

DECEMBER 2008



# CALL SIGN

FROM THE HOME OF DIAL A CAB INTERNATIONAL

*Inside this issue...*

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drivers in London...

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DaC driver tells Islington;  
"Your speed humps are too high!"

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£60 fine for scalding himself!



*Over 20 years with DaC -  
Westminster TaxiCard's Irene  
says goodbye...*



*Why do DaC Call Centre staff dress differently  
to most?*





# NASH'S NUMBERS

**By Alan Nash (A95)**

Long time since you've had a Eurostar timetable. This one is valid until 7th March 2009, until they change it before that time of course! I'd like to wish you all the season's greetings...

Arrival	From	Train#	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Notes
07:15	Alps	9099							-	Note 1
08:08	Brussels	9109	-	-	-	-	-	-		
08:12	Paris	9005	-	-	-	-	-			
08:32	Paris	9007	-	-	-	-	-	-		
09:38	Brussels	9113	-	-	-	-	-			
09:52	Paris	9011	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
10:09	Brussels	9117						-	-	
11:16	Paris	9015	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
11:19	Paris	9019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
11:22	Brussels	9121	-	-	-	-	-			
12:38	Paris	9023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
13:08	Brussels	9127	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
14:32	Paris	9029	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
14:36	Paris	9031	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
15:53	Paris	9035						-	-	
16:01	Brussels	9141	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
16:11	Alps	9095						-		Note 2
16:14	Paris	9037						-	-	Note 3
16:24	Paris	9037	-	-	-	-	-			
17:54	Paris	9043	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
18:53	Brussels	9149	-	-	-	-	-			
19:00	Brussels	9149						-	-	
19:04	Paris	9047	-	-	-	-	-			
19:05	Paris	9047						-	-	
19:17	Paris	9049	-	-	-	-	-		-	
19:20	Brussels	9153	-	-	-	-	-		-	
20:27	Brussels	9157	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
20:31	Paris	9051	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
20:38	Paris	9053	-	-	-	-	-			
20:42	Paris	9053							-	
21:59	Paris	9059	-	-	-	-	-			
22:07	Paris	9059						-	-	
22:10	Disney	9057						-	-	
22:13	Disney	9057	-	-	-	-	-			
22:19	Brussels	9165	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
22:25	Paris	9061	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

**Note 1 - from 03/01/2009 / Note 2 - from 27/12/2008 / Note 3 - not on Saturdays from 20/12/2008**

## What's On at the O2 in quite a busy month

Event	Venue   Type	Date	Event	Venue   Type	Date
Simply Red	O2 arena   Music	3 Dec 2008	Coldplay	O2 arena   Music	16 Dec 2008
Barry Manilow	O2 arena   Music	4 Dec 2008	Here & Now Christmas Party	IndigO2   Music	18 Dec 200
Classic FM series	IndigO2   Music	5 Dec 2008	Madness	O2 arena   Music	19 Dec 2008
Classic FM series	IndigO2   Music	6 Dec 2008	The Bootleg Beatles	IndigO2   Music	19 Dec 2008
Barry Manilow	O2 arena   Music	6 Dec 2008	The Bootleg Beatles	IndigO2   Music	20 Dec 2008
Classic FM series	IndigO2   Music	7 Dec 2008	Stereophonics - NEW!	O2 arena   Music	20 Dec 2008
Barry Manilow	O2 arena   Music	7 Dec 2008	Classic FM series	IndigO2   Music	22 Dec 2008
Kings of Leon	O2 arena   Music	11 Dec 2008	Disney's High School Musical	O2 arena   Family	24 Dec 2008
Elton John	O2 arena   Music	13 Dec 2008	Disney's High School Musical	O2 arena   Family	26 Dec 2008
Shakin' Stevens	IndigO2   Music	13 Dec 2008	Disney's High School Musical	O2 arena   Family	27 Dec 2008
Coldplay	O2 arena   Music	14 Dec 2008	Disney's High School Musical	O2 arena   Family	28 Dec 2008
Coldplay	O2 arena   Music	15 Dec 2008	Disney's High School Musical	O2 arena   Family	29 Dec 2008

**See [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk/extras](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk/extras) for "Whats On" at Earls Court, Olympia and Excel**



# from the editor's desk



*Hello and welcome to the December 2008 Call Sign – a sort of Christmassy issue as the January 2009 mag should be on your doorsteps sometime between Boxing Day and New Year's Eve. So enjoy the holiday period...*

## Vito Taxi – Manchester

### make a sensible decision

The Manchester council of Trafford has made a sensible decision regarding the Mercedes Vito taxi. Up until now, Manchester had only used the LTI version, but they have now approved the new cab to run alongside it. So why is it sensible, because it's no secret that I don't approve of the Vito due to its likeness to a private hire vehicle? Well, unlike London, the council will only licence the vehicle in black and in that colour, it looks far more like a taxi. As one Trafford councillor put it: "The Mercedes Vito, like the traditional style black cabs, will be easily recognisable to people as a hackney carriage due to its colour and illuminated sign."

### AGM error!

To prove – or should that be proof – that this magazine is the paper equivalent of human, we made a mistake in the November issue on – of all pages – the Chairman's one! As the kindly benefactor that he is, Mr Rice has refrained from firing – or even expelling me – so I would like to correct that mistake here. It was nothing that important... only the wrong year for the 2008 AGM!

Fortunately for me, Company Secretary Howard Pears had the correct information in his reminder, but somehow the proofing pencil must have been asleep checking Brian's page.

**So here it is with the correct year. The 2008 AGM will be held at The Brewery, Chiswell Street, London EC1 on Sunday 8, February 2009 at 11:00hrs.**

I feel purged of all wrongdoings now!

### Silly Knowledge?

The PCO say – quite rightly in my view – that they need to attract younger drivers into the trade. But surely the situation where 19 year old Kevin MacLaren has become the youngest ever candidate to pass The Knowledge, is a bit silly?

It took him around two years as against the current average of over three, but what is the point when he cannot drive a taxi until he is 21? In April of this year, *Call Sign* wrote about DaC's Natalia Shalom (A34), who at the time became the youngest taxi driver in London. She passed out at around her 21st birthday having begun the KoL just over two years earlier. But Kevin was so young when he started that he now has two years before he can get his licence. Will the PCO then ask him to do the Knowledge again because he won't have driven for two years? Hopefully not, because all he deserves is congratulations in passing one of life's most difficult exams. But it does sound a bit silly. My oldest grandson is 15, I wonder if they'd accept him? What the notorious Mr Finlay would have made of it all is anyone's guess!

### Stevie Mac and advertising...!

I've known the LTDA's Stevie McNamara for many years and yes, we've had the occasional disagree-



ment, but we often think alike. However, I have to pull him up in his general condemnation of the trade press – his obvious exclusion being the publication he writes for – inferring that we hold back from criticising LTI because of their advertising. That, Steve, is rubbish so far as *Call Sign* is concerned.

In last month's mag was this comment: "So what have LTI done? More to the point, what haven't they done? Well, LTI claim they are doing the recall in VIN order, but according to every single one of the calls I referred to earlier, these drivers cannot get a clue from LTI regarding their position in that queue so they can at least have an idea as to how much longer they will have to wait. That isn't good enough."

That's just a small example. I have no problem whatsoever in publishing anything that I consider worthy of publication – that applies to criticism and when deserved, praise too. Yet not once have LTI ever hinted to me that they did not like something I had written about them – and if your assumption were correct, I'd have lost their advertising by now.

But perhaps they accept my criticism because they know that I speak as I find? Their press releases on the TX4 fires were occasionally on the snotty side, but that won't stop me telling anyone that is interested that my TX4 is far and away the best cab I have ever driven – I can't really blame them for my Saturday night puncture! What I won't do is to criticise for the sake of it, but I'm certainly not afraid to if that is what's needed.

Stevie Mac works constantly for the betterment of the trade, but he isn't always right ... and you couldn't make that up, you really couldn't!

### Fares unfair?

I must admit to being a bit shell-shocked after last month's Editorial where I suggested we think carefully about whether we should still go for a fare increase in April 2009. The large number of DaC drivers who phoned me to say I was right stunned me – although in all fairness, I had a handful that said I was talking rubbish!

But I really am concerned that by April, we could be not only in the depths of recession – being into the third quarter of negative growth – but even possibly a depression. The problem is that I'm not actually sure what a depression is! Someone once told me that a recession is when your neighbour loses his job and a depression is when you lose yours. Well we can't actually lose

our jobs as such, but if we don't pick up passengers, the effect is the same.

By next April, unemployment will be at the highest levels we have seen for many years. Many of those losing their jobs will be former regular cab users, so we have to try everything to keep our noses ahead of private hire. We can't compete on all their prices, but neither should we kid ourselves that they can just cut theirs. Most of their drivers are working for very low rates already and can't go much lower, while their bosses have huge bills to keep up with. Many private hire companies will go out of business, although even with that we are going to be quieter than we have been since the last recession in 1989/90. But we can keep going if passengers believe that it's worthwhile for them to use cabs rather than public transport – especially after Mayor Johnson's recent transport business plan in which he announced an annual, above-inflation hike in bus and tube fares for the next eight years!

A press release saying that the licensed taxi industry is forgoing its usual increase for next year because it realises the current difficulties the economy is going through, could bring us tremendous goodwill and perhaps win us extra work. If we do go ahead with an increase – however small – it will lose us more work than we gain in extra cash. It will also lose us customers that may never come back. That is my view, but the decision isn't mine...

### Fed up with traffic lights!

I'm sure I'm not the only driver who wonders why, in an age when almost nothing of a technological nature is impossible and kids play with computers more powerful than the one that set us on our data dispatch travels twenty years ago, someone can't invent portable traffic lights at road works that actually work correctly? Either they control so many different directions, one street at a time, and keep traffic waiting for several minutes or all ways get stuck on red and cause chaos. Who can forget Brompton Cross by Sloane Avenue, when all routes came to a halt for several weeks because of the portable lights?

Surely portable lights that allow two roads at a time to operate if they do not involve the road works, can't be that difficult? Or could it just possibly be that they do not want to spend the money? Either way, I'm fed up with them and if anyone from TfL is reading this, you wouldn't like me if I progressed onto being REALLY fed up!

### Richard's rest!

In his third year of writing for *Call Sign* with his *DaC driver's views on life and everything*, **Richard Potter (T51)** is taking a rest from his always-interesting monthly column. I would like to thank him for taking the time and effort over these past years, because writing the occasional letter isn't too difficult, but having to fill a page every four weeks is somewhat more so. So thanks again Richard...



**Alan Fisher**  
callsignmag@aol.com

# Reflections Of The Chairman

## End of Year Audit

As most of you are aware, our Financial Year concluded at the end of August. Since then we have had a team of Auditors here to verify our figures - which they have done - and as a result we are now in the process of producing our *End of Year Report*. You will all receive a copy of this early in the New Year, along with the remainder of your AGM papers.

The previous year's figures (ending August 2007) was a record and the best year in regards of turnover that this Society had ever experienced in fifty five years of trading. Consequently, we are comparing this year's results against figures that were attained during that best-ever year! Nevertheless we have not done too badly with turnover down less than £500k and when that is compared to a total turnover of around £50million, then under the circumstances and the terrific downturn in the global economy, we have not fared too badly. The fall in our turnover, when expressed in percentage terms, equates to less than 1%.

However, I do not expect the above trend to continue and I believe turnover will fall considerably more during the current financial year. While we have budgeted for a 20% fall in turnover, even that could be a little optimistic. I just hope that I have got it wrong because nothing would give me greater pleasure than to say I made a mistake with my forecast and we experienced nothing like that 20% drop in turnover!

As a Society, we can draw comfort that we do not have any debt to service and with the current economic climate as it is, that is an enviable position to be in. In addition, the fact that we have built a 'war chest' over the past few years when times were better, will stand us in good stead to weather the economic storm that we are currently experiencing and will continue to experience, certainly for the short term at least.

I know the above will not help you as individuals, but hopefully it will bring some comfort knowing that your Society has been managed better than some others in our industry.

## Yellow badges in London?

There is an article elsewhere in the magazine concerning one of our members and his annoyance regarding suburban yellow badge drivers encroaching on the territory that should be serviced by green badge drivers. I can understand his frustration, as indeed all members reading it will identify with him because you are all green badge drivers. We do not have yellow badge drivers as members or indeed journeymen on DaC.

Since becoming Chairman twelve years ago, I can safely say that to my knowledge we have only had one yellow badge driver on Dial-a-Cab and he slipped through the net. As soon as it was brought to our attention - incidental-



ly by another member - he was asked to strip out, which of course he did. As we do not have yellow badge drivers on Dial-a-Cab, nor do we intend to do so, I would like to make it quite clear that none of the article in the current issue of *Call Sign* refers to, or indeed relates to Dial-a-Cab.

I do have meetings on a reasonably regular basis with the PCO and would like to make it clear that the situation regarding yellow badge drivers picking up in town has never been discussed, as I was not aware that it was a major problem. Obviously other radio circuits did, as it had been brought to their attention and not mine. After all my years in the trade I always knew the above scenario existed, but it is something we have always lived with, although of course that doesn't make it right.

It wasn't too long ago that the PCO experimented with 'island ranks' where yellow badge drivers were allowed to move closer to town in an attempt to service areas that were neglected or poorly serviced by green badge drivers. How times change in an economic downturn where most people are, quite rightly, only interested in their own economic survival!

I will raise this issue on my next visit to the PCO and hopefully go some way to having the situation remedied, as it does not do anyone any favours by having suburban drivers working in town.

## Our own problems!

I understand the frustration that the yellow badge scenario causes, but these situations do become more noticeable and annoying as business becomes slower. We've had far more complaints in recent times from members concerned about being 'booked off' than we have ever had about yellow badges working in town. We have looked at that situation closely and whilst it is not acceptable to be booked off even once, it would appear that it is not happening any more than it did before, the difference now is that it's quieter and it becomes more annoying than it did in the past as it takes longer to work your way to the top of the zone.

## 2008 AGM

The AGM will be on 8 February at the Brewery in Chiswell Street - assuming the Editor gets the date right this time! I am pleased to say that the current five elected Board Members are seeking re-election and I am more than happy to nominate them all. The only downside so far as you are concerned, is that I am unopposed as Chairman, consequently, you will have to make do with me for the next two years!

*Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and as it is not going to be a prosperous New Year - a very healthy one.*



**Brian Rice**  
Chairman  
Dial-a-Cab



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# ALDGATE MESS: TfL RESPOND...

Following the article in the October *Call Sign* (Aldgate one way – DaC drivers call it the mess), DaC driver **Mike Leo (Z09)** asked TfL about the new one way system at Aldgate.

He told them that he had lived and worked around Aldgate for over 35 years and it had always run smoothly.

In his letter to them, Mike also said that Mansell Street was constantly gridlocked - often tailing back to Tower Hill - adding that even late on a Sunday night, Whitechapel High Street could be chaotic. He ended by asking what was happening to the now-empty Braham Street?

Transport for London responded to Mike in the shape of Joanna Croom, one of the seemingly endless supply of Customer Services Advisor for London Streets.

She told Mike:

*"The works will provide improved pedestrian crossing facilities, removing the fast one way traffic streams which will deliver many safety benefits. Furthermore, the consolidation of the bus routes, so that east and west bound services are situated on the one road, opposite each other and closer to the nearest underground station will be achieved through the upgrade providing a more coherent public transport service."*

*The new proposal allows for the creation of a new public space, which is one of the Mayor's 100 spaces to be established in London. This will be in Braham Street, between Leman Street and Mansell Street, which will be permanently closed to traffic after the gyratory is switched over to a two-way operation. This will give many benefits to the public including a new green space for local residents and people working in the area. Features expected to be included in the park are a fountain, kiosk, feature lighting, green areas and trees."*

She added that the area would be significantly improved with benefits to the public realm as well as improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users and also claimed that the new traffic system had been modelled to cope with the new layout and would operate within capacity.

She ended by saying – and you would expect no less than total satisfaction from a TfL Customer Services Advisor for London Streets: *"I trust that once the works on the Aldgate gyratory have been completed and the system has been fully switched to a two way service, traffic will flow smoothly and efficiently and the area will benefit from the improvements."*

Strangely enough, Mike wasn't exactly jumping over the moon with gratitude when he contacted *Call Sign* with a rather resigned sound to his voice and we can understand that.

Joanna Croom's version of events sounds idyllic and enough to make the cab driving population of Essex want to return to its roots! But is it? Well *Call Sign's* version of events, which was passed to us by a surveyor involved in the project and whose name we are keeping secret for obvious reasons, is somewhat different and contains some important information that seems to be missing from the official response.

Yes, a new public open space will be created by closing off the western half of Braham Street between Mansell Street and Leman Street and



**Four lanes into two doesn't go – at least not at Aldgate!**

that will probably look very nice. It might even have a space for taxi drivers to park while they use the public conveniences – just joking!

**What Miss Crooms seems to have missed out and which our surveyor says is scheduled to happen, is that the eastern end of Braham Street is closed off for the building of a private development. And what type of private development would that be? A nice restaurant or library? Perhaps a permanent museum of the east end? Not quite!**

Our surveyor told us that the private development was scheduled to contain two huge tower blocks! Whether in the current climate the developers will manage to sell the offices is neither here nor there.

As we said last time – what becomes more and more apparent is that the motorist who already pay through the teeth is of no concern other than as a revenue provider and that this area of London is slowly going to grind to a halt...

## Chancellor's VAT cut slashes new cab prices!

*The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alistair Darling's recent 2.5% VAT rate cut in his budget, has given drivers thinking of buying a new cab an unexpected bonus. Taking the rate down from 17.5% to 15% has taken a TX4 Gold down by £787, the Silver model down by £745 while the Bronze sees a reduction of £684.*

*Because this is a cut in duty, it should make no difference to any special deals M&O may be offering at their Brewery Road showroom...*

## LTFUC AGM



The LTFUC AGM will be held on Tuesday 9 Dec at 7.30pm at the New Park Day Centre, 19 Highbury New Park, Highbury N5. There is parking at the centre and refreshments will be available. All drivers are most welcome to attend...

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# Jerys World



The Office of Fair Trading have issued a statement on minicabs and price fixing

## OFT Warning to Minicabs on Price Fixing

The Office of Fair Trading has launched a campaign to ensure minicab operators across the UK understand competition rules. The OFT is concerned there may be a particular lack of awareness among private hire vehicle operators of the stringent civil and criminal laws against price fixing, following a number of reports of minicab operators entering into agreements with their competitors to set prices.

In several cases, competitors appear to have agreed prices in their local area on a per mile or minimum journey cost basis. The most recent report involved firms in Lancashire, but the OFT has received information alleging similar practices elsewhere in the UK.

Minicab operators are being warned that individuals may face criminal liability for price-fixing, including fines and even the possibility of imprisonment. In addition businesses could be fined up to 10 per cent of their total turnover.

During the campaign, the OFT was working with PH trade associations to spread awareness of the rules. The OFT has also written to Local Authority Trading Standards Services and taxi licensing officers informing them of these issues.

Simon Williams, Head of the OFT's Cartel and Criminal Enforcement Group, said:

"Minicab operators in some areas appear to be unaware of the importance of independent price setting. Companies are free to change their prices, but must understand that the law forbids any collusion with competitors when deciding price levels."

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*Late deals and special price for DaC members.*



London's taxi drivers could have told them all before, but now a BBC investigation has found that some of the 1900 or so "traffic calming" measures introduced by Islington Council – ie traffic humps – are more akin to miniature mountains than small bumps!

Drivers feel they are too high and can cause damage to the underside of the vehicle, whilst residents feel that the height creates noise all through the night because of the 'bounce' effect caused when going over them.

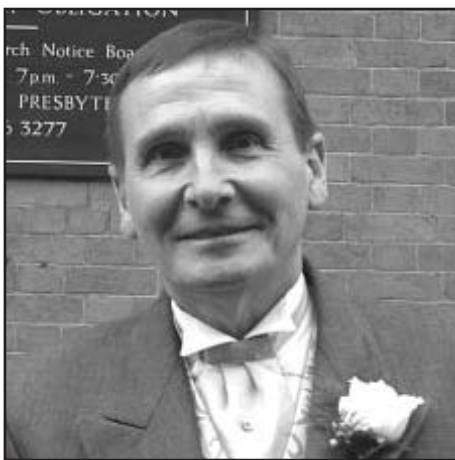
The program, *Inside Out*, spoke to one resident who made a claim against the council following damage to his exhaust system. He pointed out scuff marks on the hump that were still there after other vehicles had caught the top of it. Islington Council denied responsibility, claiming they were not responsible for the damage to the car as the speed bump complied with legislation.

According to 1999 Highways Regulations, the maximum height of a road hump shouldn't be more than 100mm (10cm) and when local MP, **Emily Thornberry**, was contacted after receiving complaints about the humps, she decided to help. The Council then agreed to pay compensation. However, that was a year ago and the humps are still the same! *Inside Out* took its tape measure to the humps that had received the highest number of complaints.

The first was in Barnsbury Square - measured at 150mm, which is 5cm too high. Number two was at the top of Offord Road and came in at a staggering 122mm – 22mm over the limit. Another hump at the other end of Offord Road measured over 10mm too high. Another in Barnsbury Road was also 10mm over the allowed height.

DaC's George Cato tells BBC TV...

## "ISLINGTON SPEED HUMPS ARE TOO HIGH!"



**George Cato: Told BBC the humps were damaging his taxi**

According to Tony Marco, who runs a garage in the area, the danger areas to the vehicle are the middle exhaust box, the rear exhaust, the oil sump and all the rubber bushes that move around and flex as you go over the humps.

The program also interviewed Dial-a-Cab driver and Islington resident, **George Cato (H80)**.

He said: "I've got a shock absorber gone that was only replaced six months ago and with my half yearly inspection due, I had to replace it

because the rubber bush at the bottom failed through constant bumping on speed humps. It's the rear suspension that suffers too."

*Inside Out* asked Islington's Executive Member for Environment, **Councillor Greg Foxsmith** about the extra height and he denied the claim saying that the humps in the borough were all within the regulations. But when the program challenged him with definitive measurements of at least five that were over the 100mm maximum according to the regulations, he said:












"It may be that there has been some road subsidence around the hump, which means the top is higher than the rest of the road."

He added that Islington would look at the examples, but added that he had been assured they were within the legal requirements. However, he also claimed that if they found any illegal humps, the council would reduce them.

*Inside Out* suggested they begin outside Roman Way, where Dial-a-Cab's fitting Bay is situated. The programme's measuring device showed a speed bump that was 270mm above legal limits. Perhaps the council should hire a mountaineer to check that one and some of the colossal humps in Copenhagen Street also, where one driver told **Call Sign** that a supply of oxygen could come in handy!

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## A DaC driver enters the debate...

Regarding the article about *Game up for yellow badges* in the last two issues of **Call Sign**, for many years I have recognised the unfairness with suburban drivers working in central London and have written many letters to the PCO about it.

As an ex-suburban driver of the large areas (as they were then), I feel I have the right to be aggrieved at the practice because I went on to do the all-London green badge. In all, I completed five years on the Knowledge. They could do the same but won't, because they get their work without the hard toil of the KoL. I can also honestly say I did not work in central London at all in my time as a yellow badge.

I still meet friends in the southeast areas and am reliably informed that many suburban drivers still work in central London with the assistance of a London radio circuit, not, I hasten to add, Dial-a-Cab. I see them myself sometimes in the City and elsewhere. I have even been on a two-cab job in central London with my previous circuit, only to find the other driver was in fact a yellow badge! His reasoning was that if they were offered the work, then it must be ok. Obviously he did not really believe it. His smug grin told me that...

I wrote to the Chairman of that radio circuit and eventually left because of his refusal to stop the illegal practice. He said he would look into my concerns only if I could supply him with a job number – obviously an impossibility. I told him that he only had to look at suburban driver's worksheets, these would show who was taking work from outside of their areas.

It still occurs every day. A member of staff on that radio circuit verified that it happened, but was afraid to do anything for fear of losing his job. He confirmed Barking drivers



**Over the past two issues of Call Sign, a DaC driver's wife has told how she blew the whistle on yellow badge drivers who had been working in central London. Now a DaC and former yellow badge driver gives his view. We have allowed him to just use his callsign...**

# Yellow Badge Drivers in London

working at Waterloo.

One excuse given by the drivers is that they are in their licensed areas when they accept the work. I know this is not true by the way their backup zones are assembled. Borough High St will not be a backup zone for Bromley (Kent) drivers, yet this is what I was told by a Board member of that circuit. He also said I must be a very bitter person to complain. The fact that they were putting VIP account customers into cabs without the relevant insurance or qualified driver, did not seem bother them in any way.

I was told by the PCO that they were not allowed to 'target' individual drivers, even if they had details of whom and when. Roy Ellis, who was Head of the PCO at the time, said he would approach the subject at a meeting with the radio companies. Perhaps Brian Rice could confirm whether this happened? I also wrote

to Mary Dowdye, PCO Head of Standards and Regulations and Mr Ellis' replacement following his retirement, who would only say that if Mr Ellis said he discussed the matter with the radio circuits, then he would have done so.

There appears to be no will by the PCO to combat this growing problem. Even after I informed them that my insurance company had confirmed that the offending driver would only have third party insurance when plying for hire outside of their licensed area, it did not have any effect on them.

Years ago I suggested to the PCO a yellow or green card in the windscreen of cabs. That way, we could all spot any illegal drivers, but the PCO would only say they were looking at an electronic version of this. I wonder what happened to that idea?

**Dial-a-Cab driver O85**

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

## Out And About in Denver

### Using GPS

Other than when I am in the area of Pennsylvania, northwest of Pittsburgh, I have a fairly reliable sense of direction. So a couple of years ago when our taxicab company, *Metro Taxi*, offered to lease GPS Navigational Systems for \$30, a few of us decided it wouldn't be advantageous. We had several years' experience and felt we knew the approximate 4,000 square miles of Metropolitan Denver well enough and carried detailed maps to help us locate unfamiliar addresses.

Last summer I breakfasted with a long-time friend who travels through the States of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and New Mexico. He told me that long-distance truckers had convinced him that GPS was great. I recited my reasons for not needing one. He scoffed and went to his car to bring his GPS to the patio where we were eating.

He gave me a quick demonstration and then let me enter a few addresses to see how it worked. I entered an address in South Dakota (a route with which I am familiar) and it swiftly produced the route I usually take! I remained unconvinced, but he got me to thinking.

During next few weeks when I had a few

spare moments and was near electronic stores, I'd check out the GPS systems – Magellan, Garmin and TomTom (lesser known brands made me leery). Yet I saw no reason to alter the position that I didn't need one.

My cell phone surprised me when *Caller ID* showed Katie, who handles PR for *Metro Taxi*. She was calling to inform me our company's owners and managers were nominating me to be the *International Taxi Driver of the Year*. I suggested they chose someone else because several years earlier I had been named Driver of the Month at Metro and I thought someone else should be given that "fifteen minutes of fame." Katie explained this was a TLPA award.

Last October, the *Taxi Limousine Paratransit Association* held its annual convention in Denver and I was presented with a large trophy of recognition, along with a cheque. The cheque went uncashed for a few weeks until I noticed a sale on GPS units. The cheque was adequate to cover the price of the GPS. While sceptical, I decided to install it in my cab.

For several days I used that GPS on every trip I ran so I could determine if the navigational directions coincided with the routes I was driving. Gradually I became more trustful, if not entirely confident with it.

We had a December snow late afternoon and my destination was in a northwestern suburb with which I was not familiar. I'd never heard of the (new) street. Rather than check the map, I decided this would be a good test for GPS accuracy. Southbound traffic was at a standstill as we drove north, so I planned to avoid the highway on my way back to town and home.

GPS took me direct to our destination. I entered *Go Home* and the monster gave me an 18.46 hours ETA at home! I missed a turn and got the *Recalculating* message and what I believed was a bad alternative turn – and discovered a shortcut I had been unaware of. Despite the weather, rush-hour traffic and missing a turn, I walked into the house at 1854 hours!

After that performance, do you wonder why I now am willing to rely on that GPS navigation system. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks!

*To all you guys at Dial-a-Cab in London, have a great Christmas...*



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





## EX-CHAIRMAN JACK RUSSELL DIES...

Former ODRTS Chairman Jack Russell, who turned 94 in early September, was recently taken ill at his residential care home and rushed into Northwick Park hospital. Sadly he passed away on the afternoon of Tuesday 25 November.

It was in 2002 at the tender age (for him) of 88 that he was admitted into St Mary's hospital, Paddington for a double heart by-pass operation. When Call Sign spoke to Jack soon after, he told us that the double had turned into a triple "as I was there anyway!" But Jack was more irritated that the by-pass would stop him driving temporarily!

Then at the age of 92, he was admitted into hospital again for a knee replacement operation and



while there, caught the superbug MRSA. Speaking to Call Sign again after being discharged, he queried whether they couldn't find "...a more pleasant way to polish me off!"

Then last year, Barbara, Jack's partner for what he described as thirty wonderful years, passed away. Yet Jack again bounced back from that tragic event in his life and moved from his home into residential care and when Call Sign paid him a visit, he looked very well.

Speaking to Jack's daughter Joyce, she told us that even at 94 Jack was still fighting – and up to the last minute, was still reading Call Sign in his hospital bed!

Jack was Chairman from 1964 when he took over from Eli Solomons, until standing down in 1969 and handing the reins over to Jack Taylor.

Our sincere sympathies to all Jack's family.

## Westminster Calltaker Irene Retires

**Call Sign** readers will remember our story about 100-year old Eileen Pattison – Goddaughter of Hollywood legend Fred Astaire - who as a regular **Westminster TaxiCard** holder wanted to visit Dial-a-Cab House.

The main reason was to finally meet the voice she had spoken to so many times when ordering using her TaxiCard, **Irene Russ**, who was in charge of day shift Westminster trips in the Call Centre. Now Irene has finally decided that after more than 20 years with DaC, the time had come to hang up her headset and retire.

Irene joined Dial-a-Cab on 25 February 1988 and was always very popular with other Calltakers. **Carol Carpenter**, who is the Account Manager for the Westminster TaxiCard, told **Call Sign**:

"Irene was a valued member of Dial-a-Cab's TaxiCard Team. Having worked closely with her over a number of years, her experience and knowledge was without a doubt invaluable. I know that she will be missed by many of the Westminster TaxiCard holders whom she spoke with regularly. I would like to take the opportunity to wish Irene all the best in her retirement."

As do we all...



Saying goodbye to Irene after 20 years with DaC  
L-R John Rogers, Howard Pears, Irene Russ, Brian Rice  
Cover pic: Goodbye with a drink!

## ISLINGTON NO TO MAYOR'S MOTORBIKE RULING!

Lib Dem-controlled Islington Council is threatening a showdown with London Mayor and keen cyclist, Boris Johnson, over plans to allow motorcyclists in bus lanes. Motorcyclists will be able to share bus lanes in London with buses, cyclists and licensed taxis from January during an 18-month trial period. But Islington Council refuses to co-operate with the plans. John Foster, Council Chief Executive, is warning Mr Johnson of the harm that could be done if TfL allow motorcycles in bus lanes and has said that if TfL go ahead and allow motorbikes to use their bus lanes, Islington will still refuse them entry.

Andrew Cornwell, a cyclist and councillor in Islington, says: "One reason cycling has risen so rapidly in recent years is the creation by TfL of an expanded network of bus lanes. While standards of bus driving still need to improve, in essence bus lanes create a relatively protected space for cyclists on main roads."

He added that there had been a 91% increase in cycle journeys since 2000 and that putting motorcycles – a mode of transport with the highest casualty rate of any – into bus lanes would put that progress at risk.

Both Islington MPs, Jeremy Corbyn (North) and Emily Thornberry (South and Finsbury) are cyclists and are in favour of the Council's stand...



Keen cyclist Boris

# CALL CENTRE CHAT

## A new signal problem!

With work being a little sparse compared to this time last year, it is making us more aware of a signal problem that has been causing frustration for some drivers and ourselves. For those that have not experienced the latest problem, it involves a trip being offered which the driver then cannot accept and the system books the driver off.

What we are seeing is the system not receiving the *accept* signal back from the cab, thus interpreting the driver as not being with the taxi. After one minute it then books that cab off, while offering the trip to the next cab. Every time this happens, we are asking questions of the driver as to where he or she is parked, is the cab engine running or switched off? The majority of incidences are happening on the island and in the city. What we are trying to ascertain is whether there are any *black spots* we can advise drivers of. Even in the days of voice dispatch, we always had a few black spots and it could be that with the constant upgrades we have made, we just might be experiencing them again.

Our IT department has been monitoring the new aerial sites and have been double-checking the functionality of the equipment. They have also been out in the DaC taxi with its two sets of radio equipment to monitor signals and are evaluating the data to clear this problem up.

Every driver I have spoken with who has suffered the experience of being booked off, has remarked that we should have a facility to put a driver back into the system with his original queue position. The Board has spoken about this at length and while it seems to be a logical thing to do, there is a reason it has not been done. To confirm a driver has received the trip and pressed the *accept* button, the



controller would have to view the logger for confirmation. Currently the logger does not show what buttons the driver has pressed. For this information, the terminal logger would need to be downloaded and this would require a visit to Roman Way within 48 hours of the incident. The logger displays the same information as a driver who is not with the cab to *accept* or *reject* and the system books the driver off after one minute. This, unfortunately, leaves the system open to possible abuse.

For example, the scenario could be that a driver is not with his cab and the trip is taken away and they are then booked off. Contacting the controller, they inform him or her that they tried to accept the trip but the host computer did not receive the signal. The controller then takes the driver's word and places the driver back into the system. They then just happen to be offered a lucrative trip, which they accept and do. At their next meeting with friends, they mention the trip and how they got it, because as we all know drivers like to tell all about the good ones. It

would not take long before word got around that the system allows for this to happen and members would lose faith in the fairness of the system, let alone the integrity of the controller.

I can hear the comments now that controllers are hooky and are putting their friends in favourable positions! It could set the Society back 25 years. To do this, as I have said, the controller would need to prove a driver was genuine and a full log of everything would need to be at their fingertips and the system in its present format just cannot do this. I am fully aware of the frustration this causes and our IT engineers are on the case. It seems that we often move one step forward and then have to take two steps back!

## And EC5

At the time of writing, we are monitoring the EC5 rank. As you know, allowing a driver to book-in within a time span leaves the distance that can be travelled open to debate with no right or wrong. In order to make it fair for all, we have decided to alter this. So in future, before a driver can book into EC5, they must physically be in any one of the EC zones. This will ensure that those drivers close to the city will be given the opportunity to book in and receive a queue position. It is a much simpler way for our controllers to monitor the zone and will stop those who attempt to gain an advantage over their fellow subscribers.

*I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members, everyone associated with the Society and their families, a very happy Christmas and a brighter New Year.*

**Keith Cain**

**Call Centre Manager**

**Driver Operations Manager**

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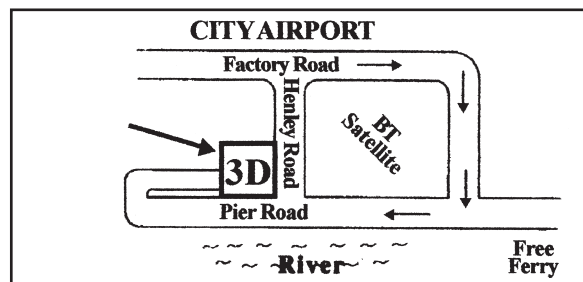
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## Kids XMAS Competition - Win £200

### Just draw a Dial-a-Cab Christmas Card...

Christmas may well be quieter on the roads this year than we're used to, but **Call Sign** is running a competition for children **aged 10 years or under**, which could significantly increase their spending power over the holidays! There aren't too many toys that £200 won't buy!

All we want you to do – other than be aged ten or under – is to draw a Christmas card that involves a Dial-a-Cab taxi. We don't mind who is driving it!

But you don't have too much time because Christmas is almost here and **Call Sign** wants you to have the money before it arrives, so all entries must be in by Wednesday 10th December. **You can either email your picture to [callsign-mag@aol.com](mailto:callsign-mag@aol.com), drop it into Drivers Reception addressed to **Call Sign** or post it to **Call Sign** at Dial-a-Cab House, 39 – 47 East Road, London N1 6AH.**

The competition is only open to children whose family member either drives for, or works for Dial-a-Cab. Don't forget, the competition closes on **December 10**. Good luck to everyone...



In case you are not too sure what the DaC logo looks like, we have selected someone to model it for you!

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

Flashback  
1974

## DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

*This month's Flashback goes back to the end of 1974 and a look at Chairman Martin Gellman's prophecy of oncoming hard times for 1975...*

*From ODRTS of London newsheet, December 1974...*

### THE CHAIRMAN SUMS UP - Martin Gellman (C47)

Well, here we are at the beginning of a New Year and what looks like a very uncertain one. If the prophets of doom, who seem to be writing in all the newspapers and appearing on our TV screens are only half right, we are in for a very rough-ride indeed. I think the only consolation at the moment is that the so-called experts are seldom right. As far as the Society is concerned, the overall level of work coming in remains most satisfactory and the interest shown from new account customers is very good.

No doubt things will be very quiet in the immediate post-Christmas period, as they usually are, but whatever the difficulties of the next few months, with your full co-operation the Society will continue to go from strength to strength.

After a very thorough investigation into the use of Vehicle Identification, the Board have come to the conclusion that V.I. in its present state of development is not suitable for our use. We are all disappointed about this as in theory it seemed such a good thing. But as is often the case, there is a world of difference between theory and practice. We will, however, keep in touch with the manufacturers to see if an improved system becomes available. In the meantime, we have obtained some new detection equipment, which we hope will cut down on the misuse of the radio.

I have recently spent quite a lot of time in bringing the set records up to date and tracing a number of missing sets. These records, which are very important, can only be kept up to date with your co-operation. If you change a set at Pyes, make sure the office knows the number of the set changed and the new one.

Another problem we have is where a driver changes cabs, but keeps his own call-sign. I appreciate that this can save confusion, especially where credit work is concerned, but it can also cause great difficulties. So when you change a set, please make sure that you are changing it in the callsign of the cab and not the callsign that you are using if it is different to that of the cab.

*Once again, I would take this opportunity of wishing you and yours, a very happy and prosperous New Year...*



**Martin Gellman (C47)**

## Dial-a Cab Credit Union

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**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 Melovesushi in NW3...**

## EATING OUT WITH CALL SIGN

Situated at 100 Avenue Road opposite the Swiss Cottage Pub, is located a wonderful Japanese Sushi restaurant called **MELOVESUSHI**. This more casual, less formal style of dining is a first for the chain of established North London *Sushi to Go* home delivery establishments. It also boasts a very smart bar upstairs for those wishing to partake of a cocktail before or after their meal.

On entering the warm, woody eating area, you are directed to a table or bench depending on your party size, to peruse an extensive and well-explained menu.

With dishes starting from as little as £2, this need not be an expensive outing. Having made your selection from the 100+ dishes offered, you trot along to the counter to order and pay and servers swiftly begin bringing the freshly prepared dishes to your table.

We spoke to manager Kin, a most friendly and helpful individual who offered Jan and I suggestions. I explained that Jan preferred hot cooked food.

Each dish is described on the menu, so there can be no doubts as to what you are ordering and the very friendly staff are happy to assist in your selection. For those who might be 'sushi curious', this would be an ideal opportunity to experiment!

As a seasoned Japanese food lover, I tend to go for *Sashimi* (thin slices of raw fish) to start and the platter at £7.50 was absolutely first class. The *salmon, tuna* and *sea bass* were presented with the usual *wasabi, sliced ginger* and a small bottle of *soy sauce*.

Jan had the shallow fried *fish cakes*, some *King Prawn dumplings* and an ample salad that we shared between us.

There are quite a few specialities on the menu including *black cod with miso donburi*, *soft shell crab temaki (band roll)* and the *phoenix futomaki*, which consists of a large roll with *sliced salmon, tuna, sea bass, cucumber* and *flying fish roe fried in tempura batter*.

Kin brought out our drinks. He had suggested the *Nigori Saki* at £11 as the perfect rice

wine for our food and he was right! The servers then filled our table with a dish of *Chicken Teriyaki* served on a big bowl of *steamed white rice, shredded duck with noodles* and *fried vegetables*, some fabulous *King Prawn Tempura*, (deep fried in a golden light batter) and two excellent skewers of *grilled beef*.

To finish off our wonderful meal, I had the *mango sorbet* whilst Jan tried the *organic chocolate ice cream* and neither disappointed.

Kin then invited us to enjoy a cocktail at the sophisticated champagne and sake bar upstairs, but we declined promising to return another time - and we certainly will together with friends who are sushi virgins!

At around £35 per head - including the Saki - it represented very good value for very good Japanese food and I will certainly be recommending it to my passengers...

You can find out more at: [www.melovesushi.com](http://www.melovesushi.com) or call 0207 483 0888.

**David Kupler (Y74)**

## It's AGM Time Again

### Notice of 2008 Annual General Meeting...

All members should by now have received an individual letter advising them of the arrangements for the 2008 AGM and I would like to take this opportunity to remind members of the details.

**The 2008 AGM will be held as in recent years at The Brewery, Chiswell**

**Street, London EC1 on Sunday 8, February 2009 at 11:00hrs.**

This year, the AGM includes the election of officers and any nominations had to have been received at Dial-a-Cab House by Friday 14 November. The same closing date saw no rule changes or propositions.

Questions or comments that members

wish to have published regarding the CV of any individual standing for election (published elsewhere in this issue) will be published in the next issue of **Call Sign**.

**Howard Pears Company Secretary**



### 'Fire Risk' TX4s all Back on Road

On Friday 31st October, Mann & Overton confirmed that they had made telephone contact with and appointed all but eight of the owners of the 673 TX4s who'd had their licenses suspended by the PCO.

Several attempts had been made to reach the remaining eight both by phone and letter, but without success or response. They were written to again by M&O and given firm appointments. With that, M&O were on course to have all the suspended vehicles back on the road by or ahead of their 12th November deadline.

The list of vehicles M&O have been working to has been derived from their own sales records together with data supplied by the PCO for all licensed TX4s within the suspended range. M&O were confident that there were very few, if any, who had been missed but ask any drivers who may slipped through the net and have not yet received an appointment to get in touch with them urgently on 020 7700 0888.

Their next task is to work on the remaining 2,700 of the London TX4 fleet in an effort to have the LTI recall action completed on all of them during the coming weeks. Drivers down time has now been reduced to around three hours...

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**The 2008 Dial-a-Cab AGM will be held at The Brewery, Chiswell Street on Sunday 8th February 2009 at 11am. The following candidates have announced that they are standing for election and sent Call Sign their CVs for publication. Names are in alphabetical order...**

# ***Standing for Election at the 2008 AGM***

## **Joe Brazil (K16)**

My name is Joe Brazil (K16). Having previously been an employee of Dial-a-Cab for 17 years I can honestly say these are extraordinary times that we face together. We will have to be innovative to thrive, we have to be adoptive to change and brave in our decisions. These are conditions not faced for many years and we have to be strong.



My belief is that while some businesses may shirk away from these challenges, we should seek opportunity. I will support an immediate increase in our sales team, especially west London which requires immediate action. A Dial-a-Cab presence in places like Heathrow and City airports would be beneficial, even Westfield shopping centre should give immediate returns and should be sought. Our cab logos should also reflect our desire for new work. Not showing our phone number is folly and this could be addressed immediately. Advertising our credit card facilities with guaranteed scrubs should also be sought. I will also support an increase in our minimum fare; £8.00 does not reflect our increased costs and should be increased to £15.00 at the earliest opportunity. Software changes are also required, GPS route checking technology, interactive messaging between drivers, Bluetooth technology to make calls via our screens are all possible and should be explored.

The past and our history may be viewed as a guide, but innovation will be the way forward, I'm not asking for wholesale changes, the steady hand showed by our present Board has guided us through the good times for many years, these times are different and we must adapt and I want to be part of that evolution.

I am asking you for your confidence and your vote.

## **Keith Cain (Q07)**

*Sitting Board member*

The unfortunate downturn in work will in my opinion have an influence in the decision members make with electing their Board.



History of the Society is that this is not the first time - and it will certainly not be the last - that we experience such an impact on our work levels. It will require individuals with a great deal of experience to steer the Society through these periods and my decision to stand for re-election is because I believe I have gained a vast level of experience that will assist in driving the Society forward. Having been a member for 25 years and a Board member for 18 years, I have held a number of senior positions - one of which was the elected Treasurer. During my term I played an influential part in bringing in a Professional Qualified Accountant onto the Board. I have also been involved with New Business, Customer Service and currently I hold the position of Driver Operations Manager. Within this role I have the responsibility for the Call Centre, which employs 160 staff.

With the competition being far greater than at any other time, we need to ensure that we cut our cloth accordingly, plan for the future and make sure that business decisions are made with the long-term future in mind, rather than deciding on a quick-fix solution.

Being part of a Board that over many years has built the strong financial foundations that will enable the Society to sustain these difficult times, it is this that motivates me to want to continue and serve the members, so that our Society remains the leader within the taxi industry.

## **Allan Evans (Y83)**

*Sitting Board member*

I have been privileged to serve you, the members, on the Board of Management for the last eight years. I am a licensed taxi driver with over 30 years experience



and a member of our Society since 1985. I have, in this time, been trusted to hold a number of important roles. As you know, I am jointly responsible for Driver Operations and presently hold the position of Compliance Officer. I treat these roles extremely seriously and my judgements are based on experience, integrity and the need to safeguard the Society and our members. Prior to being elected, I worked as a new Driver Trainer and Marshalling Officer, always seeking to raise the Society's profile and generate additional income for us all.

During my time in office, I have also been involved on a number of high profile projects, which has helped me build up an excellent working relationship with some of our most senior clients. I feel it is very important that as a working driver I have never lost touch with you the members and have always made every effort to be approachable, fair, willing to listen and available to offer help and advice if it was requested. The knowledge I have gained over the last eight years in office has given me a deep understanding of our Society and provided me with invaluable experience. I have always been totally committed to my position of Board Member; it is a responsibility that I do not take lightly.

I am a team player and proud to be member of a vastly experienced Board of Management that is fully committed to steering our Society forward and maintaining its success throughout the financial challenges that lie ahead. I ask you once again for your support in voting for me to represent you for a further term in office; I will certainly not let you down.



## STANDING FOR ELECTION AT THE 2008 AGM

### Paul Jenner (L17)

I have been a Licensed Cab Driver for 23 years and a member of this Society since 1992.



I have represented Dial-a-Cab for the last 14 years as a Marshall at all of our major accounts and am aware of the service that is expected from our clients and, as importantly, the drivers who provide a service second to none.

One of the Boards' strengths has been to plan ahead and that is why I offer myself as a candidate for the Board of Management. Nothing lasts forever and we need to have the right people in place to carry on the good work that the present Board have done in past years.

I have sometimes been called 'a company man' to which I plead guilty. As an equal shareholder, I feel it is important to do all I can to make Dial-a-Cab successful, after all, the more we achieve the more we earn.

I know I have the ability and I hope I have shown the commitment to show to the membership that I have the qualities required to ensure this Society keeps its position as market leader.

We have made enormous strides in our present status and I see no reason to change.

Like many of you, I am becoming increasingly frustrated as PH eats into our livelihood and I am against any support for our competitors. I do not understand why we prop up their service levels by covering the work they either don't want or can't cover. Present BoM members often warn us of the threat PH pose, but at the same time sanction the setting up of accounts for the very same people that they write about.

I won't make promises I can't keep but if successful will do all I can to put the interests of the members first.

### Mike Son (V52)

*Sitting Board member*

You will have read in **Call Sign** of the sad loss I recently suffered when my youngest brother Brian passed away following a long illness. Having also recently undergone a knee replacement operation and taken quite some time off work, I had



time to think about my future and initially I decided that I would not seek re-election to the Board. However, as we all know there has been a significant downturn in the economy and the taxi industry is most certainly not impervious to the reduction in revenue. This consequently may have an effect on our standard of living.

With this in mind, I now believe that to change any member of the Board at this time would do a disservice to the membership. It could also cause a lack of confidence in us to our clients when continuity with their service providers is extremely important. Therefore, I am seeking a further term of office and look forward to your support. I have no doubt that the economy will not improve for some time. All at Dial-a-Cab will have to work even harder than ever, not only keeping up the tremendous service clients expect our drivers to provide, but also to keep the ongoing interaction, contact and communication our Account Managers provide to their account contacts.

I look forward once again to your support.

### Allen Togwell (Q08)

*Sitting Board member*

Most of our members know my background, however to those who are not familiar with my working past: I had my own manufacturing business in the UK for 21 yrs as well as working abroad.



I've had a badge since 1966 and joined your Board in 1986, prompted by the fact that the Society did not have a recognised Sales & Marketing dept, a much needed department I was confident I could develop given the opportunity. Which I did and believe my role together with the advent of data despatching played a significant part in our Society's future success. One particular advantage I had in addition to generating new business was my ability to produce artwork and design, which has resulted in Dial-a-Cab never having to spend a penny during the past 22 years using outside agencies for artwork and design for marketing or advertising. I have produced it all in-house, including, I'm proud to add, the designing of our corporate logo. I mention the above for one purpose only and that is to emphasise the importance of experience, particularly in the manner in which Board members are elected. We are a multi-million pound business with a responsibility to generate income for our 2,300 members, our 200 plus staff and our Society's future.

The past few months has seen economic chaos in the UK and around the world. Dial-a-Cab is not immune from being affected by that chaos. We need a strong Board with the maximum of experience during this period of economic instability. I served on your Board during the recession of 1992 and know only too well the difficult decisions the Board had to make to keep our Society solvent. I am passionate about the success of Dial-a-Cab. I have considerable experience and would like your support to put that experience to use by you electing me for another term of office.

### Tom Whitbread (Q09)

*Sitting Board member*

It's now another 2 years since I've had to write an AGM CV and in that time I have been proud of our achievement in bringing the Society into the position it has reached today as the most respected Licensed Taxi organisation in England.



During the 20+ years that I have been a Board member, I have seen the Society through the good and bad times. The Society is now in the best position that it has experienced in the 32 years I have been associated with it.

To say that the work to get to this level has ranged from being a pleasure to frightening is an understatement. In the bad times, it was as bad as not knowing if you could lose your own home just for staying on the Board and trying to keep it solvent. In the good times there were the glory seekers, all wanting to stand for election to the Board whilst in the bad times they seem to disappear.

I have gained my Board experience through hard work, coping with nearly all the jobs throughout the company. Most of my time on the Board has been serving as the Complaints Officer, a job most Board members shy away from as it is obviously a vote loser. But during this time I have always been honest and straight talking. I will tell you how it actually is to your face and not change my view behind your back. Neither will I ever give you false or unattainable promises just to get your votes. I give you my promise of hard work and dedication to the Society, just as I have done over the past 32 years. The work may have slackened off over the past months, but stick with us and cover the work and we will once again come out as the top London Licensed radio taxi service.

Back in 1966 when I first came to this country, the family that invited me to Christmas had great fun laughing at me for eating 'with two left hands' and for chewing the pork crackling and bacon rind. I knew nothing about Christmas customs and was trying to be polite. I lived in Edinburgh then, when horse-drawn carts were still delivering the milk.

Boxing Day wasn't yet a bank holiday in Scotland and New Year's Day was an ordinary working day in England - one when many called in sick! I felt awkward and foreign at my friends' parents' houses. I didn't like my first taste of Christmas pudding or marzipan, so I decided never to go to a family Christmas again. And I haven't, from that day to this... Of course, I did Christmas for my children when they were young - without religion - though their English granny sometimes took them to church. My 'ex' and his parents took over Christmas when my kids were teenagers and I've usually had the day alone ever since.

One year I spent Christmas on a British Airways plane to Sydney, saving £150 on the fare, although I did worry when the steward greeted me in reindeer horns and tinsel. Another year I went to a *waifs and strays* Christmas, hosted by a lone divorcee where the other guests were foreigners like me, with one woman who had just been released from a mental hospital.

Once, when I had a car, I ferried old people to a big knees-up at a local community centre and helped with the cooking. Another time I demonstrated at the Israeli Embassy in support of the anti-nuclear whistleblower, Mordechai Vanunu, when Christmas fell on a Saturday - since the campaign I was in always went there on Saturday. Only two of us turned up that day. My comrade gave me a lift half the way home and I spent a small fortune paying a taxi for the rest of the trip. Where's DaCman Glen when I need him?

Usually Glen only works nights, but over Christmas he disappears completely, working flat out. He starts with Midnight Mass over Christmas and Boxing Day and then again on New Year's Day. It's not just the £4 per trip surcharge or the challenge of driving every waking hour for the three days, or the quiet and empty streets, it's more the thought of the two or three lean months at the start of the year that keeps him going - as well as the January tax bill. The DaC Christmas bonus and incentive schemes were an added perk last year. He prepares lots of food to take for these days, so he doesn't have to stop working - even to eat.

Probably we are both Christmas abstainers because we were raised as Jews and it really has no significance for us. I still get invites from kind people worried at the thought of me spending the day on my own, but it's a lovely, relaxing day. My kids telephone from their granny's place in Northumberland and keep me abreast of all developments. Last year the butcher delivered a frozen goose instead of a fresh one; the year before someone completely forgot the bread sauce and the year before that, their dad's partner stormed out after some imagined slight, leaving the door wide open and Granny in tears and heading for the sherry!

I love the presents, the eggnog and the dia-

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

# Back Seat *Driver* at Xmas



truthfully: "Yes, I think so," because once I've sent my cards and gifts, my preparations are finished. I can stay in bed, or do the washing and leave it on the radiators to dry and no one complains. No one is disappointed.

I know some women of my age go with their families to hotels, or abroad and have a great time with no shopping or washing up. And why not? And a lot of good people besides Glen work on Christmas Day providing for others - hospitals, prisons, TV and radio stations, and naturally, at Dial-a-Cab House.

Wherever you are, working or playing, with family or friends or even alone, I hope Santa brings you everything you want and more, whether or not you were good this year. And for 2009, I wish you health, happy times and jingle bells on your meter - with as much account work as you can handle!

**Till then...**

## Till then...

*Love Poppy xxx*

## TX4 OWNERS SUING OVER LOST EARNINGS

McKeowns, a firm of solicitors based in Porter's Wood, St Albans are to lodge a class action for loss of earnings on behalf of many drivers who lost the use of their TX4 taxis after eight of them caught fire in London and all the early versions were taken off the road. Some drivers have been able to rent cabs, others haven't.

Matthew Phillips, from McKeowns said it was "mounting a large class action" on behalf of more than 300 black cab drivers affected by the recall. Mr Phillips added:

"Many more will not be aware that they are entitled to compensation for loss of earnings and we expect significantly more numbers to get in touch during the course of the crisis."

Another firm of solicitors, Blake-Turner - based in Minorities - are working together with the LTDA and Tradex (formerly Westminster Insurance) and also proposing a class action on behalf of any taxi driver who has been affected financially by the recall. They have also been retained by Tradex in respect of that insurance company's fire damage outlay to their policyholders. LTDA members have been assured of a no fee policy by Blake-Turner, regardless of the result.

A class action is a form of lawsuit where a large group of people collectively bring a claim to court.

# HOLIDAY HOME DEALS

*In Ostuni, Puglia, Italy (the heel)*

More info at: [www.holidaylettings.co.uk/41004](http://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: 07590 540620**

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..."*



**Call Sign** has asked that question many times. We know who reads this mag by our mailing list and the constant requests for extra copies from various governmental and licensing departments. We even know the answer because we've heard it many times. It isn't that they don't care, but there's nothing they can do about it! What we don't know is why no one can do anything. What are we talking about? Pedicabs apparent invincibility against prosecution.

**Call Sign** has spoken to the police and the inference seems to be that Pedicabs don't pose any threat and cause no real problems. The PCO / TfL seem to suggest that they are out of their sphere because they aren't licensed. We, London's taxi service - considered to be the finest in the world - ARE licensed. We cause no trouble when doing our job, but that doesn't seem to stop our drivers receiving PCNs for setting down, picking up or waiting for their passengers.

**Call Sign** has never stopped our battle against minicabs. Not regarding their existence - we have long accepted that those companies with nice cars and drivers that obey the rule of law are a fact of life. What we don't accept is that they are the same as us and we never will.

In July 2007, **Call Sign** had an ongoing battle with the PCO over their press releases. These are available to any press outlet. Our fight began when part of PCO Notice 22/07 said:

*"In the last 12 months, seven licensed drivers have been prosecuted for DDA offences. Penalties have included fines of up to £300 and disqualification from driving. A further two drivers and one operator are awaiting court hearings."*

We wrote back and asked a simple question... how many of those 7 were taxi drivers and how many were PH operators? The PCO answered that all 7 were PH drivers.

Not long before that, we'd had cross words with the tout squad when they issued a report to the trade press that referred to a three-figure number of 'licensed vehicles' being pulled up for licensing offences - yet after several letters, **Call Sign** discovered that the number of taxi drivers involved from that high figure was actually just nine.

We wrote back to the PCO officer (whose name we are not revealing because he is always truthful in his responses to us and in that particular case seems to have managed to create a difference between the two licensed groups) and said:

"Can you understand why taxi drivers in London become annoyed at being lumped together with PH drivers when figures are given? The last time involved hundreds of drivers pulled up for licensing offences, yet only a handful were taxi drivers. I believe that the PCO should revert to itemising numbers."

The PCO representative responded

## TfL? PCO? The Police?

# DOES ANYBODY REALLY CARE ???



Zig Zags? What are they?



Theatre exits? What are they?



Keep clear signs? What are they?

that he appreciated our concerns and would bear them in mind. Sure enough, that now seems to be the case.

Pedicabs are different. They have now not just become a nuisance - they have taken over the streets. Look at them on any dry Friday / Saturday night when they swarm around West End streets like flies, stopping where they want, driving wherever they want regardless of road signs and constantly providing danger to other road users and pedestrians. Numbers of incidents regarding them hitting other vehicles are only low because they don't hang around and you have no chance of catching them in London's evening traffic.

Let's just hope that no one ever has an emergency inside a West End theatre or in the pedestrianised Leicester Square or Covent Garden, because Pedicabs just wouldn't be able to clear the routes they constantly block. Day shift taxi drivers would probably not even realise just what these Pedicab riders are like at night - yet no one will do a thing about it.

The LTDA have shown what would

happen were one to have a crash with a taxi. We've seen instances of Pedicabs going over and we've had a report in this magazine of a Pedicab passenger whose scarf became caught up in the bike's wheels. Yet no one seems to care.

Perhaps someone somewhere will have an answer and show that they DO care...???

**Alan Fisher**  
Editor, Call Sign Magazine

**Call Sign**

**December 2008**

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On Saturday 8 November, the *London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children* were honoured to wind up their 80th anniversary year by taking part in the prestigious 793rd Lord Mayor's Show, which introduced Ian Luder as the 681st Lord Mayor of the City of London. The Committee had met in Shoreditch at 6.30am, on a very dark, damp and dismal morning before moving on to Smithfield Meat Market, where we set about the task of decorating our taxis under cover. Then we awaited the arrival of our special passengers, the deserving children from the Pam Mason Group in Bow. There were screams of excitement as they clambered aboard our especially built giant 36-foot porcelain taxi and were about to embark on an adventure they would never forget.

We joined the 3-mile procession at London Wall and being 95th in the parade meant we had quite a wait. But time passed quickly with the arrival of our Honorary Life Members, the wonderful Bournemouth Carnival Band. Dressed as Batmen, they arrived in style marching along, trumpets blaring, and everyone welcomed them with cheers and rapturous applause. From then on, the gloomy atmosphere was transformed into one of non-stop fun and laughter!

At the front of our spectacular entry were children of two LTFUC committee members holding our 80th anniversary banner, followed by committee members and their wives holding the fund's yellow and blue logo golf umbrellas, topped with balloons. Behind them a committee member drove the lead taxi showing the fund's name, accompanied by the Bournemouth Carnival Band. They were followed by a brilliant taxi Batmobile designed and driven by taxi driver Steven Bell dressed as Batman, who was joined by his wife Wendy as Robin. Alongside was a Pink Rabbit taxi also designed by Steven. Behind them came the fund's pride and joy, which had taken a month to build, a lorry carrying a 36-foot long porcelain taxi with all the children on board smiling and waving flags. Behind were two more committee taxis covered with posters showing the various destinations visited on our children's outings. All the taxis were adorned with yellow and blue balloons and our entry made a very colourful sight. Huge crowds gave us a wonderful reception. Bad weather couldn't dampen spirits and a brilliant day was had by all.

**We are deeply grateful to the following for all their help and support: Borough Commander and Station Commander Why of Shoreditch Fire Station; Bandmaster Dean Davies and the Bournemouth Carnival Band; John McGee of the McGee Demolition**

# LTFUC at The Lord Mayor's Show!



Bill Tyzack (C06), David Lessman (D19), the Bournemouth Carnival Band and the children join the parade



David Lessman tells everyone what it's all about  
Inset pic: Has this rabbit got lost!



**Group, Wembley for donating the lorry; Tony Diaz and his four sons of Big Stuff Design, Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex for building the giant Taxi and last but not least, Steven Bell and his wife Wendy for all their help and support.**

Our grateful thanks also go to the Rt. Hon. Lord Mayor of London, Ian Luder, for allowing us to bring our 80th anniversary year to an end by

participating in his show.

What a great way to finish a highly rewarding, triumphant and glorious 80th anniversary year. Well done to the Committee for all the hard work involved in holding so many wonderful outings and events this year.

**Raymond Levy**  
LTFUC Press Officer



For some members of the public, Christmas celebrations seem to start ever earlier and despite annual seasonal warnings from the police, together with government advice, those that drink beyond their limitations are an almost daily hazard for we Dial-a-Cab drivers who have to deal with them when they drink themselves senseless...

**Carlo Sorrentino (V46)** is no stranger to these pages after last month's mag when we reported his tale of woe after being run over by his own cab following a rear-end shunt by a hit-and-run motorist. Now Carlo has told **Call Sign** of an incident involving a woman passenger who was so drunk in the back of his cab that she vomited over the cab interior before falling asleep in it. And that's when the fireworks had only just begun!

Carlo takes up the story:

It was about 11pm on Bonfire Night when I picked up a lady in the Strand. She gave her destination as Packington Street in Islington and off we went. When I got to Islington Green, I realised I couldn't see her in my rear view mirror, sitting upright as you would have expected.

When I turned around I saw her sleeping, laying right across the back seat and could see that she had been sick on the seat and floor. I woke her up and pointed out the mess. She said I shouldn't worry and that she would pay for it.

When we got to her destination, there was £19 on the meter and she gave me a £20 note. I explained about the soiling charge and that she would have to pay for me to have the cab cleaned.

"So what?" was her simple reply. I told her that in that case I would take her to the police station. Her only reply was a sarcastic "ok, fine!"

As we got to Islington High Street, she put her head out of the rear window and began shouting: "Help, help, I've been kidnapped!"

She then fell back onto the floor, so I shut the window and continued going - this time with some urgency - towards Islington police station, which was fairly close. However, she again started screaming about being kidnapped and with that she laid flat on the floor and kicked at the rear window, smashing it out with her shoes. Then, with the prowess of an athlete, she made her escape through the broken window. I quickly stopped the cab, jumped out and grabbed her arm.

By now, passers-by were having a go at me, thinking I was attacking her! Luckily for me, a police patrol was passing and with

# DaC Driver Accused of Kidnapping Passenger!



Carlo Sorrentino



Broken glass covers the passenger compartment where the drunken female kicked the window out

another stroke of luck, a nearby *Big Issue* vendor saw everything and corroborated my version of events.

Within minutes, there were 14 police officers, 4 police cars and a police van coming to my aid. It looked like a film set from *The Bill*!

They locked her up for the night and charged her with Criminal Damage. Having made a statement at the police station, I wrote off the nights' work and went home. The next day was also lost work-wise, getting my cab repaired.

Appearing before a Magistrate the following day, the woman was found guilty as charged and ordered to pay me £300 in damages and loss of earnings. As yet I haven't received any money, but the police say they will pursue the claim and keep me informed.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the police officers that came to my rescue and successfully resolved a most unpleasant experience. They dealt very professionally with a tiresome, inebriated female. But what a start to the festive season...!"

**Carlo Sorrentino (V46)**

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## 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](http://www.powerpillonline.com)

Pay via PayPal [ziggystardust1000@hotmail.com](mailto:ziggystardust1000@hotmail.com)

(Enter promo code DAC 10)



## Burn-ups?

With all the rumours and incendiary stories circulating in the cab trade about TX4 under bonnet fires, *Call Sign's* editor thought you might be interested in knowing that this is nothing new for the motor industry - but only new to us. Why these and other faults are described as 'alleged' in this article is to save money - theirs and ours - being spent on expensive lawyers fees!

Examples from the past that could be written of would start from the first propelled vehicles, as bursting into flames was taken as part and parcel of the new-fangled automobile motoring. It was, in the early days accompanied by wheels breaking, falling off, various mechanical bits and pieces collapsing and generally speaking, if it could break, fracture, catch fire or just plain stop working, then it did! Getting from A to B without a stop or two to remedy faults was regarded with great pride in the automobilist's achievements - and remember, we are talking about a journey of no more than 15 miles!

To be fair, roads in those far off days were even worse than today with our potholes and always being dug up. Until Mr. Macadam invented solid style road covering, roads were rutted, dirty, hard packed earth tracks. **Ford** made a car called the **Pinto** which, it is alleged, had a nasty habit of catching fire and

*"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...



It was alleged that the Vauxhall Nova caught fire under the bonnet due to wire shortening

exploding as the rear stop and tail lights had a suffer from an electrical short. This caused a spark, which under certain conditions, exploded the petrol fumes emanating from the fuel tank. This is the same principle as that of a Molotov Cocktail, a cheap, easy to make fire-bomb, usually making use of a bottle full of petrol and a wick that you set fire to and then throw far away from yourself at an object you want to blow-up. Ford managed to cure the electrical fault, plus reroute the fuel tank breather pipe.

Another fire fault alleged to have occurred was when the bean-counters saved a few pence per car by shortening the wiring loom in **Vauxhall's** super-mini, the **Nova** when the car had a facelift. This saving, by shortening the loom wires, did not allow sufficient length of wire to absorb the constant bending and flexing that takes place as a car is driven. In addition, the insulation receives more than its fair share of flexing and wear as the under the bonnet areas are hot, degrading the insulation. So within a short space of time, irate customers were telling Vauxhall dealers about their new

design fault. They would, without warning, Novas catching fire under the bonnet! Vauxhall cured the problem with loom extensions that allowed the needed flexibility. This example of money saving cost them more than if they'd just left the looms as they were in the first place.

As for the **TX4**, it could be alleged that best practice might not have been followed in sourcing certain components and once again the fault appears to be connected with wires and electrics.

Even the Wondbar **Mercedes-Benz Vito** taxi is reported in *Taxi by The Mole* as blowing interior bulbs at a very high rate and bulbs are part of the electrical system! Maybe we should look at scrapping all electrical systems and go back to gas lamps, clockwork taxi meters and starting handles?

Finally, even horse drawn cabs had problems, but then when the old cab drivers talked about crap, they usually meant manure or horse droppings...

*Be lucky, and stay safe*

Sunset Strip

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

### Kupcake's Korner



#### Decisions...Decisions!

My Metro is aging rapidly,  
but it runs just like it's new,  
I'll have to change eventually...  
but I don't know which cab to choose!

I quite fancy that new Merc;  
even though it looks like a van,  
smart vehicle to go to work...

I'd be Mercedes Man!

Leather seats, nice SatNav,  
wooden trim and more,  
everything except a lav...  
and don't forget those electric doors.

Then we've got the TX4;  
purpose built to ply for hire,  
a 50-year pedigree or more...  
with all the extras I'd desire!

But until I've made up my mind,  
I'll stick with what I know,  
perhaps in time I'll find  
that there's a new Hybrid Metro!

The type of cab I like to drive,  
the cab that I can trust,  
so long as Metro can survive...  
and don't wind up again ...BUST!

© Kupcake 2008

## 2-BEDROOM SPANISH VILLA FOR RENT

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



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

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

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

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



## PCO AND SGS: XMAS / NEW YEAR

The Public Carriage Office and SGS vehicle licensing inspection services will be open during the 2008/9 festive season as follows:

### Public Carriage Office

Monday 22 December 2008

**Normal opening hours**

Tuesday 23 December

**Normal opening hours**

Wednesday 24 December

**Open 8:00 to 12:00**

Thursday 25 December

**Closed (Christmas Day)**

Friday 26 December

**Closed (Boxing Day)**

Monday 29 December

**Normal opening hours**

Tuesday 30 December

**Normal opening hours**

Wednesday 31 December

**Normal opening hours**

Thursday 1 January 2009

**Closed (New Years Day)**

Friday 2 January - Closed

### SGS Inspection Sites

Monday 22 December 2008

**Normal opening hours**

Tuesday 23 December

**Normal opening hours**

Wednesday 24 December

**Open 7:30 to 12:00**

Thursday 25 December

**Closed (Christmas Day)**

Friday 26 December

**Closed (Boxing Day)**

Monday 29 December

**Open 8:00 to 15:00**

Tuesday 30 December

**Open 8:00 to 15:00**

Wednesday 31 December

**Open 8:00 to 15:00**

Thursday 1 January 2009

**Closed (New Years Day)**

Friday 2 January

**Hanworth open 08:00 to 15:00\***

**\*(for re-tests and 'unfits' only.**

*Other SGS centres closed).*

## FOUNDLING MUSEUM

*Britain's original home for abandoned children  
and London's first-ever public art gallery...*

**Free entry to Dial-a-Cab drivers on  
production of your badge or bill**

**Tues-Sat 10am-6pm, Sun 12-6pm  
(closed on bank holidays)**

**Usual admission £5, concessions £4,  
children up to 16 years free**

**The Foundling Museum is at 40  
Brunswick Square WC1**

**Tel. 020 7841 3600**

**Visit their website at**

**www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk**

## COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

\*\*\*\*\*

*Hello Ladies & Gents,*

With so much pessimism in the media relating to the global economy, as an organisation we must remain positive. The taxi industry has always been a good barometer of the economic climate, so therefore we cannot remain immune to the current slow-down. But I can assure you that during these uncertain times, the current Board under the leadership of the Chairman has the experience and wisdom to make the correct business decisions to keep us ahead of the other circuits throughout the very challenging and testing period that we are all facing.

We are a circuit of professional owner-drivers who have worked hard to get to the top of the tree in our field and in these tough conditions we must all work even harder to maintain our position in the market place. Accounts, however big or small, do not owe us a living and customer care and service must at all times be first-rate, more so now than ever before.

### Looking after accounts...

As I have mentioned in previous articles, clients regularly receive management reports and are rightfully monitoring service levels, run-ins and are mindful of meter fares. The very small minority of drivers who violate the procedure rules that are in place to safeguard our work and credibility will be correctly dealt with. We must all be mindful that it can take a long time to acquire an account, but it can be lost in an instant.

It is vitally important that we follow correct trip details and confirm any changes to those trips with the Call Centre and the passenger in the back. If you are asked to make your own contact or to advise arrival, then please do so; if you are parked a distance away from the actual pick-up address, please use your 'parked' button and make the Call Centre aware of your location.

We, as professional drivers, are there to be judged so let's make sure that we keep our own house in order and up to our accustomed high standards. Let others make the mistakes. Customer care has never been more important than it is now, so please go that extra mile if you feel it helps or pacifies a potentially difficult situation - it will benefit us all in the long term.



### Booking in on EC5

There constantly seemed to be a minority of drivers who were never booking in correctly on EC5 and were further away than the allowed fifteen minutes from Finsbury Square when gaining a queue position.

Then, of course, when a driver is pulled up about his or her position at the time of booking in, their version of how far you can travel in 15 minutes usually differs from the controllers'. So we have decided to alter the booking-in procedure for EC5.

As of immediately, before any driver books into EC5, he or she must physically be in any of the City zones - that's EC1, EC2, EC3 or EC4. This will make the situation much fairer and the same for everyone, with no one gaining an unfair advantage with a 'stretched' 15 minute run. The situation will be monitored regularly and action taken against anyone that tries to take an unfair advantage over his or her fellow drivers.

### House of Commons

It is very important that you do not pass comment on any of the fixed prices with HoC individual passengers. If you have a query, please contact Dial-a-Cab and discuss the matter with a senior member of staff. Individual passengers are unaware of the fixed rates on any particular trip and it is unprofessional to raise any queries with them on their journey home.

### Cash number stickers

You will have read Allen Togwell's article in the November issue of *Call Sign* that since the start of the economic slowdown, credit card work and cash hirings are becoming more common. So in an endeavour to promote this business further and create additional income, I would like to remind you that we have produced a stock of the Dial-a-Cab cash telephone number - 0207 253 5000 - that can be affixed onto your taxi below the DaC logo. Those members wishing to advertise this number on their taxi can do so by visiting our fitting bay at Roman Way.

Finally, with Christmas just around the corner, I would like to wish all of you and your families a very merry and prosperous festive period.

*Be very lucky and stay healthy...*



**Allan Evans**  
**Allane@Dialacab.co.uk**

As we said two months ago - before the rest of the trade press jumped onto our backs to say the consultation paper had not yet been completed so we must have been wrong about the 6-month check being abolished - **Call Sign's** Danny Fresco was the person who asked Mayor Boris Johnson to confirm what he had already told our readers in the *February 2008* issue when he said as clearly as he could: "I will scrap the midyear inspections. They add to the cost of the licence and are an unnecessary burden on cab drivers."

On November 4th, the PCO confirmed it following the completion of the consultation document for taxis and private hire vehicles. They issued a rather snotty statement that told us Transport for London had decided to remove the requirement for taxis to undergo a mid-year inspection as a condition of licensing with effect from 6 November 2008 (unless you were scheduled for a retest) and probably replacing the inspections with increased on-street compliance checks in line with Option 1 of the consultation document.

Snotty? What other word can describe the following (ok, perhaps chutzpah) from the PCO? "Licence fees will be adjusted in due course to reflect the abolition of mid-year

**Goodbye 6-month checks, welcome to the £36 on-the-road check!**

## As We Were Saying Before Being Interrupted...



### Taxis back to one visit a year at SGS

inspections and any potential increase in on-street compliance checks. Until then the licence fee will remain at £178 and owners will be required to pay this fee when booking a taxi licensing inspection appointment on or after 6 November 2008."

They added: "Once the new licence fee has been set, refunds will be made to all taxi owners who will have paid a licence fee of £178 and whose taxis will not have been required to undergo a mid-year inspection."

Following a TfL Board meeting, Mayor Boris Johnson said: "During my election campaign earlier this year, it became clear to me from conversations with cabbies that the mid-year inspections were a burden they could live without. And our figures clearly show the inspections have not achieved their aims of

raising standards or improving the pass rate for annual inspections. By abolishing the mid-year inspections, the Public Carriage Office (PCO) will be able to reduce the licence fee, meaning taxi owners will benefit from less administration and better value for money."

So how much are we going to be charged for sending out extra enforcement officers to have our own vehicles checked?

**Call Sign** also believes that the proprietor's organisation, the LMCPA led by *A1 Garage* boss Ivan Kovler, changed their stance from being in favour of the half-yearly check to coming out against it. Once that happened, the consultation document became a *fait accompli*.

Private Hire Vehicles will still need two MoTs a year...

## SMILE



**This month's jokes  
sent in by Peter Hallett  
(S01)**

### On the dole...

A young man walked into the local dole office, marched straight up to the counter and said confidently: "Hi, I hate signing on, I would really rather find a job."

The man behind the counter replied: "Your timing is immaculate, sir! We've just got a listing from a very wealthy man who wants a chauffeur / bodyguard for his nymphomaniac daughter. It involves driving around in a big black Mercedes with suits, shirts and ties provided. Because the job involves long hours, meals will also be provided. You will also be required to escort the young lady on her overseas holidays. The salary package is £100,000 a year."

The young man said: "You're kidding me, man!" To which the guy behind the counter replied: "Well, you started it..."

### Last words...

John was on his deathbed and gasped pitifully to his wife:

"Give me one last request, dear," he said.

"Of course, John," she said softly.

John took a deep breath: "Six months after I die," he said, "I want you to marry Joe."

"But I thought you hated Joe," she said puzzled.

With his last breath, he said: "...I do!"

## LONDON LEGEND *Limousine Taxis*



London Legend specialises in wedding transport. Our magnificent Asquith Limousine Taxis and Landaulets with drop hoods are replicas of the legendary 1930's Austin Low Loader Hackney Carriage. Special rates for Dial-a-Cab drivers on mid week and out of season weddings. We cover all areas of London and the south east.

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Last issue's **Call Sign** contained the copy of a letter from Dial-a-Cab driver **Barry Spear (Y16)** to his MP **Nick Hurd (Ruislip – Northwood)** about the TX4 fires. He asked Mr Hurd to investigate why his 20-month old TX4 should have to come off the road while waiting for a further upgrade, when, like all others with a 56 or 06 registration, he already had a stamped service record book from M&O showing that the cab was then safe? Mr Hurd then contacted Minister of State for Transport, **Rosie Winterton**, who then passed the letter to Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, **Paul Clark**.

In his letter, Barry said that the problem was that the PCO / TfL had asked for an assurance from LTI that the cabs could not, following the M&O upgrade, then catch fire. Barry compared that to the CAA asking Boeing for an assurance that their planes could never crash! Either way, this had stopped him earning his living.

His view was that compensation should come from the PCO / TfL because as Barry wrote to his MP "...they are full of Red Ken's cronies!" He also asked for a review of the PCO by new Mayor Boris Johnson...

**A reply was received from Paul Clark, who wrote to Nick Hurd:**

*Thank you for your letter of 24 September to Minister of State for Transport Rosie Winterton enclosing correspondence from your constituent Mr Barry Spear about taxis. I am replying as Minister responsible for local transport.*

*Mr Spear, a London licensed taxi driver, had his taxi (vehicle) licence suspended because of the potential for an under-bonnet fire. Against that background, he expresses the view that the Public Carriage Office, which has the licensing function with Transport for London (TfL), over-reacted and considers that he should be compensated.*

*Mr Spear's specific concerns relate to issues which are the responsibility of TfL and London Taxis International (LTI) respectively and should be pursued with them. Nevertheless, I can explain the posi-*

# TX4 Fires: DfT Respond to a DaC Driver



**Paul Clark**

*tion from the Department's perspective.*

*We have kept fully in touch with the situation regarding under-bonnet fires in TX4 taxis manufactured by LTI. Indeed, LTI notified the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) on account of their obligations under product safety legislation. Accordingly, VOSA have been monitoring LTI's investigation of the cause of the fires and the development of a solution to the problem. LTI have now identified what they believe to be the cause and have embarked on a programme of recalling affected vehicles and carrying out remedial work.*

*From the taxi licensing perspective, I note and can very well understand Mr*

*Spear's concern that his licence was suspended. However, responsibility for taxi licensing in London rests with TfL and it is up to them to make licensing decisions.*

*Whilst TfL have kept us in touch with their actions, it was up to them to decide how best to handle the situation. The only comment I would make is that it is clear that TfL rightly had the safety of the travelling public uppermost in their minds in adopting the approach which they did on licence suspensions.*

*If Mr Spear wants to receive a fuller explanation about why his taxi licence was suspended or if he wishes to pursue the issue of compensation, he should contact LTI directly.*

*I hope this explains the position.*

**Yours sincerely**

**Paul Clark**  
Parliamentary Under  
Secretary of State

Speaking to **Call Sign**, Barry Spear's only comment was that by the time the reply had arrived from various departments, all affected TX4s had been upgraded.

**He also wondered why a letter meant for TfL went to the Department for Transport who then said that it was really a matter for TfL...**

## HAVE A FLAT TO RENT?

Well, a young lady in the  
Dial-a-Cab Call Centre  
is looking for a room  
or flat to rent in London or the  
surrounding areas.

**If you can help,  
please call Fiona.  
You can catch her on  
07943 110 763...**

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# DaC's Call Centre Spooks!



Maz - alias Morticia Addams



"Witch" one is Karen?

attire, still donated to the very worthy cause.

As *Call Sign's* photographs show, the response from staff was nothing less than enthusiastic, with many climbing onto the bandwagon - er, we mean broomstick - to support the cause and in the process raising a final total of over £180.

Customer Service Representative **Karen Loughney** - who became a witch for the day - won the *best dressed spooks* competition,

with **Maz** herself taking the Manager's prize dressed as Morticia from the Addams Family. **Keith Cain** judged the competition.

The Call Centre itself was decorated in cobwebs, balloons and even the odd skeleton was seen hanging around, but no one was sure whose they were! If ever there was a graveyard bash, this was it!

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David: The Devil in disguise?

October 31 is traditionally a time for *trick or treating* when partygoers celebrate Halloween dressed up in ghostly attire to enjoy a night of frivolity and fun. A night especially for spooks - and sometimes DaC Calltakers!

Staff at the Dial-a-Cab Call Centre day shift took the opportunity to start their ghoulish goings-on while at the same time raising money for the *National Breast Cancer Campaign*.

It began when DaC Account Manager **Caroline McGowan** received a collection box, which she passed on to DaC Customer Service Representative Manager **Marilena Russo** - known to most as Maz - to organise the Call Centre into taking up a collection challenge. That challenge would enable staff to break DaC's usual strict dress code and dress up as spookily as they wanted, with prizes on offer for the best-dressed spooks. In return for the freedom of dressing up, all the staff involved donated £2 each and many of those that declined the offer and kept to their usual smart

## THE SALIERI RESTAURANT

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*We are certain that you will be delighted*



Please bring along your badge or Bill as ID

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**Reservations: 020 7836 1318**



## John Davis

I was interested to read about the heroics of DaCs **John Davis (V41J)** and his article in *Call Sign* about seatbelts. As well as being a full time London cab driver, I also used to work for Kent Fire and Rescue as a Retained Fireman at my local fire station. If you are not familiar with the retained fire service, basically I was on call when at home and used to get fire-calls via a pager, which used to bleep at all times of the day and night, in all weathers and regardless of what you were doing. Whether in bed or in the shower, you had five minutes to get dressed, jump in the cab, get to the fire station and turnout the fire engine! On one such occasion, I was sitting watching a World Cup football match, the weather was grey, wet and overcast. I had not been in the job long...

The alerter went off and I made my way to the station, put on my fire gear and headed off. The job was an 'RTA with persons trapped, Star Hill Road, Sevenoaks near junction with Polhill'. I hadn't been to a serious RTA before and was feeling a bit anxious. On the way there wasn't a sound inside the pump except the sirens and there was just a feeling of anticipation. When we arrived, it was a bad one. A head on between two cars, one coming down the hill with the other going up - the latter straying over the centre line whilst negotiating a left-hand bend. The only casualty was a 23-year-old man in one of the cars; everyone else had been released before we arrived. The personnel from both appliances got to work cutting off the roof and prising open the driver's door. An ambulance paramedic was working on the young man, but he was pasty white. We were ready to lift the casualty out when I naively leaned over to the paramedic and asked how the young man was doing,

"He's gone mate, he's gone," he said. I couldn't believe what he was saying. How could this have happened? It was then that I looked at the steering wheel, which had literally folded back under the weight of the impact with the casualties' body. There was nothing we could have done and we left the scene. I felt totally helpless.

One thing I learned during those fire service days was that people died through a combination of things happening at once, speed being one of those and the chance of survival greatly improved with the use of seatbelts. If you are in a car crash and the car stops quickly, the person inside and their organs keep moving at the same speed, but only stop when restrained by a

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...



seatbelt - or with impact of a solid object. Next time you are in your taxi, push the steering wheel forward and see how much pressure would be needed to bend it right over. You will be surprised. In my time, I attended many fatal crashes, but far more where people survived by driving with seatbelts on and in cars that had good safety enhancements such as side and front airbags. Each car you buy has a safety rating and it really makes a difference - one of the best being Renault.

## PCN collection...

As we near the end of the year, I have done well with PCNs, getting just three! DaC kindly paid for one, I paid one because there was no point in disputing it because I deserved it, but I also appealed one. I was in Shepherds Street, Mayfair and had only been there for a few minutes when a warden appeared by the cab. I ran over to it and he stood in front trying to obstruct

me. He said I couldn't move off as he was giving me a ticket. I knew the rules had changed in April and just drove off before the ticket could be stuck to the windscreen, whilst noticing that the warden had cleverly taken some photos of the parked cab, but without showing me in the driver's seat. A few weeks later I got a ticket through the post informing me that they were giving me a notice of intended prosecution with the higher charge on it because I hadn't paid within 14 days! I spoke to John Thomas at the LTDA who told me to appeal it and say that the PCN should be cancelled because it was not issued at the time of the offence. It really was so easy to appeal the PCN on-line and took about 3 minutes. Westminster must be snowed under with appeals, because they said I would get a response within 14 days. The response came on the 14th day and the PCN was cancelled. The rules apply to Westminster traffic wardens that they must issue a ticket at the time of the offence and take a note of the number of the VED disc of the vehicle. They must also take a photo of the offence, the VED disc and the issued ticket attached to the vehicle. However, this doesn't apply to Smart cars or fixed cameras. So next time, you know what to do...



**Richard Potter (T51)**

## LOOKING TO EARN EXTRA INCOME?

Any Dial-a-Cab driver or member of staff interested in earning an extra income and saving money on all your utility bills?

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or freephone us on **0800 458 4128**

You can visit our website on:

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email: [tonybardin@telecomplus.org.uk](mailto:tonybardin@telecomplus.org.uk)

Tony Bardin (R09)

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## Licence in jeopardy?

**Drink Driving**

**Speeding**

**Failing to Notify Driver Details**

**Driving without Due Care**

**Use of a mobile phone whilst driving**

These are just a few of the areas where we can help make a difference if you find yourself on the wrong side of the law

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Some of you may have heard through the grapevine that it was my intention not to stand at the forthcoming election. And no, it wasn't a rumour. It really has been such a lousy year for Maxine and myself that I really thought that perhaps the time had come to take time out to relax more.

At the beginning of the year, Maxine's mum passed away and just a few months ago my brother Philip and I lost our youngest brother, Brian. This tragedy certainly hit us hard and is one we are all still finding it difficult to come to terms with. Now, as we approach the end of the year, I have just come out of hospital following a knee replacement operation! So 'lousy' is probably quite a mild word to use for 2008 so far as the Son family is concerned.

At this point, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the many Drivers both within Dial-a-Cab and outside of the Society for the letters, emails and text messages of condolence to my family and myself. I would also like to thank the Managers and Staff of Dial-a-Cab for their sympathies and the Board for their kind thoughts and consideration in what has been a very difficult time. Don't let anyone tell you that letters of sympathy and the like do not make a

# Mike Son's Bits and Pieces!



**Mike squeezes into the car!**

difference. They do. It may not change the situation, but it helps to know that others care.

## On a brighter note...

I recently celebrated my 65th birthday for which my wife and children bought me a totally unexpected and unusual present – well to me anyway! The gift was a day's tuition in rally driving.

Mind you, other than the torrential rain, ending up in a cornfield on one of the laps and being totally exhausted by the end of the day, it really was a fantastic experience. The cars are a bit tight to get into without a 3-month starvation diet first – one that I gave up after 3 hours!

If anyone fancies having a go or would like to know more, please give me a call...



**Mike Son**  
Special Projects

# FUEL DUTY REDUCTION? HMG RESPOND...

**Many Dial-a-Cab drivers signed a recent online petition that asked Prime Minister Gordon Brown to reduce fuel duty. The answer from Alistair Darling's office, whilst unsurprising, is interesting and worth publishing...**

"In response to the concerns of many people about high fuel prices, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has decided that there will be no increase in fuel duty this year. As a result of this decision, main road fuel duty rates have remained frozen at 50.35 pence per litre since October 2007. Duty rates for alternative road fuels and rebated oils have also been frozen.

Successive decisions by the Government not to increase fuel duty mean that it is now 17 per cent lower in real terms than in 1999. Had the fuel duty rate increased in line with inflation since then, it would now be 61 pence per litre. Had it increased in line with the previous 3% escalator (which was abolished by the Government in 1999), it would now be almost 79 pence per litre.

Recent high prices are therefore the result not of fuel duty increases made by the Government, but of sharp rises in world commodity prices, especially the price of crude oil. This has almost doubled over the past year and reached a real-terms record high of \$146 per barrel in July. This has inevitably had significant knock-on effects on retail prices, which the Government is committed to taking into account when considering decisions on fuel duty.

Prices are thus a matter for retailers and their suppliers and the Government believes that the consumer is best served by the operation of open competition between companies, subject to UK competition law under the Competition Act 1998.

The Government continues to prioritise tackling the underlying causes and impacts of high energy prices in international discussions with our EU, G7/8 and G20 partner countries. The Prime Minister recently led a delegation of Government and business leaders to the Middle East to discuss energy and the economy with oil-producing states.

To build on the progress made at the Jeddah Energy Meeting in June, the UK will be hosting an international Summit of producers and consumers in London on 19 December to take forward the work to address inefficiencies in the international oil market. This will focus on improving the investment climate for new oil supply, enhancing market transparency and energy efficiency as well as the development of alternative energy sources, with the aim of reducing prices for consumers."

Alistair Darling



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**Great as Xmas Presents**



The article in the *October Call Sign* "Alex cheats death in high speed crash" certainly brought many comments from drivers, but one very interesting letter came from a former ODRTS stalwart who was at ODRTS during our days at Pentonville Road and Shirland Road, where he had the callsign of A81. He is long retired and an avid *Call Sign Online* reader. He recently wrote to us about Alex' crash on the A10 in heavy fog.

"I thought you would like to know of a matter that might be of interest to Dial-a-Cab drivers. It was with interest that I read about the fog-related accident to **Alex Laird (064)** and I am pleased that he got out safely. But it brought back memories to me of exactly fifty years ago..

I was driving my cab down a foggy Old Kent Road, taking passengers to Lewisham on 4th December 1957 with the cab's fog light beam bouncing off the smog, when I saw convoys of ambulances racing past us with their bells ringing. I later heard that two trains had collided at St Johns Railway Station just outside Lewisham at around 6.20pm in thick fog. 90 people were killed and a further 200 were injured – some very seriously.

I became passionate that there must be a way to see through fog and it became a challenge to design something with a final concept of CCTV. After all, when a beam of visible light was shone through a glass of water, the beam was refracted. What I needed was an invisible light! Hence the use of *Infrared light* was the chosen route.

My PCO passing station was at Harvist Road and they gave me written permission to carry out experiments during foggy times only, but that the equipment carried was to be of a temporary nature. I carried out a survey and was granted an

*As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Lewisham train crash in which 90 people died, a former ODRTS driver remembers the day because he was actually working when it happened. It reminded him of an idea he came up with following the train crash...*

## Driving in Fog With Infrared Cameras?



The scene of devastation exactly 50 years ago at Lewisham

interview with the Commander of London (Heathrow) Airport. He showed an interest and gave me some information from the avionic point of view.

Some limited success was made; a *Provisional Patent* with some aviation aspects was applied for and granted for one year. But sadly I ran out of time and the idea then moved into the public domain.

I believe that BMW now have an Infrared camera and modified headlights as an accessory on their upper range of cars. Infrared cameras are freely available and can be bought on the

Internet for £80 to £190 and can be connected via an interface to certain types of SatNav systems with the converted picture being displayed on the SatNav screen. But of course, not without PCO approval.

The vehicle spotlights could be set to peak the emitter at Infrared frequency by reducing the visible light beam as the beam will see heat, not light or a switchable modification on the headlights to increase the beam range - again, only if permitted. Because of limited space within the dashboard area, the original design was to project the display from a lens onto the windscreen.

Looking to the future, plasma screens are now so thin perhaps they could be embedded into the windscreen or onto it, thereby giving a larger, see-through head-up display instead of a projected image onto the vehicle windscreen?

Finally, can I thank you for putting *Call Sign Magazine* onto the Internet. It is so nice to keep in touch with the changes going on since my days at ODRTS in Pentonville Road."

**Norman (Ex A81)**

## MARCHING OFF TO WAR

*The story of those on the Chigwell War Memorial killed in WW1...*

World War 1 was the first real global war. Between 1914 and 1918, over 40million casualties resulted, including around 20million military and civilian deaths and a total of more than 60million European soldiers being mobilized. With the 90th anniversary of that awful war's ending, there will be many books out on the subject. But there is one new book out that deals mainly with just 42 of that horrendous total of dead soldiers and with many Dial-a-Cab drivers living in and around Essex, it will be especially poignant to them. DaC driver Jerry Solomons (E33) has a special reason for reviewing the book...

"The book **Marching Off To War** is written by my brother-in-law and fellow cab driver Marc Alexander. It tells the story of the men listed on the **Chigwell Village War Memorial** who were killed in the Great War of 1914 - 1918.

It took him several years to write and as you can imagine, a great deal of research. It follows the journey of those 42 men from Chigwell Village in Essex, who left their homes, families, friends and jobs to fight in the First World War.

Given the passage of time and information available from press cuttings and the National Archives, some stories are more

conclusive than others, but all are interesting. Taking the war in context, **Marching Off To War** enables the reader not only to follow the Chigwell men's journeys, but also the First World War itself as it unfolded for the men in the trenches.

Its 252 pages also give snippets of life in and around Chigwell at the time. It contains 55 maps and 112 pictures.

The book retails at £14.99, but Dial-a-Cab drivers get a £5 discount down to £9.99. Marc is happy to sign any copy if required.

**Marching off to War** makes an ideal Christmas or Chanukah present for Dads, Uncles and Granddads who take an interest in local history and World War I."

For more info, Marc is at: [marc.alexander@ntlworld.com](mailto:marc.alexander@ntlworld.com) or call him at 07956 269606.

**Jerry Solomons (E33)**



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

Please check out my portfolio on [www.anjaking.com](http://www.anjaking.com)  
Enquiries: email: [anja@anjaking.com](mailto:anja@anjaking.com)



Britain's banks aren't the only businesses currently going through the wars.

The **FT Weekend Magazine** of 25 October was dubbed *The Wealth Issue*! The idea was to look and see how smaller companies were coping under the regime known by that awful Americanism - the Credit Crunch.

In that issue, the **FT Weekend** took an in-depth look at five businesses that were nothing to do with banking, yet relied on that sector to do well - or as the FT referred to those behind the businesses: *The Other City Boys*! **Call Sign** has edited their interviews down to a brief synopsis of how they are coping.

**John Booth** is the MD of *Millards Cleaning Services* who have been operating for 90 years. His belief was that we weren't heading for a recession, but a depression that he believed would last for around four years. Whilst expecting a dip in business, he was confident that the future would be fine and ended by claiming: "So long as you have cash, you'll be alright."

**Stephen Pinner** is the MD of *Goodacre Management Consultancy*. His company have noticed that whilst there hasn't been the number of redundancies that we saw during the last recession, those positions available are being filled by contracted staff such as interim management rather than by taking new people on. His view was that Gordon Brown's virtual nationalisation of the banks was the correct decision.

**Glen Manchester** is the CEO of *Thunderhead Software Providers*. He accepts that there may well be fewer opportunities, but that because Thunderhead are careful about their spending and watch their expansion carefully, they are still in a good position.

The wonderfully named **Vasco de Castro** is the Business Development Director for *Fruitful Office* - a company that delivers fruit baskets to London offices. They supply many companies, including Deutsche Bank and ABN Amro. Their quietest period was in November 2007 and they have now noticed a return of that quiet period. However, they feel confident that their strategy of more creative marketing will pay dividends, although they expect no growth for the next six months.

The fifth interview was with *Dial-a-Cab* Chairman **Brian Rice** and **Call Sign** is publishing that interview in full.

## BRIAN RICE INTERVIEWED BY FT WEEKEND



"The taxi industry is considered a good barometer of how the economy is doing in London and the south-east. Dial-a-Cab works with all the big financial institutions - 99.6% of our business comes from the corporate sector. The UK financial centre is trying to claw back its losses from companies such as ours by saying that they need to cut

prices.

I have noticed a distinct downturn since May and we are now running at something like 20% under what we were for the equivalent period last year. Don't misunderstand me; we are not on the breadline. Until the end of July, a month before our financial year ended, we were ahead of the previous year, but by the end of August, turnover was down by £500,000.

Recent events have been so traumatic that it got to a point where I was afraid to turn on the news in the morning. But while I am delighted that governments stepped in, there is a part of me which feels that the chips should stay where they fall. You have big banks that mismanaged their portfolios, but which are allowed to continue - a luxury which would not be afforded to smaller businesses, including Dial-a-Cab.

In this country, the government has shown the way forward in terms of what needs to be done and Gordon Brown is coming out of this quite well. The situation is being tackled in the right way and Europe seems to be pulling in the same direction as well.

Things did get bad, but some prominent people who really should have known better, made things worse. The incessant talking down of the economy frightened people. I attended a dinner where Richard Lambert, Director-General of the CBI, gave a very downbeat talk on the status of the economy. By the end of it, my only dilemma was whether to cut my throat or jump out of the window. There is always some good news somewhere in the country.

I don't think a lot of politicians understand how much emphasis is put on what they say. For people such as Alistair Darling to have said we are in the worst recession in 60 years is premature. I've been with Dial-a-Cab for 34 years and this certainly is not as bad as the three-day week we had in 1974 with Edward Heath. Then there was, of course, the miners' strike in the 1980s. That was far worse than it is at the moment and I wish someone, somewhere, would stand up and say that.

While I have to make some revisions to my forecasts, as a company Dial-a-Cab will be fine as we have no debt to service - a very important factor given the current state of affairs."

**Brian Rice, Chairman, Dial-a-Cab**

## ORGANIC WINE AT HALF PRICE!

Grown in a small family-run vineyard in the Corbieres region of Languedoc, Call Sign's Bob Woodford delivers 3 organic wines to London regularly.

**Domaine Red:** Traditional full-bodied 100% syrah to accompany red meat and game.

**Trobador:** Light bodied fruity red wine; ideal to accompany poultry, Asian or Oriental.

**Domaine White:** Medium-sweet wine can be enjoyed

with Thai or Chinese cuisine.

All three wines are available at £4.50 a bottle - half the price what you would expect to pay in your local supermarket! You can mix and match and all include free delivery! Bob will be setting up a few 'pick up points' in the City and West End in December, so if you would like a more healthy option with your Christmas lunch this year, send him an email to [woodford19@btinternet.com](mailto:woodford19@btinternet.com) for more details and to arrange collection.



"This is Radio 1 and you're listening to Danny Dumont. It's 7.55 so let's get out of bed and celebrate! Hey everybody, it's Christmas Day!" The sound of Slade singing *Merry Christmas Everybody* blasted away the silence. Mike switched off his battered Phillips radio, stuck one toe out of the bed and screamed from the sudden cold!

"What is it," asked wife Sharon still half asleep, "why did you wake me up? Besides, I thought you were going to work today?"

"You've gotta be joking," said Mike almost falling out of bed with surprise at what his wife had just mumbled to him. "It's Christmas Day and besides, look outside, it's snowing."

Before he could pull his cold toe in and wriggle back down under the warm duvet, Sharon gave him a shove. Mike reluctantly got out, went for a shower and within 20 minutes was ready to sign onto his Dial-a-Cab terminal.

"I'll have lunch at The Royal Oak," he shouted as he opened the front door, moneybag in one hand and umbrella in the other. "They always have a nice Christmas dinner."

By lunchtime, the weather had eased off but work was slow. He'd only done a few account rides that hadn't really taken him too far. He was driving up Holland Road, Shepherds Bush when he became aware of someone frantically trying to hail down a taxi. Mike pulled up to the kerb and spoke to a well-dressed man holding a mobile phone in his hand.

"What's the problem sir?" Mike asked shoving a Malteser into his mouth.

"Please, cabby, I need to get to the Royal London Hospital as quickly as you can. My girlfriend has just gone into labour!" Before Mike could respond, the anxious father-to-be got into the back of the TX2, placed his mobile in his suit pocket and clipped the seat belt on.

"I'll go down Oxford Street," Mike said, "it should be quiet on a Christmas Day."

"I'll give you a £50 tip if you can get me there within 30 minutes," the passenger replied gripping tightly to the side handles as Mike did a speedy U-turn and in one fell movement sped off towards Holland Park Avenue. It took just minutes to shoot along Notting Hill Gate and through Bayswater Road. But then, as Mike's taxi flew across Marble Arch into Oxford Street and almost Oxford Circus, everything suddenly came to a halt in a huge traffic jam.

"Please don't say we've got stuck," said the panicking dad-to-be. "I would have got the underground to be on the safe side, but it's not running today and I remember hearing that buses were finishing early." Suddenly his voice shot up two octaves! "Oh no!" he screamed, "I've just remembered; the Santa parade is being held along Oxford Street today!" He was now speaking so fast that he could hardly pronounce the words properly.

"I'm really sorry, sir" said Mike apologetically, "I'll try and turn around."

It was no use though, Mike was stuck behind five hundred Santas - some with sleighs attached to their backs and accompanied by hundreds of elves! It was going to take Mike so long to get down the road that he was going to lose his £50 tip.

\*\*\* The Call Sign Xmas Story \*\*\*

# WORKING ON CHRISTMAS DAY



It was the day of the Santa Parade

Swinging the steering wheel round on full lock, Mike U-turned in the middle of the road, went back to Bond Street and shot through the back to avoid any more confrontations! Squeezing through the traffic, having witnessing three car crashes on the way and narrowly jumping two red lights, Mike arrived outside the Royal London.

"Thank you," the flustered man said while throwing a handful of crumpled bank notes into the taxi luggage area and running into the reception. Mike mumbled, as there didn't seem to be too many of them. He counted the

money and found an extra wad. As he added them up, he found he'd been given double the fare. Mike's face lit up. "Thanks for the extra, that's very nice," he screamed out through his open window.

"What extra?" his wife mumbled, "what's very nice?" As Mike came round, the radio was playing in the background and his wife was half asleep beside him. He turned the radio up.

"This is Radio 1 and you're listening to Danny Dumont. It's 7.55 so let's get out of bed and celebrate! Hey everybody, it's Christmas Day!" The sound of Slade singing *Merry Christmas Everybody* was blasting away.

"Why did you wake me up," said Sharon, "besides, I thought you were going to work today?"

"You've gotta be joking," said Mike as he went back to sleep ignoring Sharon's shove!

## REDBRIDGE HAND CAB WASH

Roding Lane North, Woodford Avenue

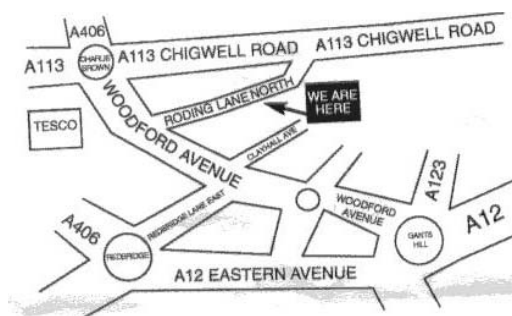
**For Essex drivers, the best cab wash for miles around is now offering Dial-a-Cab drivers a discount every time you come in to get your taxi washed!**

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

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

**Full valet service available**

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





**Celebrations following the goals that took Bedfont Green to the top of the league**

Dial-a-Cab driver and **Bedfont Green** goalkeeper, **Lee Pearce (J71)** was bubbling when *Call Sign* spoke to him recently: "I enjoyed my time at Wembley, but this is why I left to come to Bedfont Green – going top of the Combined Counties Premier League!"

It was a 5 – 0 thrashing of Chertsey Town that got them to the highest position BG have ever reached.

"The football we played that day was just magical," said Lee, "we were gliding around the pitch and you couldn't but help feeling sorry for Chertsey!"

Manager Dennis Bainborough had brought in youngster Tom McCarthy for a rare outing and he repaid in bucketloads! He opened the scoring with a spectacular overhead kick on 18 minutes and doubled the lead 7 minutes

# Bedfont Green go Top!

later when he hit home Chis Henry's saved shot. Gavin Hart scored on 42 minutes to give BG a comfortable 3-0 lead at the break. Chertsey lived up to their pre-match billing and played far better in the second half as they tried to get back into the game, however the home side's defence held strong with Lee Morley – back after suspension – and Ray Sherwood both shining next to Phil Merritt and Lee Grant. Russell Miner netted on 79 minutes before another former Wembley star, Jon-Barrie Bates, curled home a freekick in the

dying minutes. Chertsey almost scored a consolation goal but Lee Pearce produced a fine instinctive save to deny them even that! Unsurprisingly, Tom McCarthy won the *Man of the Match* award.

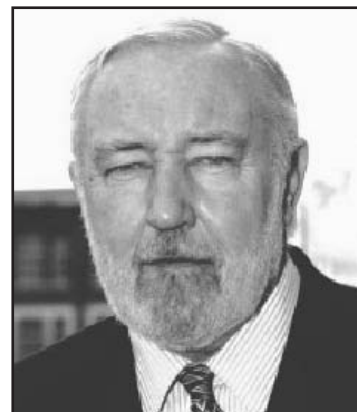
That result sent Bedfont Green to the top of the table for the first time in their history. It's true that Championships are not won in November, but as Lee Pearce told *Call Sign*: "No one can stop you dreaming!"

**Report from Stewart Cook**

## ALAN FLEMING AND PCO VISITS

**If for any reason, you have to visit the Public Carriage Office and feel that you would benefit by having someone experienced with you, Alan Fleming, the former Chairman of the London Cab Drivers Club, is available to represent Dial-a-Cab members on PCO matters. He has already successfully represented 2 DaC members.**

**Contact Alan on [a.fleming1@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:a.fleming1@tiscali.co.uk) or obtain his number via Driver Services.**



**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

The course of English history changed forever on that fateful morning in October 1066 when King Harold

II of England –aka Harold Godwinson or Godwinson – lost the so-called *Battle of Hastings* to William, Duke of Normandy.

William the Conqueror emerged victorious at *Sang-lac* (French for 'lake of blood') or *Sanlack Ridge* near Battle, as it became known, and our country would never be the same again. For a start, most Londoners spoke French for the next 300 years! Mon Dieux!

The start of this month's report from France must seem like a history lesson, but that is exactly what I have been having myself recently.

Along with two other Dial-a-Cab subscribers, **Brian With (Y84)** and **Anne Watkins (M78)**, we undertook the *Cab Guide* course organised by another taxi



driver, **Graham Woodhouse** of the *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers*. Not only was it great fun, but the three of us with DaC connections firmly believe it will enhance work options now that we can conduct tours with the new knowledge and confidence we all have.

**By the way, anyone interested in going on one of these courses can contact Graham on 07968 791117 or email [cabguide@sky.com](mailto:cabguide@sky.com). They are both worthwhile and excellent value.**

It is an 8-week course and lectures are held at *Knowledge Point* in the Caledonian Road on Monday evenings. If the credit crunch is going to bite in 2009, you might – like King Harold – need another string to your bow!

**My organic wine deliveries in the UK have kicked in and this is how I found time to undertake the course, but there is still plenty of both red and white available as I type these notes should you wish to place an order in time for Christmas. Contact my wine line on 07853 128823 or email me at**



*You can order Bob's organic wine but perhaps drink it more responsibly than he!*

**[woodford19@btinternet.com](mailto:woodford19@btinternet.com).**

Now and then I have a little tittle myself, as this recent picture might suggest! Hic!

Hope you all take enough dosh in the shilly sheashon, and have a very merry cwishmash!

*Be lucky, be careful et bon Noel...*

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



**Peter Hopkins (W60)** wasn't in the Christmas spirit when **Call Sign** met up with him recently. Peter was still reeling from the shock of receiving a posted PCN after he had stopped briefly to mop up some spilt coffee in his cab.

"I had just bought the hot drink and had placed it - admittedly rather precariously - on top of the cab dash as you do, while I settled into my seat before driving away," he said.

"I am painfully aware of enforcement cameras everywhere, particularly the static ones, so I wanted to get going again as soon as possible to where it was safer to stop," he continued.

"As I pulled away from the kerbside in Praed Street, the coffee cup toppled off the dash, hitting the gearlever, burst the lid open and splashed the hot contents across the cab's central console and me - including the more delicate parts of my anatomy that are not used to being saturated with boiling hot liquid! My shirt and trousers were soaked, the seat was wet and I was very concerned about fluid spilling onto all the electrical wiring and components around the central console area."

Peter went on to tell **Call Sign**: "I had no

# DaC Drivers' £60 cup of Coffee!



Peter Hopkins without his cup of coffee!

option but to stop right there and mop up the spillage from the cab interior. I also had to clean myself up before re-starting work. Having sorted the mess, I went back to work annoyed with myself that I had not been more careful, but gave it no further thought. Imagine how much more annoyed I was when a few days later a PCN arrived in the post, demanding £60, with a photograph of my cab taken from a not-so-Smart car, which had sneaked up behind me!"

"It was a very expensive cup of coffee and I didn't even get to drink it," Peter moaned as he got ready to drive away. "I shall be more careful in future, not just where I stop, but also where I put my cup!"

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## ROMAN WAY DELIGHT AT TERMINAL UPGRADES!



Smiling Dana is happy with how the upgrades are progressing

There was pre-Christmas joy at Dial-a-Cab's Roman Way depot recently as yet another satisfied subscriber complimented the engineering team on speedily and successfully completing the software upgrade on his cab - a task currently being undertaken across the entire DaC fleet to improve systems communications and reliability.

**Dana Thananjeyan**, Manager of the fitting bay explained to **Call Sign** that as each cab comes into the depot to be upgraded, a job card is raised so as to keep a record of what work is done to each cab.

"It can be any type of repair, the fitting of replacement parts or, as was the case for this particular driver, the software upgrade. Sometimes a new Tait radio has also to be installed, which can take a little longer. But we record everything so we can keep track of things. On this occasion, the driver concerned kindly took the time to write: 'A very good and helpful fitter' close to his own signature on the bottom of the job card."

Dana continued: "We all work very hard here and always do our best for the

drivers. So it is very nice to see that our efforts are appreciated! It's all about customer satisfaction," he said grinning with pride and as he took his leave to continue working...

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

0845 094 5307

We make the wheels turn  
so you can earn,

# THE WHINGER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY...

*Or how to lose an account without even trying!*

**Call Sign doesn't get many stories from the top floor – yes, from the Chairman himself! But on a day when his usual smiling face looked anything but happy, he recounted his tale of woe...**

Dial-a-Cab once had an account situated very close to Parliament Square that we had serviced for almost thirty years. Then one day another big, bad taxi company came along and took the account from us, telling all and sundry that they had been given a three-year contract. But, lo and behold, after less than half that time, the account in question came back to DaC and that's where they are now. The coverage is good, the fixed prices are good and the account is happy... so why is there a problem?

Well it began around two weeks ago; late in the evening a DaC driver took 3 passengers from this account's special calling rank back to their homes in Harrow. All told, it took around an hour for which the fixed price paid well, although £6 less than the meter.

However, the driver wasn't too happy and he told his passengers how unfair life was ... then he told them again and again! However, his passengers didn't take too much pity on him and in fact reported to their superiors that "...he just wouldn't stop whinging!"

The real problem was that when they went into work the next day at this lovely building close to Parliament Square, one of the three told his boss, who in turn told his boss until it reached a titled gentleman who then wrote to Brian Rice in complaint!

Besides telling the Chairman that those travelling in the cabs wouldn't know what the price was anyway and while the passengers weren't necessarily against the drivers talking, this driver just "whinged" the whole time and spoiled the journey home for them and would Mr Rice try to make sure that this type of thing didn't happen again.

Brian explained to Call Sign how much effort had gone into recapturing this large account (did we say it was close to Parliament Square) and how easy it would be to lose it once again. He recounted a tale from a few months back from this same account when a DaC driver became very moody, according to the passengers, when they wouldn't change the order of their drop-offs so that the driver could finish closer to his home. Again, it was reported and the backlash came to DaC House.

So back to the first driver. Later that evening, probably still whinging to himself, he once again booked into the special zone this account (close to Parliament Square) has and quite soon was given another job. This one had a happier ending because the meter

showed the fare as being several quid less than the fixed price. There is no report of him moaning that he didn't deserve that much...!



One of the views close to this account!

## SONY CYBERSHOT USES DAC!

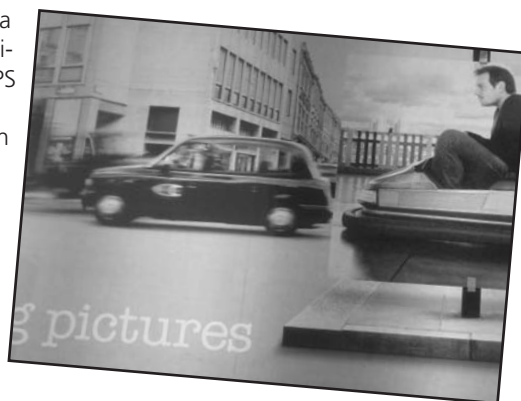
If we had any more drivers sending us a photo of the **Sony Cybershot C905** ad that has been plastered all over London with its BIG picture flash, we'd have run out of email room!

With 8.1 megapixels, this camera takes pictures with electrifying clarity and in addition has a built-in GPS for guiding lost travellers. It also contains a superfast 3G connection that makes web browsing and downloading easy.

Then there is the 16x zoom, Xenon flash and face detection – specialising in close-ups – and the fact that it allows you to edit on board and to make them as BIG as you like with a memory boost option of 4GB!

**So how could they advertise what looks like the best product of its kind on the market? Well how about putting it alongside the UK's best taxi company – and that's Dial-a-Cab! Incidentally, the answer to the question: Did they ask us first is no! But hey, if we can help out Sony...!**

Thanks again to all who sent us photos of the ad, but please... no more of them!



## 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**



## MAILSHOT

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

## Camden Council and U-turns...

Can I thank *Call Sign* for its ongoing advice on appealing against PCNs for doing U-turns in Southampton Way, when the no u-turn signs were so poorly displayed. I threatened Camden Council as *Call Sign* suggested, by saying I would be going to the Ombudsman and they wrote back cancelling the PCN! They now say the signage has been "fixed and future penalty notices will be enforced." Thank you again...

**Gerry Tobin (L32)**

**Pleased it was successful Gerry. Can I please ask drivers not to send me their PCNs. I'm afraid that you will have to do the appealing yourself, however, I'd be delighted to hear of any successful appeals. I have my own appeal at the Arbitration Service in the Haymarket later this month ...Ed**

## Too many words

Could I ask that *Mailshot* letters and replies be limited to 200 words? The long drawn out diatribes with subliminal ongoing grievances and similar wordy replies by some of the letters, where I know little about the history of previous disagreements leave me cold taking away my will to live (50 words)...

**Alan Nash (A95)**

**No! ...Ed**

## Dot2Dot

Re the article in last month's *Call Sign* (*Dot2Dot goes dotty*); if National Express wants to get rid of this loss making service, perhaps the time has come for Dial-a-Cab to move in on that market in these depressing times. Brochures should be placed in every hotel, private club and other buildings offering realistic fixed prices to all airports. Our trade is changing for the worse, so now is time to act...

**Barry Spear (Y16)**

**Dot2Dot is being closed less than a year after it was launched at a cost of £7million. The service charged £22 per person to travel to London airports in a 12-seater Mercedes people carrier. If any driver has a view on Barry's suggestion, feel free to give it here ...Ed**

## Cashpoints and red lines

About 2 or 3 months ago a message appeared in *Call Sign* and on our terminals saying it was ok to stop on a red route or double yellow after 10.30pm to allow passengers to use a cashpoint. Do you know if this is still the case please? Keep up the

good work...

**Gary Clark (W53)**

**The message came from the Mayor's office and although it was termed as being for an experimental period, I've heard nothing to suggest that it is to be discontinued ...Ed**

## Yellow Badges working in London

I read with interest the article in the October *Call Sign: Yellow Badges: The Game is Up* and it brought to mind something I have been thinking of for some time. I remember an Editorial you wrote some time ago about a driver that picked you up from a theatre and used a SatNav to take you wherever it was you were going to and went some ridiculous route. I really believe that SatNavs should be banned from licensed London taxi driver's taxis. I carry one with me because if I were to go out of town, I may well need it. But when drivers leave them on show, it demeans the Knowledge we have to work so hard to accomplish. If we did not have them on display, it would probably put an end to Yellow Badges nicking our work because most would probably not be able to work in town without SatNavs. But it would only work if none of us had them in the front of our cabs.

**Alex Constantinou (N05)**

**Thanks for the reminder Alex. It was around two years ago when I ordered a cab from the New Victoria Theatre to go back to our old office at Brunswick House. The driver used a SatNav and took us up Grosvenor Place, Park Lane, Upper Brook Street, through to Euston Road, Kings Cross, City Road and Brunswick Place. The amazing part was that the route isn't as far out as you'd think, but can you imagine what a fare-paying passenger would say! I have always believed that having a SatNav fitted to our front windscreen takes away the difference between minicabs and us and I find it totally embarrassing when a passenger asks if I need the postcode of their address because they are so used to minicab drivers asking. And for those that have phoned over the past month, no I don't consider there is a difference between a Yellow Badge driver illegally working in town and a minicab driver who is legally doing it. In their own areas, I respect YBs, but in London they are just touts ...Ed**

## Good and bad news!

Great news! Today (5th November) the September edition of *Call Sign* arrived in the post with a large second class stamp on the envelope and a yellow post office

'underpaid' handling fee sticker on it. I wonder if anyone else had such good service from the post office?

In the real November *Call Sign*, as usual there are articles about drivers booking into zones they are not in and the usual complaints meeting penalties. Is it not time we went onto full GPS dispatching and ditch the zonal system? It must surely must be out of date by now? It would cut the complaints meetings and make things a lot easier for the driver.

I wonder if other drivers have any views in this? Perhaps we could hear from the BoM for their views on this?

**Ray Sorene (A53)**

**No Ray, you aren't the only driver to finally receive the September issue with its £1.24 underpaid yellow sticker attached! Why? Well it could be something to do with the Post Office admitting liability for the incorrect postage being attached and their kind £500 donation to the LITUC Xmas party in the last issue. Perhaps resending them quietly might have made them feel less guilty!**

**As for GPS dispatching, I'm a driver too and hope the BoM don't decide to do it - at least while conditions are so quiet out there. On our current system, you know that if you are booked into a busy zone that you will get a job. It may take longer at present, but you will get one. On GPS, you would need to be passing the door or as some drivers on other circuits operating the system tend to do, just park up outside a building that uses them. Sooner or later their cab will be picked out by GPS and those driving around won't have a chance. I asked every BM and they all agreed with me ...Ed**

## Xmas already!

No it's not Xmas greetings yet, but that time is approaching when the Board of management peeks inside our wardrobes and checks our funerary attire. May I take this opportunity to say that I hate wearing black and if I need a new fleece, pale blue or pillar box red would go down better. Also if the company logo is compulsory, can we have just the logo - which I think is quite tasteful - without that awful name (Dial-a-cab) which I have never liked and is most inappropriate as nobody has dialled anything for over 25 years!

Perhaps I should wish you a Merry Christmas after all... or you might think me a Grumpy Old Man...!

**Glen Robertson (E54)**

**Brian Rice replies: Sorry no fleece this year Glen, you will have to make do with**



## MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from  
page 33



a torch - which should be acceptable because as your taste in fleeces show, you obviously like bright things!

Regarding our name of Dial-a-Cab, I couldn't agree with you more and I have always disliked it. Like you, I have been with DaC for over thirty years - thirty four to be precise - and I always liked the name 'Lords'. Consequently, I would like to change the name to 'Lords of London' however, I have done some market research in the past and the conclusion was that our logo was so recognisable and our name and reputation so good that I was advised to leave well alone - so I did!

Finally, a Merry Christmas from One Grumpy Old Man to Another!

## TX4 fires

Re your answer to my letter in the November *Mailshot*, yes I would be pleased with a safety feature on a Daimler such as a suppression system, but how many Daimler's have caught fire in the last 6 months? But if on a taxi, it is a safety feature then why only on early TX4s and not the entire London taxi fleet? Are the latest TX4s rolling off the production line with this suppression system? This in itself proves to me it's more a case of LTI still can't guarantee this work is sufficient to stop fires, so have no choice but to put a last line of defence ie an extinguisher. Or is it placed to save them money that in the event of a fire, the extinguisher kicks in and they only have to replace fewer parts rather than a whole cab?

Prior to being a taxi driver, I worked for a local authority within the environment and public protection division and under the trading standards. I've been out of that trade for 6 years but still keep up to date with legislation etc.

I am currently discussing with ex-colleagues whether I can refuse this TX4 work if my cab needs it. If it does and you don't have it done, your cab will fail the overhaul; therefore it's proved that without the refit the cab is unsafe. Now this also proves that it's not a simple manufacturers part defect, but more as an integral design failure and this in itself makes the taxi not "fit for purpose."

The sale of goods act 1979 states the vehicle must fit its description and be of satisfactory quality and if for a certain purpose ie the taxi being fit for that purpose and without this refit due to what I believe is an integral design failure, the cab will not be licensed, therefore not fit for purpose and in the eyes of the law you are entitled to a refund.

Michael Beevor (N76)

Interesting letter, Michael. What strikes me as strange is that when drivers heard about the fire suppression system that LTI claimed was a gesture to increase driver confidence in the safety of the taxi, some said that must mean that LTI were not confident in the vehicle. So now they are not fitting them to the later TX4 models, we have other drivers saying that means the cab is no longer safe! So LTI aren't going to win either way!

But whatever LTI has done to ensure the safety of the vehicle has been passed by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and they don't mess around. One of their many jobs is to undertake technical investigations into potential manufacturing or design defects, highlighting safety concerns and monitoring safety recalls. They are satisfied that the TX4 is now as safe as possible otherwise it would not have been passed. If you go to the VOSA website, you will discover some Ford Focus' having a failure of the power steering hose that could have resulted in an engine bay fire and which were recalled. Or the Iveco bus recalled because of the danger of an engine bay fire or the Ford Transits that were recalled due to the power steering faults with ensuing risk of fire. Then on 29 September this year we had a strange sounding vehicle called a TX4 that made news headlines around the world. Not quite so many headlines came three days later for the Freelander Land Rover that was down as possibly catching fire through its booster heater! There are lots more, so let's not pretend that the TX4 is the only vehicle to ever be recalled through a possible risk of fire. The difference is that we have the PCO / TfL because VOSA didn't insist the vehicles should come off the road. The situation is very unsatisfactory, but we should keep it in perspective. If you decide to challenge the PCO/SGS Michael, I don't think it will be the cab that loses out, only your good self. I once got a stop for not having a luggage-restraining strap in the front compartment of my cab of the time - some 10 years after the last of those FX3 cabs with their open luggage platforms where the luggage had to be tied on were taken off the road. You may also find this issue's Fifty Green Years interesting ...Ed

## Getting rid of hooky hotels?

Reading the letter from Mickey Lappin (E46) in November's *Mailshot* about the blatant

demand for money from a linkmen for a so-called airport job at the Mayfair; other than refusing to pay - which he did - maybe he had two other alternatives? He could have said to the linkman: "Yes, when the customer confirms his destination you will get the money" and then give him 10p, or because he had witnesses, call the police and report him for demanding money with menaces. Of course, to do the latter you would have to be on a mission and not everyone would want to go that far.

But this sort of problem has been going on for years and there are always going to be drivers and doormen who will play the high game and there can now only be a few straight hotels left. What I don't understand is the LTDA, of which I am a long-time member, have been in a position for years to do something positive such as employing a private surveillance company to get evidence of the selling of jobs by hotel staff and drivers giving kickbacks and then getting some of these people prosecuted for fraud or whichever law is broken. If big companies can be prosecuted for giving bribes, why not them? It won't stop it, but it might curtail some of the syndicates of drivers with mobile phones who have many of the hotel staff in their pockets. But no doubt the LTDA will don their Father Christmas outfits and stand outside another hooky hotel for a few days and after they've gone, all will revert to the way it's always been. That's why at the moment it seems the only way to get a fair shot at the work is to be on the radio.

Can I also say that of all the years I have been reading trade magazines, yours is way ahead of the rest. You are definitely top of your game, so well done. Please don't entertain any headhunters from the LTDA mag.

Ian Connelly (T21)

Hi Ian, thanks for that comment at the end and I can offer assurances that Stuart Pessok hasn't offered me my fortune as of yet! As for the important part of your letter, I asked LTDA General Secretary, Bob Oddy for a response. He has kindly done so - and very interesting it is...

Mr Oddy writes: "The first point I wish to make is that these issues are far more complicated than they appear at first sight and it is not possible to provide a substantive explanation within the constraints of this letters column. However, if any driver, LTDA member or not, cares to call me at the LTDA I will be more than happy to spend as long as it takes to explain in detail the legal ramifications involved."

In brief, the legal position is this: 'Bribing' hotel staff is not illegal,





## MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from  
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immoral yes, illegal no. Therefore the only way forward is to shame the hotel management into taking action against the staff who act in this underhand way. But let me ask this question; why is it that cab drivers are queuing up to service these hotels as soon as we pull our pickets off? If an hotel is bent, don't service it! Why does it require the LTDA to mount a picket? If cabs stopped working these high profile hotels, they would all toe the line.

Clipboard Johnnies are a different matter. If they wait to be approached by a prospective passenger, most courts will not convict. If they are pro active and say for example: "Do you want a cab?" then they are touting, but this is an important fine line. In the past, the LTDA has initiated private prosecutions against door staff at several venues. The average cost to LTDA members of each case is approximately £5000 and the average fine imposed is £100, and to add insult to injury, the same door staff were back on duty the next night!

TOCU have recently taken action against clipboard johnnies at three high profile locations. Two cases have already been tried. Both defendants were given an Absolute Discharge, which means that they were found guilty but the judge did not find it necessary to impose a penalty!

Senior officers at TOCU are currently endeavouring to persuade the Crown

Prosecution Service into presenting the cases in a manner which will convince the Judiciary to impose an appropriate penalty."

### Vito availability?

In the October edition of *Call Sign*, you expressed your opinion of the new Mercedes Taxi. I fully agree with your sentiments, as did a few other drivers. But one possible problem was not discussed.

It is my understanding that we (DaC) have added a 'V' attribute to the list and I find it rather hard to understand the reasoning behind it. We have only a few 'vans' (sorry) on the circuit, so if a customer requests one of these cabs, will he/she be happy to wait possibly several hours before his request can be granted? Also, if a 6-seater is wanted, I would hope that particular job would be open to all 6-seaters ie most Metrocabs and not just the new cab. It would be interesting to hear what the response to that last question will be.

**Michael Harris (F79)**

**Brian Rice responds:** Michael, the reason we have a 'V' attribute is so that we know what type of vehicle our members are driving, it's as simple as that. We do occasionally get a request for the Mercedes and all we can say to the customer is that we will try, but if there is not anything local we will get back to them; after all, we only have 19 at the time of writing.

However, if the request is for a six-

seater then of course you and your Metrocab would be included in the equation. Consequently, we are talking about three different requests, I want a Mercedes, I want a six seater or I want a Metrocab - if the request is for the latter then it would only be offered to Metros if there are any in the area. If there isn't, then like the request for the Mercedes, we would get back to the client.

### LCDC response

As acting Secretary of the LCDC, I read with interest the article by **Dave Cohen (E94)** in last month's *Call Sign*. We at the Club are most flattered that you regularly write about us. I would respectfully like to point out that both Dave Cohen and Alan Fleming's position became untenable after they gave evidence in court against the LCDC on behalf of **Terry Bezant (W87)**, the former typesetter for *The Badge* newspaper who filed an unfair dismissal claim against the Club. I am pleased to say that this was successfully defended, but at a cost to the membership of the Club of several thousand pounds.

Thank you for the opportunity to set the record straight.

**Darryl Cox (T33)**

Thanks Darryl, however I should point out that I don't make up stories and when someone feels aggrieved and wants to write in *Call Sign*, if I consider it relevant then I have no problem in allowing them to make their point ...Ed

## WCHCD Attend Memorial Service at St Pauls

On 3 November 2008, the Master of the *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers*, **Andrew Overton**, accompanied by the Clerk, **Mary Whitworth**, attended the Royal British Legion Memorial Service held in the garden of St Paul's Cathedral. The service takes place each year where the Lord Mayor and his Sheriffs and other City Officers place wreaths at the base of the tree next to the Cathedral. Then all of the 108 Livery Company Masters go forward to place a small cross with poppies in the ground in remembrance of those fallen in conflict. The service is conducted in the open air with a military band and members of the Legion in attendance.

Andrew Overton told *Call Sign*: "It was a very moving experience and special to be holding this service outside, whilst the City all around busied itself with normal life. The service ended with the last post resonating out above the traffic noise as we remembered those who had given their lives."



The  
Memorial  
garden at  
St Pauls



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