

September 2007



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

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NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

There are almost 200 flight arrivals at London City Airport each day, although there never seems enough work there. Here is the arrivals timetable, so if you do rank up you may have a better chance armed with this information. Due to the large increase in flights since my last LCA arrivals, it will be shown over two issues...

From	Arrival	Flight	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	From	Arrival	Flight	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
AMR	07:00	VG12			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	GRQ	09:15	VG2	✓						
ORY	07:00	AF50				✓	✓	✓	✓	BHD	09:20	AF51					✓	✓	✓
AMS	07:10	VG21			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	MAD	09:20	BA87				✓	✓	✓	✓
BSL	07:10	LX48	✓							EDI	09:25	CB7				✓	✓	✓	✓
LUX	07:10	LG45			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	MAN	09:25	VG4			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RTM	07:10	VG27			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	EDI	09:35	BA87	✓						
AMS	07:15	KL15				✓	✓	✓	✓	IOM	09:35	3W8	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRU	07:15	VG15			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	LIN	09:35	AP42	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MAN	07:20	VG42			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	FCO	09:40	AP42	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MUC	07:20	LH48				✓	✓	✓	✓	AMS	09:50	VG2			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BSL	07:25	LX48				✓	✓	✓	✓	LPL	09:55	VG4			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FRA	07:25	BA87				✓	✓	✓	✓	CPH	10:00	AF51	✓						
ZRH	07:30	AF51	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	RTM	10:00	VG2			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GVA	07:35	LX44	✓							GLA	10:05	BA87				✓	✓	✓	✓
GVA	07:35	LX44				✓	✓	✓	✓	ZRH	10:05	LX45			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LUX	07:35	VG30			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	EDI	10:20	CB7				✓	✓	✓	✓
AMR	07:45	VG10			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BRU	10:30	VG1			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RTM	07:45	VG27			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	MAN	10:30	VG4			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AMS	07:55	VG21			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	AMS	10:35	VG2			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ZRH	07:55	LX45	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	AMR	10:50	VG1			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AMR	08:00	VG10	✓							EDI	10:50	BA87				✓	✓	✓	✓
MAN	08:00	VG42			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	GVA	10:50	LX44	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RTM	08:00	VG27	✓							MAN	11:00	VG4	✓						
RTM	08:00	VG27			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	ZRH	11:05	BA87	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
CPH	08:05	AF51				✓	✓	✓	✓	ORY	11:15	AF51				✓	✓	✓	✓
EDI	08:10	BA87				✓	✓	✓	✓	BSL	11:35	LX48			✓				
AMS	08:15	KL15	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	CPH	11:40	SK51				✓	✓	✓	
AMS	08:20	VG21			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	LUX	11:40	LG4	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DUS	08:20	LH48				✓	✓	✓	✓	BHD	11:45	AF51	✓						
GRQ	08:20	VG21			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	ZRH	11:45	LX45			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DND	08:25	CB91				✓	✓	✓	✓	FRA	12:25	BA87				✓	✓	✓	✓
LUX	08:30	VG30	✓							NUE	12:30	LH4				✓	✓	✓	✓
MAN	08:30	VG42			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	AMS	12:45	VG2		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ORY	08:35	AF50				✓	✓	✓	✓	DND	12:50	CB9				✓	✓	✓	✓
FRA	08:40	LH48	✓							RTM	12:50	VG2				✓	✓	✓	✓
FRA	08:40	LH48				✓	✓	✓	✓	FRA	13:00	LH4		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GVA	08:40	AF51	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	CPH	13:15	AF51		✓					
GLA	08:40	BA87	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	EDI	13:15	BA87				✓	✓	✓	✓
HAM	08:45	LH48				✓	✓	✓	✓	ORY	13:20	AF50			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MAD	08:50	BA87	✓							EDI	13:25	CB7				✓	✓	✓	✓
AMS	08:55	KL15				✓	✓	✓	✓	CPH	13:45	AF51		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CPH	08:55	SK50				✓	✓	✓	✓	EDI	13:50	BA87		✓					
EDI	08:55	BA87				✓	✓	✓	✓	GVA	14:00	AF51				✓	✓	✓	✓
CPH	09:00	AF51				✓	✓	✓	✓	GLA	14:00	BA87			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRN	09:05	LX41				✓	✓	✓	✓	BRU	14:05	VG1			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRN	09:05	OD50				✓	✓	✓	✓	STR	14:05	LH2				✓	✓	✓	✓
LUG	09:05	OD50				✓	✓	✓	✓	DUS	14:15	LH4				✓	✓	✓	✓
ARN	09:05	SK51				✓	✓	✓	✓	BHD	14:25	AF51				✓	✓	✓	✓
AMS	09:15	VG21	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	MAN	14:40	VG3		✓					
DND	09:15	CB91	✓							MAN	14:40	VG3			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Airport Codes

AMS	Amsterdam	ANR	Antwerp	BSL	Basel	BHD	Belfast	BRN	Bern	BRU	Brussels	CPH	Copenhagen
DUB	Dublin	DND	Dundee	DUS	Dusseldorf	EDI	Edinburgh	FRA	Frankfurt	GVA	Geneva	GLA	Glasgow
GRQ	Groningen	HAM	Hamburg	IOM	Isle Of Man	JER	Jersey	LPL	Liverpool	LUG	Lugano	LUX	Luxemburg
MAD	Madrid	MAN	Manchester	LIN	Milan Linate	MPX	Milan Malpensa	MUC	Munich	NCE	Nice	NUE	Nuremberg
ORY	Paris	FCO	Rome	RTM	Rotterdam	ARN	Stockholm	STR	Stuttgart	ZRH	Zurich		

A new update of Nash's Numbers UID was sent out by email on 7 August and which included a list of over 3000 restaurants. At least 10 drivers on the list failed to receive it due to invalid email addresses. If you didn't receive your update or you wish to register for this FREE document, email your name, call sign, badge number, mobile number and email address to: alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk with 'UID' on the subject line.

from the editor's desk

I think that the last issue of **Call Sign** must have set some sort of personal record, because for one week afterwards, my phone never stopped ringing. And it wasn't just about one thing. It was quite strange really.

One of the callers suggested that whilst he usually enjoyed reading **Call Sign**, he felt that there were two things spoiling the August issue. Firstly he believed that I should not write about any trade matters other than those involving Dial-a-Cab. His particular beef involved my comments on the time that the Knowledge of London seems to be taking.

My view on the subject has never changed and the only reason I mention the subject is because I care very much about this trade's future and I am concerned that if not enough young people want to go on the KoL, then eventually this trade will be overrun by minicabs. They are pretty close and if there are enough licensed taxis as many scribes in the trade press constantly tell us, how come there are so many private hire vehicles already, with their numbers multiplying by the week?

But I'm happy to share the view of at least one respected trade journalist and that is Alf Townsend, who came out in *The Cab Driver* saying pretty much the same things as I've been saying for such a long time.

I have now had to tell the PCO on two occasions that I will not publish press releases giving joint "facts" about this trade and private hire. Last year I took offence at a press release detailing the number of licensed drivers who had been "convicted" of misdemeanours as 1095, a figure I found hard to believe would include a significant number of taxi drivers. I asked the PCO how many were "ours" from that huge total and was told 13! Yet the PCO thought it prudent to address both sections of the trade as though we were as guilty as each other.

Now I have refused yet another release, this one suggesting that 9 "licensed" drivers have either been prosecuted or are awaiting prosecution for offences against the Disability Discrimination Act. Those already found guilty, we were told, faced sentences of £300 and in some cases, the loss of their driving licence. The press release has gone into several trade papers.

So again **Call Sign** asked the PCO how many of this total of 12 were licensed taxi drivers? The answer we received was none? NOT ONE! Yet we were all lumped together.

So, the reason I have said so often that I believe there aren't enough drivers getting through the Knowledge is because we are not only being swamped by PH, but even the PCO (and more probably TfL) are beginning the process of downgrading us.

We need more taxi drivers and if that makes it quieter to start (it won't always be August), then that is something we'll have to put up with because this is about survival – and if you think I'm wrong then just look around you at the number of cars now



licensed. Once the public know they can get a taxi much easier, they'll flock back because most of them prefer us but can't be bothered with long waits from late afternoon into the evening and the hour or so after midnight.

One further point I felt I had to add was that those trade papers that offer a view seem unified in trying to keep taxi numbers down, so if I don't give my view – and isn't an Editorial the views of the Editor – then who will put the view out there? So sadly I had to disagree with that driver's first point...

His second was whether DaC Board members should be able to use their column to include politics – ok, he was talking about Tom Whitbread! Tom's columns have always made interesting reading because he isn't afraid to air his views, but I took note of the driver's request and will be asking Tom to try and stick to cab business. Dunno whether that driver felt it was worth his while phoning, but one-all isn't a bad result – and we had a good chat!

And the other side...

Prior to that driver calling, I had another who also phoned about the Knowledge. This driver had a more personal beef about it because it involved his son who he felt was being held back and wanted me to write about it – in other words, the opposite view to the other driver. He didn't want to be named fearing that his son would suffer at the hands of a KoL examiner (are they are that petty), but he wanted to be safe rather than sorry?

He claimed that his son had been on the Knowledge for well over three years, yet was answering question after question correctly. He then claimed that ethnic drivers were getting out far quicker and that his son had spoken to a black Knowledge boy who had "been given an easy run."

I think that all of us who have been on the KoL have tales to tell of one driver getting it easier than another or that he/she has been held back. In all honesty, while I had every sympathy for this DaC driver's son, I somehow couldn't believe that the PCO / TfL would be that stupid. After all, they are

the ones who put out the press release about drivers breaking the DDA, even if they did address it to the wrong group.

However, I must add that I also hope that the Mayor's "initiative" in fast-tracking ethnic minorities has been grossly exaggerated, because if it hasn't and an ethnic taxi driver stops another driver to ask the way because his Knowledge wasn't up to scratch, the PCO and their masters will have a taxi war of words on their hands that I wouldn't want to be around to listen to!

I'd like to know the views of any non-white driver on DaC when it comes to so-called fast tracking, because those already out there have done the Knowledge the hard way – the proper way.

So as I've said so many times, I am against shortening parts of the Knowledge, I am against computerising the Knowledge (which is where I disagree with the Taxi Board), I am against anything that makes it easier and I am against any form of favouritism. It should be equal for all. More than anything, I am against PCO examiners deliberately holding back someone who is good enough to pass out.

As for all the other phone calls, that's for another day...

London Mayoral elections...

This issue of **Call Sign** has an interview with London Conservative Mayoral candidate, Victoria Borwick. This is probably different from any other interview given in a trade paper because DaC drivers selected the questions.

There are four Conservative candidates fighting for the one place to go up against Ken Livingstone in May 2008 and the decision as to who that one candidate will be is decided at the end of this month. So because **Call Sign** is monthly, we will only be getting one crack at an interview and have picked Victoria Borwick because of her connection to the taxi business.

Her husband, Jamie, was the former Chairman of LTI parent company Manganese Bronze, until leaving and starting up the Modex Electric Van, which originally began life with LTI as the Electric Mercury but never made it as a commercial enterprise. Now again under Jamie, it has become a big success.

Jamie Borwick was without doubt someone who not only thought the London Taxi and its drivers were brilliant, but would tell that to anyone who listened. He also drove everywhere in his own taxi with its licensed driver.

So it seemed logical to see how much of her husband's admiration of our business is inside Victoria Borwick.

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

Trade politics again!

I've read Barry Hooper's column in TAXI newspaper (8 Aug) where he attacks me personally as part of his general attack on the London Taxi Board (LTB). He insinuates that the LTB and myself in particular, actively campaigned against the introduction of Tariff 3, something that is totally untrue. Consequently, I have decided to reproduce some extracts from my Chairman's Reports going back to April 2001 to see what I actually wrote at the time...

April 2001

"I must say that I'm a little disappointed that nothing at all has been done to entice more drivers out at night by increasing the night charge. The Mayor was asked by the trade to increase the running rate at night, so that when the meter was engaged it would automatically start at the enhanced rate that we currently receive when the journey is in excess of six miles. That tariff would then remain unchanged for the entire length of the journey. The trade were subsequently informed that this option was not available at the moment because not all meters were equipped with a calendar facility."

March 2003

"I wrote in the last issue about the proposed Tariff increase and I can now report the finalised details that are proposed to be introduced in April. The initial hiring charge will be increased to £2 from the current £1.40 and this will include any additional passengers and luggage - which will become non-chargeable items in the future. The night tariff (Tariff 3) will now be introduced at 22.00hrs instead of 20.00hrs, and Tariff 2 will be applicable between 20.00hrs and 22.00hrs. The daytime rate on a Saturday and Sunday (Tariff 2) in operation between 0600hrs and 2200hrs will remain unchanged and not increased."

May 2003

"In my last Chairman's report, you may recall I was just a little disappointed about the fragmentation of the Taxi trade in these very precarious times and how leaders from one or other organisations would attack their colleagues from the other organisations due purely to petty jealousies or indeed, for political ends. Consequently you can imagine my surprise when I saw the April 23 issue of TAXI. There on the centre spread was a picture of me together with five other colleagues from the Taxi trade. Why am I afforded this dubious honour? It appears that we six are the culprits for having the night tariff revised so that it now starts at 2200hrs instead of 2000hrs. So I'd like to relay the facts to the LTDA en bloc as the article was unsigned."

I must confess that at the beginning of 2001, I was one of the main instigators for introducing a night tariff because in my opinion there was a shortage of taxis at night with the market so buoyant and I also believed that taxi drivers working at night should earn more money than those working during the day. I also



believed that an increase in the night fares would entice more drivers out. But as we all know, the economic climate changed dramatically. First it was foot and mouth which took its toll on the tourist industry, I then noticed a distinct downturn in our job figures commencing in May 2001 and to cap it all, we had the atrocity in New York on September 11th. Consequently, I changed my mind and felt that the increase in the night tariff that I had helped to negotiate, should be postponed until the following April and then the whole fare structure could be reviewed. I was very concerned that the Taxi industry would be seen to be greedy and grasping in a very delicate economic and political climate. Unfortunately, I then committed a cardinal sin according to the LTDA - I dared to voice my opinion!

It would appear that the LTDA only believe in democracy and freedom of speech providing that you agree with their views; otherwise you get attacked for voicing your opinion. Or is it only the LTDA that is responsible for the Taxi trade, after all the majority of my members do not belong to the LTDA?

The article then states that Ken's (Livingstone) statement was reached after 'listening to the views of the Taxi trade' and that 'the LTDA and the T&G Cab section were the only trade bodies that supported the night tariff increase.' So if I understand that correctly, then Ken Livingstone listens to me but disregards the LTDA and the T&G - and they are supposed to negotiate on our behalf! Makes you think doesn't it...?"

So there you have it. That is what really happened and not just what Barry Hooper can recollect about the situation. He also says in his article that Geoffrey Riesel is the Chairman of the LTB, again that is not correct - it is actually me.

I was in the same room as the Mayor when we negotiated Tariff 3, then after the foot and mouth epidemic and 9/11 atrocity, the Tariff 3 rate was put back to 22.00hrs because it was having a detrimental effect on the industry. I was proven to be correct once again, that really must have hurt!

Barry also accuses myself and others that we are not doing what our members have elected us to do - oh really! Do you believe that members of the LTDA actually elected you to attack other organisations within the taxi industry? I do not believe for one second that the average member of any organisation

gets any pleasure from seeing one trade organisation attacking another. What the members want is unity within the trade, something you obviously do not subscribe to. Or are you so out of touch that you don't realise it - or as seems more likely, it just doesn't fit your agenda?

So come on Barry, don't keep harping back to the past; you were elected by your members in order to try and take this industry forward and not just to make derogatory remarks about other individuals and trade bodies. That really does not get us anywhere and you do yourself a disservice.

That was two weeks previous and I have just read the latest edition of Taxi (22 Aug), where there is yet another concerted attack on the radio circuits and myself. This time John Thomas and Stevie Mac have joined Barry Hooper! Why this has come to fruition now, I don't know! My intention was not to respond any further, but the problem is that if you don't, people will assume that what TAXI has written is correct. Barry still believes that Geoffrey Riesel is the Chairman of the London Taxi Board (LTB) when in reality I am (I just knew you lived in the past Barry) and to top it all, he believes that our Job Distribution Engine, Concierge, is a minicab company! I really can't believe how wrong and out of touch someone can actually be and it throws everything he writes into doubt.

But John Thomas, the LTDA Chairman, really takes the biscuit when he states the LTDA should start a taxi only radio circuit. I thought they did that once with ComCab - whatever happened there? Anyway, I am reliably informed that the LTDA still retain a 20% stake in ComCab, which returns annually a six-figure sum to the coffers of the LTDA. This whole scenario brings pots, kettles and black to mind! An executive of the LTDA also sits on the Board of ComCab, for which he draws an honorarium. No problem with that - but do me a favour...please!

Stevie Mac also makes derogatory observations regarding the radio circuits asking why taxi drivers should be on the radio? Excuse me Steve, but wasn't the whole point of having a radio in taxis a facility to give members of the public the opportunity to use a taxi instead of a car when ordering by phone? If radios disappear from taxis, then the public would have no option other than using a car when ordering by phone. Whatever happened to the LTDA policy that every taxi should have a radio?

I will be launching Dial-a-Cab's new building shortly and invitations will be going to the LTDA, I really believe you should try to attend and see how sophisticated some parts of our industry really are and also take the opportunity for a face to face talk in order to discuss our different points of view - and not just air them in the trade press in an attempt to score political points! Finally, come on Bob; keep your boys in order, the war of words between trade organisations is not doing our industry any favours!

Brian Rice
Chairman, Dial-a-Cab

The government's **"Know Your Limits"** campaign wants to find out **Dial-a-Cab** drivers views and experiences of encountering drunk people when working in your taxi. Cab drivers have a unique perspective into how people who have drunk too much alcohol behave and the kind of problems they can create. **Know Your Limits** is interested in hearing about your experiences of dealing with drunk people and how this effects your job.

The results of the survey will be launched in a future issue of **Call Sign** and will be released to the national media with the aim of encouraging people to think about how much they drink and to better recognise when they exceed their alcohol limits.

To take part in the survey, log on to Call Sign's website (www.dac-callsign.com) and follow the link on the top left side of the home page. The survey has 15, mainly multiple-choice questions and should only take a few minutes to complete.

The campaign is also looking for cab drivers that might be prepared to speak to the media about their personal experiences of dealing with drunk people when working in their cab. If you would be prepared to do this, there is a facility to leave your contact details at the end of the survey.

The campaign would be very grateful if you could take the time to complete the survey. We hope that it will encourage a more sensible approach to alcohol and will

Call Sign Needs Your Views on Booze!

You can help by filling in our on-line survey aimed at the national media...

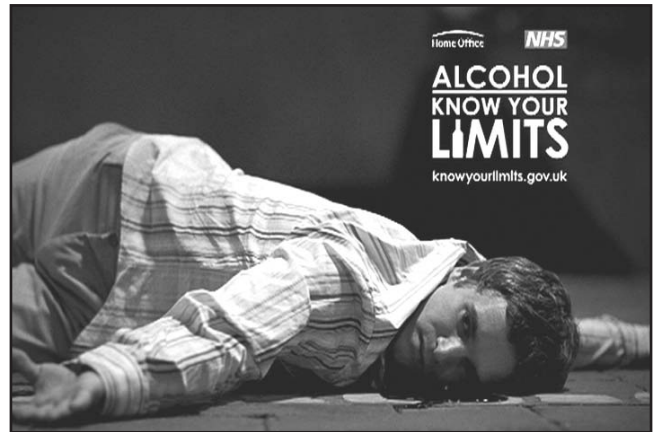
also help to make taxi drivers' working lives easier in the longer term. **Call Sign's website again is www.dac-callsign.com.**

After filling in the on-line survey, push the 'Done' button. You will be unable to send in more than one.

Launched in October 2006, the **Know Your Limits** campaign aims to highlight the negative consequences of drinking too much alcohol. A hard-hitting advertising campaign targeting young people focuses on how drinking alcohol makes you feel invincible, when in fact you're more vulnerable. The ads used a 'superhero' to symbolise the feeling of invincibility and contrast

this with the reality of alcohol-related accidents, sexual attack and violence.

The campaign website is at www.knowyourlimits.co.uk.



How the 'know your limits' posters were seen

Become a Call Sign Know-All

With Nash's Numbers Useful Information Document...!

There are already a substantial number of "know-alls" on Dial-a-Cab, thanks to Alan Nash's UID – his **Useful Information Document!** Alan (A95) has been putting his *Nash's Numbers* column on **Call Sign's** page 2 since 1997 and continues to provide our readers with constantly updated information that will assist them in their work as licensed taxi drivers.



If you always read his page and as many other drivers do, tear out those pages of interest, you could be missing out by not registering for his Useful Information Document – or in our world of initials, his UID. You need to be on the Internet and have a PDF reader on your PC, but if you don't have that, you can download a free version on the UID site. Any DaC driver can then register and receive information that you couldn't get free of charge anywhere else.

So what's on it?

Well there is far more than we have space to tell you about, but just for starters how about a DaC zonal map showing how the outer zones are divided; inner London post codes and physical zones; TaxiCard codes; updated fare tables; mileages from Cabot Square, the City itself or Heathrow; ins and outs of the Met; which flights go from where at both Heathrow and Gatwick; a complete list of London pubs, restaurants and hotels; a list of all the police stations that still stay open 24 hours and speaking of the police, there is a list of all London's lap dancing clubs and much more... and all in excellent PDF print-out quality.

If you are not registered for the UID, it isn't difficult, just email alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk with the subject line as UID. In the message section, put your name, call sign, badge no, email address and mobile phone number. The last item will only be used if Alan has any problems accessing your email address.

There aren't too many genuine free bargains in life where you genuinely get a lot while not required to give anything back. But Alan Nash's UID is certainly one. Register now and become a Call Sign Know-All...!

TAXI

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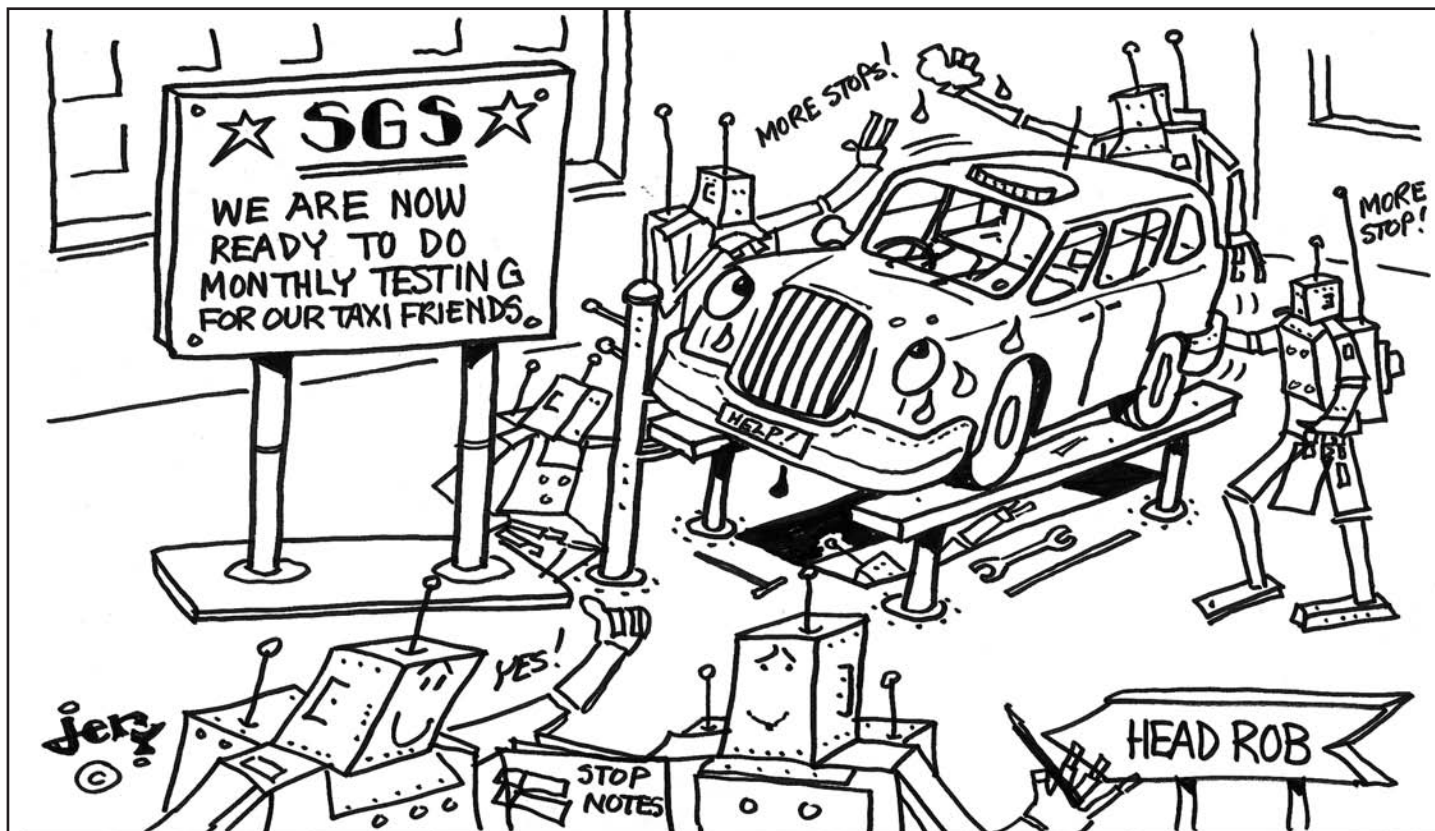
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Jery's



World



Sorry chaps, did we say 6-month testing? Naturally we meant monthly – but we might give you a discount...!

thelondonpaper

TAXI DRIVERS “LOW SKILLED?”

DaCs Rob has a go at The London Paper

DaC driver **Rob Donald (O47)** was one of several drivers who called **Call Sign** to complain about an article in **The London Paper** (dated 9 July). That paper is one of the freebies in competition to **The Evening Standard**. Rob, though, was the only driver who also wrote directly to the paper as well.

The drivers were complaining at a piece that originally discussed bus problems, yet ended by claiming: “London’s taxi drivers have also come under fire, as a government minister referred to them as being low- skilled. Immigration Minister Liam Byrne made the comment to a committee investigating migrant workers.”

While we all know who the minister was referring to, many readers would have assumed that it was the licensed taxi trade. Rob wrote to the paper:

Dear Sir,

I am by nature quite accepting, but I read the last few lines of your piece with utter disbelief. I suspect that you may have misquoted the Minister for Immigration regarding the quality of London “Taxi” drivers. As you may guess, I am a licensed London cabbie and have been for many years. We have to have spent many years gaining ‘the knowledge’ and many thousands of pounds upkeeping our Taxi to the highest possible standards. London taxi drivers come from all creeds cultures, religions and I am sure we would like to keep it that way.

Many of London’s cab trade organisations have spent most of their recent lives talking to Mayor Ken and his merry minions, and others about keeping the standards of the cab trade as high as possible.

I understand it is TfL that was talking of introducing a lesser knowledge to fast-track groups who are from communities that may find doing the knowledge a problem. Why? Surely not to reduce the quality of our world-renowned Taxi system? I suspect that the minister’s comment was perhaps aimed at the private hire (minicab) section that is overseen by TfL.

I wonder if you can find the exact quote from the minister or tell me how I can find it. I look forward to hearing from you.

Robbie the Cabbie

Whether Robbie received his reply would probably depend on the time the next pig is scheduled to fly past! But full marks for making the effort.

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Late deals and special price for DaC members.

A pensioner who lost part of both legs following a train accident 35 years ago, had left his car parked (legally) in Park Lane during the evening of 22 July. He had driven down from Hemel Hempstead to make a speech about a charity whose aim is to supply wheelchairs to disabled people around the world.

While Geoff Bone was mixing with friends, police suspected that there was a bomb in his car after someone reported lots of carrier bags on the back seat. They decided to use a controlled explosion on it and then when seeing it was innocent, towed it to a south London car pound!

Mr Bone returned in his wheelchair at midnight to where the car had been and was shocked to find the N-reg Vauxhall Omega, complete with disabled badge, missing. He assumed it had been stolen.

When he reported the missing car, he was told of the explosion. But no offer was made by the police to help the former pastor get home. Mr Bone was told to use buses and taxis to get back to Hemel Hempstead!

However, that was only part of the shock. The explosion had rendered the car useless so far as insurance was concerned and he then received a letter from the police claiming that he would now have to pay £50 for the car to be disposed of! Failing that he would be charged £12 a day in storage charges!

Mr Bone said of the police: "They left me stranded in London. My bus pass was in the car. I have third party insurance, so they can't do anything to help get the remains out of the

Never Mind the Touts - Let's Get the Disabled!



Geoff Bone - No legs and now no car after the police blew it up in Park Lane

car pound in Charlton."

A Scotland Yard spokesperson wouldn't comment other than to confirm the controlled explosion.

Although *Call Sign* has every sympathy with Mr Bone, this isn't our usual type of story. We publish it for one reason and one that you have no doubt already asked yourself: Why was a car with a disabled badge blown up, yet there is a non-stop stream of minicabs parked along there every night – and unlike Geoff Bone – rarely parked in a legal fashion?

Heathrow roaders: No more pricing...?












A Parliamentary transport committee has demanded a change to arrangements for taxis operating at Heathrow. The committee are concerned that trips not returning into town can be priced, as the airport is outside the Greater London boundaries and claims that taxi drivers can negotiate fares, rather than rely on the meter.

The committee called this confusing and "...open to over-charging. We recommend," it said, "that Transport for London look into a system similar to that which operates in New York City, where the fares to and from the area's airports in yellow cabs are standardised by the Mayor. This system is simple and easy to understand and would assist in particular those arriving in the UK from abroad."

The committee also referred to Gatwick, from which London taxis do not operate...

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ALL CHANGE IN NEW YORK

But not for the Disabled!



The New logo for cabs in NYC
Pic courtesy Smart Design

New York Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, announced some time ago that within the next five years the City would have converted its entire taxi fleet to hybrid gas-electric vehicles making the NYC atmosphere far less polluted. But not one of the new breed of taxi will be wheelchair accessible.

Over here in London, every licensed taxi has long been available for hire by wheelchair users and Dial-a-Cab's long involvement with the Westminster TaxiCard and its shared usage with ComCab of the Borough's TaxiCard account – recently renewed – is more than likely a direct result of that accessibility.

New York currently has 81 accessible taxis on the road with another 150 expected in the next 12 months. But that total of 231 for next year is shared among an estimated 65,000 disabled people who can only get about via wheelchairs. Perhaps even worse, the new hybrid gas-electric taxis cannot be converted to accept wheelchairs.

Ask any London driver and he'll admit that our City never really needed every single taxi to be wheelchair accessible, however it is true to say that now they are, it does mean that disabled passengers no longer need to enquire whether any "wheelchair cabs" are available – as DaC used to get phone calls about.

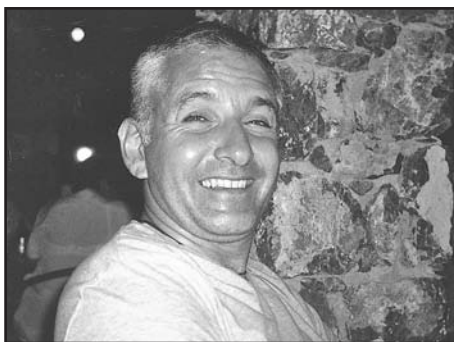
According to Michael Bloomberg, changing the fleet will save 22 million gallons of fuel and reduce carbon emissions by 215,000 tons, but many wonder why such a massive transition doesn't take advantage of the opportunity to assist the disabled – whose groups have long campaigned for more wheelchair accessible taxis.

But the Mayoral administration claims that the cost and aesthetics of converting the fleet to accessible vehicles would be too high. In addition, the hybrid models the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) look as though they will be using (Ford, Toyota and Honda) cannot be modified to include any form of wheelchair ramp as their London counterparts use.

According to Matt Sapolin, the Commissioner at the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, some non-hybrid vehicles that are currently wheelchair-accessible will be allowed to continue in use after the transition.

Whilst disability groups are unhappy at the whole situation and are threatening possible legal action against the Mayor's administration, New York's Yellow cabs are beginning to prepare for the changeover by having their outside logos redesigned...

DaC Driver Becomes a Licensed Mortgage Broker!



Richard Levy

Former Dial-a-Cab driver **Richard Levy's** experience of the way he

claims the mortgage world "mistreats licensed taxi drivers" has led him to study to become an independent mortgage advisor.

Richard (ex-W12) told *Call Sign*: "There are advisors out there that know nothing about the reality of our job; we need someone who understands the mortgage market and the taxi game and I want to be that someone."

He enjoyed his time as a cabbie and says that joining Dial-a-Cab was his best decision.

"Ironically," he added, "being a member of this Society made my move away from the cab trade so much harder, while being on DaC also makes being a taxi driver that much easier! In addition, the staff were always very helpful when I had a problem."

Richard took a long while to find a company that would correctly suit his needs and also that of the trade.

Mortgage Monitor is a membership club that proactively checks your mortgage

payments against whether the market can offer a better deal. When a cheap-

er deal is found, they move you free of charge. It is like no other and one he feels will best suit the ever-changing need of the cabbie.

Richard went on to say: "I found somewhere that will take away the headache of whether you have the correct mortgage and give you the protection of the Financial Services Authority. They are independent and all members receive free advice."

Richard, who has been a licensed taxi driver since 1996 and who was with Dial-a-cab for several of those years ended by telling *Call Sign*: "Not only are the mortgage examinations easier than the Knowledge, but this time I will be saving friends money and not spending it!"

"To everyone on DaC or your friends, if you are interested or want to become a member of The Mortgage Monitor - free of charge to cabbies - please don't hesitate to call me on 0208 527 2364 or email: richard@themortgagemonitor.co.uk."

THE GROOMER FOR MEN



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The London Taxi War Disabled Charity help with the transport...

The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled PRO, Derek Leone, has told *Call Sign* of the Princess Royal's Volunteer Corps (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) 100-year anniversary celebrations in which the LTBAWD were asked to assist with taxi transport.

"In 1907 the FANY was formed and during WW1 became involved by driving ambulances and assisting in field hospitals and troop canteens - all under dangerous conditions. By the end of the war, they had received 1 Legion d'Honneur, 27 Croix de Guerre and 17 Military Medals.

When WW2 began, they were to become The Motor Driving Companies - part of the A.T.S. Many of them also went into top-secret work in coding and supplying administration and support at the Special Training Schools and also joining the Special Operations Executive, serving in various parts of the world. A large number were sent to France, where some were captured and died in concentration camps. Three of them, **Noor Inayat Khan**, **Violette Szabo** and **Odette Hallowes** all received the George Cross - the first two posthumously. It was Violette Szabo

First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Celebrate 100 years

who was made famous in the 1958 film *Carve her Name with Pride*, starring Virginia Mckenna.

On the wall of St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge is a memorial, which lists 54 names of these brave women and on 27 October 2007, the Annual Remembrance Service will be held at the church. **The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled** are proud to have been asked to supply transport to take them to their Headquarters in Horseferry Road.

On the 28 June 2007, military and civilian vehicles were driven to Buckingham Palace where the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry were inspected by HM Queen Elizabeth and HRH The Princess Royal after which they left the Palace and made their way to Whitehall to lay a wreath at the *Memorial to the Women of World War II*.

After the ceremony, they continued onto the Royal Hospital, Chelsea and a service was held in the Chapel, followed by a reception in hospital's Great Hall.

The LTBAWD was asked to assist by supplying a cab to convey a retired member of the corps to the Royal Hospital. I went to The Royal Overseas League and met Mrs Hester Higgins, who at the age of 91 had travelled from Australia to attend this important ceremony.

During the journey, Mrs Higgins told me



Virginia Mckenna starred in the 1958 film of Violette Szabo, "Carve her name with pride"

that she joined the FANY when she was 24 and served as a driver to the Commander of the anti-aircraft batteries while billeted in a Nissen hut at Primrose Hill. In 1947 she married a doctor in the Australian Army and moved over to Australia.

The Corps is still actively working today and are called upon to man the casualty communications in the aftermath of serious incidents. They were on duty on 7 July 2005.

The **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled** are happy to assist with transport for these ladies now and also into the foreseeable future."

Derek Leone
LTBAWD PRO

SMILE



One hundred years ago, a small town in Poland had only one cow and it had stopped giving milk. The town's people did a little research and discovered that they could buy a cow from Moscow for 2000 rubles or they could get one from Minsk for only 1000 rubles. So they bought the cow from Minsk.

It was a great cow, gave lots of milk and cream and everybody loved it. Then the townsfolk decided they would mate the cow and then they would never have to worry about their milk supply again.

So they got a bull and led the cow and bull into the pasture. However, when the bull came in from the right to mount the cow, the cow moved to the left. When the bull moved in to mount the cow from the left, the cow moved to the right. This went on all day until finally in desperation, the people decided to go and ask the wise man of the town what to do. After all, he **WAS** very wise. So they told him the story.

"Oh wise one" they cried, "we have tried all day to mate our cow. When the bull moves in from the right the cow moves left, and when the bull moves in from the left the cow moves to the right. What do we do?"

The wise man thought for a moment and asked the townspeople if they bought cow from Minsk?

"Oh wise one," they exclaimed in wonderment, "you are so wise. We never said we bought the cow from Minsk. How did you know that?"

The wise man smiled and replied: "My wife is from Minsk..."

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Lend Me a Tenor...!

Ken Bates is used to handling the odd tenner as **Dial-a-Cab's** Tango 29. He gets them chucked at him everyday! But it's a different kind that helps Ken release the stresses and strains of the day.

Ken has been playing the tenor sax for around four years and joined **The South London Jazz Orchestra** (SLJO) seven months ago. Since then they have both gone from strength to strength, playing The 100 Club and Brighton Pavilion as well as appearing on the same bill as Chas and Dave!

Their success was rubber stamped this July when invited to play at the Montreux Jazz Festival!

SLJO is a community band and also a registered charity, having being formed in 1999. They specialise in popular swing music and have members aged from 7 to 87!

Ken told **Call Sign**: "It's great; we have around fifty members from all walks of life, professional musicians to... well to a London cabbie! Incidentally, not only am I the only cabbie, but I also tell the best jokes!"

There are no auditions or any other restrictions when joining SLJO, players join and find their own level and all SLJO players give their time and energy free of charge.

If you would like to find out more about joining The South London Jazz Orchestra go to their website at www.sljo.org.uk.

In the meantime, **Call Sign** wishes Ken and the SLJO all the best for the future.

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? Successful writer? Call Mickey on 07879 465 771 and he'll make sure everyone knows about you...

MICKEY'S MUSIC...



Ken is never short of a tenner - or a tenor sax!

Next month:

Which top band - and compulsory walk-on part in Eastenders - did Dial-a-Cab's Jim Rainbird (T25) turn down? To cut a long story short, I'll tell you next time...

**Mickey Lappin (E46)
Call Sign Music...**

Barry Ramsden (P54) is looking for a Bass guitar player of any standard to join his group for light hearted 'jamming sessions' on Wednesday evenings in Carshalton. They are into playing stuff by Red Hot Chilli Peppers, Oasis etc. If you are interested, then call Barry on 07801 057 988.

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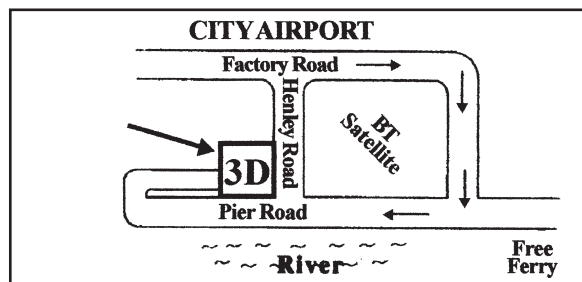
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Vehicles

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COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello ladies and gents,
We are into September and now that the school holidays are over, I am sure that work figures will return to normal levels. Sadly and in all probability, so will the traffic!

Run-ins

That leads me onto the subject of meter run-ins. I know that as a driver myself, it is often very difficult to judge the correct amount on the meter at arrival or at the booked time, but clients request as part of their invoices a report showing detailed information of run-ins and cleared meter fares. These reports also provide distances between arrival and CLJ.

So it is very important and worth reminding you, that arriving at the pick-up point with more than the authorised amount (currently set at £4.20) is a procedure rule and if it the amount is exceeded, could lead to a possible complaint and quite easily lead to problems with, or even the loss of, a large account.

Please be mindful and adjust the meter if necessary...

Increase in complaints

In the short time that I have been in this particular post, complaint numbers seem to be on the increase - pretty much on a daily basis. It appears to be more and more of a problem, we are after all in the service industry and as experienced professionals we are guided not only by the rules of our Society, but also the PCO.

As a fair-minded person, rudeness to clients, threatening or aggressive behaviour towards fellow subscribers, call centre staff or Marshals is something I feel very strongly about. Again I am sure you understand that this type of behaviour can cause irreparable damage to an account.

We are known as the gentleman's circuit and I hope we will always stay that way.

I am fully aware that it certainly isn't always a one-way street, but it is sometimes very tricky to assess both sides of a complaint and make a fair and just decision based on information I receive from either side that sometimes may be conflicting.

As I mentioned in my previous arti-



cle, if I feel it is beyond my power as an individual to make the correct decision, it is then that I may ask a committee of fellow members to listen and pass judgment on an alleged offence.

TaxiCard trips

Many of you cover large numbers of these trips in all parts of London, especially in the Borough of Westminster. These accounts are actively busy on every day of the year and provide large numbers of trips seven days a week, all year round.

Of late, I together with the call centre and the account manager Carol Carpenter have received quite a number of different types of complaints from various cardholders. Complaints regarding refusals at station ranks and street hirings, rudeness to the passengers and one that is rather concerning, complaints that a small minority of fellow members are apparently

turning down passengers for the reasons that they either don't cover these types of trips, or they feel it is not worth their while to do so.

Please remember when you carry the Dial a Cab Logos and CCC Stickers it is imperative that you do not fall fail of the Society procedures by refusing TaxiCard rides or Charge Card trips without good reason. I know the vast majority of you are more than happy to help and assist these passengers and go far and beyond what is expected of you, but again it can be the very small minority who spoil it for the majority and tarnish our good name.

And the positive side...

This report is not meant to be negative, because we also receive correspondence and phone calls commending many of our drivers and the service we supply. It is merely a reminder that we have all worked very hard to reach the top in our field - let's make sure we remain there!

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer

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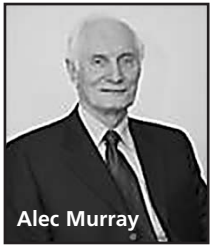
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Alec Murray

London Taxis International has blasted back at the Retail Motor Industry Federation following their accusations regarding the emissions output of taxis and buses used in London's transport system, following the announcement of the Mayor's Congestion Charging Zone consultation.

The consultation contains proposals to increase the congestion charge on vehicles with large CO2 outputs, such as 4x4s and executive saloons with a daily £25 charge inside the zone.

Alec Murray, non-executive chairman of the RMIF, claims that the proposed measures ignore the environmental impact of buses and taxis, which are currently exempt from the congestion charge and said that cabs are more environmentally harmful than a comparable saloon car.

But LTI Vehicles, who have manufactured the London taxi for over 60 years, say his comments fail to take into account the Mayor's existing policies to reduce emissions from London's 21,000 strong taxi fleet.

The Coventry-based company say that taxis

RMIF Attack on London Taxis: LTI answer back...

are currently going through a taxi emissions programme that will reduce emissions from the fleet by up to 37 percent by July 2008.

The strategy, set up by the Mayor of London, will bring all of the London taxi fleet up to Euro 3 emissions standards and significantly reduce pollution in the capital.

LTI also made it clear that the latest London taxi, the TX4, has manual emissions under the 'Chelsea Tractor' limit of 225g of CO2 per kilometre. They added that London's taxi fleet accounts for only 0.4% of CO2 emissions in the capital, while the transport sector accounts for 22 percent of all London CO2 emissions. The average London taxi journey has 2.5 people in the vehicle giving an average per person emissions of 84g CO2 per km.

LTI also asserted that Mr Murray's comparison of saloon cars with purpose-built taxis "...is misguided."

They continued: "London taxis must meet strict licensing conditions, which include equipping each vehicle with full disability

access and facilities for wheelchair passengers. Vehicles are designed to carry five or six passengers and also offer a high level of protection in a road traffic accident, which adds significant weight to the vehicle. In comparison saloon cars do not have such licensing condition, so it is not possible to compare the two vehicles.

Managing Director of LTI Vehicles, Peter Shillcock added: "The Mayor's Taxi Emissions Strategy will significantly reduce harmful emissions from older taxis in London, which will ensure the whole fleet has much lower emissions by July next year. LTI has cut emissions from our taxis by 55% since 1994 and the current emissions are 50% lower than the latest legal requirements.

"We have strong sales in London, so the fleet is being quickly renewed with the latest most environmentally efficient model and this also contributes to the overall reduction of emissions from the London taxi fleet."

Working at the O2...

The O2 – formerly known as The Dome – is hosting many sell-out concerts and events and it is expected that demand for all public transport, including taxis, will be high on those days and indeed for other major events to be held there.

There is an existing taxi rank at North Greenwich station to serve the O2 for 46 cabs that Green Badge and Greenwich licensed taxi drivers can use. Most events finish around 10.30 or 11pm, but there are also regular late night events until the early hours. Further information about all events scheduled for The O2 can be found at www.theo2.co.uk or by emailing The O2 Customer Services & public enquiries at customerservices@theo2.co.uk.

September events:

Sept 1/ 6/ 9/ 12/ 13/ 16/ 20/ 21: The Man Formerly Known as The Man Formerly Known as **PRINCE** will be doing what was formerly known as rockin' the joint!

Sept 4: Indigo (at the Bedford Bandstand).

Sept 5:

Elton John: The Red Piano - Elton brings his outrageous *Red Piano Show* to The O2 continuing celebrations of his 60th birthday and 40 years of touring.

Sept 8:

UFC 75 - The world's fastest growing and toughest sport is back in the UK with the Ultimate Fighting Championships. The O2 will play host to an incredible night of UFC action including the UK's Michael "The Count"



Elton John - one of the acts at the O2 during September which will provide much work for the cab trade

Bisping who will face Matt "The Hammer" Hamill in a rematch from Ultimate Fighter 3. This will be the toughest challenge that Bisping has yet faced.

Sept 15:

Betfair Turbo Tennis Championships - Andy Murray and Jamie Murray, Tim Henman, Pat Cash, James Blake and Goran Ivanisevic will be going head to head in the Betfair Turbo Tennis tournament. Turbo Tennis is the ultimate new tennis format, bringing tennis into the 21st century by combining speed, excitement,

entertainment, sport and celebrity into one marvellous day out – but without a hint of rain!

Sept 29 and 30:

American National Hockey League matches between the Boston Celtics and the Minnesota Timberwolves and LA Kings v Anaheim Ducks kick off the 2007 NBA Europe Live presented by EA SPORTS and will mark the first time in the NBA's 19-year history of conducting games in Europe that

London has hosted the event.

Don't forget, The O2 holds 20,000 people and passengers leaving events may well be going on long trips with many preferring licensed taxis. In addition, on nights when major events are taking place at the O2, a Surface Transport Communications spokesperson for TfL told *Call Sign* that any scheduled closure of the Limehouse Link would be delayed until midnight. If we don't bother providing a service, we all know who will...

Late June saw Dial-a-Cab enter six teams into the Andrews Golf Classic, being joint sponsors of a **Variety Club Sunshine Coach** to **Demelza House Hospice** at Sittingbourne in Kent together with **Hackney Building Supplies**.

Our teams comprised of Board members **Keith Cain** and **Allen Togwell**, **DaC drivers** and **suppliers**.

The DaC teams were a credit to the Society with the Board's team gaining fourth position. Guest **Gary Bowman**, who has carried out our building maintenance for over 20 years, won the individual Stapleford prize with 41 points. **Jim Cunningham (S88)** won the longest drive competition. **Louis Tsioupra**, who produces our garments and advertising material, took second prize.

Keith Andrew, who works for the Variety Club fund raising committee, is a very keen golfer and arranged his first golf day some 12 years ago. Year-on-year he has improved the day by inviting professional players and gained a following of celebrities with names including Henry Cooper, Kenny Lynch, Joe Goodman and the now sadly missed Mike Reed.

The Variety Club Golf Society Chairman, **Sir Geoff Hurst**, was present along with **Trevor Brooking**, **Ian Wright** and many others. Keith raised in excess of £100,000 and helped sponsors present 7 sunshine coaches. After a lapse of 2 years, by popular demand he arranged this one-off day looking towards Dial-a-Cab and Hackney Building Supplies to jointly sponsor yet another coach. Keith with the help of his wife Sue, managed to donate to the Variety Club £25,000 from the day. He told **Call Sign** that he felt good about the day and despite his decision not to do any more, admitted to now thinking about the next two years! He spoke to DaC about sponsorship and we will probably present another coach in our own right.

The undisputed king-of-the-one-liners, comedian Joe Goodman, presented the prizes and had all the players and guests laughing at his gags following the evening meal.

Demelza is an organisation that provides hospice care for over 450 children with life-limiting illnesses and their families across Kent, east Sussex and south London. **Demelza-James** provides a hospice-at-home service for over 150 children with life-threatening and life-limiting illness together with their fami-

DaC Joint Sponsors of Another Sunshine Coach!



Keith Cain, Joe Goodman, Keith Andrew, Kari Sohi (Hackney Building Supplies) and the hospice children who get the coach keys! You can see our logo on the door behind Keith...



Keith Cain: Louis Tsioupra and Allen Togwell collect fourth prize from Joe Goodman
Inset pic (above): Jim Cunningham (S88) collects his 'nearest the pin' prize

lies if required in the same areas. This service complements the care offered at **Demelza House** - an 8-bedded children's hospice offering children the opportunity to enjoy residential short breaks (with families staying as well) in the beautiful Kent countryside with the Demelza-James specialist paediatric nurses going directly into the family home to provide care, crisis intervention, an on-call service and respite.

Undoubtedly an honour for us to have the DaC logo on the Demelza Sunshine Coach...

Call Sign

September 2007

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

Design: Aldan Publications,

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Is this what we are in for in 2012?



The Olympic flag goes to Beijing ready for 2008

Beijing has under one year to go before the 2008 Olympics. It also has 1,200 new cars on its roads every day, causing the ever-worsening smog to deteriorate to new depths.

Now the Chinese bureaucrats are looking at ways to lighten the capital's roads and hopefully ease the appalling smog.

So they are going to try the former Greek method with even-number licence plate cars going out every other day and odd numbers hitting the roads on in-between days.

Taxis and the many military cars have been made exempt, but the experiment did let the usually gridlocked traffic run far better than it had for years. There were still hold-ups, but official readings put the smog levels down, although still classified as a choking smog!

It was expected that some car owners would try to come out when it wasn't their turn, but an estimated 6,500 traffic police went on patrol along the Beijing city streets setting up road blocks to pull aside any wrong-numbered vehicles. Offenders faced a fine of 100 yuan (£6.50). However, very few broke their curfew.

Many more buses and trains were put on and used with many of their users saying they were happy at the experiment and hoped it would continue.

Will something similar happen to London in 5 years? It can't be ruled out but so long as taxis get priority, then we'll have to go along with it...

DaC driver faces attack at gunpoint!



Mike McCaffrey smiling now, but not when a hoodie aimed a handgun at him

Jim McCaffrey (M93) had a narrow escape recently while setting down a passenger near Paddington. He told *Call Sign* of his awful experience...

"It was around ten to one in the morning on 19 July and I was about to set down my TaxiCard passenger in Bourne Terrace W2. I noticed some hooded youths hovering a few yards away from the cab. They saw me watching them and one gestured by raising his arms with open palms as if to ask 'what are you looking at?' They were about 14-19 years old and standing aimlessly about. I had stopped the cab momentarily while the passenger fumbled for her money, but decided to keep half an eye on the youths as they looked a bit suspicious. Suddenly, the tallest hoodie, apparently the ring-leader, passed out of my line of sight and moved

swiftly around the front of the cab to my drivers' window and aimed a hand gun at me! I then immediately floored the throttle and took off at high speed, ducking and weaving my head below the seat level while calling to the passenger to keep her head down too! As I looked in my door mirror I could see him still waving the gun around as if he was taking aim at me while I was speeding away."

Jim continued: "I roared off down towards Paddington Green Police Station where I reckoned they are more used to dealing with terrorists, guns and other less likeable villains! I phoned 999 on my mobile while on the way to the police and got a reference number to quote on arrival. I made a statement, gave descriptions of the gang and later that night toured the estate with police officers in an unmarked car, but we were unsuccessful in seeing anything."

Still looking slightly nervous just recalling the events of that night, Jim continued: "I haven't heard anything from the police as yet, but they said they would keep me informed of developments."

So would Jim return to Bourne Terrace in the future, *Call Sign* asked?

"Yes, I probably would, although I might make sure my 'flak-jacket' was buttoned up first," he said with his first grin of the interview! "And I've still got that crime reference number to remind me of probably the most traumatic experience of my 19 years driving a taxi!"

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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...?

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

Kupkake's Korner



More taxis?

"We need more cabs,
there ain't enough,
the drivers think that nights are
rough.

So they go home early,
ain't THAT tough,
and the ones that stay,
are mean and gruff!"

"They won't go south,
they won't go west,
they only want east I guess.
They won't take drunks,
they won't take gays,
they won't work nights,
they just want days!"

"We **must** control
their working times,
upon my soul
it's like a crime!
They still have freedom,
but that must cease,
they cannot do just as they please."

"Those independents
will have to change,
no more freedom...
it's all arranged.

Those cabbies will do **my** will,
and the few who are out there still
will soon expire
or retire,
either way
obey **my** desire."

"I'll start afresh
with different drivers,
refugees and such survivors.
I'll help with funding whilst they
study,
I'll give incentives to their buddy.
I'll buy 'em bikes,
I'll give 'em loans,
SatNav, maps and mobile 'phones."

"By 2012 I'll have my mob,
of ethnic minorities
to do the job.
They'll start at dawn
they'll start at dusk
they'll work when told...
just like the bus!"

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2 for 1 Admission to Sandown Park Races



Sandown's Parade Ring

JUST BOOK IN ADVANCE AND MENTION CALL SIGN!

Considered the best viewing racecourse and a natural amphitheatre, the exceptional facilities of Sandown Park make it one of the top racecourses in the UK.

In September, the racecourse has three mid-week race meetings - Thursday 13th, Friday 14th and Wednesday 19th and they are offering all *Call Sign* readers a 2 for 1 offer on any of the above race days. The offer is subject to advance booking only.

Sandown Park has two fantastic areas to watch the racing from – the Premier Enclosure and the Grandstand Enclosure. Both have convenient Tote betting facilities, bookmakers, bars, and catering facilities. The Premier enclosure gives you direct access to the Winning Post lawn, the famous 'horse-walk' and also the Loch Fyne Seafood restaurant and with a pre-parade ring, parade ring and winners circle. There really is no course where you can get closer to the horses! The terrace around the parade ring creates the perfect garden party atmosphere and is the ideal setting for a day of racing.

The racecourse lies 15 miles south-west of London in Esher, Surrey and is easily accessible from all major roads and motorways and is also located next to Esher Station with regular services from Waterloo, Putney and Clapham Junction, with the journey time only taking around 25 minutes. And of course Dial-a-Cab drivers know their way via the A3...

To book your tickets, call Sandown Park on 01372 470047 and quote 'Call Sign' to get your 2 for 1 tickets and enjoy a great day out.

The offer is for advance booked tickets only and will not be available at the gate...

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Call Sign likes to think it gets on with most people. We don't always agree with everyone but hopefully try to get on. Firstly there is **LTI**, who often invite **Call Sign** to take a group of Dial-a-Cab drivers to their factory in Coventry and treat them with the utmost courtesy. Then there is another good friend of ours, **Hans Dooren** who lives in Holland and who runs the Dutch section of the **London Vintage Taxi Association**. In between the two, and causing some friction, is a 14-year old boy from Cadiz in Spain whose father bought him an old FX4R.

Jose Basadre couldn't keep his hands off the old cab, but then hit problems because he didn't speak much English and needed to get hold of an FX4R manual. So he got a friend to write to **Call Sign** with the sort of English that made you blink and wonder whether Martians had landed (<http://www.dac-callsign.co.uk/06/Jul06/CallSignJuly06.pdf> to read the story from page 24 of the July 2006 issue). But unravel it we did and we asked Hans Dooren if he could help out young Jose.

Hans is a Dutch pensioner, but will take the time to help out anyone who has problems with a vintage taxi and he does so at his own cost. He does it because he loves doing it, so he contacted Jose and tried to correspond. Hans doesn't speak Spanish and Jose didn't speak Dutch, while **Call Sign** knows a dozen words in French, most of which apply to various baguette fillings!

But gradually Hans and Jose got to understand each other's emails and Hans worked out what Jose needed – and that was not just the FX4R manual, but which parts were needed and where he could buy them. Hans also suggested that his father pay for Jose to become a member of the LVTa.

Hans had spent some considerable time in translations and explaining about the cab and the benefits of joining the organisation – probably the only one in the world catering for vintage taxis. Then just as it looked as though Jose senior might join his son, LTI in the shape

From Holland to Spain to Coventry...

But Hans isn't very happy!



Hans and Hetty Dooren at home in Holland with their London taxi

of Head of Overseas Operations, **Nigel Walters**, told **Call Sign** that he had read the article and if we sent him the address, LTI would forward Jose a copy of the manual. We passed it on and thought no more about it until 14 months later when Hans emailed to say that he had just happened to read the July 2006 issue on line and was somewhat upset to realise that the reason Jose had suddenly stopped emailing when Hans had done so much to help, was because of the LTI offer.

"I wouldn't mind," Hans told **Call Sign**, "but I spent much time helping Jose. The only reason I didn't just tell him to go to LTI is because they rarely send out anything if we ask for it! When we approach LTI about problems we have on archival questions, they say that they cannot have that kind of work disturbing their

normal routines. I know they are busy, but we would be so grateful for the occasional help whereas Jose didn't even have to ask!"

Hans ended by saying: "Even though Jose never responded about joining the LTVA, we still sent him information on where to get spares etc and hope he is enjoying his taxi."

Of course it isn't LTI's fault; they kindly offered to help - like **Call Sign** not realising that Hans had already spent much unpaid time on Jose already. So if we dare to ask anyone at LTI whether in the spirit of good relations between Holland, Spain, East Road and Brewery Road, LTI could help out Hans with the occasional answer to a question, it would get **Call Sign** off the hook and restore our fragile friendships!

Mobile speed trap detectors to be banned!

Taxi drivers and private motorists who dished out several hundred pounds for gadgets that detect mobile speed traps, look to have wasted their money with banning orders likely to be implemented within months.

Ironically, the punishments could even be as severe as those the drivers were attempting to avoid – a fine and three points on their licence!

The new crackdown will not target SatNav units programmed to also show fixed speed camera detectors, but will only affect those such as some of the *Road Angel* series, which also take in mobile speed traps.

A Department for Transport spokesperson told **Call Sign** that they had no problem with drivers having devices in their vehicles informing them of the location of fixed safety cameras.

"These," they said, "have the same intention as signing and visibility under which most cameras are placed. These operate via GPS and work by keeping the position of cameras up to date on a computer and identifying where they are in relation to a vehicle by use of a satellite. There is no intention to ban these."

A *Road Angel* spokesperson contacted by **Call Sign** told us that it would be a simple procedure for most of their devices to disable the laser alert section purely by a visit to the menu page.

Call Sign's advice is that those who intend buying a speed detection device should stick to a legitimate SatNav device capable of detecting fixed speed traps.



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

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We make the wheels turn
so you can earn,

CALL CENTRE CHAT

August is always a time when staff within the call centre has the opportunity to recharge their batteries. However, for some of us it becomes a busier time than normal...

New staff

The final part of our recruitment process has just been completed, with a final thirteen new individuals having been selected and commencing their training on 20th August. Since our move to the new building, I have interviewed some fifty prospective candidates, of which half have been given the opportunity to train for permanent telephonist positions.

I ask you all to be a little tolerant if the details you get are not fully correct. Our trainers have been working very closely with them to avoid too many problems and despite all the checking, one or two may escape through the net.

Splitting EC5

During this quiet period, many drivers would have had the opportunity to work EC5 while it was split. All went very well and having spoken to many of you about your feelings working this way, it would appear they are mixed.

The sole reason for the Board making the change was not because we felt it would improve coverage, it was because of the number of drivers who made the case for reducing the distance needing to be travelled to a pick up address when there was the possibility of passing work that was uncovered.

I am personally very apprehensive about this way of working when it gets busy. My concern is that trips in the less popular zones will take longer to be matched because drivers will book into the busy zones regardless. But, we will have to wait and see and I hope my concerns are proved wrong.

The recent changes to the dispatching procedures on E140 have made great improvements to our coverage. Even with the Link remaining closed, it has allowed us the opportunity to monitor the situation on a like-for-like basis. Clients have remarked about our efforts and are pleased with the improvements.



Writing about writing about coverage!

It's also that time year again when articles are written that refer to the busy period approaching and how we must ensure we do not take our foot off the pedal with the service we provide.

I am a little reluctant to harp on this too much, as I don't want drivers to feel this is a slating, however, what I would say is for us all to remember that we are in the service industry. While it is extremely rare for

us to receive compliments, what is guaranteed is we will certainly be criticised if we do not meet pre-booked times.

Follow trip instructions and drive carefully. Take a different route to normal, say the wrong things or not say anything at all, and some or all of these will for certain generate complaints. Basically when in the service industry, you are damned if you do and damned if you don't. What I am confident about, however, is for everyone associated with the Society to continue doing what we do best and we will remain at the top...

Keith Cain

Call Centre Manager

Driver Operations Manager

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Bus Drivers Demand More Loos!

It isn't just taxi drivers who have difficulty taking a "wee break." Now the T&G Bus Section is threatening industrial action unless more toilet facilities are provided for bus drivers.

According to a T&G spokesperson, drivers are breaking the law by going behind bushes or even leaving their bus outside a shopping centre to run inside quickly.

TfL claim that they have a £1million budget put aside for new toilet facilities and **Call Sign** wonders whether licensed taxi drivers will also be able to use them, or perhaps they can spend some of that money on reopening the toilets close to Embankment Station?

As we head towards 2008 and **The Year of the Assistance Dog**, taxi drivers are being encouraged to welcome guide dog owners in a new information leaflet published by *Guide Dogs*. The publication, 'Access to taxis and private hire vehicles for guide dog owners' outlines the duties of taxi drivers and operators under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). It explains how services can be adapted for people with sight loss and offers reassurance about the hygiene and training of guide dogs.

Since 31 March 2001, taxi drivers have been required to carry guide and other assistance dogs travelling with their owner at no extra cost. Additionally, since 4 December 2006 under Part 3 of the DDA, it has been unlawful to refuse service to a disabled person - including guide dog owners - or offer a lower standard of service for reasons related to the person's disability. The law also requires taxi drivers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the way that their services are provided - though that does not include physical alterations to the vehicles.

The *Guide Dogs*' leaflet emphasises the importance of knowing how to communicate with blind and partially-sighted people, including speaking to the person rather than their guide dog and asking what assistance they need, rather than making assumptions.

Through working with the TaxiCard scheme, Dial-a-Cab drivers probably come into contact with more blind and partially-sighted passengers than the average non-radio driver and this leaflet reminds drivers to always communicate clearly to blind and partially-sighted passengers the amount on the meter. Then when giving

Communicating with blind passengers?

Speak to the passenger and not the guide dog!



Guide dog trainer Carl Griggs giving Logan a few tips regarding DaC drivers!

change, to count out coins and notes into the passenger's hand.

With regard to guide dogs, the leaflet emphasises that they are well groomed and trained to sit at their owner's feet. They will not climb on the seats of the vehicle or distract the driver.

To order a complimentary copy of 'Access to taxis and private hire vehicles for guide dog owners', either call 0845 241 2178 or you can download a copy from *Guide Dogs*' website www.guidedogs.org.uk/campaigns. There

are also some in the DaC driver's reception. **2008 will be the Year of the Assistance Dog, with guide dog owners nominating taxis and other services for Dog Star Awards, based on good practice outlined in *Guide Dogs*' (and other assistance dog) leaflets.**

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Taxi Driver of the Year Dinner/Dance

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

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

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

Please complete and return to the Hon Chairman:

Russell Poluck MBE, 5 St Brides Avenue, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 6BT

Please make cheque out to T.D.Y.C.F. and print your details...

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Number of tickets reqd: _____

Dietary requirements: Veg _____ Fish _____ Meat _____

Dress: Smart

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

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VICTORIA B

DaC drivers pose questions to

While Boris Johnson may be the London Tory Mayoral candidate known by most, some are now questioning whether his sense of fun and some say childish sense of humour is what London really needs should current Mayor Ken Livingstone be deposed at next May's election.

Another Tory candidate is the wife of former *Manganese Bronze* Chairman and self-admitted lover of taxis, Jamie Borwick. **Victoria Borwick** shares her husband's admiration for the London taxi driver, but would that make any difference if she knocked Ken off his perch and became Mayor? *Call Sign* asked **Dial-a-Cab** drivers for questions to Victoria Borwick...

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?

Victoria Borwick replies:

Definitely – I know this is a real problem for taxi drivers, and these are needed for driver's health. When I get elected, please let me know locations that you think would be suitable for the green butts and then we can work on this.

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?

Victoria Borwick:

The current system is unfair. Whilst I

am a great supporter of the Union it is right to say that England and particularly London subsidises Scotland. This is all the more perverse considering that English MPs have no vote over most Scottish matters.

As Mayor, although I could not directly change what is a national issue and would be a matter for the government of the day, I would fight for London to get a greater share. The views seems to be that London's streets are paved with gold – but we have areas of great poverty and high unemployment here in London and Londoner's needs should be given greater priority, and we should not always be subsidising the rest of the country.

From Bernie Silver (G08)

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

Victoria Borwick:

We were promised the congestion charge would mean better air quality and more investment in public transport. As usual with Livingstone's promises, this has not happened. After a small benefit at the beginning when it was first introduced, London's traffic has become as slow as it was before – and in some cases even worse. TfL figures say that traffic in the Strand is now 2.5 mph and I disagree with all the artificial restrictions on traffic flow and traffic movement – I don't agree that access for Taxi drivers into the Strand, as an example, should be made so difficult ie I don't want bus routes that exclude taxi drivers.

I think we have to look at the whole road space and then decide the best way of using it.

Just taxing motorists is just taking more money from people, what benefits have we seen?

From David Marks (R22)

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

Victoria Borwick:

No

From John Dixon (B67)

Would you as Mayor 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.

Victoria Borwick:

I certainly think there should be a large area for taxis to pick up and set down and plenty of space for queuing – we have all seen recently the fiasco at the O2 arena and we need to learn from our major sporting events to make sure that the Olympics really runs efficiently. I understand there are proposals for "red routes" to get the athletes and officials there on time, so that means more queues for the rest of us...

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?

Victoria Borwick:

I agree. Livingstone has actually further slowed the traffic by putting so many buses on the roads. If you go down Oxford Street you can't move because of the queue of buses and then in some areas there are not enough buses.

However my other bugbear are the "sightseeing buses." I think there are too many of them blocking the streets, and as for the bendy buses – they can go back to Munich where they belong. We need a Routemaster for the 21st Century, not buses that are a danger to other road users.

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?



Victoria Borwick:
No. They are a danger to passengers and the riders to other drivers. They are not licensed and are

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?

Victoria Borwick:

I am very wary of expanding bus and taxi lanes. I am allowed to use them but I no longer have any priority. I think from all road users' perspective it is a consistent across London. It is frustrating at certain times when the roads are particularly those bus lanes in the city centres to have long queues on the road space. This is a look at the total road space and get the traffic moving.

From Brian Flanagan (T79)

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

Victoria Borwick:

It is important to improve the quality. I don't think it is working, but we need cleaner air. Realistically older cabs will need to be replaced over a period of years, and vehicles will need to be not put businesses must be phased in over

From Joe Brazil (K16)

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

Victoria Borwick:

Where do I start with this? This has to be crime.



BORWICK...

the London Mayoral candidate

ger not only to pas-
sers themselves but also
majority of them are
incredibly unsafe.



ently have?

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o his worst decisions?
The Mayor's respon-

sibility is to keep his citizens safe. Yet every day you open the paper, turn on the news and hear about another horrific crime. Whilst Ken has been Mayor, violent crime (according to the Met Police figures) has gone up 52%. Yes certain crimes are reducing, but not street crime, crime on public transport, knife crime and I bet each and every one of you knows someone who has been a victim of crime. This should not be the reputation of our City. It is all very well to say that Ken does not have direct control over the appointment of the Commissioner, but that is not the point, the Mayor has influence, backed by 7 million Londoners. My first task would be to make London's streets safe again. This is not just working with the police, but a hearts and minds campaign – across all of London's communities.

My next criticism about Ken would be how much he is now costing Londoners – He is now taking an average £300 a year from London council tax payers, on top of our Council Tax, to pay for him and his cronies at City Hall. I want to see far greater transparency about what happens to our money.

I like using my Oyster card – but again I know this has come at a significant cost and is fine for Central London, but again we need to extend the coverage of this system.

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?

Victoria Borwick:

Yes. Speed bumps are not only uncomfortable for passengers but also bad for vehicles, particularly emergency vehicles. They also increase pollution. Councils seem to have a knee jerk reaction and whenever they want to slow traffic down they introduce speed bumps.

From Alan Green (E52)

Would you like the London Mayor to have tax raising powers? If so, how can this be reconciled with



the need for central government to keep control of the money supply?

Victoria Borwick:

He already does have tax raising powers – his precept is on top of our Council tax. However you are right – most people don't realise that there are two separate amounts in their Council Tax bills now that Ken has put his "Ken Tax" precept up to over £300 a year. I think that we need to see two separate bills, and then it will be much clearer to everyone what they are paying. As the Leader of Westminster Council, Sir Simon Milton has pointed out that if Ken goes on increasing his tax at the current rate, we shall be paying more to Ken than we will be paying to some London Councils for all the services that they provide!

The Mayor already wastes an incredible amount of money. I want to make City Hall more efficient. Last year TfL spent £220 million on advertising alone. London's Mayor should be a hands-on chief executive with a clear focus on doing the practical things that would make London a safer, more pleasant place in which to live and work, not an outrageous spender who goes on foreign jaunts at Londoners' expense. I would bring business experience, experience of strategic planning and I want to examine very closely how Londoners money is spent, so that we can reduce the costs. Everything is an extra tax – the precept, the congestion charge and then the cost of the Olympics.

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?

Victoria Borwick:

I would definitely look at such a proposal. There are many competing demands for the roads and we need to schedule the work in times that causes least disruption.



And the last word goes to Victoria Borwick. She told Call Sign:

"We are now down to the last four of who will be the Conservative Candidate for Mayor for London. Everyone on the electoral roll in Greater London can vote for the Conservative candidate.

To receive a voting form / ballot paper, you need to call a premium rate number (this enables the Party to cover the costs of this voting process). You will be sent your voting form to complete, which must be returned to arrive by 22nd September 2007.

It is anticipated that from a BT Landline, the cost of a call will be between £1.00 - £2.00. Other operators and networks may vary.

The telephone number for your voting form is 0906 555 5050. It is available between Monday to Friday 8am - 9pm, Saturday 9am - 9pm and Sunday 10am - 4pm.

If you want to vote for a serious candidate who cares about London – I was born in London and have lived here all my life. Now is your chance to vote – I hope you will vote for Victoria Borwick...



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Continued from August

Every day over here in La Marche brings a new experience, not least because of the language barrier. We have had many occasions where we've had to relay our requirements to workmen. For example, one day we had the carpenter, plumber and electrician all turn up at the same time. Of course none of them could speak English and each of them wanted our instructions. Luckily enough 'Italian John' (**John Rubini F55**) was visiting and was able to deal with the plumber. My wife explained to the chippy what we wanted and I had to deal with the electrician. I still don't know how we managed it, but we ended up with windows, doors, central heating and lights!

One of the unexpected delights that we found when we bought the house was a wood-burning oven. We decided to try it out and were in the process of lighting it when our neighbour, Maria, came along and took over. I was told in no uncertain fashion not to touch it until she came back! She then went and helped my wife prepare a piece of pork and some vegetables. It was certainly worth learning from her experience, as we ended up eating the most delicious piece of meat. We now use the oven on a regular basis and make the most of the heat by cooking a main meal when the temperature is up, then baking some bread and finally putting a casserole in overnight. We have never eaten such fresh food with so much flavour.

Over the course of the time we've been here, we have met lots of new people and have a hectic social life. We often go out to lunch and can eat a good meal with wine for around £7 each.

There are so many lovely places to explore

Ever fancied buying a run-down farmhouse and then taking a year away from your taxi to renovate it? Well that's exactly what DaC driver Tony Holmes (C09) and his wife Lesley did and they have been telling Call Sign about it. Tony concludes his story...

A DaC Drivers Year in Italy



Tony and Lesley outside their Italian dream home

supermarket, a few bars and restaurants, a weekly market and of course as in every village, an annual festa. You can find out more about these villages by visiting www.balconedelle-marche.com and

www.urbanitas.it/inglese/where.htm. There is an English button for non-Italian speakers!

If you would like any information regarding Le Marche or buying a home in Italy in general, please feel free to contact us and we will endeavour to help.

My email is: hundredeyes13@gmail.com

Tony Holms (C09)

Pitcher's Pictures!

DaC Driver has his own on-line photo gallery...

No one should ever be surprised at some of the hobbies and former occupations that Dial-a-Cab drivers have held in previous existences. Former pro footballers, accountants, precious metal refiners – they're all here. We even had a call taker around 10 years ago who had successfully taken his exams to become a solicitor!

The hobby of **Chris Pitcher (T90)** isn't that unusual, but it's the quality of his photographic hobby that hits you. Chris told **Call Sign**:

"I began my interest in photography when I purchased my first real camera, a second hand Nikon F classic film camera in the early seventies. I have continued to use Nikon cameras and lenses to this day. Although I now use a professional digital Nikon camera and embrace new technology, I still have a great love of film and continue to use it."

Chris continued: **"I specialise in landscape and travel photography and enjoy the whole process of image making from looking through the camera viewfinder, right up until I have produced the final print. In recent months I have been running my own website featuring photographs and have had a fantastic response to it, making many new friends worldwide."**

Chris has been a taxi driver since 1970, joining Radio Taxis in the same year. He told us that he had felt disappointed in recent years with that company and its management decisions.

He applied and joined DaC this March and described it as a great move, particularly for a radio man.

He ended by saying:

"There is more work and a better system here - and a society that its members should be proud of, including a REAL in house magazine!"

You can visit Chris Pitcher's on-line gallery at Chrispitcher.com.



Chris Pitcher

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DaC Customer Services/Special Projects

Although there has been the usual downturn in work as there is every year at school holiday time, nevertheless that does not stop clients complaining – more so recently concerning the mode of dress some drivers wear when entering client's premises. I was told by one of our valuable account clients that some drivers "dress like tramps." That isn't something anyone likes to hear.

I'm not going to harp on about shorts and flip-flops, however it is a fact that when customers complain about the appearance of some of our drivers, they always add that private hire drivers look smarter in comparison to taxi drivers.

I always respond to clients that many of our drivers are also smartly dressed; some choosing to wear shirts and ties, whilst others dress more casual yet still look smart. But sadly there are still some drivers wearing ill-fitting shorts and sometimes even dirty clothes. Some who even have air-conditioning in their cabs do not dress with anything remotely resembling smartness, even though there are many forms of casual wear that could be considered as acceptable.

You may ask yourself whether I should write about smartness of drivers in this publication where some clients may read it, but it is the only forum we have to indicate the complaints we get and it is always important that **Call Sign** allows us to air our views, warts and all. Indeed, I have spoken to clients over the years that admire the openness with which we operate.

It is not my intention to preach to, or belittle members of the Society, regarding what type of clothes should be worn, nonetheless each and every member represents the excellent name of Dial-a-Cab, but this can be tarnished by how you as an indi-



vidual represent your organisation.

As well as being the professional drivers that we are, clients can have a lasting impression of their suppliers - especially when we are picking up their clients or staff. They need to know they can have the confidence in not only the service we provide, but that we also take a pride in our company.

I just ask you to be mindful of how you look when representing Dial-a-Cab. Remember customers have the choice as to who will – or will not be – be their service provider.

A wee story...

I have one more gripe, but one not specifically directed at Dial-a-Cab drivers. A number of our drivers have made contact with me stating how disgusting it is when they see taxi drivers urinating on cab ranks, especially at the London City Airport, Paddington Station and other areas where drivers have to wait for passengers.

In addition to being just nasty, the smell can become unbearable, especially during hot days. Why do drivers have to urinate on cab ranks? Is it because there are not many toilet facilities in and around London? If this is the case, I suggest drivers either make contact with the LTDA, the T&G or their MP to see what can be done.

Editor's note: See Q/A session with mayoral candidate Victoria Borwick in this issue...

Cars at our account addresses...

While visiting clients, several have said that they have been experimenting with other suppliers, including other radio taxi services and car companies in an effort to reduce their transport costs and to improve service to their staff and visitors. Some then decide to carry on with both Dial-a-Cab and another service supplier, while others realise that due to car companies finding it difficult to offer an ASAP service, they decide that Dial-a-Cab will continue to remain as the preferred supplier.

So if you see passengers entering a licensed car hire vehicle from the same company as your passenger, please do not mention any displeasure you have to your passenger. Our lines of communication with customers must always remain open and one derogatory comment could close those lines. What we have to do is to continue to be courteous and give the best possible service. With so much competition, that must be the best way to keep on top...

Mike Son

**DaC Customer Services /
Special Projects**

Could Tom Whitbread be Tom Thumb!

For those who believe that Tom Whitbread is a heartless soul, **Call Sign** can reveal another of Tom's softer sides in addition to telling pensioners at their afternoon clubs about his past life driving the late Queen Mother around or as an ambulance driver!

It happened when an incident involving radio engineer Victor at DaC's Roman Way depot called for Tom's first aid expertise.

Victor apparently had an altercation with the drivers' seat of a taxi, trapping his thumb in the tilting part of the seat frame. The taxi seat frame remained undamaged, but poor Victor was less lucky, sustaining a nasty injury to his thumb.

Tom reacted to the emergency by employing all his first aid skills, bandaging Victor's injured thumb and putting his arm in a sling to relieve the pain. Only when Tom was satisfied that his patient was comfortable, did he send Vic to the Whittington Hospital for the medics there to complete his treatment.

"I hope they sew Victor's thumb back on the right way round," Tom said as Victor left Roman Way! **"Thankfully it was his left hand that was damaged and he is right-handed, so he will still be able to write and also answer the phones,"** added Tom.

He concluded by saying: **"On a serious note though, Victor's misfortune has shown us all how dangerous the**

workshop can be, no matter how much care we take.

Health and Safety is an important part of our daily routine and that is why we ask drivers not to block the entrance to the workshop when they come here, and to sit in the waiting room while their cab is being repaired."

Our photograph of Tom tending Victor's wound is a little shaky as our photographer is a mite squeamish and had difficulty keeping his camera steady, before fainting himself just moments after taking this shot!

Call Sign wishes Victor a speedy recovery, but the next time you visit Roman Way be sure not to ask Victor to give you the 'thumbs up' sign!



Victor could have lost a thumb without first-Aider Tom Whitbread's quick action

Americans **Dan and Robin Tharpe** had been eagerly looking forward to their first trip to London. The couple, from Columbus in Georgia, had never been here before and in their own words: "Our stay in your beautiful and historic city was one we had anticipated for a long time and one we enjoyed very much." They added that everything went perfectly until the final morning when they hit a problem. They said: "What had been a wonderful vacation for us left a sour taste in our mouths as we flew home from London. It reeked of impropriety."

The Tharpes were so upset at this occurrence that they were determined to complain and not to let the matter drop. The matter referred to was the "taxi" they ordered from their hotel in the early hours of 24 July. The couple had stayed at the **Quality Crown Kensington** in Cromwell Road – a hotel that Dan Tharpe said they were very happy with and would have happily stayed at again on any future trip. But that was until the incident of the "wrong taxi!"

The couple asked the hotel desk clerk if they could book a taxi to Heathrow. The clerk told them of several options but "...strongly suggested a taxi and quoted us a charge of around £40 for two people to the airport." Mr Tharpe agreed and the clerk booked a taxi.

The following morning their bags were ready loaded and they entered a vehicle, but soon realised that the vehicle had no markings and neither did the driver have any identification. The driver then told Dan that the charge to go to Heathrow "with two bags" was £60. Regardless of their protestations, the driver refused to back down and Mr Tharpe had to stop at a cash machine as they had just kept enough sterling back for the fare so as to save having to change UK currency back into dollars.

When they arrived back in Columbus, Dan and Robin still couldn't get that last morning out of their minds and decided to write to the hotel. Sadly, because they could find no trace of any management names on the Quality Crown website to address complaints to, they wrote but received no response. Looking up on the Internet, they discovered the website for the London Taxi Board and wrote to its current Chairman, **DaC's Brian Rice**.

Brian responded by assuring the upset couple that the vehicle provided for them was not a taxi but a private hire vehicle and added that he hoped it hadn't spoiled their trip too much. So upset was Brian at their experience, that he offered them a free trip to Heathrow the next time they came to London!

Mr Rice ended by saying: "Although the vehicle that took you to the Airport was not one of our vehicles, I am very concerned the experience you had tarnished your view of our city."

The couple responded quickly; Brian's offer helping to quell their disappointment and showed them that the overcharging private hire driver who wanted an extra £20 for an additional piece of luggage, did not represent all "taxis".

Call Sign was then approached to try to get Dan and Robin Tharpe some contact names and we obtained the name of the Quality Crown Kensington manager in addition to the manager of the group and forwarded them both onto Columbus. Dan wrote back:

"Thank you so much for your response. I have so far emailed the hotel three times with no response and also filed an on-line police report with the Met Police. In the course of our trip, we enjoyed London so very much. It was a dream of ours to visit there and see all its historical sights and we had a wonderful time. Had the hotel

Extra Piece of Luggage? That Will Be Another £20!

Memo to the PCO - is that why PH are licensed?



Dan and Robin Tharpe - caught by a PH vehicle when they ordered a taxi

booked a London taxi as they indicated rather than doing what they actually did, our trip would have been perfect. Yes, we will return and I hope we will have the opportunity to meet in person."

Their letter to the group manager included:

"Our stay at the Quality Crown Kensington was enjoyable and we had considered staying there again when we returned, but have now changed our minds. It was most improper and deceptive on the part of your hotel to indicate a licensed London Taxi would be booked and then send an "unlicensed private hire" who then placed us in the awkward position of exhorting additional money from us to take us to the airport!"

Soon after, Malcolm Linforth-Jones, Director of Operations for the London Town Hotels, did indeed finally respond. They had "assumed that the taxi company" had already contacted the couple regarding a £20 refund, but having said that, added the remarkable comment:

"I can also assure you that we use Britannia private hire cars for all our customers' taxi needs and these are indeed fully licensed with London council and Transport for London. We would not at any time use an unlicensed taxi company for any of our guests."

Dan Tharpe ended the matter by replying to Malcolm Linforth-Jones, after first saying there had been no sign of his £20 repayment...

"It may be your policy to use private hire, but the fact remains that I requested a licensed London Taxi and not a Britannia Private Hire! London Taxis are equipped with meters to insure proper charges. Private hires are not equipped and are at liberty to be deceptive in their charges to customers. The hotel was deceptive in their dealings with me to indicate a London Taxi would be booked and then to call a private hire!"

"All relationships are based on trust, we trusted you to provide us with comfortable and safe accommodations (which you did), but you

should have been upfront and forthcoming with the request for a taxi! If it is your policy to use private hire, then you should inform your guests that you would not be booking a London Taxi. In all honesty, you should provide what the guests requests unless they agree otherwise."

Call Sign Comment

This was the tale of a couple who loved London, who probably would have told those back home about the trip and which could in turn have encouraged more visitors at a time when their exchange rate was very unhelpful. Then multiply the same situation by several thousand! Yet that could all have been ruined by the hotel's decision to send in a private hire vehicle when a taxi was asked for.

Well done to Brian Rice whose genuine offer and assistance in helping Dan and Robin was obviously appreciated, but our final criticism must be aimed at the Public Carriage Office, TfL and indeed the Mayor of London himself, Ken Livingstone, whose haste in trying to push us and private hire under the same banner has done nothing but try to lower taxi standards down to the level of private hire. They are not and never will be our equivalent.

Both those organisations and the Mayor should feel shame that the recognised manager of a good quality London hotel does not know the difference between taxis and private hire. It isn't the manager's fault, it is the fault of the above who have shown such determination to make us all the same (SGS, mid-year check etc) and in doing so have dragged us down to their level instead of trying to raise them up to ours. We have never needed mid-year checks and our trade organisations should have had the bottle to stand up to TfL in their hurry to deliver a handsome contract to SGS. Ashamed? Most definitely...

Alan Fisher

Mohamed Abed Alaziz (N09) is not a man who gives up easily, neither is he prepared to be 'fobbed off' with poor service! So when his cab broke down late at night in September 2006, he called out the AA Roadside Assistance in the full expectation of getting his cab roadworthy in order to continue his journey.

Eventually the AA Patrolman arrived and Mo explained that the cab lights had gone out. The Patrolman checked the electrical system and discovered the 40-amp maxi fuse had burned out and he replaced it with another 40-amp fuse - which also promptly blew! Unfortunately for Mo, the Patrolman now only had a spare 50-amp fuse on his van and he fitted that to Mo's cab.

As the AA man was about to pull away, Mo detected a strong smell of burning and immediately recalled the Patrolman to investigate. The Patrolman agreed there was something wrong and advised Mo he would need a recovery truck as the cab was now immobile!

Mohamed told **Call Sign** that in his view, the Patrolman's general attitude left much to be desired. **"But I assumed he was just having a bad day,"** said Mo!

Later that night the recovery truck arrived to take Mo and his lifeless wheels to east London dealership KPM-UK, where the original lighting problem turned out to be a short circuit in a front spotlight.

But that wasn't the end of Mo's troubles. In mistakenly fitting the higher rated 50-amp fuse to Mohamed's taxi, a vital electrical component - the ECU - had burned out too. They don't come cheap and when you include labour charges and VAT, it comes to a whole heap of money and all because the correct 40 amperage rated fuse (normal cost around £3) had not been fitted!

Mo wrote to the AA to complain about the unprofessional service he had received, but they disclaimed all responsibility. KPM to their credit, were very helpful to Mo by furnishing a statement to the effect that the AA's Patrolman had screwed up big time, which added strength to what was by now looking like an impending court case.

And so it was. With the AA's refusal to accept their Patrolman had done more harm than good to Mo's cab and with the LTDA assisting on the legal side of the paperwork, Mo took out a County Court summons against the AA and won. The strength of Mohamed's case, backed up by KPM and the LTDA, convinced the judge in Mo's favour.

Mohamed ended by saying: **"I wasn't going to be messed about. Generally, I think the AA probably does a good job helping people out of trouble, but on this occasion they really made a mess of**

DaC Driver Wins Court Case Against AA!



DaC's Mohamed Abed Alaziz: Defeated the AA in a court case

things with serious consequences. I'd like to thank all those who helped me bring this case to a successful conclusion."

For the benefit of our readers, we asked the M&O Service Department for technical implications if fitting the wrong fuse. A spokesman for the company told **Call Sign**:

"Fuses are fitted into wiring circuits to protect delicate, sensitive components. Modern electrical systems are very sensitive to voltage surge and must have the correctly rated fuse fitted. Using a higher rated fuse is just asking for trouble. If a fuse blows, the reason should be investigated without delay."

The fuse that floored Mo's cab is located

under the bonnet and attached to the near-side front wing inner section, close to the coolant expansion tank. All fuses are colour-coded to avoid confusion and prominently marked with the amperage rating clearly visible. Always check the Owners Handbook to ensure the correct fuse is fitted...

© Call Sign Magazine MM7

No Smoking terminal survey by Call Sign

Call Sign was recently contacted by **LTI** following the commencement of the smoking ban in the workplace - ie our taxis. They wanted to test reaction to a suggestion and knew that the only trade magazine that could give them an immediate response was **Call Sign**. So we put a message out asking DaC drivers whether they would mind if there were no longer ashtrays fitted into the passenger compartment of new cabs being built. As there is no more smoking allowed anyway, it would probably get filled with gum etc.

At 4pm, it was heading towards changeover time, but over 1000 drivers were signed on and over 300 of those took the trouble to reply with 234 saying no. 73 said yes, they would mind. If you were one of those who said they would like the ashtrays to remain, please feel free to let **Call Sign** know the reasoning behind that decision. Thank you to everyone that took part...

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For the 90,000+ population of the Ilford North constituency, **Lee Scott** is their MP. For the London taxi trade, Mr Scott represents the latest in a long line from both Ilford North and South who are ready to help our trade when it comes to the never-ending battles with parliament and TfL.

Towards the end of July, Dial-a-Cab Chairman **Brian Rice** was invited to the House of Commons in his role as Chairman of the London Taxiboard, for a meeting with Mr Scott – someone Brian has known since his visit to DaC as a local councillor for the Fairlop ward.

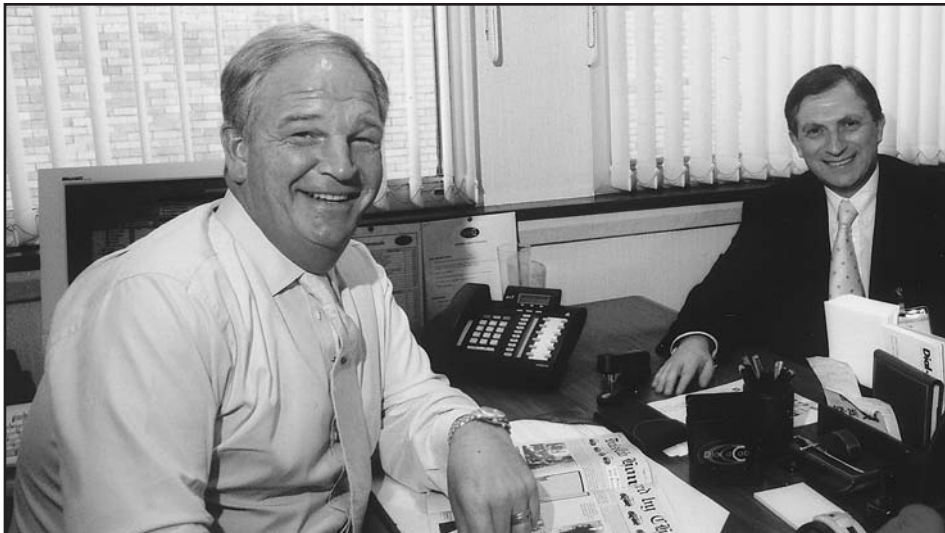
Mr Scott took the Ilford North seat from Linda Perham, who in turn had wrested it from another very helpful MP for the licensed taxi trade, Vivian Bendall.

Brian told *Call Sign*: “**Number one on our agenda was the question of minicabs using bus lanes and it must be said that Lee is very much on the side of the licensed taxi. He also agreed to ask questions in the House on our behalf in regard to the current situation of the Transport Occupational Command Unit (TOCU) and the number of crimes by illegal minicab drivers in London, in addition to proposed measures to reduce their numbers.**

“There was also a question for a projection of licensed taxi numbers heading towards 2012. Mr Scott is also writing to the Mayor on our behalf. I thought the meeting went very well.”

Also speaking to *Call Sign*, Lee Scott said:

Lee Scott Raises Questions in the ‘House’ for the Taxiboard



Lee Scott with Brian Rice during a visit to DaC

“In my view, it would be quite wrong to allow private hire to use bus lanes. London’s ‘Black Cabs’ are instantly recognisable, PH’s are not. How could the

authorities regulate bus lane use? We would get to the situation where every Tom, Dick and Harry is driving down bus lanes claiming to be a minicab driver.”

DaC Trio at War Disabled Golf Tournament

DaC Board member **Allen Togwell**, driver **Duncan Hope (R52)** and Company Secretary **Howard Pears** made up a trio representing the Society at the Woolston Hall Manor Golf Club, Abridge for the *London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled* annual golf tournament. Sadly the fourth member of our team couldn’t make it.

Following breakfast, the match began at midday with 68 players organised into teams of four who set off at hourly intervals, taking advantage of the hospitality tent in which water and cold drinks were supplied - courtesy of Westminster Insurance.

By 6.30pm, the last of the teams had completed the course and made their way to shower and change and then to the dining room where a three course meal had been prepared, with the odd glass or three of alcoholic beverage available for those that wished to partake!

John Rowland and Barry Rowan checked the scorecards and it was time for the winners to be announced. This year’s winner was Micky English with 38 points and he was presented with the Dame Vera Lynn Charity Shield and a new set of golf clubs. Second place saw Jeff Rowe with John Flynn close in third place. Rob Richards claimed the booby prize!

During the evening DaC’s **Terry Ward** – known to all as either W13 or Barking Bill - organised a raffle with a large number of prizes won. Earlier, Terry had been working hard putting out sponsor’s advertising on the course, ably assisted by Micky Long. An auction was also held, the excellent prize consisting of a day’s golf for four people at Royal Blackheath Golf Course, four Michelin taxi tyres, a golfing cap signed by a large number of pro golfers, PLUS a complete taxi overhaul including labour, valet and presentation to the testing centre!

DaC’s **Duncan Hope** won a prize after coming sixth - on count back as he actually finished with the same number of points as the 3rd place player.

The Chairman and Committee asked *Call Sign* to thank John Rowland for his hard work and help in organising the competition and also following sponsors: Dial-a-Cab, Westminster Taxi Insurance, LTDA, Dave Levy (for donating the overhaul), Joe Vaughan, HALT, Hexagon Taxis, Peter Rose Eros Weddings, Doug Sherry MBE and all those who sponsored holes and pledged money.

Call Sign apologies go to DaC’s **Ray Scott (T34)** who we wrongly identified as Duncan Hope for last month’s report on the WCHCD golf match.



DaC’s Howard Pears collects the prize for DaC driver Duncan Hope who had to leave early

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I already missed him so much and needed to feel his touch again. I cried myself to sleep. I had fallen in love with a man who lived so far away from me in London while I was in California. I loved him with all my heart and I knew then I would love him for the rest of my days...

(Continued from August)

Sam and I talk on the phone every day and have done so for the past four months, in fact ever since we last saw each other in New York. Each time we talk we make love, but when you open your eyes, you are still on your own. Nothing over the phone can hold a candle to being in the same bed with the person you love more than anything. Christmas and the New Year have already passed and I wasn't with him. We just want each other so much...

We sent each other gifts in the post and opened them together while on the phone. It was so much fun hearing him ripping the paper wrappings apart to see my gifts. He sent me a beautiful clock that resembled Big Ben - it has three clocks side by side. The first one on the left side has London time, the one in the middle has the time in New York and the third has the Los Angeles time. What a special gift this is to me. I will keep it for as long as I live. But now I will soon be able to thank Sam in person - we've decided to meet up in London!

February 1999

Well, I'm in London! It's Friday 12 February 1999 at 12.25 and I've just arrived at Heathrow Airport on British Airlines after the long 12-hour flight from Los Angeles, California. It's been 4 long months since we last saw each other in New York City. Way too long! I have dreamed about this day the whole time I've been away from Sam and now I'm here. But where is he? He is supposed to be here waiting for me, but I can't find him anywhere! The same thing happened at New York!

I have my luggage and go outside the door to get some fresh air. Wow! Am I really here in London, am I soon going to see my sweetheart? Well, providing he hasn't forgotten me!

The cool, crisp winter air of London makes me feel better and I went back inside. Then, after a few minutes that felt like an eternity, there he was! I can see his back, he's looking round for me! I tap him on the shoulder; he turns and gives me a big smile and even bigger hug! I'm in heaven, in my darling's arms once again. Nothing can be better than this - nothing!

We began walking toward a black Dial-a-Cab taxicab that's parked at the end of the terminal and I see a guy walking towards me. It was John, Sam's friend who also works for Dial-a-Cab and he's holding flowers that Sam has brought for me. My sweetheart is so sweet!

I gave John a big hug! I've talked with him on-line and on the phone several times and we have become friends. It's so nice to finally meet him and to be here in London, especial-

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

L♥ve On the Internet



Jenny and Sam enjoy a beer as they look forward to their first night together in four months...

ly being close to Sam once again.

Sam and I get in the back seat of John's taxicab and we start driving through the streets of London. It's my first time here and what a beautiful city it is. I just love the black cab, it's so roomy and comfortable. Sam keeps on looking at me and now I can't take my eyes off him. We just want to hold each other so much. We know how hard it is to be away from each other for so long, but I love him so much that I could never stop thinking about him no matter how far away I may be. He is

still the first thing that I think of in the morning and the last thing that I think of at night when I go to bed.

My heart is Sam's forever more and we will soon be together in Sam's house.

London looks absolutely wonderful and I'm so looking forward to seeing it all with Sam, but this moment isn't for touring.

Can't John drive any faster? I'm not sure if I can wait to get home...!

Continued next month

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Welcome back from your grand vacances. Now the kids are back at school, you are suitably rested and hopefully all ready to get stuck into the busiest quarter of the year. East Road is buzzing with a full compliment of call takers ready to keep a regular flow of work through our terminals. If you haven't seen the new office, take a look. They are indeed outstanding, so well done to the Chairman and the BoM. They are a credit to DaC as a society...

Taxis and SatNavs

There has been much talk about the use of SatNav systems in taxis of late and I personally don't use one at work, but I have one for my own car because I am more likely to need it away from London. As mentioned in an exclusive *Call Sign* September article, a serious point that has been overlooked regards their use if a passenger accuses a driver of taking a devious route whilst on a metered fare by using a SatNav system. Even though there hasn't yet been a clear example of this, it's only a matter of time before one comes up at the PCO and I believe that it does not give that driver a credible defence. If a driver is requested to go a longer way between A and B by direction of the SatNav, the driver is still bound by Hackney Carriage law to take the shortest route regardless. So be careful as the SatNav could end you up with a trip to Penton Street, thus another good reason to leave it locked in your glove box!

From Coventry to China...

Speaking of LTI, it seems that the writing may be on the wall for the factory in Coventry and it can't be long until the *Conditions of Fitness* in London are revoked. If LTI produce a better quality, cheaper London taxi and import it from China, the factory will be surplus to requirements and the imported taxi cheap enough for LTI to compete in the downgraded London market place. Surely the last review

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

A DaC Driver's Views on Life and Everything



and decision on the CoF for London was a political one that gave LTI time and notice that things have to change? We will see...

Public responsibilities?

As black cab drivers today, we are more scrutinised than ever with CRB checks, index numbers checked via the congestion charge, checks on Canary Wharf and CCTV cameras seemingly everywhere. So is our public image, which I believe to be very important. But I am always

amazed at some cab drivers that have little awareness of our responsibilities to the public. Did you know that using racist language or racially discriminating against a person on the grounds of their colour is a criminal offence?

A cab driver can end up explaining to a magistrate their actions after being interviewed by the boys at Cab Enforcement down at New Scotland Yard. Since the Disability Discrimination Act came into force, any cabdriver refusing access to a disabled person after plying for hire can be charged with an offence, it is unlawful to do such a thing. The public are very quick to criticise, but sometimes I feel, as a trade, we just don't do ourselves any favours. Surely it's all our responsibilities to make ourselves aware of the laws of the land, about Hackney carriage driving and even our own circuit?

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

Richard Potter (T51)

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

CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE

Before leaving England for the wonderful Mediterranean climes, I had never realised that my interest in birdwatching would lead me into discovering so many different species that are rare in the UK.

Birdwatching? Anorak I hear you say! Woodford is a Twitcher! Well, I do not care! I have had many a therapeutic morning or afternoon both sides of the channel looking through my bins – although I have not yet got to the stage of purchasing a decent telescope, but that day will not be too far away.

Maybe I am of a rare species myself, a Millwall fan interested in ornithology! And just when we thought that only Charlton Athletic had all the anoraks!

For what it's worth, there is a colony of European Bee-eaters in a nearby vineyard, which I am regularly looking at with their 'Joseph's coat of many colours', swooping acrobatically through the air in pursuit of

its insect food. These are very rare visitors to Britain, unless they turn up in the south



having overshot their breeding grounds. Other rarities include the Hoopoe, another bird with striking colourful plumage and regular sightings of a much larger Cuckoo that you might find in the UK.

Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed watching the very many and varied Seabirds and

Waders on a recent holiday up in Scotland, but down here we also have a most extraordinary array of birds of prey on offer. There are Kestrels, Buzzards, Peregrines *et al*, but last Sunday down at the beach I looked up and saw the most enormous Red Kite I had ever witnessed before in my life! Tell you what, you wouldn't have fancied that big guy swooping down to nick one of your French fries!

Birdwatching holidays, unfortunately, are not part of the deal, but if any Dial-a-Cab subscriber fancies a late break - and September and October are always very good weather-wise - then look us up at www.southof-francelets.com.

A bientot

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

Nuala Marries!



The ultimate in romantic weddings
Nuala and Mark on the beach in Mauritius

The recent marriage of Tammy to Dial-a-Cab Board member Keith Cain seems to have set a trend within Dial-a-Cab, because now it's the turn of Nuala Glavin in Driver Services to marry Mark Bodle (pronounced Bow-dell) on the exotic Indian Ocean island of Mauritius.

Speaking to *Call Sign*, an excited Nuala told us: "I've known Mark for about a year or more and we just clicked.

"We booked our hotel – *Le Meridien ile Maurice* and they took care of absolutely everything, even the witnesses. We had no family or friends with us, so it's just as well the hotel had it sorted," she said laughing.

"We married at 4pm on July 11th in glorious sunshine and later that evening ended the day with a romantic dinner on the beach with a golden sunset as a backdrop," she said sighing at the memory. "The rest of our honeymoon was spent around the swimming pool drinking cocktails and just chilling out."

Seeing how absolutely stunning Nuala looked in the photos, we have to use our own imagination as to what chilling out means!

All at DaC and *Call Sign* wish the newly weds the very best for their future together...

I'VE WON £1MILLION WITH A FREEBIE CASH CARD!

Er, sorry, but you haven't...

Call Sign recently received a phone call from a Dial-a-Cab driver who told us that he had just scratched a freebie cash card in the Daily Mirror and thought that he was in line for a major prize, with the top one being £1million. Also on offer were prizes ranging from £100,000 down to a fortnight in Italy.

He believed he had a big win because going by his previous experiences with freebie scratch cards, he knew everyone would win by scratching off and always finding two identical signs, but usually to win the worst prize advertised – often a really cheap digital camera. The catch is that you have to make a five-minute premium rate call at £1.50 per minute and then pay an insurance premium to have the camera posted!

But on this occasion, he had by-passed that group of prizes by getting three identical signs and that meant that the worst prize he could win would be a two week holiday in Italy, but that he was also in line for a crack at the £1million pay-out.

He wanted his name to go into *Call Sign* so that everyone could cheer him on in case he got close to the million. We went straight out and bought 6 copies of that day's Daily Mirror just to make sure that this driver's card was indeed a rarity. Sadly we had to inform him that every one of the six cards had three identical signs and that once again, this was nothing short of a scheme to get callers to spend £7.50 on a phone call.

We didn't investigate further, but feel reasonably certain that he would win the Italian trip, which he would then probably find was a sales pitch to get him to buy an apartment over there. We also called him back and he agreed that we should publish his story as a warning to other drivers, but he asked that we withhold his name – not because he didn't want other drivers to laugh, but he just didn't want his wife to know as she had already told him not to bother!



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Eli Solomons

Continued from August

So here we are with the ODRTS Board of Management being paid, if at all, well below what they could expect to earn on their cabs, to help out with dispatching, answering the phones - everything was all manual in those days - and frequently phoning back customers to explain why they were still waiting for their taxi! Ringbacks required then, as they still do now, a great deal of skill, patience and charm if ODRTS were not to lose customers. The heart of the problems were twofold; not enough real radio men to cover the work, especially during busy periods, and that everything from the call being received to getting dispatched was a manual operation. If you add human errors to that both with writing down correct details and the driver taking on board correct information in his cab (there were very, very few women driving taxis, with

"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...

not that many driving cars in those days), it was a wonder that there were not more mistakes.

However, let the Chairman or Board suggest allowing, or even worse recruiting, more owner-drivers onto the circuit and the outcry could be heard all the way from central London to Gants Hill, Kingsbury, Croydon and IAP!

Strangely enough, the most vocal drivers against any changes or growth of members were those whose call signs were rarely heard unless street work was dead! As for spending money on upgrading equipment? Well **** me, you gotta be joking!

But fortunately ODRTS has benefited over the years from having dedicated, or as some think, daft people who have been prepared to make sacrifices for the benefit of the society. Some lost money, some paid an even higher price with their health and social life and in return got very little in the

way of gratitude, thanks or benefits. With hindsight, of which I in common with many others possess in abundance, there must be an undiscovered disease that infects those select few with 'ODRTSism' for which, judging by the past and present day BoM and some others on the staff, there appears to be no hope of a cure.

So back to the early 1960s. Once again an EGM was called under the chairmanship of Eli Solomons (1959 - 1962) to allow the recruitment of another 50 member drivers onto the circuit. Once again the usual suspects spoke their words of doom, gloom and calumny and yet once again the BoM managed to convince enough members to vote for expansion.

Sunset Strip

Continued next month

"Nine DaC-Wembley Heroes!"

The new football season kicked off at DaC-Wembley's Vale Farm ground in disappointing fashion when after taking a deserved 2-goal lead against Sandhurst Town, the visitors came back to grab two late goals and an unexpected point as DaC-Wembley took their foot off the throttle.

But that setback was more than compensated for by the heroic effort of the **Call Sign** sponsored **Combined Counties League** team just three days later at the small ground of Cobham, when a gallant back-to-the-walls battle took place with DaC-Wembley amazingly taking all three points, while playing for most of the match with just nine men...

Dial-a-Cab driver and DaC-Wembley goal-keeper, Lee Pearce (J71), takes up the story...

"We have always been a passing team and our captain, **Ian Bates**, has always tried to get us to play that way. There's no room for cloggers at Wembley, but we can mix it with the best if we have to! But our away match at Cobham on 14 August was one where I felt so proud of the guys in front of me, because it called for a real back-to-the-walls fight.

"Cobham's style is different to ours and looks more akin to that of a pub team. From the kick-off, they charged at us trying to knock us out of our passing football and within 10 minutes, our **Dave Taylor** was sent off for apparently tackling too hard after being kicked twice by the Cobham left back. We tend not to have too many video replays at this level, but Dave's tackle looked no worse than any other from where I was standing.

"We continued to play good football and took the lead through a well-taken goal by **Shane Sinclair**. They carried on with their pub footie and the match



DaC Wembley's Bryan Marshe tries to get the ball from Haringey Borough's Omar Yaseem in their FA Cup clash
pic Max Flego

turned pretty rough and soon after, our **Jon-Barrie Bates** mowed down their mid-fielder who had to be taken to the local hospital. JB was sent off and joined Dave Taylor for an earlier-than-expected shower. The game was halted for 45 minutes while the players waited for the ambulance to arrive.

"From the restart and with still an hour to play, we came under wave after wave of attack and with just

nine men on the pitch, we found it tough going, but never wavered. Early in the second half I made a great save to my left, but all the credit has to go to those eight men in front of me who ran and chased everything for that last hour in terrible conditions to give us those 3 points. I felt proud to have been involved in this match and it was probably the hardest clean sheet I've ever kept. Every one of our team was a hero that night and if we can keep that spirit going, we must have a great chance of promotion..."

From Wembley to Wembley - on the FA Cup trail!

Four days later, DaC-Wembley took their first step along the FA Cup trail when the first *extra preliminary round* took place with a visit to **Haringey Borough** and like their first match with Sandhurst, DaC-Wembley took a two goal lead (**Paul Shelton** and **Dave Taylor**) and even missed a first half penalty. But with just 10 minutes to play, Haringey's Mark Maher and Ronardson Odinna each scored to set up a Vale Farm replay 3 days later - no mollycoddling in the early rounds!

The replay saw a different DaC-Wembley. Captain / Manager **Ian Bates** pointed out in his normal "frank" manner that it was no good being on top for the first 80 minutes and then letting it all slip and the team took note with an excellent display, running out with a 3 - 0 win to take them into the FA Cup Preliminary round proper. Scorers were Jamie Walker (2, 1 pen) and Bradley Scott.

DaC-Wembley now face Ware FC of the Ryman League - one league above the Lions - in the next round. Victory would leave them just three matches away from the first round proper and just eleven games away from the ground that Lee calls the other "stadium" in Wembley!

Mid Year Safety Inspections Arrive

This press release comes from **Alan Matthews, Head of Projects and Developments at the PCO...**

Background

1. The requirement for London taxis to undergo a mid-year safety inspection is set out in article 14(o) of the London Cab Order 1934 (as amended by the London Cab Order 2007).

2. All vehicles licensed from 2 April 2007 onwards will be required to undergo a mid-year safety inspection and this Notice is to confirm the arrangements that are to be introduced with immediate effect.

3. Licensees will receive a letter from SGS informing them when their vehicle is approaching the time for its mid-year inspection. Amongst other things, this letter will:

- Confirm that the vehicle should be presented for its inspection within a period of 30 days before, or thirty days after the six month anniversary of its licence (at a time and SGS inspection centre confirmed by the licensee)
- Provide details about how to arrange an appointment
- Provide details of the inspection to help licensees pass first time; and
- Give advice about what to do in the event of a pass or fail.

Scope of the mid-year inspection

4. Annex A sets out in detail the scope of the mid-year inspection and how the inspection is to be carried out.

5. Whilst the scope of the mid-year inspection comprises 5 distinct stages, it is proposed to introduce the new arrangements incrementally. Up until April 2008, vehicles presented for their mid-year inspection will not, as a matter of routine, be subject to Stage 4 (which is the ramp inspection component). During this initial start up period, however, SGS will be requested to randomly sample 10% of mid-year inspections for the ramp component.

6. From April 2008, all vehicles presented for mid-year inspections will be subjected to the full scope of the inspection as set out in Annex A.

Further information



about this Notice

7. Both the PCO and SGS are keen to ensure the successful introduction of the mid-year inspection. If you are a vehicle owner or vehicle presenter who might be directly affected during the transitional period or if you require further information about this Notice, you can contact us on the following contact number:

Taxi Delivery and Contract Management Team 020 7126 1638

Annex A

TAXI LICENSING: MID-YEAR INSPECTION ROUTINE

General principles

The vehicle is to be tested as presented on the day.

This routine is to be used as specified in Section O of the Taxi Inspection manual / PCO formal notices / PCO written updates. During the test no dismantling of components will take place.

There will be periodic updates of this routine and the test manual via technical bulletins.

The vehicle inspector will apply the following inspection routine:

Stage 1

Greet customer, check VRM is on worksheet, check that details on V5, Taximeter installation cert, euro3 cert (where required) and alternative fuel cert (where required) match records.

Enter Taximeter certificate details on system (if different from records). Obtain vehicle keys.

Stage 2

Locate vehicle and carry out a quick visual inspection to ensure vehicle is safe to move, free of obvious body damage and that lamps /lenses /reflectors are intact.

Carry out servo test making sure oil pressure light functions correctly, check

operation of power steering, while driving to bay check ADL (if locks are heard to function this will be considered as working) and ABS warning system (if required). Stop in beam test area; turn off engine and open driver's window. Take paperwork to workstation and retrieve vehicle details from database. Enter mileage. Open bonnet making sure safety catch and bonnet prop operate correctly. Check VIN and VRM match file.

Check oil level then connect emissions equipment making sure to place exhaust extractor over exhaust. Select emissions test and follow on screen instructions. Remove emissions equipment.

Carry out visual under bonnet check for battery mounting and condition, steering components, condition and security of all visible fuel lines and wiring, clutch (if applicable) and power steering fluid level, brake fluid for level and contamination, condition of drive belts and any leaks from engine and check condition of inner wings and bulkhead. Close bonnet...

Enter any defects. Check and store results

Stage 3

Drive slowly over sideslip plate to assess wear, wheel alignment, position front wheels on suspension tester, check condition and operation of parking brake lever and ratchet and pawl,

check taximeter seals, data equipment etc in drivers area. Wait until prompted, then allow front axle to enter rolling road/brake efficiency test. Follow on screen prompts. Drive out of rolling road and stop with rear wheels on suspension tester.

Check insurance document, check steering wheel mounting and free play, wait until prompted then allow rear axle to enter rolling road, follow on screen prompts for parking brake, follow on screen prompts for rear axle, drive out of rolling road and stop on hard standing. Check operation of front indicators and lights in mirrors at the rear of ramp, check operation of tail, brake, rear fog, reversing and indicator lamps making sure all tell-tale lamps operate. Visually check passenger area for cleanliness and obvious defects.

Enter any defects and check results before storing.

continued on page 33

Beauty tips: So many have asked, what are my secrets!

Gorgeous DaCman Glen offered to help me on this one, but all he can think of is his horror at young female passengers who apply mascara in the back of his taxi while he drives over speed humps. "It's a sharp object," he tells me, "and they're poking it round their eyes and it's dangerous." OK, thanks for that, moving on...

Hair: For most of us ladies, this is the heliport on which our greatest anxieties come in to land. It really doesn't help to fluff it up, pat at it or stick your fingers through it in public, however. It looks the same after you've done that as before and it makes you look fidgety, like an adolescent sucking on a long strand of hair. Stop it. Forget about your hair dryer – unless you have a real volumising problem, let the air dry it, save electricity and months of your life. Do NOT forget, however, to colour your grey hair. Use a £6 supermarket kit if you're skint and do it every month. Grey does not shout "style" on anyone under 70. It's dowdy and dreadful...

Long hair is lovely, but don't wear it over your eyes to flick it and toss it when you want to see anything. Men with a mental age over 10 see that as vain, not sexy, and if you're blonde as well, Glen says it is a sign you've nothing to say. French women have elegant hair styles, as Glen informed me while ogling on our last holiday, but rarely do they go for the tied up, scraped-back *Croydon facelift* hair style he sees so often on his young passengers. Leave it soft, unless your cheekbones (and your accent) are as classic as a news reader's.

Skin: Suntans make you leathery and wrinkled and are about as classy as Jennifer Lopez's backside. And if you are pale or gin-

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

Back Seat *Driver*



ger, the only excuse for sitting unclothed on a beach or under a sunbed is a death wish (via skin cancer); and it's a beauty disaster too, like smoking, really. Rub gobs of skin cream or baby oil everywhere, every night, with upward strokes to avoid sagging around the cheeks or breasts. Or get your Dial-a-Cab partner to do it, a nice beauty routine you can share, which can bring added boudoir excitement. If it happens to me, I promise, it can happen to you too!

Teeth: Brush them, floss them, straighten them even if you're 40 or more, if your parents didn't organise that for you. Pay for the terrific veneers and teeth whiteners the dentists have these days and never agree to an extraction unless root canal treatment, implants and crowns have all been considered first. A gap, bridge or dentures may catch food and make you feel bad about yourself. I'm talking about visiting the dentist

and you are entitled to nag anyone purple in your family who doesn't do that, particularly your partner. It is your duty to take your children to the dentist and make it fun for them.

Nails: Clean and unbitten is a good start, and enjoy the artistry on offer in the High Street if swirls and colours float your boat. You can use your keyboard at work with long talons; it just takes practice. I have never met a heterosexual man who admires fingertip art, but so what? Do it, love it!

And finally: Posture is priceless, especially for the tall and the fat – back straight, head high, measured steps, glide....a relaxed, soft voice, a big smile, and you will dazzle, I promise.

Gents: I'm afraid personal hygiene is your biggest failing and I'm not just talking about showers. Make friends with your washing machine and remember jackets, raincoats and overcoats all need regular cleaning too, as do ties and shoes. Shave every day if you want to be nice to be near and remember that underarm deodorant is NOT optional no matter how macho your image. Burn T-shirts depicting beer and anything you may still own with the ugly, childish FCUK logo.

While driving, your collar, neck and the back of your head are on show to your public, so check if it's haircut time – yes, now is good. Get out of the taxi to stretch as often as you can and do whatever it takes to keep the bulges away – unless they are biceps or wallets of course.

Till then...

Love Poppy x x x

Mid year safety inspections *continued from page 32*

Stage 4 – Ramp inspection

(10% sampling until April 08)

Drive onto ramp, turn engine off making sure to leave driver's window open. Select vehicle on computer, rise ramp to waist height and fit brake bar, rise ramp to working height. From underneath the vehicle visually check the condition of the following components using MAHA shaker plates and turning plates.

Starting at o/s/f; Steering / box, pipes and hoses; Suspension joints.

Moving across front check for damaged, corroded or badly repaired chassis. Visually check engine and pipes for leaks and damaged or broken mounts. Visually check n/s/f steering and suspension joints. Visually check steering idler box condition and mounting.

Working down n/s, check condition of: N/S/F Brake calliper, brake discs, pads

and back plates; N/S/F road wheel and tyre; overall condition, tread, etc. Visually check chassis, bodywork mounts, pipes. At n/s/r, visually check condition of suspension components and mounts, brake pipes, back plate, cables and wiring, rear axle for leaks damage and mounting, road wheel and tyre overall condition, tread, etc.

At o/s/r visually check condition of suspension components and mounts, brake pipes, back plate, cables and wiring. Visually check exhaust / Euro3 AT or equivalent. Visually check road wheel and tyre; overall condition, tread, etc.

Working up o/s check condition of chassis, bodywork mounts, pipes. O/S/F brake calliper, brake discs, pads and back plates. O/S/F Road wheel and tyre; overall condition, tread, etc.

Enter any defects and check results before storing.

Stage 5

Check MAHA outputs and review inspection result, print relevant documents, pass documents to owner, explain failure reasons if required.

Note

It is noted and accepted that parts of some components are only visible when the vehicle is in the wheel free position, therefore this inspection will be limited to those parts of components which are clearly visible at the time of inspection. A wheel free examination will be optional if required to facilitate investigation of suspected defects.

Any DaC driver requiring a copy of the original PDF document, can receive one by emailing callsign-mag@aol.com and asking...

It was February 2005 when TV viewers saw a program called *The Dragons' Den* in which a team of judges considered the viability of new business schemes and told **Cabtvate** MD Mark Greenhalgh that his new business of placing TV screens in the back of taxis would never work.

Just 16 months later, and certainly not their fault, the London PCO passed the system that was to put many drivers into debt. One of them was Dial-a-Cab driver **Mark Lane (N97)**...

Unlike KPM's *Cabvision*, which charges the driver nothing and pays them via direct debit every three months, Cabtvate signed up drivers to an agreement where they paid a huge £3500 at £88.50+VAT each month (around £104) for four years, with the apparent assurance that they would receive back around £190 per month after advertisers paid. When Cabtvate folded, it left the drivers – including Mark – with no programmes, but still having to pay off the 4-year debt.

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

He agreed that there was an element of greed and it was too late by the time he asked himself how they could give so much. The answer was that they couldn't...

The finance company that tied up most of the cab drivers, **Haydock Finance**, were 100% reputable and no doubt wouldn't have become involved had they realised what terrible business people Cabtvate were. It was Haydock who completed the finance for the DaC drivers involved. They told **Call Sign** at the time that the chances of Cabtvate having any money left after liquidation was almost nil – and that turned out to be correct with Cabtvate going under owing a small fortune.

On behalf of just the DaC drivers, **Call Sign** spoke to a London solicitor and sent him copies of the driver's agreements. He told us that they seemed binding and that the finance company were unlikely to have known that Cabtvate were in such a bad financial state. He added that the drivers would not be recognised as consumers under the terms of the *Consumer Credit Act*, but were acting as businesses. He agreed that a negotiated agreement with a reduced amount could be the best and possibly only way out.

Because we had published the original notice about the system being passed by Penton Street, **Call Sign** decided as a one-off to send two DaC drivers, **Mark Lane** and **Jimmy**

Cabtvate Liquidation: Call Sign helps gets drivers debts slashed!



Mark Lane: "Our thanks to Call Sign!"

Parlour (G41), who had both signed up with Cabtvate at the same time, to see that same solicitor. He was a Partner at Glenisters, the legal firm whose ads are seen in this magazine.

Mark told us: **"He was brilliant. We saw him twice and with the odds totally against us, he managed to get out debts reduced by over two-thirds! Whilst I hate the idea of even paying £1100, that is much better than £3500! I would also like to thank Call Sign who took honour to a new level when taking this on when no one could blame them for publishing a press release."**

As for this magazine, Editor Alan Fisher told us: **"It wasn't our fault, but I felt so much sympathy for Mark and Jimmy who had been saddled with a huge debt and got absolutely**

nothing out of it, that I decided to use some of our advertising revenue. Amazingly, the Partner at Glenisters, whose name I won't mention in case he suddenly becomes inundated with requests for help, made just a nominal charge that under normal circumstances would not have even covered an hour!"

Alan ended by saying: **"I think this case shows that anything which looks too good to be true, probably is! And it most definitely was a one-off!"**

Dennis Laydon

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An Occasional Chas Grump!

*By popular demand.
Chas Kissin has the occasional
return grump!*

With floodwaters now receding and summertime back on track, I am surprised that a religious scholar has not put forth the view that it was brought about by the wrath of the almighty as punishment for today's way of life! We do seem to have a warmer climate, but I remember when winters were colder and longer and summer lasted from June until late September. The only way to tell which season it is now, is that the summer rain is warmer!

So with such flood devastation around the UK, where was 'Gobby' Geldorf and his friends, Bonio and the Sledge? Had this been a third world country - which we almost are - they would have arranged a concert and the money would have been pouring into the communities where it was needed most. Or there could have been an edict from Brussels where those who've had temperatures of 35 degrees and upwards, exchanged it for some of our spare water! Or what about the Eco-warriors who would rather we all went back to the Stone Age, blaming us all for flying around the world on holiday or business? Personally, I believe it is just the normal cycle of things and Mother Nature correcting herself every so often. Or maybe the Mel Gibson films of Mad Max and Kevin Costner's Water World will become reality...?

Picking up at The O2

With the dome now in and run by private enterprise, one major problem still exists - transport. In July, when Barbra Streisand appeared there finishing at around 10.30pm, crowds were still waiting for taxis at 11.45pm and later. One of the main reasons is that the Limehouse Link closes at 10.00pm every night. This has the knock-on effect for traffic heading east and west, as well as south. Factor in the closure of the southbound bore of the Blackwall tunnel and it is not hard to see that the O2 is difficult to access. On some evenings they had three functions going on there! As with most things in this country, no thought of the infrastructure seems to have been implied until after the chaos begins. Remember, the Olympics are only five years away and the planners MUST be held accountable.

Eds Note: The Link will now remain open until midnight on O2 event nights.

Roadworks, roadworks and then more roadworks...

It's not just the two above tunnels, but the whole of London seems to be in the grip of road (non) works. Every night at 8pm, Regent Street, from Piccadilly to Oxford Circus, is closed, presumably for re-surfacing. This causes chaos around the west end. Close by, we have Tottenham Court Road and what should be three lanes reduced to one due to the fencing off of the off-side lane and parking on the nearside! To the west, we have Edinburgh Gate closed at Knightsbridge and causing tailbacks from Piccadilly to Harrods and the Albert Hall. Factor in the occasional closure of the South Carriage Road and you wonder why we have smog in the capital? Another main blocked artery to the northwest is the Harrow Road by the old hospital, with its alternate traffic lights and 20 minutes being the norm to get through. The northeast doesn't escape lightly with Holloway Road and Archway Junction often tailing back to Highbury



Corner. Trying to cross the river can also be a nightmare with Wandsworth Bridge Road closed just before the bridge and to the east, Waterloo roundabout often closed northbound - again both causing chaos.

These are all major routes in and out of the capital that are gridlocked for much of the time - and that's without the usual accidents that occur daily. And Ken has the cheek to ask drivers to pay for the privilege!

Warden's strike

I've not huge amounts of sympathy for prisoners in UK jails, but find it strange that HMG allow a warden's strike on 29 September over an increase in their wages, yet find no problem whatsoever when presenting themselves with huge yearly inflation busting increases in parliament.

Last but not least...

Napoleon, the first mastermind of the European Union, once referred to the people of this country as "a nation of shopkeepers." As I look around this city of ours today, it is more like a country of car washers...

Chas Kissin (P99J)

THE SALIERI RESTAURANT

376 Strand, WC2

**We Invite Dial-a-Cab drivers and their guests
to our restaurant where you can partake of the
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**And as a thank-you for helping our clients come
and go over the years, we are happy to be able to
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We are certain that you will be delighted



**Please bring along your badge or Bill as ID
We are also happy to be able to offer you £5 for
every passenger you bring to us
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376 Strand, WC2
Reservations: 020 7836 1318**

MAILSHOT

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

Who are you!

Last night, the trip notes on my account ride told me to verify passenger's Christian name and to put the surname on a name board. The passenger's name was Fassam Jae. All I needed was a clue, which is which? Are they male or female? Is it Fassam Jae or Jae Fassam? Is it Mr, Mrs, Miss or what? What if they're not Christian, then it would be first name. But I'm still none the wiser. The next job I get, the passenger name is given as Hsiao-wei Lee. I think you know what I'm going to say! How can I ask for passengers in a professional way with the minimum of information that drivers are given?

As for the new name boards, I think there fab too, although I don't wear mine round my neck at airport arrivals as I can't get a signal and so can't book in. As for the old name board, I've recycled mine, I stuck it above the telly at home with a photo of me on it and the word DAD on it just so the kids might remember me as I see less and less of them these days.

Nick Steventon (J65)

Keith Cain replies: Nick, this is not going to an easy one to resolve. Certainly since the introduction of V6, we have always entered the surname followed by the christian name. This was done because it was easier to recall a trip. The issue we are experiencing more and more are the bookings being made on-line by clients. Despite informing them of what is required, they still enter the trips christian name / surname.

As we move to the next generation of booking screen, which will be a profile based system, I believe it will become christian name / surname. It will allow us to pick up the persons title, which will help the situation. Unfortunately, until we start to make the transfer I have asked account managers to speak with their clients to try and get them to enter the details the same way as the Call Centre staff does.

Internet love? Then more love please!

My boyfriend Jeff has been on DaC for just over a year having previously been on ComCab (can I say that) and I have gotten into the habit of reading his copy of *Call Sign* that comes through our post box – especially the two lovers who met via the internet! The magazine from his previous circuit didn't hold a candle to your one and although I admit the taxi business isn't always my cup of tea, *Love on the Internet* and *Back Seat Driver* cer-

tainly are! I'm certainly hoping that 'Love' moves from being an interesting read to being a rather hotter one! She certainly has the right name for it. Ask my Jeff – and ask him about the internet!

**Jenny Sanders
Woodford, Essex**

Thanks Jenny and I think that your namesake may well be heating up, however, please remember that *Call Sign* is read by the family – as you have just proved. And you can mention our friends from ComCab or Radio Taxis at any time so long as you say our mag is better! I don't think I'll bother asking your Jeff what you mean about the 'net! ...Ed

Complaints

In the July issue of *Call Sign*, it was reported that a driver had been suspended for 2 weeks for using threatening and intimidating behaviour towards the chairman of Dial-a-Cab; and in the August issue, in response to a query from a subscriber, Brian Rice gave a detailed explanation to the background of this case. What is not mentioned is that about two years ago, that same driver was found guilty of another breach of society rules, namely "undermining actions of ODRTS causing problems with Call Centre and client," for which he was given a warning and a severe reprimand. This society is of course owned by the members who select the Board to run the business, but it often seems too lenient of behaviour by drivers that cause harm to other members or even damage relations with clients. This is very short sighted because whilst being kind to drivers who repeatedly break the rules, such leniency can lead to loss of accounts and so cause huge damage to the whole of Dial-a-Cab and all other drivers. At the risk of sounding like a reactionary from Tunbridge Wells, I do think that a rigorous approach needs to be adopted with more severe sentences imposed and upheld.

Careful thought should be given to such people who wish, for some reason or another, to be elected to the Board of this society. Perhaps they and Dial-a-Cab would be happier if they moved to a different radio circuit?

Laurence Kelvin (W88)

I think I am going to pull the plug on discussing individual complaints after this issue. In addition to Laurence's latter, the letter below from Brian Spiro also asks about a specific complaint and names a driver who was expelled. Even though someone has been found guilty, that doesn't mean they should be

hounded and while it may be my fault for taking freedom to its ultimate last month when a subscriber asked the first question, I think it must therefore be up to me to say let it go chaps! Questions on complaints are fine, but not when it comes to naming individuals and individual cases.

My problem is also that I could put myself into the position of having to allow anyone who has ever been on complaint and found guilty, to explain their side in *Call Sign*. That would undermine the Complaints Committee – or should I then allow them to also give their side? The opposite doesn't happen because I have made the point to succeeding Complaints officers that I do not think it fair to publish 'not guilty' verdicts and I don't. That way, very few ever know that a 'not guilty' driver was even put on complaint. ...Ed

As Directed

I certainly agree with John Robinson's (E88) letter (**August Call Sign**), I cannot see why after completion of 5 credit jobs (including scrubs) all AD jobs on EC5 and E140 should not be unmasked if the driver so wishes by pressing code 3. The Board should be aware that because of spiralling house prices, drivers are being forced further and further out of London and as John writes, if someone lives in Benfleet, they don't want to take an AD job and end up in Ealing. This could also be very dangerous, as I have heard of drivers falling asleep on the way home. I am sure that DaC's technology can achieve the unmasking of the AD jobs, possibly giving the driver 30 minutes to select a job in the direction that he or she wishes.

This would not only give drivers a contribution to their fuel or subs, but would help clients to get a job home quicker and prevent accounts being closed. The going home procedure at the moment is completely unacceptable. I hope Keith Cain can implement this suggestion as soon as possible as from September until after Xmas; there will be hundreds of jobs on EC5 and E140 that would not be covered.

Also with regards to Yaqub Rafiq's (028) letter, could you please explain why Derek Brent was expelled for refusing to go down a certain turning?

Thank you very much,

Brian Spiro (Dan 71J - ex Star 90)

Thanks for the letter Brian. I think Keith Cain answered it in his reply to John Robinson and there is no point in asking the same question again and getting the same response. But can I just add my view as a driver who also works on EC5.



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How many would bother working on EC5 if they knew that there were half a dozen or more drivers hogging the point waiting for a job that they fancied? You know as well as I, Brian, that some drivers (for example) living in Essex on a Code 3 and sitting in EC5, would not be happy with a trip to Poplar but would wait for one taking them to their door (or dare I say it, well beyond)? I for one wouldn't bother making my way to the city if I knew that those waiting for a Code 3 would take most of the good jobs. I also think that I speak for many on that point. If there are that many trips in EC5, then they will reach the bids and become unmasked and then you have to accept the Poplar trip. That would pay for the day's fuel, wouldn't it? If you get lucky, then even better.

I asked Allan Evans about Derek Brent's case. Allan was in the USA but told me that the decision to expel probably included previous complaints added onto the guilty verdict. Derek was offered an Appeal, but declined to accept it ...Ed

Slating drivers?

Yet another edition of *Call Sign*, yet another slating of drivers by the Board! Now we have Dr Allen Togwell telling us we're fat, unhealthy, live on chips, only exercise to fill up with diesel and can't climb stairs. A couple of months ago, we were a bunch of dopes who needed to go to night school to learn a foreign language and we all know his views on the way we dress - slacks for the next Christmas present I assume? All this in print from someone who purports to be our Marketing Director. Correct me if I'm wrong, but his views sound like someone who is the marketing director of a PH company.

In future, Mr Togwell, why not use the double-page spread you have as a platform to tell the world about your favourite subject - yourself - and let us in on what you have been doing the previous month and how we're getting value for money out of you. Tell us how DaC has been marketed rather than just criticising the drivers or talking about the old days. You don't have to be shy, Allen!

Tom Whitbread was accusing drivers of short-term memory loss (I'll gloss over the fact that short term memory loss is a serious problem for some people and not a laughing matter) for repeatedly pressing the QP button and overloading the system. Yet today (8 Aug) there must have been a dozen messages in an hour or so telling us that due to an accident, Roman Way will shut at

17.00. Were so many messages necessary?

How many times has the "do not book into EC5/E140 for a code 3 job etc" message been broadcast in the last couple of weeks as per the "you have to be within 15 minutes of E140 to book in etc" message?

Then Keith Cain moans that because our service level is so bad (sic "its been written about for a very long time") we now have to do 5 jobs to be entitled to a code 3 job, it kind of makes you wonder how DaC has such a great turnover and where the money was earned that paid outright for the new office block, really.

And God forbid anyone should criticise Mr Chairman, which brings me on to the poor response I thought he wrote to the Evening Standard: *"Licensed taxis will become a tourist attraction similar to the gondola in Venice."* Was it drafted by Allen Togwell? The way it talked the industry down, the industry that we all work in, was shocking. I would have expected something a bit more hard hitting, Mr Rice, not a lily-livered letter saying that give it a couple of years and we can kiss the trade goodbye, especially from someone in your position. Thank God they didn't publish it.

And then the Editor, Mr Fisher, this is for you. You don't have to publish this paragraph, but we don't want to read every month about your spat with Grant Davis. If it's personal, leave it to the playground, stop trying to knock spots off each other (if the industry is in such a state as Brian Rice's letter alludes to, we really ought to unite), leave it and find something more interesting to talk about.

So finally, yes have your opinions, we can all tolerate reading a few moans and groans, but as the magazine is from *the home of Dial-a-Cab International*, please use it to be positive about 'the game' and tell the world about the problems we ALL face and stop bigging yourselves up to the detriment of the drivers.

Gary Leaver (J54)

Sorry if you are unhappy with *Call Sign* Gary, but I will never be able to please everybody. I'm happy to give you the right to criticise, but I don't think you realise quite how difficult it is to fill up a page with text when you write regularly. When I took over the mag, the first thing I did was to stop the necessity for Board members to write in every issue. If you think their columns go over the top now, you should have read them 11 years ago. Every Board member, every month, writing about covering the work. I try to encourage them to write about different stuff, but I do not want them to write about going to the local Costcutters for a loaf and a pint of milk

and besides, I like a bit of controversy because it can help stimulate discussion.

Would you like Allen Togwell to go into detail in every issue about how he designed our logos or does our AGM reports etc? The Marketing in his title does not involve going out, but more in a designing sense. I think he has saved the society an absolute fortune in cost over the years. If you really don't like his articles - and no one can like everything - then skip it. But his views and recollections are enjoyed by more than those that don't want to read them. And like it or not, most seem to read it!

As for the Roman way messages, you have to remember that not everyone signs on at the same time and the DaC fitting bay may have been a driver's first stop. Try telling the driver who finds the facility closed, that the message was put out 2 hours before he signed on and see what the response is.

Brian's letter to the Standard? I would not for one second assume that they did not publish it because they thought it to be incorrect. Ask our drivers that have written letters to the ES over the years how many were not published, whereas the private hire response was. Do we give up?

And last (but hopefully not least), Grant and I. You are probably right! Yes I do get irritated when the internet list he is on criticises me without my knowledge using terminology that you wouldn't use in front of children, or when he has a dig at me in *The Badge*. But contrary to popular belief, when Grant and I meet, I certainly don't feel like we are mortal enemies, just two people that disagree. But I will try and refrain from mentioning Mr Davis.

I hope that answers your letter from my point of view as Editor, Gary. I have to assume that other than those Board reports that you say contain too many moans, you are happy with *Call Sign*. In the meantime, both Brian Rice and Tom Whitbread wanted the opportunity to address your remarks about them ...Ed

Brian Rice replies: You might wish to criticise my letter to the Standard, Gary, but what did you actually do? That's right, absolutely nothing other than to criticise those within the trade (like me) that took the time and trouble to actually reply. You joined this Society because you obviously believed it to be the best, purchased your £50 share and then feel you have the right to criticise absolutely anyone that has anything to do with the management of this Society



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and who have spent years endeavouring to make this Society as successful as we are today. Incidentally, do you actually like anyone? Reading through your letter again, you have actually castigated everyone, well, at least everyone on the BoM. If I were you Gary, I would seek help, because you are a prime case for a nervous breakdown! Why should Allen Togwell be the only doctor in the house!

Tom Whitbread replies: I wasn't trying to be humorous when mentioning short-term memory loss, my mother suffered with it for 3 years before she died. During that time I had to look after her and unless you have been put in that position, you do not know how frustrating it can be for their carer when their mind only remembers with clarity events that happened maybe 20 years ago.

What I was trying to say was that a person with that disease has no option, they cannot remember. But a driver does have a good memory, so by their actions will only cause problems to their fellow subscribers. I am glad to know that you do read my column.

Dress code?

I have been a member of DaC for many years and am a regular user of EC5. I have never written to *Call Sign* before, but feel so strongly regarding the way some drivers dress that I feel compelled to write. Like all drivers who use EC5 / E140, I am concerned about the way private hire has eaten into our work. This has become more noticeable as private hire has encroached into our large account based on London Wall. But one thing that it highlights to me is the difference in our dress as opposed to theirs. As they get out of their cars, they are always dressed smartly, usually in a suit and tie. Many of our drivers are dressed in shorts and trainers, which in my opinion is not appropriate to pick up account customers.

In this day and age when the vast majority of cabs are fitted with air con as standard, the hot weather excuse is redundant - even in the daytime let alone at night. I am not saying we should all be dressed as tailor's dummies, but surely it is not too difficult to put on a pair of trousers and shoes with a t-shirt or polo shirt to wear to work. What I find hard to understand is why a minority of drivers, to their credit keep their cabs immaculate, yet dress scruffily?

Personally I think we should have a minimum standard dress code on the circuit. I know about the old chestnut of being independent and doing our own thing, but surely this does not apply once you become a member of a radio circuit. After all, we are

all representing each other and DaC as a whole.

I may sound like an apologist for private hire, but I can assure you this is not the case. My reason for this letter is to begin some sort of fight back and reclaim some of our lost work from private hire. I believe this is one thing we can all do to improve our image and hopefully retrieve some of our lost work.

Ron Desborough (P42)

Happy!

I would just like to say that I have been on Dial-a-Cab for 4 months now and totally enjoy it. I was on ComCab for over 5 years before and must say that DaC win hands down! Any drivers who are thinking of jumping ship to CC, go ahead, but I bet you're back within weeks, if not days. I do have a few issues, but overall I'm very happy with the jobs and the staff.

Mike Leo (Z09)

Call Sign on-line

Having retired from driving a cab earlier this year, I would still like to read *Call Sign* online to keep in touch. Do I need a password or something so that I can read your excellent magazine for many years to come or is only an edited version available online?

Terry Farmer (ex-T55J)

I get asked this question all the time - usually by Americans who first ask if I can put them onto a mailing list (well, if you don't ask, you don't get)! Sadly I can't even put ex-subscribers on a list because what started as just the odd driver wanting to keep in touch, has now reached over 100...!

So just type in www.dac-callsign.co.uk which will take you to the website, then select the year you want, going back to 1998 and when the months are displayed, click on the month of that year. Since May of last year, each issue is presented in 2 formats. One is with around 20 pages that always include BoM reports and Mailshot among other things. This comes with a search facility where you type in a name and the engine will search out anything including that name. That facility is in every issue since February 1998. But since last year's May issue, you can also click on the PDF sign beneath the selected issue and that will give you the complete magazine, but without the search engine. While at the site, there is an old issues section where you can download and read issues from 1967 and 1977. An issue from 1987 will be added shortly ...Ed



PCNs galore...

I have just received two PCNs in two weeks after over 32 years with Dial-a-Cab and no problems. Is Westminster Council targeting us? Also, the PCN says it will allow representation if the "vehicle was on hire." Do DaC reclaim each time? Invariably the passenger keeps us waiting, so there is the risk of a PCN there. Have our accounts been told of our problems and to come down as quickly as possible? The two jobs at Berkeley Street and Stratton Street totalled £38.20 but cost the Society £120 if not reclaimed. Just when does servicing these accounts become uneconomic or will drivers get fed up with the aggravation first? Mayfair has at least 2 mobile Smart cars with cameras plus many wardens to contend with.

Meanwhile, if the new cycle lane Bill becomes law, will it become impossible to stop at 1 King William Street and why can't we just use New Court at night? With other City accounts, especially on double yellow lines and with more CCTV, we desperately need a solution to reduce PCNs and to settle our nerves!

As always, *Call Sign* leads the rest and is the best read in the trade.

Alasdair Kay (C67)

Mike Son replies: Alasdair, although I have been actively trying to get some resolve on the unacceptable level of PCNs our drivers are receiving and the Corporation of London have been helpful in reducing some legislations - changing double yellow lines to single to give us a bit more time to pick up passengers, as well as instructing parking contractors not to issue tickets manually especially in Old Broad Street - we are nevertheless still receiving PCNs. Subsequent to this, I have made contact with some of the parking enforcers from various other councils in an effort to organise a meeting with all the parking enforcement representatives from all the councils. Unfortunately, many of these are still on holiday, but I do expect a response on their return. Maybe if we get everyone in one place, we might be able to get some latitude in the issue of these tickets. As for you, congratulations on not receiving any parking tickets in 32 years - until now! So far as Westminster targeting us, I'd be surprised. I think all councils are just targeting everyone. In doing so and as taxi drivers, we are becoming increasingly more concerned when picking up passengers - especially in wheelchairs whether TaxiCard, through the system or as a street hiring, for fear of

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receiving a PCN. In my opinion, and I'm not a lawyer, if drivers refuse to pick up passengers with disabilities for whatever reason, they could be in breach of the Disability Discrimination Act. Now surely, if the Councils actions preclude drivers from picking up certain passengers, they must be answerable for those actions?

As for "vehicle was on hire," this is primarily for a hired vehicle - in other words should the owner of the vehicle receive a PCN, the notice can be referred to the driver. As for cycle lanes, I will have to consult with the Corporation of London.

Please note that you can make an informal challenge at any time within the first 28 days after the Penalty Charge Notice has been issued, but we advise you to make a challenge within the 14 day discount payment period. This means that if your challenge is rejected you will still be able to pay the PCN at the 50% discounted rate. If your challenge is successful, the PCN will be cancelled and no further action will be necessary.

You should also note that you do not need to pay the charge at the time of making an informal challenge.

As well as writing to Westminster Council, you can appeal online by log-

ging on to www3.westminster.gov.uk/forms/appealpcn.cfm.

Emission systems – which are the best?

Any chance of an article soon on emission systems, ie which garages are doing them, the costs, how long it takes and any driver recommendations? These are just a few of the questions that spring to mind. In all trade publications since the conversions started, there has been a paucity of information regarding this topic.

Jon Francis (A39)

Call Sign is sending out a reporter to ask our drivers for their views on the emission systems they have on their cabs. Answers in the next issue...Ed

Greenest taxi?

It was with interest that I read the article on "London's Greenest Taxi" as I have been a pioneer of gas taxis since the 1970s and the second owner to have an LPG taxi. In 1995 I bought the only CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) FX4 and am now driving an 2.3 LPG Metro. I phoned Malcolm Paice, Head of Operations of Computer Cab pic, and asked to see the SGS/PCO emissions print-out, proving their claim. Well I have never heard so much waffling! He said that I did not understand what was meant. Well, I can

tell him that I do understand what is meant by "greenest" (I have been to a number of conferences on the environment to understand what we are doing to it). "Greenest Taxi" means that it has the cleanest taxi emissions in London. If this is the case, is it not unreasonable to ask to see the figures to back up his claim - or have Computer Cab got something to hide? If he shows me his SGS figures, I will show him mine. If those of my taxi or any of the METROs, ECOs or JAYMICs are cleaner, I will ask the Advertising Standards to ask Computer Cab to rephrase the wording on the side of their taxi and any other printed matter as it would not be a true statement. In his article Malcolm then goes on to state that LPG is stable at 40p per litre. When I informed him that LPG is in fact 46.9 to 50 pence per litre, he said he pays only 40p but when I asked if I could fill up at 40p, he refused. Malcolm, what have you got to hide? I suggest he looks up the word "stable" in the Oxford English

Dictionary because LPG has not been "stable" at 40p for a long time.

Stanley M. Roth MITG (Y53)

When it comes to gas cabs, no one can really challenge Stan in knowing as much as anyone and more than most ...Ed



Tom Whitbread robbed at Roman Way

On Wednesday 22 August at around 13:36, a man walked into the Roman Way fitting depot. There were several drivers and fitters in the bay, but nobody challenged him because he looked like any other taxi driver. He was white, wearing jeans, a blue fleece, about 6ft 2in, greying hair and around 50 years old. He walked straight into Tom Whitbread's office.

Tom was in the office opposite, but mistakenly thought he saw a fitter with the man. Within 90 seconds the man had walked out again, still on his own. Tom takes up the story...

"I thought this strange so ran into my office and saw my coat on the back of the chair, I immediately checked for my wallet which was missing. I ran out into the estate shouting for Steve to follow me, chased up the road and grabbed the fellow, accusing him of stealing my wallet. He said he was just in there to see someone. When I said it was my office, he said that he was going to ask for a job.

"At the same time I was on the phone to the police (999) and relaxed my grip on his

arm, he immediately seized the opportunity and jumped into a car that nobody had realised was his. Within seconds, he had started it and roared off down the private road, passing the fitting bay. When he reached the end, a lorry was unloading and blocked the road. He crashed into the tail bar, causing damage all along his Mondeo (registration number P448 NTU). He then swung the car around and started to come back up the road.

"I got a driver to put his car across the road to block it, but as the car got nearer, he pulled his car back. The thief, seeing his chance, crashed into the front of the car partially blocking his way and got through, then attempted to run me over before turning into Roman Way. At the same time police were entering from Mackenzie Road and chased down the road but lost him.

I immediately cancelled all my credit cards and waited for the police to return.

"That night my wife had booked for us to go and see Carmen Jones at the Royal Festival Hall. As I went up the steps to the entrance I tripped and fell. Then on the way

home on the bus, it pulled up at Moorgate Station and another bus crashed into the back. So now I am selling lucky white heather!

"The next morning, a postman phoned me to say that he had found my wallet in Canning Town with all its contents intact, but minus the money which I had drawn out of the bank to go out to the theatre. The postman said he thought I was famous because he had tracked me down via the internet having put my name into a search facility and was surprised at the number of entries for me – mainly from Call Sign.

"We would appreciate it if drivers attending Roman Way for work to their vehicles could wear their badge in a prominent position so that it can be easily seen by our staff. Failure to do so could delay any repairs while we carry out a check on your ID. There is a lot of valuable equipment at Roman Way and we cannot take chances."

The police are still looking for the car, if you see it please let Tom Whitbread know on 020 7607 6403

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TXII	Silver	Black	02	2002	£83
TXII	Silver	Platinum Silver	03	2003	£84
TXII	Bronze	Black	53	2003	£88
TXII	Silver	Black	03	2003	£90
TXII	Silver	Nightfire Red	53	2003	£91
TXII	Gold	Platinum Silver	02	2002	£98
TXII	Silver	Black	53	2003	£100
TXII	Silver	Midnight Blue	04	2004	£110
TXII	Silver	Platinum Silver	55	2005	£120

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