

April 2008



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

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NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

April sees the annual fare increase. On a £25 fare the increase is 4.1%. Below is the updated mileage chart, waiting time rates and run-ins etc.

Miles	T1	T2	T3
1	£ 4.00	£ 4.60	£ 5.20
2	£ 6.20	£ 7.20	£ 8.40
3	£ 8.40	£ 9.80	£ 11.80
4	£ 10.40	£ 12.60	£ 15.00
5	£ 12.60	£ 15.20	£ 18.40
6	£ 14.80	£ 17.80	£ 21.60
7	£ 17.80	£ 21.00	£ 24.60
8	£ 21.00	£ 24.00	£ 27.80
9	£ 24.00	£ 27.00	£ 30.80
10	£ 27.00	£ 30.20	£ 33.80
11	£ 30.20	£ 33.20	£ 37.00
12	£ 33.20	£ 36.20	£ 40.00
13	£ 36.20	£ 39.20	£ 43.00
14	£ 39.20	£ 42.40	£ 46.20
15	£ 42.40	£ 45.40	£ 49.20
16	£ 45.40	£ 48.40	£ 52.20
17	£ 48.40	£ 51.60	£ 55.40
18	£ 51.60	£ 54.60	£ 58.40
19	£ 54.60	£ 57.60	£ 61.40
20	£ 57.80	£ 60.80	£ 64.60
21	£ 60.80	£ 63.80	£ 67.60
22	£ 63.80	£ 66.80	£ 70.60
23	£ 66.80	£ 70.00	£ 73.80
24	£ 70.00	£ 73.00	£ 76.80
25	£ 73.00	£ 76.00	£ 79.80
26	£ 76.00	£ 79.20	£ 83.00
27	£ 79.20	£ 82.20	£ 86.00
28	£ 82.20	£ 85.20	£ 89.00
29	£ 85.20	£ 88.40	£ 92.20
30	£ 88.40	£ 91.40	£ 95.20
31	£ 91.40	£ 94.40	£ 98.20
32	£ 94.40	£ 97.60	£ 101.40

Miles	T1	T2	T3
33	£ 97.60	£ 100.60	£ 104.40
34	£ 100.60	£ 103.60	£ 107.40
35	£ 103.60	£ 106.80	£ 110.60
40	£ 119.00	£ 122.00	£ 125.80
45	£ 134.20	£ 137.40	£ 141.20
50	£ 149.60	£ 152.60	£ 156.60
55	£ 165.00	£ 168.00	£ 171.80
60	£ 180.20	£ 183.40	£ 187.20
65	£ 195.60	£ 198.60	£ 202.40
70	£ 211.00	£ 214.00	£ 217.80
75	£ 226.20	£ 229.40	£ 233.20
80	£ 241.60	£ 244.60	£ 248.40
85	£ 257.00	£ 260.00	£ 263.80
90	£ 272.20	£ 275.40	£ 279.20
95	£ 287.60	£ 290.60	£ 294.40
100	£ 302.80	£ 306.00	£ 309.80
110	£ 333.60	£ 336.60	£ 340.40
120	£ 364.20	£ 367.20	£ 371.00
130	£ 394.80	£ 398.00	£ 401.80
140	£ 425.60	£ 428.60	£ 432.40
150	£ 456.20	£ 459.20	£ 463.00
160	£ 486.80	£ 489.80	£ 493.80
170	£ 517.40	£ 520.60	£ 524.40
180	£ 548.20	£ 551.20	£ 555.00
190	£ 578.80	£ 581.80	£ 585.60
200	£ 609.40	£ 612.40	£ 616.40

To calculate extra mileage over 35 add -

Miles	T1	T2	T3
1	£ 3.20	£ 3.20	£ 3.20
2	£ 6.20	£ 6.20	£ 6.20
3	£ 9.20	£ 9.20	£ 9.20
4	£ 12.40	£ 12.40	£ 12.40

It is important not to exceed the run in on account jobs. Below is the time to a £4.20, £3.80 and £3.40 run in. The figures are very useful for Pre-Booked account jobs.

Run-in £4.20

T1 5:54m to 6:26m
T2 4:47m to 5:09m
T3 3:51m to 4:12m

Run-in £3.80

T1 4:50m to 5:22m
T2 3:55m to 4:21m
T3 3:09m to 3:30m

Run-in £3.40

T1 3:46m to 4:18m
T2 3:03m to 3:29m
T3 2:27m to 2:48m

Waiting time is:

T1 £ 22.36/hour (for 35:20m)
T2 £ 27.58/hour (for 35:20m)
T3 £ 34.28/hour (for 35:20m)

Then at the "Higher Rate" at £31.86/hour.

T1 first hour of waiting = £ 27.90
T2 first hour of waiting = £ 30.90
T3 first hour of waiting = £ 34.70
Subsequent hours on all 3 rates = £ 31.86

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

EVENT	VENUE	START	FINISH	Type
Daily Mail Ideal Home Show 08	Earls Court One & Two, Ground Level	14/03/2008	06/04/2008	Consumer
Doctor Who Exhibition	Museum Hall, Earls Court	20/03/2008	18/09/2008	Consumer
Due to insufficient space for the numerous small exhibitions on this month, please visit, www.nashsnumbers.co.uk for a complete list.				
Business Continuity, Risk Management Expo	ExCel	02/04/08	03/04/2008	trade
Careers & Jobs Live	ExCel	04/04/08	05/04/2008	public
HRD 2008	ExCel	15/04/08	17/04/2008	trade
OutsourceWorld Conference & Exhibition	ExCel	16/04/08	17/04/2008	trade
Salute	ExCel	19/04/08	19/04/2008	public
A Place in the Sun Live!	ExCel	25/04/08	27/04/2008	public
London Golf Show 2008	ExCel	25/04/08	27/04/2008	public
Business Startup	ExCel	25/04/08	26/04/2008	public/trade
Seni08 - The Combat Sports Show	ExCel	26/04/08	27/04/2008	public
RAW Wrestling London	O2 Venue	14/04/08	Only	Public
Smackdown WWE Superstars London	O2 Venue	15/04/08	Only	Public
Delirium	O2 Venue	17/04/08	19/04/08	Public
Dancing On Ice Live - The Tour 2008	O2 Venue	29/04/08	30/04/08	Public

Heathrow Terminal 5. At the time of submitting my copy (12/03/08) I did not have sufficient information to publish anything useful in this issue. However if you visit www.nashsnumbers.co.uk you will find some useful information on T5. PS whilst you are there, click on UID and register for even more information to help you every working day.

from the editor's desk

Wheelchair passengers

One of the main topics in recent *Mailshot* pages concerns the carriage of wheelchair passengers. Questions have come into **Call Sign** on most aspects of that part of our job – training, the use of restraining straps, wheelchair size, the loss of Dial-a-Cab's *W* attribute – which used to inform the driver that the passenger was in a wheelchair but has been ended by the *Disability Discrimination Act* – and also about insurance coverage.

I'm happy to pick up wheelchair users with the ramp that most TX2/TX4 cabs have. It's true that as **Keith Cain** points out in an answer to **Michael Beevor (N76)** in this issue, that placing a wheelchair into the taxi is part of the PCO driving test, but it is also a fact that many wheelchair users for their own reasons, do not want to be strapped in. Perhaps they are concerned about escape in case of an accident or quite possibly, just don't want to be seen as being a burden.

In the recent **Call Sign** trip to LTI's factory in Coventry, the question of wheelchairs came up and all 10 drivers agreed that they had never strapped any wheelchair passengers in and even stranger, that not one wheelchair-bound passenger had ever asked them to use the restrainers!

I phoned the longest established taxi insurance specialists, *The Westminster*, and asked Luke Robson about cover in the case of an accident.

After confirming the answers with another department, the situation is this; it is the driver's responsibility to tell wheelchair passengers that they should be strapped in for their own safety, just as it is the driver's responsibility to tell able-bodied passengers that they should use their seatbelt. That you informed them and they refused is a legitimate excuse in any claim, but of course that would involve the passenger agreeing with you.

If you have a wheelchair passenger in the cab and are involved in an accident where the passenger was injured – regardless of whether they were strapped in or not – their right to claim would be unaffected. If you had an accident putting the chair into or taking it out of the taxi and the passenger was injured, again they would be covered. If the chair fell onto your foot and you couldn't drive, you would not be covered any more than if you tripped getting out of the driver's compartment. If you were injured in an accident that wasn't your fault, then many insurance companies including *The Westminster*, would fight on your behalf to get compensation for personal injury in addition to damage to the cab. If you are injured with no other vehicle involved, then the only answer is a personal injury policy. I'm not sure how much the above helps because it solves nothing other than explaining the situation...

Elections

It isn't difficult to understand why Prime Minister Gordon Brown didn't want an election when he took over from Tony Blair. To get his party's apparent overspending under control, he introduces stealth taxes galore under the pretence that Labour has everything in order. From where I'm sitting, it doesn't



look that way – although in all fairness, I do not set myself up as any kind of expert in these matters, I'm just someone who drives a taxi and has the opportunity of telling anyone that reads this, what I'm thinking. And what I'm thinking is that Labour couldn't care less about us.

When Labour first came back into power in 1997, diesel was 54.9p a litre and it was put to the-then Chancellor Gordon Brown by **Call Sign** that London taxis were an important part of the transport system (no TfL back then) and that it wouldn't be too difficult to put us on a par with buses when it came to filling our cabs with diesel. They are subsidised, so why couldn't we be as well?

The request was thrown out as not being feasible due to the paperwork that would be involved, although what that paperwork would have involved was never explained to us.

As a result, we are now paying around 112p a litre – unless you are unfortunate enough to only have Texaco as an option, in which case you can add a few more pennies on – a note to Texaco, if you are Googling this why are your prices always more expensive than anyone else's at a time when prices are horrific anyway?

Then last year, the TX4 and late TX2s were banded with so-called gas-guzzlers* because those taxi owners went out and bought new cabs that took them up to Euro 4 spec and were punished by having their road tax put up from £215 to £300. The cabs that weren't up to Euro 4 had increases of £5 or £10. This magazine wrote in a complaint to the Treasury, mentioning that by ferrying people around who would otherwise have used their cars, surely we were helping to keep emissions down? This was recognised with a curt response saying that my points would be looked at, but that the increases were nothing to do with emissions, purely to do with newly formulated bands – of which the TX4 was in a high one. That leaves us in the ridiculous situation of the new TX4 costing far more in road tax than any of its predecessors from early TX2s down, because it is in a higher band having emissions of 226 grams per km whereas had there been fewer, we'd have been in a lower band – yet according to HM Treasury it has nothing to do with emissions!

Yet even that ridiculous situation has been well and truly beaten by the latest in stealth taxes – £950 first year road tax if you now buy

a new cab?

But Labour have no need to worry about the Tories current 15 point lead in the opinion polls. Sometime in 2009 there will be an election and we'll be given all the usual goodies in the budget before, so many will forget the disasters in between. What do you mean you won't!

Would the Tories be better? I doubt it, but when the party of the so-called working class seems to have lost its way – although apparently knowing exactly where they are going (or NOT going) so far as claiming expenses is concerned – our election system dictates that you should give other parties a chance to do better – whether any party could do worse is a moot point....

**Gas-guzzlers have been determined as vehicles emitting 225 or more grams per kilometer of Carbon Dioxide. The TX4 has 226 grams per km whilst older cabs have less.*

Cover up?

A DaC driver phoned me last week with an interesting point. He said that he was parked in Elgin Avenue eating a sandwich when a Parking Attendant (where have the wardens gone) asked him to move.

"He was very polite," the driver told me, "and it wasn't as though he tried to give me a sly PCN."

But the strange part was that also parked there was a motorcycle with a cover over it. Our driver asked the PA why he didn't give a ticket to the bike? According to the warden (there, I've said it), he wasn't allowed to issue a ticket to a vehicle that was covered up. So the driver has asked me to pass onto the Board a request for next Christmas of cab covers so that we can park anywhere! What? You don't believe we'd get away with it either?

Ah well... at least it's almost summer!

Sponsoring good causes

Some ground rules! **Call Sign** is – and always has been – happy to help in sponsorship for good causes. But sadly, we cannot help the world! Those ground rules are that we cannot just make donations; but if you are a driver, member of staff or linked to those two groups more than just sharing the same milkman and you are doing an event for charity, this magazine will sponsor you for £50 in exchange for a report on how you did, plus a photo – and no, not of the milkman! Over the years, this magazine has sponsored numerous people running marathons or lesser distances, some ultra-weird events and even a driver's daughter attempting a relay cross channel swim in this issue.

So yes, **Call Sign** is always ready to help sponsoring good causes, but only so long as the above ground rules are taken note of. Yes, I know I'm a heard-hearted so and so, but having been asked for a donation to help bring NASCAR racing to London, I thought I'd just stake my post into the ground!!!

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

Arbitrator required...

You will read elsewhere in the magazine that the Society has a vacancy for an Arbitrator. If you are interested and fulfil the criteria of having completed five years continuous service and of course are a member and not a journeyman, then you need to apply to Company Secretary Howard Pears to say that you would like to be considered by the membership to fill the vacancy.

In the meantime, you can if you wish send your CV to **Call Sign** magazine so that it might be printed and distributed to members. At a later date, a postal ballot will be held so that members can if they wish, select their chosen candidate. I believe there is more information available regarding this topic elsewhere in the magazine.

Is there going to be a downturn?

You cannot pick up a newspaper or turn on the radio or television without seeing or reading about the global recession that is going to take place and the financial difficulties the large banks are facing!

I must say it is all very worrying and there is not any doubt in my mind that the situation is made worse by the media frightening members of the public regarding talk of any downturn or indeed recession.

Consequently, members of the public then become very nervous and cut back on their expenditure, which then just exacerbates the situation.

It has always been said that when the USA sneezes, the UK catches a cold, however it would appear that the US are endeavouring to stem the tide by drastically reducing their interest rates, which hopefully will go some way to restoring confidence in members of the public.

As you can imagine, I am watching our figures on a daily basis to see if there are any signs in our business of a slow down in the economy, because as you are aware we are generally one of the first businesses to be affected by any downturn. But I am delighted to say that at the present moment our business is holding up extremely well.

Whilst we are not experiencing the huge amount of growth that we have experienced in recent times, we are at least maintaining the status quo, which I am extremely pleased about. We are just short of halfway through our financial year and our turnover has increased by £1.25million over the equivalent period during the last financial year. That represents an increase of just under 6%.

I'm sure you will agree that if current business levels can be maintained, then we should have another good year with turnover increasing yet again over last year, which is a good sign not just for us, but for our economy in general.

It is always advantageous in any business



not to have any debt that you need to service, especially when trading becomes a little slower - even though it hasn't at the moment. But as I'm sure you are aware, Dial-a-Cab does not have a debt to service and your business is in good shape.

Finally on this topic; whilst you are all capable of forming your own opinions regarding general trading conditions and the state of the economy, we as a business have not experienced any downturn to date and I hope that goes just a little way to help dispel the doom and gloom that surrounds us.

Mayoral Elections

This is probably the last issue of **Call Sign** you will receive before the Mayoral Elections take place in May. If the pundits are to be believed, then this will probably be the closest fought election we have experienced. I think it would be fair to say that the next Mayor will be either Boris or Ken, with all other candidates finishing well below these two.

Obviously public turnout for the election will have a big part to play, as in previous

years fewer than 40% of voters bothered voting. What is also quite a surprising statistic is that less than seven thousand taxi drivers live in the catchment area for the election and so are eligible to vote. I know that statistic to be true as I was told it by Steven Norris, who incidentally is a big supporter of Boris Johnson and would have in my opinion made an excellent Mayor himself - and politicians do not normally get their statistics wrong - do they?

What I find particularly fascinating is that as a trade, we have experienced more increases and variation in tariffs under Ken than I can remember, yet I do not know anyone in our trade that has a good word to say about him and that is quite strange. It just shows what image and profile can achieve.

However, you have to say that Ken appears to be made of Teflon, as nothing seems to stick and he really has had some adverse publicity of late regarding funds that have been distributed - or not, as the case may be - by City Hall.

Finally to Boris who I believe to be an extremely intelligent man who likes to portray himself as a buffoon; whether or not he will make a good Mayor, I have absolutely no idea - the same as anyone else. We will have to wait and see, just like the remainder of the electorate, to experience what transpires should Boris become Mayor. One of the first things he should do is get that haircut sorted - what do you mean I'm jealous because he has more than me!

Anyway, good luck to all candidates in the election. I'll tell you who I supported once the results have been announced - and yes, I bet I did support the winner!

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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

Telephone: 020 8735 9770

H U B B A R D
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DID THE EARTH MOVE FOR YOU DARLING?

Earthquake at DaC!



Curls in the dispatch box (with Doug Terenzio)

Wednesday 27 February was just another day – or should that be night – in the life of Dial-a-Cab Assistant Night Shift Controller, Curls Villiers. But that changed at precisely 12.56am when forces that were in excess of those unleashed by the Nagasaki atomic bomb in 1945, unleashed them-

selves somewhere to the north of Dial-a-Cab House.

A 5.2 magnitude earthquake, whose epicentre was 12.4 miles beneath the small market town of Market Rasen in Lincolnshire, had sent its ripples throughout much of the country – and that included East Road N1...!

Curls told *Call Sign*:

"It was just after five minutes to one in the morning and suddenly the tables began shaking. At first I thought it was an evening dispatcher starting up his motor bike, but of course we are far too high up for that to cause tables to shake. Then someone asked me if I felt it and I could see calltakers looking at each other – all obviously wondering whether our new building had slipped off its perch!"

And drivers?

"Yes," said Curls, **"several felt something because the texts began arriving all with similar messages – asking if the earth moved for me as well (darling). It's lucky I can take a joke!"**

Curls ended by saying that she realised it was an earthquake, but that after the initial shock the only downside was a sudden exit to the DaC toilets for several calltakers!

UK tremors are not as uncommon as you'd think. Each year, the British Geological Survey records between 200 to 300 separate events although one as big as that Wednesday morning usually only occurs around every 8 years.

"That's a relief," said Curls, **"too many calltakers using the loo at the same time is bad for business...!"**

Vacancy for an Arbitrator



There is a vacancy for one DaC subscriber to become an Arbitrator.

Should you wish to put your name forward and you meet the minimum criteria of five consecutive years membership, then please apply in writing expressing your interest, to be received by me at

Dial-a-Cab House no later than first post

on Monday, 21 April 2008.

A postal ballot will then be conducted at a later date and the

candidate with the highest number of votes will be duly appointed.

Candidates wishing to send their CV for publication in *Call Sign* should send it to the Editor by Friday 18 April, keeping to a maximum of around 200 words.

If you have any queries regarding this process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Howard Pears
Company Secretary

CCTV Parking Tickets: Last Chance with Downing Street e-petition!

April 29 is the last chance to put your signature to DaC driver **Craig Barker's (096) Downing**

Street on-line petition. If you have had a ticket via CCTV for stopping during the course of your working day and you can't be bothered signing, then there will be no use complaining afterwards. Craig told *Call Sign*:

"More and more drivers are getting PCNs from Westminster Council's stealth smart cars with their fixed cameras. My brother Tony recently introduced me to the 10 Downing Street website and the section called e-petitions and we have set up a petition against receiving remotely issued parking tick-



ets. All you need is a computer, email address and two minutes of your time."

The link is

[http://petitions.
pm.gov.uk/CCTVfines](http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/CCTVfines)

"The more people that sign, the more notice the powers-that-be will take. Perhaps it may seem futile, but if you don't sign we will never know. At the very least it will again raise awareness of the problem in the corridors of Whitehall. And please pass on the message. The more signatures, the more chance of a solution..."

Don't forget, after April 29 there will be no point in saying that you meant to sign but forgot...

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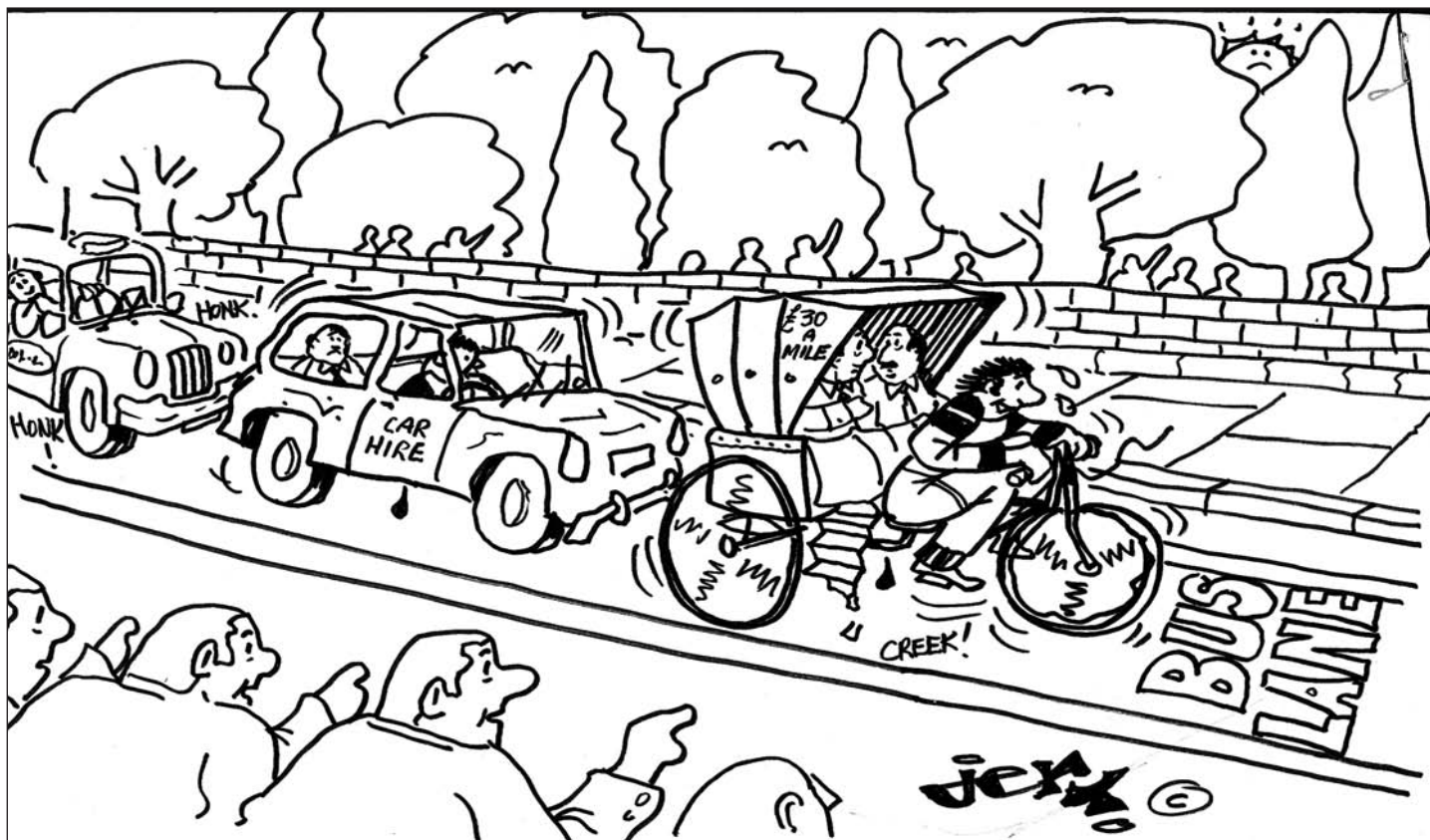
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Jery's World



"The Pedicab driver says Ken banned motorcyclists from bus lanes because they were taking up too much room and stopping the rest of us getting on.."

Motorcyclists Banned From Bus Lanes

An experimental period allowing motorcyclists to share bus and taxi lanes with ordinary pedal cyclists has ended with a *Transport for London* report that had looked into the possibility of opening up more of the capital's bus lanes to motorbikes concluding that there is no clear evidence of significant safety benefits to motorcyclists, while pointing towards potentially increased risks for cyclists and pedestrians.



Mayor Ken Livingstone said: "I am not opposed to the principle of allowing motorcycles in bus lanes if there is a clear safety benefit for all road users, but the final published report shows only a very small safety benefit for motorcyclists against a larger disbenefit for other vulnerable road users. On this basis, I do not propose to further allow motorcyclists to use bus lanes."

TfL Managing Director of Surface Transport, David Brown added: "We undertook this trial to see if we could improve road safety for all road users including pedestrians and cyclists. The results to date do not support a change in policy in this area."

Conservative Mayoral candidate Boris Johnson was one who supported the principle of motorcyclists in bus lanes and he accused Mayor Livingstone of deliberately withholding the report and then "actively trying to interfere with the findings."

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Cab Parking Tickets and Taxicards

Now UK parking expert Barrie Segal gives his support to DaC

Many PCNs issued to Dial-a-Cab drivers seem to come while drivers are on a TaxiCard trip and we are getting more and more letters from drivers who are fighting back by appealing against the tickets, even though they could have taken the easy option and just claimed the money back from DaC.



Another DaC Driver gets a PCN
Inset Barrie Segal the UK's No 1 PCN expert



The fight is hotting up! If you leave your cab in a no parking zone to get a sandwich and get caught, you can blame no one. But if it involves a TaxiCard user, let **Call Sign** know and we'll pass it over to Barrie Segal. If you have your own parking problem

away from DaC, take a look at Barrie's website - **AppealNow.com** - it has helped thousands of motorists.

**The Parking Ticket Awards: Crazy Councils, Meter Madness & Traffic Warden Hell (£6.99) is available from Amazon and most good book shops. Or go to www.appeal-now.com/mybook and get 30% off. Judy Finnegan on Richard & Judy described the book as: "... this hilarious new book. It exposes the most ridiculous fines ever shoved under drivers' windscreen wipers."*

Figures from the *Parking and Traffic Appeals Service* for 2006/7 showed that from a total of 51,484 appeals in London from all parking offences, 38,579 were successful - over two thirds.

But now **Call Sign** has received a letter from the UK's undoubted champion of those who believe that many PCNs are unfair, **Barrie Segal**. Barrie, whose voice is well known through numerous radio interviews and phone-ins talking on how the motorist is unfairly treated by councils and their PCNs, is the founder of **AppealNow.com** (tm) and the author of ***The Parking Ticket Awards: Crazy Councils, Meter Madness & Traffic Warden Hell**. His book brilliantly describes the sheer lunacy of traffic wardens! You cannot help but laugh!

Barrie has submitted evidence on parking matters to both the *London Assembly* and the *Parliamentary Transport Committee on Parking*. He also regularly represents clients before the *Parking Adjudicator*.

While in a taxi, Barrie heard of our problems via the driver and remembering his late mother who was a delighted TaxiCard user, he wrote to **Call Sign**:

"I was outraged to hear from a taxi driver that when your drivers wait to pick up Westminster TaxiCard users, some of them get parking tickets from Westminster Council! This is absolute madness. Doesn't the council realise that the TaxiCard is issued to people who have mobility problems and that drivers have to wait for the people to enable them to get from their flat or house to the cab? Often your drivers have to escort the TaxiCard users to the cab. For them to be issued with parking tickets in these circumstances is a disgrace.

"I know from personal experience that the TaxiCard is a vital lifeline to many people with mobility problems. My late mother was given a TaxiCard when she was no longer able to get around and using the service made an enormous difference for her. The drivers were always charming, kind and helpful and always escorted my mother to the door to make sure she was all right.

"I am hopping mad that this kindness is being rewarded by the rapacious issue of parking tickets. You have my complete support in your fight and, for my part, will do everything I can to get Westminster Council's policies on this matter changed."

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London Speciality*

Many older Dial-a-Cab drivers will have spent some of their younger days bopping at The Astoria theatre in Charing Cross Road before it became a cinema and much later, reverting to its roots with many modern day bands playing there.

But perhaps its most famous incident came in February 1957. **Elvis** was 4 weeks away from joining the US army, the charts were filled with stories of teen love. **Tab Hunter's** Young Love was perched at number one with **Pat Boone** at two with Don't Forbid Me. But coming up on the rails were a group that had made their name via a controversial movie called **Blackboard Jungle**. **Bill Haley and the Comets** were shooting up the top ten with Don't Knock the Rock having previously made Rock Around the Clock into a hit that was to last forever. Haley's group were bringing with them a new type of great music called **rock n'roll** – not so great was the violence that seemed to follow it. Now Bill Haley was coming to play a concert at The Dominion in Tottenham Court Road followed the next night but one across the road at The Astoria.

His arrival at Waterloo Station turned

Astoria closes its doors for Crossrail

And its memories will be lost forever...



Bill Hayley and the Comets - their memory makes way for Crossrail

into a riot and was dubbed the **Second Battle of Waterloo!** While the Dominion show – there were no gigs in those days

- wasn't quite so bad, many young people were injured when the theatre's seats were ripped out and thrown! The Astoria promptly cancelled their show provoking yet another riot outside its doors.

Things got much quieter when the theatre became a cinema sporting the country's "biggest screen ever" with its **Cinerama** presentation.

Now The Astoria is to shut its doors for ever to make way for a new **Crossrail** station that will be built between Great Chapel St and Charing Cross Road and be linked into Tottenham Court Road Station. A new concert hall within the station is planned but it just won't be The Astoria!

DIAL-A-CAB AND THE RAYMOND REVUEBAR PORN EMPIRE!

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One side saw details of Paul Raymond's porn empire...while the other showed ODRTS contact details!

With the recent death of porn magnate, **Paul Raymond**, **Dial-a-Cab** has seen an era close that it might not have been too overly proud of and possibly prefer to have remained buried in the dim and distant past.

Paul Raymond undoubtedly took pornography away from back street dives and into the comfort of his swish *Soho Raymond Revuebar* in Brewer Street and *Celebrity Club* in Clifford Street. Just on admission fees alone, Paul Raymond earned half a million pounds by 1965. It was around that time that Dial-a-Cab - or **ODRTS** as it was then - became involved.

Including the Revuebar, his porn empire including magazines *Men Only*, *Razzle* and many others, eventually made him a multi-millionaire and property tycoon - a field he successfully entered into later on. But the one thing he craved but could never get was social acceptance. He tried many ways of being accepted into society circles, but could never escape the porn label around his neck.

But there was one way of moving just a little bit closer – one that involved ODRTS...

In 1967, London taxi drivers who had picked up passengers looking for some "late night entertainment" knew exactly what those passengers meant and took them to one of many clubs in the west end that offered sizable commission to drivers.

London wasn't that busy, even though we were in the midst of the so-called swinging sixties. That included ODRTS where although nowhere near a dangerous situation, found it difficult to come across spare money. That at a time when the ODRTS under the Chairmanship of **Jack Russell** - nowadays a sprightly youngster of 92 – wanted to give out new hand out cards featuring our phone number.

Whilst we have no record of who it was that approached the Paul Raymond empire, it is a matter of fact that someone did and that the Raymond Revuebar offered to sponsor ODRTS with our advertising hand out cards. One side of the card gave the phone number of ODRTS whilst on the other, there was a photo of a young lady obviously wearing just a fur wrap with nothing underneath together with details of the Paul Raymond empire.

We can have no way of knowing how much that advertising helped or otherwise, but ODRTS has successfully grown into Dial-a-Cab and has now outlasted the porn king himself, Paul Raymond. The fact that we are still here suggests that at the time, Mr Raymond's financial assistance was probably very welcome. And that must go down as a matter of fact.

Our condolences go to his family and (we think) our belated thanks...

During **Call Sign's** recent visit to LTI Vehicles in Coventry with a group of 10 drivers, the question was asked about the possibility of a hybrid taxi coming onto the market soon and how much it would cost?

Back in 2004, there was a rush of publicity when a London taxi was paraded as being the first hybrid cab. It was claimed that the cab could run on both diesel and electrical power, which would hopefully cut the pollution of the (then) current model TX2 by up to 90%.

It was claimed that the new *Hybrid Electric Vehicle* could go further and accelerate faster than the TX2.

It worked via a built-in computer that "knew" when to switch between power sources "depending on the demands made by the driver." The taxi had been developed by engine designer Azure Dynamics and LTI with support from the Energy Saving Trust and the Department for Transport.

In reality, LTI have always had different models running around on test and said at the time that seeing the one vehicle was no guarantee that a fleet was on the way. With an horrendous cost factor involved, any new moves were either disbanded or carried out without the glare of publicity.

In reality, there will probably be a TX5 by 2012 and a TX6 by 2015. What they will be officially called or what type of cabs they will be is a closely guarded secret.

But following the driver's question at Coventry, LTI has issued **Call Sign** with a

LTI Statement on Hybrid Taxis



In 2004, this hybrid taxi caused a sensation but now seems to have vanished

statement. It seems to have put paid to rumours concerning future engine suppliers...

"We are actively looking to develop a hybrid engine, but as discussed (at the Call Sign meeting) this cannot add any significant cost on to the vehicle. We would also stay with the same engine manufacturer VM Motori."

"The engineering challenge is to develop a hybrid taxi that is durable and works for the taxi duty cycle - this is very different than a












car duty cycle.

"While we had developed some prototype vehicles over four years ago and undertaken other research in the field, we are not yet ready at this point to make an announcement to the trade. Also any development programme would take around 2 years."

"In the long term, policy-makers want to cut carbon emissions and LTI is aware of our responsibility as a manufacturer to support this objective."

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Allen Togwell - My Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is a nasty word, but like winter, is a fact of life. In winter most men service their car against the possibility of it breaking down. How many apply the same attitude towards their health?

Every so often articles are written in the press about prostate cancer, usually by prominent people who have been diagnosed with the disease and because of the suffering and ordeal they had gone through are praised for their bravery in making it public. As someone who has experienced prostate cancer myself, I honestly believe that publishing negative articles emphasising suffering and ordeal does absolutely nothing to encourage more men into having regular checks for early detection of this disease and thereby reducing the fatality rate.

Frightening men into taking action most certainly won't work as it is an accepted fact that most men are cowards when it comes to health, even my own friends when I mention the subject, tell me they would prefer not to know.

With the Internet now available to many, a considerable amount of professional information is obtainable including the positive experiences of individuals. In the USA, health authorities recommend routine screening for men over 45, however in Britain PSA (prostate specific antigen) tests are not encouraged for one simple reason – the cost to the NHS. They would rather wait until you need costly surgery or treatment than taking pre-emptive tests. Yet surprisingly, if you go to your GP enquiring about your cholesterol, you will be sent for a blood test immediately without question.

My experience with prostate cancer initially began 17 years ago when I suddenly noticed blood in my urine. Rather than wait months to see someone on the NHS, I paid £80 to see a specialist privately and within a week was having a simple rectal examination to see if the prostate was enlarged followed by a (PSA) blood test. A few days later I received a call to say everything was normal. The reason for the blood was a mystery and still is. One theory was a burst blood vessel in my bladder, very much like a nosebleed. The specialist suggested I had a routine PSA test each year, which I did. On the fifth year after my original examination, I was told my PSA level was higher than it should be. What does that mean, I asked? The reply? It could possibly be cancer. Those very words to the ignorant of the subject – as I was then – scramble the brain. The temperature in the surgery which one moment was hot, suddenly became ice cold. My eyes, which were firmly fixed on the face of the specialist could see his mouth moving, but could hear not a word. I felt like I'd been told I had only 10 minutes to live, even though he only said it *could* be cancer and not that it was. Within weeks I was having body scans, transrectal ultrasound, followed by a biopsy which eventually confirmed my worst fears... yes, it was cancer.

Obviously it depends on the severity of the cancer, but it was at this point that had I been more rational or more knowledgeable of the disease, I would have stood back, taken stock, listened, asked questions, made notes, asked more questions from a different source if necessary and read all the literature available to a layman –



including the Internet had it been available. But I didn't, the very word cancer had me chasing up my own backside and wanting whatever treatment was available immediately.

I began with a course of hormone tablets that brought the PSA level down to normal. I could have stopped there but the specialist recommended I undertake a course of radiotherapy just to be absolutely sure, so I agreed and again failed to ask the multitude of questions that one should ask before undergoing treatment of this nature, such as the likelihood of short or long term side effects – extremely important, particularly as at that time a common side effect was impotence, which could have a profound effect on a sexually active relationship. Fortunately today with the advancements in treating this disease, the chances of becoming impotent is less likely to happen than twelve years ago.

There are 27,000 new cases of prostate cancer a year in the UK, with Britain having Europe's second highest mortality rate from it.

An estimated 2 million men in Britain over 50 probably have the disease, though only a very small percentage of that figure will actually die from it. In other words there are far more men than will die with prostate cancer than from it.

By having regular tests, I was able to catch my cancer early. So I would say to any man over 50, have a PSA test regularly each year. Typical symptoms of prostate cancer include passing urine more frequently, including during the night, blood in the urine or semen and pains in the pelvic region. However there are often no signs at all until the disease is advanced. To those men that are petrified of hospitals, needles, tests and the thought of undergoing radiotherapy etc there is absolutely no need. Whatever the failings of this Government in funding research into prostate cancer, it has no bearing on those that treat you. They are absolutely brilliant.

I was treated at Barts for my radiotherapy and whilst the first of 28 daily visits was somewhat daunting, the medical team and staff soon made me feel completely at ease. I was allocated a team of 6 radiologists, including a doctor, who were there to answer questions at any time of day even after the treatment ended. And the nurses were typical angels. Obviously it's easier if you have a sense of humour because dropping your trousers in front of a group of very attractive radiologists and nurses throws dignity straight out of the window!

The treatment itself is painless and takes two minutes once you have lined up on the machine. There are a few easy to cope with discomforts, for example you are advised to drink at least 2 pints of water before treatment as a full bladder makes it easier to treat the prostate without damaging other internal organs, so it doesn't pay to cheat. One problem as the treatment progresses

is the continuing desire to want to pee and the fear of wetting yourself whilst on the machine. So one remedy is a bag strapped to your leg with a tube attached to a heavy-duty condom that you keep affixed to your penis with self-adhesive sellotape. The day I was introduced to this appliance will stay in my mind forever!

I was in the hospital waiting room full of people, when a nurse called my name and in a booming voice asked me what size condom did I need, small, medium or large and then said she'd show me how to put it on!

The waiting room suddenly went quiet and with a silly grin and a clearing of throat I suggested we try medium. What followed was hilarious. Firstly the nurse had trouble getting the condom on because I was limp with embarrassment! She then called a colleague and between them (I'll refrain from going into detail) managed to get my appendage into a manageable state, but had forgotten that I should first be shaved so when they applied the double sided sellotape – a bit like fly paper – the tape became tangled with my hair and we spent the next half hour delicately trying to cut away the tape and most of my hair! Fortunately you no longer need the sellotape, the adhesive is already fixed to the condom. I'm sure with practise I could have got the hang of putting it on myself, but when the nurses said they would do it each time I arrived at the clinic, they were so obliging I couldn't really say no. One point of interest to those that have bladder problems, the wearing of these are ideal when travelling on long journeys and they can be purchased at most chemists.

So I repeat, with modern treatment the suffering of side effects from radiotherapy is a lot less likely than when I had it and to those that do experience for example, erectile dysfunction, there are various methods of treatment including, of course, Viagra. The treatment offered to me before Viagra was available was either a pump or injections. As eye watering as it may seem, but piercing the complete length of a half-inch needle into the side of your penis was simple and surprisingly didn't hurt. Although exactly how a man with a large stomach would cope hitting the target I can't say.

Like everything in life there is always a funny side as when I read the injection leaflet, which said should the erection last longer than 4 hours, go to the A&E! Wow I thought, assuming the user had the strength to walk after 4 hours! I could imagine being in a queue at the A&E enquiry desk trying to explain the problem. As for the pump, having tried it and knowing it works, I'd give it a try if only to experience the surprise result after a few extra pumps.

If the manner I've described my experience in seems a little flippant, it is because in my opinion that's exactly how prostate cancer – or any cancer for that matter – should be approached. Until men can discuss these problems as openly as talking about football, or can joke about it, going to the GP will be put off and the fatality figures will continue to grow. Remember, driving a cab and the inability to empty the bladder when nature calls can disguise what could be a very serious problem. Don't wait until that happens. You get your cab overhauled every year; do the same with your health.

**Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing**

It wasn't that long ago that you couldn't go onto the Knowledge of London until you were aged 21. In fact, you still cannot be licensed as a London taxi driver until you reach 21, but you can - should you wish - begin the KoL at the tender age of 18. And that is what Dial-a-Cab's youngest ever driver of either sex, **Natalia Shalom (A34)** did.

Natalia has been on DaC for over 6 months and will still not be 22 until the end of May! She got her licence in July 2007 and came to DaC just a few weeks later.

"I work well into the early hours and knew that it would be much safer to be on radio," Natalia told **Call Sign**, "so after speaking to many cabbies, I soon realised that Dial-a-Cab was the best circuit to join. In addition, my boyfriend Daniel Woodhouse (K84) joined several months earlier and also told me how good it was here. Now much of my work is on account."

To save any drivers asking, the lovely Natalia and ultra-lucky Daniel live together and Natalia seems pretty sure that their future will be tied up together!

In an era when the Knowledge seems to be taking an average according to the PCO of 3.5 years, Natalia completed it in just 2 months over 2 years. But what would draw an attractive, bubbly young girl into attempting such a difficult task? Daniel was on it and Natalia always helped by calling over with him, but driving a London taxi just didn't seem the type of career a young girl would look at.

"Everyone asks me that question," said Natalia. "Before he did the Knowledge, Daniel - who is 6 years older than Natalia - was a salesman at **M&O (London)** so I suppose it was a natural progression for him to think about the KoL, but I was in and out of jobs that gave me little or no satisfaction. Hairdressing and admin jobs can be very satisfying for some, but I just wanted something else. Wives and girlfriends of drivers I'd spoken to told me that the Knowledge wasn't for a young girl and neither was the end product. But I think that must have spurred me on!"

Natalia has no fearsome stories about the PCO, believing that they treated her fairly and in a pleasant way.

"I had my bad appearances and 'Ds' like everyone else, but on the whole I feel I was treated fairly. What the notorious Mr Finlay from the late 1960s and 70s would have made of an 18-year-old girl is anyone's guess! But Natalia was happy with her time on the KoL and delighted with the end result - including her acceptance on DaC.

Although Natalia often meets Daniel for a snack, they both work until the very early hours - sometimes as late as 4am. **Call Sign** wondered how safe she felt picking up 2 or 3 young lads at 2am who perhaps began acting a bit flash when realising they had a young, attractive female driver? And does she worry about her mode of dress for work? After all, a male driver wearing some kind of shorts

The Youngest Driver Ever on DaC

And it's a girl!



At 21 and 3 months Natalia became DaC's youngest-ever driver

might get stared at, but a young female cabbie wearing a skimpy top and miniskirt would present a totally different image.

"I've had very few problems," said Natalia, "although I do get some stares as people realise that their driver is a young girl! But I'm careful what clothes I go out

in. I work on the assumption that whatever I would wear to go out on a Saturday afternoon when I'm not working is ok to wear whilst driving the cab. But I wouldn't wear anything in the cab that I might wear for socialising on a Saturday evening, so no very low tops or miniskirts. But the bottom line is that because such a large proportion of my work is on account, I get few problems. I think it's also important to remember that most people are fine and so long as you are pleasant to them, there are no problems. I won't take any rubbish from passengers, but if I was really concerned about something, then I've got radio back-up..."

So, **Call Sign** wondered, when Natalia goes out on a Saturday evening and people ask what she does, are they surprised?

Natalia laughed. "I don't think I've ever met anyone who didn't know me, who hasn't been totally shocked when I say what I do! They just don't believe me!"

Well, **Call Sign** met her and we're still shocked...!



New GSM For M&O



M&O new GSM Nik Muge

London's M&O have appointed a new General Service Manager in **Nik Muge**. Aged 36, Nik brings with him over 20 years experience in the automotive industry having previously worked in the service and bodyshop operation for Volkswagen as After Sales Manager.

He told **Call Sign**: "I'm delighted to be given the opportunity to lead the service team at M&O. The taxi trade is a great industry with so many highly professional and hard working drivers dedicated to their trade. I'm especially looking forward to working on the redefined, next generation TX4. It is a superb iconic vehicle that is instantly recognisable the world over."

Peter Rigden, M&O General Manager added: "Nik is a skilled professional whose challenge will be to significantly improve our customer focus by bringing many 21st century practices to M&O. His experience and understanding of today's service marketplace means he is the perfect appointment to develop our business going forward."

In other news, **Mike Saunders** takes up the role of M&O's Dealer Relations Manager and will be focussed on the building and strengthening of business relationships with legislative bodies, major M&O London customers, external suppliers, sub-contractors and service dealers.

Buying a new cab

I have just been through what must be an owner-drivers most stressful period - the overhaul! However, this time I didn't just get an appointment with SGS and leave the rest to the garage, for the first time in my cab-driving life I brought a new cab – a TX4. I have over a number of years changed my cab, replacing a 4-year-old with a 2-year-old and with some success in selling the 4-year-old privately, then buying an unpassed cab through M&O and getting the garage to overhaul it without a warranty.

M&O have a huge storage facility from where you can choose a cab from one that they have in stock from part exchanges and 2 years ago they sold me a cab from the showroom at trade price. I had the intention of doing the same this year, but simply could not get an offer on my TX2. The market is saturated with TX2s and their trade price has hit rock bottom so no one is buying them at all. Having phoned around the country to gauge opinion, some dealers were telling me that they were sending TX2s to auction and getting them back unsold. Indeed a very worrying scenario. Obviously the reputation of the TX2 has put owners-drivers off and fleet owners are sticking to converted TX1s until TX4s become affordable.

Having realised that I had nothing to sell privately, I went to both M&O and KPM and the difference between them was staggering. Firstly I spoke to Ascots in Deptford and even though the salesman couldn't help me with a sale, he still took time to advise me on the different options I should try, which I thought was very good of him. I initially put an offer on a trade cab, a 55 TX2 silver with KPM at a fair price, however they were not interested in part-exchanging my 53 bronze. Again after realising I wasn't going to sell the 53 privately, I had to turn my thoughts to a new cab. Its pretty simple that if you can't sell your own cab, you will not be able to buy another. This didn't seem to matter to KPM who offered me £9,500 trade-in on my 53 against a new TX4 Silver. Spitting and feathers came to mind and I was told that they don't want any more TX2s sitting around the yard. The amount of credit I was expected to take on was shocking considering I was trading in a 4-year-old cab. It seemed to me that KPM were only interested in doing what suited them and weren't that bothered in doing a deal unless it was on their terms. Yes, I felt a little intimidated with the take it or leave it attitude, which I felt was coming from behind the sales exec who was sadly in the front line! My thoughts were turning to getting my 53 cab overhauled, staying freehold and saving up, when I drove up to M&O in Brewery Road. The attitude of the staff there was completely different and very understanding. I think they knew that the TX2 market had crashed and that someone had to prop it up. The sales exec offered me £13,000 trade in for my 53 - some £3500 more than KPM. Before agreeing to the M&O deal, I phoned KPM back and asked why they couldn't offer me £13,000 as well. I think it says it all when I was told that to them it didn't make any business sense, but being fair to KPM the sales executive told me that it was a very good deal and that I should take it. So I am now the

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 Drivers Views on Life and Everything...



proud owner of a brand new TX4 Bronze.

And the overhaul refund?

As I had previously booked an overhaul with PCO (Dublin branch), better known as SGS, for the trade 55 TX2 from KPM, I needed to arrange a cancellation and refund. I was surprised to be told they don't do refunds and that I had to write a letter for consideration to the PCO as if a refund was a kind of privilege. I had thought that the overhaul booking process was going far too easily and it was just a matter of time before a sprinkling of PCO negativity fell gently down on me. So even though I was legally entitled to a refund, I had to write the explanatory letter to the PCO. Then twice when phoning SGS, I got cut off and even whilst writing the letter, my full pen mysteriously ran out of ink! Indeed, when the

refund letter arrived through the letterbox and I opened it, I fully expected a big red boxing glove to pop out and punch me on the nose. Luckily for me that didn't happen!

I hadn't used KPM before for cab sales and I won't be using them in the future. I appreciated that M&O wanted to do a deal rather than leave me with nowhere to go in difficult circumstances. The new site in Brewery Road is very impressive and the staff were polite and keen to help. They arranged the overhaul, road tax, insurance certificate and the DaC equipment fitting. All I did was to drive in with the old cab and drive out in the new one. Thanks to them, it was extremely simple and very convenient. What's the TX4 like? I'll let you know next month...

If you want to get in touch, it's Richard Potter in the subject line to callsignmag@aol.com.

Richard Potter (T51)

Call Sign

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Dial-a-Cab driver Tony Arnold (F03) has to be without a shadow of doubt, the most widely travelled taxi driver in history when it comes to doing it in the cause of work!

In 2002 he took his cab to Beijing, China and then drove it all the way back to London in a paid trip to help publicise the Olympics. He followed that up with a trip to the Nigerian capital of Abuja to help train the local taxi drivers before going on to Ghana to continue teaching their cabbies!

With China and Africa conquered - surely enough for most - Tony's next trip saw him off to Rome, Seville and Valencia - where he addressed a taxi driver conference. But Australia!

Well yes, Tony has just returned from Oz after teaching their cabbies how to behave as real taxi drivers. He told **Call Sign** on his return...

"It was a great trip, but the training schedules and locations weren't ideal. It's a big country! Driver participation in Melbourne was also limited as many of the 400 or so attending my seminars were not fluent in English and neither were they members or affiliated to the associations that publicised the trip. They needed help to improve their driving skills because, quite simply, they are not very good.

"I will be returning to Australia at the end of the year having been offered a 5-week con-

DaC's Tony Trains Cabbies in OZ!



Tony in pensive mood following the first seminar, stands on top of Melbourne's tallest building the Eureka Tower

professional taxi service over there, it appears no one told them of my trip, although after returning back to blighty one OZ transport delegate did contact me. I partially blame myself for poor communications, but I had been assured that everything was in place - after all, these were the people that paid my fees and airfares to Oz in addition to being associated with the mainstream of taxis in Melbourne.

"We all know that the London taxi and driver is the safest and most professional in the world. Other countries need to sit up, learn and watch and be prepared to catch up on what is the finest taxi service in the world. When I return to Oz in December, believe me, they'll learn how to become taxi drivers as against driving a cab!

"Finally through Call Sign, can I thank Toyota for sponsoring me and for putting me in such a beautiful apartment. Without their assistance, any trip would have been in doubt."

tract and hopefully the publicity will have spread further and the response will go from just being ok to excellent! Local papers wrote of the exercise and whilst several ministers are attempting to provide a more thorough and

BUY NOW - PAY IN 2009

TX4 offer to improve emissions



Your chance to upgrade to a TX4 with no payments until 2009

One of LTI's leading taxi dealerships is set to clean up London's taxi fleet by offering all Fairway and Metrocab owner-drivers an exceptional part exchange offer.

Based on today's typical value of just £300 for an M-reg or older currently PCO licensed Fairway or Metrocab, M&O (London) is offering drivers up to ten times that amount in part exchange for a new 08-registered TX4. For a limited time only, drivers taking up this offer can expect to receive a huge £3,000 in part exchange together with an unprecedented buy now - pay in 2009 deal. M&O plan to scrap and have crushed all the old Fairways and Metrocabs they take in under this amazing deal.

Peter Rigden, General Manager at M&O told **Call Sign**:

"This strong offer gives London's licensed taxi owner drivers the opportunity to invest in a new, cleaner vehicle. Not only will they significantly reduce their emissions by exchanging their old Fairway or Metrocab for a new TX4, but they will be helping to provide London with an improved taxi service fit for the 21st century. Thanks to this incentive - a first for M&O - owning a TX4 has never been so affordable and with nothing to pay until 2009, we're expecting a huge uptake."

Manufactured by LTI Vehicles, the world famous TX4 is the latest incarnation born out of the renowned TX series. Purpose-built to the highest possible standards, the TX4's robust and Euro IV emissions compliant design is enhanced further with a number of added driver and passenger comfort features.

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Or call Steve Rogers (H82) on 07951 829959

After more than 40 years on ODRTS / Dial-a-Cab, **Brian Spiro (Dan 71J / ex-S90)**, has decided that enough is enough and although the only reason he has continued driving a taxi for so long is his love for being on DaC and the numerous friends he has made here, he says that the time has come to call it a day.

"I think the time has now come to move on and we're going to New Milton in Hampshire to live; that's around 10 miles from Bournemouth and just one mile from the New Forest. I'm not sure what I'll be doing there, but it's unlikely to have any connection to the taxi business. In fact I have even applied to a local Tesco store to see whether they have anything to suit someone thinking of retirement."

Will he miss the London cab trade?

"No," Brian answered decisively, "I won't, but what I will miss is Dial-a-Cab. I've made so many friends there over the years both in the fleet and on the Board. To me DaC **IS** the cab trade and if I'm not on that, then I won't miss the rest of the trade one bit. In fact, if it weren't for DaC I probably would have left the trade years ago. It may sound silly, but DaC was my family and I'm really going to miss it."

For the past year or so, Brian has been semi-retired after selling his cab and renting one, but that decision meant only driving three nights a week.

Brian Spiro: DaC Was My Life...



"Even then," added Brian, "I never had any problem doing my 40 trips a month."

Any lasting memories?

"Well," he mused, "as I've said, I'll miss everyone associated with the Society very much and I will still read **Call Sign** every

month - if my wife shows me how to download it! But there is one thing I am really proud of. Many years ago at a time when DaC were seemingly on the verge of extinction and we drivers were asked to forfeit two weeks money until things improved, some other drivers and myself were offered the chance to go to ComCab. We refused because DaC meant too much to us to allow it to vanish, so we chose to stay and fight for its survival. Its status now as the number one circuit is proof that our decision was justified. Now it has the best drivers and the best Board and that's as good a time to say goodbye as any!"

Brian didn't want his phone number given out in the magazine - "...I don't want to be bombarded by hundreds of beautiful women" - but if any of his EC5 friends are likely to be in the Bournemouth area and want to say hello, then the Editor has his number. Brian will be delighted to see you.

And from those of us that have to continue working, good luck Brian.

DAC-WEMBLEY STUCK IN LIMBO!

As they head towards the end of a season they would rather forget, **DaC-Wembley** seem to have resigned themselves to the limbo of mid-table obscurity in the *Cherry Red Combined Counties Premier Division*.

Following a deserved win at Guildford City, they slumped to taking just one point from the next 12 and slowly descending down the league. Out of all cup competitions and with no danger of relegation or getting anywhere close to runaway leaders Mersham, the **Call Sign** sponsored team on behalf of DaC seem to be going nowhere and just waiting for the next season to begin.

Their problems began when DaC driver and former Wembley FC goalkeeper **Lee Pearce (J71)** was suddenly transferred to rivals Bedfont Green after receiving a financial offer he felt he couldn't turn down. His new team, **Bedfont Green**, went on a winning run that included a 3 - 0 win at Dorking, dooming the home team to relegation whilst shooting them from a lowly 18th position in the league to a high of 7th. A run of 4 successive wins saw them score 15 goals while Lee let in one at the other end!

"I still want DaC-Wembley to do well," said Lee, "but Bedfont Green are my team now and I'm sure on this form that we are ready to make a promotion challenge next season."

It was just over 18 months ago that DaC-Wembley was on **BBC's Match of the Day** as they began their FA Cup run with BBC cameras covering their successful extra preliminary round FA Cup match. Every time a goal was scored, a Dial-a-Cab banner came into view! Former Spurs scoring hero **Garth Crooks** brought along the FA Cup for publicity and newspapers including **The Sun** ran photo shoots and there again was a DaC banner in full view!

Now, just 18 months on, that excitement has gone and for DaC-Wembley, the end of this season can't come quickly enough!



Just 18 months ago and DaC-Wembley were flying high with Brian Rice wishing them well before their F A Cup run. Lee Pearce stands next to him...

ALLEN TOGWELL ASKS...

Is your Society worth more than £10?

"How much do you value your society," is a question I have been compelled to ask on five occasions recently... and the answer is just ten quid! As little as ten pieces of silver is the amount some of



Human Rights Act 1998

Does CCTV contravene the Human Rights Act?

Bearing in mind the number of **Dial-a-Cab** drivers now being caught on CCTV and being fined for just doing their jobs, an interesting article appeared in a recent *Daily Telegraph* and was forwarded to **Call Sign** by DaC driver **Bernie Silver (G08)**.

The article concerned the south Devon council at *South Hams* and their decision not to install CCTV cameras into the area even though there has been an increase in anti-social behaviour, because it could contravene the *Human Rights Act*. Courtesy of *The Daily Telegraph*, we are republishing the article and make no comment other than to ask whether there is a difference between human rights in South Devon and that in London....?

COUNCIL RULES OUT 'UNLAWFUL' CCTV

Courtesy *Daily Telegraph*

A council has decided not to install CCTV cameras in a crime-ridden area on the grounds they would "contravene the Human Rights Act."

Over the past year, anti-social behaviour has soared in the *South Hams* area of south Devon. But the local authority claims that the cameras would breach people's right to a "private life."

The council's stand comes amid a number of complaints by residents in *Dartmouth*, Devon, about the rise in anti-social behaviour such as drunkenness and vandalism.

The council yesterday revealed it would prefer to tackle the problem by improving lighting and visibility in the problematic areas. It claims to have been told that CCTV would be an infringement of the *Human Rights Act* - stating that every member of the public has "a right to respect for their private and family life."

Nick Hodgson, head of property services for the district council said: "The council was advised that the use of CCTV could contravene the *Human Rights Act*. We also took advice from the police, who indicated the use of CCTV would not aid the legal process and was unlikely to help identify offenders. CCTV is only one of a number of measures to combat anti-social behaviour."

But the revelations angered local residents. Angela Pitman, mother-of-two from *Dartmouth*, said: "It's disgusting that the council prefer to think of the criminals and their human rights rather than ours. What about us, the people who live their lives by the law, who are the victims of anti-social behaviour nearly on a day-to-day basis?"

Dial-a-Cab
Travel in peace, arrive in one piece,
with the largest and most successful
radio taxi service in London.

2,500 mobiles

Female safety

DaC's new handout card designed in-house by Allen Togwell

and to those of you that are sincerely proud of your Society and understand the power of advertising, I would like to inform you that I have recently designed new tip-up seat ads and new give-away cards, which are available in the

members entrance at **Dial-a-Cab House** and also at **Roman Way**. Newly designed receipt pads will also be available soon.

Those of you that perhaps didn't think there was any harm in putting these £10 ads on your tip-up seats, please put them where they belong - in the refuse bin - and instead get a far better financial return by pointing to your DaC ad when a cash customer is in the back of your cab, give them one of our cards and tell them how much more convenient it is getting a cab from **Dial-a-Cab** rather than waiting on the street. Get their business card, pass it on to us and for that card we will pay you £20. Easypeasy and a dam sight more profitable than a one-off payment of ten quid...

Allen Togwell

DaC Marketing

allent@dialacab.co.uk

Obviously my comments are not aimed at all of you, thank goodness,

SOUTH LONDON TAXIS 10% DISCOUNT FOR DAC DRIVERS!

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

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

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

The night E14 almost sank!

Monday 10 March saw unusually high demands for the services of Dial-a-Cab taxis following heavy winds, with warnings of even worse to come and many account holders deciding to leave their cars at home and use cabs instead.

But according to the call centre, we were coping with the demand well. Then at around 5.50pm, two lorries collided in Blackwall Tunnel and both bores of the tunnel had to be closed. Terminal messages soon went out warning drivers to keep away from the tunnel entrance with hold-ups along the A12 reaching back to the Hackney Marshes exit and beyond. But it got much... much worse!

Before long, the backlash from the accident - involving a Volvo Tipper and a Renault Heavy Tractor Artic - spread to the McDonalds roundabout to the east of Limehouse Link, which in turn spread quickly, blocking every exit from the Island and causing total gridlock on it.

Providing a DaC service to that part of London became impossible, while rescuers using heavy cutting equipment attempted to free a trapped lorry driver inside the tunnel. He was taken by ambulance to hospital and the tunnel was closed for almost two hours during a rescue operation that involved ambulance, fire crews and police. The gridlock had by then reached Tower Bridge.

DaC drivers were sending horrendous terminal messages as warnings. **Lee Rowley (B66)** did 2 hours on West Ferry Road trying to leave the Island. Two hours! Then there was **Stephen Hodgson (H26)** who sent in a message that Manchester Road and Prestons Road were gridlocked and that nothing had moved for an hour. **Patrick Granger (Y20)** reported that for those lucky enough not to be trapped on the Island, East India Dock Road eastbound wasn't moving, while other drivers said that The Highway wasn't moving in either direction!



Perhaps it wouldn't have sunk, but it was carrying a lot of traffic!

As for our headline, we were told that there was no chance of the Island sinking no matter how many cars and lorries were on it! Ah well...!

The northbound tunnel was re-opened at 6.25pm and the south-bound tunnel cleared by 7.40pm.

SMILE



Keeping to its usual non-controversial ways, **Call Sign** says hello to those wonders of the female species - blondes!

A young ventriloquist was doing a show in Accrington. With his dummy on his knee, he began to go through his usual dumb blonde jokes when a blonde lady in the second row stood on her chair and started shouting:

"I've heard enough of your stupid blonde jokes," she screamed. "What makes you think you can stereotype women in that way? What does the colour of a person's hair have to do with her worth as a human being? It's people like you who keep women like me from being respected at work and in the community and from reaching our full potential as people. It's all because you and your kind continue to perpetuate discrimination against not only blondes, but women in general - and all in the name of humour."

The embarrassed ventriloquist began to apologise, but the blonde yelled: "You stay out of this. I'm talking to that little b****d on your lap...!"

An old, blind cowboy wandered into an all-girl biker bar by mistake and found his way to a bar stool where he ordered some coffee. After sitting there for a while, he yelled to a waiter: "Hey, you wanna hear a blonde joke?" The bar immediately fell silent. In a very deep, husky voice, the woman next to him said:

"Before you tell that joke, cowboy, I think it only fair, given that you are blind, that you should know five things:

1. The bartender is a blonde girl with a baseball bat.
2. The bouncer is a blonde girl with 27inch biceps.
3. I'm a 6-foot, 175-pound blonde woman with a black belt in karate.
4. The woman sitting next to me is blonde and a professional weightlifter.
5. The lady to your right is blonde and WWE professional women's wrestling champion.

Now, think about it seriously, Mister, do you still wanna tell that blonde joke?" The blind cowboy thought for a second, shook his head and muttered:

"No...not if I'm gonna have to explain it five times..."

THE SALIERI RESTAURANT

376 Strand, WC2

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

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

We are certain that you will be delighted



Please bring along your badge or Bill as ID

Salieri Restaurant

376 Strand, WC2

Reservations: 020 7836 1318

This year's *Mocatra Angling Open* saw a milestone in our history - the 60th anniversary of the competition since resuming in 1947 following the end of WW2. How fitting then that a long-standing record was broken on this important date. But more of that later...

The Open winner's trophy each year is the H.A.Thomas Memorial Trophy, a fine silver cup donated to Mocatra by the London General Cab Company. Reading down the inscriptions back to 1947, you discover that there were some very prolific anglers back then. Mr I.Barry won the Open five times between 1950-1966. They were the days when the competition was fished on the mid and upper Thames. In the early to mid eighties, Alan Hazelwood won it 4 times in a row, a very skilled angler whom I had the pleasure of fishing with over 15 years.

Over the past ten years, the competition has switched venues to lakes such as Gold Valley, Rayne Lodge and Monk Lake, while the winner's names are more varied these days. But we take great pride in the Mocatra Angling Society's long history.

Forty-five cab drivers and relatives arrived to take part in this year's Open and the top three lakes were booked. The sun was shining as the draw took place and Captain Dave Cronin - megaphone in hand - read out the rules. Meters were set for 10am and would stop at 4pm.

The lakes looked in pristine condition and fish were topping. A carp was caught while plumb up on a bare hook, which put everyone into good spirits!

The match began and the lads were into fish on their first casts, mostly around the 1lb mark with Mirror Carp, Fls, Barbie, Skimmers and the odd Chub being caught. Carp were coming in up to 8lb with Barbie giving a good account of themselves weighing in up to 3lb. There were enough fish to occupy most anglers all day and if the fish didn't, the banter certainly did!

The winner was **Graham Dack**, a previous winner and consistent framer with a weight of 176lb on Peg 57. Graham fished short pole with paste and caught steady all day.

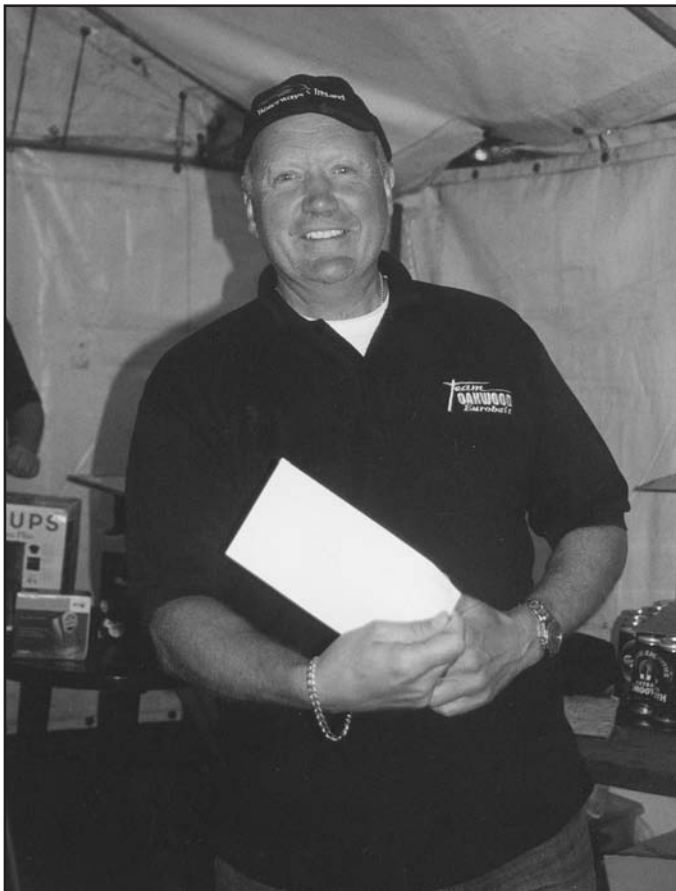
Runner up was last year's winner, **Bill Mariner (M80)** who fished long pole and corn. A quiet spell in the middle of the match followed by a storming last hour putting 1581lb on the scales from peg 55. Not quite enough to catch the winner though, but compensation came in the form of winning the **Dial-a-Cab shield**. Bill's son, David, also gave a good account of himself by finishing third with a weight of 154lb on short pole and corn from peg 18.

Coming in 4th was John Weedon with a hard days fishing weighing in at 148lb on peg 38. He fished long pole, short pole, down the edge, up in the water and on the bottom with pellets, paste and corn having to chase the fish all day to keep the bites coming. (*Ed's note: I was just going to ask about his poles and pellets...!*)

As for the individual prizes, the highest placed club member for the second year running was John Jones, just failing to frame with the big boys with a good mixed bag of fish caught on pellet and paste for 1281b.

CALL SIGN ANGLING

Jeff Clark (C25) reports on the Mocatra Open at Monk Lake, Maidstone



DaC's Bill Mariner - winner of the Dial-a-Cab Shield

wasting disease) causing him to be wheelchair bound. He is a member of Aspire Hotspur Powerchair FC and needed an attachment for his wheelchair to enable him to play in the team alongside others with similar disabilities. £500 was raised on the day to go towards the £750 needed, a big step in fulfilling Ryan's needs.

From all at Mocatra Angling Society we send a big thank you to Dial-a-Cab, LTDA, Halt, KPM and Doug Sherry. Without their support all this would not have been possible and thank you to all who came to Monk Lakes to fish. We hope you had a great day and look forward to seeing you all next year.

Special thanks to Fred Sykes for his help in compiling this report.

And that record I wrote of at the beginning of the report? The total weight caught was 3,836lb, a new Open record on our 60th anniversary!

KPM Taxis £100 prize for the biggest fish, was won by Andy Emilianu with an 81b Carp.

Mocatra's charity appeal this year was for a lad called Ryan O'Leary, aged 13. Ryan suffers from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (a muscle

Jeff Clark (C25)

2-BEDROOM SPANISH VILLA FOR RENT

Village of Pinar de Campoverde (nr Pilar de la Horadada)



- ★ Sleeps 4 - 6 ★ two bathrooms ★ upstairs terrace
- ★ communal pool ★ Sky TV

many local bars-restaurants – ideal golfing weekend – 9 courses within 30 mins (including Polaris World) – 20 mins Murcia airport – very clean villa

Prices from £225 (includes final clean) OR £199 golf weekend (Thurs-Mon)

Email john@sheridanj.freesevice.co.uk or phone John (E35) on 07866 943 469

As of **Monday 7 April**, the following change to E14C will be implemented.

It has become clear that at 6am when E140 closes and E14C opens, there is confusion as to who is correctly booked into the E14C rank and whether the drivers are in the correct Queue Position. As you know, the E14C rank is **physical** and at 6am drivers are either not in the correct order on the rank or simply not on the rank at all.

In an effort to improve the changeover period, we now propose to disable E140 and E14C at 05.50am and open up the E14C rank at 6am. During the ten-minute changeover period, work will be directed to E14.

This is how it will work...

Dispatchers will inform you that the E14C rank opens at 6am and that you must book into E14C in the correct order on the rank. When you have obtained the correct QP, you should turn on your hazard lights to inform the DaC driver immediately behind you that he can then book

Changes To E14...

Allan Evans looks at some changes to the E14 ranks



in. This will be monitored and should be self-policing once everyone has obtained his or her correct QP in the right order on the rank. If you are deemed to be out of sequence by the dispatchers, you will be sent a message to book off and allow the person in the correct order on the rank to book in.

This system worked for many years on EC5 and should stop any misunderstandings and arguments between drivers. Please work within the spirit of the Society. These guidelines are designed to make the process fair for everyone.

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer

Continued from March

Bad news, good news, bad news and more good news...!

Once again the prophets of doom and gloom can be seen and heard everywhere; on TV, radio and newspapers. And again the London cab trade is being hailed as the first harbinger of doom. We are held up as the first to go slack and sometime in the future, the first to be busy. Strangely enough this has always proven true in the past, so will it prove to be right at this time of credit crunches, redundancies and job losses in those major City institutions such as banks, insurance companies, stockbrokers, equity and finance houses that have provided the taxi trade with so much work. But will it have much effect on the London cab trade in general and the radio circuits in particular?

I'd like to tell you that it will have little, if any effect on our work... but that would be untrue. Any large-scale downturn, or even the threat of transatlantic cutbacks must have an effect on every type of business, including taxis.

Now for some good news! Most, if not all, of TfL's public transport network is regarded by the majority of London's working population as being so badly run, overcrowded, unsafe, unreliable and costly, that other forms of commuting to and from work could be seen as being preferable. Often, depending on the journey and those potential fares co-operating between themselves by hiring the same taxi, up to 5 of them can often make hiring a taxi more cost-effective, convenient and comfortable than travelling on public transport or trains - and safer! Other advantages to the hirers and accompanying passengers are that taxis are door to door, can run even when there are leaves on the road, it's raining, stormy, road or vehicle maintenance is being undertaken - and even if some taxis have been temporarily taken out of service! So all those apparently insurmountable obstacles that stop TfL public transport and trains from operating, don't stop the majority of taxis from working.

Another advantage is that a taxi, even when working at full capacity and carrying its full complement of passengers and luggage, still provides seats to all its passengers. No standing throughout the journey even though you've bought and paid a lot of money for the seat! But all these benefits have to be sold to com-

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

FIFTY GREEN YEARS...



In 1650 cabs were already at Temple Bar...

dog authorities, plus the lack of control over of lenders such as banks, mortgage, loans and credit card companies, so our taxi trade has to be ready and willing to change its ways of working if to continue providing workers with a decent living.

So remember, every job you broom off, every fare you turn down, may never ever come back to spend their money with the taxi trade again. There's also licensed private hire and illegals, whose numbers many including me expect to expand rapidly as difficult times approach.

But now for some really good news. Bad times have happened before and have even seen taxi businesses of various kinds suffer, some have gone out of business. So what is the good news, you ask? There have been

muters and only, in my opinion, can these multiple benefits of using taxis in preference to public transport be marketed and sold by radio circuits to actual and potential users. The radio circuits have the personnel, facilities, experience and expertise. They also possess varied and effective ways of communication to this vast market. As we face any downturn in taxi work caused by the growing economic woes, which have in my opinion been brought about by various factors including poor Western government economic management and in the UK by the Bank of England, FSA and several other so-called watch-

taxis since before the Romans started installing under floor central heating and public bathing. Even today, when man is seeking to travel further than the Moon and beyond Mars, we still have taxis operating in every country in the world where there are at least two, or more places with some form of road between them. In 1650 cabs were at Temple Bar and in 350 years time, they'll still be there...

Continued next month

Sunset Strip

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

Flashback
1967

At a time when DaC are distributing new hand-out cards, this month's Flashback goes back to 1967 and news of a new ODRTS hand-out card from 41 years ago + other bits and pieces from Joe Toff's Editorial...

From ODRTS News Magazine, May 1967...

EDITORIAL

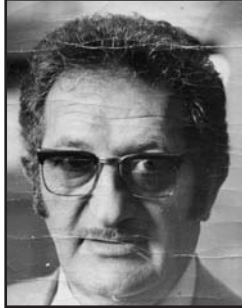
Gentlemen,

It is with personal regret that I learned of the death of one of our respected members, Harry Conway (A74). Further in this issue is a tribute to his memory.

Applicants have been interviewed for the position of Secretary/Book-keeper with this Society and the position has been offered to Mr. E. Ives (B65) on a month's trial. I'm sure we all wish him every success and best wishes.

The resignation of Bernie Lyons (B45) was recently tendered and regretfully accepted. Bernie has served this Society for many years as a Board Member and lots of his ideas were put into practice. I, personally, will miss him even if only it means me smoking more of my own cigarettes. Good luck to you, Bernie.

It is gratifying to know that during the last 12 months, our credit account customers have increased by over 40 per cent; this type of work is a source of revenue to us and has proved to be most acceptable to both customers and many of our drivers. Keep up the good work, gentlemen.



It has been brought to the notice of the B.O.M. that some drivers have been altering our hand out cards. This practice brings disrepute to this Society and stringent steps will be taken to stamp it out, so to whom it concerns, you have been warned. No excuse will be accepted and no consideration given.

Would any driver interested in "carding up" any area - particularly west and north west - please contact Martin Gelman (C47), our P.R.O. We all know the value of these hand out cards and they have proved one of the finest mediums of advertising our services. Martin assures me that people with fallen arches and flat feet will be given every consideration (they won't be given so many cards)! Now, gents, this is the opportunity you've been waiting for - how to get rid of that surplus fat in one foul swoop and also the disease of televisionitis!

It is regretted that in last month's issue of the magazine, A. J. Browning, Electrical Engineers of 312 Kilburn Lane, were inadvertently addressed as 32. Apologies are tendered to this advertiser who, incidentally, offers our members an excellent and reasonably priced service, and so handy to our Shirland Road office too.

So many rumours exist about rank telephones that it should be, again, made known that 6 telephone ranks have been saved with the co-operation of the British Legion (paying for four), Radio Taxis Southern (Mountview) paying for one and O.D.R.T.S. paying for one. This is a joint agreement and all three parties must be congratulated on their tenacity and foresight. I am sure other individual attempts are being or have been made and salutations to them also. The 6 phones in question are Baker Street, Warwick Avenue, Stamford Hill, Loampit Vale, London Bridge and Finsbury Park.

Joe Toff (B04) Editor

THE QUEEN OPENS TERMINAL 5



H.M. The Queen opened Heathrow's long-awaited Terminal 5 on Friday 14 March by claiming that it represented a "21st century gateway to Britain."

BAA told **Call Sign** that they were proud the new £4.3 billion terminal had been built on time and on budget. It opened for business on Thursday 27 March with a British Airways 747 inbound from Hong Kong and is the most modern air terminal anywhere with a maximum capacity of 30 million passengers a year - more than many airports get in total!

The new T5 site covers the area of Hyde Park and has 120 retail outlets, a 12,000 space multi-storey car park and a 600-room Sofitel hotel. There is a 3/4 mile long air-side road tunnel linking the complex to Terminal 3 that will be used for all airside operations.

Environmentalists claim that the new terminal will lead to more flights and more pollution.

PORTRAIT AND WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

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

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

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

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



Ask Dial-a-Cab's **Andrew O'Regan (B92)** what his 15-year old daughter **Ella** is doing in July while most of the country are on holiday and you'll get a surprising answer... she is going to be part of a team of youngsters who are swimming the English Channel.

Ella wrote to **Call Sign** on behalf of the **Clissold Swimming Club** asking whether we would consider being a sponsor for the club's Channel relay in July.

Ella is a member of the Hackney-based swimming club and they are currently trying to get enough sponsorship to help train for the channel relay. As a swimming club, they train for many hours and on top of that are having extra sessions for the Channel swim that will hopefully help their stamina for the long swim in icy cold water.

Ella told **Call Sign**: "We hold these sessions in the London Fields lido every Saturday morning. As a club we are situated in Clissold Leisure Centre although we also swim in

Dac Driver's Daughter in Cross Channel Swim



Some of the youngsters who are hoping to swim the channel

Kings Hall, Ironmonger Row and the Lido,

which are all local pools."

Ella finished by saying: "In order to complete the channel swim, we are holding a mock Channel relay on Saturday 29th March at Clissold Leisure Centre to practice for the real thing. The whole squad will have to swim 1,482 lengths in a 25-metre pool in order to reach 'France' and we are looking for sponsorship for this event. And DAC are our local circuit!"

Clissold are looking to raise £10.5K. If you'd like to help these youngsters in their goal, contact Anna Hart: 07977094330 or email channelswim@clissoldswimmingclub.org.uk.

DAC'S SECURITY MINISTER!

Many Dial-a-Cab drivers who work on an evening shift will know the happy face of security guard Francis Odutuyo. What you might not know is that besides working as a security guard, Francis is also a senior church Minister at the Solid Rock Gospel Church. The name of the church comes from belief that in Jesus Christ, on solid rock they stand.

At church services, in addition to reading from the Gospel, they have an excellent Gospel choir and also provide counselling for a range of problems, in addition to running classes on computer literacy.

Francis, who usually has a copy of the bible with him wherever he goes, is naturally religious but always happy to discuss his beliefs without forcibly pushing his views onto you.

He is married to Emily, who is also involved in the church. **Call Sign** asked whether women were treated as equals to men at the Solid Rock Gospel Church?

"Of course," said Francis, "when Jesus died for us, he saved men and women and we make no difference between the two sexes."

And why is he always smiling?

"Because Jesus is in my life, I have no worries. Why worry when you can pray?"

Francis and Emily have three children in John, Deborah and Peter.



Dac's Minister / Security guard Francis

Ken: "20's plenty to save lives!"

In a move that current Mayor Ken Livingstone hopes will help win him May's Mayoral election, he pledged that by 2010 he would halve the number of child deaths and serious injuries on London's roads.

The Mayor was visiting a London primary school and claimed that the policies he has put into action since taking over in 2000 meant around 500 fewer casualties a year than there would otherwise have been.

His plan to halve numbers include working with the boroughs to put 20mph speed limits on all residential roads and put into place more pedestrian crossings. Speaking of a reduction in deaths and injuries since he came to power of 40%, Mr Livingstone said:



"This is the result of comprehensive policies to support pedestrians, including more pedestrian crossings and giving pedestrians longer to cross at traffic lights – even if it means we have to wait a few seconds longer."

He continued by saying: **"To maintain real progress, my transport manifesto sets out a commitment to now deliver a 50% reduction in all casualties and a 50% reduction in under-16 child road casualties by 2010."**

According to TfL figures, close to 950 children were seriously injured or killed in 1998 but that figure had fallen to 400 by 2006.

No, Dial-a-Cab isn't facing any form of disaster, but it still needs a plan should the highly improbable scenario of everything at DaC House suddenly failing!

Anyone who has unexpectedly had their home PC crash on them will know how just inconvenient it can be. Multiply that problem many times, such as running a multi-million pound business like Dial-a-Cab's and the consequences are unthinkable!

Our major clients rely on us to get them from A to B, so the chance of lost bookings, lost billing info or lost communication with either clients or our mobile fleet is simply not an option we can afford to take.

So those Wizzkids in the DaC IT Department have come up with a comprehensive plan - the *Disaster Recovery Suite*. Now should any catastrophe befall Dial-a-Cab House, be it earthquake, burst water main or simply that we were denied access to our home for public safety reasons, our contingency plan would ensure that we can, in an emergency situation, continue to function from our remote site.

That remote site will be our Roman Way fitting bay where **Call Sign** caught up with some of the IT staff while they were testing the set-up prior to permanent installation as part of our *Business Continuity Plan*, which adheres to the BS 25999 standard.

Those collapsible tables, cushioned chairs and laptop notebooks will allow eight call takers to maintain our functionality following a disaster, while the hardware is to be housed safely in fireproof cabinets elsewhere in the building.

DaC Network Administrator Jon Winterburn told **Call Sign** that all aspects

THE DAC DISASTER RECOVERY SUITE!



Working on DaC's Recovery Suite L-R: Jason O'Brien Dana Thananjeyan and Jon Winterburn

of the Suite were designed for efficiency and staff comfort, meeting Health and Safety Executive requirements.

Every aspect of the DR systems was thoroughly tested at the time of our visit and will continue to be checked regularly on a monthly basis. There will also be continuous updates of data from the mainframe computers at DaC House to

the DR Suite to ensure data continuity.

In a business like ours, all these safeguards are necessary to protect our own business interests and to give confidence to our clients that we are a professionally thinking company with resources that can meet their demands... under any circumstances!

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POSH NOSH TOP TEN!

...according to the Good Food Guide London

For only the second time in its long history, **The Good Food Guide** has published a London edition detailing all the finest restaurants the capital can offer. The last time a London edition came out was way back in 1969.

Elizabeth Carter, Editor of **The Good Food Guide London**, told **Call Sign**:

"What's happened to London? The city is now buzzing with new ideas, new influences and an astonishing diversity of cuisines unmatched by any other capital city. There's no doubt that London is setting the pace right now. Standards have gone through the roof and the city is starting to compete with Paris, New York and Tokyo."

These are the top ten restaurants in London taken from the books top 40...

1. Gordon Ramsay, Chelsea; 2. Le Gavroche, Mayfair; 3. Pétrus, Knightsbridge; 4. The Square, Mayfair; 5. Pied à Terre, Fitzrovia; 6. Tom Aikens, Chelsea; 7. The Capital, Knightsbridge; 8. Maze, Mayfair; 9. Club Gascon, City; 10.

The Greenhouse, Green Park...

The Good Food Guide London can be ordered on 01903 828557 (£11.99, p&p free) or at www.which.co.uk/books or bought from bookshops.

Gordon Ramsay - top of the pile!



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Dial-a-Cab driver **Sid Nathan (K88)** recently visited his birthland of Israel and came back with a fascinating article from the *Jerusalem Post*. The head of a company called C.En (Clean Energy), **Moshe Stern**, claims to have come up with a revolutionary breakthrough that would allow motor vehicles to run on hydrogen power and according to him, at least one fuel company was concerned enough to offer him \$50million to shelve it!

London **Mayor Ken Livingstone** has already declared that within the next two years he wants 70 buses running on hydrogen with 10 of them – 5 fuel cell and 5 internal combustion – already running around our streets.

The fuel cell buses are powered by electrical energy, which is generated when hydrogen passes through the fuel cell. The hydrogen then forms with oxygen from the air to form water vapour as it enters the atmosphere. The hydrogen is stored in pressurised tanks on the roof of the bus. The five hydrogen internal combustion engine vehicles (H2ICE) will use a specialist ICE V10 engine, which is powered directly by hydrogen, again stored in tanks on the roof of the bus.

Hydrogen can be made from a number of different sources, including natural gas and the splitting of water into hydrogen and oxygen (electrolysis). The procurement process to secure a hydrogen-refuelling supplier for the project is well under way and TfL expects to have the provider secured soon.

While US President **George Bush** is said to be pumping billions of dollars into hydrogen development, there has been no real mention about automobiles using the power. Moshe Stern says that no matter how much money he is offered, nothing will divert his aim of knocking a hole in our dependence on OPEC for oil.

So is there a plot to keep hydrogen fuel away from the ordinary motorist? According to Microsoft's founder, Bill Gates, if General Motors had kept up with technology in the same way computers had "...we would all be driving around in \$25 cars that did 1000 miles to the gallon!"

The biggest problem that the fuel companies claim holds back hydrogen use in cars is getting the fuel into the car and then storing it for use as you drive. Liquid hydrogen – the most common form for those currently using it – is unstable and needs an ultra-strong, very heavy storage tank and that would mean a tank holding just 20 litres of fuel, taking you around 150 miles. That's where Moshe Stern's company claims to have come up with the answer.

C.En (Clean Energy) say they have safely developed a way of producing hydrogen gas collected from the environment rather than being produced via fossil fuels. The result is that the weight would be much less and could be contained in a thin, leakproof glass container.

Mr Stern told the *Jerusalem Post* that his firm could build a 60 litre tank that

Do Fuel Companies Want Hydrogen Technology?

Fifty million dollars says no...!



One of London's new hydrogen buses. Can the technology be transferred to cars and taxis?

could take the driver around 375 miles, yet weigh little more than 100 lbs. But even better, the hydrogen cell within the tank is very small and when running low you would pull out the empty cell from within the tank and replace it with a new one. Then the next time you see somewhere the fuel was sold, you would just buy a new spare.

Mr Stern's system is currently being

tested in Germany by the BAM Institute, which is responsible for the development of safety and reliability in chemistry and materials technology. If successful, he says he would need the backing of a superlarge company to push the product onto what he hopes will more than compensate the firm's decision to reject \$50million to drop the project. Time will tell...

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The magic of Dial-a-Cab and Eurostar together...

A former DaC subscriber recently told **Call Sign** about an early morning, nightmare hiring from the West End to Waterloo Station and how he subsequently found himself in court as a result of that hair-raising journey – as a witness for the police! We have agreed to keep his identity a secret...

Towards the end of September 2007 at around 05.30, the driver stopped in Shaftesbury Avenue for two well-dressed young men who asked for Waterloo. Only when on the south side of Westminster Bridge did they request the driver stop at a cashpoint. He then told them that having probably passed several ATM's along the route, it was a bit late as they were virtually at their destination! With almost 30 years experience of cab driving, the driver became suspicious that he might not get paid...

By now they were inside the station at the set-down whereupon the driver asked for the fare of £8.80. No money came and after several more unsuccessful requests from the driver for payment, he decided to take the passengers to another kind of station – Snow Hill police!

With cab doors firmly locked, they headed north and that's when all hell broke loose in the back of the 3-day old TX4. The passengers repeatedly kicked at the solid, one piece central division by bracing themselves against the rear seat and gripping the yellow handles secured to the door pillars. Simultaneously, they kicked and punched the door windows in an attempt to flee the cab, all the while verbally abusing the driver who was obviously concerned not only for his cab, but his personal safety too.

During his evidence at the *City of London Magistrates Court*, the driver paid tribute to the design and strength of the one piece central division and the protection it afforded him under an intense and prolonged attack. He had dialled 999 and requested the emergency operator to alert Snow Hill of his imminent arrival and pulling up outside the station, repeatedly sounded his horn - an action which brought no less than six officers tumbling out of the station. The drivers' frantic phone call was recorded by the emergency service, including the mayhem going on in the back, so the police had a good idea of what to expect at the cabs' arrival outside their door...

The two individuals were immediately arrested and each charged on three counts:

Using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with intent to cause fear of, or to provoke violence: Destroying or damaging property (value of damage £5000 or less – offence against Criminal Damage Act 1971 only): Using racially threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with intent to cause fear or provoke violence.

Considerable damage had been caused to the interior of the taxi during the short journey from Waterloo to Snow Hill, including deep score marks and scratches to the central division, deep scratches to the windows and even the 'blue lamp' hire light had been broken away from its fixing due to the ferocity of the attack. It was hanging by a wire when the police took photographs, which would later be produced in court as evidence.

On Friday, March 7th 2008 at the City of London Magistrates Court, the case was heard. Legal arguments from defence lawyers regarding *no case to answer* and *unlawful imprison-*

Three Day Old TX4 Vandalised

Call Sign at London Court Case...



ment (the locked cab doors) fell on deaf ears of the three judges who ruled that the case should proceed. And so it was that the cab driver found himself in the witness box, recounting his harrowing ordeal as part of his evidence for the prosecution. The police brought all the charges.

During intense cross-examination from the two defence lawyers, it came to light that the two men had over £96 on them at the time of the incident, thought that they were being abducted and were therefore trying to escape from the moving taxi. They accepted causing damage to the taxi in desperation to get out of the cab.

The taxi driver was in the witness box virtually all day and with the six police officers yet to give evidence, the case was adjourned until June with the two defendants given unconditional bail until that date.

Call Sign will be following this case to its conclusion...

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THE LTFUC NEEDS YOU!

To help AND have a fun day out...

Please join the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children on their 80th anniversary outing to Chessington World of Adventures.

Tuesday 13th May 2008 is the date of the outing and they need drivers to help make it a fun-packed and wonderful day out for the 200 special needs and disadvantaged children. As well as giving a great deal of pleasure to so many needy children, you will have a brilliant and fun-packed day out yourself. If you have never helped out before, the Fund promises to make you very welcome.

Without you there are no outings, so please contact their Drivers' Liaison Susan Angel on 07958 280881 or leave details on the Volunteer page of their website at www.ltfuc.org.uk. Remember: "None Walks so Tall as he who Stoops to Help a Child"



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Those of you that work mornings may have seen a fleet message from me berating a then unknown driver of a vehicle carrying our logo who, having chosen not to stop when hailed by me, then proceeded to give a hand signal that at best was confusing and at worst looked extremely offensive. The signal in question was a repetitive Z sign that from a distance was indicative of what adolescent boys with overactive hormones do when reaching puberty!

Had it been a non-radio cab I would have thought nothing more of it, but the fact the vehicle was carrying our logo and that I could so easily have been the MD of one of our most senior clients, the gesture could most certainly have jeopardized the account.

Had the driver remained anonymous, the incident would have gone unchallenged. Fortunately and I might add to the credit of the driver in question, contact was made to the office with an explanation and for the benefit of the Society, I am happy that the matter has been resolved. However, the explanation was interesting as it gave an insight into modern day hand signals (official or otherwise) that I will be better acquainted with in future should I ever encounter a similar incident to the following...

A cab was travelling north along City Road towards the Old Street roundabout. I was walking south on the opposite of the road, my destination being London Wall. I waved to the driver and after being acknowledged, signalled to the driver to do a U-turn. The driver then picked up speed and when I called out again,

Allen Togwell and a hand signal...



Not all hand signals are quite as understandable as this one!

I was greeted with what the driver later explained as being a Z sign, which in my ignorance apparently means one cannot do a U-turn when approaching a crossing. Although exactly how far away from a crossing this traf-

fic rule applies, I have yet to establish as I was not near a crossing. Neither do I have any idea how many cab drivers would adhere to such a rule had the person hailing the cab been surrounded by a stack of Louis Vuitton suitcases and flapping their arms indicating a trip to the flyers. I'm not suggesting for one moment that drivers should disobey the laws of the road; I'm simply being pragmatic. Plus in my 42 years of owning a Bill and 51 years since I passed my driving test, which was at a time when very few vehicles had electric indicators and hand signals were an integral part of that test, I and everybody I have spoken to including the *British School of Motoring*, have never heard of a zigzag hand signal.

Anyway, the matter has now been resolved, but in doing so and in an effort to prevent a similar incident from being possibly misunderstood by any of our clients in the future, can I suggest that any driver feeling the need to apply this zigzag sign be absolutely sure that the palm of the hand is firmly facing downwards. Thank you...

Allen Togwell

HAYLEY GOES FOR A RUN!

Hayley O'Connell has spent her complete working life with Dial-a-Cab. Starting straight from school at 16 as a call taker, she is now 21 and has moved up to – and enjoys – being a dispatcher.

Hayley is currently involved in the **Race for Life** at Old Deer Park, Richmond in May, where the park has set a joint target of raising £272,000 to help **Cancer Research UK's** ongoing – and winning – battle against cancer. The event is for women only and similar Race for Life events take place all across the UK.

"In addition to supporting the cancer charity, I am also running in memory of my Nan who, although she died from breast cancer when I was just 9, I still remember with love and I just want to do whatever small part I can to help defeat this awful illness."

Hayley will be competing with a group of friends and the promise is that they will be taking part dressed in something spectacular!

"I have a very artistic friend and I have no doubt that she will dress us all in something totally outrageous," said Hayley! "We hope to run the distance, but even if we have to walk or crawl, I promise we'll finish the course!"

Since the race inception in 1994, millions of women have raised over £200 million for Cancer Research UK's life-saving work from their Race for Life events. This year they hope to raise a total of £50million to support the work of their scientists, doctors and nurses in addition to help in finding new ways of preventing, diagnosing and treating cancer.

Almost two thirds of women diagnosed with breast cancer are now likely to survive for at least 20 years. When Race for Life first started, fewer than half could expect to survive this long.

The death rate from bowel cancer has dropped by over a quarter in the last 14 years. That's thanks to greater awareness, earlier detection and better treatments while incidence rate for cervical cancer has dropped by 30 per cent over the last ten years, largely due to screening. Cancer Research UK contributed to the development and improvement of cervical screening.

If you would like to help Hayley by sponsoring the amazing work of Cancer Research UK, go to their website at <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/> or make a cheque out to Cancer Research UK and leave it at DaC House for the attention of Hayley O'Connell at the Call Centre.



DaC Dispatcher Hayley O'Connell - doing the Race for Life

Is Vista there yet?

Microsoft's newest version of their operating system, Vista, has been out now for over a year and my past experiences with new technical releases has taught me to be patient and wait till the product has matured - unless I want to waste money and time. So given a year of maturity, I thought it was time to invest in a new 64 bit Vista PC - how I wished I'd waited even longer.

Regular readers of my column will know that I recommend buying HP/Compaq's refurbished or obsolete models from their eBay shop at <http://stores.ebay.co.uk/HP-Renew-Shop-UK>. Although my recent experience with them is not good, it's still a great place to bag a bargain.

So I won a 64 bit Vista Home Premium HP desktop PC for £422 including VAT with 600GB Hard drives, 2GB of RAM, 512MB Video Ram, etc - the usual high spec you expect from a quality HP PC. The problem was that it came with a 32 bit Vista operating system which I didn't want. 64 bit operating systems offer a wealth of improvements that are a must when restoring photos, so I wiped the hard drive and installed my own version of 64 bit Vista.

It all went extremely smoothly; in fact I was quite impressed how smooth it all went! The PC rebooted, I logged on and checked my settings; but there was no LAN network or Wireless connections, so I couldn't get onto the internet.

I checked the drivers provided and visited the website. After two days of searching, I gave up and on a Saturday afternoon I raised a support ticket with HP. Saturday evening I received this reply: *"I regret to inform that the WLAN and LAN drivers of*



Computer Chinchat from Vince Chin

64-bit Windows Vista Operating System for your PC are not available.

NOTE: HP does not recommend installing of a retail version Operating System, it cannot guarantee a high level of compatibility for all basic hardware and software components of the PCs. PC device drivers (including graphics, BIOS, chipset, etc) for some PC components may simply not be available."

Personally I feel this is unacceptable. If you sell a 64 bit PC, then you should supply 64 bit drivers for all the components. Shame on you HP...

Free software

We all like something free, especially when it comes to software. So when someone is giving away some free software legally, we all want to know about it, yes? Well, the website to visit is: <http://www.giveawayoftheday.com/> it's where vendors and software developers give away their software for a day. So far I've downloaded a Data Recovery software package and a DVD converter application, totally free of charge! I suggest visit-

ing it every day as I'm sure you'll find something useful... and free!

Back to the war...

Finally, a quick question for you historians: What was the most influential *Battle of Britain* aircraft? Wrong! It wasn't the flash, stylish Supermarine Spitfire, it was the workhorse Hawker Hurricane. The Air Ministry's statement: "The total number of enemy aircraft brought down by single-seater fighters was in the proportion of 3 by Hurricanes to 2 by Spitfires." It also noted: "The average proportion ... of serviceable (aircraft) each morning was approximately 63 percent Hurricanes and 37 percent Spitfires."

However, this is hotly disputed by Spitfire enthusiasts, but it makes excellent reading at: http://www.historynet.com/air_sea/aircraft/3033001.html?page=1&c=y.

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Vince Chin
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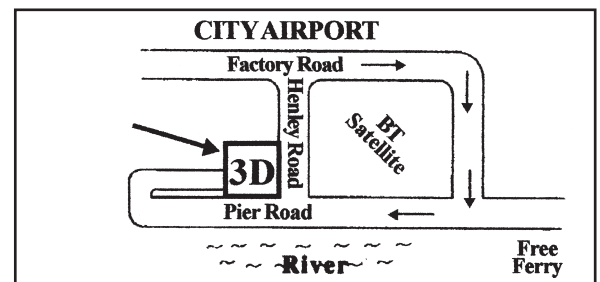
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I am a very fortunate person; apart from having had a wonderful upbringing, being married to a lovely wife and having had two smashing children who between them with their respective partners have presented us with two adorable grandchildren, I love music!

I play guitar, saxophone, piano accordion, piano (just a little) and the Jew's harp.

The accordion was the first instrument that I learnt to play, my teacher, Luigi, a superb accordionist and teacher was Italian and very impressed with my pronunciation of the Italian musical terms i.e. ADAGIO - did you hear that? And I'm English!

Also receiving lessons from Luigi was an extremely talented young man named Frank Riccotti, who went on to become one of the country's top young jazz musicians. He played many instruments, but specialised in percussion.

One Saturday evening in the late sixties, I was out with my best friend Ray who a few years later would become my brother-in-law. We were looking for somewhere to go when, who should drive by? Yes, you've got it, Frank Riccotti.

"Hello Frank, where are you going," we asked?

"Down Ronnies," he replied.

"Ok, see you down there," we called back. Our evening was now sorted; we jumped in a cab and arrived at Ronnies - which of course meant Ronnie Scotts - some twenty minutes

In 1968, Paul Tully (Y40) played in a band, played rugby for Haringey RFC and worked for his father in a betting shop. Although he didn't really mix with the musical fraternity, he knew a few musicians. Apparently not the legendary Horace Silver though...!

Things You Say That Could Cause Embarrassment!



The legendary American jazz pianist / composer Horace Silver

later. Headlining was Horace Silver and his quartet and the support act was the lovely **Marion Montgomery**.

There was an admission charge to get in, something we never thought about, but something that made us turn about and walk out! After a short debate and a rapid count-up, we paid the £3 each admission, walked in and approached the bar.

From where the bar was situated and with pints in hand, we were looking out across the very intimate club. The stage, occupied by Marion Montgomery and the band, was to the left and the club - spread out from left to right - looked very jazzy with dimly lit red lamps

on the tables.

For those of you that don't know, **Horace Silver** is a legendary American Jazz Pianist/composer.

At this particular time in my musical development, I had been having saxophone lessons for over two years and was saxophone and jazz mad.

Jazz mad? Yes, but I had never heard of Horace Silver. "Shame on you," I hear you say! Soon after Marion had finished her set, the great Horace Silver took to the stage; the music was just mesmerizing. The drummer was the best that I had ever seen or heard, the tenor saxophonist was brilliant and Horace was just Horace. Three cheers for Horace - hip hip Ho-race, hip hip Ho-race, hip hip Ho-race. I was standing there simply spellbound.

Ray and I were still standing at the bar during all this brilliance, when the Horace Silver quartet took a well-earned break. You will never believe what happened next; I still can't! Horace Silver, the legendary American jazz pianist/composer left the stage and walked up to where we were standing at the bar. I'm sure that everyone thought we knew him! We shook his hand, paid him several compliments on the performance and bought him a pint of lager. Then I asked Horace Silver, the legendary American jazz pianist/composer:

"How long have you been playing the saxophone..."

Paul Tully (Y40)

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Dial-a-Cab Board member Tom Whitbread has for many years been responsible for getting DaC drivers London theatre tickets – often for the best shows. So Call Sign asked him to review the current two hottest tickets in town – The Jersey Boys and Hairspray...

The Jersey Boys, Prince Edward Theatre, Old Compton Street...

I left home at 6:30pm giving us an hour to travel from Dalston to Charing Cross Road, but as usual with the help of Ken Livingstone and his 'improved transport system' I was still on the 38 bus at 7:30! Then at the theatre, I saw the sad spot where *Call Sign's* Editor had stood and paid for his tickets - the teardrops on the carpet hadn't dried out yet!

The show had started so we waited in the bar area watching on a TV screen until a short break in the proceedings. An usherette asked if I would allow another gentleman to go in first as his seat was further in towards the middle. I agreed as he was bigger than me and the audience could have a go at him for being late! It was only when looking at him again, I realised it was **Sir Tim Rice** who informed me he had also been held up in the traffic!

As we entered the auditorium, the music was captivating. I was a teenager when **Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons** began. Frankie had such a haunting voice - once heard you would never forget it. When the group was at its peak, I was in the merchant navy travelling between America and Australia - and both countries were playing Four Seasons records!

From the moment I heard the music, I was transported back to those carefree times as a teenager with songs that let you understand the words with clean, well-dressed singers. If you want a night of pure enjoyment, I urge you to go and see Ryan Molloy, Glann Carter, Stephen Ashfield, Philip Bulcock and the rest of the cast of The Jersey Boys. You'll get real value for money. The cast puts their heart and soul into giving a great performance that allows you to forget your problems and join a magical tour through the 1960s.

You'll leave the theatre with those great songs echoing through your mind! It is a show for all the family, although there is

Call Sign at the Jersey Boys and Hairspray



Oh what a night the Jersey Boys is!

some swearing that could upset young children or maiden aunts.

Hairspray, Shaftsbury Theatre, Shaftsbury Avenue...

Being a great lover of musicals, I was once again up at the front when *Hairspray* opened.

This show also has the music of the 60s; music you can understand and relate to, music that caresses your ears rather than batter them as though you'd gone 6 rounds with Mike Tyson!

The cast has been chosen carefully and slot in together like a well-made jigsaw, it's a joy to watch the bond between them.

Leanne Jones plays the part of Tracy Turnblad, a young lady who would love to become famous on the show *Any Dream Will Do*. Leanne is not the slimmest of girls and I do not say that in an unkind way! But boy has she got energy! Her amazing dancing and jumping around made me feel tired.

Michael Ball as Tracy's mother Edna began worrying me as he played her so convincingly! And we shouldn't forget Mel Smith - not the most handsome of men but the ideal person for a wonderful performance as Tracy's father.

Hairspray gets your feet tapping from the moment the curtain goes up and encourages you to get up and dance! Costumes showing fashions of the era are also mind-blowing! I tell you this because as many youngsters are rushing to see this show as those who were

around in the 60s.

I've been to many shows in the past two years - some good, some bad - but these two shows are really worth making the effort to go to and have a night out at with your partner or friend.

They will run as long as *The Lion King* or *We Will Rock You*. If you are asked by your passengers or friends what show they should go and see, tell them *The Jersey Boys* or *Hairspray* because Tom Whitbread, who is not a critic, recommends them both - and he has no reason to lie! And he is also scared of anyone over 5 feet 2 inches tall...

DAC CREDIT UNION AGM

The Dial-a-Cab Credit Union AGM will be held on Thursday 3 April at 2.30pm. The address is: Channelsea House, Canning Rd, Stratford E15.

Light refreshments will be provided and we hope to see you there...

John Riley K38



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APPEAL MEETING RESULT

An Appeals hearing took place on 18 March 2008. The result of the original Complaints hearing on Tuesday 8 January was upheld...

**Name/call sign
Russell Hall (G44)**

**Complaints
Rule 2
Rule 3**

**Original Sentence
4 weeks suspension
Expelled**

For the fifth time, *Call Sign* has organised a trip for Dial-a-Cab drivers to visit the LTI Vehicles factory at Holyhead Road, Coventry. It took place on 5 March and in addition to Editor Alan Fisher, saw drivers Daniel Andrews (O92), Paul Willet (V12), Paul Heatley (V09), Trevor Denton (Y18), John Dixon (B67), Mark Tiller (K90), Brian Fox (G35), Eddie Lambert (V37) and Gerry Dunn MBE (S84) taking a day off work.

The trip began and ended in the best possible way thanks to the wonderful sponsorship of Virgin Trains who sent us there and back *First Class*. There can be few better ways of travelling!

Arriving in Coventry an hour after leaving Euston and feeling content following a smoked salmon and scrambled egg breakfast on board the wonderful tilting train, LTI sent two new TX4s to pick the 10 drivers up and take them on the short ride to the factory. LTI *Government Affairs Manager*, **Richard Daniels**, then gave an introductory talk while the group had some coffee. Richard also introduced LTI's *International Marketing Development Director*, Matthew Cheyne, to give the *Call Sign* group an update of how the partnership with Geely in China was progressing. The first taxis to come off the Shanghai line are expected later this year and one of the pleasing things was hearing that the cost of parts could eventually come down thanks to the partnership.

Then came the part that most of the drivers had been waiting for – LTI's ongoing *Listening Group*. This gave those interested the opportunity to question **Trevor Hattersley MIMI**, the *Customer and Technical Support Manager* and the man who must know more about the workings of a London Taxi than anyone else on the planet! The drivers really dug deep so as not to waste the opportunity and the 90 minute session flew by with questions ranging from why some bulbs burn out quicker than others, to the explanation of why some TX4s make 'farting' noises (EGR valve breathing), to why there have been problems with radiators and turbo pipes (hopefully all sorted now). Trevor asked *Call Sign* to thank the DaC drivers for their input.

There were questions on squealing brakes, hybrid engines, more comfortable driver seats from DaC's 21 stone, 6foot 4inch driver Trevor Denton! And of course, why aren't the TX4 rear head-rests removable so that you can clean the window (in case passengers remove them and attack the driver).

Lunch followed, but our inquisitive drivers wouldn't allow Trevor to have

Another Call Sign Trip to LTI Coventry



Call Sign's 'listening group' at the LTI factory



Gerry Dunn is shown the door!

any peace and continued with the barrage of questions. Fortunately the *Customer and Technical Support Manager* didn't appear to mind!

Richard Daniels told *Call Sign*: "**We thought your group were excellent and the feedback on driver issues very useful.**"

Then it was a tour around the factory and it soon became apparent that a large proportion of the 350 or so people that work there were very proud of the TX4. It seems strange to find so many in one business that don't just use it to earn money, but actually take pride in the end result. It's easy to see why LTI Vehicles are such a well-respected business in Coventry in addition to being the UK's largest motor vehicle manufacturer.

Call Sign's tour began with a sheet of metal and moved around until the sheet – some two weeks on – became a polished London taxi ready for delivery to various different parts of the globe.

On behalf of all the DaC drivers,



Trevor Denton looks for a DaC terminal!

thanks once again to LTI Vehicles for a very informative day and pleasant lunch and also to Virgin Trains for sponsoring the trip.

The next trip will hopefully be towards the end of summer...

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**Covering London and the
Home Counties**

Dial-a-Cab driver, **Darren Dennis (W65)**, recently ran in the 27th **Brentwood half-marathon** to help raise funds for **St Francis Hospice** in Havering-atte-Bower, Essex. He also ran in memory of former DaC driver and Darren's good friend, **Colin Starr**.

He completed the run in just under 1 hour 58 minutes alongside his friends Dave and Robbie and their Hummer!!! - which helped to take some of the strain out of the 13.1mile course.

Darren told us: **"I'd like to thank Call Sign and all my other sponsors, especially the Grosvenor Gardens Cab Shelter for their help in raising around £500 for St Francis Hospice in Collier Row."**

St Francis' Hospice does much good work to help those with terminal illnesses, their aim being to alleviate suffering regardless of whether physical, emotional, social or spiritual so that they can give patients the best quality of life possible for however long that life may be. They care for more than 1,400 patients and their families each year at a cost

Darren's Half Marathon Run for Hospice



Darren (arm in the air) reaches the halfway mark

of around £5million, which ensures that loved ones get the care they need 24/7.

If you would like to make a donation, you

Saint Francis Hospice, Freepost, The Hall, Havering-atte-Bower, Romford, RM4 1BR.

can phone on 01708 723593 and their fundraising staff will help you to make an instant donation or you can send a cheque to:

Glasgow Taxis Visit DaC

Led by Chairman, Bill McIntosh and Secretary Robert Dunobie, a five-man party from north of the border came down to London to get a personal tour of Dial-a-Cab from Chairman Brian Rice.

The trip hadn't started off in the best way when their flight from Glasgow had to be diverted to Southend due to fog at London City Airport. They grabbed a lucky cabdriver and made the trip at a cost of £110 – including £8 the shrewd driver said he would have to pay for congestion charging. Of course DaC is outside the zone!

Originally, Glasgow's radio cabs were known as the Taxi Owners Association and by the 1990s there were several small radio taxi companies, who in 1997 created Glasgow Taxis by merging and forming a fleet that numbers close to 1000. It now operates as a driver's cooperative – very similar to DaC.

Now looking to update their *Raywood* system, they made enquiries about who or what would be their best bet to have a look at and even in and around Glasgow, the name of Brian Rice and Dial-a-Cab came up several times! So they hopped onto a flight and headed south!

After a visit lasting several hours, Bill McIntosh told **Call Sign**:

"We were hugely impressed with the sheer professionalism of Dial-a-Cab, their headquarters and they way their dispatch system is set up to meet customer needs. They have come a long way since my last visit and it is great to see a fellow co-operative flourish in the face of competition from circuits in the private sector."



Brian Rice with party from Glasgow Taxis

NOT THE LAST OF THE TAXICARDS!

If the name of Norman Clegg means nothing to you, then you must have been in a tiny minority of those who weren't captured by the charm of the long-running hit BBC comedy series, **The Last of the Summer Wine**.

Peter Sallis played Norman Clegg and starring alongside **Bill Owen** as Compo, **Michael Bates** as Cyril Blamire (later replaced by **Brian Wilde** as Foggy Dewhurst) and **Kathy Staff** as the incomparable Nora Batty!

Now almost retired from acting – although he is about to begin a UK tour called *An Audience with Peter Sallis* – Peter takes life somewhat easier than *Summer Wine* schedules allowed and is a frequent user of the **Westminster TaxiCard** (see cover pic).

Summer Wine first hit the TV screens in



January 1973, but that one-off episode tickled enough tastebuds to become a series by the following November and led to another 27! He also achieved huge fame in 1989 when voicing Wallace, of Wallace and Gromit fame. That included several movies as well.

Did he get bored playing Norman Clegg for so long?

Cleggy (left), Compo and Cyril from 1973

"Never," he says calmly, just as Norman Clegg would have. "How can you get bored with such wonderful characters, let alone it being set in such a wonderful place as Holmfirth!"

The programme's setting in Yorkshire's Holme Valley is now a tourist hotspot with the show's lovers constantly visiting it. But Peter is content in his Bayswater apartment.

"My eyes aren't as good as they once were," he explained to **Call Sign**, "but I know that whenever I phone up **Dial-a-Cab** to use my TaxiCard, I won't be let down. I think that both Dial-a-Cab and the TaxiCard are wonderful."



The Florida shaving fight - but the fighting is soon to turn real!

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

Kupkake's Korner

Ken the Kabby???

When Ken moves out
as he surely must,
he'll need a job
or he'll go bust.

He ain't got a trade
or a degree,
in fact he's worse
than you and me!

Oh I forgot,
he went to teachers college;
so perhaps he'll go
and do the Knowledge!

Can't you see him
in Penton Street,
suited and booted
shuffling his feet?

Waiting for his appearance
before the Chief of staff.
No security clearance?
That would be a laugh!

Out on his bike doing his runs
his helmet clamped on tight,
calling over with his chums
late into the night...

Then one day he'll get his Bill
and a Cabby he'll become,
then he'll know how it feels,
to work under a gun!

He'll wait behind a line of cabs
feeding into a station,
watching unchecked pirate scabs
exploiting the situation.

Just desserts for a man that's hurt
our trade like no predecessor,
maybe he'll don a horse hair shirt...
and repent - like Edward the Confessor!

Kupkake 2008

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 wrote it. Their names have been changed, but any photos are genuine.

Jenny suspects Sam of seeing another women but still loves him. They meet up in Florida with 2 friends...

L♥ve On the Internet

Continued from March

I know that distance can be bad for a relationship, especially for a young man. I know what loneliness can do to you...

Sheila and I picked up our rental car - a red convertible so we could enjoy the Florida sun. We drove towards South Beach, but I was so nervous at seeing Sam again that I was driving way too fast. We arrived at the Blue Moon hotel, checked in and as we walked towards our room the door of the room across from ours opened. There was Sam smiling at me with the smile that I just loved so much. My heart just melted. All the feelings of hurt following my suspicions of him seeing another woman in London were forgotten, why do I have to love him this much? Sam came towards me and gave me a huge hug and kiss. I introduced him and his friend Sean to Sheila. Later Sam, Sean and I went out for a walk around Ocean Drive in South Beach, Sheila didn't want to go so and stayed in the hotel. The three of us had a ball. We went to eat at *Elarios*, the Cuban Restaurant owned by **Gloria Estefan**. I wanted Sam to try some Cuban food and both he and Sean just loved it. After dinner, we went for a walk along the beach and Sam got his jeans wet in the tide. I was wearing shorts, so only my legs got wet. We took some photos and walked around some more just checking all the people in South Beach. Great fun, but now it was getting late so we decided to go back to the hotel.

Sam and I wanted to spend some time together, but we didn't know what to do with Sean, so we sent him to watch the television with Sheila for a while.

Sam and I spent a very special time together in his room. It ended with me sharing his bed all night. Sean came and slept in the other bed in the same room, so we tried to be good for the rest of the night! Sheila was already

sleeping, so I was hoping she wouldn't mind. But we just couldn't resist each other and made love as quietly as we could as Sean was still sleeping in the other bed! I wanted so much to let myself go and express my love. This was just so crazy!

Later that morning as Sam was shaving, we had a shaving cream fight, both giggling as we ended up full of shaving cream - just like two kids and perhaps the way love should be?

Sean just kept looking at us as though we were crazy. I knew that Sean wanted me to be with Sam. He told him later on that he thought I was the best woman for him. Thank you Sean...

Then the four of us had breakfast and decided to drive along the coast, ending up renting a boat. I remember that there was a puddle of water, so Sam picked me up and put me on his back and took me across the water so my sandals wouldn't get wet. How romantic was that! And he looked so cute with his hat on.

God! I thought I loved this man so much. How could I have doubted him? But I did and deep inside knew that he had been unfaithful to me somewhere.

We all got on the boat and took a ride looking at all the very expensive mansions along Miami Beach. Sam drove most of the time, but occasionally Sean took over leaving Sam and I able to sit on the front of the boat trailing our feet in the water. It felt so good to be there with him just playing, our bodies just brushing each other. Just another very special moment in time. I didn't know - or even want to know at that moment how many more there would be.

We lunched in the marina and headed back to our hotel as that night we were going to have dinner and watch a show at the *Copa Cabana* night club at the Fontainebleau Hotel.

Continued next month

Life's passions...

Have you noticed how many job adverts want people who are *passionate*? Passionate about sales, about telecoms, about the planet? No passion, no job, my HR people



confirm. Time-servers not wanted! When you did the Knowledge, did you have to show you cared deeply about hotels for London tourists and that the quickest route from Euston to Kilburn meant more to you than your own mother? I expect not. It's hard for kids now. Exams aren't enough, employers want commitment, or a show of it. But for most of us our real loves are still outside work.

My DaCman Glen is hooked on the information superhighway and tells me regularly to check my emails as he's sent me something. "Just tell me, whatever it is," I ask. "I'm fed up looking at screens, I do that all day."

"But I want answers to some questions!" You can't just smile or mutter *hmmm* to email questions! Or "I want you to have the date for cousin Brian's birthday party in writing so you won't forget." What was wrong with putting the invite on the fridge magnet? That has worked since the invention of the fridge magnet. Or "I've sent an interesting link for you." (Another one backing up his eccentric view that global warming is just a big hoax. *) Yes, it is amazing what *Wikipedia* says about Nigella Lawson and that the BBC website can get you the weather forecast for Bruges in less than one second. This is important to me right now, as we are about to go there for a short holiday later today. Truly a wonder that the internet can enable Big Al's 24 hour rock n' roll party station to arrive loud and clear from the US down our phone line, and even more

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

Back Seat *Driver*

amazing that in 2008 he still calls people daddy-o! Check out www.industrialinfo.com. **Honestly, Glen believes global warming will turn large parts of Siberia into market gardens and that Mongolia will become suitable for the few million Bangladeshis and island people whose homes will be under water in a few decades. If malaria reaches England, well at least the Scots will become free from frostbite and the Northumbria beaches will sprout resort hotels. And so on. Glen is a passionate debunker...*

I don't know what I'm really passionate about any more. I confess I can't stop reading METRO every morning on the tube and tut-tutting about the crime stories. Though this should really be described as a compulsion rather than a passion as it is an activity, I cannot help doing rather than something I love to do. Another confession: I find it almost impossible to give up on a bargain or pass by a shop holding a sale. Perhaps I should also mention that I have shelves and shelves of miniature shoes on display; sandals, boots, clogs and slippers - porcelain, silver, glass etc. My mother started the collection in 1939 with little beaded Native American shoes my father gave her when they were engaged. I love them and hope to find a lacy new little shoe in Belgium to add to the collection.

...and hobbies?

Like millions of people, I adore Elvis. He was a beautiful person and I get an official

Elvis magazine every month. I wear Elvis badges and read books like *The Gospel according to Elvis* and *Elvis Shm Elvis: The Search for Elvis's Jewish Roots*.

My son has managed to get paid for watching and studying Italian films and my daughter is a professional at finding the latest gossip and peeping into people's lives and retelling their stories for TV. That's what journalists do and she's happy as a sand flea. When your hobby is your job, heaven has blessed you. Your editor asked readers to tell him about their hobbies. I've met a few Dial-a-Cabbies who put everything they've got into charity work and more power to their elbow. I'm sure there are ballroom dance whizzes, honky-tonk pianists, local councillors, landscape painters and snooker aces out there - and a few secret masterminds on topics like 18th century castles or who knows what. I'm looking forward to reading about all of that, but here's my challenge.

Who will write about the passions that dare not speak their name? Chocaholics, trainspotters, cat fanciers, frequenters of hostess clubs, greyhound gamblers, trekkies, transvestites, Sudoku players, budgie-breeders or body-builders? Maybe I'm wrong, but I think you're out there and I hope you'll write in too, or put yourself forward for an interview and photo. If it's legal and you do it, it's time to come out! **Till then...**

Love Poppy x x x



For under £65 you can have a digital radio in your cab
Access all areas...

This month, **Mickey's Music** looks at a new gadget that will be a godsend to all cab drivers. How frustrating is it to tune into **5Live** for the footie only to find out that its being broadcast on their digital station or you fancy something a bit different, but are stuck listening to the same old stations? You promised yourself an in-car digital radio, but almost have a heart attack at the price of them? Now help is at hand!

Pure ©, the DAB radio people have come to our rescue with the **Pure Highway** ©. This is a digital radio receiver that broadcasts the stations through the FM radio in your taxi! There is no installation or wires and it's totally portable so you can move from cab to cab or car to car. So long as you have an FM radio,

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...

Something different this month – an interesting gadget...



MICKEY'S MUSIC

you can now also have digital radio. The Highway unit uses a rubber suction cup to stick to the inside of your window (like a SatNav), it tunes itself into a free FM frequency using its *Quickscan* function and away you go, free to listen to a whole new range of music and talk from Planet Rock to GayDar to TalkSport. Anyone with a digital radio at home knows that the choice of stations is fantastic!

Stations you listen to on Medium Wave that are a bit crackly or that you often lose the

signal on are crystal clear with the Highway. The unit has 4 presets for you to save your favourite stations and, unbelievably, you can also play your iPod or MP3 player through it! Personally, as someone who could not drive a cab without my music and radio, I think this is a fantastic invention and with them retailing at around £63.99 (on Amazon), it's a must for all cabbies.

Mickey Lappin (E46)
Catch me at mickeylappin@hotmail.com

Gerry Rosen (W56) has been a cabbie for 8 years, but whilst on the Knowledge was diagnosed with Testicular Cancer. He was 26 at the time and of course asked himself: "Why me?" Gerry takes up the story and the strange twist that has taken him to the Tour de France!

"There wasn't much time to think about the cancer as the day after being diagnosed I was operated on at Barnet General and released the following day. I had scans and 3 weeks of radiotherapy before getting the all clear to return to full time work and the Knowledge.

Things could have been so different. I was first diagnosed with a hernia and if we hadn't taken a second opinion, who knows what might have happened, because the waiting list on the NHS for a hernia operation was 18 months...!

Fast Forward to the Jewish Passover in April last year. We had a family gathering and having our main meal when my niece (age 6) came out with: "Uncle Gerry, are you having a baby?" You can imagine the embarrassment that caused and it triggered me into finally deciding to do something about it. Being a cabbie isn't the best job in the world for exercising or losing weight, but because we can pick and choose our hours, I tried to do something about it.

I looked at a few sports that weren't really for me but then saw cycling. The main reason I chose that was because of **Lance Armstrong**, who was diagnosed with the same cancer as I had, but at a much more advanced stage and given just a 50/50 chance of survival. Yet he came back from that to win 7 Tour De France titles. He is a true inspiration.

I got onto the internet and some cycling forums. Some members were rather vitriolic towards me being a London cabbie, but in the main most were quite friendly and I was welcomed.

In May last year before going out, I weighed myself and it wasn't pretty - 21 stone 9lbs!

Later that morning I met up with a cyclist who also happened to support the same football team as me, QPR - the richest club in the world! We arranged to meet in Richmond Park and do 3 laps (around 20 miles). I survived - but only just! Days and weeks passed and in July I joined a cycling club as I was enjoying it and believed I could get much more out of it. My weight began to drop and by August Bank holiday, I was down to 20 stone and everything was beginning to look better.

February 13th 2008 was an important date for me; my last-ever check-up for Cancer remission and I would then be totally discharged. With this in mind, I thought I'd like to give something back to the hospital or a cancer related charity, just to say thank you.

On 25 October last year, they announced the route for a stage of the **Tour de France** that would be open to

A DaC Driver's Journey

...from testicular cancer to the Tour de France!



Gerry ready for the Tour de France. Inset: Lance Armstrong

the public and I thought I want to do that! I paid my money and suddenly it hit me: "Oh my God... Gerry Rosen from Dial-a-Cab in London is in the Tour de France!"

The route is 155 kilometres, based in the Pyrenees from the start town of Pau and ending at the top of a ski station called Hautacam. It involves a 100k reasonably flat section before you climb the highest mountain pass in the Pyrenees, the Col de Tourmalet, which translated means terrible mountain... and for good reason! You climb 17.5k with an elevation of 1,268m. The summit is at 2,115m with an average gradient of 7.4% and a max of 10% before getting a 37k descent - which in itself is going to be interesting! You then climb to the finish at Hautacam, which I've been told is even more savage than Col de Tourmalet!

With the help of the club - **Kingston**

Wheelers - and its members, we came up with a training plan. We get on our bikes and ride, cutting all rubbish food out. I've got just under 4 months to go, have so far completed two 100k + rides, am about to take ownership of a new bike and more importantly, my weight is now 17 stone and I've had to throw most of my clothes away!

I have set up an account for the charity: www.justgiving.com/etapedegezza or you can call me on **07866 767 290**. Sadly I won't be taking any calls with withheld or unknown numbers as I've been getting some nuisance calls recently.

I will of course let **Call Sign** know how I do. **Lance Armstrong** may not have too much to worry about, but I'm going to give this a real go. Any financial help to the charity that DaC drivers or staff would like to donate would be truly appreciated..."

Gerry Rosen (W56)

REDBRIDGE HAND CAB WASH

Roding Lane North, Woodford Avenue

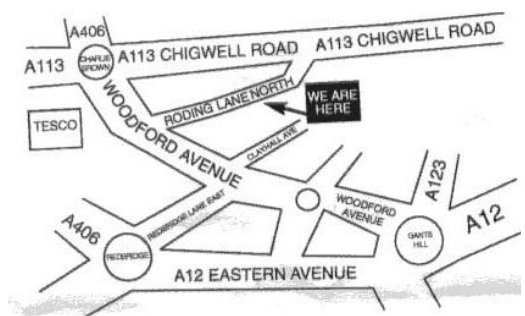
For Essex drivers, the best cab wash for miles around is now offering Dial-a-Cab drivers a discount every time you come in to get your taxi washed!

**Inside and outside including a free air freshener:
Usually £10... The DaC price is £8**

**Outside only:
Usually £6... The DaC price is £5**

Full valet service available

Opening times:
Mon - Fri: 9am to 7pm
Sat: 8am to 6pm
Sun: 9am to 6pm



THE MAYORAL ELECTION

A personal view from the Editor...

Who do you give your vote to is the question most of us will face on 1 May. Do you base it on your political leanings or treat it as a totally separate question?

In my view, Mayor Ken Livingstone has as much to do with the Labour Party as Boris Johnson would have to the Tories should he become Mayor or perhaps less likely, if Lib-Dem candidate Brian Paddick comes through on the rails. The bottom line is that London's a one-off. The Mayor tries to run the capital as he sees fit regardless of party politics.

That's why my own belief is that we should forget the party names and just go by what we know or have been told as taxi drivers. We know what Ken has done. What seems to be a traffic nightmare at Trafalgar Square is, for tourists and normal pedestrians, a wonderful place often ringing to the sound of entertainment. He does believe that traffic lights should allow more time to allow pedestrians to cross. But after all, no one wants to run any one over.

He brought in the 6-month check that no one really wanted. If it meant that the price of overhauls would come tumbling down, then it might have been fine. But that doesn't seem to be the case.

Both Boris Johnson and Brian Paddick say they will get rid of the 6-month check. Can we believe them? Well they'd be stupid to put it into print (both said it in **Call Sign** interviews) but of course nothing is impossible.

We know Ken is looking at allowing minicabs in bus lanes, both Boris and Brian say they will not allow it. Sadly, Ken's PR people told **Call Sign** they would organise an interview, but it never materialised. The same happened with Sian Berry of the Green Party.

In the end, the decision is yours. The only point I would emphasise is that whomever you want to vote for, please go out and vote for them. Don't say you can't be bothered...

Alan Fisher
Editor, Call Sign

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

Winter is well and truly over and *le soleil* is in the air. Numerous property-seekers and holidaymakers are making their way down here to the sun kissed beaches of the Med. In recent weeks I've had to source even more suitable properties for our guests to enjoy as the numbers of visitors this spring has exceeded all expectations. Having said that, here in Hérault there is plenty of space to be as quiet or convivial as you would like, on your own, in a crowd or somewhere in-between.

During my research, I've come across Greg and Penny Hannaford who run a delightful guesthouse called **La Maison Rose**. This charming family-run haven set in the pretty village of **Montblanc** is in an ocean of vineyards, not to be confused with its slippery namesake, and is very close to the renaissance town of **Pezenas** and the historical city of **Beziers**. The accommodation is set over two floors and blends the natural stone and wood fabric of the home with the clean, contemporary and practical. New facilities include modern insulation and velux windows affording comfort whatever the weather, en-suite bathrooms and a brand new swimming pool with built-in Jacuzzi surrounded by a large patio and terrace to facilitate those who wish to sun-worship or otherwise. Their address - **www.lamaison-rose.fr** - should answer any queries.

Furthermore, Greg and Penny are proposing offering special familiarisation visits for those who would like a tour of the area, as with any unknown quantity, the joy is in exploring and unfolding the hidden layers. There are 3 and 4-day trips available, which will include airport transfers and half-a-day wine tasting...should you so desire! If it's a house-hunting trip, appointments can be made to view properties with local agents. They suggest an email dialogue to establish your exact specifications to **penny.hannaford@wanadoo.fr**. If you would prefer to 'do-your-own-thing' and hire a car, then that's clearly not a problem.

By coincidence, Greg is also a licensed financial intermediary. If your search proves fruitful, there is the opportunity to benefit from this service. Punters can have the absolute minimum (just B&B) right the way through to the 'full package' - he was recently heard to ascribe over a glass of our very own vineyard's award-winning red...many a true word spoken in jest! Greg, like myself, commutes between southern France and London and should you require any financial advice or indeed a mortgage, his office is up on Canary Wharf, quite handy for



Dial-a-Cab subscribers. Catch him on email **greg.hannaford@gmail.com** or UK mobile **07930 493459** - and don't worry, he pays the international surcharge bit if you catch him when he's in France.

Next month I shall feature another amiable place for you to stay, this time much nearer the ancient city of Carcassonne.

A bientot.

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



Keith Reading
Professional Toastmaster /
Master of Ceremonies

Telephone: 01279 465938
Mobile: 07774 860374
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Graduate of the
Professional Toastmasters' Academy

MAILSHOT

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

Wheelchair cabs continued...

I should not have bothered with this comment if it were not for **Michael Beevor's (N76)** letter (*March Call Sign*), but I too went into this problem when the whole business started. I could see a whole host of problems that could arise including those mentioned. I am 63 and have had back problems in the past and know of no Doctor or Physio who would recommend that I should reach into the boot to retrieve the ramps from my Fairway.

Prior to Dial-a-Cab's decision to do away with the 'W' attribute, I used to cover up to 50 Westminster TaxiCard trips a week, but now if I do cover one it is because I have hit the wrong button. I can only recommend that Mr Beevor is careful...

Glen Robertson (E54)

My sympathies Glen, I know all about back probs! However, I don't think DaC could reintroduce the 'W' attribute because the Disability Discrimination Act would prevent it. Amongst other things (ie guide dogs), the act prohibits discrimination against wheelchair users, and having an extra charge as DaC had for picking up wheelchair users or differentiating by including a 'W' in the attribute list, would probably count as discrimination in the terms of the Act. A bad back is a legitimate excuse for not picking up wheelchairs as a street hail, but you would need to send a medical certificate to the PCO to claim exemption. See my Editorial on page 3 for the insurance side ...Ed

Michael Beevor's follow-up...

Thanks for putting my wheelchair letter in *Call Sign*, but I did end by asking for DaC's policy on my questions. Whilst I very much appreciate that Allan Evans will be contacting the PCO, I believe this to be the fundamental problem here. No one is willing to stick their neck out with firm guidelines. I fully understand that DaC policy can't really be different than PCO law, but as a Society, correctly advising our members is a must.

Alan, am I making a mountain out of a molehill? I don't think so. My aunt is a home helper and the vast amount of training she goes through just for pushing and helping wheelchair users is unbelievable. She can't believe that we as cab drivers have no training. As for their transportation, ambulances would never carry an unstrapped chair according to my aunt, it's a disciplinary offence to do so.

I know for the number of chairs we carry in any one year, it seems like a bit of a rant to go on like this, but in the event of an accident who covers me? My insurance said they won't. Who pays my bills should I be injured pushing a chair? The passenger won't. You may have heard of a driver (now on DaC) who recently received a solicitor's letter about a claim against him for injury to a passenger when the wheelchair crushed their foot after being incorrectly fitted in the back of his cab. He was not on DaC at the time of the incident. Did you know that a passenger has up to 3 years to make a claim for injury after the event, so this driver may not even have remembered the fare?

Should I be ashamed that as a result of this I now think twice when offered a ride with the attribute 'A' and as for kerbside wheelchairs, if it looks too big I consider driving on. Let's hope Allan Evans can get a definitive answer from the PCO and we can finally put this to bed. Somehow I don't think he will as I believe it's such a complex issue that it really needs starting afresh.

Michael Beevor (N76)

Keith Cain replies: There is no set policy at the moment, but that could change after the next Board Meeting. My opinion is this; no driver will be expected to take a wheelchair passenger if their chair cannot be fixed correctly into the cab. I believe it's that simple. We cannot expect any driver to put themselves in a position whereby forcing them to take such a trip would make their insurance invalid. I believe that all new taxi drivers have to be tested on securing a wheelchair correctly as part of the driving test. The other situation is a driver not being able to help the wheelchair user into the vehicle on medical grounds.

The PCO is very clear on this and you are correct when you say the driver must obtain an exemption form from them. If a driver does not have the form, then they leave themselves open to being accused of discrimination under the DDA. These situations can really get messy and the worst case could see the driver losing his licence.

A letter from Moscow...

Dear Brian

First of all I would like to say that I am sorry for my silence but thank you very much for helping me when I was at Dial-a-Cab. I was very glad to be ten weeks at your friendly company and spend my time with the HR and IT departments. I remember all the days of my long holidays in London.

Now I am trying to use my knowledge about the best taxi company and taxi business that you have given me.

I hope my experience helps me and my company to make good business. Maybe one day I will give you something helpful for your company.

Sergey Pietnev

City Taxi, Moscow

Brian Rice replies: Hi Sergey, nice to hear from you and I'm glad that you learned something from Dial-a-Cab in London. It was a pleasure having you here and I know you were very popular with our staff. It was unfortunate that I could not spend more time with you than I did, but as you know they keep me exceptionally busy here! Please continue to keep in touch with us; we will be interested in your progress.

Editor's Note: Sergey came to DaC for 10 weeks via the EU funded Manager's Training Program organised by Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS). That organisation is responsible for policies involving the former Soviet states of Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. The Manager's Training Program has been running successfully since early 2000 with almost 3,000 candidates across Europe, over 500 of whom have trained in the UK.

Terry's in Crete...

Many thanks for the kind words in Brian Rice's personal letter to me as well as for the flowers - which at least mean that my sons have now got a vase! They were much appreciated and a very thoughtful gesture.

My 30-odd years at Dial-a-Cab were, on the whole, an enjoyable part of life and I made some good friends along the way. However, I readily admit that semi-retirement is preferable and I look forward to the time when I can enjoy the Cretan way of life to the full. The only traffic hold-ups we encounter out here are usually caused by a flock of sheep making their way along the road to the next olive grove. I somehow don't think the *Clamp Club* would do much business either, while the nearest set of traffic lights is six miles away!

I will be returning to the UK for a fortnight every six weeks or so and no doubt, without the back-up of the Dial-a-Cab system at my elbow, things will certainly be a lot more difficult in the future. Still, you can't have your cake and eat it as they say and I will look back on my working life with a sense of pride to have been involved with such a prestigious outfit. Keep up the good work and please pass on my thanks to the Board and staff for their help over the years.



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I might even pop in with a jar of olives from our garden if we get a good crop this year! All the best – and be lucky!

Terry Lynn (Ex-E44)

Crete

Some decent Feta cheese would also be nice! Good luck to you and Tessa for a long and happy retirement in the Cretan sunshine ...Ed

From Crete to Queensway...

Here is another story for your PCN case file. On the evening of Sunday 11th November last year I dropped off a passenger outside Threshers in Queensway. The passenger paid and left the cab. I was sorting out my change and checking the terminal for messages when a car pulled up alongside me and the driver said that I was being caught on camera by a Smart Car.

It was just over a week later that I received a PCN stating that I was parked in a restricted street during prescribed hours and that the penalty was £120 reduced to £60 if I paid within 14 days. I checked the video on the Westminster website and they had caught me on film waiting for 2 minutes. It seemed that they had a watertight case against me. However, I decided to appeal on the grounds that I was not parked and that I was setting down a fare.

I received a reply from Westminster stating that my appeal had been refused and that the £120 fine was to be paid. I wrote back to them to say that I did not agree with their findings and reiterated the fact that I was setting down a fare and that if I had left my cab and gone off for 5 minutes then I would have accepted the charge. I then expected my appeal to go to the independent arbitrator, however to my surprise I received a rather patronising letter stating that due to a procedural error, they had decided to take no further action and that the PCN has been cancelled. As to what procedural error occurred I have no idea, I only wish to add that if we appeal against all these PCNs as Martin Hizer has suggested in several *Call Signs* then at the very least it must slow their system down and who knows - we might win a few.

Meanwhile it's: *Cab Driver 1 City of Westminster 0...*

Paul Arrowsmith (T83)

And speaking of the Hizer report...

Greetings all you PCN warriors. I'm pleased to announce another victory over the enemy at Westminster council! **Bosh!** Westminster have backed down on a PCN issued to me whilst on an account trip in

Dean Street. The hostile spy machine took the photo with me parked in Old Compton Street due to Dean Street being closed because of the overhaul to London's water pipes. Relentless pressure again from my side was a telling factor and this time they became aware of a 'procedural error' that had occurred at an earlier stage - maybe I was unknowingly waiting for the CCTV operator's mother! The likelihood is, as I keep telling *Call Sign* readers, that they knew that I would be more aggravation than they like to deal with, so therefore they accepted my representation and cancelled the PCN.

My hearty congratulations also go to Tony Bradshaw (K48) for going from being just another benefactor of the *Evil Council* to a full-on PCN warrior. **Kapow!** Tony stood up to the bullies and overturned a non-DaC ticket in Westbourne Grove, employing his courage and a little imagination (I told you, all is fair in war) and is currently taking them on again. Go get em'...

Be Lucky, Be Strong!

Martin Hizer (M47)

Keep going Martin and everyone else who has decided that enough is enough ...Ed

A wee matter

Dear Alan

I was very interested in your comments in the March *Mailshot* regarding you being able to get a PCN cancelled on appeal for a ticket issued when you stopped to use the Queensway toilets. Can you please advise me on the grounds you managed to get this cancelled as I have had my appeal turned down for having to use this facility at 10.15 p.m. for just a few minutes to answer the call of nature. I am so incensed at this action by those money-grabbing tykes at Westminster that I am taking the matter to the Arbitrator quoting the *Human Rights Act* if necessary! It appears that there are many of us that have fallen foul of this trap and something must be done if they don't want us all peeing in the streets.

Look forward to your help...

Chris Caselton (O24)

I wish you luck Chris, but see no reason why using similar text to mine (see below in parenthesis), you should not get the PCN cancelled ...Ed

On the date of issue, I left my licensed London taxi in a lay-by outside the public toilet in Queensway. There are double yellow lines in place, but the lay-by means that no interference is caused to any passing traffic.

Having been working, picking up passengers since 16.00, I had an urgent need to go to the toilet and finding one at 21.09 isn't easy. I and other licensed taxi drivers are



part of the Mayor's Transport for London system, but we still have to obey the call of nature or risk getting kidney stones.

I find it difficult to believe that Westminster is so desperate that they have to target taxi drivers with CCTV while using a public convenience.

I would ask you to cancel this PCN.

Cash machine petition

More and more cab drivers are getting issued with parking tickets via CCTV from London councils for stopping at cash machines so passengers can pay their bill. We are petitioning the government to stop this practice, as it surely is another way of councils making more money from drivers just trying to do their job!

Please sign the Number 10 petition and pass it on...

Peter Hallett (S01)

I have today signed the online petition to stop PCNs being issued by CCTV cameras whilst going about our lawful business. I was surprised to see that only 252 people had signed it. As DaC has 2200 drivers and *Call Sign* publicised it, I would have expected more. This is an important issue that impacts on or daily lives so I would like to ask all drivers to sign the petition and for them to encourage their friends and families to do the same.

Alf Cook (A62)

The petition was started by Craig Barker (O96) and publicised in the last issue of Call Sign (page 5). I also wrote and sent out a press release to all the trade papers, most of whom have published it. The address to go to is <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/CCTVfines/> and the closing date is April 28 ...Ed

Earthquake!

The recent earthquake that we had in the UK went unnoticed by me. Some people slept through it, others just rolled over and went back to sleep. I never felt it because at the time I was driving my cab and negotiating a few speed humps. Disappointed that I never experienced this event that I am informed comes around about every 25 years, I took myself off to sunny Spain to relax.

Two days later after a hectic day of drinking wine and sunbathing, I went to bed and slipped into a deep sleep only to be woken 4 hours later by a very large rumble and shaking (3.3 on the Richter scale). I must admit that despite being frightened, I was also to a certain degree amused. Quite ironic that I missed the quake in the UK and several days later experienced it elsewhere.

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Thirty minutes later another very slight shake, followed by what I thought was another quake but which turned out to be the wife snoring. Dogs were barking in the street but our dog (Molly) slept through it. It's the first time the wife has asked me: "Did the earth move for you."

By the way, I would highly recommend Vanish detergent for bed sheets...

Steve Shaller (R75)

See this issue on how the staff at DaC House felt their desks move! ...Ed

Call Sign trip to LTI

I just want to say a big thank you to Alan Fisher and *Call Sign* for arranging our trip to LTI Vehicles in Coventry and also to *Virgin Trains* for sponsoring our brilliant first class return journey. The day was very informative with lots of discussion on possible changes to cabs and to their credit, there was no brushing of complaints under the carpet by LTI. Every question received an honest answer. In fact LTI, via their Customer and Technical Support Manager Trevor Hattersley, seemed very interested in our opinions and notes were taken on suggestions put forward by the DaC drivers. That was followed by an excellent tour of the factory to watch how taxis are built.

I'd also like to thank LTI for their tremendous hospitality in tea breaks and lunch. A very worthwhile day and a must for anyone who takes an interest in our trade...

Mark Tiller (K90)

Dear Alan

I am writing to express my thanks for the opportunity to visit the LTI factory in Coventry. I certainly had a great day, as I am sure the other cab drivers did. The start of the day was great with first class travel on Virgin Trains to Coventry! Well done and thank you to the train company and their staff.

We were met by Richard Daniels at the station and taken by cab to the factory where we were offered coffee on arrival and met Matthew Cheyne and Trevor Hattersley. We settled quickly into a full open, frank and honest debate about all aspects of LTI cabs, TX2 and TX4, this took up a lot of time. Trevor Hattersley really impressed me with his knowledge of the cab and was very honest about any problems with the vehicle, but there were plans in hand to correct them. He also praised the cab as well and seemed pleased with their relationship with VM. He said they would be keeping the engine until at least 2012 with no plans for an immediate hybrid engine. I did not always agree with him, but his passion and commitment to get things right shone through - you can't help but like the man!

A quick pause for an LTI lunch was followed by a tour of the factory. It soon

became clear how labour intensive building a cab is, this certainly went some way in helping me understand the cost of the end product, could still be cheaper though! I was surprised at the amount of quality control throughout. The cab's history is documented from start to finish of production. It left me bemused at why my cab had so much wrong with it, but then some cabs never have a problem. Sixty cabs a week are built of which two are picked out and gone over with a fine toothcomb. Ten faults on average are found compared with BMW, who find 8. I was pleased with this and personally surprised they even did this quality check. Well done.

Lots of issues were raised about the cabs and also the level of customer service we receive as cab drivers from the dealerships. All points raised by the DaC cab drivers on the day were listened to and notes were made by LTI, even on trivial matters. LTI really did seem genuinely interested in what we had to say about their product. We can only hope that they are as genuine when it comes to improving our cab.

My sincere thanks for a great day to all involved.

Trevor Denton (Y18)

Dear Alan

Many thanks for the trip to LTI to see the latest TX4 in production. I was impressed with the dedication of the management in trying to produce a vehicle that would satisfy all London's Taxi drivers. It would seem to me that the major complaint from the DaC drivers who were there with *Call Sign* was not about the body of the vehicle, but about the components that are bought in. As you know I change my cab regularly - about every eighteen years or so whether I need to or not - so perhaps I am not one of LTI's best customers! But if I were just starting out in this job, I would certainly buy one. I remember when I bought my first new one in 1966 for the princely sum of around £1100, I was told by an old-timer driving a FX3 with three doors that I was mad to spend all that money as, in those immortal words, "The game's dead!" Now after 42 years on "the game" I am still only on my fourth cab, but with care and much love, I hope to keep my new "N reg" cab for many more years yet.

Gerry Dunn MBE (S84)

Dear Alan

Thank you for an enjoyable day out to LTI Vehicles in Coventry. It was very interesting and so nice to get the chance to speak to those people that work there and to give them our views. The day included an amazingly comfortable return journey with Virgin Trains and I still can't believe that the whole day cost me nothing! Thank you once again.

Brian Fox (G35)

Dear Alan

Thanks for arranging the recent visit to LTI.



I thought it went well and found it very interesting. Meeting the LTI representatives was positive and although they cannot tell you everything, their general attitude seemed open and helpful. Personally, it enabled me to get stuff off my chest that had sat for too long. As the main agent I deal with has been unable or unwilling to talk about, let alone solve the problems I have experienced, at least I now feel as though someone has listened, is aware of the problem of excessive heat entering the driver's compartment, that it is under investigation and a solution may not be far off. We'll see! It was also interesting to see the TX4 under construction during various stages of production in what seemed to be an efficient and industrious, if relatively small scale environment. What happens in the future as a result of LTI's Chinese partnership can only be speculation, but it would seem to me the future of production of the traditional style London cab has been strengthened, quite possibly big time.

Thanks once again...

Paul Willett (V12)

This was *Call Sign's* fifth trip to LTI and another one will take place towards the end of summer. Over the years, several DaC drivers' suggestions have been incorporated into the next generation of taxi, so it is quite feasible that Paul's and other suggestions will be taken on board ...Ed

Lost property?

Dear Alan

I have now safely received back my briefcase of papers inadvertently left in your taxi last Friday night. May I again express my gratitude and thanks for your prompt and efficient service in being able to return the case to me. As you realised, this contained papers which are highly important to my work and their safe and prompt return is greatly appreciated.

Having been delighted with your professional approach to the recovery of my briefcase and whilst we have always been pleased with the Dial-a-Cab service in the past, this now gives my firm of lawyers even more reason to continue using the prompt Dial-a-Cab service.

The level of accountability for Dial-a-Cab cannot be matched on this occasion by any other service. I am truly grateful, both on a personal basis and on behalf of my firm.

London EC4

I don't normally publish letters with no name, but have made an exception because the person concerned could lose business if it became common

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knowledge that they had left very important papers in the back of my cab. I've also published it for another reason. When I discovered the briefcase (tucked into one of the pull-down seats which is why I never noticed it when the lawyer left my cab), I hadn't a clue who had left it but soon realised that the papers were extremely important and were needed for a case at the High Court in the Strand. The question was: Should I hand them in to Lost property or make an attempt to return them, but in the process probably break an important rule about anything found in the back of the cab? I looked at the papers and found an email address running through them, that of a partner in the firm and sent an email late on that Friday evening informing them that I had the case, but that if I hadn't heard by Monday morning I would have to hand it in. I received a reply early Saturday from the partner of the firm who had been very concerned about the serious loss. They gave me the address in EC4 to take it to and the firm's account number with DaC. I just returned it the next day with no charge. Had I handed it into the police or to Baker Street, the court case would have been put in jeopardy. My question is whether I should have obeyed the rules and handed it in or do what I did? Is there such a thing as an exceptional situation to the PCO or is it a case of the rules must be followed regardless? I asked them, for future reference, and the following was the reply I got from Simon Buggy, Senior Driver and Operator Policy Manager at the PCO. My thanks go to him ...Ed

I've had a look at paragraph 51 of the 1934 London Cab Order (page 21 in the current Abstract of Laws) that says: "A cab driver finding property left in a cab or having such property banded to him must deposit it in the state in which it was found by or banded to him at a police station in the Metropolitan Police District or the City of London within 24 hours and truly state particulars of such finding, unless it is sooner claimed by the owner to whom it shall be restored forthwith on satisfactory proof of ownership."

What you did appears to fall within the final phrase, in that it was claimed by the owner within 24 hours (albeit with your help) and they were able to prove the property was theirs. I think you took a perfectly pragmatic approach, moreover I don't think you've fallen foul of the law.

Extra income?

As most drivers realise, there is now much less work on the streets than before Christmas and some of your older readers

may be interested in an extra source of income I have found to supplement my taxi takings. Plenty of reports over the last three years have highlighted climate change and CO2 emissions, and there is now a scheme that can enable London taxi drivers to benefit financially from the global warming issue. Responding to scientific evidence and various pressure groups, the government is trying to get us all to use energy more efficiently, recycle where possible, cycle rather than drive and switch to low energy light bulbs; and there is also a policy known as Carbon Offsetting. If someone engages in an activity that produces a chunk of nasty carbon output such as flying, then to make amends they can find out the cost of the damage caused and make a payment to one of several Carbon Offset Trading schemes that have been set up. Loosely speaking, this enterprise then sponsors another organisation not to carry out a polluting activity that it would otherwise have engaged in.

Finally, this is where I enter the system. Obliging, instead of going out to work and adding to global warming by driving round the streets of London, I now stay at home and get paid for each mile that I do NOT work. Or to put it another way, it is similar to the system of funding to farmers known as "set aside" whereby they get payments from the European Union for not growing crops on certain fields. Luck no longer plays a part in my daily trawl round the streets; whatever the weather, traffic or number of people looking for cabs, I can now get a guaranteed income whilst I stay at home playing tennis or chess!

My accountant has been in touch with The Carbon Trading company and based on my average mileage over the last 5 years [Personal Base Coverage or PBC], a formula has been applied to determine how much I receive providing I do not exceed 75% of my PBC. I started by suggesting that this is of more interest to older drivers, because although the payments to stay at home are very generous, they are about 15% less than

I may expect to earn off the street and 20% less than radio work. These payments are treated as earned income for tax purposes. For a driver with a mortgage, children and ex-wives to support, this may not sound like a good deal, but when you get to my age with waning inclination to put in the long hours, then it is very attractive. Of course I make sure that I still complete the minimum of 40 credit jobs each month.

Laurence Kelvin (W88)

Thank you Laurence, my only problem with your suggestion is what happens to those drivers who do not read it on 1 April before midday! ...Ed

Hats what I want!

During a long February evening, my mind started to wander to this years DaC



Christmas prezzie! Would the Board consider a good quality baseball cap - with logo of course! I love wearing my DaC polo shirt (even though it is starting to fade) and my fleece as well, but when they are in the wash I'm at a loss. Every driver could keep his / her cap in the cab and just slip it on when entering an account office as ID.

Or another option may be a metal badge that could be pinned to a shirt or jacket, as I know some drivers still prefer to wear their own personal (dare I say designer) attire! And neither item requires to be ordered in an array of different sizes!

Hope this doesn't come across as being too forward but I just like something to look forward to! I know, I lead a sad life...!

On a completely different subject, the other night I was offered a job to Frenches Rd RH1 S99. Didn't have clue where RH1 was! Mr Nash please!

Tony Doltis (R38)

The January issue of Nash's Numbers didn't cover RH1 (Redhill) but Alan did say it would be available on his website. He composed the list but didn't provide a link. It is now done and if you now visit www.nashsnumbers.co.uk you can indeed get a much bigger listing ...Ed

Brian Rice replies: Thanks for the tip Tony, I don't see any reason why we can't consider it at Christmas - assuming we can afford it! However, as you no doubt realise when you are dealing with as many members as we are, you can't please all of the people all of the time!

TX4 paint job...

As regular readers of *Call Sign* will know, I have had some paint and finish problems with my new TX4. Well, I'm pleased to say, it's now all sorted. Repainted inside and out! It looks great with a really deep black shine. So can I say a big thank you to our Editor Alan for fetching it to the attention of Andrew Overton, to LTI for the repaint and for doing the minor warranty jobs, they even replaced the light bulb in the time clock (these have been out of stock for months). Also a huge thank you to KPM - especially Chris - for putting up with my nagging and arranging the DaC loan cab and for keeping me updated during the 3 weeks my taxi was away, something M&O were unable or didn't want to arrange. KPM and I were both surprised how clean the cab was returned. Perhaps things are changing with LTI.

On another note, it appears that our forthcoming fare increase is not an increase at all if you have a fare of less than £4, which if you work days is not unusual. How long can we drivers sustain

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a flag fall of £2.20p? Perhaps that's why the average age of taxi drivers is going up. Not much of an incentive for a young guy to enter our trade, 3 + years doing the Knowledge and a taxi costing 30+ thousand. That's a lot of £2.20 's...

And another! The Blackwall Tunnel northbound! Why haven't our trade associations got us access to the Bus Gate at Blackwall Lane? This is needed more than ever with the tidal flow removed (what an edge over the private hire trade this would give for morning drivers and fares) and the O2 Arena being so busy at nighttime.

Yours, almost a happy taxi driver...

Jon Robinson (E88)

Pleased I could be of help ...Ed

AGM

I feel obliged to write this letter after witnessing the most poorly attended AGM in DaC's history. One new member in attendance who was previously on ComCab said that DaC was a unique radio circuit implying that it was run in a warm and friendly way and that it had a character all of its own; he was glad to be part of it.

This 'uniqueness' that he implied has been borne out of the fact that (a) we are an owner-driver radio circuit and (b) for many years we had to attend the AGM. These two things together were omnipotent, so much so that after several years of postal voting there is still some of that unique feeling that DaC is different from other radio circuits remaining, but for those of us who have been with DaC for many years, we are noticing changes taking place, mainly in attitudes.

One young man told me that he wasn't attending the AGM because it was full of old blokes ranting and raving and that it was just a waste of time. He had never attended an AGM, he had been told this, probably by someone else who also had never attended an AGM. The AGM is not a waste of time; it forms an essential part of DaC's backbone. The introduction of the Postal Vote is probably the single most damaging thing that

has ever happened to DaC.

The Chairman tells us that it is not democratic to force people to attend the AGM, yet he seems to think that it is democratic to force members to complete 40 trips each month or be expelled. The fact of the matter is that in a democracy, it is quite alright to force people to do things, especially if they are for the good and usually in a democracy, they are. One of the things that are missing in today's society is discipline, without it the democracy in which we live is fast becoming anarchy; everything that has ever been achieved throughout the world has needed a disciplined environment in which to achieve it.

The Chairman seems to be in tandem with Ken Livingstone; an advocate of democracy, but only when it suits.

The way Concierge was incorporated into our Society was against our rules, of this there is absolutely no doubt. It contravenes Rule 31 of our old rulebook, which is Rule 32 in the new one. The Chairman in his defence has twisted the meaning and intention of Rule 1 (f) and decreed that this rule allows Concierge to be incorporated into our Society. Rule 1 (f) simply means that if a customer wishes to open a credit account with us rather than pay cash for the service we provide, then we will operate and manage that account for them. It was never intended to mean anything other than that. Please look at your rulebook and make your own conclusions. As I said at this year's AGM, Concierge is here to stay; what worries me is the stealthily way in which it was introduced; if a person or a group of people get away with flagrantly ignoring and breaking the rules on one occasion, it could surely encourage them to do it again.

I am sure that the Chairman, if he responds to this letter, will deny breaking any rules but I assure you he has.

Paul Tully (Y40)

Brian Rice replies: What an amazing letter, Paul, simply because it is full of contradictions - read your letter again! The new member that stated we were a unique radio circuit and run in a warm and friendly way was spot



on! However, you must remember that he was a new member and does not know any different to the warm and friendly way we are run. He wouldn't have known how bad things were in the past - what is wrong with that? However, the bit that really made me smile was your quote from a new member who stated he did not attend because "...it was full of old blokes ranting and raving." Did you not realise that he was talking about you Paul? Your recent lecture at the AGM and subsequent letter this year could also have applied to several years past because you always say the same thing - that is why members become bored and do not wish to attend AGMs.

Rules regarding members attending or voting by post at an AGM and the 40-trip rule are identical in the sense that members voted them into the rulebook because that's what they want. It is called democracy - not the Tully version of democracy where it is apparently "ok to force people to do things" - but the member's version.

Regarding me breaking rules, that is totally untrue and absurd. Some of your colleagues reported me to the FSA because they obviously had been listening to you! The FSA did not agree with them and concluded that I was acting in the best interests of the members by introducing Concierge and an increase in sales of 34% in the last two years has borne out that fact and proven that I was totally correct in my actions. Finally, you conclude your letter by stating that you assure members that I have broken the rules of the Society - absolute nonsense! If I had broken rules four years ago, then I would not be Chairman today, the only people that believe I have broken rules are "...old blokes that wish to rant and rave!"

Charities Boosted by LTI Support

In addition to manufacturing taxis, LTI have long been one of the biggest donors when it comes to helping out charities - whether connected to the taxi trade or otherwise. The staff at their Coventry HQ are often organising various fundraising ideas.

Throughout 2007, over £5,000 was raised by the 450-strong staff through an extensive range of activities including a golf tournament and raffle and then presented to five chosen charities that included NSPCC, Myton Hospice, Acorns Children's Hospice, Alzheimer's and Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance. Each of the nominated charities will use their funding to support a number of projects that include:

NSPCC - Boole House Family Support Service; ensuring vulnerable children receive help to protect them from abuse.

Myton Hospice Appeal - contributing to the build of a much needed

20-bed hospice.

Acorns Children's Hospice - helping to provide vital nursing care to chronically ill children who require round-the-clock support.

Alzheimer's - providing new equipment to assist people with dementia.

Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance - enabling response to emergency calls.

LTI Vehicles MD Peter Shillcock said: "We're delighted to be helping so many local charities. They do some excellent work within our community and we are only too pleased to offer our support. A big thank you must go out to all of the staff for their huge efforts in raising such an impressive figure."

LTI Vehicles support of the taxi trade's charities is also well known...

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