

August 2008



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

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transport policy man at
City Hall...

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pays to appeal...

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**Brian Rice
in the Mercedes
Vito...**

**But could this cab
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taxi trade?**



DaC donate another Variety Club coach





NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

The concluding part in the series on nightclubs. This month sees S to Z...

Salmon and Compass, 58 Penton Street, N1 9PZ	Thirst, 53 Greek Street, W1
Salt, 82 Seymour Street, W2 2JB	Thirteen, 13 Gerrard Street, W1D 5PS
Scala, 275 Pentonville Road, N1 9NL	Tiger Tiger, 29 The Haymarket, SW1Y 4SP
Scene, 516 Old Kent Road, SE1 5BA	Touch Bar, 254 Edgware Road, W2 1DS
Secret Location (Buttoned Down), Inverness St, NW1	Traffic, 1 Vernon Place, WC1A 2EP
Secret Location (Lost), New Inn St, EC2A 3AE	Trafik, 40 Hoxton Square, N1 6PB
Secret Warehouse Location, Bacon St, E1 6SB	Tramp, 40 Jermyn Street, SW1Y 6DN
Secrets 2, 309 Finchley Road, NW3 6EH	Trap, 201 Wardour Street, W1F 8ZH
Secrets East Smithfield, 43-45 East Smithfield, E1 9AP	Trash Palace, 11 Wardour Street, W1D 3PG
Secrets Euston, 34-38 Eversholt Street, NW1 1DA	Troy Bar, 10 Hoxton Street, N1 6NG
Secrets Hammersmith, 62 Glenthorne Road, W6 0LR	Tryst, 222 Fulham Road, SW10 9NB
Secrets Holborn, 3 Grays Inn Road, WC1X 8HG	Tudor Rose, 68 The Green, Southall, UB2 4BQ
SeOne, 41 St Thomas Street / Weston St, SE1 3 QX	Turnmills, 63b Clerkenwell Road, EC1M 5PT
Sequoia @ Ruby Lo, 23 Orchard Street, W11 1HH	Twilights, 291 Kirkdale, SE26 4QE
Sesto, 254 Edgware Road, W2 1DS	TWO8Six, 286 Lewisham High Street, SE13 6JZ
Shadow Bar, 5-6 Leicester Street, (Empire), WC2H 7NA	Umbaba, 15-21 Ganton Street, W1F 9BN
Shadow Lounge, 5 Brewer Street, W1F 0RF	Under Solo, 22 Inverness Street, NW1 7HJ
Shannons, 32 High Street, Hounslow, TW3 1NW	Underbelly, 11 Hoxton Square, N1 6NU
Shed, 17-20 Ironmonger Lane, EC2V 8EP	Underworld, 174 Camden High Street, NW1 0NE
Shepherds Bush Empire, Shepherds Bsh Grn, W12 8TT	Upstairs at Garage, 20-22 Highbury Corner, N5 1RD
Shoreditch House, Ebor Street, E1 6AW	Upstairs at Ronnie Scotts, 47 Frith Street, W1D 4HT
Shoreditch W'house, Worship St, (Plough Yd) EC2A 2BA	Urban Inc, O2, Unit 20 Peninsula Square, SE10 0DX
SIN, 144 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0LB	Valmont Club, 266-266a Fulham Road, SW10 9EL
Sirocco, 39-45 Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 6LA	Vanilla, 131 Great Titchfield Street, W1W 5BB
Six String Bar, 460 New Cross Road, SE14 6TJ	Vanilla Bar, 15a Royal Windsor Stn, Goswell Hill, Windsor, SL4 1PJ
Smiths, 66-67 Charterhouse Street, EC1M 6HJ	Vault, York Way, /Goods Way N1
Snooty Fox, 75 Grosvenor Avenue, N5 2NN	Velvet, 143 Charing Cross Road, W1
Social, 5 Little Portland Street, W1N 5AG	Venue, 2 Clifton Rise, SE14 6JP
Soho, 12-13 Greek Street, W1D 4DJ	Venue, 5 Leicester Place, WC2H 7BP
Soho Lounge, 69 Dean Street / Meard St, W1D 3SE	Verve, 1 Upper St Martins Lane, WC2H 9NY
Soho Revue Bar, Brewer Street, (Walkers Ct), W1F 0ED	Viaduct, 39-41 Parry Street, SW8
Soho Spice, 124-126 Wardour Street, W1F 0TY	Vibe Bar, 91-95 Brick Lane, (Truman), E1 6QL
Sosho, 2 Tabernacle Street, EC2A 4LU	Victoria Casino, 150-162 Edgware Road, W2 2DT
Soul Cellar, 1 Hertsmere Road, (Dockmasters), E14 8JJ	View Lounge, No. 1 Leicester Square, WC2H 7FB
Sound, 1 Leicester Square, WC2H 7NA	Village Soho, 81 Wardour Street, W1V 3TG
Sound Shaft, Hungerford Lane, Craven St, WC2	Village Underground, 54 Holywell Lane, EC2A 3PQ
Soundstage, York Way, (KX Goods Yd), N1 0UZ	Virgos Nightclub, 148 Old Kent Road, SE1 5TY
South Central, 349 Kennington Lane, SE11 5QY	ViVa ViVa, 18 High Street, N8 7PB
South London Pacific, 340 Kennington Road, SE11 4LD	Vogue, 512-516 Old Kent Road, SE1 5BA
Spearmint Rhino, 161 Tottenham Court Road, W1T 7NN	Volstead, 9 Swallow Street, W1R 7HD
Spice House, 270 Mare Street, (Ocean), E8 1HE	Vortex, 11 Gillett Street, N16 0JH
St Moritz Club, 159 Wardour Street, W1V 3TA	Vox, 43 South Molton Street, W1K 5RW
St.Aloysius Social Club, 20 Phoenix Road, NW1 1TA	WAC, 14a Bayliss Road, SE1 4AA
Storm, 28 Leicester Square, WC2H 7LE	Walkabout @ Limelight, 136 Shaftesbury Ave, W1D 5EZ
Stratford Circus, Theatre Square, E15 1BX	Walkabout Inn, 14-16 Putney High Street, SW15 1SL
Stratford Rex, 361-375 Stratford High Street, E15	Walrus Social, 172 Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 7RW
Strawberry Moons, 15-17 Heddons Street, W1B 4BF	Wandsworth Palais, 52 Wandsworth High St, SW18 4LD
Stringfellows Soho, 201-203 Wardour Street, W1	Warwick, 1-3 Warwick Street, W1B 5LR
Studio 4, 4 Great Queen Street, WC2B 5DG	Water Rats, 328 Grays Inn Road, WC1X 8BZ
Studio 57, 57 Jermyn Street, SW1Y 6LX	Waterfront, 187 South Quay Plaza, E14 9SH
Studio 88, 88-89 Chalk Farm Road, NW1 8AR	Watershed, 267 The Broadway, SW19 1SD
Studio Valbonne, 62 Kingly Street, W1B 5QN	Wax, 4 Winsley Street, W1W 8HF
Sub Club and Bar, 2 Goulston Street, E1 7TP	Way Out Club, 9 Crosswall, EC3N 2JY
Sub Logic, 5-6 Argyll Street, W1V 1AD	Wessex House, 1 St Johns Hill, SW11 1TN
Suite @ No. 1 Leicester Square, WC2H 7FB	West 5, Popes Lane, W5 4NB
Sunset Strip, 30 Dean Street, W1V 5AN	White Horse, 94 Brixton Hill, SW2 1QN
Swan, 215 Clapham Road, SW9 9BE	White House, 65 Clapham Park Road, SW4 7EH
T.J's, 2a-2b Woolwich New Road, SE18 4BG	Windmill, 22 Blenheim Gardens, SW2 5BZ
Taboo, 25-27 Brewer Street, W1F 0RR	Windmill, Clapham Common Southside, SW4 9DE
Tamarai, 167 Drury Lane, WC2B 5PG	Woody's, 41-43 Woodfield Road, W9 2BA
Tattershall Castle, Victoria Embankment, SW1A 2HR	Works, 1 St.James Road, Kingston, KT1 2AH
The Tabernacle, 55-61 Tabernacle Street, EC2A 4AA	World Turned Upside Dn, 145 Old Kent Road, SE1 5UT
The Theatre Factory, Tyssen Street, E8	Yacht at Temple Pier, Victoria Embankment, WC2R 2PN
The Three Arches, Plough Yard, EC2A 2BG	Zebrano, 14-16 Ganton Street, W1F 7QY
The Three Compasses, 66 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6BP	Zeta Bar, 35 Hertford Street, (Hilton), W1J 7SD
The Tramshed, 46-48 Mitcham Road, SW17 9NA	Zone, 330-336 Neasden Lane, NW10 0AD
The Troubadour, 263-267 Old Brompton Road, SW5 9JA	Zoo Bar and Club, 13-17 Bear Street, WC2H 7AS
Third Space, 211 Clapham Road, SW9 0QH	Zyrus Cocktail / Karaoke, 102-108 Clerkenwell Road, EC1M 5SA

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from the editor's desk

Close call?

Look, I've never doubted that I have a suspicious mind. Quite often I have found that my suspicions were totally wrong, but reasonably often they turn out to be correct.

On this occasion, as the PCO sent a press release to the trade press (which includes all the PH mags and organisations) on the new signage regulations for private hire, I had a sudden feeling that we'd had a close call.

Those regulations now mean that private hire can have roof markings, such as Brunel have had for some time, although signs that protrude from the roof as in our *For Hire* signs are not permitted. PH companies can also now have signs and logos on the rear of the vehicle that identify licensed operators, but with a stipulation I feel is often abused by some operators – those vehicles that the new regs apply to must not increase the tinting over and above vehicle manufacturer's original specification ... "for the purpose of enhancing any rear signage." Would they do that? Well the tint on some PH vehicles is so dark that you wonder if they're hiding something inside! Perhaps PCO/TfL officers who roam the streets looking for defects could check the level of tinting in PH vehicles?

On the same subject, I'm somewhat concerned in an age where paedophilia seems to be more prolific that at any time before, that PCO / TfL will approve signs relating to specialised transport. So PH vehicles that carry out a regular school run, with prior approval of the Licensing Authority, can display a relevant sign. I do not approve of that idea one iota. Can you imagine a car with a sign saying something like *Children's School Vehicle* and a driver with paedophilic leanings seeing some kids waiting at a bus stop? I don't even want to think about it let alone write.

The bottom line is that licensed private hire vehicles can now display the company telephone number and / or website address on rear windscreens, on a single area of rear bodywork or adjacent to the vehicle registration number plate. They are not allowed to display any signage along the side of the vehicle.

Incidentally – as I'm sure any sensible person would realise – a vehicle that is sold must remove all signs and licenses etc. Perhaps the PCO should include second hand car dealers in its press releases, because many of them either don't know or don't care.

Ok, so back to the beginning; why the close call? Well, as many of you may have read here in the past, my belief was that former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone was considering allowing private hire vehicles into bus lanes and that all he was waiting for was the formality of allowing the vehicles to have advertising on the rear so that CCTV would recognise them. Mayor Boris has promised *Call Sign* that he will not allow that. Can you imagine PH in bus lanes? No one will convince me that the recent Mayoral election allowed this trade to achieve a close call...



Private hire vehicles and Royal Parks...

Bearing in mind the previous, as no vehicles other than licensed taxis are allowed to advertise in the Royal Parks, can we now assume that minicabs with advertising are banned?

A *Call Sign* file from 2002 reported on Addison Lee MD John Griffin appealing against a ban on minicabs using the Royal Parks. He claimed in court that minicabs should be treated in the same way as the capital's licensed taxis, which are allowed to use the parks. However, law lords agreed with a ruling given earlier by two High Court judges that the ban was not discriminatory.

This followed a £10 fine on minicab driver Harvey Phillips, who had been given an on-the-spot fine for driving in St James Park in January 2000. Approaching a checkpoint manned by the Royal Parks police, he did a swift u-turn but was stopped by a police motorcyclist and given a £10 fine. He refused to pay and that led to the unsuccessful court case.

After the case, John Griffin said: **"It seems that London and its judges are in love with the black cabs, but that is not a good reason for discrimination. There is no good reason whatsoever why minicabs cannot travel through the Royal Parks in exactly the same way as black cabs."**

Then in January of this year, the PCO published a press release confirming that nothing had changed and that PH still cannot use the Royal Parks. I do not think I have heard anything since which suggests that not to still be the case, so the PCO notice must still stand. The message from 7 months ago (*Jan 2008 Call Sign*) said:

The Regulations governing Royal Parks prohibit any vehicle "constructed, adapted or in use for the purpose of a trade or business" from using roads in the Parks. There is a specific exemption for London licensed taxis, but this does not cover private hire vehicles (PHVs). This means that PHVs cannot drive in the Parks if they are on business, for example taking customers to or from Park venues (such as the Zoo or the Serpentine),

unless the passenger resides in the parks.

The press release added:

Enforcement of this regulation has been variable due to the difficulty of identifying PHVs. The licence discs and the forthcoming red route exemption signage makes these vehicles more readily identifiable, thus increasing the possible risk of a fine. We have made clear that private hire vehicles provide a similar public service to taxis in many respects and urged Royal Parks to extend the exemption to include PHVs among the vehicles allowed to use the Parks. In response to these requests, Royal Parks has agreed to review the restrictions and will be consulting on whether to allow PHVs to drive in the Parks in the coming months. In the meantime the existing prohibition remains in force.

With the new advertising regulations, I assume that PH are even more identifiable and that the regulations will be enforced – always assuming that they haven't rescinded them without telling me! Why am I so vindictive to our private hire friends? Because I can be and until I can honestly say that they are all behaving in a correct, honest and decent manner, then my view is that they don't deserve any favours – even if the PCO disagree with that assessment.

Incidentally, the Royal Parks consist of Bushy Park, Green Park, Greenwich Park, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Regent's Park (with Primrose Hill), Richmond Park and St James's Park...

And speaking of Mayor Boris...

Gotta say I am delighted that the Mayor has – at least for now – put the block on his predecessor's idea of pedestrianising Parliament Square and creating another traffic monster like Trafalgar Square. I'll happily admit that tourists love Trafalgar Square as it is now and even Linda and I enjoyed a traffic-free afternoon there some time ago. But so far as I am aware, motor vehicles are not yet illegal and still a necessity in order to keep London moving. Had Parliament Square become the latest no go area, Westminster would have been a place for taxis to avoid altogether.

Mercedes cab

I have written elsewhere in this issue my views on the new Mercedes cab. My only comment on this page is to wonder now just how long it will be before London becomes inundated with similar looking "taxis" to the Vito? Mike Holland's TW200 looks just as nice to me – both inside and out – except for the lack of the turning circle and like the Merc, it bears little resemblance to a London taxi on the outside. But it does carry a price tag of £15,000 less than the Merc. A can of worms? You betcha...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

Meeting with the Mayor's Director for Transport Policy...

I have recently had a meeting at City Hall with the new Mayor's *Director for Policy Transport*, Kulveer Ranger. There were a number of topics on the agenda including signage, bus lanes, congestion charging, parking tickets and any possible fuel surcharge.

I must say that I was quite impressed with how quickly he had grasped the topics on the agenda and showed an understanding of our industry. All too often politicians just sit and listen and you are never too sure whether or not they understand the situation, however, in Kulveer's case he asked some very intelligent and pertinent questions and genuinely showed interest in our concerns.

As you can appreciate, nothing was resolved because that has to be decided by *Transport for London* and not an individual, but I believe it is essential that the leading politicians are well briefed on the concerns that face our industry. This was the first time I had met Mr Ranger (with a name like that, it's good enough for me) and I must say that I was quite impressed – however, time will tell and we will have to wait and see how he performs.

Signage

I must have bored many of you to death with the number of times I have written over the past few years concerning the exterior advertising on minicabs. I am – as I have always been – totally against any form of advertising as it will be used by members of the public as a sign of authenticity that the minicab in question is *bona fide*, whereas we all know that very soon there will be cars cruising around London with bogus signage purporting to be legitimate licensed private hire.

Members of the public will not look for the licence roundel, because so far as they are concerned the exterior signage will suffice to indicate the vehicle is licensed.

When private hire instigated their lobbying for exterior signage, it was intended the signage should be anywhere on the vehicle but this was vehemently opposed by the taxi industry. So it appears that the authorities compromised (hopefully due to the lobbying we did) and agreed there could be signage on the rear of the vehicle including the back window, but only advertising the name of the minicab company – you know, like Addison Lee used to do!

I was told at the PCO in December 2006 that they had recommended to TfL that exterior signage be allowed on the rear of the minicabs, but only advertising the operators name. TfL were just expected to rubber stamp the recommendation, however I heard nothing and did enquire several times as to what had happened, only to be informed that everything was going through its normal process.

Then out of the blue, like other organisations in our industry, I received the following communication from the PCO. I thought the sentence that started the communication



regarding the guidelines was quite unusual – what do you think?

The attached sets out new guidelines affecting London licensed PHVs which reflect the change in Regulation 8 of the Private Hire Vehicles (London PHV Licences) Regulation 2004, approved by the TfL Board and signed by the Transport Commissioner on 15 October 2007. The changes come into effect immediately.

Why wait until July 2008 to release guidelines that were signed in October 2007? It seems rather a long time to me.

Oh and by the way, I am reliably informed that when Boris Johnson was running for Mayor earlier this year, he received one particular donation to his election fund of £25,000. Three guesses as to who it was from – aaahhh, you got it in one... that's right, Addison Lee!

Golf Day

As many of you golfers are aware, DaC tends to have a golf day every year and donate any

proceeds to a taxi trade charity. However, we did not have one last year due to the fact that we were moving premises.

I am a member of the *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* (WCHCD) and they too have a golf day each year in order to raise funds for their general charity fund, consequently I thought it would be a good idea to combine the two with Dial-a-Cab sponsoring the day and with the proceeds being donated to the WCHCD general charity fund.

The event took place on Friday 18 July at Nazeing golf club. Although not a golfer myself, I went along for the day and I must say the whole day was excellent. Eighteen teams took part and the support that Dial-a-Cab received from the remainder of the trade was also excellent. I believe there is a report of the day, including pictures, elsewhere in the magazine.

I really must give a special mention to Keith Cain and Jacqui Chart who organised the day extremely well and to Natalie, who came along on the day and who with the assistance of Jacqui, coerced the golfers into parting with their money to purchase raffle tickets.

DaC Finance Manager, Howard Pears, checked the scorecards and Allan Evans was the starter on the 1st tee. We laid on a comedian for the evening (no, not me) and the day raised £4k for the charity, which I believe is an excellent result and I know the WCHCD will be very pleased with the amount raised. My thanks to everyone who was involved on the day and helped make it so successful.

Brian Rice

Chairman, Dial-a-Cab

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Now Westminster admit it...

Appeal your PCN and you will probably win!

Call Sign has been telling **Dial-a-Cab** drivers for over two years now – take your PCN to the independent appeal adjudicators and you will probably win. Now **Westminster Council** have admitted that is the case.

Recent figures for that borough indicate that of the drivers who take their appeals all the way, just 6% fail – or in other words – 94% of those prepared to go to the final adjudication are winning! In the 6 months from October 2007 to March 2008, a total of 9506 PCNs were taken to adjudication of which Westminster won the paltry total of just 606.

In addition to Westminster, the boroughs of Southwark, Lambeth and Hackney also fared poorly when it came to that final appeal.

So why is the record of wins so bad for Westminster and others? The answer is because the appeal process that most drivers go through, often via email where having two appeals is fairly non time consuming, seem to have very little notice taken of them. Drivers appealing with good grounds are having those appeals turned down and a large percentage of those – after two appeals – will give up and pay the fine before the borough's "threat" of it doubling, comes into being.

But a London council's spokesperson told us that few of the PCNs issued in London that are taken to the adjudication process are actually challenged if there is any evidence likely to be produced and as a result, the PCN is wiped off the record before the adjudication even takes place. So does that not suggest that many PCNs are issued incorrectly?

One of the organisations that helps motorists fight parking tickets, parkingappeals.co.uk, say that many of the early appeals to boroughs



should be accepted if there is any sort of reasonable excuse, but they aren't – probably hoping that the "offender" will give up quietly and pay-up.

Many drivers on Dial-a-Cab have told PCN issuers following unsuccessful appeals that they will wait for adjudication rather than pay – drivers such as **Tony Guerrier (L28)**, **Martin Hizer (M47)** – whose current battles are itemised in this issue – and even ye olde editor, **Alan Fisher (F07)** who committed the cardinal sin of parking on a single yellow line on a Bank Holiday Monday when the pay and display machine said there was no charge on Bank Holidays. There are many others as well who – even though DaC would have paid the fine – feel that the issue of their PCN was so wrong that it became a matter of principle. Now it seems that even Westminster agree with them...

Ron Yarbrough

PCO AND TOUTING

Unlike other trade papers, **Call Sign** realised immediately and wrote in the last issue that **Mayor Boris Johnson's** new anti-touting programme of *one strike and you're out* applied to licensed taxis as well as private hire. That is why there was no cry of "about time" from here.

Now **Mary Dowdye**, the PCO's Head of Standards & Regulations, has given the PCO's position as to the Mayor's plans to introduce the policy aimed at licensed drivers convicted of touting.

"This means," she says, "that any licensed driver convicted of touting on or after 1 August 2008, will have his or her driver's licence revoked. Drivers who have their licences revoked under these circumstances, may not be considered for a fresh licence before the expiry of 12 months from the date of revocation."

The policy does not affect your statutory right of appeal against the decision of the Licensing Authority.



Mary Dowdye

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Jery's World




Come on Alfie, you're just a bit paranoid about there being too much CCTV nowadays!

Subsidised Fuel For Cab Drivers

And why we won't get any...

Dial-a-Cab driver **Sid Nathan (K88)** has been with the Society since April 1986 and is extremely pro-DaC. During these 22 years, Sid has made numerous different suggestions that he believes would help improve the job we do as cab drivers. But his latest – in a plea to the Minister of State for Transport, **Rosie Winterton** to give licensed taxi drivers subsidised fuel as they do for buses - seems to have fallen on deaf ears.



The original request went to his constituency MP, **Andrew Dismore**, who in turn passed it to Ms Winterton. In her reply, Rosie says that Sid is referring to the *Bus Services Operators Grant*, a scheme that reimburses bus operators (and some community transport providers) with a large part of the fuel duty paid in operating local services. She continues:

"Whilst the Government recognises the valuable role played by taxis in transport provision, I have to say that there are no plans to extend this grant to taxis. To do so would involve substantial additional public expenditure, which I am not sure would be justified given many other pressing priorities. One of the great strengths of the taxi industry is that it delivers the services people need very largely without public subsidy. I would just add that there are circumstances where a taxi driver could benefit from subsidy. When service, it attracts *Bus Service Operators Grant*. Financial assistance schemes, administered and funded by a number of local authorities, travel in licensed taxis at substantially reduced fares."

The Minister ends by assuring Sid that "...the Government greatly appreciates the contribution which the taxi trade makes to overall transport provision."

“Typical Government Minister’s response,” he said. “What is the difference between us and buses other than size? We do the same job except we don’t know where we are going to go until the next passenger gets in, whereas they are doing it the easy way in following a prescribed route. We deserve a fuel subsidy and I do not think this is the end of the fight.”

Knowing Sid as we do, neither do we...!



Rosie Winterton

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Alan Green (E52) is Call Sign's photographer when not driving his DaC taxi...

You'll Never Guess Who Was On My Back Seat?

No? Well neither did I...!



This was a taxi driving day and I had accepted an account trip. The name of the account rang no bells and I just assumed it was someone's private account as the passenger's name was the same as the account name. It was in NW8 and at first the trip details made it look like a Westminster job – but this was definitely no *TaxiCard* ride...

As I pulled up outside the account address, several paparazzi were already standing around waving an assorted range of high-end cameras – and at my empty cab! Not too comfortable facing the other side of a lens for a change, I donned my dark glasses and Dial-a-Cab cap. Just then and with his usual impeccable timing, Editor Al called and I related the scene before me. I asked him if he had heard of the lady whose name was on the terminal?

He quickly *Googled* the account holder's name revealing her to be the daughter of a well known singer from a folk/rock group formed in 1969 and that she had an album due out in August.

"I don't want you to look a pillock, so this is her background," *Call Sign's* Ed continued, while giving me a stream of information about my passenger and expressing the hope of my taking a photo of her holding the latest issue of *Call Sign* Magazine! However, we were both rather puzzled as to why the daughter of a singer whose name was rarely heard outside of folk and oldie radio station circles, should have attracted the attention of such a large group of paparazzi?

I rang the bell and a lady's voice asked me to drive round to the back door. Embarrassingly, I had to explain that a growing number of paparazzi were blocking my route and that I'd have to wait out front. An unusual word to come out of a lady's mouth – not, I believe actually aimed at me personally – followed. Then the lady's head appeared through an open window, suggesting in rather graphic language where the photographers could go! I still had no clue as to who she was other than whatever info was on my terminal – plus that of the Ed.

Thirty minutes later and after two *advise arrivals* – my passenger came rushing through the door sporting a pair of sun glasses and a big floppy hat. She virtually threw herself into the taxi and called out even before closing the door... "Go, go, go!" We roared off down the road, chased by the aforementioned gentlemen of the press corps on their motorbikes!

Eager to please the boss, I told the passenger that my Editor was a big fan of her mother and we knew that she herself had an album coming out soon. Could I take a photo at some convenient moment on the journey?

That moment never came, as the 'paps' swirled around us for the entire length of the journey. They followed us to our destination, snapping away on the move as I weaved through the heavy traffic trying to avoid the stares of pedestrians who were pointing at my passenger.

As she got out, the passenger told me: "You must be confusing me with someone else, my name is Sienna Miller and I'm an actress!"

The conversation that ensued between the Editor and myself shall remain private; sufficient to say that his desire to avoid my looking like a pillock didn't go very well! As for me, I don't mind wheelchairs, pubs et al, but I might change my attribute list to exclude anyone who uses an alias!



The real Sienna Miller

Alan Green (E52)

WESTMINSTER INSURANCE TAKEN OVER

Westminster Motor Insurance has been around for 60 years and for many of those, it changed very little. But that lack of change had a certain informality that many drivers liked. It was probably the last taxi insurance company to become computerised.

In 2003, South African insurance firm Santam acquired it and the changes became noticeable. Suddenly the Westminster had joined the 21st century.

But from May 15, the Westminster is no more having been swallowed up by fellow taxi and private hire insurance company, Tradex, following agreement in March.

According to Tradex – whose turnover is around £100million – the name of Westminster is still valued and will be used in some policies aimed at taxi drivers. However, as a company, the Westminster is no more as Tradex becomes the trade's largest insurance company.

Westminster clients who would like more information should call Tradex on 0207 264 7900. The office is at 128 – 129 Minorities, EC3N 1NT.

Drivers with Westminster policies will automatically be transferred to Tradex and current claims will be dealt with as usual with many Westminster staff having been kept on.

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A personal view from the editor...

Is the new Vito Mercedes the catalyst that spells THE END OF THE TAXI TRADE???

If you've been around more than a few years, you will have heard many times along the way that the game's finished! By the 'game', we usually mean the taxi business and so far, no matter what's been thrown at us, we have not only survived but have continued to run the finest taxi service in the world.

But for several years, in addition to our ongoing battles with the little people and three-wheeled cyclists, there has been one other major topic of conversation – the need for an alternative taxi to the one currently available from LTI. The Coventry manufacturer have always said that they had no problem with any other manufacturer as competition, provided they had to produce a vehicle that met the same stringent conditions that they faced - ie the *Conditions of Fitness* and especially its 25foot turning circle restriction. No one can deny that Mercedes, in the form of a converted Vito Traveliner, has done exactly that.

Their new vehicle, which they claim is specially adapted for the taxi trade, has without doubt the most comfortable driving compartment that we have ever seen in this business. It is an undeniable fact that anyone over 6feet tall has a problem with comfort in a TX taxi and over the years, LTI seem to have done little to change that fact.

Dial-a-Cab's Michael Beevor (N76) is reviewing the new cab in this issue from the point of view of a driver, rather than quoting from the press release.

As for me? Well the Mercedes Vito looks like a nice vehicle, however I doubt that even with the added class of its Mercedes name it will hold value as well as the TX variety has in the past. In fact, according to an ad in the latest *Private Hire and Taxi Monthly*, an 04 Vito 9-seater minibus can be yours for £9995 or a newer version (07) 9-seater would set you back just £13,995. That would suggest either a very poor return for a 6-seater costing £35K- or is it that we are paying far more than we should? Especially as its advertised weight prohibits it from going over Albert Bridge, although I have been told it can just squeeze through the 6ft 6inch width restriction.

But why the *Call Sign* scare tactic of the headline? The end of the taxi trade?

As I said in the last issue, my problem is that it may have a *For Hire* sign, but it looks like a minicab. That's because it IS a minicab, converted from a van. As we also wrote last month, in 1998 a Bill was passed which prohibited any vehicle working as a minicab from looking like a London taxi. This now is the exact reverse situation. The Mercedes Vito was – and still is – used by many minicab companies and therefore looks not like a taxi, but a minicab. Would a *For Hire* sign on an old Austin 1100 where the turning circle had been converted in the same way as the Vito, then become a taxi? I don't think so. Yet courtesy of the PCO, the Vito is now a taxi.

My problem is that if we all - taxis and private hire - end up driving the same vehicle, there will be no need for a differential and we'll all be just cabs. Touting will become impossible to control because from the front and back we'd all look alike to passengers – especially tourists. In the end it would be the easier option to let everyone with a licence ply for hire.

Some drivers say that the Metrocab never looked like a taxi when first arriving. True! But neither did it look like any car you had ever seen – other than at a funeral perhaps! If the Vito looked unlike any other car, then it would be a totally different matter...but it does and most of those vehicles it resembles are in the PH business.

Following rumours that we'd heard from dri-

vers, *Call Sign* phoned KPM (admittedly without saying who we were) to enquire about taking our TX2 in part exchange for a Vito. They offered to "look at it" and would let us know if they found someone interested. But the bottom line was that they wouldn't take it – and that from an LTI main dealer. Is that not ominous enough? We also called M&O about a new TX4. They said they were accepting TX2s in part exchange. But if the Vito takes off, would there still be an LTI anyway?

If the new cab is successful, I believe we will all soon become minicabs. So when I say the end of the trade is near, I'm not just looking for a cheap headline...

Alan Fisher

Electric Taxi at Motor Show

The UK's first electric taxi is currently on show at the British motor show, which ends on 3 August. The electric cab has been launched by Glasgow based *Allied Vehicles*, whose E7 has not been passed for London use. However, to those parts of the UK where it is currently in service, their new zero emission electric taxi will be available from October 2008, following three years research and development by Allied. They are currently looking for local authority partners to install recharging networks for those drivers buying the cab.

The E7 is powered by Lithium-ion batteries, which have been developed and supplied by Scottish company Axion Holdings plc. These give the new vehicle a range of up to 100 miles from a single charge and a top speed of 60mph.

Lithium-ion batteries are notoriously expensive, but so confident in their longevity are Allied that they are offering a six-year warranty on them with a two year unlimited mileage Peugeot warranty on the vehicle itself.

Allied Chairman, Gerry Facenna spoke about the high cost of diesel, suggesting that problem would probably get worse and that an electric vehicle is the solution.

The E7 will cost £39,450 to put onto the road. LTI's TX4E electric taxi is expected to go into production next year. They will be working with Tanfield...

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Dial-a-Cab driver **Steve Bryant (Y41)** is about to accompany an NHS trouble-shooter on an errand of mercy that could help many Ugandan people extend their current life expectancy beyond its miserly average of 45 years. By 2050, it is hoped that figure could reach mid-60s.

Steve is accompanying **Jane Barr**, whose usual task is to float between NHS hospitals and clinics in Devon. The plan for Uganda is to deliver urgent medical supplies to both adults and children in Kampala and also to give talks on how they can help themselves more. This especially applies to midwifery – where there is an acute shortage of midwives. The subject of HIV and AIDS is also something that affects so many in Africa and advice on how they can help battle the illness will be high on Jane's agenda.

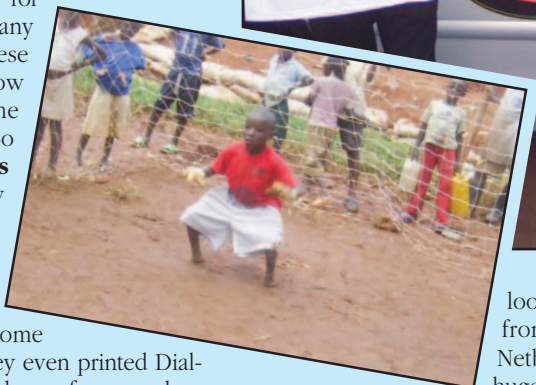
As for Steve, after hearing about the **Kampala Kids League**, a soccer league containing many players with disabilities yet one that is taken very seriously, he approached **Call Sign** to see whether we could get hold of any old football shirts for some of the kids. Like many around the world, these kids love – and know everything about – the English Premiership. So we went to **Netbusters** in Horns Road, Newbury Park and explained the situation.

They provided a complete set of **Spurs** tops together with some scarves at cost price. They even printed Dial-a-Cab on the back of each one for us and our sincere thanks go to them. For a shop that

STEVE FLIES TO UGANDA TO HELP THE KIDS



Brian Rice presents the **Spurs** tops to Steve Bryant, who will take them to Uganda and give them to a disabled children's team. Inset pic: This young boy want to be goalkeeper and having no feet won't stop him...



looks quite small from the outside, **Netbusters** have a huge range of foot-

ball gear covering all the top teams in Europe! **Brian Rice** presented Steve with the shirts on our behalf and he will be taking the shirts and giving them to one lucky team. A report will be in **Call Sign** when Steve and Jane return.

DAC PRESENT VARIETY CLUB COACH NUMBER FIVE

Dial-a-Cab's first sponsored Golf Day of 2008 took place at the West Kent Golf Club where over 20 teams of four turned up and yet again our drivers put in an excellent performance.

However, the main purpose of our sponsoring the **Andrews Classic** was to help raise some £20,000 on the day with the proceeds going towards supplying another sunshine coach (see cover pic) – this one making an astonishing ongoing total of 4802 sunshine coaches presented to various children's organisations by the **Variety Club of Great Britain**.

DaC Call Centre manager, **Keith Cain**, told **Call Sign**:

"I was very proud to present Dial-a-Cab's fifth sunshine coach to the leaders of **The Winchester Project**, who are based in Winchester Road, St Johns Wood. The project is run by Camden Council and provides educational and recreational activities for children and young people. These include an after-school club with a school pick up service, summer, Easter and half term play schemes, a youth club with young people's workshops, outings, multi-sports, football training, competitions and coaching courses in football. We all talk about giving young people something to do rather than hanging around street corners and The Winchester Project certainly offers young people those opportunities. Don't be surprised if the next time you are in St Johns Wood, the DaC Variety Club coach gives you a toot!"

As for the golf, the best performance by a DaC player came from **Peter Waldren (K11)**, who was runner up in the individual competition with 40 points - missing the outright winner's tag by a whisker.

Taking third place in the best team competition was **Bobby Norris' (M02)**, whose team amassed a total of 91 points. **Bobby Norris** as an individual also won the *nearest the pin* competition with his second shot to the 18th green.

Well done to everybody who made this such a great day, especially our former bank manager Keith Andrews who put the whole thing together - and of course congratulations to The Winchester Project who join the proud list of previous Dial-a-Cab Variety Club coaches that the Society has presented.

DaC Variety Club coaches: The Winchester Project; The Demelza Hospice for Children in Sittingbourne; Shenstone School in Crayford; Helen Allison School in Dartford and Delves School in Derby.



Keith Cain presents the keys of DaC's fifth sunshine coach to the Winchester Project

CALL CENTRE CHAT

New radios

With our new radio channels having been tested and fitted, we now need to upgrade driver's radios in the cabs. We have been slowly fitting these new radios as cabs visit Roman Way with problems, however, we would like to speed up this process and in the near future you will receive a letter notifying you that an appointment has been arranged for you to visit Roman Way.

We have organised allocated slots, which means that drivers are not held to a specific time. So long as you arrive between your allocated times, the change of equipment process should go smoothly. But please wait until you receive your notification to attend.

Mercedes Vito

With the introduction of the new Mercedes Vito cab, our engineers have had the opportunity of seeing the vehicle with reference to fitting Dial-a-Cab equipment. I must say that a lot of thought has gone into designing the vehicle with radio drivers in mind.

Wiring has been fitted to make it easy for radio circuits to connect their equipment and it is planned that the aerial cable will also be installed at the factory prior to delivery - a time saving factor when our fitters install the system.

At the time of writing this article, we are still waiting for confirmation that the actual aerial can be affixed to the roof. I do not think this will be a big problem and I understand that Mercedes are looking to make a decision very soon.

I have seen the vehicle and like everyone else have mixed feelings, however, time will



be the real test. If the vehicle performs as it says on the tin, then it just may be popular. Although, the 2.2 litre engine is said to be sufficient, I would still like to see it perform up Highgate Hill with six people in the back. I remember as if it were yesterday, my first 2.2 Rover engine FX4R taxi. Highgate Hill with just one person on board caused real problems with pedestrians walking past you and vehicles behind following in a cloud of smoke!

Euston late night "shouts"

This section could be very similar to that of Allan Evans' article this month because we need to make drivers aware of certain situations that are causing problems.

Virgin Trains staff has audited the late night train "shouts" recently and revised procedures have been implemented. From

now on, if you are lucky enough to undertake a ride from Euston, St Pancras, Kings Cross or Marylebone on the *Fraser Eagle* and *Eurostar* accounts, drivers whose trip involves going outside the M25 will be questioned as to the miles 'cleared' if it exceeds the estimated mileage of the computer route planners.

The same also will apply to those drivers who do not call DaC controllers to clear their trips and just let the meter reading go through. Each trip undertaken is double-checked by staff at Dial-a-Cab House and those drivers who persistently fail to follow these procedures will be required to explain their actions.

EC5 and scrubs...

We have experienced a problem on EC5 during quiet times in that when there are 99 drivers booked in and you are unfortunate enough to be scrubbed off a trip, you will be unable to get back into the system at number one. In fact you will be booked off.

It would require reprogramming to overcome the problem, but because it has only occurred on very few occasions, I would ask you to contact the controllers so that they can instruct you when to scrub the trip. They can monitor the actual number of cabs booked in and as soon as the number falls below 99, they will advise you to clear. As I've said, it doesn't occur often, but it can happen and this will prevent you from becoming frustrated at losing your position.

Keith Cain

**Call Centre Manager
Driver Operations Manager**

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

FIFTY GREEN YEARS...

Here we go again, no sooner do I ask / beg / plead with Alan Fisher to be allowed to recall prototype taxis that looked full of promise in some instances, and others that frankly bordered on the ludicrous, when out comes news of not one challenger to LTI and their TX4, but two!

The KPM/Mercedes Vito has already received a great deal of publicity, ranging from the best thing since Adam had his wicked ways with Eve (and the serpent), to it being doomed to failure as being much too van-like and costly to maintain.

However what I can say with justification is that even if Mercedes put their might and money behind this vehicle and even though it has been passed by the PCO, it will still tempt fewer buyers initially than KPM might have cared to plan for. The long running saga of Metrocab has made many in the London and UK cab trade wary of taking another chance with any new entrant, even if it is Mercedes who are respected for their superb engineering, but who are also known for charging premium prices for a premium product - especially for their spares.

The other soon-to-be entrant is a rather bizarre combination; better known before the Second World War than today for specialising in hand built out-and-out sports and sports racing cars - Frazer-Nash! Today they also deal with electric designed motors.

Why they have been selected to build London taxis is not easily digested. Also, this does not seem to me to be the best possible use of a name revered in sports car racing circles to this day, even though they have not been a player for decades in those circles. I will finish up with this; competition, fair competition, is often a good thing for customers. As buyers, let's hope it helps us.

Be lucky, Sunset Strip



A Frazer-Nash sports car from 1934 - are they now involved with electric taxis?

Despite torrential rain and strong winds, a convoy of taxis set off from London to Herne Bay on 7 July. But nothing could dampen the spirits of those taking part in this **Albany** trip. Many of the children on this fifth annual trip came from Chernobyl and Belarus. Also there were some children from Delmeza House, in Eltham, who also enjoyed the day.

It's over 20 years since the accident at the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, but the effects of exposure to radiation 90 times greater than that of the first atomic bomb at Hiroshima are still being seen today. In December 2000, the last working reactor at Chernobyl was closed down, but the sarcophagus built around the exploded reactor is in a poor state and continues to spread its cloud of death on the Ukraine and Belarus. Thanks to the Friends of Chernobyl's Children (**FOCCV**), children from the affected areas are brought over to the UK to stay with families for a month and taken for medical and dental help they would not get at home.

The fresh foods and uncontaminated air in the UK mean the immune systems of these children receive a boost to increase life expectancy. These are the children who enjoyed their day at the seaside in Herne Bay, rain or no rain.

The **Herne Bay Catholic Social Club** played host to the Albany event and their hall was the venue for the children's disco party. On arrival, the **Lord Mayor of Canterbury** (Carolyn Parry) welcomed the convoy along with the **Herne Bay and Whitstable Lions** and members of the **Herne Bay Catholic Club**. Fish and chips and then ice cream was followed by home baked cakes from the local **Brownies**.

For many of the adults present it was a real tearjerker when the children stood together and sang some Russian folk songs. As the group had interpreters, they had also learnt a song of thanks, which they sang to the audience of taxi

Chernobyl Childrens Day Out

Thanks to the Albany Taxi Charity Fund...



The Chernobyl children sing their thank you!

drivers, carers and those from Herne Bay.












The Albany committee would like to thank everyone involved for making this such a great event. In addition to those already mentioned, thanks go to **Michael Glassman** of Colts Cabs for sponsoring the diesel for the trip, **Henry Forrester**

for providing the amusements, **Councillor Vince McMann** for all his help as well as **ROK Maintenance** for their sponsorship and providing the children with goodie bags and balloons.

Thanks, of course, also go to the drivers for making the outing possible...

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While the weather in early July wasn't overly good, nothing stops the Queen's Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace. They can cause some extra traffic, but most agree that they add colour to London. But the party on Tuesday 15 July saw something of a problem as it ended – and that problem involved taxis, an LTDA marshal and the PCO.

As usual for those parties, the LTDA provided marshals to help keep the huge queue organised and to make sure that there is no free-for-all involving the morning suit brigade – many of who are probably regular taxi users. Council of Management member and TAXI columnist, **Steve McNamara** was marshalling and according to him, everything was going well. On occasion, he'd ask a Dial-a-Cab driver to see whether a message could go out on our terminals asking for drivers to help out at the palace and these went out.

When **Call Sign** phoned Steve to see how things were going, he said the queue was long and there was plenty of work, but that everything was under control. But at around 6pm came the first sign of trouble. DaC driver **Kevin McDonald (H14)** was about to go onto the rank, but instead sent a message saying that Steve McNamara had closed the Buckingham Palace rank because three PCO officers had arrived and were issuing stop notes.

Kevin told **Call Sign**: "The rank is something of a cul-de-sac and once on, you are trapped! Steve closed it just as I arrived. He explained why and I could see the officers checking cabs. I don't think it was the most sensible thing they could have done with so many people waiting to get home."

Steve McNamara confirmed the message with **Call Sign** and told us:

"The queue was absolutely huge, but drivers were coming in and taking the work. Several of the passengers were in wheelchairs, but everyone got a cab in turn. Even though the weather was really hot, the queue remained very orderly. Then the PCO turned up. After they had issued two stops, I closed the rank. There was no way I was prepared to wave cabs in, only to see them get a stop note. My colleague pointed out to the Carriage Officers that their presence was having a disruptive effect, but they told him that they were PCO officers and could go where they wanted. That's when we closed the rank. I have no problem with the PCO and in fact I think they generally do a good job, but surely they could have gone to Victoria Station or the Gatwick Express – even the Coach Station. Why come to the palace and cause what was bound to be a huge disruption when so many were waiting for taxis?"

As Steve put his own stop onto the rank, the **Queen's Equerry** came out to see what was happening. "The palace were very understanding," said Steve, "I think they know what a good job the trade normally does in helping to clear passengers following the parties."

Another DaC driver told **Call Sign** that the PCO left at around 6.35 after being asked to do so by the police who were becoming concerned at the number of people milling around looking for taxis. The police then asked DaC drivers to put messages out that the PCO had gone and could they assist in clearing the queue.

According to the PCO, one driver asked to stop by the compliance team turned out to have neither a PCO licence nor a DVLA licence. In other words he wasn't a taxi driver at all!

A TfL spokesperson for the Public Carriage

Exclusive...

Taxis Boycott Buck House with PCO there!



Steve McNamara marshalling at the palace

Office told **Call Sign**:

"As part of our work to ensure London's taxis maintain their reputation for excellence, the Public Carriage Office carries out regular on-street checks of random vehicles. Our compliance team will always make every effort to minimise disruption to taxi drivers stopped for checks and vehicles are only pulled over where it is safe to do so without disrupting other traffic. For a properly licensed driver whose vehicle is in good condition, our checks should never cause more than a few minutes' inconvenience."

The spokesperson continued: "In this case, just one driver was asked to pull over because he was unable to produce his licence and his vehicle was in very poor condition; we had in fact already served this cab with an *Unfit Notice* so it should not have been on the roads at all. The driver was asked to pull over to one side so as not to disrupt the other waiting taxis.

Our compliance officers and a passing police officer were surprised by the behaviour of the LTDA marshal who turned away the remaining cabs and taped off the area, causing needless disruption."

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DaC's Mr Theatre Ticket,
Tom Whitbread, reviews a
sensational new show...



JAY JOHNSON: THE TWO AND ONLY

On 1 July, I was lucky enough to get some tickets to see the press preview of a show that has arrived in London from an ultra-successful tour of America and which is now based at the Arts Theatre in Great Newport Street WC2.

I had never before been to the Arts Theatre, but was pleasantly surprised. I thought it would be small and cramped, but it was a bit like entering Dr Who's Tardis!

Jay Johnson: The Two And Only is a one-man show that takes you through the life of Jay Johnson, his entry into and his life of ventriloquism. Along the way and in a very entertaining manner with Jay's own brand of American humour, it showed the enthralled audience how ventriloquism began and progressed through the centuries.

His humour is probably more subtle than the English variety and a little knowledge of American politics is useful. Having said that, this show is very amusing. So much so that in the US, the show won a *Tony* at the 2007 ceremony.

Put together, you have a real evening's entertainment. I particularly liked his monkey and tennis ball dummies and especially the felt drawing pen (please don't erase me). You end up watching the dummies as he convinces you that they have come to life and are talking to you. No Archie Andrews syndrome here as throwing your voice really comes of age!

Jay Johnson began performing at eleven years old when he discovered his natural ability to make a cousin's doll come to life. This was the start of a career of using his imagination to entertain. In high school he produced and starred in his own television show, which led to him performing in various shows across Texas.

Jay's TV credits are many. In the 70s he starred as schizophrenic Chuck and Bob alongside Billy Crystal in the classic television comedy *SOAP*. Most recently he has appeared on the *David Letterman Show* in addition to the telecast of the 2007 *Tony Awards* where he was presented with his award by Eddie Izzard.

For a relaxing and humorous evening's entertainment, I recommend you go and see this show. Jay Johnson is an amazing ventriloquist whose show travels through two very quick hours without wasting time on an intermission, so you don't arrive home too late if there is an early morning start the next day.

Jay Johnson is at the Arts Theatre until September 28 - Box office on 0844 847 1608.

Tom Whitbread



Antony and Lauris - lucky escape!

Crash landing scare for DaC's Tony on Silver wedding holiday!

A month in publishing sometimes seems like a long time. This time exactly 4 weeks ago, *Call Sign* wrote of the celebrations surrounding the silver wedding anniversary of Dial-a-Cab driver **Antony Hizer (E63)** and his wife **Lauris**.


In addition to a party for the family, Tony and Lauris decided to also take the opportunity to have an 8-day Italian break. What they hadn't planned on was a lucky escape for the pair of them as their flight attempted to land at Forli Airport! Antony takes up the story...

"We were coming in to land. I've flown enough times to know what a landing feels like and this one didn't feel right. As we came in over the rooftops approaching the runway, I could see that we were travelling too fast! I could feel my adrenaline pumping away and whilst it was happening too quickly to feel fear, it was hardly a comfortable feeling.

"Then when we were around 200 feet away from touching down, there was a sudden roar of the engines and we took off again. Lauris, who'd been sleeping, woke up with a start and asked what was happening! By then we had circled and were coming in again, but this time you could see and feel the difference. It was the speed you'd expect and we made a perfect landing. Nevertheless, passengers who hadn't said a word to each other for the whole trip suddenly started talking. Then an announcement came over the speakers apologising for the forced take-off and blamed 'animals on the runway'. No one will ever convince me that it was anything other than probably someone training in the cockpit and not doing it very well!"

Will the experience stop Antony from flying again?

"Of course not," he said, "it was just one of those things!"



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Over 300 smiling kids descended on Southend on what could well have been the wettest July day in history! But every one of them was intent on having a good time – and they did!

The **London Taxidrivers' Fund for Underprivileged Children** – now celebrating its 80th year – made its annual pilgrimage to Southend with a huge 120 vehicle convoy of horn-blowing and decorated taxis – 97 of them – together with back-up vehicles from the RAC, St John's Ambulance and City of London police outriders. The cabs carried 300 disadvantaged and special needs youngsters, together with their carers. *BBC London 94.9* covered the complete day with reporter Alison Freeman giving listeners a taste of how children – no matter how disabled or disadvantaged – can enjoy themselves even in the most atrocious weather.

Waving the smiling kids off from their start at Victoria Park were the Alderman and Sheriff of the City of London – Mr Ian Luder and Mrs Lin Luder. The Worshipful Company of Tin Plate Workers sent The Master, Roger Smaridge and The Clerk, Michael Henderson-Begg CC. The Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Councillor Mohammed Abdus Salique, joined them.

Cartoon Network characters and *Heart 106.4* with lots of goodie bags for the children – provided fun in the park. Also there was Chingford *Costco* manager Terry and her assistant Charmaine who came to the park to donate goody bags and sweets for the children and drivers (!!!) plus a welcome 760 bottles of water for everyone.

The convoy arrived in Southend – via the traditional 'wee' stop at the *Palms Hotel* in Hornchurch – and headed for the seafront following lunch at the *Cliffs Pavilion*. Inter-charity assistance saw Brian Houssart of the *Southend Taxi Drivers Charity Fund for Children* working tirelessly ferrying those children who were in wheelchairs down to the sea front in his minibus – and of course bringing them back later.

A few hours at *Adventure Island* and Southend's *Sea Life Centre* saw most of them still going strong, so it was back to the Cliffs for a slap-up tea and *Dave Davies* 'High School Musical' disco, which was attended by the Mayor of Southend, Councillor Gwen Horrigan MBE. She later presented the *Terry Stapleton Rose Bowl* to the winner of the best-decorated taxi – who again was Steven Bell. This year he and wife Wendy decorated the cab as the Batmobile! Steven dressed as Batman with Wendy making a lovely Robin! Steve's imagination has gained him a place with the LTFUC float at the Lord Mayor's Show in November. Meanwhile, *Essex MGM Inflatables* of Southend had a huge queue of kids wanting to get their faces painted in all sorts of weird and wonderful designs!

A touching moment came when driver **Lenny Harrington** came on stage to present Bill Tyzack with a £425 cheque, donated by the *Hilton, Euston* who have chosen the LTFUC as their charity, but then David

Even the Rain Couldn't Spoil a Great Day!

As the LTFUC take 300 happy kids to Southend on their 80th anniversary...!



David Lessman with the children and the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Mohammed Abdus Salique. Inset pic: David Lessman and Bill Tyzack present Lennie Harrington with a 40 year surprise!



Lessman turned the tables to a shocked and overwhelmed Lennie to present him

with an inscribed black

miniature porcelain taxi in appreciation of the 40 years of loyal support he has given the Fund as a driver on the outings.

Eventually it was time to say goodbye to Southend for another year and everyone piled into their cab – all wet but happy. However, the drivers were about to get even wetter as they drove past *Hadleigh Fire Station*; the crews were eagerly awaiting the convoy and turned their hoses on them! The kids squealed with delight seeing their drivers getting another soaking!

Raymond Levy, the Fund's PR spokesperson, said afterwards:

"The weather didn't dampen the children's enjoyment at all. They went to Adventure Island despite the rain and were filled with excitement. Some of them had never been to the seaside before. One child even asked me if we were abroad. He had just never seen the sea before."

Ray added that we perhaps take a day out for granted, "...but it is something very special for these kids."

The children came from hospitals, foster homes and underprivileged families across the Greater London area. The outing costs £8,000 to fund and the money is raised by sponsorship and fundraising activities, which the LTFUC organise throughout the year.

The Fund's Chairman, DaC's **David Lessman (D19)** and Life President **Bill Tyzack BEM (C06)** both asked *Call Sign* to thank everyone involved for their help in making the day go so well, even with the constant rain, and especially the 97 drivers who gave up a day's work.

Ray Levy summed it all up by saying: **"It's worth it to see just one child smile, but today we've seen 300 smiling children."**

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 speciality 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





I was recently lucky enough to test-drive the new Vito taxi whilst waiting for my TX4 to be serviced at KPM. First impressions of the taxi were good; stylish, modern and well built - something you would expect from Mercedes. The driver's compartment was spacious with (at last) a decent drivers seat as standard. It also had a good driving position and drove very well.

The passenger compartment was larger than expected with 6 seats and full aircon as standard. I don't think we have too much to worry about regarding the engine and gear-box, as they have been in the Vito vans for quite sometime now.

As a London taxi, I think it still needs adjustments. I noticed a number of things that could lead to drivers having major headaches with the Vito. With standard aircon and 6 seats, already high diesel costs could become even higher. With no real opening rear windows, the aircon will be on almost 24/7 and an extra person on board may tip the balance regarding those fuel costs - unless the 'extras' are reintroduced. And re those non-opening windows, the Friday night vomit will end up on the carpet and not down the outside of the door!

The electric steps are too low and will hit speed humps, although since my test drive I've been told by the sales team at KPM that the steps are to be raised by 2 inches.

The turning circle matches the TX by pressing a button to engage it (you must be doing under 5 mph). You don't need to turn it off, but it did make an awful groaning / rubbing noise that the salesman said was the hydraulics. The noise did put me off slightly.

The brochure says it takes around 5 seconds for the electric sliding doors to open / close in one, but I timed it closer to 10 seconds. I think this is too long. Ten seconds of holding up traffic for someone to get in can seem like a lifetime, especially when they all start hooting! The nearside sliding door seemed sticky and didn't want to work at all that day via a button inside the passenger compartment. Perhaps it needed greasing? I'm unconvinced that an electric sliding door will cope with the constant use of a nearside London taxi door.

There is no spare wheel. According to the salesman you are given a tin of tyre weld as a get-home measure. What if you have a passenger on board? Don't tyre manufacturers advise you not to use this stuff and if you do, to replace the tyre immediately afterwards?

The ceiling yellow grab handles have been replaced by standard grey small handles. With that in mind, I think TaxiCard users and the disabled in general may struggle to get in and out.

There's also no boot as such, just a space behind the rear seats where the wheelchair ramp is sited - the Merc doesn't have LTI's pullout ramp. I like to carry an emergency breakdown kit - spare coat, hat, hi viz vest

Motoring 'experts' don't work in taxis, so Call Sign has used a real driver to look at it!

A DAC DRIVER REVIEWS THE MERCEDES VITO...



The new Mercedes Vito

and brolly in case I breakdown on a motorway. I also carry some spares, a first aid kit and booster box / jump leads and small trolley jack, but in the Vito these would have to go in with the passenger. Also I might be wrong on this, but the gross weight is 2770kg, if so it is too heavy for Albert Bridge.

The taxi 'flash' along the side is not compulsory (according to KPM) but I think perhaps they should be. A side-on view shows this taxi and a private hire car of similar design looking identical and confusion will start. I also think it should be produced in just one colour, or at least a disguising feature other than just the *For Hire* sign.

I think it will take off with some airport and radio drivers. There's masses of luggage space and those who go up and down the M4 all day will enjoy driving the Vito with its comfort and stylish looks. It looks professional and that could help us win back some of the lost work that went to private hire. As for non-radio,

everyday town / cash drivers, I think the TX taxi is still the one. Any vehicle or any body can be a taxi or taxi driver, but to do it in London? Well that's different and I think Mercedes need to fine-tune the Vito a bit more. Also, our fitting bay at Roman Way told me they were still having problems with the Merc cab aerial.

What I hope doesn't happen is that the Vito is so popular in 5 years, that we have a reverse situation where LTI are no longer the main suppliers and the monopoly goes to Mercedes.

I have already noticed that the Vito 8 seat Traveliner taxi from another dealer, albeit non-PCO approved, costs much less than KPM's 35K Vito, whilst in the last issue of TAXI, they quoted Steve Bridge, Mercedes-Benz UK Van - yes VAN - Sales and Marketing director! So are we going from a purpose built taxi to a van?

At least for now, we have an alternative and that can only be good for the trade...

Michael Beevor (N76)

SPARKLING DRI

The waterless car wash! It cleans and polishes in one!

**Help save the environment by cleaning your taxi with
SPARKLING DRI**

**Each litre bottle gives you 9 washes and using just one
bottle will save the environment from losing 500 gallons
of valuable water.**

**The recommended price per bottle is £19.99 (+ £6 postage)
but DaC drivers can get each bottle for £11.00 (+£6 postage).**

Or you can pick up a bottle at Roman Way for £13...

More info on 07763 962 422

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES FOR CAB OFFENCES

And how you can protect yourself...

A new Bill is currently going through the House of Commons, which if successful would mean that any offence against the *1934 London Cab Order* or *Hackney Carriage offences* will carry a Fixed Penalty Notice with it – and that could also involve points on your licence.

If you belong to a trade organisation such as the LTDA, the chances are that you would be protected via their legal side. However, if like the majority of drivers you belong to no trade organisation at all and come up against a possible suspension or revocation of your

licence, or even those three points that could take you closer to losing your DVLA licence, you will find yourself out on your own.

You would, of course, have the option of contacting legal advice at your own expense, but how much would they know about the *1934 London Cab Order* or even how the taxi business operates, let alone *Hackney Carriage offences*?

Now Dial-a-Cab drivers have the opportunity to join a scheme that will cover you for all the above in addition to any motoring offences incurred while working as a licensed taxi driver (that, of course, does not include PCNs for parking offences).

The cost of the scheme will be

around £6 per month and every member joining would have £25,000 legal expenses cover. Membership will also include a 24/7 help and advice line.

Most drivers who do not join a trade organisation give the reason that it's because of all the politics involved, but there are no politics in this scheme because it is run by a law firm.

If you feel that you would like this invaluable protection of your licence, all you need do is contact either **Ian Lewis** or **Dee Scott** at **Lewis Hymanson Small LLP** and they will send you all the relevant information.

**Either call Ian or Dee on 0161 827 1808 or you can write to them at:
Lewis Hymanson Small LLP
South Central
11 Peter Street
Manchester
M2 5QR**

Although **Lewis Hymanson Small LLP** is also based in EC3, it is the Manchester office that has all the details.

Just ask someone who has lost their licence - even for a short period - how difficult life becomes. For such a small monthly charge, is it worth taking the risk...?

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

Kupkake's Korner



The Touting Game...

In Cornhill near the Bank,
they wait beside the bars,
it's like they have a rank,
not Taxis, but saloon cars.

With no police in sight,
they have it all their way,
every Thursday night,
they lurk and seek their prey.

The drivers stand outside,
each one looks the same,
offering cheap rides,
this is the touting game.

As punters stumble forth,
they approach in a creep,
*"we go south and north,
and we do it very cheap."*

It happens all so blatantly
and I find it very odd,
it's plain for all to see...
except the Cab Tout Squad.

They seem to have the skill,
to trap cabbies seeking loos,
is that not overkill...
why do they pick and choose?

As usual, when it's us -
the Licensed Taxi Institution -
they know there'll be no fuss...
just an easy prosecution...

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Dial-a Cab Credit Union

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

*Well wonder no more! If you are a subscriber, journeyman or member of staff at Dial-a-Cab, then you qualify to join the **Dial-a-Cab Credit Union**. Any member of your family residing at your address also qualifies for membership!*

Then if you are over 18, have been a member of the Credit Union for over 3 months and have established regular savings, you can borrow up to 3 times your total savings...

The cost?

Just 1% per month on the outstanding balance (or APR of 12.68%). Loans can be paid back early AND there is usually an annual dividend on your savings.

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

Call us on 020 8522 4503

D Charity Golf Day

Brian Rice welcomed the golfers and their clients and guests from throughout the trade the opportunity to thank the numerous sponsors - even possible.

for their golfing expertise were **Peter Boxall** (B89) for 'longest drive'. The individual trophy was won by the **PSS Ltd** team - who also took the team trophy. Prizes up for grabs. That raised a very

healthy £3675 and amid hearty applause from the audience, Brian Rice announced that Dial-a-Cab would round the total up to £4000.

Comedian Joe Goodman, who had played the course himself during the day, entertained the audience after dinner. His non-stop stream of jokes and ad-libbing kept the diners in fits of laughter!

As the evening drew to a close, everyone agreed it had been a most pleasant day's golf, a successful social event and most importantly, a profitable fund-raiser for the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers...



Peter Boxall (B89) picks up his 'nearest the pin' award from Alan Parker



Martyn Madden (Y97) putts as Alan Callaghan (L86) and Eugene Smith (E90) look on



Morland, Ian Smith (American Golf) and

POWER PILL IS BACK!

Call Sign finds another Power Pill supplier!

Chris Hayball is happy to supply any Dial-a-Cab drivers with the amazing Power Pill & at an even better rate than before!

You can buy 1 pack for £15, 5 packs for £65 or 10 packs for £110 – and all prices include postage!

You can order by phone on 01246 856 153 or 07737 956 298

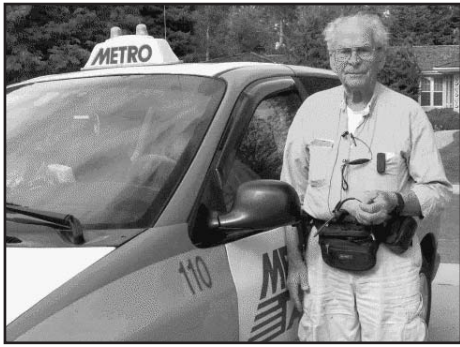
You can order via post to: Chris Hayball, 2 Meadow View, Holmewood, Chesterfield S42 5UL

Or by visiting www.powerpillonline.com

Pay via PayPal ziggystardust1000@hotmail.com

(Enter promo code DAC 10)





Wendell White drives a radio taxi in Denver, Colorado and writes the occasional column for Call Sign. He is the current TLPA International Taxi Driver of the Year...

Out And About In Denver

Back in the BCD days (*Before Computer Dispatch*), Denver taxi companies used Voice Dispatching. Our company had abandoned the Post/Log system using a Bid System instead. The Dispatcher would announce an intersection, then do a random number count-down with drivers bidding when the count-down number matched the last digit of their cab numbers. So driving Cab 466, my bid would be on 6.

Experienced drivers recognized locations for regular customers. Drivers with fast reflexes had an advantage over older drivers whose reflexes were slow. There was stiff competition for the better trips. These *bells* (which is the Denver lingo for customer orders phoned to the company) received good service. So when drivers ignored *bells* for certain locations, one could make several assumptions: The trip was a shorty and going nowhere, the passenger didn't tip well / was difficult to deal with or some other problem drivers wished to avoid.

Drivers being independent contractors, no one could make a driver run for a specific trip. That resulted in undesirable trips remaining open until someone accepted or they were just not covered. Naturally customers would complain about poor service.

I recognized Arapahoe Road and Long Avenue as one of those addresses that often remained uncovered. It was suburban where there would be few, if any, available cabs. No driver would run any distance if the call was for a short trip where he might actually lose money going after it. So when the company Communication Manager asked me to personalize the Arapahoe Road and Long Avenue trip, I was reluctant and of course he couldn't force me to do it.

The manager explained this was the home of a high muckety-muck in a prominent company from where we received a lot of business. The executive complained that nearly every time he needed a taxi from home, no one would service his call. Though I didn't wish to do so, in the spirit of "to get along, go along" I unenthusiastically agreed to contact the customer.

Who says beggars can't be choosers? When I called he said he would have to "inspect" my cab because there would be times his family would be with him and he wanted to be sure my taxicab was in safe condition! The following day at his office not only did he walk around the cab kicking tyres and stuff like he was buying a used car, but he put on a pair of white gloves and eased his fingers down beneath the seats! And he showed me smudges on the gloves!

He had seven garages attached to his home with Cadillacs, Corvettes, a station wagon and a red Ferrari roadster. He flaunted his wealth in other ways too. His income far exceeded what he formerly had earned as a school-teacher and bandmaster.

With time, we gradually established some rapport. The family was leaving for a vacation (you Dial-a-Cab guys call it a holiday). I waited as they gathered their luggage while Daddy was on the phone. En route to the airport he showed me his brand new Rolex wristwatch that probably cost as much as a luxury auto. He bragged he had the exact time because he had been on the phone with the U S Bureau of Standards in Washington DC to set the time by the Atomic Clock!

I tried telling him the Bureau of Standards maintain that clock at Fort Collins (a few miles north of Denver) and a local call would have yielded the same result. He challenged me, maintaining it was not as accurate as calling long distance to Washington.

Turning on the loud speaker on my car

phone, I dialled the local number. He checked his Rolex as we heard the announcement: "At the tone, the time will be fourteen hours, fifty-three minutes Universal Standard Time...tick, tock. tick, tock Buzzz!" He remained unconvinced.

A month later I brought them home from the airport and helped carry their baggage into the house. Daddy was livid when he saw the phone off the hook and on the coffee table. He picked it up in time to hear: "At the tone, the time will be nineteen hours, three minutes Universal Standard Time...tick, tock. Tick!"

I've often wondered how large his long-distance charge was for those thirty-some days while connected to the Washington DC Atomic Clock. Probably not as expensive as his Rolex...

The difference between men and boys is the price of their toys...

**Wendell White
Call Sign Online
Denver, Colorado**

TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR DINNER/DANCE

**The Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund presents their annual
Dinner / Dance on Saturday 29th November 2008**

The 35th Taxi Driver of the Year dinner dance will be held at:

**Crowne Plaza London Docklands
Western Gateway, Royal Victoria Dock
London E16 1AL**

Reception 6.15pm, dinner 6.45pm with a 4-course meal and half bottle of wine per person.

Tickets £60 per head includes complementary drink on arrival.

With your support The Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund is able to make donations to the taxi trade charities that support us. Don't be the one to miss one of the great nights out. Come along and join in with good food, great company and a wonderful time.

**Please complete and return to the Hon Chairman
with cheques made out to TDYCF**

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

RSVP: 28.10.08

Dress: Smart

Please Print:

Name:.....

Title:.....

Company (if applicable):.....

Address:.....

Tel:.....

Email:.....

Number of tickets required @ £60 per head:.....

Dietary requirements: Please tick: Veg.....Fish.....Meat.....

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

Registered with the Charities Commission No: 1000761

'Remembering those less fortunate than ourselves'

As the September 2007 issue of *Call Sign* reported, on a late August afternoon, a man walked into the Roman Way fitting bay passing by several drivers and fitters and went straight into Tom Whitbread's office. Looking like any other driver, no one thought anything of it.

Tom was in the office opposite, but mistakenly believed a fitter was with the man. Within 90 seconds the man had walked out again - with Tom's wallet! By now Tom had sussed that something wasn't right and went back to his office to check his jacket. He realised that the wallet had gone and went out into the estate with Steve Thomas. They ran down the road and grabbed the thief and accused him of stealing the wallet.

He denied it and said he was just looking for a job. They phoned the police but he wriggled loose and escaped in his car roaring off down the private road passing the fitting bay on the way. As he reached the end, a lorry was unloading and blocked the road. He crashed into the tail bar, causing damage to his Mondeo and then swung the car round to go the other way.

"I got someone to put their car across the road to block it," said Tom, "but as the car got nearer, he pulled it back! The thief saw his chance and although crashing into the front of the car, which was still partially blocking his

Tom Whitbread robber "caught"



Tom and the staff at Roman Way

way, he managed to get through. He then attempted to run me over before turning into Roman Way! At the same time, police were entering from Mackenzie Road and chased him down the road, but lost him."

Tom cancelled all his credit cards and waited for the police to return.

The next morning, a postman called Tom to say that he had found the wallet in Canning Town with all its contents - ie cards - intact. £80 in cash was missing. The postman had tracked Tom down via the Internet and a search engine. There were numerous entries from him - mainly from *Call Sign*.

Tom had provided the police with a CCTV image of the crook. It was circulated and police in Canning Town recognised him and soon apprehended him. Then in July this year, Tom received a cheque for £80 with not a word of explanation. He eventually found out that this had come from a court, but no one would tell him what had happened!

"Isn't it ridiculous," Tom told *Call Sign*, "had I not phoned, I wouldn't even have known what the money was for. I still haven't been able to find out what happened to the thief. All I know is that if he comes back here, I won't be giving him that job...!"

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
1971

This issue takes a look at a report from ODRTS Company Secretary in 1971, Bill Browne.

From ODRTS News and Views, February 1971...

Cars on ODRTS?

A meeting has been held between representatives of the Board of Management and car-owning members of ODRTS who may be willing to participate in a pilot scheme for using cars on the circuit. Many ideas were presented and discussed. These were put on the agenda for next month's Board meeting. A good deal of progress was made and more announcements will be made soon.

Subscriptions

Within the next few years, it will be necessary to re-equip the majority of our mobiles. We may decide to purchase equipment outright rather than hire-maintain them as at present. For this reason, plus the

increases in wages and extra staff now employed, we are obliged as from April 1 1971 to raise the subscription rate to £12 per calendar month. We feel that this increase, less than 5p per day, in no way compares with the escalating cost of taxi operating today. It will, however, ensure the continuance and growth of our Society.

Obituary

With deep regret, we announce the untimely passing of Bert Frankford (ex D50). Bert joined ODRTS in March 1954 and ranked as one of our longest serving subscribers until September 1966 when, through ill health, he was forced to leave the circuit. In later years, he spent some time in hospital and after disposing of his own cab, was employed as a journeyman. On Saturday February 20 he was taken ill outside the Houses of Parliament, pulled his cab safely into the kerb and passed away. He was 57 years old and had been a taxi driver for 36 years. A representative of the Board of Management attended the funeral at Bushey Jewish Cemetery. We extend our condolences to his wife, daughter and family. Rest His Soul.

CASH MACHINES - NO MORE PCN'S?

Licensed taxis (and private hire cars with appropriate signage) will be allowed to stop on red routes, Mayor Boris Johnson has announced - the latest of his election pledges to taxi drivers that he has carried out. The scheme will be piloted for six months.

From 10pm to 6am, any passenger needing to withdraw money to pay for their taxi journey can ask their driver to stop near a cash machine on red routes for up to five minutes. TfL will then consult drivers, passengers and local authorities to consider the overall effect of the policy. Outside of these hours, normal policing will be maintained.

The Mayor has also asked TfL to consider improving card payment arrangements for taxis. He said:

"As Mayor I want to make life easier for Londoners and this is just one of the ways that I will be doing so."

If the pilot is successful, TfL will decide whether exemptions from stopping restrictions can be extended.

CALL SIGN COMMENT

In *Call Sign's* March issue, we published the decision by Michael Nathan, an adjudicator appointed under Section 73(3) of the Road Traffic Act 1991. He allowed an appeal at a personal hearing from a taxi driver re a CCTV issued PCN. The driver claimed that the reason he stopped in a place where no stopping was allowed, was because it wasn't until the end of the journey that the passenger realised he needed a cash machine. We are delighted to find that we have a Mayor who shows huge amounts of common sense...



Ok to stop between 10pm and 6am even if on a red route

LTB Welcome Mayor's 'Tout Crackdown'

The London Taxi Board has welcomed Boris Johnson's announcement that he plans to crack down on illegal touting. The package of measures announced last month included doubling the number of dedicated cab enforcement officers from 34 to 68, more high profile operations aimed at preventing touting and a 'one strike' rule that would mean any licensed driver convicted of touting would immediately have their licence revoked.

In March of this year, the LTB called for stronger action against illegal touts. Commenting on the GLA Transport Committee's report, the LTB said that the three strikes and you're out policy endorsed by the previous Transport Committee in its final report, sent out a weak message to touts and did not provide the right policy to stop illegal touting.

The LTB called for 'a one strike and you're out rule' and that the PCO should revoke a private hire driver's licence once they are convicted of a single touting offence.

Geoffrey Riesel, Vice Chairman of the London Taxi Board, gave evidence to the original GLA inquiry and welcomed the Mayor's announcement. Mr Riesel said:

"Mayor Johnson's recent announcement is a measured and sensible response to the serious and dangerous practice of illegal touting. This strengthens the previous policy and sends a strong message to illegal touts. It will also protect women at night, but the Mayor now needs to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of taxis to meet night time demand and that cab enforcement officers continue to pursue illegal touts."



LTB Vice Chairman Geoffrey Riesel

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

CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE



This month I'm sending my news from the Somme in northern France and writing it on the TGV train on my way to Paris, before eventually making my way back south to the Med.

I enjoy taking the train. I have a mobile broadband connection for my laptop, so I can type these notes, catch up on emails and surf the web in comfort, which is great when I decide to travel home this way.

I have a comfy seat, there's a snack bar nearby and we're heading down the tracks at 180 miles per hour. There must be people on this train who are working and that is probably more cost effective than renting an office!

France is a big country with several different climates and thousands of years of tradition, but whether I fly or drive home, nothing can beat this form of travel. It might be a little more expensive, but I had a good fortnight in my taxi working at Wimbledon tennis for my 24th year, so I decided to treat myself.

After a short snooze, I find myself almost at the old **City of Carcassonne**, not too far from home now. Carcassonne is well worth a visit - the local tourist office will fill your car with leaflets of local stuff, wine trails and museums. The **Abbey of Fontfroide** is good - local towns like **Mirepoix** and **Foix** are interesting, but not as awesome as Carcassonne's old City - nonsensical superstitions like the **Cathar**

trails and loony priests discovering hidden **Merovingean treasure** are all around that area. The so-called Cathar castles have spectacular views and tend to be on top of mountains, so you need to be fit and have good walking shoes.

For me, the best pleasures are finding a quiet village and having a simple lunch with a carafe of local wine (if it's good), or buying

some wine, bread and cheese and motoring down narrow farm roads until I find a very quiet spot and have a picnic - it won't be long now!

Be lucky, be careful et à bientôt...

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

HOLIDAY HOME DEALS

FOR DIAL-A-CABBIES

In Ostuni, Puglia, Italy (the heel)

More info at: www.holidaylettings.co.uk/41004

Brindisi Airport 25 mins... Bari Airport 50mins

Flights with Ryanair from £10 each way

Several Blue Flag beaches nearby

Typical rates for 1 week's rental before 20% discount for DaC drivers

January £210 August £560

Contact Shayne Wise (G05)

Tel: 01708 753128 or on mobile: 07961 912340

Email: shaynewise@yahoo.com

Rough Guide: "One of the most stunning small towns of southern Italy, a gleaming white splash of sun-bleached streets and cobbled alleyways..."

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello Ladies and Gents...

Complaints procedures

Following on from my last article, I have had one or two queries relating to the recent complaints hearings and the findings of the various committees. In my first article as the Compliance Officer, I did try to give an account of how I perceived this position and explained how hearings and committees operate. (July 2007 *Call Sign* – page 10).

It's very easy to search the online version of the magazine at www.dac-call-sign.com if you are not in possession of this particular back issue (click the PDF format logo).

I would like to add that the Compliance Officer, in the presence of the person answering the complaint, presents the information to the committee and their Chairman, who will be a current Board Member. He cannot guide or steer the committee in any way whatsoever. It is the sole decision of the committee and Chairman of the committee to listen, question and give a fair and open-minded verdict on each individual grievance.

The committee have no prior knowledge of the complaint they are judging and must treat each case on its merit. The Compliance Officer and the member who is answering the complaint are not in the room whilst deliberation is taking place. They will return when a verdict is reached.

If the member feels aggrieved with the decision, he or she has the right of appeal to the remainder of the Board who have no previous knowledge of the relevant complaint.

Late Night Shouts (Euston Station)

I have mentioned to you previously that



when you reach your final destination following a late night shout from Euston, it is imperative that you inform the Call Centre of the exact destination of the journey that you have just completed. No longer will the account accept *As Directed* destinations or even postal zones such as SE99 or E99. They will refuse to pay the meter charges unless they have a specific location (eg Maidstone or Southend).

In addition, please remember to inform the Call Centre of the exact trip mileages if going outside of the M25 and they will be calculated at the new rate of £2.80 per mile. Journeys inside the M25 will be at normal metered fare rates. But please remember, you **MUST** inform the dispatch that, for example, it is Bexley and not SE50 etc.

Our trip reports must now be extremely accurate to avoid a delay or even possible non-payment, obviously something we need to avoid if possible. So if there are any

unforeseen reasons that could add to the normal route, please advise the Call Centre.

Automatic transfer of fares

As you know from my previous reports, the meter fare is automatically transferred to the terminal after each trip. If you regularly have to enter the fare manually, it is important that you visit Roman Way to have the interface checked. The CLJ fares are invoiced to the clients and if they find any anomalies on their management reports, they will quite rightly query the invoice and that will result in a late payment.

Also please be aware that the current maximum run-in (unless authorised otherwise) is £4.20 and that if for any reason you arrive with more than the correct amount, you must restart the meter. Please do not deduct the additional amount at the end of the trip.

Finally can I once again remind you that E14C and E14S are both physical ranks and until E140 comes into operation, you must be on either of these ranks before booking onto them. A number of drivers are still complaining that they are the only Dial-a-Cab taxi on a rank yet not showing queue position one. It is still being monitored, as is EC5, and failure to comply with procedure rules may result in a complaint. I have brought these issues to your attention on numerous occasions, but it is important that they are dealt with effectively to prevent the very small minority flaunting the rules.

Enjoy your summer breaks...

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

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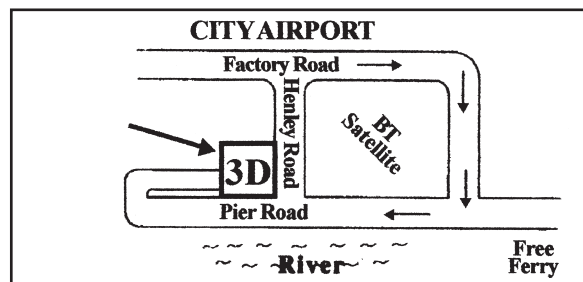
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In late June and in front of a packed York Hall boxing crowd, Dial-a-Cab's version of *Rocky Balboa* - better known as **Rob Binding (V49)** - entered the ring to a rousing fanfare and enthusiastic shouts of his nickname from his many ardent fans - "go get him boom boom!"

The charity event was billed as the *Summer Punch Show* and was aimed at raising funds for the **Peacock Amateur Boxing Club**, based in Canning Town and which provides support and facilities to young boxers - and indeed the community in general - with the aim of helping to keep young people off the streets and re-directed into sport.

Although not a seriously combative event, it was obvious from the opening round that Rob's opponent - Pete 'The Bookie' - wasn't there purely to share a dance, although his nifty footwork had Rob moving briskly around the ring. One particularly hefty uppercut lifted Rob off his feet!

Rob fought back gamely giving as good as he got and on numerous occasions during the three round contest, Rob had 'The Bookie' on the ropes. Rob's series of com-

DaC's 'Boom Boom' in Boxing Draw!



Rob takes a punch from The Bookie.



Inset pic Rob with wife Tina and his trophy after the match

bination punches had Pete tied up in a corner for several seconds at a time, leaving him unable to evade Rob's powerful onslaught. But Pete was a game opponent

and every time 'Boom Boom' looked to be getting the upper hand, he'd come back with his own one-two combination.

After three hard fought rounds, the referee declared the match a draw and both fighters received a small statuette trophy for their display cabinets.

After the match, **Call Sign** caught up with a breathless Rob and his wife Tina, who declared herself very proud of her hubby's effort. We asked Tina if she'd have been tempted to enter the ring to help Rob out if he'd have taken something of a bashing!

"I did bring a rolling pin from my kitchen just in case," she replied laughing, "but I knew he'd be ok!" Rob added that Pete had been probably his toughest opponent ever.

The promoters told **Call Sign** that a rematch was not only on the cards, but that it could be for the vacant charity super middleweight belt and Rob could become DaC's first ever boxing champion!

The Peacock Gym was founded in 1973. Sites may have changed over the years but the area remains Canning Town. The gym has been at the present site in Caxton Street North, Canning Town, since 1994. Charitable Status was granted in June 1993 and the gym now boasts a rolling membership of 11,500.

If you would like to support the work of the **Peacock Gym** you can contact them on:

Tel: 020 7611 3799 or www.peacock-gym.com

Adrian's Little Boy Gets Wed!



A happy Spencer and Nicola at their wedding

According to **Adrian Landau (T14)**, he has been on Dial-a-Cab for more years than he cares to remember! But the money from those years came in very handy recently when he and wife Benita watched their "little boy" Spencer marry his long-time girlfriend Nicole at Great Portland Street Synagogue followed by a magnificent bash.

"Looks like I'll be working for sometime to come," Adrian told **Call Sign**, "but it will have been worth every extra minute!"

From all at **Call Sign**, congratulations to Spencer, Nicole, Adrian, Benita and Nicole's mum Val...



LTFUC 80TH ANNIVERSARY - AT THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER!

As you may know, in addition to being a Board member on Dial-a-Cab, I am also on the committee of the *London Taxidriers Fund for Underprivileged Children* and it is with great pride that I, along with my other colleagues on the LTFUC committee, can tell you that this year of 2008 sees us celebrate 80 years of helping special needs and disadvantaged children within the Central London and suburban areas.

With huge assistance from drivers, we run outings to the seaside in addition to various venues such as the circus, theatres and the annual party at the Grosvenor House Hotel. We also receive many appeals for financial help in the purchase of medical, recreational, educational and communicative equipment for special needs schools, children in residential homes and individual families.

At Christmas time, the committee send many thousands of pounds worth of vouchers to taxi

drivers who have been unable to work due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances. The vouchers are specifically for the children, enabling the purchase of toys or other goodies at that special time of the year. It gives the opportunity for parents/guardians and the children to enjoy that magical time of the year, even if it is just for a short time.

Help is also given to many children who have been abused by adults, those that suffer from some dreadful illness and or are terminally ill. Without the financial help and support that organisations such as Dial-a-Cab give to the charity, it would be extremely difficult for both past and present committee members to continue the work that began in 1928.

In celebration of those 80 years, we are delighted to announce that Mr Lee Scott MP will be hosting the London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children 80th

Anniversary Gala Dinner & Dance in the Palace of Westminster on Saturday 18th October 2008. We are also grateful to those who have considered sponsoring some of the events.

The itinerary begins at 6.30 with a champagne reception on the Terrace followed by dinner in the Member's dining room. Dancing in the Stranger's dining room to Belissima follows dinner. Belissima have provided backing to such stars as Amy Whitehouse and Jamiroquay in addition to providing the entertainment at Elton John's AIDS Foundation ball at the Kensington Roof Garden. After dinner drinks will be served in the Pugin Room.

Due to limited availability, should you consider purchasing tickets, please let us know as soon as possible. Application forms can be obtained from Driver's Reception.

Mike Son

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The Transport for London Act 2008 received Royal Assent on 22 May 2008. Part 3 of the Act makes a number of provisions with regard to London taxis (and private hire vehicles). This PCO Notice summarises the provisions of the Act as they affect London taxis. Unless otherwise stated, the provisions came into force on 22 July 2008...

* Sections 9 and 10 provide TfL with the power to designate directional taxi ranks and rest ranks for drivers.

The consultation procedures and formal processes for designating, suspending or revoking these ranks will be the same as the well-established processes for conventional ranks.

* Section 11 amends the London Hackney Carriages Act 1843 by replacing the term

Transport for London Act 2008



London Taxis: Transport For London Act 2008

metal ticket in respect of taxi driver's badges with the term *badge*.

* Section 12 amends section 16 of the 1843 Act to prevent TfL disclosing the address of the holder of a cab licence to any person unless it appears to TfL that that person has sufficient reason for requiring that information.

* Section 13 changes the sum specified in section 19 of the 1843 Act that TfL can charge for a replacement badge from 15p to "a sum as TfL shall consider reasonable".

From 22 July 2008 until further notice, no charge will be made for a replacement taxi driver's badge.

* Section 14 amends section 38 of the 1843 Act by increasing the time limit for making complaints for cab driving offences from 7 to 28 days.

* Section 15 amends the London Cab and Stage Carriage Act 1907 by allowing a taxi driver and passenger to agree in advance a fare for a journey starting within, but ending outside, London. In the absence of such agreement, the fare payable must be that on the taxi meter.

Taxi drivers accepting fares from Heathrow Airport should take particular notice of this provision.

* Section 16 amends section 2 of the London Hackney Carriages Act 1853 to allow TfL to serve an unfit notice on the dri-

ver as well as the proprietor of a cab found to be unfit preventing the cab being used until it is repaired.

An unfit notice means that, with immediate effect, the vehicle cannot be used for hire and reward purposes until the notice is cleared. If the vehicle is used in contravention of the notice, then the vehicle licence can be suspended.

* Sections 17 to 22 and Schedules 1 and 2 provide for the introduction of a regime for fixed penalties for certain offences relating to London taxis (failure to wear or to produce badge; failure to produce copy of licence; plying outside licensed area; carrying excess passengers; failure to attend cab at cab standing) with power for the Secretary of State to add further offences.

This provision will be enacted on a date to be determined by TfL. Further details will be published prior to any commencement date.

Full text can be found at:

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/localact2008/pdf/ukla_20080001_en.pdf

The Abstract of Laws for taxi drivers will be updated accordingly.

Editor's note: See Fixed Penalty Notices for cab drivers in this issue...

SMILE

This month's 'Smile' comes from Pat Keefe (G01)...

An Australian was drinking in a bar in Earls Court when he got a call on his mobile phone. He hung up, grinning from ear to ear and ordered a round of drinks for everyone in the bar as he announced that his wife has just produced a typical Australian baby boy weighing 25 pounds! Nobody could believe that any baby weighed in at 25 pounds, but the Aussie just shrugged his shoulders.

"That's about average in Australia mate, like I said, my boy is a typical Aussie baby boy!" Congratulations came from all round the bar with many exclamations of wonderment at the baby's size.

Two weeks later he returned to the same bar having flown home to Oz to see his wife and baby before returning to London. The bartender remembered him and said:

"Hey, you're the father of that typical Australian baby that weighed 25 pounds at birth. We've all been having bets on how big he'd be in two weeks and were going to call your office to see if they knew; so how much does he weigh now?"

The proud father answered 19 pounds. The bartender looked puzzled and somewhat concerned: "What happened? He already weighed 25 pounds the day he was born. What happened to the 6 pounds?"

The dad from Oz took a slow swig from his XXXX, wiped his lips on his shirt sleeve, leaned on the bar and proudly told the Earls Court bar: We had him circumcised...!"

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Contact Andy (P32) on 07904 091278 or 07932 960350



David Kupler (Y74), David Ballard (N28) and Alex Constantinou (N05) are Call Sign's restaurant reviewers. These DaC drivers and their guests will visit restaurants periodically and give their honest opinions. This month David Kupler went to the Camden Brasserie...

Eating Out with Call Sign

It was a warm Monday evening in late June when the cab dropped us off in Camden High Street close to Jamestown Road where we were scheduled to review the **Camden Brasserie**, which is celebrating 25 years of business.

We approached the tasteful sage green glass fronted building and had a quick scan of the location. The table was booked for 19.30, so we expected to eat in a near empty restaurant but could see through the window that there were several tables already occupied; a good sign as Monday is usually quiet for restaurants.

We entered the cool foyer and introduced ourselves to the friendly and smartly attired hostess who escorted us to our table in the middle of the spacious room. The manager was brought over to greet us and whilst exchanging pleasantries, recommended some dishes.

There were some very interesting items in the grill section including an *aged rib of beef* for two at £32 and *French corn fed chicken* at £13.95. But when I spotted *calves liver*, there was no other dish to tempt me! Jan and I selected a half bottle of *Macon Village* (£11.95) to go with our

starters of *pan fried king prawns* for Jan and *calamari with tiger prawns* for myself, each priced at £6.95. There was some fresh bread to dip in and soak up the rich olive oil and garlic sauce and both dishes were delicious!

For entrees, we selected *fillet of wild bass with samphire and new potatoes* for Jan whilst I salivated on the prospect of the *grilled calves liver with sage and shallots* and a dish of mange tout and carrots on the side. We wanted a fruity wine to accompany this course and went for the *Cheverny Blanc* at £22.00, which was served refreshingly cold.

Meanwhile more tables were becoming occupied by keen patrons and although people were talking, there was no *din* from the diners as tables are well placed and acoustics well managed.

The fish and liver arrived together. The wild sea bass plump and white fleshed, just as it should be and a really large portion of calves liver cooked to perfection. The vegetables were also excellent, probably steamed to preserve their flavour. A wooden bowl full of tasty *pommes frites* was placed alongside our orders and we dipped in heartily to what were described as the best chips in London!

We demolished the meal and were full, but

the dessert menu beckoned and after a short break we decided on the *black and white chocolate mousse*, and a *myrtle wood orange lemon cheese cake* with two cappuccinos.

The restaurant is a very popular haunt, whether for locals or visitors to the area regardless of whether they are looking for a one-plate meal for lunch, a decadent cocktail, 3-course dinner, all day weekend breakfast and brunch or Sunday roast. Very reasonably priced junior menus and crayon sheets keep the kids amused and there is wireless Internet access for adults.

After such a gargantuan feast we knew we would need a walk before our journey home, so we took a stroll along Camden High Street through the still lively Camden Lock to Chalk Farm before ordering our Dial-a-Cab taxi for the homeward journey, while reflecting on the magnificent dinner we had enjoyed and will recommend and endorse.

The Camden Brasserie is at 9-11 Jamestown Road, London NW1. Bookings 020 7482 2114.

It opens daily from 12 noon - 11pm. For more information visit www.camdenbrasserie.co.uk.

David Kupler (Y74)

Gary Bromelow is a partner and the road traffic expert of Saunders Solicitors who are based in both Aldersgate and Great Titchfield Streets. He will be writing regularly and is happy to answer driver's questions sent via Call Sign...

ASK GARY...

Question:

I'd rather my name wasn't published for obvious reasons, but I'd like to ask Gary a question. Rather stupidly (no one needs to tell me that) I was recently flashed and received a letter asking me to send my licence, which I assume means 3 points. If that wasn't bad enough, these points will take me up to 12 and a probable ban.

The situation is that my first batch of 3 points was scheduled to come off my licence just a week after the latest flash. My question to Gary is this: If I have to appear in court, will the first batch of 3 points have been cleared even though I still had them at the time of the offence, but won't do so at any court appearance?

Brian

Gary replies:

The important thing here is the date of offence. As your question seems to imply you are aware that points stay on a licence for four years, they remain liable to being included in a totting up calculation for three years. The court will consider any points received for offences committed within a three-year period; the important dates are those of the offences. Therefore to answer your question, if the first and last offences were committed within three years of each other, then I am afraid to say the Court will disqualify you for a minimum period of six months.

There may be some light at the end of the tunnel for you though. You have not told me the circumstances of your latest offence, but if there is anything out of the ordinary or unique as to why you were speeding, then it may be possible to argue special reasons for the points not to be endorsed upon your licence.

The other and probably stronger argument available is to allow the Court to put the points on your licence, let the twelve points accumulate and then argue that to disqualify you would cause exceptional hardship. This would allow you to continue driving, albeit with twelve or more points on your licence. The circumstances to support this type of argument are unique to each case, but if they exist then generally a Court can be persuaded to show leniency.

Gary Bromelow, Saunders Solicitors



Keith Reading

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LTB CALL FOR EXEMPTION FROM NEW ROAD TAX

The London Taxi Board is calling for an exemption for London taxis from the new first-year rate for Vehicle Excess Duty (VED), announced in the 2008 budget.

The LTB has asked new Mayor, Boris Johnson, to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and request an exemption for the taxi trade from the new VED tax, which is to be introduced in 2010. The hope is that the Conservative Mayor will tackle the Labour Chancellor on this impending stealth tax on drivers.

Speaking up for the London trade, DaC Chairman and Chairman of LTB, Brian Rice said:

"Vehicle excise duty is a green tax and should not be applied retrospectively on older vehicles or on the purchase of new vehicles, which have the highest level of Euro emissions. London taxi drivers have a choice of an LTI TX or Mercedes Vito. The CO2 output on these vehicles is identical, so taxing drivers for buying a new taxi with the latest disability features and best emissions is simply a stealth tax. Taxi drivers don't have the same option of buying a lower emission vehicle as do consumers in the car market."

The new first year rate will add £430 to a driver's first year of road tax.

VED has been developed as an environmental tax to incentivise car



Brian Rice in the new Mercedes taxi: "Choice of identical emission taxis..."

buyers to purchase lower CO2 emitting cars. However, the London taxi is designed around different parameters than a saloon car and manufactured to accommodate up to 6 passengers and wheelchair users. Therefore it cannot be compared to vehicles purchased for private use...

From DaC's most successful anti-PCN battler, Martin Hizer (M47)

MARTIN'S WINNING PCN BATTLES...

My PCN war has continued unabated! I thought the *evil Empire's* ruling junta had granted an armistice as what had been a steady flow of PCNs through my door seemed to suddenly stop. But cunning and stealthy is the dark side and suddenly bang... the Empire struck back!

On 25th March 2008, I was contacted by the Empire's insidious agents at P.A.T.A.S. (Parking and Traffic Appeals Service) and told to show up for a hearing with *Darth Warden* at New Zealand House on 24th June regarding a PCN received in Shaftesbury Avenue on a DaC credit trip. On 14th May, P.A.T.A.S. again were in contact, this time regarding a credit ride from *Tiger Aspect* at 7 Soho Street. This time they requested my presence on June 23rd!

Curiously, I was contacted again as P.A.T.A.S. decided to merge both hearings into one mega hearing on June 24th.

Despite this, I continued picking up credit rides in Soho undeterred and my sincere thanks go to Andrew Zein, Managing Director of *Tiger Aspect* as he has shown that we are not alone! On the booking from *Tiger Aspect* for Mr Zein, he came out to find me in front of my Taxi obscuring my licence plate and waving at the CCTV cameras. He was greatly amused and went on to tell me that he had been ticketed for getting out of his car at Soho Street to open the garage door leading to *Tiger Aspect's* own car park and he kindly offered his full support - including letters - to back up any appeals against PCNs issued whilst servicing



his account!

As I have told *Call Sign* readers before, when parking hearings are set you normally get a letter the week before cancelling the hearing. However, on 8th June, Westminster sent me a large selection of photos and documentation that was to be used against me regarding the Soho Street case. I don't mind telling you that this had me slightly worried as despite Brian Rice and the rest of the Board verbally giving me their unreserved backing in the case of a judgement agin me, I would hate to have to go to them to request probably quadruple what I would have had to pay had I just handed the ticket to Nuala!

Anyhow, Keith Cain backed me with letters showing I was on a hiring, Nuala kindly printed off the logs and Mr Zein, true to his word, came through with a letter. Then unbelievably, *Bosh!* Despite their show of force, Westminster wrote and

cancelled the hearing for Soho Street! This left Shaftesbury Avenue. I called P.A.T.A.S. but was told the hearing stood!

I was resigned to a bloody battle, but yet on 21st June, *Kerblam!* Another cancellation and a double victory!

Apart from those, I'm still fighting PCNs in Greek Street for a DaC account ride in which the appeal form has been submitted. A date has been set for October - but I'm telling you... it ain't gonna happen! Another PCN received whilst delivering a phone back to Bayswater Road for the fictitious Mr Al-Hatoumi of Dubai - I told you all is fair in war! Actually I was buying a slice of pizza for my fat face! Yup... cancelled again!

Westminster now put everything in the hands of the court and I just send off my statutory declaration, which removes the case from the legal system meaning that Westminster have to begin again from the start on their pursuit - which means they indisputably decide against!

And finally, another personal PCN in Mortimer Street whilst escorting another work of fiction who was 'getting cash-back from Sainsburys' (and a Coke and sandwich for me) in order to pay me. My appeal was submitted and Westminster caved in without even putting up a fight! Almost a disappointment!

Proof again fellow warriors that you must stand firm whatever the provocation. No surrender!

Until next time, be lucky, be strong!

Martin Hizer (M47)

With summer finally here, many are now away on holiday. If you don't have children, you've probably already been, taking advantage of out of school term time prices and availability. With the rain in April and May, the landscape is looking very lush and this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show was excellent as usual. London Horticulture has vastly improved in recent years with there being much attention to gardening scheme detail. A good one is **Russell Square**. If you fancy somewhere different to take a break, there's a good coffee shop with plenty of seating to relax and enjoy the flowers and shrubs. There is also a very good show of flowers on the south side of St. James Park along **Birdcage walk**, whereas Hyde Park by **Rotten Row** has a Rose garden. My personal favourite is the cottage garden in the Alexandra Gate House Lodge at the top of **Exhibition Road**...

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We're all now used to the Internet and price comparison sites, which are the latest fad. These sites say they have the best products and prices in comparison, but on the whole they are sponsored by companies paying to advertise on those sites. I looked at two sites and then found a cheaper alternative on the homepages of large companies that obviously don't advertise! Look at money comparisons and you won't find **Barclaycard**, who do a simplicity credit card at 6.8% APR for purchases as standard. Nor that **Egg.Com** does a variable rate tracker mortgage at 0.75% above Bank of England base rate. Both are very good deals, so although comparison sites have their uses, search on! Indeed, bear in mind that with the search engines themselves, the more an advertiser wishes to pay the higher up the page they are, so sometimes it pays to scroll past the first one or two.

Speaking of the 'net, if you use eBay here's a good way of saving money. Find an item on **eBay.co.uk**, then see if it is for sale on **eBay.com** - the American version where goods are marked in dollars. Most eBay shops advertise on both, but because of the weak dollar buying on eBay.com could save you a third. I recently brought a t-shirt for \$21.00 from eBay.com. The same t-shirt was selling for £14.95 on eBay.co.uk. After currency conversion, my PayPal account was charged £10.50. Not bad for a couple of clicks of a mouse...

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It has been well documented by cab trade scribes that the congestion charge has not worked and has been used against the taxi trade for many months, with members of the public using us at its conception but having now gone back to using other modes of public transport. Some passengers use us because they have an address that's too far to walk, but cheap enough to warrant a cab. Others travel further as their firms are paying and time is important. Others might pay a £15 cab fare, but because it rises to £20 with traffic they go elsewhere. When was the last time you did three £15 trips in a day off the street? Simply put, traffic congestion drives people out of our taxis on the grounds of value for money and as we have a meter that works on time as well as distance, it affects us more than the PH industry. We

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...



need to win these people back and put the trade within the reach of all potential riders - especially ones who want to go from Cadogan Square to Bank for £15.

What we need is a dedicated taxi route running from the city to the west end and visa-versa. If we could lobby the mayor to dig up Trafalgar Square and start again or at least get the north side closed part-time, this would help because in the evening very few use the pedestrian area in front the National Gallery. What about making Admiralty Arch accessible to taxis and bikes only eastbound or a taxi lane along Embankment and up Northumberland Avenue heading west? It's a sad indictment that if you pick up from the Town House in Upper Grosvenor Street to get to the city, you have to use Parliament Square. Something needs to be done and as we have a new Mayor, now is as good a time as any...

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When I first passed the Knowledge, my wife brought me an autograph book for use

at work and it has had some use over the years. A few entries include Sir Robin Day, Charles Spencer, Steven Fry, Rick Mayall and Mary Archer. The latest was former Arsenal superstar Freddie Ljungberg. I had a chat with him and for those of you who support the Gunners, his most important goal was the curler that put them two up against Chelsea in the 2003 FA Cup final. His best goal was against Manchester United in 2001 when he chipped Fabian Bartez from outside the box. His most disappointing moment was losing to Liverpool in the 2001 FA Cup when Michael Owen scored that late winner. Finally - and I don't know the significance of this - but he said it was always good to score against Spurs! (Ed's note: You're fired)...

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

Richard Potter (T51)

Call Sign

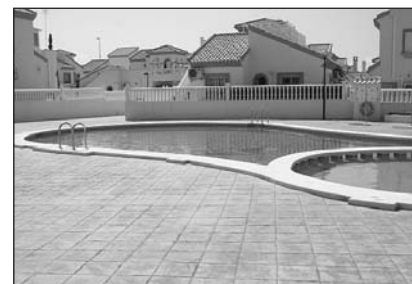
August 2008

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 Web Site: www.taxicab.co.uk/dialacabmag
 Printers: John Brown Printing 112 Portland Rd, London SE25 4PJ
 Design: Aldan Publications,
 Tel: 07958 300 428
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 Email john@sheridanj.freemove.co.uk or phone John (E35) on 07866 943 469



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

Jon Asks What's New?



The Amazing Eee701

Hi all - sorry it's been so long, it has been really busy in the **DaC IT dept** of late! However, I can tell you about the latest gadget around; and it's one I've recently bought! You may recall some months ago I wrote about the upcoming UMPCs - Ultra-Mobile Personal Computers. At the time, most were either very expensive or a bit naff. Well, things have come a long way since then...

Asus (www.asus.com), the makers of laptops have brought out the *Eee PC 701*. This baby has got to be seen to be believed! If you are always on the move (as DaC drivers are) and need a small, lightweight laptop, then go to your nearest PC World and ask them to let you have a go on their demo version. You'll be hooked! But don't buy it from them or you'll spend between £249 and £299, depending on the model you want. Instead, buy the highest spec model for £219 on www.play.com - search for Asus Eee 701 and choose white or black.

I did that for the black model and I'm very happy. I can log in to work if I need to whilst on the train thanks to mobile broadband available for cheap from www.three.co.uk (or for you drivers in the city, just jump on the WiFi cloud using the integrated wireless), as well as play games (*Unreal Tournament* works perfectly), watch films or TV programmes (downloaded

legally from *BBC iPlayer*; I hasten to add) or transfer your photos onto it whilst on holiday.

Now to the specs...

The 701 ships with *Xandros Linux* installed by default. Whilst this is easy to use, it's rubbish for the built-in wireless and personally I prefer *Windows XP*, which you can install if you have a valid licence and access to a USB CD-ROM drive.

It comes with a 4GB solid-state drive (no moving parts) which, whilst small, is more than enough for XP and all the programs you'd need. Plus, www.play.com are selling a 4GB SD card which you can pop in the 701 to double your disk space. You can keep any big files on your USB key, which you can then stick in whenever you need to get to them. The full QWERTY keyboard is a bit small admittedly, but after a bit of playing you get used to it. Let's face it - you're not going to replace your home computer with this; the Eee is designed for use on the move. Again, installed memory is 512MB, which is sufficient, but you can upgrade this to 1GB or 2GB for a few pounds on *eBay*.

The 7 inch matt screen defaults to 800 x 480

but can be increased to 800 x 600 (and above with free add-on software) but is more than sufficient for browsing the 'net or watching a movie. Being matt rather than the oh-so common gloss screen is so much better for viewing on the move, as you don't get that horrible glare from bright light.

The 900Mhz processor is underclocked to 600Mhz, but can be easily clocked to the full 900Mhz, although surprisingly for the most part, you never need to do this. The mini-laptop has 3 USB/2.0 ports, an RJ45 network port, built-in 802.11g WLAN, decent sound, graphics and a modem. In addition, there's a built-in webcam and headphone/mic sockets. Battery life is pretty good - up to 4 hours continuous use and the charger is no bigger than a mobile charger, unlike the big heavy bricks most laptops require! The shell itself is matt and surprisingly durable. The touchpad is very easy to use and is responsive, as you'd expect. The Eee 701's dimensions are a tiny 22.5 x 16.5 x 2.1~3.5 cm (8.9 x 6.5 x 0.9~1.4 in). So it has the essentials of a full-size laptop, but is considerably smaller, lighter (about as heavy as a bag of sugar) and because of its solid-state disk, it's shockproof.

There are later, larger editions from Asus - the 900 and 901 - and other companies are now getting on the bandwagon. But from the reviews I've read and my own hands-on experience, I think the 701 is the best by far for a mini-laptop.

My 6 year-old son loves it too! Buy one now while you can as they are selling fast!

Jonathen Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

KIBBLES CAMERA

One of the hobbies of Dial-a-Cab driver Bill Kibble (K86) is "now and then" photography. In this occasional series, Bill takes photos of places and buildings that have an original version somewhere in the public domain...

This month: *Romanos* was at 399-400 Strand. The restaurant had its heyday from 1877-1901 but still existed until bombed in the blitz to be later replaced by *Stanley Gibbons* stamp shop. Amazingly, only the names seem to have changed...



Romanos
in 1895



Stanley
Gibbons
Stamp
shop in
2008
where
Romanos
was

Call Sign correspondent, **Chas Kissin (P99J)**, has asked TfL several questions relating to the licensed taxi business and on behalf of Mayor Johnson, **Luke Howard, Senior Strategy & Integration Manager** at TfL/PCO has answered him...

Chas asked: "Since the Mayor has taken over the running of the taxi and private hire sectors, licence money collected has risen to £250 per 3-year term, equating to £30,000,000 per 3-year period or £10,000,000 per year. Can you tell me what we get for this money and how it is spent?"

Re private hire, why do they not display a proper plate as they do in other cities as opposed to the paper roundels that look like tax discs?

How much longer will pedicabs be allowed to tout their trade and wares openly on the streets unregulated? Many are foreign students who ignore traffic signals, constantly go the wrong way in one-way streets and even ride on the pavement. They rip off the public by charging fares per person as well as overloading with as many as 5 passengers at a time. It is surely only a matter of time before someone is killed?"

Luke Howard's response:

By law, the revenue from licence fees is used to cover the costs of that licensing activity. The costs of licensing and associated activities (processing and checking applications, issuing licences and enforcement activity, with an appropriate proportion of the overheads and infrastructure costs) are assessed and licence fees set to recover these costs. There is no net revenue and no cross-subsidy between the five licensing strands (taxi drivers and vehicles; private hire drivers, operators and vehicles). The total revenue from taxi and private hire driver licensing is slightly under £6.5m per year, not the £10m you state.

Other activities, such as maintenance of the taxi rank network, the provision of information about taxi services (including the installation of poles and information panels at ranks) and negotiations with highway authorities on taxi access to bus lanes, are funded from TfL grant rather than licence fees.

The private hire vehicle licence disc was developed through a consultation process with a wide range of stakeholders, including taxi trade associations. Although it was seen as important to provide a clear and distinctive identifier for PHVs, it was also important not to make this too intrusive as a significant part of the industry, particularly in the chauffeur sector, would find this unacceptable and so a high number of exemptions from the licence display would be necessary.

The roundel sticker was subsequently offered in order to make the licensed status of PHVs clearer to other motorists as well as enforcement staff. This is necessary to allow PHVs similar rights to stop to pick up or set down passengers on red routes to the exemption allowed to taxis.

Asking TfL About...

Licence fees, minicabs and pedicabs...



Chas questions TfL...

This sign is optional and was offered as an interim measure and we will be undertaking a consultation later this year with a view to replacing both signs with a single identifier.

We are aware that pedicabs cause significant congestion on both roads and pavements as well as having safety implications for their passengers and other road users.

Unfortunately, the current state of the law is

unsatisfactory. A court ruling in 2003 stated that the passenger-carrying role of pedicabs falls under *stage carriages* and as such, is outside the licensing and regulatory regimes. In terms of traffic enforcement, they are classified as pedal cycles and can use the facilities that ordinary bicycles are allowed to use. It has therefore proven difficult for TfL and other authorities to take effective action on safety or to support traffic and parking regulations regarding these vehicles.

TfL is seeking a *Declaratory Judgment* from the High Court stating that pedicabs are a form of Hackney Carriage. But the pedicab industry has challenged this, which has delayed a decision by the court. If the application for a judgement is successful, pedicabs will be regarded as non-motorised Hackney Carriages and be subject to a licensing and regulatory regime that could either prevent their operation or restrict them to certain numbers and area.

Luke Howard
Senior Strategy & Integration
Manager (TfL/PCO)

DIAL-A-CAB SHIRTS AVAILABLE



L-R Sam, Vic and Dana with their DaC shirts at Roman Way

We have had drivers showing interest in the short-sleeved shirts that the staff at Roman Way are now wearing. If any drivers are interested, we can get the shirts for £10.16 each (incl VAT). This includes the Dial-a-Cab logo on the left breast. Long sleeved are also available.

The shirts are from *Alexandra*, the company that supplies all major companies with their corporate wear.

They come in grey, white, pale blue or lilac and are 70% cotton / 30% polyester. Collar sizes are 14½ up to 19½ ...

Tom Whitbread

I wanted to tell you about a way to save money on fuel; that is by buying it at the coldest hour of the day or night. Then when the temperature goes up, the fuel will expand and your litre will grow a bit – more for your money. I ran this past Glen, my beloved Dial-a-Cab driver and partner.

"How stupid can you get?" he laughed "Do you think you can fill up a tank and then when the sun comes out, you'll have more than a tank? Don't you realise it would explode?"

Well, he taught physics for a term at some desperate comprehensive school in the 70s, but that doesn't give him the right to fall about laughing at me, calling me "stupid, stupid, stupid!" I can't be the only DaC partner who's heard enough about diesel prices – is it worth driving to a party 15 miles away if the food we'll get costs less than the diesel to get there and a litre of diesel costs more than a litre of cranberry juice? And possibly the only non-alcoholic liquid dearer than diesel is ink and blah blah and I have to work an extra six hours a week to cover the extra cost! Ok, it's getting boring now. There's nothing we can do about it. Let's change the subject. If I think of any more fuel-saving tips, I'll keep them to myself instead of trying to help...

To Jenny, Call Sign's Californian Beauty

Now, I may be stupid but I'm not daft. Jenny,

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

Back Seat *Driver*



you are daft. You convinced me that Sam was a love-rat. I grabbed *Call Sign* every month when it landed on the mat – no, even before it landed - to read each instalment of your fabulous love story, knowing it would end in tears and sure that it would all be HIS fault, the lying, two-timing toad. Now I've read your poem I'm not so sure.

I think you nearly drowned him in your devotion and sentiment and he had to come up for air, girl. He moved in with another woman and you still pined. You rang him after he'd fathered her child, and now you're a mar-

ried woman and you'll love him always and forever?! What does your husband say?

Please, Jenny, get a grip. Ingrid Bergman did NOT send poetry to Humphrey Bogart in Casablanca, and if she had he'd have forgotten Paris. If Juliet had done that to Romeo, I bet he'd have ended up cheating on her, just as Sam did to you. I can believe any DaC driver has lips that are "fathoms of fire," as you say, that burn your lips, and no doubt have burnt a few others too. What I can't believe is that you've told him, and all of us too! Now, stop!

I'm sorry, Jenny, and sorry to any other besotted women out there who write poems to lost loves. I don't want to be horrid, so here's some positive love advice courtesy of my late mother, Bertha. She told me never to marry for money, only for love – but rich men, she said, are very easy to love.

Maybe stupid women are lovable too, cause I've just got a big kiss from Glen, not too fiery, as he goes off to work – and he's still laughing about the expanding diesel...

Till later...

Love Poppy x x x

Dial-a-Cab drivers...

How will age affect your brain and memory?

We are conducting research into how memory and the brain changes over time. In our previous research, we found that part of the brain in licensed London taxi drivers is bigger than in people who are not taxi drivers, presumably because they have acquired so much knowledge about London. We are now extending this work to examine what happens to the memory and brains of people when they continue to work after retirement age. Our overall aim with this work is to understand more about how the brain supports memory, so that we can assist patients with memory problems.

If you are interested in taking part and you are healthy, male, a retired or working licensed London taxi driver over 65 and would consider having some memory tests and a quick brain scan, please call **Katherine Woollett (Institute of Neurology at the UCL) on 020-7813 1546.**

It will involve coming to the unit in central London for about 1.5 hours to do some

pen and paper memory tests and have a quick brain scan. We also offer a small payment to help cover the costs of £30-£40 - and you get to see your brain!



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Design Your Own Future for 2050!

The Science of Survival at the Science Museum

The Science of Survival is a new, hands-on, family exhibition that uses the latest environmental research to challenge visitors to create their own sustainable city of 2050. The exhibition highlights ways of changing and adapting how we live to ensure we will be able to survive in 2050.

The *Science of Survival* is at the Science Museum in London until 2 November and invites visitors to explore new ways of finding water, creating new super foods, designing vehicles and building new homes and gardens for 2050. It reveals how our lifestyles and leisure activities affect the world's environment. Each visitor's choices, designs and creations are stored using their *Survival* card as they progress through the exhibition until, finally, their own neighbourhood of 2050 rises from the ground and combines with the communities created by other exhibition visitors to form an entire city!

Visitors move through seven areas, playing interactive games along the way and shaping their lives for 2050. Among the activities is *Future Journey*, a driving game that involves picking up friends in newly designed vehicles, running on new fuels, to go to a party in the 2050 city.

The exhibition also offers an early opportunity to see at first-hand many new inventions designed to make best use of the planet's resources. These include the *toilet-lid sink*, which recycles the water we use to wash our hands sending it straight into the toilet cistern; the *Q-drum*, a rollable water container which is a simple, hygienic and comfortable way of transporting large amounts of water large distances in poorer, drier countries rather than struggling with heavy, cumbersome, unhygienic containers; the *Eglu Chicken House*, an effective way of keeping chickens and producing eggs in an urban garden and the *eCube*, a low-cost device that imitates food to dramatically reduces the large amount of ener-

gy used by fridges and freezers.

The exhibition is highly interactive with challenges for children and families to complete throughout. It is backed by new research and all of its features are devised following



One of the futuristic games you can play along the way

consultations with scientists and researchers across the UK. It also illustrates exactly how individuals can make a difference to the future of the world.

The *Science of Survival* is sponsored by three global organisations, BASF, HSBC and Nissan.

Admission: £6 adults; Family (1 adult, 2 children) £16.50; Family (2 adults, 2 children) £22.

Open 10am–6pm every day. For more information go to www.scienceof.com/survival.

With the kids on holiday, there are many other exhibitions at the Science Museum to keep them occupied and entertained including IMAX 3D films.

Van Aaken vADDERS Emission System

**Dave Stock, Head of Service
Delivery at the PCO writes:**

The Van Aaken vADDERS emission system was first approved in March 2006 for the LTI Fairway models of taxi, with further approval being granted in May and August 2006 for the TX models of taxi.

On the 3 January 2008, Van Aaken Developments Ltd ceased trading and was placed into administration. Since this time, the PCO, in conjunction with the Energy Saving Trust and the administration company concerned, have been trying to get in place after-market support for those taxi owners who have had a Van Aaken system fitted to their taxi who may now need to obtain certain replacement parts.

Feedback from taxi owners and those maintaining taxis has indicated that the front pipe assembly on this particular system does fail in service. The PCO is pleased to announce that the company who previously supplied the front pipe assembly to Van Aaken, has agreed to supply this part to the London taxi trade through the Richmond Road Cab Centre Ltd, who are based at 195 Richmond Road, Hackney E8 3NJ (Tel. 020 7275 7589 Fax. 020 7254 8976). They have a website at www.richmond-roadcabcentre.com.

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Going home

For as long as I can remember, a high percentage of drivers on our circuit have not been happy with the 'going home' facility. Would it not be possible, when selecting a Code 3, to have a further two choice buttons on the screen?

Choice 1: The present facility, which dispatches drivers unlimited jobs to anywhere.

Choice 2: The previous facility, which dispatches drivers jobs only to adjacent zones to where the driver lives.

This would solve the problem when a batch of jobs are dispatched at the same time. Drivers living east for example and who really do want to go home, would not get jobs offered far west and vice versa.

I know that you can't please everyone, but I'm sure that having a choice would please many of our drivers.

John Myers (K62)

Keith Cain replies: John, I believe having the choice of two would not change anything. Why would a driver select the facility of trips going to his home or back up zones when they can see all the work unmasked, which then gives them a wider choice to where they want to finish? For example, if a driver's home zone is SW15 and they chose option 2, then trips going to W6 or SW6 would never be offered. Likewise if a driver lived in E50 or E99 zones, they would not see a SE50 or SE99 and vice versa. As there are more trips of this nature going through the system, I think the majority of drivers would only use the one option.

Mercedes Vito

I went to Battersea Park to view the new Mercedes Vito Taxi. Phew! What a motor! I know which one I will buy next March. Before that weekend, several cab drivers I spoke to regarding this Mercedes Vito said they were absolute rubbish, but now I know they must have been on the moon at the time!

George Cato (H80)

Hi George, nothing from Mercedes can be described as "absolute rubbish." The name virtually guarantees the quality – the only question to decide is whether it is suitable as a London taxi. That's one that you should decide for yourself after reading reports and talking about it with others
...Ed

Florrie Culverwell

Dear Alan,

What a great article in last month's *Call Sign* about Florrie Culverwell and her son Michael. I was truly filling up and honestly had to dab the corner of my eye halfway through. After reading it, I had a brilliant idea. Since Dial-a-Cab House wasn't dedicated to anyone, how about the Client Reception being named The Florrie Culverwell client reception? As we all

now know, if it wasn't for Florrie there would have been no first accounts and who knows where ODRTS would have ended up? Not only that, but I can't get this vision of a small, rotund, spectacled (and bearded) little boy making a pest of himself as young Michael is said to have done! Isle of Sheppey Mick hasn't been too well of late, so how about it in memory of the Culverwells both past and present?

Nick Stevenston (J65)

Hi Nick, I did put the point to those upstairs and while they sympathised with your views, there are many, many others from our past who probably have just as much claim to fame as Florrie. She did a great job as a Jill of all trades and was paramount in getting the BBC as our first corporate account, but where do you stop? Founder Chairman Bonnie Martyn? Jack Taylor, who took the trade to new levels when meeting the Royal family as Chairman of the Underprivileged Children's Fund? Aubrey Siteman, who whilst on the Board undertook every single position the Society had to offer? Probably every Chairman we've ever had including the current incumbent of the position? And what about all the drivers over the years who have done something outstanding to benefit not just DaC but the trade as a whole? That takes nothing away from your suggestion, Nick, but you can see the problem ...Ed

Email address at DaC

Dear Alan,

Well done on producing an excellent magazine. Having had a limited experience of producing a magazine when I worked in industry, I know how difficult it can be.

Anyway to my question:- Would it be possible to include a list of email addresses and / or phone numbers of key people at Dial-a-Cab? Since the new switchboard does mention that you can enter the extension number of the person, an updated list would be invaluable. I do understand if there is a confidentiality issue, but thought I'd ask anyway!

Paul Howe (O78)

Thanks for the kind words Paul. So far as the phone is concerned, if you don't press an extension number then you will go to the operator and they will then put you through. As for emails, take the first name and add the first letter of the surname with the addition of @dialacab.co.uk. So Allan Evans would be allane@dialacab.co.uk. Keith Cain is the exception and his complete name is used before the @ sign ...Ed

Who does what?

Part 2...

Dear Brian,

Thank you for your reply, if that's what it was. I was trying to make a serious point in my let-

ter as to the state we have allowed our country and our trade degenerate into. You chose to take it as a personal insult and the red mist that descended upon you stopped you making any comments to the questions I raised. My complaint was against anyone that takes it upon themselves to represent me as a taxi driver and continues to give new legislation the nod without consulting those that they represent. I'm not going to reply to the disparaging remarks you made about me, I am not looking for a slanging match. It would serve no purpose and to be honest, I don't feel I need to. The several years I have been back with Dial-a-Cab have been good and you have never heard one word of complaint from me because I consider it well run and that is down to you and the board. However, if I and others are not happy with things, we can complain, change chairmen and board members, or leave. On a trade basis, that is not the case.

It was disappointing to read your rant, however it did show you hadn't understood the meaning of my letter and you made one or two strange statements, which I will address. Firstly, you made great strides to ascertain if I had made contact with Lee Scott, my M.P. about my concerns. Lee is a good and willing MP and I do consult him on other matters. It must have pricked your conscience as to how your contribution to the Home Office meeting would go down as you contacted him to see if any complaints about the ISA had been registered with him. Why? Let me explain why I never contacted Lee Scott over the ISA. Let's imagine 50 constituent taxi drivers were to complain to Lee that they were unhappy with further legislation, no doubt he would have got onto it right away and sent a letter to the Home Office about his constituents concerns. The reply would have been similar to: *Thanks for your letter Lee, sorry to hear about your constituents concerns, but their representatives never objected so we're going ahead, thanks once again for your letter.* Then it would have gone into the bin. Can you understand that Brian? Do you understand the responsibility you have when you step outside Dial-a-Cab?

Every month the Prime Minister holds a Q&A session with journalists at Downing Street. To gain entry you need a pass, all the press and major news channels plus a smattering of foreign journalists are there. They ask pertinent questions to a point, but they never rock the boat, otherwise the pass may be withdrawn. You won't see the likes of Peter Hitchen or John Pilger there. The question therefore needs to be asked why were you and Bob Oddy the only ones there? Were others asked but never bothered turning up or were you the only two invited? Although you and Bob Oddy may raise questions - even become vociferous - do you think it was considered that you wouldn't rock the boat? That's a question and not an accusation.

Another strange comment that caught my eye was that you and Bob Oddy were endeavouring



MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 36

to protect the good name of the trade. Pray tell me to whom? Surely not politicians, who at the moment are under scrutiny for exceeding their expenses? There have been those that have been named for declaring their second homes as their first, so as to receive much larger incomes and a couple were recently told they could keep the six figure sum they had over-claimed while sorting out their affairs. If you can tell me one organisation with 24,000 members who are more law-abiding, more honest and more decent than London taxi drivers, please name them. And you feel the need to defend our good name? How patronising.

Then it gets worse. I read further on in *Call Sign* about the new touting laws - one strike and you're out. I never saw any objections to the full implementation of it. Let's look at it closely. The article starts off by stating the need to rid our streets of uninsured illegal vehicles and their drivers. Nothing wrong with that, it goes on to refer to licensed taxi drivers who hang up at hotels. As a night driver it doesn't affect me, but it must be wrong. How it will be stopped is another thing, it's all done on the phone nowadays, but nothing wrong in stopping that. However, it then goes on to threaten drivers that may stop at a bus stop on the way home with their light out, it doesn't specify whether or not a hand has to come out to see if the person is going their way. It then goes on to mention those that park up with their light out - obviously a reference to those drivers at Liverpool Street. So it seems that in this politically correct asylum that we now live, if you're going to be nasty to illegal minicab drivers, you must be nasty to London taxi drivers as well. A man or woman who has done up to 4 years on the Knowledge, may have worked hard all day or night paying £6 plus a gallon for a vehicle that struggles to do 20 to the gallon, tries to find one going home to offset his or her horrendous unsubsidised outgoings, stops to see if the hand that hailed him or her while their light was out is going his or her way, is actually the hand of Sergeant Hilson (remember him)? How absurd and as for the drivers at Liverpool street, what are they doing wrong? I've picked up young city kids in the early hours asking if I'd go to Chelmsford for £60, if not to drop them off at Liverpool Street where one of the boys will take them. I'd rather a taxi driver got one home for a deal than the alternative because these people are not going to pay the full fare and what about the public? Have they been consulted? Imagine on a miserable winter's night, a queue in Charing Cross freezing to death and all the empty taxis going by, off home with their lights out scared to go in and ask if anyone is going their way, because you can bet your life these places will be the hunting grounds of the tout squad. The trouble is the suits that represent us now spend more time in the back of a taxi and not enough time in the front.

All the things that Lord Denning said some 60 years ago must never happen, are happening. Councils are abusing their power,

Governments are abusing their power and we are getting no support from our representatives. Read my original letter again, Brian and look at the content, not for something to get upset about. This is serious, why should we be purer than the driven snow on tenterhooks every time we go to work? As to what new regulation we've fallen foul of this time, that's not how the world works. If you choose to represent us then stand firm against any further invasion of our daily lives.

Mike Pollington (K17)

Ok Mike, enough is enough. I know some drivers enjoy verbal fisticuffs in Mailshot, but this bout gets us nowhere. You referred to the Chairman with absolutely nothing to back up your statement, as attending meetings and "come out shaking your head with the other sheep." Also because he wears a suit "that doesn't mean you should become a nodding donkey." And then you feel aggrieved at not receiving a polite response! Well, sorry Mike, having spoken to you after you won a *Call Sign* competition to find a name for DaC House, I know you are highly principled. But that doesn't give you the right to criticise others who are every bit as highly principled as you and who, whatever they do, will never please everyone. You criticise those from the trade for attending the meeting, but don't say what the alternative is. Boycott the meeting and not find out what they intend doing or putting our case?

There are now 26,000 licensed taxi drivers. The LTDA have around 7000 members, Dial-a-Cab have 2500 - more than the LCDC and the T&G have together - and Brian was also representing the London Taxi Network. Should they not also be there? I don't know who else was invited - the PCO were there - but if previous experiences are anything to go by, then more representatives from different groups does not necessarily give you more options - just more in-house disagreements. *Call Sign* gave a fairly detailed report in the May issue including some of the points raised by Brian and Bob Oddy, but by no stretch of the imagination was it a word-by-word account of what was a long meeting. Brian also said in his Chairman's report that "whilst all should welcome the new legislation, the registration to the new system by London taxi drivers is completely ludicrous and the authorities have got it wrong!" That doesn't sound much like a nodding donkey.

As for your second point re 'one strike and you're out', *Call Sign* doesn't make the rules. The points you bring up make the case for more 'going home' ranks like the one in Cranbourn Street, not a free-for-all where we can all stop and ask passengers where they are going and say bog off if it's the wrong way. You may not say that, but I promise you that some do.

You may also approve of 'hanging up' outside Liverpool Street, but not every passenger coming out is just looking for a cheap fare and those drivers sitting with their lights off are taking the work of those who are passing by and who perhaps might also like a trip to Chelmsford - yes, even at a discounted price - and even if they don't live close to it. They also turn down most trips as not being lucrative enough. What type of impression do you think that gives the licensed taxi trade? I admit that whenever I drive past those drivers, I feel an irritation that not only are they showing us up, but they are also stealing our work - and no, Mike, I don't think they are much better than touts because that is exactly what they are doing - touting. Go up to them at night and ask them to take you to Mile End and they'll tell you to get a passing cab because that trip isn't far enough east for them. If a minicab then pulled up and took them, who do you think they'll use next time?

But it isn't all moans from me; the new Transport for London Act (2008) that received royal assent at the end of May, gives the go-ahead for more going home and rest ranks. With some common sense by the PCO - not always a certainty - that could mean marshalled destination ranks at Liverpool Street where everyone would have the option of a cut-price trip to their home or something along the route. And Mike, please don't take the above as an attack on you, it's just my view ...Ed

Internet reader

I have only just come across your website and find your magazine amazing. It's nice to hear regular mention of my birth city instead of just seeing adverts for London in travel agent stores. Dial-a-Cab sounds amazing, we have nothing like it in Durban although a few companies with a small number of cars are attempting to merge into a big radio taxi group with a mutual phone number. But they keep arguing and I doubt they'll agree on what time of day it is let alone a merger.

Interesting to read comments in some of your back issues regarding the length of time robots stay red. The part of town I work in, we don't take much notice of them and if it's safe, we just go!

One suggestion; why don't you rename your website so that it has the word taxi in it, then it will give many more in our business the chance to Google it and benefit from what is an excellent read. Is it possible to have a hard copy posted? I do not mind paying...?

Aaron Weinstein

Durban, South Africa

Sorry Aaron, *Call Sign's* courtesy list is filled - even if you do pay! Incidentally, I think Aaron's use of robots means traffic signals ...Ed



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£27,495 on the road

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Official fuel consumption figures for the TX4 in mpg (l/100km): Urban 25.5 (11.1) - 28.0 (10.1), Extra Urban 38.2 (7.4) - 41.5 (6.8), Combined 32.0 (8.0) - 35.2 (8.0). CO2 emissions: 211 - 233 g/km.