

November 2007



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

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The old meets the new!



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Jack Russell at the new
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NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

The new Eurostar terminal opens at St. Pancras on 14 November 2007. This month I've tried to give you the arrival times to give you work and the travelling public a good service. On 9 October, the Eurostar website's timetable was valid until July 07. I contacted Eurostar and they told me the website would be up to date on 10 October and they would also send me the St. Pancras timetable.

I visited the website on 10 Oct and it was updated to show arrivals at Waterloo until 13/11/07! The timetable for St. Pancras has yet to arrive. So the following table was constructed by checking each train by arrival time for the first day (14 Nov) and the following week Mon to Sun. There were major changes in the early days of Waterloo Eurostar, which then settled into a fairly stable timetable. This too might be true of St. Pancras. If it is, I may need to publish an update fairly soon...

St. Pancras Eurostar Arrivals (please read the above).

From	Time	Train #	14/11/2007	Mon-Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
LILLE	07:55	9109		✓	✓	✓	
PARIS	08:28	9007		✓	✓	✓	
BRUSSELS	08:56	9113		✓	✓	✓	✓
PARIS	09:33	9011		✓	✓	✓	✓
BRUSSELS	10:01	9117		✓	✓		
PARIS	10:35	9015		✓	✓	✓	✓
BRUSSELS	11:01	9121				✓	✓
BRUSSELS	11:07	9121	✓				
PARIS	11:10	9017	✓				
PARIS	11:28	9019		✓	✓	✓	✓
PARIS	12:28	9023	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRUSSELS	13:01	9127	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PARIS	14:33	9031	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PARIS	15:28	9035			✓	✓	✓
BRUSSELS	15:56	9141	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PARIS	16:35	9039	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRUSSELS	16:56	9145					✓
BRUSSELS	17:01	9145	✓	✓	✓		
PARIS	17:33	9043	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRUSSELS	17:58	9149	✓	✓	✓		
BRUSSELS	18:03	9149				✓	✓
PARIS	18:33	9047	✓	✓	✓		✓
PARIS	19:00	9049		✓	✓		✓
BRUSSELS	19:03	9153	✓	✓	✓		
PARIS	19:33	9051	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRUSSELS	19:58	9157	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PARIS	20:28	9055	✓		✓		✓
PARIS	20:40	9055				✓	
DISNEY	21:12	9057		✓	✓	✓	✓
PARIS	21:40	9059		✓	✓	✓	✓
BRUSSELS	22:03	9165	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PARIS	22:33	9063	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Don't forget that if you would like a FREE list of over 3000 restaurants, loads of pubs, hotels, all MP stations, LCA arrivals, What's On at Earls Court / Olympia / ExCel / O2, Lap dancing clubs, Post codes, DaC codes and much, much more (currently 56 A4 pages worth), all you need to do is send an email to alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk with the subject as UID (this is to sort your valid request as opposed to Nigerians offering me vast amounts of cash), with the text stating your name, email address, badge number, call sign and contact telephone number (only used if your email address fails) and you will receive an email pointing you to all that useful information. Only about 100 of you out of 2000+ drivers have bothered, how about the rest of you? These 100 drivers have an advantage of making their working day easier, join the club for FREE - no strings attached. Send an email TODAY. Will the following drivers please email me at alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk with a valid email address as the ones I have on file have failed on every update: Steve Farley, Michael Davies, Jeff Devonport, Ian Mark, Larry Miller, Francis Robinson, Dean O, Barry Ward, Danny Anker & John Hoskins...

from the editor's desk

Too much health and safety?

When I was younger, health and safety referred to exactly that – whether you felt well and to look where you are going. Nowadays with the politically correct woosey society we live in, *Health and Safety* regulations mean that you can't do anything without first taking the precaution of making sure it doesn't, at the very least, cause you any inconvenience!

You can now take advice on workplace health and safety issues and how to manage your sickness absence or returning to work issues. Many companies, in return for Government funding, make a living out of offering advice to moaners who call their helplines and assist the caller to understand their health and safety responsibilities and to query whether their place of work is indeed safe or whether they have or have not been sick for long enough.

Don't get me wrong; no one should have to work in surroundings that are not safe or have to work if they are feeling too unwell to do so, but how far should we take H&S regulations?

Take those who work at repairing our roads or perhaps who have to cut the grass along dual carriageways. I was recently caught in a several mile-long tailback on a dual carriageway where there was no usable escape exit. Why? Because the complete stretch had one complete lane shut leaving just a single lane for huge amounts of peak-hour cars, lorries and buses.

Don't get me wrong on this either – if the grass was never cut along the centre of the road, it could turn into a forest! No, my problem is that health and safety dictates that even though the centre of the road was more than wide enough for the grass-cutters, they had to be ultra-safe and close a lane off as well.

The same applies to someone actually digging or repainting part of a road. How often have you been stuck in a jam because a lane has been closed and at the end of the closure is a man with his van just sticking some paint on the carriageway fence? Go to any part of Europe and you'll see the equivalent man with a few cones around him to give him protection. They don't require the closure of 800 metres of road in front of them and another 800 metres behind.

Thanks to *Health and Safety*, we have become a bunch of wooseys...

Out and about with the PCO?

I'd like someone from the Public Carriage Office to explain something to the readers of *Call Sign*. When the 6-month safety checks (or should that be mini-overhauls) were brought in, we were told that it would allow Carriage Officers to concentrate on other things instead of spending so many man-hours on the highways, byways (and railway stations) checking for licensed taxis that had faults. They would still be going out, but be far less noticeable.

Well, judging by the number of sightings of late, it seems to me that not only are they going out more often, but also using more men -



could they be those who no longer have to carry out overhaul checks?

Whatever the answer, I think drivers can be forgiven for believing that this trade has once again been shafted by those on high. The six-month safety check was totally unnecessary and was probably part of the agreement when SGS started taking taxis – after all, there aren't enough taxis in London to make the SGS deal attractive, but put each cab through twice and bingo! Suddenly it becomes a lucrative deal.

As I've said before, I don't believe our trade organisations did anywhere near enough to fight off the half-yearly examinations, which are going to cost this trade dearly. Every single driver in our industry should belong to a trade organisation – preferably the same one – and only then will we have enough sway to at least have a chance of getting a point across. Who actually listens to us now? No one is the answer. The PCO do what they like, TfL do what they like and the Mayor does what he likes – all at the expense of the licensed taxi industry. Why? Because we are no more than a tiny irrelevance to them. They know that because the majority of drivers belong to nothing, they will accept whatever is thrown at them just to keep the peace. Since TfL came into our lives, this trade has slowly been decimated and anyone who doesn't believe that minicabs will eventually be allowed to ply for hire is living in cloud cuckoo land. Their aim is to equalise both public and private hire. By then it will be too late...

Using the underground...

If you read further on in this issue, you'll see that in a survey by regular world travellers London has won *Best City Transport* for the second year running. It also came top for being most expensive. I had an example of that recently.

I haven't used the tube for years, but accept it can be a good – even if very uncomfortable and expensive – way to cross London, but was totally staggered when 4-passengers from Barnsley on a weekend trip to London, caught me at the entrance / exit to Piccadilly Circus station early on a Saturday evening whilst an account passenger was getting out. They asked to go to Victoria. I didn't like to say no as they looked so sad, even though I would normally have turned my light off, read the paper and waited for another account trip!

It should have been a just another normal job

until they said that they had intended using the tube for the journey, but when told at the ticket office that the fare was £4 each - £16 for four people to Victoria – they walked out and decided to use a cab. Even on rate 2, the fare only went £8.20. No wonder some tourists are scared to use cabs when they see what a rip-off underground prices are...

Trotting to see the swine!

I couldn't help but smile when picking up an account ride in Bishopsgate supposedly going to E3. It was a Friday evening and each of the 3 young ladies looked like a beautiful – if rather undressed – princess!

When I asked where to, one of them read from something that looked to be a small piece of toilet paper! Struggling to read it, she eventually admitted that she wasn't sure but knew that it was a wine bar in Bow. She thought it was called the Right Swine!

I started making my way and asked a dispatcher if they could help because the girls hadn't a clue. I had just passed Mile End station when the message appeared on my terminal. No trace of Right Swine Bar in Bow. Could be Wright's Wine Bar in Bow Lane?

Of course it was exactly that and we trotted back to the City.

"Sorry girls," I said. "Don't worry," said the girl with the piece of toilet paper, "the company are paying!" I wonder whose fault it would have been had it been a street pick-up!

Looking after the Society...?

Going into Waterloo, my account passenger asked what the significance of the blown-up photo stuck on the wall showing a car sporting a stuck-on DaC logo was? I hadn't seen it before, although several drivers had phoned to tell me it was there. I didn't want to tell him that we have a few drivers that would be delighted to see the Society fail miserably just so they could say "I told you so." I told him that I hadn't a clue.

Several weeks earlier, at least one of our drivers sent a phone photo of a DaC terminal message to TAXI for publication, even though it had been explained that the message was totally unauthorised, incorrect and should never have been put out. The chances are that it was the same person who also put another one in the same station some years back that Brian Rice was earning (from memory) £120,000 per annum – around £2400 each week! At the time I believe he was on around £27 per hour and would have had to have completed a mere 90 hours a week (not including travelling in from his Hampshire home each day). So it poses the question: Why do these bill posters want to be on Dial-a-Cab?

To be honest, the stupidity of the Waterloo notices made me smile, but it does make you wonder about the mentality of those who would be happy to bring down an organisation of which they are an equal shareholder...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

Dial-a-Cab House launch...

As you are probably aware, we launched our new building to the trade and clients on 19 October. I must say I thought the whole day went extremely well, especially as we also launched our new website and announced that Dial-a-Cab are now offsetting our Carbon Footprint.

For those of you that have access to the Internet, I would ask you to have a look at our new website that has been completely rebuilt by DaC's IT department. We've decided that early in the New Year, we will give members that require it the opportunity to review their credit payments directly via the website. We will be writing to you in the future explaining the situation, but in a nutshell you should return the letter to us together with your chosen password so that you might gain access to your account via our website. We believe this could be extremely beneficial, as the website will retain your accounts for two years, which should prove particularly helpful should your accountants require any backdated statements. Of course, you will also be helping Dial-a-Cab to offset their Carbon Footprint even further!

And speaking of Carbon Footprints...

The same day as we launched our new building and website, Dial-a-Cab announced that as from the 1 October we were offsetting our Carbon Footprint. Hardly a day passes when we are not all reminded about global warming etc, consequently we can now inform our clients that in future for every journey they complete in one of our taxis, Dial-a-Cab are offsetting the carbon that is produced by that journey. We are also looking at our new building to see if we can reduce even further the amount of emissions we produce from it. However, as you can imagine, we were mindful of this situation when the building was being renovated and as a consequence, such things as automatic lighting etc have already been installed. I believe that in the future, your corporate clients will discuss with you the Carbon Footprint issue, as it seems to be gathering pace. It's a topic that is very close to the hearts of many of our top corporates, with some of them even insisting that they use electric cars for some of their journeys... how long before KPM launch an electric taxi?

If you would like to know a little more regarding your Carbon Footprint, then please visit our website, which has a link to the Carbon Footprint site.

Eco City Vehicles

I have just been reading the above regarding our Carbon Footprint and feel it pertinent that I explain my comment a little more regarding KPM and the electric taxi. It has just been announced that there has been a reverse takeover regarding Pannal and KPM, with KPM being reversed into Pannal. What that actually means is that KPM have taken over Pannal - the manufacturer of electric



vehicles - and named the new company Eco City Vehicles. As explained earlier, Pannal were manufacturers of electric delivery vehicles, so why would a taxi distributor want to purchase a company that produces electric vehicles? Anyone fancy a flutter on the AIM?

Christmas incentive

You should have received a letter by now outlining our Christmas incentive in order that we might maintain - and hopefully even improve - upon our coverage in the run-up to Christmas. If you take the seven week period over a five day week, we are only requesting you cover less than three account trips per day before you start earning £5 for every credit ride you accept. I hope you will endeavour to support your clients and the Society in what I believe will be a very busy period. There is not a lot more I can do, the remainder is up to you! We anticipate that we will pay the incentive towards the end of January.

Signals again...

You will read elsewhere in *Call Sign*, Keith Cain's response to Darren Hawley's letter in this issue's *Mailshot*. There is also a letter from Paul Taylor where he also criticises our


signals. I know you will agree that I have written thousands of words on this issue and every single one of you should be extremely conversant with the subject, assuming of course you read the magazine.

For Paul Taylor to accuse me of not listening and burying my head in the sand is very unfair and extremely derogatory. No one - and I mean no one - could have done more in an attempt to cure our problems. The latest attempt is to convert our voice channel to data in an attempt to improve signal quality. We have installed a new site at the Hilton in Park Lane, to be followed later this year or early next with a further site near Heathrow. However, to lock onto these new sites you will require the latest upgrade from Roman Way (3.4.5). The upgrade takes around 15 minutes to complete, including the radio upgrade.

During the recent past, we have totally refurbished every aerial site with new equipment, new interference filters have been fitted to every site and software has been changed in an attempt to improve channel roaming. All 4031 *comms controllers* have been replaced with *servers* with an IQ link to improve signals and to cap it all, our turnover has increased by over 30% in the last two years, meaning vast volumes of extra work has gone through our system and into your cabs. We are constantly battling to improve signals, even going so far as to eliminate back-up zones so that trips go back and forth less often.

Even as I write, we are in discussions with one of our suppliers to provide a back-up network on the public GPRS system. So perhaps you can understand why I do sometimes get a little tetchy when there is constant criticism and I and everyone else is doing everything possible to improve signals whilst still returning a record year for Dial-a-Cab.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab



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

Telephone: 020 8735 9770

Moving home

Commercial property

Property disputes

Family - divorce, co-habitation and children

Wills and Probate

Personal Injury - accidents at work, on the road, at home, criminal injury claims

The August *Call Sign* told of the imminent arrival from Moscow of Sergey Pietnev, the Commercial Director of *City Taxi* in Moscow, a company that employs around 400 staff.

After the usual jokes about Roman Abramovich buying out Chelsea Football Club and asking Sergey whether he was thinking of a similar situation with Dial-a-Cab, *Call Sign* asked him about *City Taxi* and their operation in the Russian capital. It bears a marked similarity to ours - albeit on a smaller scale.

"Passengers telephone us as they do you or they stand on street corners and put their hands up to hail a taxi. Our biggest problem is with what you would refer to as touting. We see many vehicles with four wheels and where the driver is short of some money, pretending they are a taxi and stopping for anybody who looks like they require one. I believe our situation is probably even worse than London. We even see ambulances picking up passengers!"

Sergey is here through the auspices of the EU-funded *Manager's Training Program*.

The MTP is organised by an EU bureau known as TACIS - *Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States* - and is responsible for policies involving the former Soviet states of Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. It has been running successfully since early 2000, with almost 3,000 candidates across Europe.

Sergey Arrives at DaC - From Moscow!

Under the scheme, Dial-a-Cab offered a 10-week internship to Sergey, who has a Masters Degree in Transport Management and who rather fortunately for DaC, speaks English! During his tenure at DaC House, he will be based with DaC Trainer, Daren Morley and ended by telling *Call Sign* that he was enjoying his time at DaC very much and was impressed at how well it ran.

"You have a lovely building and the people are also very nice. The whole operation is very impressive."

Dial-a-Cab Chairman Brian Rice told *Call Sign*: **"Such a prestigious EU organisation coming to DaC to ask for our input into the Manager's Training Program is a huge compliment to this Society and the repu-**

tation it has made for itself outside, as well as in London."

Our Russian is not too good but we'll have a go! Sergey, Добро пожаловать в Да_!



Sergey with DaC Trainer Daren Morley

American Artists View of London Taxis



Deutsche Bank sponsored art show gives out good advice...

The hugely respected US artists Internet site of ARTINFO has given its view on London's transport system for its members who travelled to London for the recent Deutsche Bank sponsored Frieze Magazine Art Fair in Regents Park, which provides an environment to introduce and showcase new and established artists to visitors from around the world every October.

"Don't use buses unless you have to. Tubes are ok but expensive unless you can get an Oyster card." And taxis? This is what their reporter Robert Ayers says about us...

"Taxis are the only form of transport in London that I can recommend with my hand on my heart. They're comfortable. You can get five people in them with only a slight squeeze. The drivers are mostly friendly, talkative and absolute miracle workers when it comes to knowing the quickest route from one place to another (they actually have to pass a fiendish exam on London geography to get their license). OK, so there aren't enough of them, particularly in bad weather. They are also very expensive! But face it; you're going to London for the better part of a week. There are almost exactly two dollars to the pound now. You're going to come back with debts almost as bad as your student loans! A few cab rides aren't going to make that much difference..."

We always did have a soft spot for American artists!

TAXI

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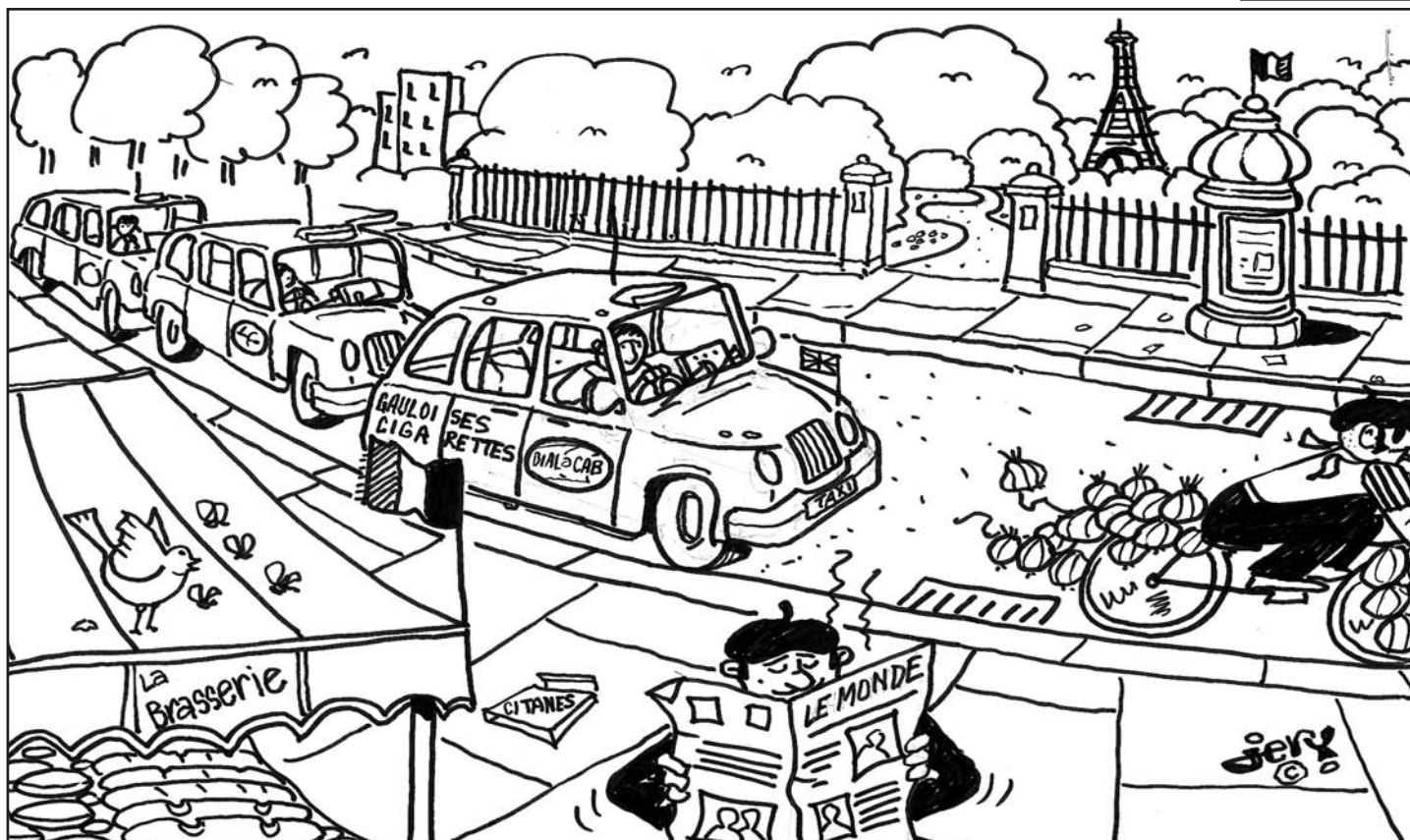
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Jery's World



Non, non, non! Ze new European Union Treaty will change nussing...

Offensive Behaviour by Licensed Drivers



Licensed drivers urinating in the street...

PCO Notice 21/06 highlighted the nuisance caused by licensed drivers urinating in the street, particularly in central London. Since that Notice was issued, the Public Carriage Office and the Metropolitan Police Service have received a further 40 complaints of such behaviour. All complaints of urinating in the street received by the PCO are passed to the police who will investigate the matter. Offenders are liable to prosecution, which could result in a fine and a criminal record.

In the event of a complaint of such conduct being received, the fitness of any taxi or private hire driver concerned to remain licensed will be reviewed and may result in the suspension or revocation of their licence.

Further information including opening times, accessibility and maps showing the locations of conveniences in Westminster can be found at www.westminster.gov.uk.

Taxi meter bays are already installed in the following locations in the City of Westminster and the PCO is continuing to work with the local authority to identify other suitable locations...

Bolsover Street, Ebury Bridge Road, Horseferry Road, Paddington Street, Palace Street, Regency Street and Warwick Row.

Drivers are advised to make use of these facilities when wishing to have a break or use the public conveniences. When using the taxi meter bays, all drivers should ensure that they comply with any restrictions regarding times of operation.

It is appreciated that the number of toilets open late at night is limited, but in the interest of hygiene, common decency and the reputation of the trade, drivers are asked to act in a professional manner and find alternative facilities.

Mary Dowdye
Head of Standards & Regulations

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per person

*Late deals and special price for DaC
members.*

Ian Macdonald (C64) considers himself to be a very lucky man. Why? Well, Ian takes up the story...

"It was the early hours of a Friday morning when I had just got home from work. I took my holdall out of the cab before parking it in the garage. When I returned to the pavement, my holdall had disappeared... gone ... just like that," he gestured Tommy Cooper style!

"I was fuming mad with myself for being so silly, especially as I had my digital camera in the bag with images on it of a recent fishing trip, plus the celebratory dinner and prize afterwards for landing the largest catch of the day! I resigned myself to not seeing either camera (or fish) ever again, so I was stunned when a few days later I received a call from PC Ray McKinnon of **Colindale police Burglary Squad**, who told me that they had my camera! Apparently they had arrested known offenders and found my camera in the swag bag."

But how did they know the camera was Ian's was the obvious retort?

"Well," Ian said, "by trolling through the camera images, they found a photo of me and my fellow fisherman in our local hostelry holding the winner's silver tray. There was also a menu board in the background that gave them a further clue – *Lord Nelson*. That's when they phoned around, until eventually they spoke to the landlord of my local who knew of my loss and was able to confirm my identity through the image of us celebrating

DaC Drivers's Stolen Camera Returned...

Following police suspect arrest...



Ian Macdonald (left) with the trophy winning photo he thought he'd never see again

our win!"

Now in full flow as he recalled the almost unbelievable event of getting back stolen property, Ian went on:

"The Gov'nor of my Lord Nelson gave them my contact details and now I not only have my camera back, but my treasured images too! So through good old-fashioned *Dixon of Dock Green* police work, I have my property

returned and the miscreants who nicked it will be dealt with. **Through Call Sign Magazine, I would publicly like to thank PC Ray McKinnon and DC Mark Maxwell for their sterling efforts and I can assure them that I will remember to take greater care of my possessions in the future!**"

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CALL SIGN WRITER WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD

Wendell becomes TLPA Taxicab Driver of the Year!

Although we'd heard through the grapevine in time for the last issue that **Call Sign's** US writer, **Wendell White**, had won an award, we knew little else about it until we were told that **Call Sign** had been mentioned in connection with the **Taxicab Driver of the Year** award!

It was at the **TLPA's 89th Annual Convention and Trade Show** held in Colorado and the rarefied air of his home city of Denver, that **Call Sign** writer Wendell White was presented with the **2007 International Taxicab Driver of the Year** award.

Wendell, a long-time driver for Metro Taxis, has been a cabby for over 30 years and was famous at Metro for not caring who, what or where to and was always happy to just take the next trip. However, over the years, Wendell has become so popular with passengers and famed for his reliability, that he gets (almost) as many calls as the cab company with passengers wanting to use Wendell's service privately!

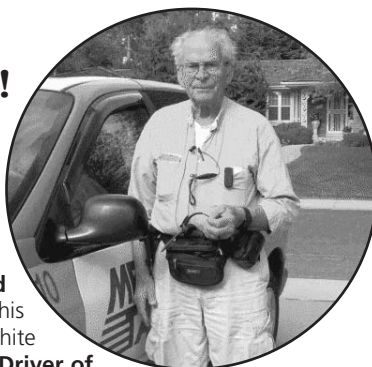
Now aged 82, but showing little inclination of calling it a day, Wendell says that his main worry is that computerisation within the cab trade has made things too impersonal.

"I enjoy personal contact," said Wendell, "this is a people industry and the most important person is the one in your cab. They are the people that put dollars in your pocket!"

As for being the Taxicab, Limousine and Paratransit Association Taxicab Driver of the Year, Wendell said modestly: "It is a distinction that I appreciate, but I think there are others that are equally, if not more deserving than me."

But it's Wendell they picked, so congratulations from all at Dial-a-Cab. Wendell will be back in a future issue to tell us more about a day in the life of a Denver cabby...

The TLPA has 1100 international cab companies as members including DaC, RTG and ComCab...



PORTRAIT AND WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

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

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

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

Please check out my portfolio on www.anjaking.com

Enquiries: email: anja@anjaking.com



Win 2 pairs of tickets for a great day of racing...!

Be the first out of the stalls and get ready for the start of the winter season of racing at Sandown Park Racecourse! The launch of this year's jumping season will take place in association with the **Spinal Research** raceday on Saturday 10 November 2007 - Gentlemen's Day.

Due to the outstanding success of the country's very first Gentlemen's Day last year, Sandown Park is very proud to announce this second annual event featuring a whole host of entertainment for both the men and the boys! There will be gadgets and gizmos, boy's toys, games and fun bits for your home kindly provided by **www.iwantoneofthose.com** - go online now to see how this unique website can transform your lifestyle with stuff you don't need but you really, really want! It's the perfect Christmas present buying solution for that impossible to buy for person.

Enjoy a host of other entertainment on the day including a casino where Black Jack and Roulette are there to play, plus live music from 'Class of 87' after racing. For the more style savvy among us, there is the opportunity of taking the highly contested *Best Dressed Man* competition by storm; this is the ideal day out for those planning stag parties or simply a fun day out for all the boys! In preparation of the competition, pop into the Grooming Stable, where complimentary treatments including traditional wet shaves and massages will be available, compliments of Austin Reed and Aveda.

David Mackinnon, Managing Director for Sandown Park, told **Call Sign**:

A DAY FOR THE GENTLEMEN AT SANDOWN PARK



Sandown Park winner's enclosure

"This is the second time in as many years at the racecourse where we have held a Gentlemen's Day. After the roaring success of last year, this day is sure to become a firm favourite on the racing calendar. However, this does not mean ladies are not invited - it's a great day out for all! We have a huge variety of entertainment to ensure enjoyment both before, during and after the races."

This is the first year that the first jumps race meeting of the season will be in association with the Spinal Research Raceday. Spinal Research focuses on finding ways to repair

damaged spinal cords. More than 40,000 people in the UK are paralysed through damage to the spinal cord and hundreds more join them each year. Spinal Research has forged close fundraising links to the equestrian world through its *Saddle-Up* campaign, which is supported by the British Equestrian Foundation. The charity has also funded important work with the help of generous donations from the Injured Jockeys' Fund.

Gates will open at 11am with the first race at 12.55pm - there are 7 races on the card. The racecourse is offering racegoers an advanced package where tickets are only £17 for Grandstand and £25 for Premier (these need to be booked 5 days in advance of the race meeting). Racing is a really social occasion and all group bookings of 6 or more receive a 20% discount. Accompanied children 16 and under are admitted free of charge. To book tickets, call Sandown Park on 01372 470047 or visit **www.sandown.co.uk**.

Two lucky Dial-a-Cab drivers can win a pair of tickets each - and accompanied children are free. Just tell us how many times Sandown Park has had a Gentleman's Day. Post or email to the usual **Call Sign** addresses. Entries must be received by November 5. Editor's decision is final...

DaC driver Mickey Lappin (E46) is always on the lookout for anyone connected to DaC who is involved in music. Are you in a band, solo artist, musician or songwriter? Call Mickey on 07879 465 771 and he'll make sure everyone knows about you...

Mickey's Music



Do you want to be in a band?

Ever fancied playing in a band? Are you learning an instrument and need a goal to set yourself? Or are you an old hand who keeps threatening to dust down the Rickenbacker or get your Stylophone out from the loft to give it another go? If so, then read on as this might be just what you're looking for!

Dial-a-Cab's **Dick Francis (T15)** is looking to put together a band with a view to going *on the road*, playing pubs, clubs, weddings, birthdays and barmitzvahs etc. Auditions and rehearsals will be in the Waterloo area on a midweek afternoon and the range of music is up to the influences of those who take part.

Dick told **Call Sign**: "We're looking for all types of musicians - guitarists, sax players, vocalists and virtually anyone who feels that they can give it a go and commit to turning up for rehearsals. We'll be playing some rock and roll, blues, soul, Beatles and Stones covers, in fact a bit of everything and whoever joins the band can add their favourites!"

So if you want to give it a go, then give Dick a ring on **07976 444 313** or email him at **dickfrancisuk2001@yahoo.co.uk**.

Mickey Lappin (E46)

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Lake Davenport

Great offers available
10% discount for Dial-a-Cab drivers
Contact John (M13) on 07921 920743...

Those drivers who advertise their holiday homes abroad for renting out in **Call Sign** should look out after a Barclays survey estimated that UK holidaymakers are saving £4billion a year by taking advantage of friends' and family's free accommodation!

The research from Barclays Buying Abroad and YouGov, found that 41% of Brits regularly take a holiday at a flat or house abroad owned by someone they know, with 13% admitting that, to some extent, they stayed friends purely so they could use the property! Over half (53%) thanked the owners with just a thank you card, a bottle of wine, box of choccies or some other small token of appreciation, while a tiny 7% spent the value of what they had saved on gifts and treats for their hosts.

Furthermore, 44% eat some or all of the food they find in the house or apartment and 36% drink some or all of the alcohol left there by the owners!

After reading the above, perhaps it isn't surprising to hear the survey discovered that when it comes to leaving, almost a third dashed to the airport without even washing the sheets!

Richard Exton, head of Barclays Buying Abroad told **Call Sign**:

"Buying abroad either as a permanent home or a holiday destination is now easier than ever before. The market is flourishing and many more Brits are taking the plunge and purchasing – either as a buy-to-let, a permanent home or just somewhere they can holiday with friends and

Call Sign hols homes advertisers - watch out!

Your "Friends" may be meanies!



family. We are seeing record numbers of enquiries and purchases in Spain, France, Italy and Portugal as Brits realise the savings that can be made on holidays by purchasing property abroad."

He had to leave when we asked whether buyers should then lend apartments to friends! Fortunately, those advertising their holiday properties to rent in **Call Sign** are all working on Dial-a-Cab and are offering properties at the best prices anyway

LTFUC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 'London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children' AGM will be held on Tuesday 4 December 2007 at 7.30pm.

*The New Park Day Centre,
19 Highbury New Park, N5.*












There is parking at the Centre and refreshments will be available.

All drivers are most welcome to attend...



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Dial-a-Cab driver **Steve Sharpe (F34)** has long been known among older DaC drivers as the man who could fix anything - on a cab, that is! Many was the night on EC5 when you'd see Steve's legs poking out from underneath another driver's cab or from under the bonnet and solving yet another mechanical problem.

Sadly for Steve, around 19 months ago he was taken ill and diagnosed with a *bilateral diaphragmatic paralysis*. This meant that his diaphragm was working incorrectly and instead of opening in an up and down motion, it opened from side to side. His life was turned upside down. He was unable to do many of the things people take for granted - and that included driving. Just getting into the cab became an impossibility, let alone driving it. He just had no strength and couldn't even put his car into first gear.

Bilateral diaphragmatic paralysis is a rare condition that if at all, comes after chest surgery. But Steve had not had anything like that for at least 40 years. He literally had a doze in an armchair and awoke to find himself suffering from this debilitating illness.

Steve took every conventional medical test there is and the consensus of opinion was that sadly, nothing could be done to help. His condition was continuing to deteriorate.

For over 20 years, Steve has been a member of the *National Federation of Spiritual Healing* (NFSH) and also the *Jewish Association of Spiritual Healers* (JASH). He is a respected healer who practises from his home and who also makes hospital visits. He also found that sending out healing messages while driving his cab helped relieve the undoubted stress of driving a taxi in London.

Sadly, he could never have predicted the *bilateral diaphragmatic paralysis* that hit him but Steve claims that while conventional medicine gave up on him, it has been spiritual healing that slowly but surely brought his life back from the brink and now, although not yet driving a cab, he can drive a car for up to two hours. When we met him, Complaints Officer Allan Evans was giving him a walking tour of Dial-a-Cab House.

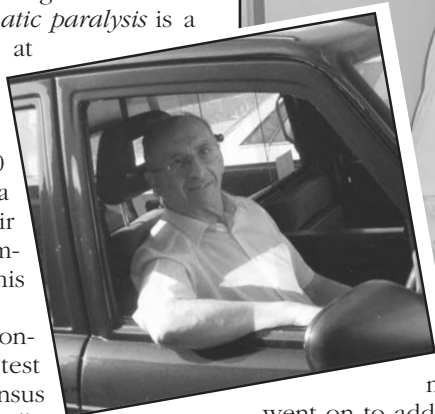
"Not too long ago, I'd never have managed it," Steve told us, "but thanks to the powers of healing, I did it with little problem. I've also managed to overhaul the cab myself! Believe me, that was something that no doctor would have said I could ever do again."

Steve first realised he had healing powers in 1987, soon after his father-in-law passed away. He and his family visited a spiritualist church and while admitting that was a strange place for a Jewish family to visit - let alone to his complete

With respect to all physicians... Taxi Driver... Heal Thyself!



Allan Evans gives Steve a walking tour of DaC House.
Inset pic Steve in his cab



shock, receive the message that he did - he went on to add that spiritual healing is non-religious.

"It encompasses all religions and all faiths," he said, "it has no boundaries."

Steve is heavily involved with the NFSH and JASH and in addition to healing himself, is still happy to send healing to anyone who needs it.

Steve is not the only spiritualist healer that Dial-a-Cab has "produced", former Chairman Aubrey Siteman was also well known for his healing powers.

Call Sign November 2007

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SOUTH LONDON TAXIS 10% DISCOUNT FOR DAC DRIVERS!

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

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BP Ultimate Diesel / Shell Diesel Extra...

I was in a BP garage recently and saw they were selling BP Ultimate diesel with the claim: "Leave the rest behind with up to 22 miles extra per tank." So I thought I'd see whether the claim was correct and if there were any benefits to me using it in my taxi on a regular basis? I have a pretty good combined cycle, with almost half my daily mileage being spent at 60 mph ie half motorway, half urban. I based the trial over 10 days using **BP Ultimate Diesel** for 5 days and **Shell Diesel Extra** for 5 days. This first trial took place before the latest fuel increase, which saw diesel nudge against the £1 a litre mark.

First using BPUD, I noticed that the engine

This series has sent out Call Sign's Richard Potter to test all the different diesel fuels to see what, if any, of their publicity is true...

Call Sign tests BP and Shell Diesels

ran quieter and smoother and it burned more efficiently because there was a slight increase in power and the amount of soot (unburned fuel) from the exhaust was much reduced. My MPG over the 5 days was 23.09, 22.25, 24.24, 23.54 and 23.50 making an average of **23.32**. The main problems were that BPUD is only available at participating garages and the cost was dearer at **100.9p-105.p per litre**.

Using Shell Diesel Extra, there were no benefits with exhaust soot and I had to occasionally rev up the engine to clear the exhaust, but saw very little change in power. Over the five days, my MPG were 24.01, 23.77, 23.29, 23.58 and 22.58 making an average of **23.44**. The big difference was in cost with Shell Extra costing as little as **93.9p-96.9p per litre** in comparison - not forgetting that you can now add between two and three pence per litre onto all the above prices. As you can see, per-

haps surprisingly, the cheaper Shell Diesel Extra did slightly more miles to the gallon than the BP Ultimate Diesel. Neither did I find any evidence that it did up to 22 miles more per fill.

Baring in mind the big difference in price between the two and if comparing the modest benefits over a monthly period, I personally won't be using BP Ultimate diesel in the future.

Perhaps the most disappointing point about the whole trial is the fact that my TX2 did 23 MPG. Not good for a purpose built vehicle in this day and age. As we start looking at energy efficiency and hybrid vehicles, I can't help but feel a touch embarrassed.

My local Shell Garage has just started to sell V-power diesel. I will trial this fuel and put the results into the next issue of Call Sign.

Richard Potter (T51)

KPM in "Reverse Takeover"

KPM-UK Taxis Plc – Main LTI Dealers for many years - have been involved in what is known as a reverse takeover with **Pannal plc** and have now been admitted onto the London Stock Exchange's AIM market as **Eco City Vehicles plc**. The process has been used for several years as a way of cutting out red tape to turn private companies in public ones.

The reverse takeover process usually involves shareholders of the private company (KPM) purchasing control of the public company (Pannal plc) and then merging it with the private company. This would mean KPM's shareholders receiving a substantial majority of the shares of the Pannal and taking control of its Board of directors. The transaction can often be accomplished within weeks, cutting out many months of red tape.

At an EGM held by Pannal plc, their shareholders approved the "reverse takeover" of KPM, whereby KPM become the dominant partner and the new company **Eco City Vehicles**, have now begun trading on the AIM market.

KPM Chairman and now ECV CEO, Peter DaCosta, said following the deal:

"This has been a monumental step in the lives of all at KPM and after serving the industry for over 32 years, has allowed us to reward our hard working senior management with shares in a company they have helped build. It also allows our loyal customers now to become shareholders, some-



Peter (I) with DaC chairman Brian Rice

thing we have been asked time and time again since becoming a privately owned Plc back in the 80s.

"The move will enable the company to take advantage of the opportunities that are available in the environmental sector, an area that KPM has been involved in for some time now. The new platform will help grow the company in that market place as well as our core business, and take advantage of the new technology being introduced in the busy business to business sector, by way of environment friendly vehicles enhanced with fuel saving ideas.

"I wish to thank our customers, suppliers and everybody who have over the years given us support that has allowed us to reach this milestone."

As Eco City Vehicles, KPM intend supplying – in addition to taxis – environmentally friendly vehicles to those such as local authorities and urban vehicle fleet owners.

Pannal was admitted onto the AIM market in February 2005 raising £1.5 million in the process.

The former MD of Leeds United Holdings plc for three years during their Premiership days, Jeremy Fenn, becomes a non-executive director of the new company having previously been a Pannal Director.



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Signal problems

When I first read Darren's letter, I was somewhat surprised to read that if a Board member responds to a letter it is perceived to be a slanging match between Board and the fleet. While signals are nowhere near the standard we would all like to have, we must look at the possible reasons why situations occur in the way that Darren describes.

It's been written about time and time again that the only reason for signals being inaccurate is because of the number of packets of messages going backwards and forwards between the fleet and the host computer. While Darren has been offered his trip, the reason he is booked off is because his *accept* signal has not reached the host.

The system is programmed that if it receives no signal back, it is then to book the driver off. On some occasions, trips appear on the driver's screen but the connect message from the terminal has not been received, leaving the host computer to believe the trip has not been offered. Darren, like all drivers, is not aware of the whole picture and I can only agree - why should he be? While trips are being offered, what goes on in the background is the majority of other offers are being rejected.

It has been written and spoken about on numerous occasions; if more drivers were to *accept* rather than *reject*, this would reduce the packets of messaging and improve the signals.

With the busy period soon to be upon us, I have been looking at back-up zones in the central areas. One trip can be rejected by anything up to 20/30 drivers in its primary zone. When it passes to the back-up zone, it can then be rejected by a further 30/40 drivers, which equates to just one trip having up to 70 rejects. The reason for the reject is not in question as drivers in the primary zone will have a different reason to those in the back-ups. If we have just 10 trips firing out in one zone and all are rejected by the drivers in the primary and back up zones, we are now looking at 700 rejects. If you look further, each reject then causes another packet of information being sent to another driver, so the total number of terminal transactions is 1400. For every message sent one way, one is sent in return. When there are some 90 trips unmatched at times, can you even begin to imagine how many packets of information have been sent backwards and forwards?

What is extremely frustrating to the Call Centre controllers is they now have a good eye for what trips will be taken and which trips won't.

I have been looking at is the number of back-up zones that are allocated to a zone and I believe it is a total waste of airspace to send trips as back-ups when we know full well they will never be taken. For example, if a driver is booked into NW1W and is north of Regents Park, he/she can be offered a trip in W1SW. I think we all know that if the trip in W1SW is picking up around the Hilton Hotel and going to Chelsea, the driver is not going to run all that distance to cover the trip. Therefore, by removing certain back-up zones and allowing the trips to go into *BIDs*

Keith Cain responds to Darren Hawley's (A80) letter from this issue's Mailshot...

Call Centre Chat



much quicker, drivers who wish to run for the work will do so by Bidding. Let me add that we have not touched the outer zones, so there is no need to worry about the '*going home*' facility being altered.

I'm confident that by reducing the number of packets of information, then the accuracy of the signals should improve. Couple this with the removal of the voice channel, which introduces two more data channels to spread the load, it must assist in improving our problems. One of the new data channels is up and running at the Park Lane Hilton, with the second planned for January close to Heathrow Airport. The whole DaC fleet will need to make a visit to Roman Way to have their radios tuned to receive the new channels. I am advised that it only takes 15/20 minutes and those who already have had the upgrade are reporting an improvement with their signals.

Incorrect Info...

I have looked into Darren's other comment about incorrect information being given to drivers. My initial reaction was to think that we had another very serious problem, however, the two trips in question have been isolated incidences compared to the number of trips Darren has undertaken between the two dates of each trip. Darren asks for the name and extension number to be always taken, but unfortunately, if the caller does not wish to - or can't - give us this information, then telephonists have been instructed to put down what they are given without becoming involved in an argument.

While I accept that the driver message says what your instructions are, the telephonist does not see this. They have their own instructions, which do not always match yours. The client who sets up the account is not necessarily the person travelling and with the best will in the world, we often find ourselves being in the middle. The primary cause for much of this is the use of the mobile phone, which is the contact number given instead of an extension.

Darren remarked about names; when we can, you will notice we put the surname first followed by Christian name or initial and a title if we can get one. We do this so that it is

easier to recall trips on surname. When picking up 'Kate' from Pall Mall, the caller was asked by the CSR for her full name and contact number only to be told: "Just put down Kate, I will be waiting for the driver."

The reason Darren was later given an extension number was that the controller had time to recall previous trips on that account number to see whether Kate had used us before. Sure enough she had and on that occasion had supplied us with an extension number that was then passed on.

That is not to say the staff are always right, of course there are occasions when they get it wrong. If you recall, I did inform DaC members through *Call Sign* that we had increased our complement of call centre staff by 70 and I said then that you might receive some errors that I would like you all to make allowances for. However, the trip picking up from Queenstown Road was an error because the CSR had selected Battersea Park Station instead of Battersea Park. Both addresses are next to each other on our street data base and the wrong address was selected. However, just to confuse the CSR, the client also gave Sun Gate and Queenstown Road as the pick-up addresses. I say it again; CSR's are human and like us all will make an occasional error. Those that make errors constantly do not work for us for very long, but the individual who makes one out of 200 calls taken, must have allowances made to them.

The point I'm making to Darren and other members is to think of the wider picture. Some 7,000/8,000 trips a day are dispatched through the system. If they were all incorrect, then we would have serious problems, but fortunately this is not the case. However, don't think that every piece of incorrect information is the cause of our staff. Clients can be very frustrating too, as we all know. What we are experiencing more of lately are the number of mistakes made by clients when booking via our on-line facility. We do try to monitor these trips and often controllers catch them and make alterations, however some do get through.

Our procedure of taking bookings from clients has not changed to that extent from when the Society first began. We are aware of the difficulty and inconvenience it causes drivers when details are not as we would like. Not always is it the staff that are to blame, but they do carry out their jobs to a very high standard and are trained by DaC's in-house trainers to a level that no other circuit has.

Darren I have taken the time to explain in depth the situations and problems we have and I sincerely hope you find it informative rather than part of a slanging match...

Keith Cain
Call Centre Manager
Driver Operations Manager

Dial-a-Cab driver **Jim Rainbird (T25)** seems to have an addiction to appearing in movies - alongside his cab! Over the years, **Call Sign** has reported on Jim's exploits in a Bollywood blockbuster - *Namaste London*, which starred the absolutely stunning **Katrina Kaif**; the ITV production of *Deadline*, where along with a film crew and the very pleasant - but not as stunning as Katrina Kaif - Janet Street Porter, he set off in chase of Prince Harry and his girlfriend.

Then there was the TV quiz on JHK (Japan TV), where Jim and presenter Yoko - almost as lovely as Katrina - toured London in Jim's cab recording questions for Japanese viewers, which were then dubbed into the home language! Locals in Tokyo reported that you would never have known that he couldn't speak Japanese!

Now Jim (and trusty cab) is in a brand new movie and one that promises to be a big hit. Produced by Face Films and Scanner-Rhodes Productions, **City Rats** is a black comedy full of witty social commentary addressing contemporary issues such as sexuality, disability, ethnicity, love, life and death.

The movie tells the story of eight haunted people who meet and fall apart - looking for redemption in each other. One (another Jim) is throwing watermelons off his office roof testing the effect for a possible suicide, while Sue is on a nearby roof about to jump herself! They see each other and delay their departures temporarily. Together they set off searching for other ways out other than down.

Then there is Sue's ex-boyfriend Dean who is struggling with his creativity. His paintings are getting panned and his poetry ripped apart. He needs someone to admire - and who better than Gina, the experimental prostitute with dodgy legs who lives next door! Funny and sad with several other emotions thrown in, the movie stars Danny Dyer - who recent-

Jim's in the movies again ...



On City Rats with Ray Panthaki and Susan Lynch - but hey, that's a great looking cab driver! Pic Kim Bildorf

ly starred alongside Sean Bean in *The Outlaw*. Also in **City Rats** is Tamar Hassan - who starred in hit movies *The Business* and *The Football Factory* - and Ray Panthaki, who has appeared in many films but may be best remembered for his major two year stint as Ronny Ferreira in *Eastenders*.

As for Jim, other than the above, his list of appearances would take up too much space in a mag with only 40 pages! So why does he do it? Is it the money?

"Definitely NOT the money," said Jim recently speaking to **Call Sign** from the **City Rats** set, **"unless you are the star, then film**

work isn't as lucrative as you'd think and often you could earn more by just going out in the cab! I do it because I enjoy it and it gives me a buzz. Addicted? Well perhaps not quite that, but I'm waiting with baited breath for the next part!"

And the movie?

"It looks really good - and there's a great looking cab driver in it...!"

Production companies are Face Films and my company Scanner-Rhodes Productions. Tamer Hassan, also starred in the hit films, *The Business* and *The Football Factory*.

Ken Freeborn Becomes a Grandpa



New grandparents Jenny and Ken with Kiera

Jenny Freeborn and DaC hubby Ken (W6) recently became first-time grandparents, courtesy of daughter Louise who gave birth to baby Keira Samantha on 6 September.

"Keira weighed in at a healthy 6lbs 3oz and arrived at 08.30 in the morning - right on booked time," Ken beamed to our reporter!

"A very sensible time of the day too," added an excited Grandma Jenny, **"and what a little treasure!"**

Both mother and baby are doing well as is new father Adam.

"Adam is over the moon about the new addition to the family," Ken told **Call Sign** while reminding us that there are also another set of grandparents to congratulate - Adam's parents, Sandra and Sam.

Congratulations to all...

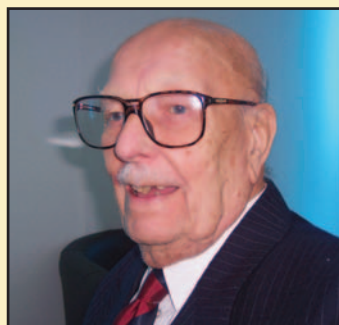
Former ODRTS Chairman, Jack Russell was guest of honour at the official launch of Dial-a-Cab House. Now aged 93, Jack wanted to give his views on the day...

Reflections of a former chairman

I was so happy to be invited to the opening of this lovely new building and speaking as an ex-Chairman, I want to firstly congratulate everyone on the move. It certainly takes the Society a long way from its first two buildings at Pentonville Road and Shirland Road. I also want to say that meeting again current Chairman Brian Rice, his Board and all the staff on this wonderful day, has been a real pleasure. They are all such very nice, personable people and obviously dedicated to their jobs.

Just because it is now over 40 years since I took over from the late **Trixie Solomons** and had anything to do with ODRTS - now Dial-a-Cab - that doesn't mean that I don't take an interest in its development. I follow its progress each month in **Call Sign** and have occasional chats with the Editor and others. Even though I am now 93, I still think of and feel so much for this Society.

Perhaps I shouldn't blow my own trumpet,



but I will anyway! I was one of the instigators of the idea of buying our own building and so far as I am concerned it was one of the best things we did and DaC House is the logical result.

I feel lucky to have had some good Chairmen following in my footsteps, but especially Brian Rice. In my opinion, Brian has been

one of - if not the best - Chairmen DaC have had and I go right back to the beginning with Founder-Chairman Bonnie Martyn. Brian is a very sensible Chairman; he knows when to say yes and when to say no - two very important requisites to being in charge - and the way that he has cultivated this company has been just fantastic.

So Brian, I would like to place on record in our wonderful magazine, my admiration for the excellent work you have done. And I mean every word of that...

Jack Russell

ODRTS Chairman 1964 1969 (Ex B24)

A business website reflects its company and is visible to thousands of potential customers and competitors alike. Therefore, it is imperative that any business worth its salt has an up-to-date, user-friendly website.

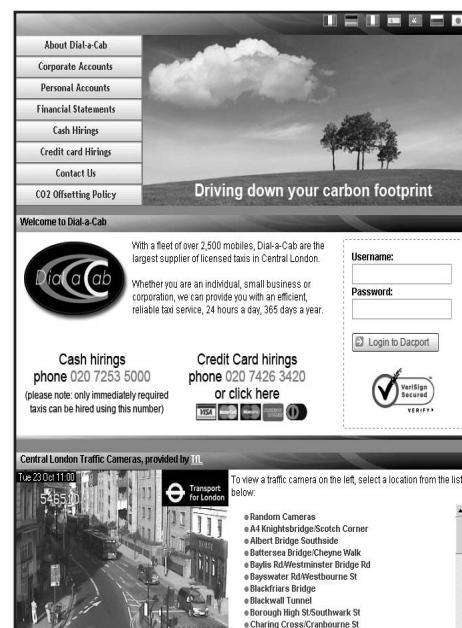
Around the time of the building move, I had thought about revamping the then-current DaC website. Having redesigned it personally 3 years previous, I realised that although 3 years ago it was the best in the industry, it had now become outdated compared to our competitors. This is the nature of the Internet nowadays; corporate websites hold their appeal for about a year before having to be scrapped and redesigned. Unfortunately, I

DaC website relaunched

hadn't had the time to put in the hours to redesign our website, what with being involved with the planning and executing of the building move.

So in mid-September, I heard about the official opening of Dial-a-Cab House on the 19th October and was aware that we would be going carbon neutral from the same date. I realised that that was the perfect date to launch a redesigned website. A new era for Dial-a-Cab required a whole new online image.

The new website is coded in ASP.NET 2.0, and the front page uses several live XML feeds to provide visitors with up-to-date traffic news, weather and live traffic webcams. As a matter



of course, the website is also available in a no-images version for accessibility reasons, but additionally, any page can be translated in seconds into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and even Japanese!

We will soon be adding streaming media content and more interactive features and the website will continue to change and improve in the coming months.

I believe our website is once again the best in the industry - but what do you think? Have a look (www.dialacab.co.uk) and feel free to send your comments - good or bad - to the editor who will forward them on to me.

Jon Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

Celine Dion at the O₂



O2 have told *Call Sign* that Celine Dion will be playing at the **O2 Arena** on 6 May 2008. The biggest selling artist of all time is the latest star announcement for London's newest entertainment destination. The tour follows her record-breaking engagement at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas where she has played to nearly 3 million people over five sell-out years.

The concert promises to be another visual spectacular where she will perform her biggest hits along with songs from her new album 'Taking Chances'.

Tickets go on sale on Friday 16th November at 9am and can be bought from www.theo2.co.uk or by calling 0870 400 0688.

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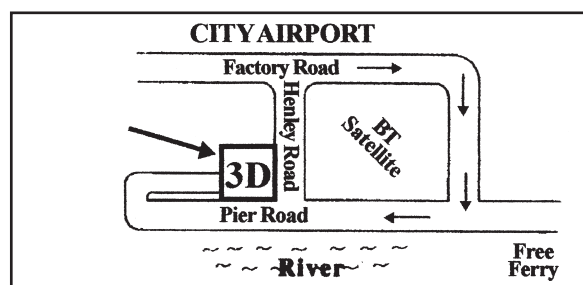
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WE ARE ALSO A PCO APPROVED EMISSIONS FITTING AGENT FOR THE TAXI CAT SYSTEM



The October issue of *Call Sign* ran a poignant article by Dial-a-Cab driver **Jon Robinson (E88)**, who wrote of his drive to Holland in his TX4 with his father and son and their hunt to find two war graves. The first was of his father's best friend, **Cyril Pearce**, of the 4th battalion Somerset Light Infantry who, at the age of just 18, was part of D-Company who were ordered to clear Barchem (Holland) of German soldiers. Private Pearce was killed during the German retreat and buried where he fell on 1 April 1945.

Jon also visited a second war grave, this one in the Belgium town of Ypres where his target was the final resting place of his great-grandfather, Lance Corporal Fred Sprules. Fred was part of the London Regiment during WWI and died in action in 1917.

Following publication of the article, Call Sign received a letter from Hans Dooren, who runs the Dutch section of the London Vintage Taxi Association. From his home in Holland, he wrote to this magazine:

"I read the article by Jon Robinson in *Call Sign Online* and it gave me goose pimples. I am a war child of Arnhem (at 11-years old) and we lived near the bridge that Jon wrote of. My dad was the GP in the area. There was a battle going on all around us, followed by a 9-month forced evacuation and then years of Nazi occupation. I may say we had it all - as so many others did as well.

"Now I am a pensioner, it gives me some time and it all comes back in my memory. So I try each year to meet the war veterans and assist in giving them a good time - as my thank you for still being alive after what happened to all of us. We lost everything - but no relatives. I like driving them in my FX4S London cab and they tell me it

Amazing offer to Dial-a-Cab drivers! Dial-a-War Grave?



The Dutch war grave of Cyril Pearce

makes them feel at home!"

Hans then made an astonishing offer to any Dial-a-Cab driver, their relatives or friends. If you have lost someone in one of the two wars who died and was buried in Holland and you have never seen their grave, Hans will try to do what he can in finding it and if possible, take a photo to send to you. Hans continued:

"If any of your drivers or their relatives want to write to me, they are welcome and I will try and comfort them by (hopefully) finding the information they may have been seeking for many years. I have found graves and sent pictures to relatives in the past. Occasionally I have even sent some moving shots of the environment of

the cemetery etc.

"The Commonwealth cemeteries are very well looked after. Each year we attend several commemorations by visiting veterans groups such as the Old Comrades Group of Market Garden and the Anglo-Dutch Bond, who we meet yearly at Venray.

John and Margaret Sleep, being veterans (and badly injured at the end of the war) have come back to this area for the last 21 years and now have many good Dutch friends; we still see them as our liberators! John fought from 1940 in Libya, North Africa, as a paratrooper as well as Sicily, Italy, Normandy and into Holland until April 1945.

"He says that war is a dirty business, remembering the soldiers who came back tired after days of fighting at Venray, filthy from not washing, unshaved, with lice on their heads, having lost comrades and feeling terrible. Then they met the first freed citizens in the town.

A veteran visiting Arnhem who says that he fought at Arnhem will always get a free drink!"

If any DaC driver or their family would like to take up Hans' offer of trying to search for war graves at Arnhem, let Call Sign know and we'll pass the message on. There are no guarantees. As Hans points out, he is a pensioner and perhaps not as quick as he used to be, but will be happy to try to help you.

Courts Uphold Taxi Emission Strategy in London

The London Cab Drivers' Club (LCDC) has for some time been undermining the Mayor's Taxi Emission Strategy as implemented by the Public Carriage Office (PCO), by promoting adverse press coverage of it. Stories have included claims that "the systems do not work" and that they "will take on everyone and anyone and that includes the Mayor, TfL and the PCO."

On Friday 28 September 2007, the Royal Courts of Justice for a second time, rejected calls by the LCDC for a Judicial Review of the PCO's implementation of the taxi emission strategy.

His Honour Judge Mole, having considered all of the available evidence in detail, ruled that the request from the London Cab Drivers' Club was "doomed to failure." He also commented that the PCO implementation of the emission strategy was entirely reasonable. This hearing took place after Mr Justice Wyn Williams had already refused a previous LCDC request for a Judicial Review in May this year.

The PCO is satisfied that the integrity of the extensive and controlled testing carried out by the Energy Saving Trust on its behalf, resulted in the development and approval of emission reduction systems that fulfil the requirements of this strategy.

The PCO remains committed to the Mayor's emission strategy, which seeks to improve air quality for the benefit of everyone in London, not least working taxi drivers. The PCO is also confident that all the approved emission reduction technologies are fit for purpose and will deliver the required standards provided they are fitted in accordance with the manufacturers' specifications to properly prepared and maintained vehicles.

Dave Stock
PCO Head of Service Delivery

**The LCDC have appealed against the decision and have requested a further High Court hearing...Ed*

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20MPH speed limit for London to replace humps?

Mayor Ken Livingstone has announced that he is in favour of the system to be introduced in his home borough of Brent, where speed humps in residential streets are to be replaced by a 20MPH speed limit that will be enforced by CCTV cameras.

The Mayor also said he would like to see the system brought into every residential street in London and added that the new batch of cameras were much cheaper than the wired speed traps and saw no reason why the cameras should not be placed in every street to enforce the limit.

Speaking to the London Assembly, he added that current tests in Camden and other places had been very successful, with road deaths reduced by up to 57% and felt that most drivers would prefer the speed limit to traffic calming humps.

Trials will begin next year and Transport for London has a £10million fund to help the boroughs set up the scheme.

So if you thought PCNs for parking were bad enough, you will be able to get them on the move as well soon!

POWER PILL

Many DaC drivers have phoned Call Sign to ask why they cannot get in touch with Power Pill; the answer is that we don't know and neither do JVBright, who were one of the main stockists of the pill.

Call Sign has no doubt that Power Pill works, but until such time as we can resume contact with the PP dealer, we will not be using their advertisement and advise drivers not to send them any money...

New York Mayor looks at London's 'Ring of Steel'



New York Mayor (centre) in London with Ken Livingstone and TFL's Peter Hendy

New York Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, visited London last month to see how our Ring of Steel and network of CCTV cameras works. Mr Bloomberg is looking to take the idea back to Lower Manhattan.

"If you think cameras aren't watching you all the time, you are very naïve," said the Mayor, "we live in a dangerous world and people want to have security cameras."

Although US civil liberties groups are against the idea, the NYPD says it expects the program to be running in NY by the end of 2009. As in London, the system will consist of thousands of security cameras, roadblocks and licence plate scanners. One of those scanners is already being tested close to the World Trade Centre site.

Mayor Bloomberg also looked at London's taxis and took a ride on a hybrid double-decker bus along with London equivalent, Mayor Ken Livingstone and TfL Commissioner Peter (Mr Bendy Bus) Hendy.

Mayor Bloomberg has now proposed a congestion charge for New York similar to the one started here in 2003. He told us:

"If you're sitting in your car in traffic and an express bus that's pleasant and safe and fast goes zipping by, you're going to ask why you're wasting time sitting in the car?" Now he has to hope that whatever he takes back is enough to convince the state Legislature and City Council enough to go along with his plan.

Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

Ever needed money quickly but were anxious about 'variable' bank interest rates?

Well wonder no more! If you are a subscriber, journeyman or member of staff at Dial-a-Cab then you qualify to join the **DIAL-A-CAB CREDIT UNION**.

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

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

The cost?

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

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

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

All savings and loans carry free life insurance.

AND you usually get an annual dividend on your savings.

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

Whilst going home recently, I had an interesting conversation with a young lady. She was telling me how she had just moved to Kent and that the standard of living was much higher, the people were nicer than those in London and that it was one of the best things she had ever done. Those who know me appreciate that it's not in my nature to be controversial in my opinions, so I didn't mention the fact that we were going to Bromley and not since the early 60s had Bromley been in Kent, so I just nodded agreeably. Indeed parts of all the Home Counties were swallowed up when the old LCC boundaries spread out, the worst casualty being Middlesex, which now doesn't exist at all.

London has 5 Home Counties; Essex, Herts. Bucks, Surrey and Kent. The confusion came with the Post Office initially requesting people posting to places such as Croydon, not to use a Surrey address but use LBC instead - which stood for London borough of Croydon. Bromley became LBB - London borough of Bromley. I can distinctly remember my mother doing this when I was a child, but apparently the idea was dropped after complaints from users and residents.

Another organisation whose boundaries have changed is the London Fire Brigade, which only used to cover the present post coded area until the 60s. The old Richmond Fire Station in Kew Road used to belong to Surrey Fire Brigade and Barking Fire Station formed part of Essex Fire Brigade. If you go past Erith Fire Station you will see a sign on

A DaC Driver's Views on Life and Everything



the front wall saying *Fire Brigade*. It used to read Kent Fire Brigade, but the Kent was taken down when London took over.

Remembrance Sunday

As with every November, our thoughts turn to Remembrance Sunday and to the British men and women who perished trying to make the world a safer and more peaceful place in all conflicts - but especially the Great War and WW2. I have been to the British war graves in both Bayeux and Albert on the Somme and was very moved and humbled to see how the young soldiers lost their lives to allow us all to live a life of peace. It makes me very proud to be British and I must pay tribute to the Commonwealth war Graves Commission whose responsibility it is to make sure that all

British and Commonwealth cemeteries and graves are kept in fine order all over the world. Over the years many people have tried to explain the British psyche and its contribution and link to the successes of WW1 and WW2.

One attribute goes like this. It is a quote from Jack Marriott, an Air Raid Precaution (ARP) Warden. *"We ran across a field to where the German Dornier 'flying pencil' lay on the ground with little damage except for a smashed undercarriage. Three of the crew who were not seriously injured had been taken away by the Home Guard. One was lying by the aircraft. The first Aid crew applied dressings and bandages to the bullet wounds to his chest and we carried him to the ambulance. This was the first German I had seen up close and he was very young and ghostly pale. His uniform looked shabby and he had holes in the soles of his flying boots, not at all the ruthless superman type we were led to expect. Colonel Greenwood and his Home Guard collected one of the uninjured airmen. He told me: 'The poor blighter seemed very shaken, so the boys and I stopped off at The Crown and I brought him a pint before we turned him in.'"*

Please support the Royal British Legion and wear your poppy with pride...

As usual, just put Richard Potter in the subject line and send to callsignmag@aol.com if you would like to get in touch.

Richard Potter (T51)

FIRST DRIVER FINED FOR SMOKING IN HIS CAB!



Iftikhar Ahmed, an Oldham Private Hire driver, has become the first cabbie to be fined for smoking in his vehicle. **Call Sign** doesn't usually print stories about minicab drivers, but as this is believed to be the first case of its kind in England, we thought it worth the warning.

The fixed penalty notice was handed out to the Motown Taxis driver after a council official spotted Mr Ahmed smoking a cigarette while parked in his car. Since July 1, it has been illegal to smoke in any place of work including taxis and private hire vehicles.

Mr Ahmed is a 60-a day smoker but has paid the £50 fine and claims he won't do it again.

Anyone caught smoking in their cab - Taxi or PH - could face a £200 fine or as much as £2500 if they allow passengers to smoke in the cab...

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COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello Ladies And Gents,

I have now had a reasonable amount of time in this position and have been able to assess and evaluate the types of complaints I receive from clients, members of the public, fellow subscribers and the PCO. I have written previously stating how I feel I should manage this role and how difficult it can sometimes be to judge both sides of some serious complaints, but I must remind you that we must all work within the framework of the ODRTS rulebook and a long standing list of procedure rules.

Our technology is highly sophisticated and foolproof and any irregularities or discrepancies are easily highlighted and accurately verified in daily reports and Management Information Statistics.

In this article, I would like to list a number of issues that still occur on a regular basis and I would politely request that you make every effort to address these problems that are a cause of concern and which could lead to a complaint.

1. Booking in – inner and outer zones:

You must be able to reach the furthest part of a particular zone within 15 minutes.

2. Booking in - outer zones without a postal code:

You must be physically in these zones that are inside and outside of the M25 and which is easily proved by GPS.

3. Working Ranks:

Ranks such as E14C and E14S are used to dispatch trips from designated accounts and unless you are instructed otherwise, please do not book in unless you are actually on the stand. Even when work is busy, it is unfair to book in



from places further afield. It is a procedure rule and again any misdemeanours can easily be proved by GPS.

4. TaxiCard trips: I have recently received complaints of drivers refusing TaxiCard holders. That is certainly not in the spirit of this account. Quite a number of these passengers are severely restricted and rely on our service as their only way of travelling around. I have previously mentioned that it is a very small minority that give the vast majority a bad name. The PCO and relevant authorities are regularly informed by the card holders and complaints that I receive of aggressive and heartless drivers is certainly not what the vast majority of us want to be branded as. These are accounts that are active 365 days of the year, come rain or shine. Please look after them.

Not **all** Boroughs allow you to 'stage-

coach' (swipe the card twice) on a single trip. Please note that Westminster are one of those that do not allow stage-coaching. An up-to-date list of all boroughs is available in the Driver's Reception.

5. Trips to outlying destinations: Please remember to update the trip with the exact destination. E99 or SE99 will not sufficiently justify a high meter fare for a long trip, Southend or Gravesend will.

6. Meter Interface: If the **actual** meter amount is not automatically transferring to the CLJ Form when you clear the fare through the terminal, please arrange to have your meter interface checked at Roman Way immediately. If you manually enter or modify the CLJ screen trip before clearing the amount, it will show as an incorrect charge and also a discrepancy on the reports that are sent to clients. These must be 100% accurate, so please be very careful that the exact amounts are cleared on the meter.

If you have any queries on these or any other points that may be a cause for concern, please contact me on 0207 553 7222, I really am only too pleased to help.

Finally can I remind you that ODRTS rulebooks and procedure rules are available at Dial-a- Cab House. Work levels will be getting busier in the run up to the festive season.

Please abide by the rules of our Society, they are there for a reason...

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer
Allane@Dialacab.co.uk



COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS - RESULTS



Results of a Complaints meeting heard on Wednesday 26 September and an Appeals meeting on 2 October 2007. *Call Sign* does not publish 'no further action' or 'not guilty' results. A list of rules is available from the Complaints Officer...

Rep = Reprimand... Susp = Suspension...

Name/call sign

Francis Massingham (H31)

Derek Donnelly (V47)

Stephen Gander (V20)

Nature of complaint

Rules 2, 3, 12

Rules 1, 2, 3

Rules 2, 5

Sentence

4 weeks susp (Reduced to 3 weeks on Appeal)

3 weeks susp (Reduced to 1 week on Appeal)

2 weeks susp (Reduced to 1 week on Appeal)

London Wins Best City for Public Transport

...and that includes taxis!

In a survey by world travellers, London came top for the second year running as *Best City for Public Transport*. The UK capital also topped the poll by holiday review site *TripAdvisor* for having the safest public transport, best subway or Metro system - and also the best taxis!

The bad news was that London also came top for having the most expensive transport system. New York came in as runner-up to London in both categories. Coming in last for best system was Los Angeles.



London came top in 'Best City Transport' and that included taxis

London also came fourth behind Washington, Tokyo and Paris when the question asked who had the cleanest transport system.

TripAdvisor communications director Michele Perry told *Call Sign*: "It's proof that even when it comes to riding a bus or a subway, you get what you pay for."

DaC Chairman Brian Rice added: "We didn't need a survey to know who had the best taxi system!"

Dial-a-Cab House Officially Launched



Some five months after moving from Brunswick House to our new home at Dial-a-Cab House, the Society launched the new building with an invitation to drivers and clients to come and have a look around the four storey building, while food and drink were on hand in the marquee where previously had been the car park!

All of our top clients were represented, whilst many drivers also took the opportunity to have a look round. Brian Rice's PA, Jacqui Chart was the person designated to put the event together and everyone seemed to agree that it was a great way to launch the latest instalment of the Dial-a-Cab story. It also included a relaunch of the DaC website, which you can read about elsewhere in this issue.



Allan Evans with drivers Larry Miller (S35), Tony Perkins (C63) and Paul Ranson (L90)



Brian Rice with John Sheen, WCHCD Beadle



Mike Son has a chat with Sam Harris. Corporation of London's Ian Hughes looks on...



Natalie Ezekiel takes PCO's Dave Stock and CoL's Ian Hughes on a guided tour



Allen Togwell and RTG's Harvey Student looking at something with Alice Clark!



Roman Way Manager Tom Whitbread gives former Chairman, Jack Russell, a push!

In a season that promised so much, Dial-a-Cab (through *Call Sign*) sponsored Wembley FC have been suffering of late. While Merstham are running away with the Cherry Red Combined Counties Premier Division championship, DaC-Wembley are struggling to get two good results back-to-back!

Dial-a-Cab driver, **Lee Pearce (J71)**, who is also DaC-Wembley's goalkeeper, told *Call Sign*: "Our manager Ian Bates has given us so many rollickings this season and has even come out and told us that unless we are prepared to put 100% into the team, then the team would be better off without us – the inference being that not everyone cares enough."

In a disastrous month following The Lions exit from the FA Cup at the hands of Ware and being dumped out of the League Cup by Merstham, their league form has been up and down to say the least! A well-played 3 – 0 victory over Reading Town, which included a penalty taken by Lee Pearce, saw a 2 – 0 reverse against lowly Horley Town follow and a 2-all draw against Colliers Wood that should have been all over by half time, yet Wembley

DaC Wembley Suffering!



Andy Walker on his way to scoring against Colliers Wood

couldn't put the south London team away.

But according to Ian Bates, that 2 – 2 draw with Colliers Wood saw The Lions playing some of their best football of the season and fighting hard after twice being behind, with Andy Walker and Jeff Dalton-Brown grabbing the important goals. Ian was confident that the results would improve. Lee Pearce added that a few weeks earlier, DaC-Wembley would have almost given up after twice going behind, "...but we played good, determined football and that will hopefully kick-start our season."

The month's good news was that DaC-Wembley beat St Margaretbury in the first round of the prestigious FA Vase and now play Woodbridge for a place in the third round.

And even better, Lee's partner Becky has given birth to a daughter, Holly, to add to their other two children, Jack and Lauren. Congratulations to the whole family...

JAMIE IS NOW LORD BORWICK...



Brian Rice shows Jamie around Brunswick House in 2001 when Jamie was still MBH Chairman

Sir Geoffrey Robert James Borwick is probably better known to the licensed taxi trade as **Jamie Borwick**, the former Chairman of LTI parent company Manganese Bronze Holdings. He resigned in January 2003 and is now the Chairman of the successful Modec Electric Vans. That particular project originally also began life under the LTI banner as the Electric (E) Mercury, but was discontinued as a commercial enterprise. Jamie picked it up and has made it into a notable success with at least two City-based companies, *AccordMP* and *Amev* using fleets of Modecs as part of their street-cleaning and highway management businesses.

Some time after leaving MBH, Jamie sold his majority shareholding in the company and pocketed a very handy £13.7million, but the trade lost someone rather special. No one will ever hear Jamie speak anything but good about London's taxi drivers and the vehicle they drive. He was always a taxi man and no doubt will remain one of our greatest admirers. Jamie is rich, powerful and most definitely a 'blue blood' with his Eton College education in addition to being heir to the Lord Borwick estate on one side, while wife Victoria comes from the Lord McAlpine building stable on the other!

But now, with the death of his uncle - who had 4 children but no sons - Jamie has inherited the lengthy title, Sir Geoffrey Robert James Borwick, 5th Baron Borwick and the rather shorter moniker of Lord Borwick.

Call Sign asked him how we should address him and "Jamie is fine" came forth!

And to our question on what uses he would find for being Lord Borwick, the obvious one came - along with the Borwick smile: "I've been told that it can be extremely useful when booking a table at a nice restaurant!"

Congratulations Jamie...

Outside The Met Taxi Fares to be Disclosed

Mayor Ken Livingstone has disagreed with a Commons all-party transport select committee who claimed that the introduction of flat taxi fares from Heathrow would stop passengers being "ripped off" and as a result, he has said that they should carry on as now.

However, Mr Livingstone added that licensed taxi drivers taking passengers outside of the Met area must agree the fare with the passenger before setting off. Should drivers wish to, they could use their meters. The Mayor said that passengers must not be hit with an unexpectedly large taxi bill at their destination.

The transport select committee were told that some cab drivers travelling out of London were charging passengers £50 to £60 for just a one or two mile journey because of where the London boundary ended. They argued that adopting the New York system of fixed prices would benefit those arriving at Heathrow, particularly business people. But the Mayor insisted that it was not necessary and the status quo prevailed....

Garry Bushell has become a well-known celebrity over the years and a prolific writer for *The Sun* and *Daily Star* among others, often penning critical and satirical TV reviews. His past saw him as a serious punk rocker and like many of that ilk, a socialist and member of the SWP. He is now a member of the *English Democrats Party* and has won their nomination to stand for election as Mayor of London next May.

He is no stranger to politics having stood for the EDP as a candidate in the 2005 General Election (Greenwich and Woolwich). He also stood in the Staffordshire South by-election following the main election.

The English Democrats Party have said that this country needs to change immigration policy so that it better reflects the needs and wishes of the English people, suggesting the Australian and Canadian points system as being fairer. It also wants an English Parliament as against a UK one, suggesting withdrawal from international conventions on asylum and immigration.

Garry sees his identity as English rather than British and is a vocal opponent of the EU.

Call Sign's panel questioned Garry...

From Alan Green (E52)

The English Democrats Party sounds like a racist party. Do they have any policies that refer to non-white persons, because London is as multi-cultural as they come and a racist Mayor would bring rioting to the streets?

Garry Bushell: *The English Democrats Party is not a racist party and nor am I! I believe in equal treatment for all and not special treatment. This is also an odd question to ask at a time when the Scottish Nationalist Party is the Government of Scotland and there has been no rioting there! We think that England now needs a political party which will stand up for England and be concerned about our people's future. We do not oppose the UK but now that there is a Scottish Parliament, Welsh Sennet and Northern Irish Assembly, we need similar national recognition for England.*

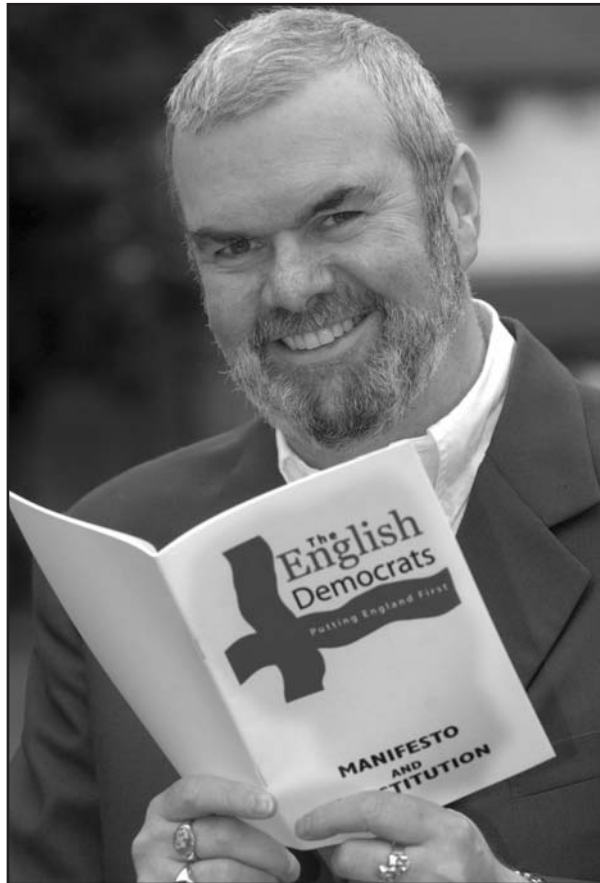
I am also standing in this election because I want to fight for an English Parliament in London. Devolution means the English have become second class citizens. Londoners in particular are being conned and taken for granted. We have to draw a line in the sand. We've given away too much. We need to kick Ken Livingstone out of office and start running London for the benefit of Londoners. It's time to put London, and England, first.

From Call Sign's Poppy (whose partner drives for DaC)

What is your view on increased provision for public toilets both on the streets and on the transport system? They are now woefully inadequate, not only for drivers and others working outside buildings who may need toilets at any time, but also for sufferers from Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis?

The Mayoral Election

Call Sign speaks to the English Democrats Party candidate, Garry Bushell



Garry Bushell - The English Democrats Party Candidate

nor for there to be free prescriptions for all in Wales and Scotland but the English to pay for it all.

*The English Democrats join Lord Barnett in demanding the immediate abolition of the Barnett Formula and for a truly **fair** funding system to replace it.*

We've got child poverty, unemployment, crime and a decaying infrastructure in London and yet London 'exports' over £13 billion in tax revenues every year to the rest of the country, largely to pay for higher spending in Scotland and Wales. It's crazy and it infuriates me. On current figures over £1,800 for every man, woman and child living in London is exported out of the Capital, every year.

That's over £2,500 per adult.

Garry Bushell: *This is an excellent suggestion which, if I were to be elected as Mayor, I am happy to promise effective action on.*

From Laurence Kelvin (W88)

Under the Barnett formula devised in the 1970s, England and London especially, sends a disproportionate amount of money to subsidise Scotland. Scottish voters have a say in English matters such as health, education and transport, yet have complete control over their own systems without English interference. How would you like to resolve this?

Garry Bushell: *The Barnett Formula is an unfair transfer of £12 billion per year to Scotland and there are similar arrangements for Northern Ireland and Wales. It leads to much more being spent on public services in those countries per head than even in the poorest parts of England, which includes some of London.*

It cannot be right for English students to pay 'Top Up Fees' but not Scottish students

From Bernie Silver (G08)

Would you keep the Congestion Charge as it is and do you think it is working?

Garry Bushell: *No, the Congestion Charge is simply yet another tax on Londoners. I would like to scrap it but, because of the enormous debt that Ken Livingstone has created for London under his PFI Agreement, we cannot scrap it without costing Londoners yet more money. So I would propose to make the charge bite only during periods of congestion and even then only at such a rate that the scheme breaks even.*

From David Marks (R22)

Could you see yourself as Mayor ever allowing private hire vehicles to ply for hire on London's streets?

Garry Bushell: *I can answer that simply – no.*

continued on next page

Watch out in Park Lane!

You must have seen it in the trade press many times, but just in case, here it is again – Transport for London seem to be looking for taxis innocently waiting for their pre-booked passengers in Park Lane by the hotels – usually late at night. Minicabs seem to escape them, but we aren't so lucky.

The latest Dial-a-Cab driver to be targeted with a PCN was **Ian Lingham (K64)**, who received a ticket for waiting in Park Lane at 1.26 in the morning! And it wasn't a warden – Ian's cab was captured on CCTV! As Ian so succinctly put it: "They're after us – look out!"

Fortunately for Ian, he is a member of the LTDA and spoke to General Secretary Bob Oddy about the PCN. Now it looks as though he will not have to pay it. Bob also told him that the Grosvenor House hotel was sympathetic to our cause and that they too wanted the taxi rank to be extended to the whole length of their three Park Lane entrances.



Even at 1.26am, they are still watching us

Call Sign speaks to the English Democrats Party candidate, Garry Bushell

continued from page 22

From John Dixon (B67)

Are your views on the London Olympics the same as the current Mayor and would you, if elected, give priority entrance to the Olympic Village for London Taxi drivers in 2012 for picking up and setting down passengers? Cabbies in other Olympic countries were promised the earth, but when the time came, were given no priority at all.

Garry Bushell: *I think that the London Olympics are going to be a colossal waste of public money which could have been far better spent on our appalling roads and for example on sports facilities for our own citizens; instead of taking money away from the Arts, English Heritage and public swimming pools. That said, the Olympics are coming so we have to make the best of them and yes I would guarantee a priority entrance for London's taxi drivers.*

From Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)

Many Londoners and probably most taxi drivers consider that having too many buses causes much of London's traffic problems. A good transport system is important, but is not Ken's bus policy a case of overkill?

Garry Bushell: *I agree. You often see nearly empty buses queuing through London. Clearly that is not an efficient policy.*

From John Riley (K38)

Would you, as Mayor, be happy to see pedicabs working the streets of London as they currently do? They cut up traffic, ride on the pavement and take terrible chances whilst having unsuspecting tourists on board who are often fleeced with the cost?

Garry Bushell: *I think this is an issue that the Mayor's office might be able to improve the situation if it had the power to licence pedicabs and to bring them within the*

same rules as taxis, giving a proper level playing field.

From Stewart Lewis (D20)

Ken is trying to work out how private hire cars can use bus and taxi lanes. Do you not think that would nullify the benefit buses and taxis currently have?

Garry Bushell: *I don't agree with Ken on this and I agree that it would undermine the whole point of the bus lanes.*

From Brian Flanagan (T79)

What is your view on Ken's version of a 'green' London? Many taxi drivers considered that his time limits at the licensed taxi driver's own expense were very unfair...

Garry Bushell: *Ken is an out-of-date socialist dinosaur. For Ken, the answer to every problem is more State interference. The greenest thing we could do in London is to help people to be able to use bicycles safely. It does not help to unfairly interfere with our London cabbies' businesses. I do however think that it is right for a Mayor to make commonsense efforts to improve the environment for all of us and I would do this, if elected.*

From Joe Brazil (K16)

What would you say were Ken Livingstone's best and worst decisions since taking power?

Garry Bushell: *Ken generally focuses on doing things which are in the interests of his client groups of 'minorities' and in the interest of getting himself re-elected.*

I'm a real Londoner. I was born and bred in South London and it saddens me that my city, the Capital of my country, England, suffers from such high levels of crime, grime, pollution and poverty. London has been misruled for far too long. Livingstone is an embarrassment. He seems to hate anything English. He's waged a relentless campaign against drivers. His love affair with foreign dictators

and dodgy extremists is well documented. His obsession with political correctness is frankly perverse.

On a lighter note, as Mayor I would back proper St George's Day celebrations in London. For years Livingstone has spent more than £100,000 of our money every year on St Patrick's Day celebrations in London and only this year begrudgingly £8,000 for St George's Day. Why not have one day a year when the English can celebrate their culture? Let's make it a bank holiday, too.

From Martin Freeborn (C67)

I live in Barnet where the Council has removed most of the speed humps without any dire consequences. Would you like to see other councils follow this example and find a way to control traffic that doesn't make it so uncomfortable for passengers?

Garry Bushell: *I agree speed humps are not really effective and often create more noise in the street and so disturb residents and I would be happy to consider all commonsense solutions to control speeding traffic.*

From Bill Kibble (K86)

There are road works and congestion all over town with the renewal of water mains. This could be completed in a third of the time if work were carried out at night as well as during the day. In many places such as Strand, there are few residents to disturb and elsewhere surely people would prefer to get the work completed quicker rather than have heavy traffic outside their houses for months on end. Is it something you would look at if elected?

Garry Bushell: *Yes it is. I think that we should have strict time limits on the time when public roads can be closed and heavy financial penalties on utility companies if they do not complete the works on time. At the moment there is no extra cost to them so they do it as cheaply as possible (which is also slowly).*

In the September issue of Call Sign, Ilford North MP Lee Scott told Brian Rice during a meeting between the two, that he had asked questions of the Secretary of State for Transport. These are the answers, courtesy of Hansard:

Lee Scott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions her Department has had with (a) the Mayor of London's office and (b) Transport for London on the access of private hire vehicles to bus lanes?

Rosie Winterton: *The Department keeps in touch with TfL officials about a range of issues related to TfL's responsibilities for taxis and private hire vehicles, including the question of PHV access to bus lanes. We are aware that TfL are giving consideration to this question. As part of this, they have sought the Department's advice on the road signs that would be required. I am not aware of any discussions with the Mayor of London's office on this issue.*

Lee Scott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions her Department has had with the Transport Occupational Command Unit regarding (a) the number of crimes committed by illegal minicab drivers and (b) proposed measures to reduce the number of illegal minicabs operating in London?

Rosie Winterton: *The Department has not had any discussions with the Transport Operational Command Unit on these matters. However, we keep in touch*

Lee Scott questions: Minister's response



Minister of State for Transport, Rosie Winterton

with TfL officials about a range of taxi-related issues. We are aware through discussions with TfL, that the unit undertakes dedicated enforcement activities in respect of illegal minicab drivers in London using a variety of methods including multi-agency road checks and visits to operators. We are also aware of TfL's initiative to enhance safety for passengers through its "Safer Travel at Night" campaign.

Lee Scott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans she has to reduce the number of illegal minicab drivers operating in (a) London and (b) England?

Rosie Winterton: *If individuals provide a minicab service without holding the requisite licenses, they are committing an offence. Responsibility for enforcing the law rests with Transport for London within London and the relevant local licensing authority elsewhere in England. The police also, of course, have a role to play in enforcing the law.*

Last year we brought forward a change in the law, which will establish a more comprehensive system for licensing minicabs (private hire vehicles—PHVs). Section 53 of the Road Safety Act 2006 repeals the exemption from PHV licensing outside London for vehicles which work on contracts lasting not less than seven days. When the repeal takes effect (January 2008), it will be much harder for operators and drivers to evade licensing. A similar provision (section 54 of the Act) will bring operators and drivers dedicated to contract work in London within the PHV licensing regime—in March 2008.

AMERICAN TOURISTS SHUNNING THE UK?

The poor US dollar exchange rate against the pound has hit the UK – and especially London's – popularity amongst high-spending American tourists, says US travel firm

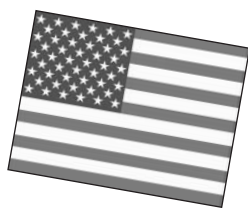
Travelocity.

The UK's share of visitors from the US in 2007 is down almost 10% on last year, according to Travelocity figures. The decrease has coincided with fares to the UK increasing by almost 19%.

The drop in visitors has seen the UK slide four places in the Travelocity's standings from 22nd to the US's 26th biggest tourism market, which includes both domestic and international destinations,

The decline is damaging, as the UK's tourism economy relies on US tourists more than visitors from any other country, with Americans tending to stay for longer durations and spend the more money while on holiday.

Travelocity's data is supported by figures from tourism marketing body **VisitBritain** that shows US visitors to the UK in 2006 – when the US had a stronger economy and the dollar to pound exchange rate was better – increased by 13% on the previous year.



NetXposure.net
<http://www.netxposure.net>

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DaC Customer Services/Special Projects

Looking from the other side...

I recently bought a used Metrocab TTT from a reputable garage, but within 24 hours the engine blew up! The garage is dealing with the repairs and I should have it back soon. To tide me over, the proprietor loaned me a non-radio cab to use while the repairs were carried out.

I must say that even though I already knew there was plenty of cash work on the streets, I was still surprised at how much better radio work is. The financial value between radio work and street trips bears no comparison at all. With cash work I was actually losing revenue.

For example, taking a cash trip for say a £10 meter fare, I invariably get a 'legal' therefore losing the Dial-a-Cab standard 10% driver gratuity. Then there was also the matter of waiting time. Yes, it's usually less than radio work but can still amount to a substantial number of minutes and you won't, of course, receive the DaC premium waiting time.

From a security point, I do not know whom I am picking up and should I have a problem I have no back up from the DaC Fleet Controllers. Plus, taking every street hiring can mean a trip to areas where I have little chance of getting another trip back to town. I receive no traffic information or information on whether there is work at stations, special events or even if there is work at the airports.

Although I only work on my cab a few days a week, I still want the best value for



that time and for it to be financially valuable for the subscription I pay. Taking a trip to say NW6, with no chance of picking up a trip until I get back to town, is also reducing my earnings.

During previous weeks, this working practice has proved to me how much financially rewarding work we have at DaC - even with traffic congestion and parking problems etc. With my previous articles about service, I still cannot understand why more than ever, drivers reject so much work in favour of street hirings? If one of the reasons is that you think you may not get to the pick up on time, accept the trip and do a delay advise, clients prefer their trip to be accepted but delayed, rather than have no cab available.

I make the comment because one of my responsibilities is to visit clients when they

have issues. These meetings are increasing week on week and will continue leading up to the festive period. When you see a message on your screen from Fleet Controllers that we could lose an account if we don't cover the work; make no mistake it is a fact.

Although accounts may not always close, the jobs we do not cover will not necessarily go to other taxi radio circuits, but to car companies. Sales reps from car companies tell existing or potential customers that they will guarantee to have a car outside the pick up at the time required. Maybe they can or maybe they can't, but the client's perception is that they can because car companies only supply pre-booked trips and rarely offer an ASAP service. There must be 80-90,000 licensed minicabs out there and continuing to grow. As drivers, we should not be complacent to think that we will always have the tremendous and lucrative work we currently have. Our customers have the choice; if they cannot get a DaC taxi they can go onto the street and flag down a cab, which they do and find less expensive without service charges, gratuities and run-in costs etc. They can even open an account with a minicab company and just use our service as a back up.

Clients have issues with excessive run-ins, cabs not available in certain areas, untidy and occasionally rude drivers. So be aware, the bubble could burst at any time...

Mike Son
DaC Customer Services /
Special Projects

Would you be happy if the Government logged every day how many times you travelled down a specific road, what speeds you were travelling and how many people were in your car? I guess not. Would you be happy if someone kept records about what time you left your house, what paper you bought and what you watched every night on TV? Probably not. So why do we put up with the invasion of our privacy on the Internet? Google have recently provided a new service called Web History located at: http://www.google.co.uk/support/accounts/bi_n/topic.py?topic=10470&hl=en_GB.

They state: "In addition to enabling the Web History functionality, the information we collect when you use Web History may be shared among all of our services in order to provide you with a seamless experience and to improve the quality of our services." What? All of their services! Google are now a very large company, I'd be very careful about that statement. However, rest assured, Peter Fleischer, the Privacy Chief of Google recently said "Without global standards, the health of the internet is at risk!"

There are also a number of popular social networking websites, which mainly attract the younger audience such as **Facebook**. Like Google, these websites gather information about its users, a lot of the data being quite personal. Facebook will soon expose some of that data to search engines and spiders, although they do say only limited amounts will be exposed.

Can you see a pattern here? I can and that's why I only ever put the bare minimum of data required - or incorrect data - and if an email address is required I always use free email



accounts such as Hotmail or GMail. However, I must add I am not a member of any socialising website as I'm an anti-social sod!

Parkinson's Disease

Recently a family member was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and as with most of these conditions, you've heard of them but never really bothered to learn more about them. So I did a search on the web and came across some superb websites, the best being a British website: <http://www.parkinsons.org.uk> Within 20 minutes of visiting this site, I knew famous people who suffered from the condition (Ali, Michael J Fox), I knew symptoms, available drugs, side effects of the drugs, future research and how to live with the condition. Top marks

for a super website and if you're feeling generous, please leave a donation on the site.

Microsoft loses court battle

Last month Microsoft lost its legal challenge to an EU ruling that it had abused its dominant market position. The investigation concluded that in 2004, Microsoft was guilty of freezing out rivals in server software and products such as media players. It was ordered to change its business and fined 497million euros (£343m; \$690m) - peanuts to Microsoft!

What's the news here? It's old news. Just like the Netscape ruling and now Real Media... they'll disappear as it takes too long to reach these judgements.

Vince Chin
Call Sign online

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

Kupkake's Korner



Please Mr Livingstone...

Please Mr. Livingstone,
enough is enough!

You've helped destroy our trade
with new rules and all that stuff.

Once we had our freedom,
we'd earned our right to work,
the hours we had chosen,
no one ever shirked.

But now we have restrictions,
emission laws and more,
and you have your convictions -
that extend beyond your door.

You took away our extras,
you increased our refusal limit,
12 miles is so very far,
there ain't no justice in it!

That's why we try at end of the shift
to seek a ride to home,
now passengers just can't get a cab -
even when they 'phone...

Your silly ideas have caused this mess,
it worked so well before.
Admit you're wrong - you can confess,
I know I'm right for sure...

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

Back Seat Driver



Women's Problems

I've had no need, luckily, for abortions or fertility treatment, nor any miscarriages, but I have had four spells in hospital for women's things - in the days when they let you stay awhile. I had two babies at the Whittington, a sterilisation at the National Temperance Hospital and a hysterectomy in County Durham.

The gynae wards are so civilised. Women with mobile catheters are referred to as having *hand-bags*, the nurses taught us the *gynae bop* so we could sort of dance to hospital radio tunes after our operations. You did it sitting down, with head and hand moves - plus kicking out to the beat since we couldn't walk for several days.

Maternity wards were fun too, like all your Christmases had come at once! Full of flowers, presents, flashbulbs and champagne corks popping.

"You can't bring alcohol onto a hospital ward, can you," I asked the Irish matron?

"Of course not," she said fiercely, **"and if your corks don't break my windows, I won't see your drink. Never have noticed anyone with a drink,"** she said with a wink!

A jolly-hockey-sticks physio came round to teach us pelvic floor exercises so we could get "those parts" into shape for our husbands as soon as possible. And when she said that, I think all twenty of us groaned and dived under the blankets as one, thinking: *NOT SEX! Never, ever again!*

Luckily, women do forget the pain, the stitches and the cramps. If men did childbirth, there would be no brothers or sisters, would there, just one-child families.

Looking at *Dial-a-Cab* drivers, you're a pretty middle-aged lot on the whole and I'd guess most of you are coping with your partner's change of life rather than changing nappies these days. If

your partner has night sweats, waking up to kick off the duvet and has hot flushes, buy her a lovely fan like my DaCman Glen got for me. I went off hormone replacement last January and still the clammy overheating comes about six times a day. I tear off all my clothes if it happens at home, or my jacket if out, till it passes.

It made me feel old and grubby, until my daughter suggested they weren't hot flushes at all, but *power surges*. Much better! Thanks so much for that.

How can women complain about health issues, a male supremacist once said to me, when we live six years longer than men on average? Well, that's obvious. Burying you and sorting out the finances are our final household chores for you. Surviving as a widow and knowing that we (unlike you) will now live and probably die alone, is no fun.

My solution is to hook up with a younger man. My younger man's solution is for me to jump into his cremation fire - the first *suttee* in Golders Green. Thanks, Glen, but I'll leave the burning at just the bra, if that's ok.

Next month it's back to your problems on anything - taxis or otherwise. Emails to Poppy at callsignmag@aol.com and the 3 best letters will be answered by Poppy and each will receive a box of choccies and a bottle of bubbly in time for Xmas! Drivers, partners and staff are invited to send in any dilemmas they are facing. Names will not be published unless you give permission, but contact details will be needed so that prizes can be distributed. Emails must be received by 14th November.

Till then...

Love Poppy xxx



I type these notes just hours after England's amazing rugby semi-final victory over the French - and what a superb atmosphere it was in the packed little French village bar I was in! The weekend coincided with a visit to these parts of the *Sheppey Cricket Club*. Their 22-strong touring party joined 15 members of our own *Midi Cricket Club* - made up of ex-pats - to total almost 40 English fans that were drinking with at least 40 French people who witnessed the amazing match.

Just as 4 years ago, Jonny and England triumphed over France for a place in a World Cup Final and just like 4 years ago, there was plenty of hand shaking and backslapping at the final whistle. But it was much better than before, the tournament was in Australia then and just 4 Englishmen and 15 Frenchmen had assembled in a rather quiet bar at 8am in the morning!

The fact that one week later, the Springboks took our World Champions title will never diminish the memory of that magical 80 min-



utes in the French bar...

Vino a L'Angleterre

By the time this article goes to print, I would have driven the 650 miles that distances me from the ferry port of Boulogne for the purpose of transporting a consignment of wine ordered by clients in the south-east of England. And that has just reminded me; I have had two Dial-a-



Cab subscribers email me recently requesting a good road route to the Mediterranean - forget the tom toms and sat navs, my route is the quickest and most cost-effective should any reader require it. Just email me at robert.woodford@tiscali.fr.

Once the wine has been delivered it's off to New York for a week. Not business or marathons, just a trip to catch up on a bit of shopping, taking advantage of the weak dollar at present. If the credit card gets spanked too hard, I will have a couple of weeks in the saddle before Christmas to help you cover all that street work!

Check out www.southoffrancelets.com for a place to stay in la belle France or www.immoboulevard.com if you are seriously looking for property to buy.

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

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Dial-a-Cab Training Manager, Daren Morley, recently completed in the Great North Run half marathon and told Call Sign about his run in aid of Cancer Research UK...

"It is just over a year since my last article regarding my running. I was competing in the Nike London North v South race and since then

TX4 goes with Blaupunkt

Blaupunkt has been awarded a contract to supply LTI Vehicles with in-car entertainment systems for its latest cab model, the TX4. The new cabs will be supplied with a choice of three Blaupunkt systems:

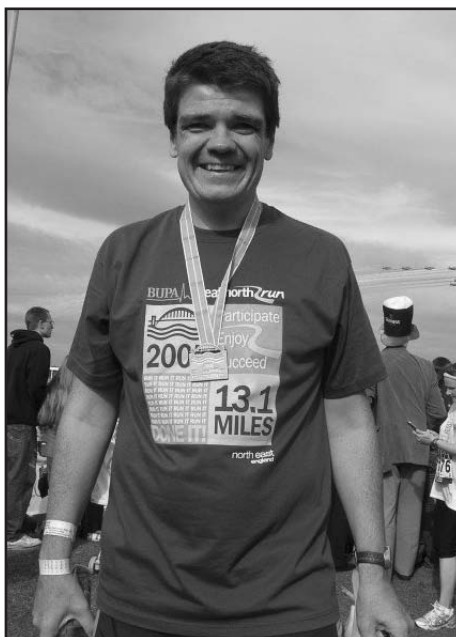
The TX4 *Gold* will have the Blaupunkt Nashville DAB/CD-tuner, which offers outstanding digital audio sound quality with a large choice of DAB radio stations, an FM/AM/LW RDS tuner, MP3/CD-RW playback and external MP3 player connectivity - plus 90W coaxial speakers. An optional Blaupunkt iPod interface and Bluetooth interface for hands-free mobile phone use are available.

TX4's *Silver* will have the Blaupunkt London MP3/CD-tuner offering 25 station presets, plus MP3/CD-RW playback and external MP3 player connectivity. 90W speakers come as standard and the radio is compatible with an optional Blaupunkt iPod interface. A Bluetooth interface is also available for hands-free mobile phone use.

The TX4 *Bronze* has the Blaupunkt Porto CD-tuner fitted offering 25 station presets, FM/AM/LW RDS tuner, CD-RW playback and 90W speakers. The unit can also be connected to an external MP3 player via an optional aux-in cable. Martin Wheatley, LTI purchasing and SQD manager told **Call Sign**:

"The TX4 continues a heritage of iconic vehicles that stretches back over 60 years. As the most advanced purpose-built taxi in the world, we wanted a partner who could provide us with entertainment systems of a quality and functionality that would fully complement our vehicles. We felt that Blaupunkt's distinguished heritage and reputation for quality and reliability - as well as the advanced level of technology and style of its chosen products - matched those requirements perfectly." In addition to excellent sound quality, Blaupunkt's systems will provide TX4 drivers with the flexibility to connect external MP3 players, as well as the safety of hands-free Bluetooth connectivity for mobile phones. Drivers will be able to connect their phones via Bluetooth to the car radio speakers, ensuring they comply with mobile phone driving laws. The inclusion of DAB in the Gold option also provides an outstanding selection of radio stations, including access to local stations nationwide, with crystal clear, interference-free sound.

Daren Completes Great North Run...



Daren proudly wearing his Great North run medal

I have been gradually building up my mileage, running on average between 40 and 50 miles per week with my ultimate goal of running a marathon before my 40th birthday, which is next November....gulp!

"I have competed in four 10k races and a half marathon this year prior to the Great North Run. This one though is the largest Half Marathon in the world with over 55,000 competitors. The start is so big that that it begins

on a large dual carriageway! This year it took over 15 minutes for all the competitors to cross the line. I had a very good start position and crossed the start line just 90 seconds behind my more elite male competitors.

"The atmosphere for the race was fantastic with the majority of runners raising millions of pounds for charity. Thousands of spectators lined the course between Newcastle and the finish at South Shields. A number of spectators were giving out oranges, ice-lollies and even beer! I was wearing a Cancer Research UK vest with my name on and people were shouting my name. It really puts a spring into your step.

"I was aiming to run under 1 hour 50 minutes and was up on my time all the way until the last mile, where I managed to lose a minute! I can only imagine this was due to enjoying the atmosphere because I didn't feel tired! I finished in 6372nd position with a time of 1:50:39, which took 9 minutes off my personal best. There were a total of 35,833 finishing the course and I raised over £800 for Cancer Research UK.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff and drivers who sponsored me.

Anybody who would still like to make a donation to this worthy cause can do so at www.justgiving.com/darenmorley.

Now I'm hoping for a place in the Flora London Marathon. Applications closed in October. Last year over a 122,000 people applied for 50,000 places. So fingers crossed...!"

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Contact Andy (P32) on 07904 091278 or 07932 960350

This year's Magical Taxi Tour was the fourteenth time that the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers had taken around 200 children – many of whom suffer with life-threatening illnesses – to the Disneyland Resort, Paris. As usual, many of the volunteer drivers were from Dial-a-Cab...

In beautiful early morning sunshine, the Chairman of the Disney Committee, Phil Davis, happily accepted Mann & Overton's offer of spending money for each of the children and LTT's generous donation to cover the substantial driver's fuel costs. And just as they always do, P&O generously donated the ferry crossings. All that was then left after scoffing the traditional Big Breakfast, was to depart from Bank Street in Docklands and make their way to Paris. Several UK police forces and French gendarmes accompanied the long queue of taxis.

Once in la belle France, crowds of mystified onlookers stared and then began waving as they realised what they were looking at. The kids happily waved back in return. However, things soon looked rather more difficult when the convoy realised they were on the wrong road and heading towards Paris – and in the rush hour! God knows what French radio travel updates made of the situation! A police officer – a gendarme no less – had taken the wrong turn but the group eventually made it to Disney with no one falling out of convoy – a remarkable achievement.

They reached the Disney Resort in the early evening sunshine, around an hour later than planned and for the most part, totally worn out and taking the option of an early night. But everyone was up bright and early next morning for a quick breakfast and then into the Park with their taxi drivers and carers. All had priority passes, so there was no queuing to get onto the rides. All agreed that the Disneyland Resort Paris was brilliant and if you could keep the sunshine as they did, many of the kids said they would have been happy to move there!

Then in the early evening, Disney's New York Hotel gave a Gala Dinner, followed by a party that saw lots of Disney characters mingling with excited young guests.

The organising committee also asked **Call Sign** to thank the Marriott Hotel for providing packed lunches, the Mount Blanc Climbers who sponsored the Big Breakfast and the many other sponsors who helped. But last and certainly not least, all the drivers who returned to London totally knackered, but feeling great after seeing so many young people –

THE COMPANY, THE KIDS AND DAG GO TO DISNEY...



DaC's Janet Fox (L) with Taxi Globe's Sandie Goodwin ready to leave

Jim Moore with some children and their mother at Disney
inset pic: Friends!



times stretched to 6 miles! As usual, and as the name suggests, it was just a magical taxi tour..."

DON'T TAKE IT OUT ON THE SCREEN!

For the last 7 years, DaC members have been able to use the best equipment available in their vehicles. Recently, because of frustrating problems with signals etc, the unfortunate touch-screens have been taking a battering from some members. Unfortunately, there is a cost associated with this, some £500 for a totally new screen and this has been re-charged to drivers where damage can be identified as self-inflicted.

The Board is fully aware of the frustrations that poor signal quality can generate, but this is no excuse for mutilating touch-screens. If all mobile phone users were to take their anger out on their handsets every time service was lost, London would be littered with smashed Nokias and Samsungs. Please be careful!

Howard Pears
Company Secretary

who don't always have much to smile at – grinning broadly.

We spoke briefly to some of the many DaC drivers on the trip. This is what they said:

Jim Rainbird (T25): "The kids had such a great time. They took the place by storm and won the hearts of everyone there..."

John Dixon (B67): "This is my 11th time on the trip. It really is hard work – especially the concentration when driving, but the look on the kid's faces makes it all worthwhile."

Janet Fox (G35J): "Very tiring, but so very rewarding..."

Jim Moore (M58): "It is such a worthwhile experience seeing the smile on these kids faces as they look around them in wonderment. Just brilliant...!"

Head of the organising committee, Phil Davis, told Call Sign: "Even the weather smiled on the day. There were 117 cabs this year in a convoy that at

DaC to Offset 4500 tonnes of CO₂

At their recent launch of Dial-a-Cab House, the Board of Management announced the Society's decision to work with **Carbon Footprint** in offsetting 4500 tonnes of carbon dioxide in supporting projects around the world. This will assist in reducing carbon emissions via the displacement of fossil fuels through clean and renewable energy generation and reforestation programmes.

Chairman Brian Rice told **Call Sign**: "It has now reached the point where some clients will only travel in an electric vehicle! Dial-a-Cab are now determined to do everything we can to help lower the carbon emissions that come through doing the job of transporting passengers."



Brian with representatives of Carbon Footprint after the agreement to offset 4500 tonnes of CO₂

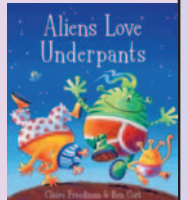
ALIENS LOVE UNDERPANTS!

One of my wife's friends is a children's author who has recently written a really funny book for young kids called **Aliens Love Underpants**. We own a copy of the book and my son and I read it together often, always ending up in fits of laughter!

On Thursday 25th October, this book came in number one in the early reader category on the Richard and Judy's Best Kids' Books programme on Channel 4.

Aliens Love Underpants is by Claire Freedman and it can be bought in most bookstores (Waterstones have it on the featured stand in the kids section). My family and I cannot recommend it enough! If you have young kids and you want to have a good laugh with them, then buy them this book!

Jon Winterburn, DaC Network Administrator



Or stuff the disabled – they're not messing up our system!

The September **Call Sign** ran the sad story about pensioner Geoff Bone, who lost part of both legs following a train accident 35 years ago. He had left his car parked (legally) in Park Lane having driven down from Hemel Hempstead to make a speech about a charity whose aim is to supply wheelchairs to disabled people around the world. The police towed his car away claiming that it was reported as containing "suspicious looking carrier bags on the back seat."

Then they made him get home on the train...

Another example of today's couldn't-care-less attitude towards the disabled came last month when **Call Sign** Editor, **Alan Fisher**, received a TfL PCN for waiting outside of the Chapel Street exit to M&S for a disabled passenger using their Westminster TaxiCard.

Unfortunately, the passenger needed substantial assistance to get out of the store and Alan had to wait some time and then several more minutes when trying to get her into the back seat.

Unbeknown to Alan, a CCTV camera recorded his stay in a loading / unloading zone.

Alan couldn't understand why the PCN applied to the period in the loading zone when causing no hold-ups, yet not to those few minutes when the passenger came out and he drove across and stopped on double red lines to pick her up?

So he appealed in writing, asking that question and pointing out that the person whose name was at the bottom of their parking tickets, **Mayor of London Ken Livingstone**, was

The Good Ken Giveth and the Good Ken Taketh Away?



20 years ago he gave with one hand and 20 years on he now takes it back!



the very person who, as leader of the former Greater London Council, introduced the TaxiCard for the benefit of the disabled.

Alan denied none of the facts supplied on the PCN and gave exact details of the TaxiCard trip as evidence that he wasn't just doing some shopping. He added that the passenger was disabled and slow and queried why no ticket was issued when he was on the double red lines. His letter to TfL included:

"No doubt it would have been rather embarrassing to know how little TfL think of the disabled to have issued a ticket (and video footage) while I was lifting the woman into the taxi, especially as the person whose name ends the PCN (the Mayor of London) was the person who initiated the TaxiCard scheme many years ago. Although the scheme has helped many with disabilities to go out where they probably would have been unable to do so before, it has also cost London's taxi drivers a

fortune in parking fines for the privilege, as no leeway seems to be given and cases such as mine where selective images are chosen, seem to be in the majority."

In rejecting his appeal, TfL claimed that the taxi had been left on a loading / unloading bay for the 3 minutes that the camera was trained on it and during that period, no loading or unloading was seen. And as their camera failed to spot the woman being helped into the taxi, they were rejecting the appeal.

Alan also sent a copy of his appeal to the Mayor's office. As of publication date, no response has been received.

It does seem strange that the very scheme Mr Livingstone introduced to aid the disabled is thought so little of by his baby, **Transport for London**, that **Dial-a-Cab** have to spend a fortune repaying drivers who have been caught.

Frank Dawson

In today's modern society, bedroom 'habits' are spoken of as freely as the type of breakfast cereal used later on! The expression: "*Did the earth move for you too darling*" is one often used in dramas / films or paperbacks. But in the case of DaC's Roman Way Manager, **Tom Whitbread**, those words could be rather misleading!

Tom takes up the story of the events of 26 September...

"We were in bed at around 2 am on Wednesday morning, 26 September, when I heard a sound like a rat scratching paper. As I looked around the room, I saw nothing. Then I glanced upwards to see the ceiling just split open allowing 170 years of dirt, dust and soot to rain down on Anne and myself. That did not include the plaster - which was at least one and a half inches thick and which filled two full sized dustbins!

"As the dirt rained down, Anne awoke and sat up, but the air had turned into a 1960s peasouper fog! When I eventually managed to see her, she resembled a panda - a black face and two white eyes.

"Not to miss the chance of a lifetime, I asked her: *Did the earth move for you also?* But from the look in those eyes, I don't think she was too amused. I'm not even sure she realised that she was awake; after all, bedroom ceilings collapsing on you whilst in bed tend to be reserved for dreams!

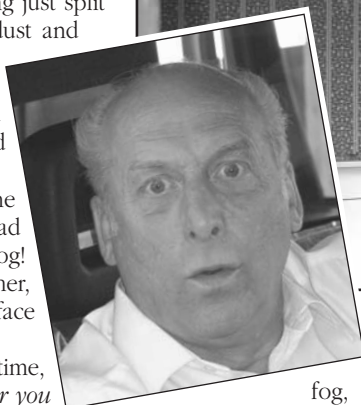
"Whilst the room was in the darkness of the

Did the earth move in Tom Whitbread's bedroom!



Tom's bedroom ceiling minus plaster!

Inset: Tom looks shocked as he tells Call Sign of the collapse



fog, I heard a man's voice and for one awful second thought we had a burglar who had been knocked down by the ceiling collapse, but when the air cleared a little, I noticed that the TV had been knocked to the floor and powered up.

"I contacted our landlord and 2 builders

turned up at 8:30am the following morning. By 7pm they had ripped down the rest of the ceiling, plaster boarded and the plasterer was beginning to do his work. Let no one criticise Polish workers...they were excellent!

I will be at Liverpool Street Station next Friday selling Lucky White Heather..."

New Radisson Opens in Docklands

Radisson Edwardian New Providence Wharf is now open in a stunning waterside location, bringing contemporary luxury to the Canary Wharf area. The 169-bedroom, four-star deluxe new-build property occupies a prime riverside spot, boasting panoramic views of the river.

The stunning vista spans from Greenwich to Canary Wharf and down to London City Airport with the O2 arena directly opposite. Its restaurant, *Azura*, will feature contemporary dishes made with British ingredients in a spacious dining room with floor to ceiling windows.

The adjacent outdoor terrace seats 45 on low tables and sofas. Boasting impressive views of the river and O2, this is destined to become a popular 'chill out' spot for hotel guests, local residents and the increasing number of visitors to the area.

The East River Spa is located across the entire first floor of Ontario Tower and features six treatment rooms with integrated showers offering a range of treatments catering for stressed out business travellers, leisure guests, Canary Wharf residents and perhaps taxi drivers who need a chilling out session! A spa-



The Radisson Edwardian has magnificent views of every part of Docklands

cious gym features state of the art equipment and is flooded in natural daylight, with impressive urban views to the city and Canary Wharf, whilst the relaxation room offers peaceful views of the water from the comfort of six gently warmed mineral Hamam beds.

Business facilities include seven conference, meeting and banqueting rooms catering for up to 200 guests, all featuring natural daylight and state of the art audio-visual facilities. The hotel is ideally located close to Canary Wharf, London City Airport and the ExCeL Exhibition Centre. It is also extremely convenient for the O2 and its concerts, sporting events, cinemas and year-round exhibitions.

The Radisson Edwardian will be adjacent to Ontario Tower, a residential development by Ballymore Properties. Ontario Tower is currently the tallest residential building in Canary Wharf, designed by world-renowned architects Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. The Radisson Edwardian New Providence Wharf official address is 5 Fairmont Avenue E14.

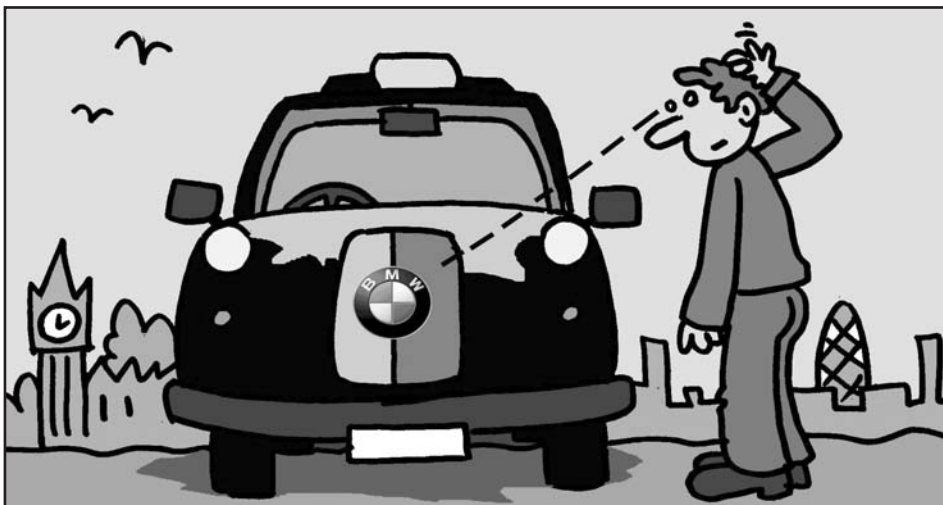
From Aspen Way, turn into Prestons Road and then first left again

Dial-a-Cab driver **Gary Strachan (J93)** has a '56' reg TX4 that he bought last January. He was very happy with it and other than the occasional minor problem, has had a trouble-free time.

That was until recently when he was involved in a collision after someone shunted the rear end of his cab. When the insurance company assessor ran Gary's registration number through the DVLA computer, he discovered that the taxi was actually registered as a BMW 5 series! That meant that his cab had been through M&O, the PCO and the SGS passing station with an incorrect reg and the wrong plate number and that from January until the error was discovered, his taxi had been running around with the same number plate as an innocent BMW 5 driver!

Gary told *Call Sign*: "The registration document and road tax disc showed the correct number, so the DVLA were in the clear. The trouble began when M&O covered the cab with a temporary insurance document as they always do when you buy a new cab. However, the number on that and what was the PCO plate had one of the letters of the registration number different. The real problem was that the

The Only DaC Driver Working in a BMW!



number I was then down as having, was actually already in use by the BMW 5 owner."

Gary ended by saying: "I suppose it could

have been handy had it remained undiscovered – especially in regard to parking or speeding offences! And who knows, it might even have been a private hire vehicle!"



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

Eating Out with Call Sign

I love Japanese food, having first acquired a taste for it when I lived in Los Angeles. So when the Editor asked me to review **Kombu** at **ExCel West**, I couldn't say no. The restaurant is perfectly located, adjacent to the cab rank between a Chinese restaurant and cafe/car and will certainly attract visitors to ExCel.

We checked their menu on the website noting that beside the *sushi* and *sashimi* (raw fish) dishes, there was an interesting range of entrees on offer such as tiger prawns and steaks, chicken, quail, salmon, duck and even a lamb chop! A wondrous repast and the long-awaited opportunity for Jan to eat some authentic Japanese cooked food with me.

Call Sign booked our table for 8pm and we arrived early intending to try one of the interesting cocktails advertised on the website. We were swiftly ushered to our table past the bar where the barman was polishing glasses. We were the only patrons in the dimly lit expansive room, decorated in a modern Oriental style.

I tried to introduce us to our server, a sweet young lady from Thailand who then called the manageress, Brigitte, to our table. She was friendly, polite and from Singapore. We had a little chat and I mentioned that we had intended to come the day before as it had been Jan's Birthday, but were unable to as it coincided with the official *Kombu* opening party.

She had an excellent command of English and no trouble understanding that although

I was familiar with Japanese cuisine, Jan was not. So I suggested that Brigitte take charge of the meal, hoping she would want to show off the best that *Kombu* had to offer two hungry diners.

She enquired if we had any allergies and then went off to the kitchen to organise our meal. Meanwhile the server brought a bottle of chilled Norwegian water to our table.

Presently, Brigitte arrived with a small plate of *sushi*, best described as several California rolls and their accompanying shaved pickled ginger and *wasabi* (green horse radish). For those not familiar with *sushi* dishes, they are strips of seaweed with various fillings rolled up with a layer of rice adhering to the outside. Delicious - but not filling. A variety of *sushi* would normally include some *sashimi* (uncooked fish) dishes too, but there were none on the plate.

We devoured the rolls expecting another *sushi* plate to arrive with more delicacies, but were disappointed to receive a bowl of spinach with a sesame and peanut sauce served almost – but not quite – cold. Jan does not like spinach one bit, so it was left up to me to eat it.

Then came the Chilean sea bass, or rather two wedges of the fish artistically placed on a banana leaf and yuzu truffle sauce. Once again the food was delicious, but not filling.

The manageress was attentive but not hovering, while the server made sure our wine glasses were topped up with the Australian Riesling selected from the compre-

hensive wine list.

We were still hungry and as no more dishes were appearing, I suggested to Brigitte that we would like to try the tiger prawns. These were tasty and meaty. Suddenly, a small but excellent dish of salmon and turbot *sashimi* also materialised with sauces alongside.

We had some coffee and beautiful fruit sorbet desserts (both of which I consumed), followed by a delightful chocolate mousse coupled with a Champagne sorbet for Jan.

On reflection, the menu at *Kombu* is up market Japanese nuevo cuisine where the food is artistically presented and mostly very good. We were both disappointed that there were no noodles or rice offered to us. It could well have made a difference to this review.

I would certainly recommend *Kombu* to passengers who wanted to try Japanese nuevo cuisine but who were not as ravenously hungry as we were.

KOMBU is situated close to the main entrance of *ExCel West* at 2 Western Gateway.

Reservations: 020 7474 1459. The restaurant is open Monday to Saturday for lunch between 12 and 3 and dinner between 6 and 11. Last entrance 30 minutes before closing times.

Average prices are around £40 per person...

David Kupler (Y74)

£4m transformation means 24 November gallery relaunch – And it's free!

Thanks to a £4m transformation, the Science Museum will again invite young visitors to launch a rocket, capture a multicoloured shadow, turn their head into a sound box and control a magnetic cloud in a bigger, better and bolder version of the largest free interactive science gallery in the UK.

Launchpad, the Science Museum's most popular gallery, is being totally transformed with the new opening on 24 November 2007. The current gallery is not only being relocated within the Museum to a site one third larger than the existing space, but is also undergoing a bold and innovative redevelopment and redesign to ensure it remains at the forefront of international, interactive experiences.

The new Launchpad will continue exciting, inspiring and engaging children in the fundamental principles of science and technology with over 50 sophisticated interactive exhibits and devices built specifically for the gallery. The interactives will be a combination of updated 'classics' from the current gallery, world-firsts created by designers and technicians from the Science Museum and around the world and new installations inspired by existing pieces previously unseen in the UK. The gallery is particularly aimed at 8-14 year olds, their parents and teachers, with provision made for younger children too. All content has been devised and created by the Science Museum in consultation with a panel of National Curriculum advisers, teachers and science centre experts as well as physicists. Launchpad's family visitors have also been involved in planning the new gallery.

Anthony Richards, Launchpad Head of

Science Museum Interactive Gallery Reopens



Launchpad will bring physics to life
pic courtesy Shawn Lani

Content, said, "The physics that 8-14 year olds have to tackle at school is fascinating, but can be off-putting for many. A visit to Launchpad will lift these concepts off the textbook page and bring them to life because you get to experience the phenomena for yourself – there's nothing like a ride on our *Rotation Station* to bring home the hard-to-grasp concept of spinning forces! The quality and breadth of the interactive exhibits mean the gallery is always full of theatre and excitement with some major exhibits demonstrating physical phenomena on a more dramatic scale than visitors have ever experienced before."

A single visit to the gallery will introduce young visitors to the principles of electricity and magnetism, forces and motion, energy transfer, light, sound and materials. The new exhibits include *Water Rocket*, which launches a plastic bottle 30m across the gallery using just air pressure, *Big Machine*, an impressive 4m-high exhibit where visitors combine forces by pulling levers and pulleys to demonstrate mechanical advantage, *Sound Bite*, which invites visitors to turn their own head into a sound box by biting vibrating posts to hear 'unheard' messages and *Icy Bodies*, a mesmerising exhibit where spinning dry ice pellets turn into jets of gas. A new digital artwork, *Social Light* (from artist Scott Snibbe) allows visitors to manipulate their own shadow to reflect laser beams or create rainbows. You can then capture your own piece of unique artwork to post on to the Launchpad website or email to friends!

The gallery is staffed and run by trained and experienced 'explainers' who help visitors use and understand the gallery. They will also be running a brand new series of demos and performing science shows for visitors.

Accompanying the new gallery is a Launchpad website, which will transfer some of the gallery themes, experiments and questions to the home and classroom.

The Science Museum is open daily from 10am – 6pm and admission to Launchpad is free (from 24 November). The website is at www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/launchpad.

CCTV breakthrough in Peterborough?



The October issue of Call Sign told the story of two Dial-a-Cab drivers who, among many others, were left with large debts after the Cabtivate taxi TV system folded. But Eddie Lambert (V47) has news of a CCTV system that sounds more than useful...

"Earlier this year, Peterborough City's taxi

enforcement team held a driver safety exhibition at the Gladstone Community Centre. This featured exhibitors of safety equipment for taxis such as safe screens for 4 door saloons, cameras with digital capture units that could be encoded to restrict access to pictures so that only authorised personnel with the right access codes and equipment could view the pictures. The local police and Cambridgeshire Road safety team also had stands and all involved felt that after a slow start, the day was quite productive.

"One of the exhibitors had a screen which showed adverts, but also took pictures of the inside of the cab when the doors were opened or when the driver chose to do so in the event of a problem on route. The system was expensive at £1,600 fitted, but following extensive negotiations between Ken Gray's team in Peterborough (Taxi Enforcement Office) and Xtron UK, Peterborough's hackney drivers can have the system fitted for a one off installation fee of £99.00 plus VAT. This payment is a one off, no annual fee,

repeat fee, or any other costs. The system remains the property of Xtron and the advertising shown to passengers funds all the other costs that arise. All images captured can only be downloaded by the Cambridgeshire Police Force.

"This must be a terrific deal for the drivers, alright they don't get the advertising fees unlike a system that was approved in London last year, but they do get a very good camera system for very little with no ongoing costs and hopefully a lot more peace of mind. Another system went to the wall early this year, with some drivers locked into paying for the rest of the time period without any income from adverts to compensate - and it did not have the camera facility either.

"I know if I were working in Peterborough, I would be looking to be at the front of the queue for fitting. It's just a pity that not all Licensing Authorities and their officers work at helping the trade as well as policing it the way Ken's team do in Peterborough."

Eddie Lambert (V37)

Continued from October

The swinging sixties were proving to be both good and bad for the London cab trade, as car ownership became commonplace and once you had experienced the convenience and comfort of your own car, walking or waiting for buses lost its appeal - if it ever had any! Then at some West End bus stops, inspectors, with the help of our friends in blue, would try to nick cabbies who - and I quote - "...were seen to be slowly driving past the bus stop so they could steal our rightful fares, Your Honour." No prizes for guessing on whose side the beaks came down on.

When the London cab trade complained to the police and authorities about touting minicab drivers, we got the usual dreary reply of not having the manpower to deal with the situation "...and people have to get home somehow." This translated in Met cop shop speak as "...so long as they are taking the drunks, late nighters and the rest off my patch, who cares."

Meanwhile more and more businesses wanted radio circuits to operate credit accounts, which ODRTS and co were happy to do, but sadly did not have sufficient cost effective available funds to do so. So they began operating roller bond schemes that held back a small percentage of the member's money earned by covering credit rides. This helped in reducing the costs of operating and paying members using only bank overdraft facilities. The alternative would have been to raise monthly subscriptions to the high levels being charged by minicab firms and this could have driven down the number of cab drivers staying on, or joining the expanding radio circuits. The majority of radio men were farsighted enough to realise that making more money costs money. But it was, and in some cases still is, strange how some cab drivers expect their elected committee members to work for nothing and maybe not so strange is how few of those cab drivers do anything for nothing themselves!

Socially, the swinging sixties caused havoc with many marriages as women found libera-

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

Fifty Green Years...

<p>tyres! £4. 0. 0. each free fitting MAXIMUM CASH DISCOUNTS ON CAR TYRES AND BATTERIES</p>	<p>"BLUE PETER" TAXICORD REMOULDS EXCHANGE CASINGS TUBE and TUBELESS (Metropolitan Police approved) tyrequipt co. ltd. Tyre and Battery Distributors 1 MELFORT ROAD, THORNTON HEATH (Near S.R. railway station in Brigstock Road) 01-684 8612 01-684 8593</p>
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Early 60s and besides women, you could also get new tyres for £4 - probably more useful! Pic from ODRTS news 1963

tion from the long established traditions and explored the sexual freedom that The Pill gave them. Some cabbies found this presented them with previously unknown temptations, as many well heeled ladies decided that the man behind the wheel could well be encouraged to be in her bed - and with no danger to her person. Weren't cab drivers licensed by the Met Police as being fit and proper persons? What cab driver was going to present the lady in question with unwanted problems - and chance losing his bill over a "quickie?"

There was one famous actress who took up with a cab driver, clothed, wine and dined him, even gave him an allowance so that he could be at her beck and call, which he was. Both seemed happy with this arrangement. When his wife found out, she for reasons of her own told him that so long as the bills got paid, she had at least as much housekeeping as before and didn't have to work, he could do what he liked with the other woman!

The affair continued for around ten years, his cab was replaced every year, his suits and clothes got better and they wine and dined in the best places! Life was sweet for him until

the fateful day when he didn't phone the actress first and just turned up unexpectedly at her beautiful flat in Kensington, to find her entertaining a young guitarist. He then made the huge mistake of telling her off for being unfaithful to him! She told him that the newcomer in her bed was younger than him, that the cabby had reached his sell-by date and should go back to his wife or she would call the police and have him arrested! So he went back to his wife who also threw him out as she, like the actress, had found herself a man friend for all those lonely days and nights.

Poor chap! He never recovered from this double whammy, became unkempt, fat, lost his looks and sex appeal living a miserable lonely life driving his aging cab and living in a scruffy bed-sit - and yes, for a time on ODRTS! And no, it wasn't me...

The moral of the story is that you could have a good time in the swinging sixties, but most paid the price! The rest of us suffered from bad doses of aggravated green-eyed jealousy...

Continued next month

Sunset Strip

DaC driver in M&O Fire Scare!

Alarm bells rang out loud and clear at taxi dealer Mann & Overton recently, causing a mass evacuation of the premises and a complete stop to the busy workshop routine of getting cabs repaired and back onto the road.

"Every facet of our operation was affected," Peter Rigden, General Manager at the north London dealership, told **Call Sign**, "from selling light bulbs in our parts department right through to new cab sales. Everything just came to a total halt while the Fire Service investigated the problem."

Peter continued: "At first I thought it was a safety check by our Health and Safety security team, but wondered why I hadn't been informed? When the bells continued to ring, it became apparent that something was amiss and as customer and staff safety is our primary concern, the building was immediately evacuated until the firefighters declared it safe to return."

He ended by saying: "All credit to them, they were here in minutes but found nothing wrong, so we were soon back at work. But even a false alarm always needs to be checked out."

DaC driver **Alan Green (E52)** was in M&O at the time and told **Call Sign**: "When that fire bell went and we were told it was a genuine alarm, we were all more concerned for our cabs than ourselves!"



The building was evacuated

MAILSHOT

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

Buying a new cab from M&O...

In early March, my night man and I decided it was time to change our 12-year old faithful Fairway, our choice was the new TX4. As we were cash buyers, we phoned both main dealers to see who would give us the best deal. Both offered similar incentives so we decided to go to the east London one which was both closer to home and which we have used before. On arriving at the showroom to place the order, we were told that as the TX4 was so popular, all deals were off. So we phoned Simon at M&O expecting the same response, fortunately he stuck to his word and we placed the order.

We picked our new taxi up on 10 April, unfortunately it had some faults so Simon arranged to take the cab in and give us a loan cab. As we are on Dial-a-Cab, we had to wait a few weeks for one to become available. On 24 May, I handed our taxi to Steve, the mechanic at M&O, with a list of my concerns. I was given a one-year-old TX2 with a DaC radio. What I thought was going to be a few days of repairs, turned into weeks. After about 8 weeks Steve, who had kept me informed of everything he had done to try and cure the droning and vibration problem, said the taxi was returned to the factory.

On 13 August, I met Mr Divito and Mr Ali Tarkan-Ali at their request. They apologised saying they felt we had been without our new taxi for too long and as they were not sure how long it would take to rectify, they offered to order us a new taxi - like for like - and in the meantime we could continue to use their loan cab. We picked up the new taxi at the end of September.

What I am not sure of is whether we would have got the same level of service from any other dealer? Throughout this episode, M&O's staff have impressed me with their customer relations and service. Although we were unfortunate to have a problematic cab, I am at least pleased we bought it from M&Os...

Ian Connelly (T21)

Thanks for letting us know Ian. Everyone likes to complain about bad service, few bother to compliment good service, so it makes a welcome change. Human nature I suppose. Ian picked up his new taxi in early October ...Ed

Questions, questions - and rubbish answers!

I refer to the letter from **Mike Curwood (F51)** concerning the carriage in licensed taxicabs of children under 10 years of age, which was published in the October issue of *Call Sign*. The subsequent reply from Judith Adams, whom we were told was senior Press Officer for TfL

Surface Transport & Enforcement, gives me some cause for concern.

This woman clearly has no conception of what is a licensed London taxi and has presumably never actually set foot in one. She states that: "The number of passengers is limited by the number of seat belts. If the vehicle is licensed for 5 passengers, it will have 5 seat belts and can take 5 people." How many seat belts are there in the back of your cab? Obviously she is a minicab user where she does not encounter rear-facing cricket seats.

And these are the people who are licensing us and in charge of enforcement! Can I retire early, please?

Keith White (A16)

I don't know about your Metrocab, Keith, but newer TX cabs do have 2 seat belts by the tip-ups. They may be more suitable for wheelchair use, but they are there. Other than that, I tend to agree with your assessment ...Ed

About these signals...

We are now in our sixth year of having new 'state of the art' terminals. Over the six years, we have experienced very poor signal quality and Brian has stated previously on many occasions that the DaC Board have endeavoured to rectify the problems using various methods and at substantial costs. Over recent months we have moved to the new premises at considerable expenditure and all we hear Brian banging on about in *Call Sign* is how fantastic the premises are, having all the latest technology and state of the art facilities. He is forever blowing his own trumpet about how DaC is such a flourishing business. Well that's all well and good Brian, and we all want DaC to flourish, but I think the Board have lost their way over the last few years. You have all certainly forgotten what it is like to be on the shop floor with the boys. I am of course referring to the signals yet again! I only wish that the Board still had to drive their cabs and experience the problems first hand. All of the state of the art technology in the world is useless if we can't send or receive signals and supply cabs to the ever-waiting customers.

Please don't insult me and ask me to take my terminal to Roman Way again, as I have been on numerous occasions only to be told that the terminal is working adequately. I can honestly say that I speak for the entire membership, because you can talk to any driver you wish to and they all agree on the signals issue. I am sure that if the AGM were still compulsory, you would come under fierce criticism. When you talk to other drivers, they will all tell you about jobs that have been lost from their screen. I can also tell you that it is not just during busy periods, but at any given part of the day. It is so frustrating when drivers lose jobs from the screen, be it 'bread and butter' jobs, being point cab on a physical rank, roaders, jobs into work, jobs home or wrong details appearing after you accept a job and getting booked-off after having a decent queue

position. These are just some of the scenarios that are occurring on a regular basis. We are all really fed up with the situation, but all feel that we just have to grin and bear it. I have never written to you before, but feel so aggrieved, I felt I needed to tell you what the drivers are saying on the shop floor as so far you have failed to listen. I also read your replies in *Call Sign* and sometimes find them patronising and never apologetic.

How long do we have to wait please, Brian, before you finally put your hands up and admit that there is a much bigger problem than you are realising? How long will you keep your head buried in the sand? We are paying our subs monthly, so feel that we are keeping our half of the contract but feel that DaC are not honouring their half by letting us down on a regular basis. When will you finally offer the drivers of this circuit some compensation as a gesture of good will of say one month's subs for all of the inconvenience and jobs lost from the screen over the last six years? And finally, when will the situation be resolved once and for all?

Paul Taylor (M01)

Paul, I know you addressed this to Brian, but as your letter notes, he has constantly responded to the problem and other than agreeing signals aren't good, there seems little point in getting the same response. I'm a driver as well, Paul, and on strike days there were times when I almost gave up trying to get an account ride. But I also work on normal days - which are obviously in the huge majority - and whilst often getting a delay in a signal response when it's really busy, I cannot remember the last time I lost a job. You obviously have, so what do you think should be done that hasn't been tried? Everything called AD? I'm pretty sure that would cure the problem. Is that what you'd like? I'm not sure that I'd be too mad about the suggestion even though in all probability, unless you were looking to go home, it should make no difference. As you say Paul, the BoM have tried everything (other than making everything AD) and it's all very well complaining about signals, but do you have a positive suggestion? After all, logically, if we are doing so well, it must mean that most of our incoming trips are covered because clients wouldn't hang around if signals constantly prevented them getting a service. New terminals aren't too far away, but will they cure the problem? I'm not so sure because having used PCs for almost 15 years, one thing hasn't changed - the more different facilities I use at the same time, the slower it all works.

My advice as a driver to anyone inter-



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ested is this; Take an extra second to check that the *busy* sign isn't on when you accept a trip. When you do send something and the *sending* sign appears at the top right of the screen albeit for just a few seconds, don't press anything else until you get a response or *resend* message – even if it seems you are waiting an eternity (or 20 seconds). It works for me. And I don't think wrongly calling Brian Rice 'patronising' and 'never apologetic' helps, because the Board seem to spend half their time trying different ways of improving signals ...Ed

War graves offer from Holland...

I read the article by Jon Robinson (*Call Sign online*, October) and it gave me goose pimples.

I am a war child of Arnhem (11-years-old) and we lived near the bridge that Jon wrote of. My dad was the GP in the area. We had the battle all around us followed by a forced evacuation of 9 months and then years of Nazi occupation. I may say, we had it all - as so many did.

Now I am a pensioner, it gives me some time and it all comes back in my memory; therefore I try each year to meet the veterans and assist in giving them a good time, as my thank you for still being alive after what happened to all of us. We lost everything - but no relatives. I like driving them in my London cab (FX4S) and they tell me that "now we feel at home..."

So if any of your drivers or their relatives want to write to me, they are welcome and I will try and comfort them by (hopefully) finding information they are seeking after so many years? I have found graves and sent pictures to relatives in the past. The digital camera photos even makes some moving shots possible of the environment of the cemetery etc.

The Commonwealth cemeteries are very well looked after. We attend each year several commemorations by the visiting veterans groups like the Old Comrades Group of Market Garden and the Anglo-Dutch Bond. That last group we meet yearly at Venray.

John and Margaret Sleep, being veterans (injured badly at the end) have come for the last 21 years to this area and now have many good Dutch friends; we still see them as our liberators!

John fought from 1940 in Libya, North Africa as a paratrooper as well as Sicily, Italy, Normandy and into Holland until April 1945.

He told me war is a dirty business, not only because of politicians who decide what happens but also as they themselves came after days of fighting at Venray, covered in dirt, tired, filthy without washing, unshaved, smelling, with lice on their head, having lost comrades and they felt really terrible when meeting the first freed citizens in the town.

Any veteran visiting Arnhem and telling in a pub "I fought at Arnhem" will always get a free drink!

Hans Dooren
Holland

If any DaC driver or their family would like to take up Hans' offer of trying to search for war graves at Arnhem, let Call Sign know and we'll pass the message on. Hans is an old friend of Call Sign running the Dutch section of the London Vintage Taxi Association ...Ed

Gas matters...

I am sitting by my computer looking at the photo of the TX1 emblazoned with words *London's Greenest Taxi* shown in Malcolm Paice's recent article in TAXI newspaper.

Whether they call this an advert or a statement, one expects it to be true. If it is not true, then it must be removed because it is a false statement. I have asked a number of people what they thought the statement meant and all took it that it was the least polluting taxi in London.

Malcolm stated in his TAXI reply to me: "We have been quite open with the emissions data." If that is the case why won't he produce the data? Then he says: "The taxi is still undergoing the 10,000-mile PCO test and they cannot verify the data at the moment." So how can he make any claim for the vehicle?

In his TAXI article, he also stated: "LPG conversions have been available for some time, but at almost twice the cost of the Gastech solution." Does this mean the Gastech will cost under £6,000?

It was difficult being a pioneer when the LTDA made fun of me for trying to make London a cleaner place instead of supporting me so that we could all have been driving gas cabs today!

With regard to Malcolm's statement: "With diesel currently averaging 99p per litre and LPG stable at 40p per litre..." that is the biggest untruth I have seen for a long time. The fact that ComCab can buy LPG at 40p per litre does not mean that the price is stable. *Stable* in The Little Oxford Dictionary is defined as: "Firmly fixed or established, not fluctuating or changing." If Malcolm has to refuel away from his own supply, he will not find it anywhere in London at 40p. The price at the BP station at Hatton Cross is 50p per litre, so a driver who uses that station and has purchased the Gastech engine (when it comes on the market), is faced with a fuel cost 25% higher than Malcolm's calculations.

I look forward to the day when the Mayor of London decrees that only gas taxis or hybrids can be built with a 15-year phase-out of diesel taxis. I guarantee the first organisation to protest will be the LTDA!

Stanley M. Roth MITG (Y53)

The LTDA...and those drivers whose cabs are 14 years old! ...Ed

Emission systems...

I am not a radio circuit driver, but happily earn my keep from the various ranks, streets and stations of London. I also read your



online version of *Call Sign*.

In the September Mailshot page, Jon Francis (A39) asks about driver's experiences of the emissions systems that are currently on the market. I had the Van Aaken system fitted in May this year to my 1998 TX1. Since the fitting, my fuel consumption has gone up by about 10%, the cab now runs hotter than it used to pre-fitting, but most of all it's sluggish and slow. Whilst it was never the fastest cab (a Friday cab) the journey home to Hertfordshire is now painfully slow.

In short, I wouldn't recommend my emissions system choice. I don't think there is a perfect system, but rather it's a case of finding the best of a bad bunch.

Greig Smith (badge number 65476)

Thanks Greig. If any DaC driver wants to add to the comments on the September article where 12 of our drivers commented on their emission systems, feel free. Please keep any negative comments polite and constructive! ...Ed

Touring the new building

I can still remember the fuss and fanfare that took place when Dial-a-Cab moved home from Shirland Road to the new prestigious building called Brunswick House. I'm not very good where time is concerned, so I cannot remember what year that was. What I can remember though is the BoM's pride with what had been achieved by them and the membership. Consequently the members were invited on guided tours (over the weekend periods) to view the new state of the art building. Can we expect the BoM to extend the same or a similar invite to view Dial-a-Cab House so the membership can see the fruits of their labour? Needless to say I would remove my shoes and change into my slippers.

Steve Shaller (R75)

That tour took place on October 19 and I'm sorry you had to miss it Steve (he had booked his return home and he lives in Spain). Incidentally Steve, because I like you so much and wouldn't want to upset you by reminding how long ago our move from Shirland Road was, I won't give you the date of 22 August 1984 – Oh sh**! ... Ed

Ranting!

Just reading my letter in *Call Sign* and it looks like a bit of a rant / tirade. I didn't mean it to be rude or derogatory. Would it be possible to have the email address of Mr Rice so I could clear a couple of points up rather than write another letter? And DaC is far better than ComCab... believe me!

Daniel Priddle (N96)

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It was emailed to you Daniel and I hope you thought the exercise worthwhile ...Ed

Nuala wedding

Please pass on my best wishes to Nuala and Mark on their wedding (*Call Sign* September). The photos were fantastic! Roy Manix (K98)

A Waste Of Time?

Yesterday, a Monday, I accepted ten account trips through my terminal. Almost all were bookings with a lead time (on rate 1) so my meter was turned off for almost 6 minutes each trip to avoid exceeding the run-in. Rate 3 means meter off for even longer. If my maths are right, that's an hour of my day with my meter off. Only one of those trips made more than £15. My reward? At least I could use code 3 having spun more than 5 trips. So after a scrub in EC2, which booked me off because EC5 is now disbanded, I press code 3, book into a zone and look in the bids. There are around 100 trips across the EC and E140 zones. So here we go, a long average day should now become an alright day. I press a trip bid and make my choice of EC2 as that's showing most trips. I press EC2 and watch as the terminal says *sending*. It shoots off into cyber space and returns *no bid trip in EC2*. Ok, another go! Press trip bid again, but it's *wait for x number of seconds*. I press again and find EC2, which has now moved across the screen! This time it says *resend*. Press again, off into cyber space and it returns *no bid trip*. Repeat this with left arm outstretched and unsupported left index finger fully extended for 1 hour before getting booked off! Go home with a sulk and wonder why you bother to pay subs for all that?

How doing this for an hour gives customers and members a service, I don't know? How pressing and sending trip bid 4 times a minute for an hour cuts down on air-time, I don't know.

I know why... because sometimes it works. Perhaps another journey up to Roman Way to see if the signal is good to be told "its the signals..."

Jon Robinson (E88)

Keith Cain replies: I don't quite know what type of answer there is to this type of letter. Is it a comparison between radio work and street work? Jon refers to the time he is driving to a pick up with the meter off, but all taxi drivers during their working day have the meter off between trips. I wonder what the time would add up to between each street hiring? Is it the cost of an account ride compared to street work, bearing in mind that the account work undertaking on this day was specifically chosen by him? Street work is all A/D until you stop and speak to the passenger. Assuming a driver is playing by the

rules, there is no choice about where you go then.

Jon remarks on the number of unmatched trips there were and makes the assumption that there must have been something going in his home-ward direction. On the evening he writes of between the hour his code three was engaged, there was in fact only one trip going to one of his back-up zones. Unfortunately, that went to another driver who was also bidding. He missed it by seconds. Prior to the time he began bidding, there were four trips going his way. The signals on this day played very little part in how Jon's day progressed.

Is it fair to say that not all days are the same? Some will be good, some will be bad, some will be very good and some will be very bad. That's what happens when you are driving a cab. Weighing up the cost of being on a radio circuit and what it can offer, in my opinion can only be decided by the individual...

What is Dial-a-Cab?

Dear Alan,

Regarding the Chairman's reflections in the October *Call Sign*. £7million worth of extra work was put in the back of member's taxis last financial year. Well done everyone, well done. But hold on, who did this work, the pixies? Fairies? Shouldn't that be, £7million extra that the drivers made for DaC? The same drivers who pay a subscription for the privilege of doing this work and earning this money. It didn't fall from the sky, it was earned. And despite the best efforts of TfL, PCO, SGS, the Mayor and not to mention our own signals. And for what? Does it make DaC an even juicier cherry to be picked in the future. What good is this to me and all the other drivers that have been made to sign away any share or cut of possible spoils should the Society be sold? Figures are up every year - well yours are, not mine. I've only got a limited number of hours in my day, yet all I'm ever told is my coverage must be better. I'm scruffy and I'm wrong to want to pair myself up with a ride going my way at the end of my shift. DaC don't even give mushers a week's subs break when we can't even drive our own cab while its in overhaul. I feel the Board slap each other on the back when things go well, but any problems... let's blame the drivers. That's it, tell every one it's the drivers fault. Oh sorry, we do get a Christmas present. Last year 2 curly collard poor quality polo shirts and free access to the tea machine at our office. You're really spoiling us! Last night, when it wasn't busy - more cabs than jobs while EC5 was disbanded - I booked into EC1. I was in Smithfield and given a non-rejectable pick-up in Tower Hill EC3. I'm glad this new system is working well then.

Lastly and on a lighter note, Mr Togwell says he took eight books on holiday this year and finished five of them. For God's sake, somebody tell him it wasn't Harry Potter who died in the end. Oooonnlny joking!



Nick Steventon (J65)

Thanks for the letter Nick. Surely no one has suggested that it's the BoM who have made DaC the huge success that it has become, any more than your suggestion that it's really the drivers? Who gets the accounts? And when we get them, who covers the work they provide? And when we cover it, who collects the money from the clients? We all need each other and the expression 'Dial-a-Cab' refers to the BoM, the drivers, the DaC House staff and everyone who works for the Society.

The question of a subs break was brought up in a past *Call Sign* Mailshot by Sid Nathan (K88), with the answer that if you want to pay more, then the suggestion would probably be feasible, but that our subs already were (and still are) already the cheapest of all the circuits.

As for signing away your right to any profit if selling your share, you knew the situation when you joined ...Ed

Reply to Keith Cain

Hi Alan

I'd like to reply to Keith Cain's response to my letter in the October *Call Sign*. As usual it was a BoM fudged answer to a member's question. My question was what's to be done about coverage of work on E140 after the link is closed, EC5 and SW zones in the mornings. I'm sorry, but the answer that when jobs are dispatched *As Directed*, the signal is better doesn't wash with me. My signal is worse than ever even during quiet times. Resend, resend, resend. But the point I was trying to make was like last night at around 10.30pm. 14 unmatched jobs on E140 and the screen crying out for help, but the problem wasn't just the signals. It's the fact that cabs can't get to the Wharf. Same as in the mornings, most cabs are in the City / West End and nowhere near the SW11s, SW15s, SW18s etc, so why on earth has this not been addressed? And as for drivers being offered 80 trips in a morning and rejecting all 80, well I find that very hard to believe. Did anyone ask this driver why he did it?

The point about the Society being 'them and us' was, I believe, proven in October's issue with Keith Cain and Tom Whitbread's pages. A photo of a building and one of him took up one third of Keith's page - as if we forgot what he or DaC House looks like! As for Tom Whitbread describing a cabbie look-alike, someone dressed in jeans and a fleece (are these the same fleeces given to us for Xmas last year) and is he insinuating violence? Let me tell you, if I walked into the fitting bay and as he claimed an "edgy fitters actions speak louder than words" on me, I will defend my self and then press full

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charges on this person. Then again, isn't it an ODRTS offence to threaten violence to another member? Should he now be on complaint for this? But I too was robbed on my last visit to the fitting bay; £130! Yes, that's what I was charged as a member for the crime of buying a new cab and having it fitted with a terminal. Them and us? You decide...

Michael Beevor (N76)

Hello Michael, I'm proud of *Call Sign* and hopefully most people enjoy reading it, so I'm sorry if you didn't approve of my lay out of Keith Cain's article last month. It's been said 1000 times, but there are still apparently some who think that it's just my name on page 3 but that the mag is really written in some dark corner by the BoM every month. Sorry to disappoint those who think that, but it's all my own work together with those who regularly write for me or send me correspondence for Mailshot. It's all appreciated and without it, there would be no mag, but it is all put together by me. Keith would not have known what his page looked like or what - if any - photos were to be used. Even Brian Rice, who is the only person to see a proof of the mag's text on its way to the printer, doesn't really know what the finished product will look like or which photos I may use. Had I not used the photo of DaC House (which I thought showed the new building well), what do you suggest I should have filled up the gap with? Keith said all he wanted to say and I suppose I could have put some press release in that you would have read in every other trade mag, but it would have been nothing of particular note otherwise it would have been in anyway.

I'm sorry you took offence at Tom Whitbread's article, but some could say that your response also falls short when it comes to accusations with the inference that Keith was lying in regard to 80 jobs being rejected. Ask that driver? Reread the article and he doesn't use the word in its singular use - it was drivers! Why don't you ask Keith Cain if you can go and see for yourself how many trips are rejected and get a general impression of how the call centre operates? Then write in again with your honest observations and suggestions as to whether you think it can be improved. I'll be happy to publish those observations AND give you a nice photo to go with it! Whaddya say Michael? ...Ed

National Express

Re the article on National Express undercutting the cost of taxis (*October Call Sign*), I will do any five hotels in Central London at £22 per person. I have been a taxi driver now for 35 years and still don't understand why everybody else can advertise prices, but we can't. Perhaps you or somebody else can tell me why?

Terry Jackson (E56)

Terry, I don't think there is any law that prohibits advertising fixed prices on a pre-booked trip, providing that with normal street work you do not charge more than what's shown on the meter. There is also cab sharing and if it was that busy, I don't see why it couldn't happen at LAP as it does at Paddington. The problem there Terry, is that with the greatest will in the world, I don't think 5 people - possibly strangers - and all their luggage would consider a ride in one cab as being particularly comfortable ...Ed

Six-monthly cab checks

With reference to the current controversy over the mid-year safety checks, I have found a way round the problem. I recently took delivery of a new TX4 and have just received a request to carry out the safety check when the plate will have been on the taxi only six months. I firmly believe in the *if you don't ask - you don't get policy*, so I refused. I told SGS that I would not bring my taxi for inspection until six months before the plate expired and they agreed.

David S. Lessman (D19)

Who'd have thought that the Chairman of the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children could also be a sarcastic so and so! ...Ed

Email contact et al

Can you tell me if it is possible to contact various departments of Dial-a-Cab by email? I cannot seem to find any information in the online *Call Sign*. I particularly wish to ask for my bond to be sent to me. Could you assist please?

On a separate issue, I see in *Call Sign* that some drivers are offered 80 jobs and refuse them all. I do not understand why they would do this, but from experience there are more jobs offered to me that I cannot do than there are ones that I can. By this I mean I get offered an untold amount of TaxiCard jobs that are in the next zone. Often the same job is offered many, many times. These are far too long a distance to be able to run for. Also, I get many jobs that are just not a reasonable distance to reach. If I am in Fleet Street and get offered Trafalgar Square, it can take 20 minutes to get there - or longer. This happens in many areas of London with the heavy traffic. It is not good for the customer to have to wait and not good for the drivers financially, so I often refuse them. I would love to have jobs offered to me that are viable to accept ie nearer, that is what I am on a radio circuit for, extra work. This is not meant as a criticism, just how I see it.

Also, I have never had a parking ticket while on a radio job in 22 years of being on different circuits. Am I covered by DaC while on a TaxiCard job in the event of a PCN? What is the position I would find myself in if I was helping a TaxiCard passenger to their flat/house at the END of their journey and I received a PCN for parking? Is the rule as it is at the beginning of a radio job and I would

be covered by the company?

Tom Reynolds (O85)

Keith Cain replies: Tom, you can contact the Driver Services department by email. You need to send your request to either Nualag@dialacab.co.uk or Valerieg@dialacab.co.uk.

While I accept that there are many trips offered to drivers from back-up zones, there are as many as 75% of all trips offered in the primary zone that are rejected first time round. I would love to be able to offer every driver a job when they are virtually outside the door, but unless the account is serviced by a rank, then this is not always possible.

When we inform customers that we cannot get them a cab, you are right to point out that it's not good for them. But I have to ask the question, have you ever thought what the client's reactions are in these circumstances? I have said it time after time; it's far better to inform a client that a driver is on the way, than have to say we have no cab!

Not having received a parking ticket in 22 years is a tremendous achievement and long may it continue. The Society will pick up the cost of a ticket so long as the time the ticket is issued corresponds with the trip details from start to finish.

What is a new cab warrantee?

I took my cab for its first overhaul and it failed on the smoke test, so I took it to KPM because it was more convenient for me even though I actually bought it from M&O. The head mechanic came out to look at it and shocked me by saying that the problem wasn't covered by the warrantee and would cost between £90 to £120 to fix as they would have to clean the injectors and flush the system through. He asked when it was last serviced and I told him that KPM had carried it out. He then told me that if I could get it done cheaper elsewhere then I should, as they didn't know when they could do it and I had a retest booked for the next morning.

So I went back to M&O who told me that the whole thing was nonsense and that of course it was covered by the warrantee and they did it that day. Apparently they cleaned out the EGR unit, which sometimes tends to get blocked.

Can it be that KPM didn't like it because they knew I had bought the cab at M&O, even though I had the service done by KPM? M&O offered no problems, even though they knew they hadn't done the servicing. I always thought that warrantee work could be carried out by any LTI Main Dealer and had no bearing on where you bought the cab?

Terry Lampshire (T68)



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Trevor Hattersley (MIMI), LTI Customer & Technical Support Manager in Coventry replies: LTI Vehicles empower dealers to carry out warranty repairs on our behalf. All dealers have the same policy and procedures manual that explains the terms and conditions of the manufacturers warranty and how to claim, as well as a procedure to follow should they require technical assistance or they require assistance on any arbitration issues. The dealer carries out the diagnosis prior to dismantling and makes a recommendation to the customer as to whether the issue is in fact warrantable in their opinion. The customer then makes the decision whether to proceed or not. The important thing to note is that a diagnosis is made without dismantling. Should a dealer suggest to a customer that the repair is not warranty and then find during disassembly that their initial diagnosis was incorrect, it is in the dealer's best interests to carry out the repair and claim the costs from LTI Vehicles under the warranty agreement. I am unable to comment on this particular incident as there are no records of the vehicle being to KPM for a repair.

Incorrect info?

Over the last few months, our letter pages have been dominated by letters from drivers complaining about our signals, which are well below standard. This has turned into a slanging match between the Board and the Fleet where a Driver complains and a Board member passes the buck back accusing us of overusing the system by requesting too many queue positions etc. While I agree that the signals fall well short of an acceptable level, only too often have I accepted a job only to lose it and get either booked off or given a queue position (why is it sometimes you get booked off and sometimes you get put back in the position you were already in?)

One of the main reasons we make too many requests on the system and control room is the way our work is dispatched. Details stating 'name and extension number to reception,' only you don't get an extension so you then get told by the receptionist that they need an extension so you go back to the cab and request an AAR or as has happened to me, you type a data message requesting the extension number only to get a reply asking you to try extension number 45454. Why not give it in the first place? It would save a lot of time. I got a job from Pall Mall this week to contact Kate at reception, that's all just Kate no surname, no extension. A few weeks back I took a 3-cab job picking up from Queenstown Road SW11. When I got my details, I had a name and the pick up locations were Sun Gate, Queenstown Road and also Battersea Park Station. How could we be in 3 places at once? All 3 cabs then had to waste time con-

tacting the control room by phone, ARR and data message, then we get sent to the corner of Prince of Wales Drive and Albert Bridge Road where the passengers were waiting. When we arrived, we were all well over £4.20. How does that happen? When the job was booked, which one of the 3 pick up addresses did the customer ask for I wonder?

I could go on, no doubt other members could come up with a few stories themselves, but the level of dispatching we are receiving through our terminals must improve. Incorrectly spelled names, wrong extension numbers or none at all, slow us down. When we can't make contact, we then have to make unnecessary requests putting more strain on our already poor signals. Why then, when we are under pressure, can't we be given the extension numbers so we can make our own contact? I recall last Christmas waiting for over 20 minutes for an ARR! Could we also ensure that all jobs have the minimum of a name and contact number before they are accepted?

Darren Hawley (A80)

See Keith Cain's article ...Ed

New HQ

Seems we have a new headquarters and very impressive it is. As regarding open day, all this happens in 2 hours - 2000 + subscribers? I think in view of that, you should have booked the Grosvenor House and took us all out on the p*ss seeing as we paid for it. Can the BoM see their way to getting a couple of aerials on top so we can get a signal, it's not that difficult. You say, Mr Rice, that we have the best technology in the world, then why can't I accept a job around Finsbury Square?

Patrick Noble (S55)

This was an official launch and you would have enjoyed it had you come. Then you could have put your point in person and seen whether the answer was any different. Quite a few drivers did come along and those I spoke to were impressed, but they were hardly queuing around the block to get in! Not every driver has the desire for a tour around the building. They come out to work. When you realise that DaC are lucky to get 100 drivers to attend its AGM, I doubt that the Grosvenor Arms would be needed for your p*ss-up, let alone the Grosvenor House. And Patrick, was it really necessary to be so rude in your letter? As a result, I deleted your last sentence...Ed

Plants in DaC?

Reading Brian Rice's light-hearted suggestion in response to a letter of complaint from **Daniel Priddle (N96)** in the October *Call Sign* ie if he was a "plant," made me wonder if we have actually been infiltrated by a number of these from other radio circuits? Why else would some of these drivers join DaC, only then to refuse to do good work put towards them? Incidentally Daniel, on 4 September (the first day of the tube strike),

I managed to do 9 account rides in my 9-hour shift, averaging £36. Yes, it was difficult in the early evening with all the resends, but if you were prepared to bear with it, you got by ok. But then I didn't waste "four or five minutes staring transfixed at my stone age MDT and telegraph pole and asked myself what is the point?" I, no doubt like many other members, just got on with covering our work. You are at DaC and unlike ComCab, the work covered, not covered, lost, gained or binned is all *our* work.

But back to the "plants!" The two drivers that refused to accept Natalie's Chargecard at Eurostar (same issue) are definitely this month's prize ones! Why join a radio circuit and pay subs if you only want cash on some days? Unfortunately, attitudes like that will jeopardise our livelihoods. Even more sad is the fact that they didn't notice that the young lady had a small child and luggage with her. I hope those drivers managed to sleep well that night. Can anybody give me one good reason why those two drivers should not have been put on complaint?

Anyone working into the early hours of Friday and Saturday nights will have noticed a lot of credit card work, which regrettably struggles to get covered. These jobs are mostly to the Gatwick Express or Eurostar, therefore it's safe to assume that someone is going on holiday. They book the taxi knowing that the cab could turn up with up to £4.20 on the meter plus a £2 booking fee and a 12.5% surcharge at the end of the trip, yet they still phone us because they want a taxi and not a minicab. And then we don't cover the work. Brilliant! We mess up the beginning of someone's holiday and pee them off so much that they may never use us again. Remember that the next time you complain about minicabs taking all the work.

I also find it sad and shameful to have read an article in *Call Sign* by Board member Allen Togwell where he has to explain how he is giving value for money to the Society. Once again this year we are enjoying an increase in work due to the efforts of the Board and staff at DaC. And I don't mean just by accepting the figures given to us by Brian Rice in his October article, I am going by my own earnings this year compared to last. In fact I am struggling to take any cash due to the amount of account work on offer. But so long as I have another trip offered to me as soon as I clear my last one, I am happy not to have "roaders." The Board have been voted in by a majority of members and although that doesn't mean we agree with everything they say or do, we could at least keep our disagreements civil and not personal. I think it is unbecoming of the Gentlemen's Circuit for a BM to have to explain whether he is giving value for money or not...

Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)



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- Improved security
- Improved intercom

Mann & Overton are the largest retailer of London Taxis in the UK, we are therefore able to offer an extensive choice of models and specifications, supported by an experienced sales and technical team.

*Business users only. Finance Subject to Status. Price per week based on financing on a Black Horse Taxi Finance Preferences scheme. Illustration based on a new TX4 Bronze Auto in non-metallic paint = £31,295.00 with £1,500.00 deposit, then 35 monthly payments of £542.77 (£125.26 per week) £145 acceptance fee on first payment due one month from delivery and optional final payment of £18,580.00 (Guaranteed Future Value + Option to Purchase Fee). APR 11.4%. Taxi pictured may not reflect actual taxi in offer. TX4 models and specification subject to availability. ** Applies to all TX4 models registered and sold from new by Mann & Overton London on or after 1st October 2007

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