, but an unofficial record of the meeting as captured by Call Sign Editor, Alan Fisher. It is not a full record and neither should it be taken as including every word said or indeed the exact wording spoken. A brief Editor's estimation of the attendance put it at 118 – almost identical to last year (116). Around 40 had not used their postal ballots and were voting on the day. There were no rule changes or propositions.

Some paragraph grammar has been sacrificed in order to make the long report as compact as possible.

The meeting opened at 11.00 with Chairman **Brian Rice** asking for the traditional one-minute silence to remember those members who had passed away during the past 12 months. Approval for the presence of a sound engineer and Mike Tovey of DaC Accountants Chantrey Vellacott was given.



Approval of the minutes of the 2005 AGM

Matters arising:

Grant Davis (L39) queried an item where he claimed that something he had said regarding the previous year regarding Concierge hadn't been put into the Minutes. The query regarded whether DaC telephonists decided what a "long journey" was. Brian Rice explained how the system worked saying that it was the client who decided what type of journeys would go in cars and which would go in taxis. Grant asked why a tape recording he had made of his conversation with a DaC calltaker had not been entered into the minutes? Brian replied that the sound engineer had probably been unable to copy it due to the poor quality. To laughs, Brian criticised Grant's "terrible American accent!"



With no further matters arising, Brian admitted to there being an error that no one had noticed with the Minutes claiming that a proposition had fallen when it had, in fact, passed.

Members voted to accept the minutes 1660 for...35 against.

To receive the Chairman's Report and Financial Statement

First to question Brian Rice on his End of Year Statement was **Ron McCartan (H26)**. He said that the report had been "excellent so far as I am concerned," but he would have liked to have seen more mention of drivers and staff in addition to clients. Brian agreed but added that what he had meant was that a company could only be successful if it kept its clients happy. Ron went on to query another part of the report where the Chairman talks about competitors running their own car companies and asked whether Brian was insinuating that if the Board considered it necessary to start their own car side to the business, that they would just go ahead and do it? Brian put Ron's mind at rest by saying that there was no way the BoM would ever take a decision like that without first fully consulting with the membership. Ron ended by claiming to be putting a point for another subscriber who felt that the photos of Board members within the report could be perceived as a subliminal hint towards voting and giving the impression that these (the outgoing Board) were the only real candidates for election. He wondered whether other members standing could be given space in future End of Year Reports? Brian explained that the Report was prepared long before the closing date for election candidates.

Next up was **Darryl Cox (T33)** who reiterated Ron's concern regarding the Chairman's mention of the competition and their car companies. He asked whether Brian "consulting" with members meant an EGM? Brian replied that it did but also explained that in 1996, an EGM gave the Board permission to look into having our own car company with DaC members driving the cars. He added that if a scenario arose where it was felt a car company was needed and if the cars were to be driven by non-DaC drivers – as he suspected



would be the case – then an EGM would be called. Darryl then spoke about Brian's terminology in **Call Sign** referring to 2006 as the busiest year in our history and suggested that 1989 had been busier. Brian reiterated that 2006 had been our busiest year ever in terms of turnover beating our previous highest year of 2001 by £300,000. Brian reminded everyone of the huge downturn that took place over the following years – even though we still made surpluses in those intervening years – caused by foot and mouth disease, 9/11 and then the Iraq war. Since then, he added, we have gradually clawed our way back culminating in last year's record turnover. Darryl claimed that money returned per pound of subscription in 2001 was more than last year, but Brian came back to say that he was referring to turnover which had increased by over 15% on 2006 and that so far as the first quarter of this year was concerned, we were already 19% up on that 15%. Darryl and Brian then exchanged views on what a Mutual Trading Society should consider as success followed by DaC's policy on taking new drivers, which Brian said was unaltered from previous years ie we take more drivers when we have more work and we currently had a lot. Darryl pointed out that there was no longer a waiting list to get onto DaC and Brian responded that our competitors were finding it difficult to get drivers, because they all wanted to come to DaC. He added that DaC were now the largest central London fleet and to a round of applause he told members that when you drove through the City at night, all you could see were DaC taxis. Darryl then asked whether it was true that we were recruiting 'yellow badge' drivers? Brian said that even though our rules didn't forbid it, there was no way we would do it and added that he was personally against any such idea. He added that although there was nothing to stop us starting a suburban fleet, going by others experiences, it didn't appear to be a viable prospect as you were almost totally going to rely on TaxiCard work.

Darryl also asked about the increase in staff costs and Brian replied that those costs had increased because as we became busier, we needed more staff but added that he was pleased to report that those costs had risen less (14.08%) than the increase in work (15.1%). Darryl then asked about total costs for the new building and Brian told members that the total came to £5million including refurbishment. He added, to more applause, that we paid cash for the building! To laughs, Brian added that the new building came with planning permission to build 36 new apartments but that DaC had no intention of taking up the option. However, he added that should they change their minds, then he (Brian) was

All you need to know about the 2006 DaC AGM

having the Penthouse suite! Following a further question, Brian said that we were unsure what we would be doing with Brunswick House but hoped to move at 0200 on Good Friday morning. Darryl ended by asking what our current bank balance was and was told that it was in excess of £1million.

Long-time subscriber **Brian Spiro (S90)** was next up. He spoke of Concierge, which he said he agreed with and that drivers should give it 100% support. However, he went on to wonder what the future held so far as what he called "our political overlords" were concerned. He said that we were at the mercy of Ken Livingstone and politicians. He asked Brian for his view and Brian responded by saying that he agreed and spoke of John Griffin (Addison Lee MD) who wanted radio out of taxis, which he said should be for public hire only. Brian went on to say that he was 100% against making the Knowledge easier and speaking about SGS and the apparent two overhauls a year for taxis, said that he was concerned that like overhauls, the KoL would also be outsourced. Brian also said that he was hopeful that now a new administration was entrenched at the PCO, that we could convince them to work with us. He considered that our business is likely to be extremely buoyant at least up to 2012 and ended his reply by saying that his report had been upbeat and he didn't want to spoil it by writing about possible problems, although he agreed with Brian Spiro's concerns. He then gave his view on the Corporation of London and parking with the Chairman saying that Mike Son and he had met with CoL and they were beginning to realise that if they weren't careful, many of the companies concerned would consider moving if the CoL made their lives too difficult.

The only lady to speak on the day was **Mary Leaming (C44)** who claimed to feel excluded because the Chairman kept referring to the members as "gentlemen." Brian held his hands up and apologised! Mary added that even with Brian's reclassification of her gender, she wanted to congratulate the BoM on the huge amount of work they had brought into DaC.

Paul Tully (Y40) was next up and said that whilst Concierge was a fact and it would be pointless to discuss its rights and wrongs, he queried as to whether it should have been brought in without a vote from the membership and mentioned that our rules forbade us working with PH. Brian replied that our rules forbade us from operating a PH company without the membership deciding, but didn't mention anything about managing the credit

account side of some PH companies, which is what we were doing. Paul then spoke about the 1996 EGM and the wording concerning the operation of cars and as to whether it gave the Board permission to look into it or to go ahead should they want to. Brian said that it was February 18 1996 and that it gave permission to the Board to go ahead even though they decided not to.

Tony Lawyer (C51) was last up in this section and spoke about a proposition he had put forward last year re new rulebooks being printed every time a new rule was passed. Brian replied that every time a new rule was passed, the FSA were notified. Tony then queried why his proposition had fallen by a substantial majority yet three months later, the Board brought in a new book? Brian replied that it was just coincidence and that a new rulebook was generally brought in when there were several rules to add. So far as the occasional single alteration was concerned, the Board have an appendix stapled to the rear of the rulebook until such time as there are several and they consider a reprint to be needed. Brian added that had been the Society's policy "since time immemorial."

That ended questions on the Chairman's report

To receive the Auditor's Report via Mike Tovey

Mike Tovey gave the Auditor's report on behalf of Chantrey Vellacott, of which he is a Senior Partner.

He raised smiles when saying that as he had been around DaC for so long that perhaps he should be allocated a call sign! He then went through the report before asking for questions.

First to take the opportunity to question Mike was Darryl Cox (T33) who asked a question regarding member's loans and a change in wording. The answer was that the wording change came about due to a change in Financial Reporting Standards. Darryl then asked what 'tangible assets' would consist of? In an interesting reply, Mike explained that tangible would normally mean something you could touch ie the building, furniture etc whereas 'intangible' would be the reverse ie, you couldn't touch it – goodwill for example. He then spoke of an example



of an exception such as a piece of software that perhaps you couldn't touch, but which could then be an important part of a piece of hardware - which of course you could touch! Darryl then said that since the introduction of Concierge in 2004, we had spent in the region of £864,000 on it as against having been told that it cost £24,000. Mike replied that although he had no paperwork with him regarding Concierge costings, he did recollect the figure of £24,000 to be correct and that the other amount quoted (£864,000) would have contained "all sorts of other stuff such as radios, terminals, new building developments and computers etc." He went on to add that in his opinion there was "nothing unusual in the spending that the questioner referred to for a business of your size."

Darryl ended by asking Mike for his view on whether Concierge was self-financing? Mike called it a "no-brainer," claiming that DaC had earned far more on Concierge than anybody could possibly have contemplated before they started building it – adding that was his personal opinion and not that as an auditor.

Joe Brazil (K16) then claimed to have a "very quick question" before staying on the lectern for just over 7 minutes! He began by asking Mike why some figures didn't tally and Mike again explained about the reclassification and added that the figures in question were certainly a permanent capital part of DaC. Joe then asked about a decrease in net cash inflow from operating activities. Mike pointed out the substantial amount owed to us by clients as against the previous year when less was owed. That was purely because we were so much busier and that it shouldn't be seen as a negative and that it was sometimes important to remember that the balance sheet was just a snapshot and it could literally change day-to-day and week-to-week. The bottom line was that we were successful and that meant that more clients owed you more money. **Brian Rice** also added that we had paid the deposit for the new building out of the figures Joe spoke of, which would have made a substantial difference. Joe also asked about the change of wording in some parts and Mike responded that words sometimes change but that was because reporting standards sometimes change and that also the reports sometimes appear to be written for accountants by accountants! He emphasised that it was only the wording that changes. Joe then asked an interesting question as to the wisdom of paying cash for the new building rather than borrowing and quoted a former Chairman who used to say that it was prudent to keep money in reserve? Mike said that it would make no sense to borrow £5million and pay 7.5% interest when the same amount deposited in a bank may only earn 5% in interest.



All you need to know about the 2006 DaC AGM

Call Sign writer, **Richard Potter (T51)** was last up in this section, asking Mike about doubtful debts and how we had managed to collect the debt? Brian Rice answered saying that it was all down to good credit management and how pleased he was that the question gave him the opportunity to offer thanks to our Credit Control department for the excellent job they do, often without too much thanks.

Members then voted to accept the Annual Report 1666 for ... 34 against.

To reappoint Chantrey Vellacott as Auditors

Members voted in favour 1636 for ... 68 against.

Election of Board Members

There were 8 candidates standing for election to the DaC BoM, the 5 outgoing candidates – **Keith Cain**, **Allen Togwell**, **Tom Whitbread**, **Mike Son** and **Allan Evans** plus 3 drivers – **Russell Hall (G44)**, **Grant Davis (I39)** and **Steve Tyson (V99)**. All the above had entered their candidacy prior to the November 10 deadline.

All the candidates were then given as much time as they required addressing the drivers present, no doubt realising that the vote on the day can affect the result - the last election of two years ago being a prime example.

Questions were aimed only at the 3 new candidates and included Ron McCartan (H26) who asked if they would carry on driving their cabs if elected.

David Kupler (Y74) brought up the difference between trouble-makers, respect and bad blood. Brian Spiro (S90) said that the current Board had done an excellent job and asked one candidate whether his views were designed to bring down the Board. **Stanley Roth (Y53)** asked one candidate whose seconder had proposed a "subs holiday," how it would be paid for? He also castigated the same member for his constant use of the term "black cab" rather than licensed taxi driver. Brian Rice then interjected and explained that besides a "subs holiday" having to be paid for from somewhere, it could also be perceived by the



Revenue as a dividend, which would be against our rules and would leave us open for a taxi bill.

Brian Spiro (S90) returned to the lectern and gave his view on Concierge, which he said he was 100% in favour of. He also congratulated candidates on having the passion to want to stand and to put themselves out for the Society. Next was **John Rubini (F55)** who told drivers that if they felt they wanted a change, then there was no reason why they shouldn't vote that way, giving the example that had voters followed a previous Chairman's advice, then we would not have had Brian Rice now. He also asked about postal balloting. **Laurence Lacombe (D68)** was last up in this section and asked Grant Davis about whether he could combine being a Board member with his position as Vice Chairman at the LCDC and whether it was within the Society's rules? Brian Rice interjected and explained that as the LCDC did not run a radio circuit, there was nothing in the rules to stop anyone in that position from standing for the DaC Board. Laurence also asked whether Grant would have the time to do both jobs and Grant replied that he saw no problems in that respect. **Steve Tyson (V99)** then gave his view on postal balloting.

Members then cast their votes followed by a short break.

Members then cast their votes followed by a short break.



Russell - not elected



Grant - not elected

for an AGM to put forward a concern or suggestion. He also spoke about having a secondary postal code for outside zones. Brian said it would be on the new system.

At this point, the election results were announced:

Keith Cain 1194 votes (elected), **Allen Togwell 1178 (elected)**, **Tom Whitbread 1122 (elected)**, **Mike Son 1145 (elected)**, **Allan Evans 1409 (elected)**, **Russell Hall 823 (not elected)**, **Grant Davis 346 (not elected)**, **Steve Tyson 291 (not elected)**.

AOB then continued with **Brian Abrahams (G91)** who said that he would like to see the postal voting system "kicked out the window" saying that we should have 1400 members present with marshals to keep order. Brian was followed by **Sid Nathan (K88)**. He asked for a big hand for Brian Rice saying that 10 years at the top was a marvellous achievement. Brian thanked him and wondered if there was a punch line when Sid chimed in with the word "but...!" He went on to ask about the next generation of terminals and Brian went on to describe what he intended to see on the new generation of terminal. He then went on to say that the first priority was to move.

Tony Lawyer (C51) was next up and asked **Tom Whitbread** about the preventative heart procedure (stents) he had inserted and whether he was still a licensed taxi driver? Tom gave full details of the situation including the date of his stress test and explained that a driver had reported him to the PCO following an article he wrote in **Call Sign**. **Brian Rice**



Steve - not elected



Re-elected Board

Any Other Business

As usual, a lengthy queue of drivers approached the lectern, first up being **David Kupler (Y74)** who brought up the delicate subject of call takers who cannot be understood. He said that he was a cockney cab driver from Hackney and that if he could be understood then so should our call takers regardless from where they originated. Brian Rice explained that there were over 40 call takers taken on before Christmas and perhaps some were not as good as they should have been, but now they have to take a phone test first and that came about thanks to David Kupler's original email on the subject. Brian added that was a good example of not waiting

All you need to know about the 2006 DaC AGM

then spoke about the heart attack he had suffered and explained that what Tom had was not a heart attack but a procedure to prevent one. Tony also asked about a flyer that had been put under his windscreen concerning Tom Whitbread's charity and Mike Tovey, who was doing the charity's account at no cost. Tony said that this could bring the Society into disrepute. Brian Rice explained that the problem was purely because the accounts had been accidentally been entered unsigned. Had the problem been relevant, Brian said that surely Mike would have had to leave Chantrey Vellacott and he hasn't. **Tom Whitbread** then asked whether anybody in the hall would like to put a complaint against the person who put the flyers under the taxi windscreens.

John Edwardes (H05) offered support for Tom Whitbread and was followed by Stanley Roth (Y53) who asked whether it could be pointed out to clients about how much extra their accounts were costing because they kept cabs waiting for so long? Brian Rice agreed and said that clients had the use of Dacport, which enables Managers to track all the vehicles used on the account. Stanley then went on to talk about imposing a minimum dress code and said that it was about time we had one. Brian agreed but added that considering how much taxis cost, they should all be fitted with aircon, which would enable the driver to dress more as we'd like. He went on to institute a new "position" for drivers – DaC's *Directors of First Impressions!* Brian added that a polo shirt and Chinos would be perfectly acceptable in his view, however, he didn't know how he could force drivers to dress correctly. Stanley ended by asking whether DaC had plans to let Brunswick House out. Brian said that nothing had yet been decided although in all probability, we would be keeping the top floor as emergency cover should anything untoward happen to the new call centre and that were the building to be let, our taxi liability could change.

Next up was **Ray Sorene (A53)** who brought up the signals and connected it to our terminal operating system of Windows 95. Brian said that it would be updated in conjunction with future updates to our accounting and dispatching systems. Ray was followed by **Richard Potter (T51)** who asked what ODRTS could do to promote unity within the cab trade? The Chairman of DaC is also the current Chairman of the Taxiboard and went on to explain how he had invited all the trade driver-led organisations to come back to the Taxiboard and show a united front. The LTDA and Union both rejected the offer, LCDC never replied and HALT accepted, but after



some behind the scenes talking, HALT changed their mind. Brian thought it was a great shame but that he couldn't force them to join. "It's all down to politics," Brian said, "I tried but for their own reasons, they don't want to join."

John Rubini (F55) made his second appearance of the day congratulating the Board on their re-election. He then went on to talk about Code 3 (going home facility). He asked whether the current system worked against E14? Brian explained that the previous Code 3 (which would have been what John wanted), was changed at the last AGM by members who voted for it and the Board were unable to overrule a proposition.

Ron McCartan (H26) returned to the lectern and spoke of the serious problem regarding attacks on drivers who work in the E14 / Blackwall Tunnel area. He claimed that the police were not taking the matter seriously enough and asked whether DaC and ComCab could publicise the situation. Brian replied that the situation has been publicised in *Call Sign* and went on to explain how the panic button worked. He also said that the best thing drivers could do would be to lock their doors. Ron went on to talk about himself as a civil rights worker and how he objected to having his photo taken for security purposes at an account address. He could put up with the photo provided it was deleted after he left the building. The company refused that saying that they kept it on file for future use. Brian said in reply that he believed the company couldn't download the type of info Ron was referring to for their own purposes.

Brian Spiro (S90) gave his support to **Tom Whitbread**, spoke about waiting times and also asked whether the system could be made more adaptable at busy times and reiterated John Rubini's Code 3 remarks, but suggested that perhaps destinations could be given on all AD trips? Brian Rice gave an example of a transport strike day when all destinations were given. He said the call centre was "slaughtered" with drivers waiting for what they perceived as good jobs. He said that the only way to improve coverage would be to make every job as directed and that jobs would then fly out. He added that DaC would not be doing that, but it was the only way that coverage could improve. He added earlier that coverage was still good and although the terminals may have shown 50 trips in EC5 for example and two minutes later, there were still 50 trips there, they were different trips and that in general, coverage was very good.

Next up was **Peter Speroni (D89)**. Peter is a former Board member from the 1970s at Shirland Road working under Martin Gellman and asked for standardisation of the way passenger names are given with some being given back to front and others as they are. He pointed out that some names could be conceived as two christian names (eg John Terry). Brian responded that our future system would take care of that. Peter reiterated about the going home situation and suggest-



ed putting a directional clue to bid trips. Brian said that it couldn't be done and reminded those present that the situation was as it was because of an AGM proposition that had been passed by members.

Mark Sherlock (W41) then questioned the scrubs figure that had been brought up earlier and asked Brian if the figure could be broken down. Brian again gave the figure and explained how it was arrived at.



Election candidate **Russell Hall (G44)** was the last speaker of the day and congratulated the Board on their re-election. He queried why a scrubbed trip didn't count towards Code 3 and considered it unfair as you may have been tied up with several scrubs through no fault of the driver. The Board agreed with him and will alter software to count scrubs towards the three trips needed to go on Code 3. He also enquired about a change in Code 3 saying that some of the scrubs might be covered if Code 3 was reorganised? Brian Rice agreed that as time passed, the system was not as flexible as it once seemed, but that our new system would have far more flexibility, but that for the time being, Code 3 could not be changed as it was passed as a proposition by members and the BoM could not overrule the membership.

Just to show how deceiving the terminal can make figures look, **Brian Rice** told of the worst night he could remember – the night that Arsenal played Barcelona in the Champion's League. EC5 constantly showed it being full on 99 trips, yet the average covering time for trips was still only 12 minutes.

The meeting ended at 3.30pm...

Wide red line to aid congested bus stops...

A new road marking is being introduced to show that exemption for taxis does not apply. This takes the form of a single red line at the roadside, 200 or 300 mm wide, within and adjacent to the bus stop 'cage.' It looks similar to the wide yellow line indicating a bus stop clearway on other roads, but will appear quite different from the single and double red lines (normally 100 mm wide) indicating "no stopping" on other stretches of Red Route. Taxis will not be allowed to stop to pick up or set down passengers where the wide red line is marked. The first site to get this new marking will be Wilton Road, alongside Victoria Station. This will come into force from 12 March 2007. A dedicated taxi set-down bay near the junction with Hudson Place will allow passengers access to the "hole in the wall."

E14 – SOME PROGRESS MADE

Call Sign has heard that some progress has been made in putting a halt to the rash of robberies and attempted robberies in the E14 area of London. We also only managed to find one driver who had been held up at gunpoint – or would admit to it despite a string of terminal requests.

Following **Call Sign's** meeting with the Crown Prosecution Service, police have been watching the situation and several decoy cabs have gone out in the area with several arrests following.

If you are attacked, you can still call the usual emergency number. However, if you think you have some information that could assist the police, you can use a 9 – 5 number at Bethnal Green Police station – the Motor Vehicles Focus Desk – on 0208 217 3737. Ask for D.I. Bob Gurr, who is in charge of the operation.

Call Sign has also heard from Alison King of the East India and Lansbury Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team. She is in charge of the ward that covers East India Dock Road and told us:

"Towards the end of last year, the area was targeted by youths who would open taxi doors when they were stationary in traffic or at traffic lights. Extensive resources were used to try and track down the offenders. Apart from the use of plain clothed officers by Tower Hamlets Borough Police, I used my team of community officers to leaflet the local area and give out leaflets to cab drivers warning of the risks if they failed to lock their cabs. A couple of suspects were chased and arrested after a theft, but unfortunately the victim of this was unable to pick the suspects out on an identification parade.

"I am aware that since the beginning of January, there have been 9 reported thefts committed in the same circumstances on this ward. These offences were committed between 3pm - 10pm. Taxis are targeted when they are stationary in traffic, at lights, in McDonalds and petrol garages. The suspects for these have been both lone and groups of young males. The ages range between late teens to early twenties. They have been described as white, black, Asian and mixed-race by victims. They have sometimes distracted the driver, whilst one other opens the front door and aims for the bag left in the footwell by the driver's chair. Whilst I can assure you we are doing what we can to try and detect the perpetrators, I need the assistance of drivers to try and prevent the offences happening in the first place by limiting the opportunity for these youths to commit the offences."

Alison ended by saying: "Please could you use whatever means you have of getting home the message that if the doors are left open in cabs they are likely to become targets of these offences. This is happening in other areas within the borough and in other areas of London as well. Additionally, I would ask that all thefts are fully reported as I am sure the ones I know about may not truly reflect what has been happening. I would urge anyone who hasn't reported to come forward. They may provide the link we need to actually catch the suspects."

Call Sign has a further meeting with police and a report will be in the next issue if it contains anything new...

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

This month's Flashback goes back to October 1969 and a time when, looking back, we seemed to think life was much safer. But was it...?

From O.D.R.T.S. News Magazine, October 1969

Editorial

The bitter experiences of a few drivers and owners is the subject of this Editorial. The number of vehicles being hijacked and stolen is a major headache confronting the police daily. A recent sufferer is **Mr. Harry Baylis (A54)**. His case is similar to one other which occurred a few months ago, or rather the result is similar. The latter was premeditated - someone rang for a cab and when it arrived at the pick-up point, the driver could not make contact. On referring back to base control, he was told to make contact himself at the passenger's request. He left the cab to make his enquiries, but could not find his job.

He returned round the corner to where he had parked his cab and it had disappeared. All this had taken but a few minutes and had obviously been planned. The cab was eventually recovered minus the radio set in the back (*I believe the radio was in the boot back then...Ed*)

Harry Baylis's experience was somewhat akin to this. His nightman had accepted a job from a public house, which is not an infrequent caller to this circuit. On arrival, he went inside for his passenger, but he too on returning, found the cab removed.

May I take this opportunity to warn ALL subscribers that on arrival at the pick-up point, under no circumstances leave the cab unattended with the engine running (which is an offence anyway), but to park in a convenient spot, stop the engine, remove the ignition key and even lock the doors before entering the building to make contact.

If there is no available parking space, ask the dispatcher to ring the job out, but please only use the latter method as a last resort, simply because if every driver were to make this request, our already astronomical telephone bill would be even more so – plus the fact that you use up air space and also tie up a telephonist and a line.

What is asked of you is that you should use your head. If it means walking a few yards, the exercise will do you good anyway. Do not leave an open invitation for someone to deprive you of your livelihood by ignoring these safety measures.

One other thing to remember is that others having one of our radio sets gives them the opportunity to eavesdrop and "nick" our work. So, safeguard yourself by taking precautions

Joe Toff (B04), Editor, O.D.R.T.S. News Magazine

Flashback
1969

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MAILSHOT

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Impressive – so what about a bonus?

Along with everyone else, I have been impressed by our job figures as described by Brian Rice in recent copies of *Call Sign*. Month after month we are setting new records it would seem, after much effort by staff and the fleet and with careful stewardship by the Board, we find ourselves in a very strong position. One of the rewards being the purchase of a new office building with hopefully, a much-improved environment for staff.

However, pleased though we all are at our continued success, is it not possible that those of us at the 'coal face' could derive some tangible benefit from this success? Many of the accounts we serve so well give generous bonuses to their staff to recognise a 'good year'. Wouldn't it be great if, for instance, we drivers could receive a bonus in the form of a month's free subs in recognition of a brilliant year?

Perhaps we could enjoy this each year providing our figures continue to improve. It might even help to encourage a collective incentive to pursue the Society's interests.

What do you think Brian?

David Brett (P93)

Brian Rice replies: David, thank you for a very nice and sensible letter and I think you know that I agree with your sentiments. I, like you, would also like to receive a bonus on the strength of the success of our Society just as no doubt, most members would also agree to a bonus. The problem we have is that we are a non-profit making organisation; consequently all our 'surpluses' have to be ploughed back into the business. If we start distributing free subscriptions then it could be conceived that we are issuing dividends. As a consequence, we would then be trading for profit and that would lead to all kinds of connotations – especially from the Inland Revenue who would perceive that we are entitled to pay tax and be in breach of our mutual status.

Cabtivate

After receiving a general message from *Call Sign* on my terminal regarding Cabtivate, I am rather concerned as I am presently waiting for a fitting date. Can you please let me know if there are any problems with the company or system, as I will then have to think seriously about whether I should have it fitted. Any information at all will be much appreciated.

Mark Davis (T98)

There is an article on Cabtivate in this

issue, Mark. The answer to your question is just to keep as far away from it as you can. If you want a TV in the back of your cab, go for Cabvision, which is risk-free ...Ed

Cleaner London?

TfL, PCO, LTI, LTDA and of course our dear Mayor who is all talk and no action - and anybody else I have forgotten to mention - are doing nothing to make London cleaner and quieter. We in London are light years behind most other cities in the world when it comes to moving forward. Now that the London taxi is going to be made in China, it's interesting to note that country has one of largest *Compressed Natural Gas* (CNG) fleets in the world with India, Pakistan and Bangladesh also having CNG taxis. Over the next 5 years, Australia will have to have wheelchair taxis and guess what - they use gas not diesel. So LTI will let that market go as well as any other place in the world that will stop diesels being sold.

Using road fuel gases is likely to have the greatest benefit in areas with poor air quality such as dense urban areas like London. In locations such as these, air quality is of a higher priority and should be treated accordingly. For example, converting a Euro III petrol car to run on LPG will result in a 30-40% reduction in NOx emissions and converting a diesel fuelled London taxi will result in a massive reduction in NOx and PM10 emissions.

Stanley Roth (Y53)

Stanley has been driving a gas taxi for many years and is referring to the Singapore Government's announcement of a package of incentives for CNG vehicles as part of an overall emissions reduction package. Although Singapore already enjoys a reputation as being a "clean" city, the legislation has been introduced to combat particulate emissions - 50% of which it is claimed have been caused by diesel engines. As a result, from October 2006, all new diesel engines in Singapore are now required to be either Euro 4 compliant or fuelled with CNG. The choice of CNG follows trials of twelve vehicles, conducted over the past 2 years in commercial truck, bus and taxi operations...Ed

Old trips...

I understand the need to keep our top accounts happy and at busy times some of the trips stay in the system for quite a while. Then trips you have been offered previously, all of a sudden become non-rejectable. Inevitably they are now late and to be honest I don't normally accept late jobs because

I don't like the aggro. To solve the problem, why don't we just make the top accounts non-rejectable at busy times and right at the start of the booking? That way you have got time to get to the job without having to panic.

Colin Lewis (N55)

Call Centre Manager Keith Cain replies: Day shift Operations Manager / Dispatcher Lee Morland and I have been speaking about this problem recently and are working on an answer. That response should appear in the next issue.

Thanks for the votes

I would just like to pass on my thanks to each and every one of the members that voted for me in the recent BoM election. It fills me with immense pride that with your support, I still managed, for the second consecutive election, to get well in excess of 800 votes! With the support and encouragement that I have received from the drivers since, I would hope to stand again in two years time.

Can I also congratulate the re-elected BoM. I hope they can keep up the good work under the watchful eye and stewardship of our Chairman, Brian Rice. Once again, a big thank you...

Russell Hall (G44)

...and from me

I would like to congratulate and say well done to the Board of Management on being re-elected for a further two years in office. Although I was naturally disappointed at not being elected, I believe the membership have shown faith in the BoM and made an excellent and positive decision in not changing a winning team. I look forward to the next two years with optimism and excitement. I would also like to say thank you to everyone that took the time to vote for me, as well as supported me on the day. I promise to continue giving nothing less than 100% commitment in my current Call Centre roll. Also, my commiserations to the other members that stood, Russell and Grant and I trust in saying they will join me in congratulating the BoM. I have every faith and confidence in the current Board and I am sure they will continue to strive and serve the Society well.

Steven Tyson (V99)

Gangsta wannabes in London's West End?

A club in Beak Street is an A-list celebrity club which dates back many years and under a different guise, was well known to



MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 37

London taxi drivers in the 60s. It attracts a young, very wealthy crowd and 'gangsta' wannabes who like snowstorms, R&B and heavy rap music. No doubt a bulletproof vest will soon be obligatory on entry. A recent visitor said the whole place stank of weed. A local resident I recently took home said she is constantly being woken up at night by touts outside who park up on the double yellow lines and congregate together in a group, laughing and chatting. I was told the local traffic warden is a friend of theirs!

No doubt this posse are on first name terms with some of the celebs they take home and do favours for them - of which I won't elaborate on. Recently, there was a drug related murder outside the premises. All of this makes these places even more attractive for those who want to sample life living on the edge.

The councils and police really must get to grips with what is now happening in London with more foreign mafia being attracted to our shores by our tax laws and easy-giving attitude. I wish we could adopt a zero tolerance attitude as they did in New York, which then improved dramatically. But then they had a good mayor and not a fairy godmother. In the meantime, the rest of us will have to keep wishing.

David Heath (Ex W27)

Call Sign has arranged to interview TOCU's Chief Inspector Bob Marshall for the next issue. We'll show him your letter and see if he has any comments ...Ed

Tom Whitbread and how to address clients...

With reference to Tom Whitbread's advisory on addressing out esteemed clients, I agree with him 100%. But, how would he handle the following scenario? It was a trip from an account in the City to Commercial Road E1. Need to take a leak, but feel I can wait for the few minutes it will take to complete the job. Arrive at pick up and guess what - no extension number in details! Nothing new there, after all we do get telephonist's errors and who cares if the driver has to wait anyway. It's only our reputation at stake after all. Wait 15 mins and do a 'no show' request. Usual reply; please wait, passenger on way down bla bla bla. We all know that no contact was made by the call centre, but this will keep the driver happy for 15 mins whilst we have a good old chat about our weekend plans etc. 30 mins wait, bladder full and need for leak imminent!

35 mins wait and arrogant young overpaid

snotgobling Russian gets in cab and wants Commercial Rd by Adler Street...QUICKLY! No "sorry to have kept you," no "thanks for waiting," no "hello," just an order barked whilst yakking on his mobile.

"In a hurry are we," I politely asked? "Didn't think that someone who keeps his cab waiting over half an hour could be in a rush."

The response? "You get paid for job! Many drivers like big money for short ride!"

"Well," I said, "I like people with manners who appreciate that I'm not part of a machine, people who apologise for keeping me waiting. They have class."

I completed the trip in a few minutes and took a leak in Adler St. I was tempted to throw my urine across his threshold, but refrained from making him feel at home!

Didn't call him 'Mate' or 'Sir' either. Did have a few expletives in mind for this pig, but reserved them to be expounded mentally, as I emptied my bladder.

If they want 'Sir' they'll need to demonstrate they deserve the accolade from me...

David Kupler (Y74)

David is referring to Tom's terminal message to drivers about not referring to clients as mate! See Tom's article elsewhere in this issue ...Ed

Christmas gifts

With regards to our Christmas gift this year, I would firstly like to thank the Board for giving us a useful gift each year. In the past we've been given among other things, a DaC umbrella, rain jacket, reversible jacket and a fleece jumper - all bearing our logo and all looking very smart. However, why do our sizes always start at Large? I am an average 5' 8" and of (if I may say so myself) svelte build, so why is it when I went to Roman Way to collect this year's gift, I was told I could have L, XL or XXL? What's wrong with medium? Most of the drivers I see wouldn't require a large size either.

Also, while I have your attention, would it be possible to offer the subscribers a subscription holiday each year? This could be for a period of 2 weeks a year so that when we take our families away at peak times, we don't have to pay for a terminal which is not being used.

I think it was mentioned in Russell Hall's manifesto a few years ago and as our circuit is doing so well with cash in the bank and a new building on the horizon, I think this would really give us something back.

One last thing, why does it say *Ride to Job* on McKinsey job details? How else do we get to the pick up? This is the most bizarre detail I have seen so far. Can you please tell me why?

Darren Hawley (A80)

Darren, I asked Keith Cain about the lack of medium polo shirts and it wasn't that there were none, but just that they went quickly this time (there were also small sizes for women drivers too). I think that only a minority of drivers can still get into a medium size with comfort ("I'm a 32 waist, but a 38 is comfortable")! However, Keith says he'll look to see if he has any mediums tucked away and if he finds some, he will contact you. He added that trying to work out the proportions of size differences for 2000+ drivers isn't as easy as you think!

Keith also explained that the *Ride to Job* is nothing to do with DaC and that our IT department will be trying to remove it shortly. I must be honest, Darren, I also wondered what it meant!

As for the subs break, this was raised at the AGM (having the whole month off) and two reasons were given why we don't get it. Firstly, when you multiply the amount by 2200, it is quite a significant amount and even if the Board decided to go ahead with it, it could be seen as DaC paying drivers a dividend and could detrimentally affect our tax status as a mutual trading society. Thanks for an interesting letter ...Ed

AGM

So another AGM has come and gone. When arriving at 11am, the first noticeable thing was the number of empty seats, but I assumed drivers would come in at the last minute. Perhaps another dozen showed up bringing the attendance to around one hundred. Yes just 100 out of approximately 2200 members. Just 3 or 4 hours out of the year for those that didn't attend was obviously too much to put themselves out for our own Society. That is quite amazing.

Some say: "What's the point, I've already voted by post," or "what's the point of going to that crappy meeting." They are among the usual comments from those apathetic drivers who don't bother. Then first thing the following morning, those same drivers ask what happened? "Did Tom Whitbread get on," or "did anyone mention Concierge?" It beggars belief!

I would like to say well done to Russell, Grant and Steve for putting up a fight and for putting their point of view across, but I'm sure they realised that with the highly debateable postal balloting system, they had about as much chance as my beloved Tottenham Hotspur of winning the Premiership!

Brian Cohen (C81)

Brian, we don't often agree, but yes, I'm



MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 38

with you most of the way here. Sadly, the drivers have made their views known that they don't want to be forced to attend and like it or not, that is democracy. However, I still cannot understand why we don't have at least 6 or 700 taking an interest? Two years ago, the votes in the hall could have made a difference and there weren't that many more than this year (118 this time), so no one should use that as an excuse. As for Spurs, well at least I was there on that day when they last won the league and were presented with the championship after the home game with WBA – who had just beaten us 2 – 1...! But 46 years ago is quite some time I suppose! ...Ed

Marshalling the marshals...?

I have always been opposed to minicabs and do not have the 'T' car attribute. How sad then the other night at DB to see the DaC marshal alongside a Lewis Day marshal – albeit at a distance! My fare was going to E1, I am guessing Lewis Day drivers were going a little further. My thoughts returned to the client from a large E14 account who was pleased at the promptness of my arrival to transport him to EC2. He had phoned the minicab company first and was told 2 hours! This he couldn't understand as his colleague was quoted 10 minutes. His destination?

Harlow. Make up your own minds re 'T' attribute...

John Addis (K97)

Brian Rice replies: John, I think you are getting a little confused regarding the 'T' attribute. That attribute is given to a job that is sent to us because the PH company cannot cover the trip for their customer, consequently, it is then up to our members if they cover the work or not – hence the 'T' attribute. I'm not sure what that has to do with the Marshal at Deutsche Bank. As a matter of interest, the average price of a 'T' attribute trip is £31. I notice in your letter that there are not actually any 'facts' but in your own words, you were 'guessing' – hardly any firm evidence. I am as loathe as anyone to cover this type of work, but unfortunately it is a fact of life. We have two choices – we either stay and fight our corner, give exemplary service and win the accounts on service, or we pick our ball up, go home and let the PH companies play the game without us being included – you have obviously made your mind up what you intend to do! Regarding the Lewis Day Marshal at Deutsche Bank, this is a trial. It stems from last November when our service was under extreme pressure and we did not give the service the customer required. Lewis Day have decided to put a Marshal there in an attempt to win more work and prove to DB they are better than us, I would like to stress again – this is a trial. Once again you have a choice, you can prove who is better, or pick your ball up and go home and capitulate – your choice John. After all, it is not our God-given right to ser-

vice these accounts, the customers always have a choice.

Just another day at the AGM!

It was so sad to listen at the AGM that some lowlifes put a brick through a Board member's taxi window, flyers on windscreens and wrote untrue letters to the PCO. What brave men you are, give yourselves a pat on the back!

I have had triple bypass heart surgery which I now wish I'd had 10 years earlier! Following a heart attack, we are told that we have to hand our Bill and Badge to the PCO – just what we need to hear when lying wired up in a hospital bed! For those interested, to get them back, we have to pass the Bruce Protocol test every 3 years by going on a treadmill for 3 minutes at 1.7 mph or 2.7 km on grade 10, then 3 minutes at 2.5 mph or 4.0 km on grade 12, finally 3 minutes at 3.4 mph or 5.4 km on grade 14. That's it!

Good luck Tom...

Ian Mossey (A31)

Thanks Ian. It's worth remembering that the examples you give represent a tiny minority of subscribers and even most of those who would vote against the Board would not be party to any of the incidents you refer to ...Ed

Awana Draws the Celebs and DaC Taxis!

Awana, London's first fine-dining Malaysian restaurant, was recently the venue for a star-studded gathering with a non-stop stream of Dial-a-Cab taxis pulling up alongside the stretch limos!

First of the stars to visit the trendy Sloane Avenue restaurant was former Eastenders star **Michelle Collins** for an intimate dinner with friends. Michelle is currently starring as Ma Baker in the BoneyM musical **Daddy Cool**.

Later on in the evening, celebrity **Big Brother** star and former member of the Jackson 5, **Jermaine Jackson** was accompanied by his wife, together with fellow housemate **Cleo Rocos** – who first found fame as **Kenny Everett's** sidekick. They were followed in by shoe designer **Jimmy Choo**, who smiled at one DaC driver's friendly question as to whether he did shoe repairs in his spare time!

Next up was UK Soul singer, songwriter **Beverly Knight**, who will be releasing what sounds like a hot new album next month. Recorded in 5 days in Nashville, *Music City Soul* sees Beverly adopting a live, organic soul

sound that pushes her gospel roots to the fore. The result is said to be electric. The album features a collection of local Tennessee musicians who have played with legends such as Elvis Presley and Al Green and also features the guitar playing of Rolling Stone **Ronnie Wood** on three of the tracks. One track **Call Sign** is eagerly awaiting is Beverly's version of the Rolling Stone's early classic, *Time Is On My Side*.

Since opening in late 2005, Awana has gone from strength to strength and has famously gained an AA rosette within 5 months of that opening. With the ever-increasing popularity of Asian cuisine, Awana is attracting much attention. The restaurant boasts an elegant and inviting interior, an interesting and varied menu and traditional Malaysian hospitality matched by none.

If your passengers – or even you – are looking for something different from Asia, Awana will be the answer.

The Restaurant is open for lunch on Monday to Sunday 12 – 3pm and dinner on Monday to Sunday from 6 – 11pm.

The bar is open Thursday to Saturday, 6 – 11.30pm and Sunday 6 – 10.30pm.



Awana owner Eddie Lim with Daddy Cool Star Michelle Collins

They also have a Satay Bar, which opens Monday to Sunday from 12 – 11.30pm.

You can find out more on their website at www.awana.co.uk.

Awana is at 85 Sloane Avenue SW3 Tel: 0207 584 8880...



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