

February 2008



# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

*Inside this issue...*

800 drivers now on e-statements

Allen Togwell and terminally ill  
Jasmine...

DaC, Morgan Stanley and  
'Bleeding' Xmas!

Mayoral elections: Boris  
Johnson speaks to Call Sign...

DaC driver's wife becomes an  
author!

Westminster TaxiCard: Are DaC  
drivers paying the subsidy?

Dishing the dirt on Ken? Steve  
Norris reviews C4 Dispatches...

Where is Power Pill...?



*No wonder Brian is smiling...  
He has just given away £½million!*



*This beautiful  
FX3 was totally  
rebuilt by a  
Dial-a-Cab driver!*





# NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

True to form the Eurostar timetable was updated less than a month after opening in November. Here is the updated version, which is valid until 05/07/08

| From | Arrive | Train No. | Mon-Thur | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|------|--------|-----------|----------|-----|-----|-----|
| F    | 07:16  | 9099      |          |     |     | ✓★  |
| B    | 07:55  | 9109      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   |     |
| P    | 07:58  | 9005      | ✓        | ✓   |     |     |
| P    | 08:28  | 9007      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   |     |
| B    | 08:56  | 9113      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 08:59  | 9009      | ✓        | ✓   |     |     |
| P    | 09:34  | 9011      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| B    | 10:03  | 9117      | ✓        | ✓   |     |     |
| P    | 10:38  | 9015      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| B    | 11:01  | 9121      |          |     | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 11:28  | 9019      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| B    | 13:03  | 9127      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 13:28  | 9027      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 14:34  | 9031      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 15:28  | 9035      |          | ✓   | ✓★  | ✓   |
| B    | 15:56  | 9141      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 15:59  | 9037      |          |     |     | ✓   |
| F    | 16:12  | 9095      |          |     | ✓★  |     |

| From | Arrive | Train No. | Mon-Thur | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|------|--------|-----------|----------|-----|-----|-----|
| P    | 16:36  | 9039      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| B    | 17:03  | 9145      | ✓        | ✓   |     |     |
| P    | 17:34  | 9043      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| B    | 17:58  | 9149      | ✓        | ✓   |     |     |
| B    | 18:03  | 9149      |          |     | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 18:34  | 9047      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓★  | ✓   |
| P    | 18:59  | 9049      | ✓        | ✓   |     | ✓   |
| B    | 19:03  | 9153      | ✓        | ✓   |     | ✓   |
| P    | 19:34  | 9051      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| B    | 19:56  | 9157      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 20:07  | 9053      | ✓        | ✓   |     |     |
| P    | 20:28  | 9055      | ✓        | ✓   |     | ✓   |
| D    | 21:13  | 9057      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 21:34  | 9059      | ✓        | ✓   |     |     |
| P    | 21:42  | 9059      |          |     | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 21:59  | 9061      |          |     |     | ✓   |
| B    | 22:04  | 9165      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| P    | 22:34  | 9063      | ✓        | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |

Key: ★= From 16/02/08 ★★= Until 29/03/08 F=French Alps  
D=Disneyland P=Paris B=Brussels

**"What's On" at ExCel, Earls Court, Olympia and the O2 in that order and by start date**

| Event name  | Type   | Where                          | Start date | Finish date |
|---|--------|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| The UK Wedding Shows                                  | Public | ExCel                          | 02/02/2008 | 03/02/2008  |
| Your Money Matters                                    | Public | ExCel                          | 02/02/2008 | 03/02/2008  |
| Hotelympia 2008                                       | Trade  | ExCel                          | 17/02/2008 | 21/02/2008  |
| Hostec-Europe 2008                                    | Trade  | ExCel                          | 18/02/2008 | 21/02/2008  |
| The London Stitch and Creative Crafts Show            | Public | ExCel                          | 28/02/2008 | 01/03/2008  |
| The Baby Show in association with Bounty sponsored by | Public | ExCel                          | 29/02/2008 | 02/03/2008  |
| The Times presents Destinations: The Holiday & Travel | Public | Earls Court One Ground Level   | 31/01/2008 | 03/02/2008  |
| Travel Technology Show 08                             | Trade  | Earls Court Two                | 05/02/2008 | 06/02/2008  |
| Business Travel Show London 2008                      | Trade  | Earls Court Two                | 05/02/2008 | 07/02/2008  |
| Technology for Marketing 08                           | Trade  | Earls Court Two                | 12/02/2008 | 13/02/2008  |
| International Confex 08                               | Trade  | Earls Court One                | 12/02/2008 | 14/02/2008  |
| Futurebuild   | Trade  | Earls Court One & Two, Ground  | 26/02/2008 | 28/02/2008  |
| Ecobuild  | Trade  | Earls Court One & Two, Ground  | 26/02/2008 | 28/02/2008  |
| Innovations for the Built Environment 08              | Trade  | Earls Court One & Two, Ground  | 26/02/2008 | 28/02/2008  |
| Cityscape   | Trade  | Earls Court One & Two, Ground  | 26/02/2008 | 28/02/2008  |
| Londonedge and Londoncentral                          | Trade  | Olympia Two                    | 03/02/2008 | 05/02/2008  |
| Screen Expo Europe 2008                               | Trade  | Olympia National Hall          | 05/02/2008 | 06/02/2008  |
| The Retail Business Show 08                           | Trade  | Olympia National Hall          | 05/02/2008 | 06/02/2008  |
| Aesthetic Medicine 08                                 | Trade  | Olympia Two                    | 09/02/2008 | 10/02/2008  |
| Pure Womenswear Spring 08                             | Trade  | Olympia Grand & National Halls | 10/02/2008 | 12/02/2008  |
| Publishing Expo 08                                    | Trade  | Olympia Conference Centre      | 13/02/2008 | 14/02/2008  |
| Zee Carnival 2008                                     | Public | Olympia Grand Hall             | 15/02/2008 | 17/02/2008  |
| National Wedding Show                                 | Public | Olympia Grand Hall             | 22/02/2008 | 24/02/2008  |
| Listed Property Show 2008                             | Public | Olympia Two                    | 23/02/2008 | 24/02/2008  |
| FORM LONDON 08  | Public | Olympia National Hall          | 28/02/2008 | 02/03/2008  |
| One Life Live 2008                                    | Public | Olympia Grand Hall             | 29/02/2008 | 02/03/2008  |
| Strictly Come Dancing                                 | Public | The O2 Venue                   | 13/02/2008 | 15/02/2008  |
| Smashing Pumpkins                                     | Public | The O2 Venue                   | 16/02/2008 | 16/02/2008  |
| ACU British Supercross Championship                   | Public | The O2 Venue                   | 23/02/2008 | 23/02/2008  |
| Shockwaves NME Awards Big Gig                         | Public | The O2 Venue                   | 28/02/2008 | 28/02/2008  |
| Alicia Keys   | Public | The O2 Venue                   | 29/02/2008 | 29/02/2008  |

**Don't forget, if you would like a list of over 3000 restaurants, loads of pubs, hotels, all MP stations, LCA arrivals, What's On at Earls Court Olympia, ExCel & O2, Lap Dancing clubs, Post codes, DaC codes and much, much more - currently 56 A4 pages worth and for FREE - all you need to do is send an email to [alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk](mailto:alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk) with the subject as UID, with your text simply stating your name, email address, badge number, call sign and contact telephone number (only needed if email fails) preferably in that order and you will receive an email pointing you to this useful information.**



# from the editor's desk

**Not much fun after Christmas is it! Ah well, on with the show, it'll soon be spring...!**

## Roaders...

A story in a recent *Telegraph Online* got me wondering. It wrote of the soaring cost of rail travel, which in many cases has now made it cheaper to travel by taxi if there are several passengers. If passengers can get hold of 'cheapies' then they can still get a bargain, but these type of tickets are becoming far more difficult to get hold of – especially at peak times.

A standard single ticket from Euston to Birmingham New Street costs the passenger £61.50 plus taxi fare at each end. Is there anyone out there who wouldn't take a four-hander to Birmingham for £260, which would also include door-to-door travel? Almost the same cost!

A London to York day trip would cost a passenger £177.70. Is there anyone out there who wouldn't do the job for £500 including being prepared to wait all day to bring them home again? A big saving to the passengers, plus less hassle with door-to-door travel.

Ask DaC Chairman Brian Rice how much railway season tickets are! Those of us living in and around London probably don't realise the enormous cost involved and on top of that, some commuter fares – supposedly capped by the Government – recently went up by around 11%.

According to the *Telegraph* article, rises for non-regulated fares have been far steeper and as an example gave *Arriva*, which last year imposed a 30% increase on tickets whose prices were not capped.

The Government has said that it wants passengers to pay more to maintain the network, which could well provide Dial-a-Cab with an opening to become involved. Of course if you aren't prepared to do fixed price trips then forget I spoke! Your comments please...

## London taxi heaters

I don't know about you, but the days of heaters blowing out cold air, with some naughty drivers even using their tip-up seat ads to close off the radiator grill attempting to keep some heat in, seem to have gone with the recent batch of TX2 and TX4s. The only problem now seems to be that most passengers don't know how to use them! Why? Because they are so complicated! In theory you have a heater and a booster, but in reality it becomes a chore because most push the booster first and nothing happens. Then they push the heater and the cab turns into a furnace. What then makes it worse is that the driver may attempt to switch it on or off and that could leave the passenger compartment switches facing different directions for the next passenger!

I recently got into the passenger compartment of a Metrocab, along with Linda, on an icy winter's morning and the first thing she reached for was the heater. There, low and behold, was just the one heater switch blowing out a reasonable amount of silent heat that you could just leave running without getting your feet toasted! I doubt that it would warm up the compartment from cold to hot as quick



as the TX2 or TX4, but at least you didn't have to spend the whole trip just working out what to do. LTI now know in advance one of the questions at the next *Call Sign* trip to the Coventry factory...

## Fuel increases

We are still scheduled to have a 2p per litre fuel duty increase in April, adding to the Governments' belief that drivers will always pay up in the end. Drivers might moan, have the occasional lorry demo and even sign the same internet list that has been doing the rounds for several years. But HMG are right – in the end we will pay up because we can't be bothered with too much complaining.

But forgive me if I'm wrong; hasn't diesel been going up every month and doesn't Mr Brown's Government cop more tax every time that happens? Six years ago we were moaning about paying 75p per litre, now it's up to 110p per litre. Mr Brown is right though, he will play the good guy in his budget by telling us how hard it's been, but that we still do well compared to most of Europe and that to help out industry, he will delay the increase for six months – during which time fuel will continue to rise anyway and they'll get their duty increase in a more roundabout way – via fuel tax.

We've heard it all before and yes, we'll always pay up like lambs to the slaughter. American politicians are suffering because their fuel has hit around 90c a litre – about £2 a gallon (shock, horror) and they know that the yanks won't take it like we do. They would get voted out if fuel hit our levels. But we're British and we'll take it on the chin... and will those damn fuel companies stop trying to make their fuel sound cheaper by leaving the .9p on the end! Do they really think we believe that 110.9 is cheaper than 111p. They also believe we're mugs and do you know what? They're probably right...

## Editor's treat...

I rarely venture into non-taxi territory, but I can't let this moment go by without a comment. For many, many years, I spent Saturdays standing in the cold at Tottenham Hotspur or stuck on a train on my way to some God-forsaken part of north-eastern England – Newcastle and Sunderland's open grounds in the winter were real treats for Eskimos! Now

two of my favourite players of all time (and that goes back to 1958) are to be added into the *Spurs Hall of Fame* at a special ceremony next Thursday (Feb 7) as part of Tottenham's 125th anniversary celebrations. Ossie Ardiles and Ricky Villa arrived at Spurs in 1978 to an amazing ticker-tape welcome with Ossie immediately forging a 'dream team' in midfield with Glenn Hoddle and were undoubtedly two of Spurs biggest ever stars. I just wish I could be there on a night when almost every Spurs player past and present will be having a munch of some cheese and Marmite sandwiches! To Osvaldo and Rikardo, my congratulations. If ever you want a tour of DaC House, just pretend you wanted to play for QPR...

## Congratulations LTFUC

Celebrating 80 years existence for any organisation is undoubtedly an achievement worth noting, but for a London Taxi charity, it is far more than that. So congratulations to the London Taxidivers Fund for Underprivileged Children who this year are celebrating their eightieth birthday.

They did so in the manner to which we have become accustomed, with yet another amazing party at the Grosvenor House Hotel. How the Fund's PR Officer Raymond Levy continues to draw such entertainment at hardly any cost still amazes everyone concerned!

This year saw another 600 children plus their parents and carers enjoying the party, so how many children in total have been entertained by the Fund over the years, let alone those who have been helped, is a guess I would not want to pick out of thin air.

So on behalf of all those kids, thank you to the LTFUC and happy birthday...

## Christmas incentive alternative?

You can read about the Christmas incentive in the Chairman's report on the next page and also later in this issue, but the total payout of over half a million quid was astonishing and got me thinking. According to a former member, now second in command with a trade organisation, early last year this Society was going to be sold to a French company. But we still seem to be here and no word has left his mouth about being wrong!

So my idea? Well, with £500,000+ between us, we can go out and buy our own circuit! We could take turns of being Chairman and tell customers who disagree with our prices where to go! We could tell all our clients that we don't believe in any Job Distribution Engine and we intend being the only circuit without one. Then we could threaten any account that dares use cars that they either give up the cars or we would no longer service them and they'd have to go elsewhere. It would be great!

**Alan Fisher**  
callsignmag@aol.com

# Reflections Of The Chairman

## Christmas Incentive

By now you should all have received your payment regarding the Dial-a-Cab Christmas bonus. I must say it was very successful and some members really did extremely well. The thinking behind the philosophy was really quite simple; we wanted to return something to members whilst enhancing the service we gave to our customers during what I knew would be an extremely busy period before Christmas (November 1 to December 21).

As you are aware, we have been extremely successful as a company in recent years, however, as a Mutual Trading and a Drivers Co-operative we cannot return a dividend to our members. Consequently, it was decided to implement an incentive that was very easy to achieve for members who wanted to do that little bit extra.

Our old building, Brunswick House, has now been sold and if you look at the Balance Sheet on page 11 of this year's Annual Report, you will see that it is shown as an *Asset held for Resale* valued at £1.42m. I am delighted to report that I was able to negotiate a deal with the purchaser, whereby they paid £2.75million. As you can no doubt appreciate, if you can replace a tangible asset with £2.75million of cash, then you have had a little windfall of £1.33million.

It was decided that we would endeavour to return some of that cash to members, especially the ones who endeavoured to enhance the service we give to our clients during a very busy period such as the lead-up to Christmas. As I stated earlier, it worked extremely well and from a mercenary point of view, made my life so much easier during that period! Under normal circumstances, I would spend a great deal of time endeavouring to visit all our large clients in an attempt to placate them regarding service levels etc. You and I know the problems that we experience at that time of year regarding supply and demand, however, our clients quite rightly are not interested in our problems, they want a cab to arrive the same as it does for the remainder of the year.

However, this year was so much better as members were accepting trips rather than rejecting them, which in turn put less pressure on our Call Centre because clients were not constantly ringing them up with an enquiry as to where their cab was? This, in turn, freed up our Call Takers to take calls instead of dealing with queries.

The figures this year for December were better than the corresponding period last year despite all the gloom and doom that was reported on the High Street! But regardless of figures, I would like to make it quite clear the amount of Christmas bonus that was paid to members this year was a one-off, purely due to the cost involved. However, as I explained earlier, we experienced that little windfall and that will not happen again in the near future.

Now for the bit you've been waiting for.

The cost of the Christmas Incentive was in



excess of £520k! Yes you read that correctly, over half a million pounds paid to members as a bonus, which will probably make our competitors choke on their corn flakes and turn their drivers a rather pale shade of green. But let me repeat that this was a one-off and any bonus next year will not be so generous – always assuming of course we continue to be as busy as we are at the moment.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Call Sign*, I believe there is more of an in-depth report regarding the incentive, but I am delighted to say that we had two members that received in excess of £2,500 and one over £2,000. We also had in total, sixty seven that received more than a £1,000 and four hundred and eight who received more than £500, while no less than eight hundred and twenty picked up over £250.

The remainder of the fleet varied between £250 and nothing, however, everyone had the same offer and chance to make the 2007 Christmas period an extremely profitable one. I am just delighted we were in a position to

reward our members – long may it continue.

## Tariff Increase

It has been recommended to the TfL Board there should be a tariff increase on the 5 April this year, although at the time of writing it has not been agreed by the Board as they do not meet until 6 February. However, I have no reason to doubt that the increase will not be granted. I am led to believe the 20p Environmental charge is going to be removed, but that the flag fall will be increased to £2.20 – if that makes sense! The reasoning is that the flag fall will remain the same even though the Environment charge is no longer there. It had originally been introduced in April 2005.

Also the *extras* button will be changed so that in future it will go up in 50p units rather than the current 20p, which basically means you will not have to press the *extras* button so many times to achieve the desired amount on the meter.

Overall the increase will amount to 4.7% across all three tariffs, however, I would like to re-iterate the above increase has not yet been endorsed, but hopefully will be on 6 February.

## Dial-a-Cab AGM

Finally, I would like to remind you that our AGM is on Sunday 10 February at 11.00hrs at The Brewery in Chiswell Street. I would also like to remind you that should you choose not to vote by post, then you must attend the AGM otherwise a £50 fine will be imposed. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the day.

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

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## E-DRIVERSTATEMENT: ALMOST 800 DRIVERS USING IT

News from Dial-a-Cab accountant **Warren Smith** is that the Driver On-Line Statement facility (E-driverstatement) is proving very popular with subscribers. To date, almost 800 drivers - close to one third of the total DaC fleet - have signed-on with more than 400 already making full use of the system.

"As our drivers are paid at different times of the month - some weekly, some monthly - I expect the system to be fully utilised by the end of January or beginning of February," Warren told *Call Sign*. "Subscribers also like the fact that they can check their credits at any time of the day or night, whenever it is convenient, instead of having to wait for the postman



to deliver their mail."

He continued by saying: "Another really big advantage is that our Carbon Footprint (Sootprint?) is dramatically reduced without all that paper flying about and together with other measures we are introducing here at Dial-a-Cab House, we are rapid-

ly becoming an ever more environmentally friendly company, as well as a Friendly Society!"

He ended by adding: "You can change or save your password, save all your statement sheets onto your PC or check out other information on the new revamped DaC website, however, I would advise subscribers to ensure they have the latest version of Internet Explorer (version 7) to ensure the best results from the system."

You can read more details of what you can currently do and how to make suggestions for future additions to the system by reading Jon Winterburn's E-statement article elsewhere in this issue.

## Cabvision show the good side of In-Cab TV

With many UK taxi drivers, including some on Dial-a-Cab, having lost thousands of pounds through the aborted Cabtivate in-cab TV system, *Call Sign* was delighted when several DaC drivers with the successful Cabvision system in their passenger compartments told us about some recent advertising they had heard about.

Just to confirm our suspicions, we called Cabvision Director **Nigel West** and asked about the recent ongoing series of **Childline** and **NSPCC** ads. Were they charged the same as normal advertisers or were they a special case - after all, this trade is renowned for its charity?

Nigel confirmed what we had suspected:

"To tell you the truth," said Nigel, "we made a tiny charge, barely enough to cover the actual cost of making the ad. But had your DaC drivers not found out, we certainly wouldn't have mentioned it because with the best will in the world we can't have every charity under the sun coming to us and asking for air-time at the expense of the clients we try to get! After all, we are here to try to make money, but there was no way we would want to earn money out of two such excellent charities as Childline and the NSPCC. We were happy to be able to help them." Well done Cabvision...

*Call Sign* knows the actual production costs and it was a fraction of the usual one. So at the risk of embarrassing Cabvision, we say well done to them for upholding the good name of the trade and would ask trade charities not to embarrass us by going there and asking for air-time.



Keep it quiet but Cabvision are helping the NSPCC

## DAC 2007 AGM

The Dial-a-Cab 2007 Annual General Meeting will take place at the King George III and Queen Charlotte Rooms, The Brewery, Chiswell Street on Sunday 10 February 2008. The meeting will commence at 11am.

If you decide to vote via postal ballot, you can still attend the meeting but cannot vote again. Please remember that in accordance with rule 9(g), a fine



of £50 will be imposed for member's non-attendance at the meeting, unless a postal vote was received by the outside agency at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. Non-attendance includes leaving the meeting before the Chairman declares it closed unless you have already voted via postal ballot.

The date for putting in propositions and rule changes has now passed.

## TAXI MORTGAGES ESPECIALLY FOR LICENSED TAXI DRIVERS

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# Jery's World



Climate change eh? Fink I preferred it when it was global warming...

## TUK-TUKS: Is London About to be Invaded?



**Dominic Ponniah and Tuk-Tuk. Is London about to get them after Brighton kicked them out?**

The fleet of motorised rickshaws that have caused so much aggravation for the licensed taxi drivers of Brighton, East Sussex, have been taken off the road following the local transport authority classifying the vehicles as buses rather than taxis.

The fleet of 12 rickshaws were introduced to the coastal resort in 2006 by TucTuc Ltd MD, Dominic Ponniah. His claim was that the vehicles, which were imported from India, were very popular among locals and tourists alike. But many felt they were unsafe, especially on very windy days when driving along the front. Officially they were supposed to keep to a scheduled route, but many left the route to drop passengers to their doors – and that was where the problem lay. A spokesperson for TucTuc Ltd told **Call Sign** last year that their vehicle was definitely earmarked for a London launch and added that the vehicles were “environmentally friendly and ran on compressed natural gas with super-low emissions and would offer tourists and shoppers a safe, economical and environmentally friendly means of getting around the congested city.”

But Brighton's transport authority has ruled the rickshaws should be licensed as buses, rather than taxicabs and last November the company were fined £8000 for operating the rickshaws as taxis, insisting the fleet should run to a specific timetable and pick up clients at designated stops.

Dominic Ponniah said recently: “The current situation is just not workable. There is obviously a market for them, but the council in Brighton will not licence them in the appropriate way,” – meaning as taxis – “and we will now look into introducing the rickshaws elsewhere in Europe.”

The question now is: Does elsewhere in Europe mean London?

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*Late deals and special price for DaC members.*



Dial-a-Cab driver **Tom Quigley (Y33)** was invited onto *BBC London's Big George Show* in January during the very early hours, to give his views on the West End's traffic problems.

Tom presented his views as someone who is in London frequently rather than as a licensed Taxi driver. He began with Oxford Street and suggested that during shopping hours there should be free bendy buses operating a shuttle service from Centre Point to Marble Arch. This, he said, could be sponsored by the large stores, with buses stopping at the major stores on a hop on /off basis. They could be painted in the colours and logos of sponsoring stores.

Tom went on to say that all buses coming from the east would terminate at Centre Point and from the west at Marble Arch, leaving passengers with immediate access to shopper bendies, Marble Arch and Tottenham Court Road Stations and the taxi ranks outside the Cumberland Hotel and Dominion Theatre. So far as those two ranks were concerned, Tom said that taxis would only be able to pick up at the designated ranks on a queuing basis and not to stop for street hails when passing them. There would be marked zones for taxi U-turning.

He went on to talk about having trained street marshals who would ideally consist of medically retired bus, tube and taxi drivers to assist in transport guidance. Most importantly, the 'no cars allowed' policy would be strictly enforced. He added that if implemented, his suggestion would lead to easy pedestrian access to Oxford Street, which would also mean much lighter traffic.

### Other transport ideas...

Tom turned his attention to coaches and asked why they couldn't set-down in Birdcage Walk, Horseguards Parade, Hyde Park's South / North Carriage Drive, Westminster or Southwark Bridges facing north, with no residents to disturb at any of those places? You could then have taxi sharing to and from the theatres in Shaftesbury Avenue, Covent Garden and Victoria. These would be marshalled with cabs charging £2 a person – the same as a bus with a minimum £8 fare for fewer than four passengers.

Tom claimed that this would free the theatre areas of coaches and reduce congestion. To make things easier, Tom's ideas included buses and tubes displaying maps with information of where taxi ranks and bus or coach terminals were and where the closest stations were situated. He gave examples of Walthamstow, Tottenham Hale, Clapham Common and Morden stations being among many where there are bus and taxi connections, but no information to inform passengers about them. He also went on to question why unlike so many cities, there are no *Park and Ride* schemes in the London Area?

"I know that Oxford Street and Regent St have had non-traffic days," he told Big George, "and they have had some success,

# Tom Gives Big George Answers To London's Traffic!



Tom Quigley (above)  
BBC London's Big George (L)



but on the streets behind the scenes the traffic had been chaotic. My idea could be trialled without permanent road designs and has the flexibility to be operational during the 10 hours or so of shopping times. It could revert to full access for the other 14 hours for deliveries and maintenance etc."

Tom ended by saying that other concerns of his, involved the lack of trial situations and the time taken for redesigning road layouts

before permanent structures are built.

"If you take the situation of changing the route from Tavistock Place through to Torrington Place and converting it to one-lane and a 2-way cycle lane on the north side of the road, it then crosses Tottenham Court Road into Howland Street and the cycle lane changes to the south side of the road. This has caused problems for cyclists where they have to negotiate a busy junction as traffic turns into them. A similar situation occurs on other sections of the route where traffic is on its way to Euston, Kings Cross and St Pancras stations. Students leaving the university campuses by bike at Malet Street have to cross the road to get in the cycle lane. If that cycle lane had trials by putting out plastic road cones and other portable protection on the route, it could have been trialled correctly and I believe the cycle lane would have been put on the south side throughout the route."

Tom continued: "Also, doing all this during St Pancras' area major road closures and renewing water mains along the route has seen road closures with many traffic problems, especially for emergency vehicle access. It needed better planning..."

After his live broadcast, Tom told *Call Sign* that he was pleased with the way things had gone and thanked Big George for helping him through what was a nerve-racking experience.

"Big George has a great overnight show," said Tom in finishing, "and I know many of our night drivers listen in. I'd be interested in any of their views on my suggestions."

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On Thursday 17 January, DaC Chairman Brian Rice was invited to City Hall to meet Mayor Ken Livingstone's senior advisor on Transport, Environment and Energy, Mark Watts. Also at the meeting was the PCO's Taxi and Private Hire Director Ed Thompson, along with several members of the London Taxiboard.

Discussions involved the trade in general and the new pre-booking only TfL signs on the rear of private hire cars. The trade representatives made their displeasure known regarding the probability that LPH will be able to advertise the name of their company on the rear window.

Brian told **Call Sign**:

"We objected because we see it as posing a danger to the travelling public. Although it looks as though our objections

# Brian Rice Meets Mark Watts at City Hall



Mark Watts

to them having signage on the side of the vehicles has been accepted, allowing LPH to advertise their company on the back will leave the way open to those less salubrious types who will then put an ad of some kind on the back saying ABC cars or similar to give them an air of authenticity. They could then use that to lure in some unsuspecting female passenger. Whether our objections will be taken into account or not, it's too early to say, but having won 80% of the battle with side door signage now unlikely, to win 100% of our demands could be asking a lot as LPH have powerful backers and do not give up too easily. I also believe that even the LPH proprietors will be against the idea as it would encourage touting and leave them short of cars at busy times."

## DAC-WEMBLEY ON THE UP - BUT IT'S TOO LATE!

Following a disastrous November without a qualified goalkeeper following DaC driver **Lee Pearce (J71)** leaving them for **Bedfont Green** after receiving a financial offer he said was too good to turn down, **Call Sign**-sponsored team from the *Combined Counties Premier division*, **DaC-Wembley** have begun to pull their socks up with only one reverse in the last five matches. Sadly it's a bit too late for this season.

Runaway leaders **Merstham** have left everyone else standing and the battle is now on for the runner-up position as only the top team is promoted. Lee's new team have also shot up the league into 8th position, but have played more games than all the others.

Following some new signings, **DaC Wembley** hope to sign a new regular goalkeeper in their former reserve, **Mark Croffe**, but their emergency goalie, midfielder **Marc Talbot** has indicated that he quite likes his new position and is reluctant to give it up after playing well over the past five matches.

DaC-Wembley Captain **Ian Bates** told **Call Sign** that the team were beginning to gel again after several changes had to be made with players moving on and others coming in. But he added that the target had now to be next season, although he was hoping that the team could give themselves a psychological boost by taking that second spot in the table.

In the meantime, although Bedfont Green with Lee in goal scored a 6 – 1 win at home to Bookham, the away team's goal was down to Lee dropping the ball. His partner Becky told **Call Sign**: "I'm nervous to let him hold the baby now after seeing him drop the ball like that!"



### Combined Counties Premier Division – Top 7 (20 January 2008)

| Team               | P         | W         | D        | L        | F         | A         | Pts       |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Merstham           | 22        | 20        | 1        | 1        | 75        | 9         | 61        |
| Guildford City     | 25        | 14        | 4        | 2        | 56        | 27        | 46        |
| Camberley Town     | 22        | 14        | 4        | 4        | 52        | 27        | 46        |
| Cove               | 22        | 12        | 6        | 4        | 45        | 32        | 42        |
| Nth Greenford Utd  | 23        | 12        | 5        | 6        | 45        | 33        | 41        |
| <b>DaC Wembley</b> | <b>26</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>39</b> | <b>35</b> | <b>39</b> |
| Chertsey Town      | 23        | 12        | 3        | 8        | 48        | 49        | 39        |

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

## DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

Flashback  
1956

**This month's Flashback goes back 52 years to February 1956 and the Chairman's Report from a strangely named ODRTS handout sheet...**

### **From Odrats News, February 1956... YOUR ODRTS CHAIRMAN**

Your Committee has decided that subscriptions will remain at £1.18s.6d for the present but would still ask you to continue to not put your meter on until your passenger has entered the taxi. This will ensure that we build up a name as a good, trustworthy and reasonably priced organisation. It will help to remove the myth that taxis are the form of transport used by the upper class only. Our aim must be to get everyone to use taxis, which means that our prices must be reasonable, while at the same time our passengers must realise that although there is a difference between ourselves and number 653 London Transport trolleybus, the difference is not huge and well worth paying the extra.

We also have some advertising cards showing the cost of some longer jobs. Please do not charge more than these prices as the passenger may pay on that occasion, but will not phone again. As an example, there is London Airport for £2, Gatwick Airport for £3.7s.6d and the Royal Docks for £1.7s.6d.

If any of your passengers enquire, yes, we still are mem-

bers of the Holidays and Travel Association. We feel that the mentions we get from being members outweigh the cost.

If you know of anyone who is interested in coming on to the ODRTS radio circuit, let a committee member know. Fitting to our organisation is still free.

*My sincere thanks to Wally for Wireless for sponsoring this newssheet. Many of you are now investing in a television set and some of the programmes are becoming very exciting.*

**Bonnie Martyn, Chairman**

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# Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

## Jasmine's story...

I have in the past been guilty of writing about issues not directly involved with marketing and I do so again because I genuinely feel it's relevant - particularly at the start of yet another year in which the same old moans and groans will be heard. Grievances that have been associated with the cab trade since the year dot, many self-inflicted, most that with little effort could be eradicated. But by and large, almost all are totally and utterly insignificant when compared to what's going on in the real world outside of that 2ft by 2ft space on which you park your backside, whilst participating in a job you enjoy, with the freedom to work as and when you please and for the majority, hopefully blessed with that most valued of all assets, good health.

A few months before Christmas, I was approached by the mother of a little girl who lives in Surrey, asking if it was possible to supply a taxi to take them to the **Kids Nickelodeon Awards** at the **Excel Centre**. From this request, I discovered that the daughter (Jasmine) who is just seven years of age, is terminally ill with a brain tumour and unlikely to live until her next birthday. I later learnt from someone who knows this family that there is a drug undergoing trials in Bonn, Germany, to treat this type of tumour and it was there that Jasmine and her parents had been travelling each Friday for the previous six weeks for treatment in the hope it might extend Jasmine's life by a few more years.

At the end of the six weeks treatment, an MRI scan was taken to ascertain whether Jasmine was responding to the drug (which she was) and if so a further six weeks treatment might prove beneficial. Needless to say the treatment plus the travelling is extremely costly and in an attempt to ease that cost, they approached the airlines to ask if they could assist with the fare. Unfortunately their request failed.

On hearing of Jasmine's plight and the fact that she needed to travel to Bonn for treatment on six more occasions, I felt compelled to try and help in some small way even if it was just writing to organisations for help in assisting with the cost of the airfare. Which is what I did and amongst those I contacted was **The London Taxidriers Fund for Underprivileged Children**. I wasn't too hopeful because I felt sure they must be absolutely inundated with similar requests from parents whose children are as in need of their help as Jasmine and the difficult task their committee must have of determining which of those they can help. But help Jasmine they did with the cost of the airfare and I was absolutely thrilled as were Jasmine's parents. We all know the fantastic work the London taxi charities involves themselves with and how little is publicised outside of the cab trade. So I would like to take this opportunity to say a big BIG thank you to **David Lessman (D19)**, Hon Chairman and the committee of **The London Taxidriers Fund for Underprivileged Children** for helping Jasmine and her parents. It really was a great start to their Christmas.

Since my involvement, I have received the occasional news of what progress Jasmine is making and the news that her parents were lobbying the PCT (Primary Care Trust) to meet the



cost for this treatment and for it to be available in the UK. Obviously when you lobby, you need the support of as many people as possible and for that reason I put a list on the notice board in the drivers reception for names and addresses of those who wish to lend their support. The response from Dial-a-Cab was extremely good, for which I thank all of you, both staff and drivers who signed the petition. The total number that Jasmine's parents managed to submit to the PCT was in excess of 13,000. Unfortunately the petition failed.

There are of course thousands of children suffering like Jasmine in this country and around the world, but quite often it's only when you come into contact personally does it have a profound effect and really puts life into perspective. Above all, it makes a mockery of the many mundane things that we moan about daily. And in particular, hence the reason I mention the story, the moans, whinges and pathetic nonsense the

**On hearing of Jasmine's plight and the fact that she needed to travel to Bonn for treatment on six more occasions, I felt compelled to try and help in some small way even if it was just writing to organisations for help in assisting with the cost of the airfare. Which is what I did and amongst those I contacted was The London Taxi Drivers Fund for Underprivileged Children.**

Board and I hear daily from some members. I'm aware that each person's grievance is relative and how they can be blown out of proportion in many instances by having time on which to dwell on them. This can happen within the isolation of driving a cab.

In fact, the following is one typical bit of nonsense that I feel the need to mention because it epitomises the level of what we see in this trade as a grievance, to the point where it was actually reported in the trade press no less, something I read at the same time as I heard of the story of little Jasmine. The grievance concerned a taxi driver who took issue with the proprietor of a popular watering hole because there was no toilet paper. Yes, no toilet paper! Apparently all hell broke loose, a national incident was nearly created because a taxi driver who has the mentality to go to work totally unprepared, finds himself using a loo that was minus toilet paper. Whether that was before he availed himself of the facility or afterwards, I've no idea, although personally I

hope it was afterwards, but either way it beggars belief how some drivers conduct their lives, how ill prepared they go to work and what they consider to be a crisis. The moment I read the story, I thought immediately that it could only happen to a cab driver. A typical cab driver crisis and one that I bet whoever he told probably laughed their socks off, as he should also have done had he really thought about it. Had he put the situation into perspective, it should have made him laugh, not be angry. Maybe in future he will do what I did and many cab drivers do and have a small holdall stocked with toiletries, including deodorant and in the summer a spare clean T-shirt stowed away in the boot. All to be used to freshen up as and when required.

But more importantly, I would ask all of you to use the above story for your new year's resolution. Stop and think before moaning and whinging and taking up issues, which on reflection are absolutely meaningless when compared to those like Jasmine and her family. Perhaps then you will count your blessings, smile and give thanks to what life has given you. You will never be a millionaire driving a cab, but there is absolutely nothing stopping you being as happy as one.

## Charges: Then and now...

Finally, I would like to clarify a comment I've made on occasions to those drivers who give me an ear bashing about how we should increase our charges. I've accused these drivers, who have not a clue about being in a competitive business, that their attitude would put this Society back twenty years. It's so easy to make statements that we should increase run-ins, gratuities, fixed prices and minimum fares etc, but in the real world it's far from easy. Twenty years ago when I came on the Board as Head of Sales, I was continually handicapped by propositions from members being passed at AGM's concerning charges, which took away my ability to negotiate and because of that, we could never compete with our main competitor at that time - ComCab. It was madness and for years we struggled in the market place. In fact one year our biggest client said the account was guaranteed to be lost unless I reduced our gratuity from 12.5% to 10%. I knew it would fall if I asked the members, so I agreed. I had no choice (without it we would have had virtually no night work) and all hell broke loose. I had drivers, including ex-Board members, storming my office threatening to punch my teeth out!

Fortunately over the years we have managed to convince members to allow the BoM to manage and set the best charges possible from our knowledge of the market place and the competition, and slowly but surely we achieved success - in fact enormous success. I would hate, and it's possible because of the make-up of our business, for it to revert back to how it was twenty years ago. And believe me if it did, our Society would most definitely fall to pieces. Hence my comment of putting this Society back twenty years...

**Allen Togwell**  
**DaC Marketing**  
**allent@dialacab.co.uk**



Dial-a-Cab driver **Clive Pammont (M09)** thought he had just a normal twosome in his cab when he picked up **Nikola Kuehne** and **Mr P. LeBian** from **Morgan Stanley**, Docklands, a few days before Christmas. Mr LeBian may have been quite normal, but his lovely travelling partner, Nikola, certainly looked different by the time she got out of Clive's cab!

"I saw this very attractive young lady get in," Clive told *Call Sign* with a smile as the memory of the day returned. "Looking back, I remember a few drivers smiling at me as we passed, but took little notice. Then, when we arrived at their destination – the Bleeding Hart restaurant in Bleeding Hart Yard – this young, attractive lady had turned into Father Christmas!"

Clive continued with the story. "I didn't like to ask, but was obviously staring at her! She told me that it was her department's Christmas party and that she was going to hand out the prezzyes!"

As for Nikola, her only comment to *Call Sign* was that the beard itched but that everyone thought her outfit was great! We'll go

# What a Bleeding (Hart) Christmas!



**Nikola / Father Christmas. Inset pic: Bleeding Hart Yard, EC1**

along with that. It certainly brightens up a dismal February day!



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You can obtain further details or arrange cover at any of the Cabsurance four offices at Seven Kings, Dunbridge Street, KPM's showroom in Bethnal Green or Taxi Media at the Oval. A phone call to **0208 597 2622** with your credit card details is also sufficient if you cannot find the time to visit their offices. Fleet owners and owner-drivers are able to have this cover on any age of taxi, so it is not surprising that Cabsurance are being besieged with enquiries for their new policy.

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## Passenger Receipts: PCO Advice...

The PCO recognises that receipts are an effective method of advertising and has itself promoted causes through this medium. However, when issuing receipts drivers are reminded that the advertisement of some products or services may cause offence to passengers.

When providing drivers with receipt pads, the PCO would encourage promoters to apply the same standards used for approving advertising on taxis and the reverse of printed taxi receipts.

**These standards are detailed in Appendix B of the PCO publication 'Guidelines for Advertising on Licensed London Taxis' and is available at:**

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/businessandpartners/Taxi-advertising-guidelines.pdf>



**Mary Dowdye**  
PCO Head of Standards & Regulations

**Mary Dowdye with Brian Rice**

**Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson** was born 43 years ago in New York City. He is a renowned journalist and former editor of *The Spectator*. Currently the MP for Henley, he was Tory front-bench spokesman as Shadow Minister for Higher Education until announcing his intention to stand in the London Mayoral election.

*Call Sign's* panel asked Mr Johnson the following questions...

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

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

**Boris Johnson:** The one thing that lets our city down is not only a lack of provision for public toilets, but also the grotty state of most of them. I believe that in order to get a clean, pristine city we need to work with local councils to upgrade them and provide more of them where they are needed. This is particularly important for people like cab drivers who spend long hours out on the road.

**From Laurence Kelvin (W88)**

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

**Boris Johnson:** I believe London gets a relatively poor deal from government, considering we are a major world capital with totally exceptional funding needs for transport, hospitals, schools and the police. I think it is a disgrace that, for example, the government refuses to provide funding to the London fire brigade for terrorism related costs. The Mayor should be lobbying for a better deal for London.

**From Bernie Silver (G08)**

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

**Boris Johnson:** I would not scrap the congestion charge; we need to move on and work out how to make it fairer and easier to pay. I think it was a brave move that had some success at the start, however things are starting to return to how they were. Congestion was up 15% in central London last year and the western extension has allowed more vehicles into central London for free, further contributing to congestion and pollution. TfL have deliberately installed more traffic light schemes, which they themselves admit are reducing road

*Previous issues have seen interviews with English Democrat candidate for Mayor of London Garry Bushell and Lib-Dem candidate Brian Paddick. This month it's Conservative Boris Johnson...*

# The Mayoral Election

**Boris Johnson (Conservative)**



space and slowing down traffic. We have to focus on getting London moving.

**From David Marks (R22)**

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

**Boris Johnson:** No. I believe London's cab trade has taken a bit of a bruising under Ken Livingstone and my approach will be to re-energise it. I think private hire vehicles have their place, but black cabs must retain their right to solely ply for hire.

**From John Dixon (B67)**

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

**Boris Johnson:** I believe the Olympic and Paralympic Games could be a great success - if we make sure that London gets real legacy. That means better transport, more affordable housing and jobs. I wasn't aware that there were plans to exclude black cabs from the Olympic Village and I certainly support their right to have access.

**From Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)**

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

**Boris Johnson:** Oxford Street is a good example of this. 40% of all London bus routes go down there and the place has turned into a giant bus park. It's certainly quicker to walk. What we have to do is get the balance right. We have to meet Londoners' expectation of a frequent, reliable bus service, but we also have to recognise that we need to keep the traffic moving. It's a tough job, but we need a fresh approach.

**From John Riley (K38)**

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

**Boris Johnson:** They should certainly be subject to the same rules as everyone else. It's important to make sure they are safe and the fares are honest. I don't have a serious problem with them, as long as they are confined to a small area.

**From Stewart Lewis (D20)**

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

**Boris Johnson:** I totally agree, and I would not allow private hire cars to use bus lanes.

**From Brian Flanagan (T79)**

What is your view on Ken's version of a 'green' London?

**Boris Johnson:** He just doesn't match his words with credible actions. He lectures us all on being green, but I was in the back of a cab the other night going over Tower Bridge and City Hall was lit up like a Christmas tree! His approach is about punishing people for not being green, my approach would be to encourage people to be green.

**From Joe Brazil (K16)**

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

**Boris Johnson:** His worst decision was running for a second term in 2004, and his best was promising that this would be his last job

*continued on page 13*



Two thirds of Britain's greatest-ever band got back together to take NW5 by storm! As I strolled down Highgate Road with my son, surrounded by Parkas and Vespas, a feeling of nervousness and trepidation gripped me. Rick Buckler and Bruce Foxton, from The Jam, had reformed - albeit without lead singer Paul Weller. They were now calling themselves *From The Jam*.

It was almost 25 years to the day that I last saw them live. Would they be as good as they were? Would they miss former lead singer Paul Weller? Would I go home disappointed? Well I needn't have worried... they were brilliant!

From the opening song to the end of the gig, singer / guitarist Russell Hastings took lead vocals and with his passion and grit made most in the packed crowd, including me, forget about Weller - for 90 minutes at least! With Bruce Foxton and bass guitar leaping round the stage like a teenager (he's 52), Rick Buckler's superb deadpan drumming and fan-

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



# MICKEY'S MUSIC

**Caught live by Mickey's Music**

***From The Jam.... The Forum, Kentish Town, 20 December 2007***



tastic contributions on guitar and keyboards from Dave Moore, we were transported back to the late seventies/early eighties.

From *Eton Rifles* to *Going Underground* and *Down in the Tube Station at Midnight*, the crowd were with them all the way. The pure energy in The Forum that night was amazing!

They played all the great songs that The Jam was renowned for, with a few more obscure one's thrown in - including my own personal favourite Jam ballad, *Ghosts*.

The big question for me was did they miss

Weller and my own answer even surprised me. As a big Paul Weller fan, I don't think even he could have carried it off with the passion needed to sing these songs now. Weller has moved on as a solo artist and thank God these boys are stuck in a timewarp of Mods, Parkas and Leslie Ash! Long may it continue!

You can check the group out on [www.fromthejam.net](http://www.fromthejam.net).

**From the Jam photo line-up (l-r); Dave Moore, Russell Hastings, Bruce Foxton and Rick Buckler**



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## MAYORAL ELECTION – Boris Johnson *(continued from page 12)*

in politics. London needs to move on from his tired approach.

### **From Martin Freeborn (C67)**

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

**Boris Johnson:** I believe local councils must be free to respond to what their local residents want. If residents in other Boroughs wanted the same thing, then it's their council's duty to listen and take action. I do think we should look at ways to make sure that the design of road humps causes as little damage to vehicles as possible.

### **From Bill Kibble (K86)**

There are road works and congestion all over

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

**Boris Johnson:** We have to sort out what happens with roadworks. How many times have we all driven past a giant hole in the road left unattended? They do roadworks at night in other major cities and I will certainly look at it, yes.

**Alan Green (E52):** You have a reputation as a cyclist. Do you bother stopping at red traffic lights and if so, what would you do about those who don't?

**Boris Johnson:** I love cycling, and I'll hold my hand up and say I've probably jumped the odd red light when I was in a hurry - although not anymore! I want to make cycling safer and the first step is to make sure cyclists stop at red lights - it's for their own safety.

**Alex Constantinou (N05):** London taxis are the safest vehicles on the road, thanks to the comprehensive overhaul they go through once a year in addition to spot checks carried out by the PCO. Now TfL have brought in a mid-term check, which is fast developing into another overhaul. Would you keep this 6-month check that no one seems to want?

**Boris Johnson:** I will scrap the midyear inspections. They add to the cost of the licence and are an unnecessary burden on cab drivers.

**Call Sign:** Thank you

Dial-a-Cab driver **Nick Nicola (O99)** doesn't always see too much of wife **Joanne**, even though they are just a normal married couple living under the same Essex roof. That's because for 8 hours each day, Joanne locks herself and her laptop in a room and continues writing the follow-up to her book, **Holly Blue**, which is to be published later this month.

Nick joined DaC last year and had been driving a taxi for four years previous to that. Joanne on the other hand was a nail technician, but decided to take a year off because she had long wanted to put the novel that had been floating around her head for such a long time, onto paper.

**"I used to write poetry,"** Joanne told *Call Sign*, **"but I just knew that this story was inside me waiting to come out. One day, around two years ago, I just sat down at my laptop and the words just flooded out of me! It was incredible! I still had some doubts because I had no formal training and prior to being a nail technician, I was a fashion designer. The only writing involved invoices! But I always felt that this book was inside me."**

Even then, it still took her the whole year – 7 days a week and 8 hours each day – to complete **Holly Blue** before hawking it around to find a publisher prepared to take a chance on a new author. **Yianoulla Nicola** – Joanne uses her Greek name for writing – wasn't a name that had ever sold a book before and publishers weren't queuing up for the book rights!

Some time later, a friend of Joanne's was at a seminar and mentioned **Holly Blue**. It turned out that the person she spoke to was with a publishing company and after Joanne phoned them, they agreed to take a look at the manuscript. Time passed, but then last February Joanne got the call she had been dreaming of, asking her to go to the publisher's office to discuss her book and to sign a contract!

**"I was thrilled,"** said Joanne, **"I had lived *Holly Blue* for so long and now it was no longer just in my head but with a publisher who wanted to print it! Even better, they wanted the first option on a sequel!"**

## The Wife's Writing a Book - I'm off Down the Gym!



Holly Blue



Yianoulla Nicola

The sequel has turned into a trilogy and having completed the second book in around 11 months, Joanne is now into the third. So what is **Holly Blue** about?

**"Well, it's a romantic novel,"** said Joanne **"and recently a total stranger to me read the book and described it in a single sentence: It tells of the love we have, the love we never forget and the love we cherish. I thought that summed it up perfectly."**

The novel is set in the 1970s and involves a Greek girl, Sofia, who lives in England and is trying to mix her traditional Greek morals with her English life. The book follows her journey as she tries to sort out in which direction her life and love is going.

So what did Nick say when Joanne said that she wanted to write a novel? There was laughter in her voice as she remem-

bered the early days of **Holly Blue**...

**"Come on,"** he'd call, **"let's go out. *Holly* is only a hobby! Some hobby, I thought!"**

So does she have any real hobbies?

**"My hobby is now my work,"** she said, **"I just love it so much and I don't really have time for other hobbies – although I do enjoy cooking and reading when I have the time."**

And Nick?

**"Well he quite likes reading autobiographies and going to the gym. I think that's it!"**

Good luck to Joanne and of course, to **Holly Blue**...

**Holly Blue by Yianoulla Nicola**  
**HandE Publishers Ltd £6.99**  
**Published 15 February**

## LTI JOINS THE FUN!

LTI Vehicles have long been one of the trade's prime supporters of charities and showed that side of themselves once again at the 80th birthday party thrown at London's Grosvenor House Hotel by the London Taxi Drivers' Fund for Underprivileged Children and where the taxi manufacturers donated £1,500 to the Fund.

Presenting the cheque to LTFUC Hon Chairman **David Lessman (D19)**, LTI Vehicles' Government Affairs Manager, **Richard Daniels**, told *Call Sign*:

**"We are delighted to help this worthwhile charity as it kicks off its 80th anniversary. This party means so much to the children and their families and we would like to congratulate those who helped organise such a superb event."**

David Lessman added: **"A big thank you to LTI Vehicles for this generous donation. Without their support we would be unable to give such pleasure and excitement to hundreds of disadvantaged children and their helpers."**



**Richard Daniels presents David Lessman with a cheque for £1500 in front of some rather strange looking witnesses!**



Many readers will recall the spooky goings-on at the Halloween Party held in October at the **Royal Oak** eatery in aid of the Underprivileged Children's Fund. **Call Sign** reported then that the Oak's Guv'nor, John Anderson, ably assisted by his bevy of beautiful girls, were planning something rather special for the Christmas season and his intention was that the **London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children** would benefit from the event.

And so just prior to the Christmas hols, **Call Sign** was invited to join the many Dial-a-Cab drivers who eat there regularly to witness a magnificent banquet – although they just called it a supper - and Disco / Karaoke evening held at the popular cab restaurant, with the proceeds of a Raffle going solely to the Underprivileged Children's Fund.

The evening started with a slap-up meal for the many patrons who had reserved their places several weeks before, while DJ Simon kept the music going to accompany the diners. The 'waitresses' - dressed in saucy seasonal costumes - bopped their way around the dance floor in between serving the pre-ordered meals.

Later during the evening, as part of the Karaoke session, Knowledge School supremo **Tony Norris** took to the stage to give a stunning rendition of Frank Sinatra's *My Way* and with calls for an encore, returned to the microphone to wow the crowd with another Sinatra hit, *That's Life*.

The ice having been broken, diners plucked up courage to try their own Karaoke skills while disco-man Simon fulfilled requests from his extensive collection.

During the course of the evening, Johns' girls coaxed drivers to part with their money, buying strips of raffle tickets to support the LTFUC appeal. The donations raised £330 and as John told **Call Sign** later: "Everyone enjoyed themselves and we had great driver support, but I didn't think £330 sounded quite enough, so I added £200 to it to make it sound

# Call Sign at the Royal Oak Xmas Party With Funds to the LTFUC...



Call Sign's Mickey Lappin (right) together with Santa's little helper Sophia and interested bystander!  
Inset pic: Tony Norris does his Francis Albert Sinatra



even better!"

A great evening for all with once again the Royal Oak showing that it is prepared to put in as well as take out...

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## SOUTH LONDON TAXIS 10% DISCOUNT FOR DAC DRIVERS!

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

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

### Call Sign

#### February 2008

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Web Site: www.taxicab.co.uk/dialacabmag

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

Design: Aldan Publications,

Tel: 07958 300 428

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Ladies and gentlemen partners - if that applies which I doubt - may I by example encourage you to forget Valentine Day meals or nights out this year? It is just about the only night of the new year when drivers can get lots of work, so let them go. A joint bank account in the black and a meal out on 13 or 15 February is as much romance as we should expect. Surveys say women buy 90% of valentines and, as we all know, a man who buys flowers with any other emotion besides guilt, is as rare as hen's teeth. And daft, if he buys flowers during Valentines' week, when prices go up.

Where's the romance in all that, you may ask? In my (long) experience, romance is like having doors opened for you - lovely, but what a price to pay! Wages still 20% less than men's and over half of us on the poverty line after a divorce, if there are children. The sage who said hanky-panky on the chaise longue is exciting but I'll trade it any time for the deep peace of the double bed, was right! Reliability beats romance and equality is worth more than hearts 'n' flowers.

My DaCman Glen is pretty romantic in his own way. We do the Valentine thing on 16 August. We skip the pink balloons and just go for first-rate food. I get wrapped-up gifts all the time; once a huge suitcase, once a washing-up sponge I needed, sometimes posh face cream or a duck feather duvet. Ok, you may think, thoughtful little gifts are fine, but remember Dorothy Parker's poem, *One Perfect Rose*? She waxes lyrical about its loveliness for a few lines, then finishes:

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

# Back Seat Driver



*"Why is it no one's got me yet one perfect limousine, do you suppose? Oh, no. it's just my luck to get one perfect rose."*

I made that point one year, dropping hints about diamonds for weeks before my birthday. No one had ever given me any, even an earring, never mind a big solitaire. Glen seemed to pick up the hint and there it was on birthday morning, a small parcel in diamond wrapping! I acted pretty cool about it, which was just as well, as inside were four playing cards - the ace, ten, three and jack of diamonds. Readers, after that I bought myself a diamond ring with my own money and I like it fine.

Glen was romantic when we first met,

of course. He asked if I'd go to a sculpture exhibition with him and reeled off names of the famous sculptors exhibiting. I said yes, why not and noted the date. A couple of days before, he said to pack a bag and my passport as it was an outdoor exhibition - on the Champs Elysee in Paris! We met at the Eurostar terminal and the whole weekend was a golden haze; a boat trip down the Seine and a trip to the top of the tallest building in la Defense, which you could see from the outdoor sculptures. We drank hot chocolate in sparkly art deco cafes and walked around Marais, the Jewish quarter near our charming hotel. He held my hand and bought fancy pastries for me.

It was this time of year, which means our anniversary-of-meeting is coming up. Unlike the Dial-a-Cab lover whose American girlfriend's serialised story is keeping us all on tenterhooks and which is clearly going to end in tears, my man stuck around! But will he remember that anniversary - I'll put it out on his taxi computer terminal, send a text, an email and a voicemail. A gal can always dream!

**Till then...**

*Love Poppy x x x*

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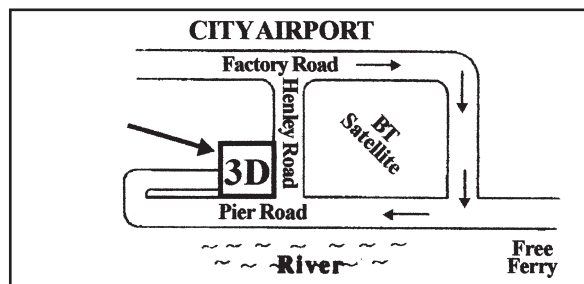
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Dial-a-Cab's *Network Administrator*, **Jon Winterburn**, is the person who designed the new DaC website and has given driver's a portal entrance which will enable them to keep a record of their credits safely online. But there is also more. Jon explained to *Call Sign*:

"As you are no doubt now aware, you can access your *e-statements* online at Dial-a-Cab's website([www.dialacab.co.uk/MembersPortal.aspx](http://www.dialacab.co.uk/MembersPortal.aspx)), allowing you to save them to your computer and in the process, avoid the need to print it out and so saving another little piece of the environment. However, this is just the beginning of what is available to you on the DaC Members Portal...

In addition to the *e-statements* section, there is also a walkthrough (just click on the link next to *e-statements* titled *Need Help?*), which will show you how to save the *e-statements* to your computer should you need support.

We have also added a *Technical Problems FAQ* which we will update regularly with any frequently asked questions we receive about terminals, signals or anything else technical that may be of help to you. So if you have any technical queries, please check the FAQ first and if your question isn't answered there, email us at [techproblems@dialacab.co.uk](mailto:techproblems@dialacab.co.uk).

We'd like to add more features to the DaC Members Portal during the coming months - one of these features will be an **online manual** and real-time **video guide** for the driver terminal - this will serve as a refresher for drivers new to our circuit who may need a quick recap on some of the functions of the terminal.

What I'd like to hear from you is what else you'd like to see on the Members Portal? This

## E-Statements: Members Portal Designer talks to Call Sign



What you will see when you log on to the Members Portal

is **your** portal and only you know what would be of benefit to you on it, so please feel free to email me any suggestions you have at [webmaster@dialacab.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@dialacab.co.uk) or send them

straight to the Editor who will forward them on to me."

**Jon Winterburn**  
DaC Network Administrator



### WHERE TO STOP FOR A REST



*Call Sign* gets so many Dial-a-Cab drivers having a moan about where they can stop if they don't want to go into a shelter to eat and are therefore banned from the rank outside the premises. The obvious problem is that of CCTV and PCNs and the fact that they can only recoup the cost of the ticket from DaC if on a trip via the system. So we asked the PCO for some advice and got it from **Robin Gillis**, their Integration & Interchange Manager. He told *Call Sign*:

"The City of London have a few waiting places where drivers can stop for a rest or refreshment. The locations are Queen Victoria Street, St Martins le Grand/Angel Street area and in Gresham Street. The only area set aside for taxis in Transport for London roads is in Farringdon Road by Mount Pleasant, close to Muratoris café.

"In Westminster there are a number of taxi meter bays in Palace Street, Regency Street, Ebury Bridge Road, Paddington Street, Bolsover Street and there will be further bays established. However a fee is paid for use of these. There is provision within one of the clauses for the Transport for London Bill still in Parliamentary reading for provision to make a rest area from a section of a taxi rank, so there may be opportunities in the future to improve the provision for waiting."

### M&O HAVE FOUR CABS WITH DAC TERMINALS

Mann & Overton have four courtesy taxis fitted with Dial-a-Cab terminals and DaC drivers attending the Brewery Road dealership for servicing or overhauls have the chance of a free DaC-fitted TXII while their own vehicle is being worked on. Speaking to *Call Sign*, M&O General Service Manager Mike Saunders said:

"With the co-operation of the DaC Board who have made the radio equipment available, we are delighted to provide this facility for our Dial-a-Cab customers. It allows drivers to continue servicing account clients while their own cab is here. I would remind everyone though, that these courtesy cabs are subject to availability and not guaranteed." You can contact the M&O Service Dept. on 020 7700 0888..

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M&O archivist Sue Hughes with Mo as they look up the record of VNF 150

For most Dial-a-Cab drivers, their taxi is a working vehicle they drive most days and replace every few years. Rarely do owners become so attached or emotionally involved with their vehicle that they heap huge quantities of tender loving care onto it or have the desire to restore it to its former glory - especially fifty years on! But regular readers will recall Mohamed Abed-Alaziz (N09) and his tussle with the AA, when their patrolman damaged Mo's cab and he took them to court. In a robustly presented case, he won the day and with equal dedication and unending enthusiasm, Mo told *Call Sign* of his love affair with *Victoria*, Manchester's oldest and only surviving FX3 taxi from 50 years ago...

"My story starts back in 1997 when I first set eyes on an Austin FX3 taxi. I was so impressed that I wanted immediately to own one. All through the Knowledge, I dreamed of having my badge and owning one of these rare and historic vehicles.

It was 2001 when I first saw this lovely looking cab on eBay. The vehicle was described as *starts and runs*. I couldn't sleep for thinking about it, asking myself if it was the right time to buy one. Although my wife wasn't keen on the idea, I went ahead and bought the taxi - Victoria - and brought it home from Dorking.

I joined the **London Vintage Taxi Association (LVTA)** and soon discovered that I had a lot of work ahead of me. The Chairman at the time was DaC's **Keith White (A16)**. Everything on my FX3 was rusty except for the chassis. I visited a fellow member of the club and discovered that many parts were missing from Victoria. Then began the hunt to find the much sought after parts needed to restore her.

I remember one occasion finishing taxi work on a Sunday at 2am and deciding to head for Cornwall to pick up some parts - not exactly round the corner! Parts were hunted for with vigour in auto jumbles, shows, eBay, magazines - and enthusiast Anthony Blackman! Never discouraged, I was determined to bring Victoria back to life. After all, she'd clocked hundreds of thousands of miles.

When I bought her, the seller told me I'd

# DaC's Mohamed in FX3 Victory!

*Manchester's oldest cab returns thanks to Mo..*



Proudly back to her original best - Victoria, Manchester's FX3

have no problem getting registration documents from the DVLA. I soon found out it was far more complicated than that. It became a lengthy battle with the DVLA to retain Victoria's identity by means of the original registration number (VNF 150). It was important to me, a part of her history. After all, Victoria was the only surviving vehicle off the Manchester rank where she began her career.

**The body of the vehicle was supplied direct from the Austin Motor Company - Carbodies Ltd for the provincial market - to Manchester (she ended her career in Glasgow). The DVLA would not accept supporting evidence - an article from the Manchester Gazette, letters from the LVTA, Lord Montague of Beaulieu, my local MP, M&O, the Austin Motor Company, the founder of the LVTA and the Manchester Owner Drivers Association.**

After all this support, numerous letters and communications to retain Victoria's identity, even accepting an age related number in the interim - after 50 years they wanted to change her identity - the battle continued. I sometimes felt like giving up, but with full support and dedication from one of the LVTA founders, Derek Pearce, victory was eventually ours and the DVLA decided to grant us Victoria's original registration! Since 1978, **Derek Pearce** has played an important role in the London taxi's preservation and his assistance was invaluable.

At the same time, my work on Victoria became complete. Taxis such as these are not like any car, they have worked for a living. They feed families and play a very important role in people's lives. Every nut, every bolt, every part and every bit of work done on her

was like a vocation. She also took hours and hours of welding and the 'lady' is now absolutely rust free.

The result is a beautiful cab with a history to be proud of. The cab had cost £975 from new and is special because it was supplied direct to Manchester. Most cabs begin their working life in London and end their lives in the provinces. This is the only surviving one with a Manchester plate and that's why it was so important to preserve her identity.

If Victoria could talk, I am sure she would have so many stories to tell. One, for example involves an old penny that had dropped between the toolbox and luggage compartment. It remained there for many years. Who dropped it? Maybe it was your grandfather!

I am now the proud owner of 3 historic taxis and they have become a huge part of my life, but part of the reason I decided to write this story is to thank the people who contributed to bringing Victoria back to her former glory, as without that help she could not be as she was before. It took time patience and persistence. So I sincerely thank the following:

One of the LVTA's founders, **Derek Pearce; Anthony Blackman** who provided me with guidance, parts and his knowledge for detail; **Bob McPhail** for his help with parts and advice; **Danny Stephens** for his marvellous electrical and mechanical work; current LVTA Chairman **Doug Cheshire; Sue Hughes** from M&O's archives dept; **Lord Montague of Beaulieu; George Simms** of the Manchester Taxi Owners and Drivers Association and **Mal Smith** for parts and guidance..."

**And from Call Sign, well done Mo. The AA had no chance against you...!**





**Carol Carpenter - Account Manager for the Westminster TaxiCard**

This issue of *Call Sign's* Mailshot pages contains a letter from Dial-a-Cab driver **Ian Connelly (T21)** in which he writes of job satisfaction and asks how some drivers can be so cold towards some Westminster TaxiCard holders? He gives an example of picking up a Westminster cardholder and hearing his experience of a DaC driver who he claimed had been in a bad mood and who told him (the passenger) that he was not going to wait for him - even though he was scheduled to - and then left him stranded in the rain at Victoria.

**Carol Carpenter** is the Account Manager for the **Westminster TaxiCard** and *Call Sign* asked her for an update on the account. We didn't want a specific reply to Ian's letter because there could be another side that we don't know about. Carol told us:

"In general, most of the calls I get regard-

# Westminster Account: Have a Heart!

ing the account are to say thank you - perhaps for a specific driver going out of his way to help, maybe just because he or she was just so nice that they helped make the passenger's day more enjoyable or to thank a particular calltaker for being so helpful.

"The fact that Ian's passenger refused to condemn the driver who apparently left him speaks volumes for the general satisfaction that particular passenger must feel. Of course we get complaints, but far fewer than some seem to think. The biggest complaint we get is that due to delays, they may have missed an urgent medical appointment. I have asked some who phone me to explain to the calltaker that they have an appointment and that can go onto the trip offer.

"Other than that, the only other complaint I get is very occasionally when a passenger with a disability feels that perhaps the driver could have helped them more than they did. But in all honesty, the majority of Westminster TaxiCard holders are happy with the service they receive and with the drivers they meet.

"But there is one comment I'd like to add to Ian's letter. He obviously cares a great deal and puts himself out to help whenever he can. I also have no doubt that there are many

others on Dial-a-Cab who also do their best. But there may be times when you are faced with a choice of a Westminster cardholder or a street job. I'm not asking you to sacrifice your day's money by covering work that you would lose money on because you had to run so far for it, I'd just like to ask you to cover these TaxiCard trips when you are within a reasonable distance. Many of these passengers rely on us. Yes, some use the card to help with their social life, but doesn't everyone deserve some enjoyment in life? But the majority just need to get from A to B and have no other choice other than DaC. So the next time you are offered a Westminster trip and you aren't too far away, can I just offer one sentence:

**Please have a heart and remember that we are talking about real people and not just a card number.**

"But my bottom line is also one that many Westminster cardholders often ask me to pass on to you - thank you very much..."

**Carol Carpenter**  
**Westminster TaxiCard**  
**Account Manager**

## SMILE



### Talking frog?

An elderly man was walking in the forest when he heard at his feet a very weak voice. He bent down to look and saw that the voice came from a little frog:

"I'm a beautiful, erotic and sensual princess," said the frog, "very skilled in all the carnal pleasures of love. An evil queen, obviously very envious of my charms, turned me into a frog, but if you kiss me I will once again become a fair maiden and I will provide you with all the joys and delights of my voluptuous temperament, not to mention my ardent lust."

The elderly man picked up the little frog and put it into his pocket. Bewildered, the frog looked out and asked:

"What, aren't you going to kiss me?"

"Nope," replied the old man, "at my age it's more fun to have a talking frog than a sex maniac!"

### The affair...

A man returned home a day early from a business trip and called Dial-a-Cab from the airport just after midnight for a cab home on his account. En route, he asked the driver if he would mind being a witness as he suspected his wife was having an affair and at this time of night, he could catch her in the act? The driver agreed.

At the house, they tiptoed into the bedroom, turned on the lights, pulled the blanket back and found the wife in bed with another man. The husband pulled out a gun and put it to the man's head. Then his wife shouted out:

"Don't do it! This man has been very generous. Who do you think paid for the sports car I said I bought for you? Who do you think paid for our new boat? Who do you think paid for our swimming pool? He did..."

The husband looked at the taxi driver and asked him what he should do?

The cabbie thought briefly and replied: "I'd cover him up before he catches a cold..."

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# To celebrate their THE LTFUC THROW TH

**Call Sign** felt honoured to be at the LTFUC 80th birthday celebrations at the **Grosvenor House Hotel** on Sunday 20 January and couldn't help but wonder... whatever would **Mick Cohen** have made of it...?

**Mick Cohen** grew up in the Norwood orphanage and later on in life became a cab driver. One of his ambitions was always to go back to Norwood to take some of the kids out on an outing in his cab. It was 1928, the year that UK women had their voting age reduced from 30 to 21, Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, Herbert Hoover was elected US President and a taxi charity to become known as the **London Taxidriers Fund for Underprivileged Children** was to become a reality at, of all places, the Leicester Square taxi shelter!

Mick had casually mentioned his idea of taking some orphans on a trip around London ending at London Zoo and hoped that 2 or 3 other drivers would take their cabs as well. Twelve other drivers turned up, allowing them to take almost fifty kids and teachers on the outing.

So successful was the outing that the drivers decided to offer help to any children that might need it and the Fund was eventually registered as a charity. Then in 1931, the first outing to Southend and as they say, the rest is history – one littered with Dial-a-Cab drivers as well from Jack Taylor to Sam Harris to those among the current committee. But it really is a celebration for the trade as a whole.

And we think that **Mick Cohen** would have been with not just fifty, but around 600 children, parents and lives with enough food to sink a battleship, entertainment, of course, Dave Davis' disco.

Among the acts on show were the truly spectacular dancing champions Diversity, *Britain's Got Talent* monkey Bubbles, extracts from every kids favourite Time School of Arts and an amazing laser show. At the party The Cheeky Girls - Monica and Gemma hit records. Then there was the amazing robot, 'The Bionic Boy' around the hall! Also there, one of the most amazing *Talent*, Donovan Jones and Rebecca Peache won a slow motion power dance involving some incredible poetry in motion. It says much for the Fund that at the celebration.

The Bournemouth Carnival Band were once again Performers, the Stardance Club and the brilliant M



The Band of the Scots Guards thrilled everyone



The amazing Crazeehorse – poetry in motion



The Cheeky Girls with the cheeky boy!



*...r 80th birthday...*

# THEIR BEST PARTY EVER!

en so proud on this, the Fund's 80th birthday party  
ts, carers and teachers all having the time of their  
entertainment fit for a television spectacular and of

acular Band of the Scots Guards, the UK street  
alent semi-finalist Damon Scott and his talking  
rite movie, High School Musical from the Song  
y to music. Then, for their sixth successive year  
abriela - sang live with a set featuring all their  
Titan, who thrilled the children by chasing them  
amazing acts anywhere; also from *Britain's Got*  
who together are known as Crazeehorse. Their  
credible aerial balancing was nothing less than  
at they returned from a gig in India to appear

again there along with the Margaret Howard  
McGuire O'Shea Irish Dancers. It was just non-stop

fun from 2pm until after 6.

Also at the Grosvenor House was BBC London phone-in presenter Vanessa Feltz and her DJ fiancé Ben, who sang Happy Birthday to the Fund. Never was the tribute more deserved.

After the party, LTFUC's former Treasurer **Gerry Dunn MBE (S84)**, told *Call Sign*:

**"It's hard work, but when you look at the kid's faces you can see why we love doing it."**

Fund Chairman, **David Lessman (D19)**, agreed and told us with a sense of pride:

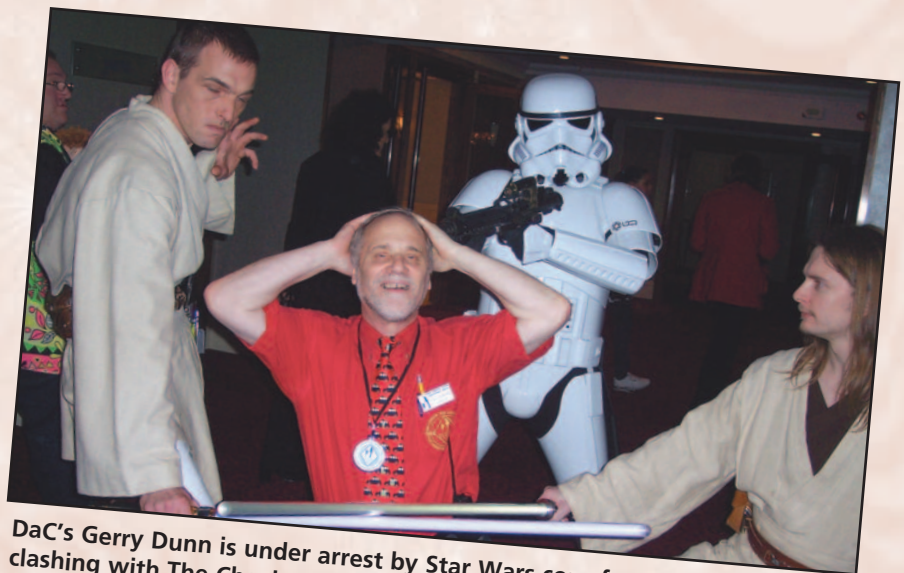
**"There is nothing that can beat the look of enjoyment a child has when they come to our party. I must also thank Raymond Levy for the quality of the acts he managed to get to appear on stage for us. It is truly remarkable."**

Raymond Levy, the Fund's press contact, was his usual coy self refusing to accept the praise aimed in his direction and told *Call Sign* that it was the committee as a whole who made the day successful. Accepting finally that it was he who got the acts, he said that he also had to thank his wife **Maureen** for all the support and help she gives him.

**All in all, it was a day to remember and besides thanking all the acts, the management of the Grosvenor House Hotel deserve huge amounts of praise for their kindness in providing the ballroom. And of course, a very happy birthday from all at Dial-a-Cab and one final word – wherever you are, well done Mick Cohen...**



Damon Scott and Bubbles, who did so well on Britain's Got Talent



DaC's Gerry Dunn is under arrest by Star Wars cops for wearing red and clashing with The Cheeky Girl's knickers!



Having a great time at the Grosvenor House Great Room

# Are we subsidising the Westminster Taxicard account?

**Call Sign** has published pages of letters and articles from drivers and Board members alike concerning the number of **Penalty Charge Notices** received by Dial-a-Cab taxi drivers during the course of their working hours. There is also a petition available for signing in the Driver's Reception of DaC House, which has been organised by two drivers, **Martin Hizer (M47)** and **Tony Mitchell (T88)**.

Regardless of all that, we still have the situation where DaC drivers are being given PCNs either via a Warden, courtesy of CCTV or while the driver is assisting a disabled passenger who has called for a taxi via the **Westminster TaxiCard** and perhaps specifically asked for assistance, which then involves leaving the cab briefly.

This issue contains an article by DaC's Westminster Account Manager **Carol Carpenter**, who is always full of praise for the way DaC drivers carry trips out on this account; the question seems to be whether Westminster themselves care quite as much?

Dial-a-Cab are already paying out huge amounts each month on behalf of drivers who receive a PCN in the course of covering an account trip. Many of those occur while the driver is assisting a disabled passenger. Others on DaC are getting them when not on an account ride, but just stopping somewhere to pick up a sandwich or as **Call Sign** Editor, **Alan Fisher**, found out to his cost recently, when parked briefly outside a public convenience. The driver has no chance of getting the money back for these.

**"It was around 21.10 on a fairly quiet evening when I stopped for around 3 minutes outside the convenience at the north end of Queensway. There was no question of delaying any traffic because there is a lay-by outside the toilet and although there are double yellow lines, why have a lay-by that you can't use? But far worse than that, I was given the PCN via CCTV. That means Westminster Council is deliberately watching the toilet at that time of night just to catch people stopping – and who are the biggest users in vehicles? Taxi drivers! Perhaps those who end up suffering from kidney stones due to holding themselves in should consider whether ongoing actions from Westminster Council are possibly to blame? But at £60 a time, drivers will be tempted to hold it in."**

Alan continued: **"The idea of subsidising the disabled and allowing them to get out when, quite feasibly, without taxis their lives would revolve around the television is an excellent one that was started in the late 1970's by Ken Livingstone as leader of the GLC. Perhaps he should now ask Westminster Council whether their aim is to get the subsidy money back off the very drivers that cover the work? Perhaps this is some sort of ruse to get us to dump the account, so that WM can say it wasn't them? I have long had a feel-**



**Michael Dwemoh cared about the disabled - do his successors care as much?**

**ing that since the death of Michael Dwemoh, who was the Transport Contracts Manager at Westminster, the council would rather use the money for other things."**

Alan has appealed against the decision and ended by saying: **"Every single driver who receives a PCN that they consider has been given unfairly, should not only appeal against the decision, but also send a copy of the letter to the Mayor at City Hall. Perhaps after several thousand land on his desk, someone there will take notice. I've sent one..."**

Dial-a-Cab won the Westminster TaxiCard in June 1992 and have held it ever since. Last year, as the 15th anniversary of being awarded the account, should have been a celebration. Instead we were being punished by the very council whose account it is...

**Geoff Bennett**

## **THE SALIERI RESTAURANT**

**376 Strand, WC2**

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

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

***We are certain that you will be delighted***



**Please bring along your badge or Bill as ID**

**Salieri Restaurant**

**376 Strand, WC2**

**Reservations: 020 7836 1318**

## **Now Euro MPs want to axe biofuels!**

A group of MPs from the European Parliament, the *Environmental Audit Committee*, have claimed that biofuels are ineffective at cutting greenhouse gases, in addition to being expensive. The group added in their report that the EU should abandon its support for biofuel targets because its use is damaging the environment.

The Committee also said that problematic emissions from vehicles could be cut more cheaply and with less environmental damage. The European Union Parliament has now launched a new climate change strategy aimed at reducing damage caused by biofuels.

Part of the problem is not so much the use of biofuel, but how it is produced. Many claim that rainforests are being destroyed in order to grow palms that are then turned in to biofuels. Farmers have also been criticised for growing crops to use as biofuel rather than food, because it can pay more.



**Black & Blue** is an American steak house at 1-2 Rochester Walk in London's trendy Borough Market, one of 5 Black & Blue steak house restaurants in London. The name derives from the way to cook a perfect steak - seared black on the outside and virtually raw inside.

The restaurant has an extremely modern design, being constructed in glass and metal with a glass elevator in the middle, which takes you up to the state-of-the-art toilets. There is a large bar area and an outside decked seating area featuring a life-sized plastic cow for those who still enjoy a smoke! Situated under the railway arches, there are frequent - but not too unpleasant - rattles each time a train passes overhead!

The dining area consists of leather-seated glass booths for 6 people (although I think there was one which seated around 10) with granite tables and glass partitioning.

The starters were priced between £5 (*soup*) and £8 (*smoked salmon and scrambled eggs*). I ordered the *foie gras* (£7) to begin and it was excellent. It came with an interesting garnish of pea cress, which I have never encountered before. My wife ordered *butterfly prawns in breadcrumbs* (£6), which arrived with a chilli dipping sauce.

We both decided to go for the same main

**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 Ballard went to Black & Blue at the Borough Market...**

## Eating Out with Call Sign



T-bone steak will set you back £23.

For dessert we ordered *American cheese-cake with clotted cream and fresh raspberries*, large enough for us to share and absolutely delicious.

Also available on the menu were *hamburgers* (from £10), one even topped with *foie gras*. There is *chicken Genovese with basil and pesto*, *racks of lamb* and *tuna and salmon steaks*, all from between £13 and £18. There are vegetarian dishes, but obviously this is not a place for veggies!

Bottled beers were served in ice-cold glasses at £3 a time, £5 for a spirit and mixer and a wide range of wines starting from as little as £15 a bottle.

A steak meal for two at Black & Blue will set you back somewhere in the region of £75 or around £55 if you go for the *hamburger* option or shared *cote de boeuf*.

The restaurant provides a very pleasant experience with plenty of efficient and attentive staff. The steaks are extremely good, but in view of the fact that no amount of money would appear to have been spared on the décor and surroundings, I think decent, freshly cooked, home made chips are a must.

**Booking on 020 7357 9922. Find out more at [www.blackandbluerestaurants.com](http://www.blackandbluerestaurants.com).**

**Others restaurants in the group are located at 205-207 Haverstock Hill, 105 Gloucester Road, 215-217 Kensington Church Street and 90-92 Wigmore Street.**

**David Ballard (N28)**

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

## Kupkake's Korner



### Mayoral Elections?

I just don't reckon Boris and the other wannabes, forget Steve Norris and his smile for camera... cheese!

I'd nominate David Blunket to be our London Mayor, I'm sure that he wouldn't flunk it I'm sure he'd really care.

He's got the past experience and he likes we London cabbies, he couldn't be worse than Red Ken, so perhaps he'd make us happy?

With his guide dog and his white rod City Hall he'd manage to find, To replace the current deaf demigod and instead we'd have one that's blind...

**Kopyright Kupkake 2008**

course, *fillet steak* (£20 each). I ordered mine as the house black & blue with a garlic butter and herb dressing while my wife had medium with peppercorn sauce.

Black & Blue's steaks are supplied by North London company *Nigel Fredericks*, who have conducted extensive research both here and in the US into how to produce the perfect steak - involving a 28-day dry aging process to produce the tastiest and tenderest beef possible, currently sourced from Scotland and North Yorkshire.

The steaks were served with chips and a side salad on a separate plate, which we dressed with oil and balsamic vinegar. Both steaks were extremely succulent and tender and although we had separate cooking orders, seemed practically identical - albeit delicious! The only disappointment was the chips. They had obviously been frozen as they were virtually hollow inside and did not really go with the excellent quality of the steak.

A *cote de boeuf* is on the menu for one hungry person or for two to share at £25. A

## Dial-a Cab Credit Union

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

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

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

### The cost?

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

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

**Call us on 020 8522 4503**

*I hope that you all had a very pleasant and enjoyable Christmas holiday period and that 2008 will bring a healthy and prosperous New Year for you and your families. I am sure that by now you have restored the money to your bank that you spent on the family Christmas gifts and are now saving for your holiday in the Bahamas!*

## Christmas gift jackets

Some 1700 of you had collected your DaC Christmas gift (reversible jacket) by the first week in January, but we still have around 800 awaiting their new owners. We ask you to come in and try on the jacket personally and not have a partner or other person collect it as sizes vary. We've had drivers arriving home, trying the jacket on again and then coming back to ask for it to be changed. When we refuse they get upset, but drivers want a new, unused jacket. I'd be the same and would expect to receive one still sealed in the bag and not one that has been on somebody else's sweaty body! If you are a night man who lives out in the sticks and does not come into town until late, you can order it by phone. Call before 5pm with your chest size in inches and it will be delivered to Dial-a-Cab House by 6:30 pm that day. Currently we only have sizes (L) 42inch and (XL) 44inch chest, if you are well outside these sizes please let me know. You can then collect the jacket on production of your badge to the Security person at East Road. It will have your name and call sign on it and will be the size that you selected.

## signals

We get drivers coming to Roman Way complaining about signals and asking what are we going to do about it? The truth is we can do nothing; we can work on the hardware in your taxi to improve the *send* and *receive* facilities. John Banks, DaC's IT Manager, explained last month what his department is doing to upgrade the aerial sites and equipment. We will check your taxi equipment to make sure that it is all working correctly, but we also rely on drivers to make sure they keep their taxi in good working order; this means that battery terminals are kept free of corrosion. After cleaning the terminals, put on a light covering of grease or gel to make them waterproof. Make sure the battery is not past its sell-by date and failing to hold a charge. If you do not complete this easy maintenance, then when you are sitting with the engine turned off, you might not have enough power to send out a signal.

## safety and temptation

When or if you have to come to Roman Way for work to be completed on your taxi, would you please help us by keeping within the rules. Remove your moneybag, cash dispensers and wallets. Remove any breakable items, mobile phones, hand held computers and MP3 players. Also turn off any radio, satnav or television. This will stop any problems of shorting out whilst the fitter is working on your taxi. Whilst waiting, there are free tea/coffee facilities and some chairs to relax on while you update yourself by reading the trade press. Please do not wander into the fitting area; this is due to strict rules imposed on us by Islington Borough Council Health and Safety Officers. At the end of your visit, you will be asked to sign to say that work was completed to your satisfaction. Please check your taxi for any problems before

# Tom's Roman Way Happenings...



signing and leaving the building.

During your visit, if you have a problem with any member of the staff, please inform me. I have the utmost respect for our staff and confidence in their standard of their work. They treat drivers with politeness and courtesy and I would hope that drivers reciprocate. Shouting and screaming will achieve nothing.

## Theatre tickets

A driver complained recently that he gets messages regarding free theatre tickets. Probably due to his quickness in deleting these messages, he deleted others that contained Society information. It's easy to blame anything other than your own failures when something goes wrong. I am asked to put many messages out other than ones that will give drivers something for free. Some messages are knocked back, usually if it is illegal or it shows the Society in a bad light. One of those reasons is when drivers want to sell off tickets for events where the tickets are not transferable. This would show the Society acting as a tout. I may sound at times like *Del Boy*, but I can assure you that I am not like him at all.

As I explained to the driver regarding theatre tickets, many drivers like to take their wives out for a night at the theatre and a nice meal. If I can acquire on their behalf tickets for a theatre, this will drop their bill down by anything up to £100. Some drivers are too lazy to take their next of kin out, but others find this is a great relaxation after a days work. Plus their wife is only too glad to get out after staying in the house cleaning and looking after the children day after day! As I related to this driver, during the year drivers have saved hundreds of pounds on taking their wives, girlfriends or partners out to see top shows in the west end - some shows they get to see as soon as they hit theatreland.

## Overhauls

I have been asked by a subscriber to give a warning to drivers who are taking their own taxi up for the overhaul or half-year check. He got 'knocked back' on what he was told was a leak on the brake servo. He looked and saw it wasn't a leak, but where the fluid had been topped up a dribble had trickled down the outside of the unit. He wiped it off and pointed out to the fitter that it was not a leak. The driver started to worry about his sanity, so he

went to the garage that had checked the cab and they stated there was no defect but told him that he was not the first to get a knock back on this and other non-existent faults. Due to this non-existent problem, the driver had to wait another 2 days before he could present his taxi again. So the outcome was that he lost 2 days work. We as a trade do not know the qualifications of people who are holding the position of these engineers. I seem to remember that most, if not all of the staff when it was at the old PCO, held a City and Guilds certificate.

## It's a danger

Reading newspapers or listening to the news, you couldn't be blamed for not venturing out after dark! With murders occurring almost daily and murderers being let out of jail after a reduced sentence, who would feel safe? There was a time when you were hung for committing murder, but the tree huggers have cried their crocodile tears and now you are lucky if they stay in prison for 10 years. Why? Because over the years politicians have not addressed the situation of a growing population, the influx of EU persons and problems of illegal immigrants. So no extra prison spaces were allowed for, which meant prisoners had to be kept in police stations. That meant more policemen and women had to look after them in the stations with less fully qualified police officers on the street. What we are now seeing are more plastic policemen on the streets (Community Support Officers) who cannot stop and arrest offenders. So I know whom I would like to be standing next to if I was having a spot of trouble. We are told they are bringing in new penalties for drivers using mobile phones whilst driving that could involve a custodial sentence. I'm sorry, but if the prisons are full, what will they do? Let a murderer out to accommodate an illegal mobile phone user? Do they really think that we are stupid enough to believe these lies they feed to us? The main problem is that if MPs do not stand up to be counted by imposing harsh sentences and supplying more prison spaces, how long will it be before a lone taxi driver is seriously injured or killed? It no longer matters which area you work nowadays, you get 'head cases' wandering all over London. I know that I never want to go to visit a driver in hospital or even worse, go to his funeral just because these spineless politicians do not want to lose the votes of the tree huggers.

We pay more than enough for our taxes, so let's get some more protection during our working life and also when we are out with our loved ones. Any politician addressing these problems will get my vote. When we get a prisoner, such as on one recent occasion, who refused to leave his cell to make an appearance in court because while there, prison authorities could allocate his single cell to someone else, it just goes to prove it's the lunatics who are running the asylums now...

**Tom Whitbread**  
**DaC Roman Way Manager**



**Continued from January**

*We ended up going to bed and even though we made love, it was nothing special and I could feel that something was wrong. Was it just because I was leaving for home tomorrow? I didn't know what it was, but things just didn't feel right from here on...*

In the morning we got up and I began packing. I had to be at the airport by 10am, so we were rushing. Just a cup of tea and off to Heathrow. I felt so sad. I didn't want to go back home, I didn't want to leave his side because I had a feeling things might be different once I'd gone.

After we arrived at the airport, Sam parked his Dial-a-Cab taxi and came in with me. We sat and talked for a while but about nothing special. It should have been about our future plans but it wasn't. Then I had to go to the departure gate, but Sam said he wasn't allowed to go with me. So we kissed and hugged, someone took our picture, I told him I loved him and he said he loved me too. He stood there as I walked away just staring at me. He looked sad and I just wanted to run back into his arms and tell him I would stay, tell him I didn't want to leave. I didn't do any of that, instead I walked away and soon we were out of each other's sight.

My trip home was a sad one. I missed Sam so very much; I really didn't want to go home without him. I was trying to convince myself that any bad thoughts I had were all in my mind.

Sam had asked me to call him when I arrived back at LAX (Los Angeles airport) to let him know I had arrived home ok and I did that as soon as I got off the plane - but he wasn't at home. It was midnight in London by then and I just didn't know where he could be? Perhaps he was asleep? The phone just rang and rang. I felt such emptiness inside me; I needed to hear his voice so badly. The feelings I had before leaving London were returning and I just knew something was wrong. I didn't know what, but I never did find out... I just felt it. I don't know how I got home...

We still spoke on the phone every night and he always said that he missed me, but there was something in his voice - I knew him so well. Ask any woman and she will know her man far better than he knows himself. There was a coldness in his voice and I could tell something wasn't right, but I tried to pretend everything was fine and hoped that it was.

Then one night when we were talking, he suddenly said that he felt tired and was going to sleep. He had never ended our conversations that quickly before. It was around 2am London time, Sam worked nights for Dial-a-Cab and that was why I used to phone at that hour. But that night was different. He just said he felt tired, had to go and hung

*This is the true love story of a Dial-a-Cab driver and a Californian beauty who met and fell in love on the Internet in 1998. Sam lived in London and drove for DaC, while Jenny lived on the USA west coast. Call Sign is publishing Jenny's story exactly as she wrote it.*

*Jenny has come to London to visit Sam, but senses something is wrong...*

# L♥ve On the Internet



**Happier times for Californian Jenny and DaC's Sam. Is it now the end...?**

up really fast. But just before he hung up, I heard his doorbell ring. I thought it could be his friend John; he'd occasionally stop by and stay the night if he was working late, since he lived out of London. I called Sam back to see who it could be at his house that time of night. I had a very funny feeling inside.

Sam answered the phone and when I asked if John was there, he answered me in a whisper

saying no one was there but that he was just tired and wanted to go to sleep. I asked him why was he whispering and he said it was because he was tired. I knew that wasn't the truth - I could hear it in his voice. What Sam couldn't understand was that I knew the sound of his voice so well and could read him just by listening to him.

I called John at his house, he answered and I asked him straight out if he knew anything about Sam seeing another woman. He said he didn't want to answer the question. I told him there was no need to, I now already knew the answer...

I called Sam back and told him what I thought. He made up a story but my heart was broken. He was now also lying to me. I trusted him with my life and now he had someone else with him, probably making love to her that night and telling her all the things he used to tell me.

I cried all night long. I couldn't believe this was happening. I knew all along that he was lonely, but he should have told me the truth no matter what. His lies have hurt me so much...

**Continued next month...**

## CONTACTING DRIVER SERVICES AT DAC

Some drivers have asked *Call Sign* to republish the direct lines for Nuala and Val in Driver Services. They can now deal with most general queries, including rollerbond requests by phone, email or fax.

*So here they are...*

Driver Services, Dial-a-Cab, 39-47 East Road, London N1 6AH.

Telephone: 020 7553 7201 for Nuala or 020 7553 7230 for Val.

Email: [nualag@dialacab.co.uk](mailto:nualag@dialacab.co.uk) or [valerieg@dialacab.co.uk](mailto:valerieg@dialacab.co.uk)

Fax: 020 7553 7296.

***You may not need us now, but cut us out for when you do!***

**LOCKHOUSE SECURITY**



**10% Discount on keys and locks for DaC Drivers**

**Free estimates    No call out charge**

**Burglary repairs / boarding up**

**Additional security / security upgrades**

**Safes opened, repaired and serviced**

**On site key cutting services**

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**Auto locksmiths**

**Transponder and chipped keys**

**Domestic and commercial**

**Locks replaced and fitted to insurance specifications (BS3621)**

**All types of locks, opened, repaired and replaced**

**Specialists in UPVC doors and windows / patio doors**

**24hr service**

**8-10 The Arcade, Farnham Road, Harold Hill**

**Tel: 01708 371115**

Following the 1998 Dial-a-Cab Christmas incentive, 10 drivers shared £5,500 between them for covering work leading up to the holiday season. By 2006, that had been improved to a 'Gold' spec taxi and 6 weeks of luxury holidays. Then last year, the DaC incentive gave away 3 black 'special' Peugeot 307s to three lucky members.

But it has to be said that if you were to add together every Christmas incentive this Society has given to its drivers since that fateful Sunday of March 29 1953 when 4 owner-drivers met in back of Bonnie Martyn's cab at the Grosvenor Gardens shelter cab rank, the combined total would still come nowhere near this year's payout. It also seems highly probable that this year's total paid to drivers is higher than any incentive ever paid out to any group of cab drivers anywhere in the world - let alone London! That total figure? An astonishing £521,730.

From that huge total, three drivers came away with over £2000 each - two of them beating the £2500 mark. A further eight smiled as they received their payout of over £1500, but then it almost begins to border on the realms of fantasy with no less than fifty-six DaC drivers copping over £1000 each! How can you possibly beat that? Well how about an amazing 341 planning their next holidays after scooping over £500 each! We don't suppose that the 412 drivers who came away with an extra bonus of over £250 complained too much either. Literally hundreds more received useful amounts of around £100 or more with many others close to three figures. And of course, everyone got paid for doing the work anyway!

**Call Sign** asked Chairman **Brian Rice** how even a Society that was doing as well as this one could afford such a huge amount?

**"Firstly, let me say how absolutely delighted we are to be able to pass this huge sum onto our members. However, I have to say that although we may well have an incentive every year, the amount on offer this year was most definitely a one-off!"**

He then explained: **"Our old building, Brunswick House, has now been sold. It was on the books at £1,420,000 as an asset, but I managed to acquire £2,750,000 for it. Basically, we replaced the £1.42million asset with £2.75million in cash and I decided to give Dial-a-Cab members a windfall. Our rules forbid any kind of dividend, so I thought that the Christmas incentive, using reasonably easy targets, would be the ideal vehicle to reward our members who wanted to work hard during the run-up to Xmas."**

Brian continued: **"Whilst we wanted to reward members, we also hoped that this incentive would help coverage at a time of year when we probably get the highest number of complaints through delays etc. Well, I have to say that our driver's coverage has resulted in my most peaceful Xmas since becoming Chairman in 1996. I've had very few complaints**

# £521,730! The Cost of DaC's Xmas Incentive...



**DaC's current and late founder Chairman. What would Bonnie have made of Brian giving away £521,730 to drivers!**

**and most clients have been delighted by our service. So the bottom line was that we wanted to give members some of the extra money that we received for the old building and if that helped make members smile, which as a bonus helped our clients also smile, then we are delighted!"**

**Call Sign** cannot but help but wonder what those 4 drivers in Bonnie Martyn's cab on that cold March 1953 day, Arthur

Cutmore, Albert Hall, Eric Stoffel and Bonnie himself, would have made of a Christmas incentive that involved giving away over half a million quid when just 8 weeks later - in June 1953 - at the Albany Tavern, Great Portland street, a meeting of owner drivers struggled to find between them the £200 needed to get ODRTS off the ground! We think they would have felt incredibly proud!

To everyone who coined it in 2007 well done. And to those few believers in 1953, a belated thank you as well...

## THE 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](http://www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk)**

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***You can take family and friends with you, but the DaC driver must be in the party. Booking forms are available only from the DaC Driver's Reception...***

***The prices to DaC drivers?***

***Just £49 return standard class OR...***

***If you would like a bit of luxury, £99 return 1st Class!***

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



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**5 Days**  
**In Advance**



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Major Service  
**£129.00** inc VAT



As TX4s seem to be selling like hotcakes, here's another reason why you might want to buy a new one before 1 April this year. Even though the taxi trade has reduced its emissions under TfL's clear air policy from Euro 3 to Euro 4, the road tax burden on a new TX4 will increase to £400 per year. Road tax on the present TX2 costs £180 and on the TX4 £300. What is more shocking is that road tax on a 62 seater (or above) London bus is reduced from £500 to £165 per year and a Euro 4 compliant LGV weighing less than 3.5 tons is £115. Even a private HGV pays £165. Our problem is that we are classified as a Private Light goods vehicle, which ties us in to categories like the *Chelsea tractor* where emissions and taxation are based on individual vehicles, not classes. How a commercial vehicle of which you have to pay VAT on when purchased new and is used by the public for hire and reward can be a private vehicle beats me. Seems that everyone else who has reduced their emissions get tax breaks, but for the cab trade it goes up!

If you do decide to buy a TX4 and are attracted by low finance deals with low APRs at the dealers, look out for the add-ons. In most HP agreements, on top of the basic interest charges for the loan they add on acceptance fees (currently £145) and option-to-purchase fees at the end. These will turn what was an initially attractive APR into something quite ordinary. But as it's an HP agreement, dealers will ask for your badge number binding you to the PCO if you default. You can get a non-binding and more competitive personal loan off the Internet or High Street! *Moneybackbank* by Alliance and Leicester is one of them at 7.1% APR...

## From APRs to PCNs...

The topic of parking tickets is still very much in the fore. DaC drivers **Martin Hizer** and **Tony Mitchell** are asking drivers to sign a petition in driver's reception. If you want to add your support and push for a change in local authority parking policy, take the time to sign it. It's a problem that has been around for sometime. **Call Sign's** archives have a quote from a letter to the Editor from **D38** in the **July 1967** issue: "Outside 52 Paul Street I made contact with the ball porter; my absence from my vehicle 5 minutes and a £2 parking ticket. The job was 15 shillings. It doesn't pay me to work with the present traffic laws; a cabdriver cannot give the public a service which is badly required." Where have we heard that before? But if you do get a PCN and want to appeal, don't be put off. There is a common myth allegedly from local authorities that if you lose on appeal, you have to pay the higher fine. This is simply not true. So long as you respond to the initial charge within 14 days, the PCN is time locked and it doesn't matter if it takes 6 months, you will only have to pay the ini-

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...



*the other entrance and I am not letting you in here either."* Amazed, I drove off empty! I appreciate they've a job to do, but sometimes they go too far. But next time I'll keep my suggestions to myself...

Talking of The Wharf, it always appears that this time of year brings out the worst in some drivers. We all have to do our local rides (usually after 45 minutes wait) but it's swings and roundabouts. So why do some drivers think it OK to get the driver behind to do their locals? I've heard it all: *Do you know where the Britannia Hotel is as the driver in front doesn't or Please take me to West Ferry Road, or The driver in front wants me to walk to Rotherhithe as it's just across the river.* Don't forget, we are all out there to give a service to the public...

tial charge if you lose ie £60. Just make sure you send your initial responding letter by recorded delivery.

## Canary Wharf security...

When working at Canary Wharf, which I often do, I'm surprised at the number of times I have my cab checked whilst going through the security barriers. Having done 3 local rides, I had my cab stopped three times on return! I suggested to the person checking that had they an index plate reader they would see that I have recently been checked. I was told: "If you don't want your cab checked, don't come on The Wharf." So I decided to reverse out and not bother. Letting my senses get the better of me, I decided to try again at the Four Seasons entrance. There I was told: "Sorry sir, you didn't want to go in

Finally, as the cost of cobalt soars - 60% last year - so does the cost of batteries. Even the supermarkets are expensive, however I found a good company on the Internet called *Battery Force*. These examples all include VAT. Remote keyfob battery A23 for taxi £1.29, Panasonic CR2 camera battery £2.65, Duracell AAA 8 pack £2.79 and Duracell AA 8 pack £2.79. See [www.battery-force.co.uk](http://www.battery-force.co.uk) or call **01892 730877**.

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

**Richard Potter (T51)**

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The manufacturers of the London taxi, **LTI Vehicles**, had a busy run-up to the new year when the Coventry factory was visited by two MPs and they also announced a new Sales Director.

It was a short trip for the first visitor, Rugby & Kenilworth MP and Conservative Party's whip on transport, **Jeremy Wright**.

Following a tour of the factory, Mr Wright met Manganese Bronze Holdings CEO, **John Russell** and LTI Managing Director, **Peter Shillcock**. The visit provided an opportunity for the MP to be briefed on the company's developments in China and the work the company has undertaken on accessibility for disabled people. Since being promoted to transport whip, Mr Wright has engaged with stakeholders to understand the challenges to transport in the UK. He told **Call Sign**:

"LTI manufactures a British icon recognised throughout the world and has invested in producing one of the most accessible vehicles for disabled passengers. It's good to see that the accessibility features in the London taxi include features for ambulant disabled and those with hearing and visual impairments as well as a wheelchair ramp."

A few weeks later, **Stephen Timms**, Minister of State for Competitiveness with responsibility for automotive manufacturing, also paid LTI Vehicles a visit.

He too was met by John Russell who discussed LTI's on-going commitment to its Coventry headquarters and its continuing expansion into emerging global markets. The minister then took the opportunity to chat with staff and union representatives during the factory tour.

At the end of his visit, the minister addressed staff to express his support for LTI and automotive manufacturing in Coventry and the West Midlands. He said:

# A Busy Month at LTI...

**Building more cabs, a visit by two MPs and a new Sales Director!**



**Pictured from left to right: Richard Daniels, Andrew Overton, Jeremy Wright MP, John Russell, Peter Shillcock and Rob Laidler**

"LTI Vehicles has shown that British automotive manufacturing can succeed and prosper in the global economy. The company's joint venture with Geely offers enormous opportunities in international markets and secures future production in the UK. LTI will celebrate its 60th anniversary of manufacturing in Coventry next year and I wish the company and all employees the very best for next year and the future."

To complete a busy month, LTI Vehicles also announced that **Rob Laidler** had joined the company as Sales Director. Rob brings with him over 18 years experience within the motor trade. Prior to joining LTI, Rob spent two years as Operations Director with Sang Yong UK.

Rob's brief is the responsibility for developing close and effective relationships with LTI's network of nine dealers in order to drive profitability and to maximize sales of the TX4 taxi within the UK.

Another regular visitor to LTI in Coventry is **Call Sign Magazine**, which takes a group of drivers for a tour of the factory to see how the cab is built and gives them a chance to question the people who make the cab. We'll be making another trip soon and will be looking for drivers who are interested...

## TX4 Saves Life of Driver!

Cardiff taxi driver, Emad Osman, believes he's only alive today thanks to the safety protection provided by his TX4 after being involved in a serious collision with a Land Rover that came out of nowhere and ploughed into the side of his taxi.

The strength of the LTI taxi shielded Emad from the potentially fatal collision and he believes that had it not been for the solid construction of the taxi, he would not have survived (see photo).

Emad said: "The collision was so severe, it completely crushed the side of the vehicle and I'm just thankful that the TX4's robust steel shell protected me and saved my life. I've already purchased another purpose-built taxi and would encourage other drivers to do so as well. A recent tour of the LTI Vehicles factory at Coventry has convinced me that this is the right vehicle for me and my fellow cabbies."

New LTI Vehicles Sales Director, Rob Laidler told **Call Sign**: "Our vehicles are designed and built with safety and strength firmly in mind. Naturally, we were extremely concerned when we first heard about Emad's accident, but we're glad to hear that the strong steel frame used in the construction of the TX4 withstood this significant impact. Like the TX4, all of our models are subject to rigorous testing to make sure they are the safest they can possibly be. LTI Vehicles is proud to offer its customers this assurance."

**Call Sign will be making a further visit to LTI's factory sometime in February or March and will again advertise for drivers wanting to go with.**

You can find out more about London taxis at [www.lti.co.uk](http://www.lti.co.uk).



## Ruffles

**The Complete Curtain Making Service**

Curtains, pelmets, swags and tails or blinds as well as soft furnishings...

Cushions, quilts and headboards all made to measure using customers own fabric...

Or choose from a selection of fabrics and trimmings bought to you in your own home.

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Kim on 0208 505 9755  
or mobile 07961375418**

While **Call Sign** was wondering round the LTFUC 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party celebrations at the Grosvenor House recently, we bumped into a lady without whose husband, Dial-a-Cab may never have started.

Looking as wonderful as ever at the young age of 96, **Millie Dunn** was watching and smiling as hundreds of kids enjoyed themselves eating, drinking pop and watching the entertainment.

The last time we saw Millie was 5 years ago at DaC's 50th anniversary celebration when she and husband Lou danced the night away – well she was just a spring chicken of 91 then! Sadly, just 22 days later, husband Lou passed away at the age of 93.

Lou Dunn passed the Knowledge on 20 February 1951 having done it by car! But it was towards the end of 1952 that his name was to become enshrined in the history of the London cab trade.

Lou told **Call Sign** during a visit to Brunswick House in January 2003: "I was having a tea break in Wilton Road, Victoria with a few other drivers in November 1952. We were discussing the possibility of starting a radio taxi service for owner-drivers to compete with Lou Levy of York Way Motors and The London General of Brixton. Both companies had their own radio circuits, primarily for their own fleets of cabs.

"We later spoke to a large number of owner-drivers who seemed enthusiastic about the idea. The prominent members of our organising committee consisted of myself, George White, Mr. Frewin, Charlie Watson

# GERRY'S MUM STEPS OUT - AT 96!



**Millie and Gerry at the party.**

**Inset pic: Lou meets Brian Rice on his visit to DaC in 2003**



and a Mr Woods. Cyril Lumley was appointed Secretary and RODA – The

Radio Owner Drivers Association – was born. Word got around quickly and we soon had enough drivers to operate. Sadly, problems – mainly financial – beset it and it folded in the face of the new oncoming ODRTS in 1953."

Many believe that without the RODA lead,

Bonnie Martyn may never have started our company and it is to people such as Lou Dunn that this trade owes so much.

But back to the present and Millie, also the mother of DaC's **Gerry Dunn MBE (S84)**, still has that sparkle in her eye.

"Say hello to that good-looking Chairman of yours for me," she said with a twinkling smile, "but how old did you say he was? I'm looking for a nice young man!"

## Richard Picks up the Butler!

When **Richard Hill (L62)** was sitting on the Lincoln's Inn Fields rank (WC3), he assumed that the chances would be that his passenger would be connected to the legal industry – the last person he expected to pick up was a butler. But then again, this wasn't just ANY old butler, this was THE butler – Paul Burrell, butler to the late Princess Diana.

It was mid-afternoon when the trip asked Richard to pick up at the Royal Courts of Justice and to actually drive in. There was no passenger name.

"In all the years I have been driving a taxi, I had never driven inside the Law Courts before. A security person guided me into the car park and as I got out of the cab to try to find out who my passenger was, I noticed a huge number of paparazzi just on the other side of the security barrier. They were all asking if I was there to pick up Paul Burrell, who had been giving evidence at the Princess Diana inquest inquiry, but I didn't know so I said that I wasn't.

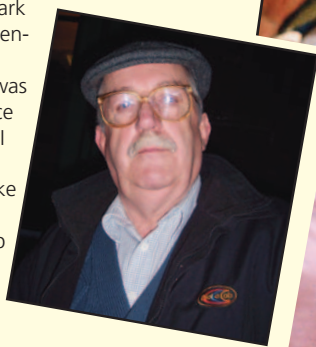
But I soon found out that it was Paul Burrell I was to take to an hotel not too far away. As he and three others got into the cab, a policeman came over and asked me to stop at the main gate to allow photographers to take some photos. Some photos? As I stopped, they clambered over the taxi like bees around a honey pot. All I could see were camera lenses – one actually scratched a window!"

Eventually they managed to get out and at their hotel, Mr Burrell kept alive his reputation of being "careful" with money by asking Richard whether there was anything to pay!

"All taken care of sir," replied Richard. With that a happy Paul Burrell departed and Richard went back to normality after a brief flash of him on some TV news programmes...



**Paul Burrell with Princess Diana.  
Inset Pic Richard Hill**





# COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

*Hello Ladies and Gents,*

There are a number of topics I would like to remind you about in this article, areas that have become regular bones of contention for numerous members who have felt the need to contact me over the past few weeks. I've written about them previously, but I must reiterate that the problems still seem to repeat themselves...

## Zone "hopping"

Booking into outlying physical zones from inner postal zones that are long distances away is not only breaking a procedural rule, it is grossly unfair for the drivers who are booked in the correct zones and waiting for the trip to appear on their bid screen. It can easily be proved through the GPS technology and is a complaint that drivers will not sympathise with - and one that will be closely monitored in the Call Centre.

## Cabot Square rank (E14C)

Many drivers regularly start work at Canary Wharf and as you know, it is a very busy area. But the changeover from E140 to E14C at 6am is causing a problem with some drivers and dispatchers alike. Again it is monitored, but I believe that you, the members, have also to play your part and book in within the spirit of the Society. In the near future and for a trial period, the rank will be closed for a short time during the changeover and the dispatchers will then open E14C and send out a message to ask drivers to book into the rank in their correct order and queue position. Similar to when EC5 was a physical rank, they may also ask you to display your hazard lights so that the person behind can also book-in correctly. It worked well for many



years at Finsbury Square, so let's make it work at Cabot Square.

Can I also politely ask you to wait until you are actually on the rank before booking in - that means the south side of Cabot Square on the feeder rank adjacent to number 20.

## Name boards

Some of our valued accounts have requested that you make every effort to show both christian and surname on name boards showing in the windows of your taxi. J P Morgan is one such account and they have also asked if as a full-proof check that you have picked up the correct passenger, you may at times need to confirm the destination. It is very important when large numbers of taxis from the same account and pick-up addresses are parked outside the client's address.

## Meter charges

I have previously made you all aware that account clients receive regular reports listing meter charges that they can verify with us. It is their right to see these listings and it is a service that we as a

Society are only too pleased to offer. It shows a number of readings that can be queried and confirmed on any chosen trip. Again I would like to remind you that if the actual meter is not automatically showing on the CLJ form, it is very important that you contact Tom Whitbread at Roman Way and arrange for your equipment to be checked.

## Complaints committee

During my short time as the Society's Compliance Officer, I have selected my Complaints Committee randomly from a list of experienced members that have been in place for a number of years. Some of the drivers have now retired and a number of them are no longer with ODRTS. If you would like to be considered to sit as a Committee Member on future hearings, could you please contact me by phone or email? My aim is for consistency and continuity, but I would welcome new members who are willing and able to give up their time for the good of the Society and who feel that they are experienced enough to make fair and open judgements on many different types of complaints. It can at times be very difficult to judge your fellow members and can even be quite intimidating, but I am sure that there are those of you that could perfectly match the criteria. If any member volunteers for the complaints meeting - he will of course be paid.

Thanks for taking the time to read this article and I look forward to seeing you at the AGM

**Allan Evans**

**DaC Compliance Officer**  
**allane@dialacab.co.uk**



**Transport for London**

## Setting down passengers at the Houses of Parliament

The Metropolitan Police has drawn attention to the practice of taxis stopping outside the **Houses of Parliament** next to the Corus Security Lane in the section of road with cones. Stopping there is prohibited; it blocks through traffic and it is also inconvenient and potentially dangerous for alighting passengers.

Taxi drivers are advised that the most convenient and accessible alighting point for passengers for the Houses of Parliament is the kerb between the St Stephens Entrance and the statue of Oliver Cromwell.

Enforcement action may be taken against drivers who continue to stop in the prohibited area.

**Len Simkins**

**Head of Strategy and Planning, PCO**

## 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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Did you see Channel 4's **Dispatches** programme last week? I did because although I don't like blood sports, there's nothing so enjoyable for an old Tory like me as watching two acknowledged lefties, Martin Bright the political editor of the *New Statesman* and Mayor Ken, locked in mortal combat. Bright won't be voting for Ken, as he told us right at the start the show. But what did he actually tell us? Not much to be honest.

Ken Livingstone apparently likes a drink, treats the London Assembly with contempt, employs a bunch of hard left wingers who want to overthrow world capitalism, gives money to dodgy organisations that don't seem to keep accounts and can't actually tell you where the money's gone and spends more time in Venezuela than he does in Harrow or Hackney.

Now tell me something I don't know!

Ken likes a drink and bears defecate in woods. He always has and I'm sorry he obviously now feels the need for a dram at ten in the morning. That's a bad sign. When I was a Minister, I virtually gave up drink because the only person who thinks you're better when you speak is you, and you never know when some nosey journalist is going to stick a microphone under your nose.

His lefty connections are genuinely worrying. John Ross, his economic advisor, Redmond O'Neill, his transport advisor and Simon Fletcher who looks after his private office were all members of a group called Socialist Action, which is on the real fringe of mad lefty politics. The mayor of the most aggressively capitalist city in the world absolutely relies on three men who used to do their plotting in a room over a pub in typical student style, but now meet over the water cooler in City Hall since Ken is obligingly paying them six-figure salaries for their pains. What is their real agenda now? Have their politics changed one iota? I doubt it.

The London development Agency has been a shambles for years. This is a city with one of the worst unemployment rates in the country and a massive skills gap, but the LDA throws money around like a drunken sailor on every-

**Call Sign asked former Minister of Transport for London, Steve Norris, to review C4's Dispatches programme on the London Mayor**

## C4 dishes the dirt on Ken Livingstone in 'Dispatches'



**Ken Livingstone: Likes a drink and treats the London Assembly with contempt?**

thing from St Patrick's Day parades to politically correct knowledge schools without impacting on that one iota. And where there is rank inefficiency, lack of accountability and control, there is always the risk that money is misused. The recent Evening Standard investigation by its excellent reporter Andrew Gilligan, has uncovered a real hornet's nest at the LDA and in my view, Livingstone only has himself to blame.

The truth is that Ken Livingstone has never really been interested in making London a better city. He is obsessed instead with using the position and the huge power that goes with the job of Mayor, to pursue a political agenda at home and abroad that has more to do with anti-American globalisation than how to run the PCO, TfL or the Metropolitan Police Authority. He has always been like this. He



**Former Minister of Transport for London, Steve Norris, reviews the programme**

has not changed since he did exactly the same at the GLC where he had more policy on the IRA and Nicaragua than on education - where the ILEA was ranked as one of the worst education authorities in Europe.

A lot of cab drivers ask me how he ever got elected? The answer's simple. Because six out of ten Londoners who could vote, didn't. They could not be bothered to get off their fat bottoms and stroll down to the polling booth. You get what you deserve when you elect politicians, and particularly when you let other people do the job for you.

Maybe after *Dispatches*, a few more Londoners might decide enough is enough and do something about it on May 2nd...

**Steve Norris**

## NEW WCHCD CABGUIDE COURSE

### What did the Romans ever do for us?

Not just a quote from Monty Python's classic film *The Life of Brian*. Do you know what they really did during the formative years of this great city?

### Why is London here?

How has it developed over its 2000 year history? How did our capital city evolve from the Roman port of *Londinium* into the world's most important financial centre and one of its greatest tourist attractions?

Once you've got the answers to these and many more questions, why not tell others - and actually get paid to do it!

The **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers**, Spring Cabguide Course starts on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February. It will equip you with sufficient knowledge to conduct an informative and entertaining guided taxi tour of all the major places of interest (and some lesser known ones) in central London.

### Topics covered include:-

*History and development of the City of London and Westminster.*

*Architectural London.*

*London's oddities.*

*The story of the River Thames, its docks, and their joint impact on London as a trading giant.*

*Palaces, Royalty & Pageantry.*

*Prisons, Asylums & Hospitals. How they helped shape London.*

*Cab Trade history.*

*Customer care and ideas for a tour.*

The course is fully accredited by City University and co-ordinated by Graham Woodhouse - a licensed London taxi driver and Qualified City of London Guide Lecturer. All successful candidates receive the Qualified Taxi Guide badge (pictured) along with the City University Accreditation Statement.

I did the course some years ago and loved it. It can be beneficial in various ways - as a possible source of extra income and by waking up the sleeping 'grey matter' by expanding upon your KoL and supplying you with new skills.

**For enrolment or further details, please contact the course co-ordinator:-**

**Graham Woodhouse - Tel: 07968 791 117**

**email: [info@cabguide.com](mailto:info@cabguide.com)**



**Jim Rainbird (T25)  
WCHCD Lower Warden**



**"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...

*Continued from January*

Reading through the last copy of **Call Sign** reminded me of how we, *the best taxi trade in the world*, have seldom enjoyed the benefits of being that best and most regulated taxi service. To gain the coveted green badge, we submit to passing The Knowledge with the efforts and dedication being frequently compared to that of gaining a university degree.

During my first 15 or 20 years, we had police officers nicking the first two cabs on a rank for not having their engines running, being improperly dressed, badge not worn in the correct manner, pulling onto a rank from a feeder rank seconds before the first cab, which had been hired, completely left the rank. Or letting our FX3s and occasional Beardmore wait outside a theatre in an orderly queue then as the theatre burst, move them all on after booking them for hanging it up! But compared to what is happening to you today, I think we had it easy, peasy!

Our vehicles have always been highly specialised, costly to buy, run and maintain because of the standards required and the fact that they have been sold mainly in markets where the buyers are compelled by the licensing and regulatory authorities to operate London / PCO taxis. As a body, we are reliable, charitable and in the main very honest. Yet today we are expected to comply with rules that if followed, make it almost impossible to wait and help the infirm, disabled and handicapped enter or leave our taxis, let alone wait a while for our passengers to leave their premises and enter the cab.

The London taxi trade needs to convince LTI to come up with a new, overall finish. This should camouflage our taxis to make them resemble any of the following; pedicabs, two seater sports and other cars obviously abusing the Licensed Private Hire requirements. Also included in this finish could be to make our taxis look like they belong to touts and tuk-tuks.

If LTI could discover how to produce this finish, then we could also dwell, block ranks, stop and park on double yellow lines and wait where or when we liked. The lists of what we could do are almost endless. Then add no more costly overhauls, meter rentals and a huge choice of vehicles - in fact no need to service and maintain at all. We could work with, if we chose, bangers, stolen cars or anything we liked judging by what can currently be seen picking up passengers off the streets of our camera ridden London.

Yet the London taxi trade has various organisations representing fleets, radio circuits, drivers, and if they spent as much time and effort co-operating and collaborating and if more drivers joined and stood up to be counted, think of the power a united London taxi trade could wield?

Well it has only sort of happened three times in my 50 plus years; once when the LTDA called for a protest that blocked Whitehall, another when the streets of Westminster were brought to standstill just as senior civil servants were leaving to go home and the blockading of Victoria Coach Station. There have been many other protests and demonstrations, but with never enough support from drivers and even members of the organisations that exist to protect their members. Committees or BoM's can only do so much. Without their drivers/members support, it amounts to nothing. Certainly nothing for the authorities to worry about.

The same goes for vehicle type testing by the PCO / SGS who



**Was this one of the cabs nicked for hanging up outside a theatre!**

have applied the rules handed down to them for London taxi type approval. Like us, their hands are tied. Once again, a united London taxi trade would have a real input into what we wanted to operate; instead it has been left in the hands of the faceless army of bureaucrats to decide what's best for us and the public to have as their taxis. Imagine a taxi that could have been designed, developed and sold across a wide market, because if a vehicle can be sold in large enough numbers, the costs are progres-

sively reduced, otherwise your average family car that sells today in the region of £15-18,000 would be priced in the region of £60,000 and upwards.

So next time you feel like having a moan and groan about how bad things are, how you are being victimised and the cost of running the taxi, don't do what I and many compatriots did - nothing - just standing by to watch things getting progressively harder and more difficult.

*continued next month*

## Sunset Strip

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

*Vintage Photos  
Large Format  
Canvas Prints  
Calendars  
Greetings Cards  
Enlargements  
Photo Restorations*

*Superb Cab Photos  
Hansom Cabs  
Growler Cabs  
Early Motor Cabs  
FX3s & FX4s  
Cab Shelters  
London Speciality*

**Great as Xmas Presents**

# Where is Power Pill?



Many drivers have asked **Call Sign** the same question over the past few months – whatever happened to **Power Pill**? All claim that it worked and that they used it regularly to save fuel and cut emissions. Now **Mel Edwardes**, wife of Dial-a-Cab driver **John (H5)**, has hinted of a fuel companies-inspired plot to get rid of it. Did Power Pill work too well? The idea of fuel companies combining or perhaps even an MI5-inspired plot sounds fascinating – especially at a time when major fuel suppliers are bringing out their own fuels containing special additives at an increased price over and above their already high prices.

Going onto the Ubiee Powerpill main website (not the UK one), it seems obvious that the whole system is designed not for those who want to buy packets of the amazing pill, but for those who want to make a living at selling it. The main difference between this scheme and many others like it is that the Ubiee Power Pill worked! They have developed a platform

that they claim ‘guarantees’ your success, but involves spending (in Euros) 590 which gets you a personalized website for marketing the pills. There are other promises too, but the bottom line is that this is a marketing ploy. You join not to help the world, but to earn money. The fact that you do, indeed, help cut emissions is a by-product.

According to the website, you will earn 1 on each pill sold – good if you sell thousands. The person behind the UK scheme was **Leon Warner** who provided our drivers with packs at greatly reduced prices – often giving up all his commission to try to gain future buys. As Mel’s letter shows, he achieved his aim of making everyone aware of the pill and so far as **Call Sign** was concerned, deserved to do very well on future sales. But there was one problem – sales needed to be on a regular and much larger basis to make it pay as a full time job and there was only one way that could happen – he needed the PCO to allow drivers to use the Power Pill instead of fitting ridiculously overpriced emission contraptions.

**Call Sign** introduced Leon Warner to **Roy Ellis**, then Head of the PCO. He read the genuine reviews that DaC drivers had written in this mag and agreed that the product appeared to work. Roy brought up one prob-

lem that turned out to be insurmountable – how would the PCO know drivers weren’t using Power Pill for a week before the overhaul to get emissions down (it worked immediately) and then stop using it for the following 11.5 months?

Many DaC drivers were using it regularly and still ask **Call Sign** if there are any other outlets, but the nature of life means there would be others who used it just for the overhaul.

There was no way Leon could prove that everyone would use it – after all, it wasn’t free and eventually he had to give up trying. He tried convincing the radio circuits to buy large quantities at discounted prices, but we weren’t talking about a few hundred quid – it would have involved many thousands of pounds and the problems of storing and reselling.

It is sad because Power Pill worked, but other than giving it away for nothing, it seems it will never be a major selling product in the way it is marketed. Where Mel is probably correct, I can’t see the fuel companies agreeing to sell it at their sites in opposition to their own fuel!

**Alan Fisher**

## Xmas online purchases

Since it’s now a fact of life that most of us do our Christmas shopping online, I wonder how many of you had problems with online stores regards returns and refunds? Last Christmas I bought all our Christmas presents online, basically sticking to large online stores such as Amazon, eBay and Ernest Jones. Generally, my experience has been relatively good, however with some gotchas.

I started buying my presents in late November to avoid the rush and usual Christmas delivery delays. So by the second week of December I had virtually completed all of our Christmas shopping, bar the essentials such as fruit and veg. Come Christmas morning, it was obvious that I had bought the wrong presents for some, had pieces missing from others, while some just didn’t work as advertised. So after New Year, I began the onerous task of contacting the appropriate online stores.

eBay provided a superb returns process for the item that did not do as it was advertised – basically the helicopter did not hover! They issued an RMA number and collected the item within days; excellent! However, they subsequently sent a replacement that we refused to accept and we’re now awaiting a full refund. eBay were not so helpful regards the two 4GB miniSD cards that I incorrectly purchased – I should’ve bought microSD... doh! Because I had purchased them in November, they would not accept them as returns, even though I explained that they were Christmas presents.

I didn’t have any items to return to Amazon, but what used to be a showpiece



online store is fast becoming a nightmare. I regard myself as being very technical, but somehow I managed to order two expensive Canon lenses and of course it wasn’t my fault!

Amazon now allow *Partners* to sell through their online store, however Amazon’s integration with their *Partners* system is not as seamless as you’d expect. I ordered a lens, but did not receive confirmation of the order and could not see the order in my current or order history, so I contacted the *Partner* to see if they had received the order; which they hadn’t. So I ordered again and funnily enough, both orders came through at the same time even though they were placed over 24 hours apart! Luckily enough the partner recognised the order and cancelled one, but that could have been an expensive blunder.

So my lessons learnt for next Christmas? Only order within December and try to avoid buying through Amazon using their *Partners* system, it just causes too much hassle.

And Ernest Jones? No problems with the jewellery at all.

## Fields of Flanders

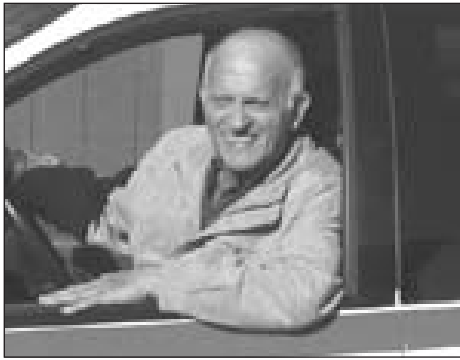
My youngest son is in his final year of GCSE and recently went to the fields of Flanders and returned a changed lad. It seems that actually visiting the memorials, cemeteries, trenches, field hospitals etc, has brought home what sacrifices our ancestors underwent. It also helped that the wife had researched and found members of both our families who took part in the Somme and Ypres; one died, one lived, respectively.

The company my son’s school went with are all ex-military who have researched the subject and brought to life vivid true stories of events during those battles. My son managed to record some of those stories, which were superb. I will definitely be taking a trip to Flanders, hopefully this year. There are many web sites promoting battlefield tours as it’s now big business, but my son highly recommends these guys: [www.angliabattlefields.co.uk/](http://www.angliabattlefields.co.uk/).

*Be Lucky and see you next month*

**Vince Chin**  
**Call Sign online**





*Call Sign's illustrious cartoonist recently visited Dial-a-Cab's equivalent in San Francisco, California – The Luxor Cab Co. His report concludes next month...*

## **Jery Craig visits Luxor Cabs in San Francisco**

When I happened to casually mention to my illustrious **Call Sign** Editor that I was going on a visit to Menlo Park, a lovely district ten miles south of San Francisco, California, he jumped straight in suggesting to me that while there I should contact his cyberspace taxi driver friend and occasional **Call Sign** correspondent, **Charles Rathbone**. Alan asked me to look around **Luxor Cabs** radio operation - who Charles' drives for - and to compare it to Dial-a-Cab. Incredibly, Charles and Alan have been corresponding online since around 1999, a time when most hadn't even heard of the 'net

Rest assured, I told him, I didn't mind doing such a 'difficult' chore as being his roving correspondent to a lovely place like San Francisco. The envy in his large blue, now blood-shot dog eyes, was evident! But he stood up straight as a rod when I suggested that perhaps he might give me half towards my airfare to California!

I emailed Charles and wife Bettina and they said they'd be delighted to show me around Luxor. They also generously invited me to lunch with them at Gaylord's Indian Restaurant in the Embarcadero Center following the grand tour. Being of Scottish descent, I couldn't turn that offer down! But that was just a bonus. Luxor was to be my priority...

### **The old and the new...**

Charles Rathbone has been driving a San Francisco cab for 33 years. He is one of the 6000 licensed taxi drivers sharing 1500 cabs between them that are allowed to ply for hire in a mixture of residential and business areas over a 7 square mile area. Their licence also gives them the right to ply for hire at San Francisco International Airport.

I asked what happened when passengers wanted to go outside the San Francisco hiring area? Charles told me that to make it worthwhile for drivers, the passenger would have to pay a meter reading plus a half towards the return trip. That reminded of the way we London taxi dri-



**Jery tries out a Luxor Cab**

**inset pic: Charles and Bettina showed Jery around**

vers had to negotiate trips to Heathrow Airport and the suburbs in days gone by. This was back when I entered the

taxi business in 1958. Trips then going over 6 miles were few and far between. But when we got the chance of a long job, we'd often have an argument with the passenger at the end of the trip to get the extra fare as it did not show on the meter and they didn't want to pay for what they couldn't see! In fact, most drivers often asked for double fare on the meter for going outside the 6-mile limit. If you could get it, then it was a sweet ride.

The meter with the flag down in 1958 started at nine pence (3.8p), shortly afterwards we were given an increase to one shilling and threepence (6.5p), diesel fuel was one shilling and ten pence per gallon (9p), whilst the average worker's wage was around £10 per week.

More and more people were having telephones installed, but many who wanted a new phone had to share it with another family on what was called a party line. But the increase in phone usage was good news for the radio circuits. The idea of a taxi picking up passengers from their home address was catching on all over

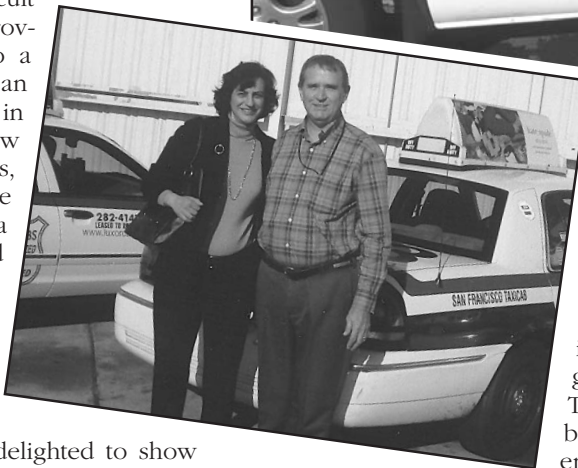
London. Business began to get better week by week for our *Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service* and our *TER 6444* phone number at Pentonville road was being well used by the fast growing, taxi riding public. I knew this because new drivers to the circuit had to sit with the day dispatcher and listen in to how the circuit operated!. My dispatcher on duty was a guy called Bilko. He had a completely bald nape, fringed with jet black hair and was a ringer for the famous cheeky TV sergeant. Our control room then was, if anything, bigger than Luxor Cabs have now...

### **And to Luxor...**

The Caltrain trip from Menlo Park to San Francisco took 47 minutes. Charles wife Bettina met me at the station. She works as an order taker at Luxor Cabs. We hired a cab off the long rank of waiting taxis and Bettina directed the driver to take us to Luxor's cab garage on Jerrold Avenue. On route, the driver sounded off the familiar taxi driver's gripe of waiting on the point of the rank for ages! Within ten minutes we arrived at the Luxor garage to be welcomed by Charles. It's a strange world we live in, one minute we were contacting each other on email, the next we were coming face to face on the other side of the world.

*Concludes next month...*

**Jery Craig**



## MAILSHOT

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

### Power Pill plot?

The absence of supply of the Power Pill, in my mind, has a simple reason. It was an additive that actually worked. There have been other such 'inventions' in the past regarding other sources of fuel, better fuel consumption, etc. These have all just disappeared. If I knew who to place the bet with and had a method of finding out if I was correct, I would lay a hefty bet that the oil companies have bought out the inventor and his product and quietly buried the whole concept.

**Mel Edwardes (Mrs H05)**

**Thanks for the letter Mel, I have written my thoughts elsewhere in this issue as it's rather long for the letters page ...Ed**

### A letter to Richard Potter

*Dear Richard,*

Having read your monthly article (**December Call Sign**) with regards to the feasibility of banning spare tyres, you will be pleased to know that I too am very conscious with regard to saving the planet.

Agreed, spare tyres are heavy and to remove this surplus weight from the cab could indeed save a couple of gallons of fuel a year. My contribution to help saving the planet was to have a petrol/gas conversion on my Metrocab. A number of years ago I too experimented in an attempt to remove surplus weight from my cab. I did this by inflating my spare tyre with helium. As you are no doubt aware this gas is lighter than air, consequently this resulted in having to chain my spare tyre to the cab so as not to lose it when opening the boot lid. Initially, this appeared to be quite successful as the tyre could be lifted by using one finger. Unfortunately several months later my spare tyre developed a slow puncture. I was oblivious to this leakage until my fare requested his destination in a voice reminiscent of one of the Chipmunks. Not one to give up easily, I have now overcome the problem by inflating my spare tyre with 200 pounds per square inch. Between the two of us we can save the world.

*Best wishes, your Eco Warrior friend...*

**Steve Shaller (Red 75) MOFS**

**Richard Potter replies: Steve that would make an excellent Children's story! Floating taxi beats London's traffic congestion! Or maybe you have just invented a new entrant for the Wacky races to go head to head with the Arkansas chuggerbug!**

### TfL planting trees?

I recently wrote to the Sunday Times motor-ing magazine (*In Gear*). My answer

appeared in the December 9th edition in the Car Clinic section. It received an interesting reply.

23 litres of fuel a day equates 14.5 tons of carbon a year - only 131 trees a year needed! How big is your garden? Carbon offsetting companies only charge around £108 a year. Let's hope someone from TfL doesn't decide to surcharge us all? Scary thought is it not?

**Jon Robinson (E88)**

**Are you suggesting we all carry several trees around in our cab boot as sign of goodwill! ...Ed**

### The other side of the fence...

I often think that in our trade so-called job satisfaction is minimal and a good or bad day is determined by how much money we take or the amount of traffic we may encounter.

Today Thursday 13 December, I was reminded that we are sometimes given the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives. I don't mean getting our fares to the airport on time, I mean the less fortunate who maybe don't have a choice in transport and depend on us.

I accepted a Taxicard job this morning; a Mr Jansen from St Georges Drive SW1 to Victoria station, wait and return. An elderly man came out with the aid of a walking stick, we got talking and it transpired he had suffered two strokes and the reason for the trip was so that he could pick up a sandwich from M&S to take to the hospital, as he had an appointment later that day and it was difficult to get food there. I asked him how he was spending Christmas, he replied he had been an orphan, had no family and would spend it alone. He also said how grateful he was to all the Dial-a-Cab drivers who pick him up as he did this same journey every week and was full of praise for all the help other drivers have given him in the past... all except one that is, the driver who had picked him up the week before me. Apparently this driver was in a very bad mood and told him he was not going to wait for him, even after this very pleasant man explained he does the same trip every week. So rather than cause a fuss, he paid the driver £2 and was left stranded at Victoria station. He had no mobile phone, it was raining of course, he couldn't walk and there was a large queue at the taxi rank. Eventually he got a lift home with what I believe was probably a minicab tout, as he was charged £12.

I asked if he had complained about the DaC driver, but he said no and that perhaps the driver was just having a bad day!



I would like to say to this driver if he reads this; we all have bad days and I have done many things I am not proud of. But I would hope I could never stoop as low as you did that day and if you rightly do feel ashamed, you might also reflect that you could have made a difference - perhaps not a life saving one - but a difference all the same to someone's life and you blew it! Shame on you...

**Ian Connelly (T21)**

**Thanks for the letter Ian. I have asked Carol Carpenter - who is in charge of the Westminster account - to write an article in this issue ...Ed**

### Smart car comments

I thought I would inform you of a conversation I had with 2 guys today driving a Smart car from Westminster Council Parking (the one with the camera).

I was telling them about the parking ticket I received whilst sitting in my cab in Curzon Street. They told me that they have been instructed to photograph any vehicle - cab or car - if they park on any single yellow line for even a minute and we should be careful around the loos in Kingsway / Strand, especially driving in front of Clements Danes church.

They suggested all the cab trade organisations should lobby Westminster Council. Sounds a good idea to me, but why has it not been done yet? They seemed to be not too happy about the job they are doing or why we do not get dispensation as we are working.

Perhaps you can contact Westminster Council Parking in your capacity as editor for an interview and also lobby them on our behalf?

**Joseph Hornstein (K78)**

**DaC are currently having talks with Westminster on the subject of taxi parking and as tempting as it sounds to question them, I don't think I have enough clout to interfere. However, I have written a comment elsewhere in this issue, which asks if we are subsidising the Westminster TaxiCard account ...Ed**

### PCNs and "strong arm action..."

Regarding parking tickets, I hope I'm not tempting fate here as I was expecting 2 PCNs from the Westminster area via their Smart car that now don't seem to have materialised. Their little black car pulled up behind me twice and I'm now hoping that the 2 twonks occupying it forgot to put film in!

I know there's a petition in DaC House, but I don't think the councils or TfL will lis-



# MAILSHOT

## Mailshot continued from page 36

ten and neither do I think DaC can continue paying out fines at the rate they are. I think a strong-arm response is needed and I for one am willing to take a stand. The only way I can see is when on account rides, tell the drivers they must park in a legal manner and if this means finding a meter 2, 3 or even 4 streets away, then so be it. And when the passenger struggles to find us or in the case of a TaxiCard, can't walk that far and starts to complain, send them to Westminster to moan.

I think it would work very well beginning with Westminster trips, especially if at a St Mary's Hospital pick up and the drivers have to pay and display in Eastbourne Terrace. It would be very hard on the passengers, but it would get the message across to Westminster. Think about it; they are issuing us with PCNs to pick up passengers that they are subsidising – or is it us now subsidising the trips via parking fines?

And a final thought, over the past two days, 3 out of 5 credit rides have asked me to stop on route; one for Tesco, 1 for a cash point and 1 for Starbucks. I said to the passengers (rightly or wrongly) that should a PCN be received for any of these stops, I would be advising DaC to forward the ticket back to the passenger or company, even for a credit ride we are still governed by hackney and highway laws. It might be worth advising all account clients that if they book a cab from say London Wall to Battersea Rise and demand the driver stops on route and a PCN is received as a result, then the account will be charged? The same goes for making a cab wait a long time after the pre-booked time expires.

**Michael Beevor (N76)**

**Keith Cain replies:** I agree with your sentiments Michael, and the points you raise.

The whole situation of issuing PCNs is getting totally out of hand and we are doing all we can. I can only refer you to my article in the December issue of *Call Sign* to reiterate that an initial meeting with Westminster Borough Parking Enforcement has taken place and another is scheduled. Michael Son and I have been assured that the data we supplied is being reviewed and we both feel that we can progress to a conclusion of reducing the number of tickets issued.

## Thank you Paul

Hopefully I have the right company. One of my colleagues hailed a cab earlier today from Tothill Street to Victoria Station but left a document wallet in the back. Your driver, **Paul Butler (B34)** kindly returned the wallet. I would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks and is there any way of

sending a bottle of wine or something to say thank you?

**Nial Dixon, London SW1**

**Thanks for that Nial. I'm sure Paul would agree that it's the thought that counts ...Ed**

## Bringing boroughs to task?

I've heard a whisper that central government are looking to bring to task some London boroughs over the way they are issuing parking tickets (PCNs) as revenue collectors rather than to help keep illegal parking in check. Have you heard anything about this?

**Richard Benjamin (R48)**

**I asked Ilford North MP, Lee Scott, if he had heard anything about it and he told me that following a report earlier this year, central government said they were going to do something, but that he hadn't yet heard of anything actually having been done ...Ed**

## Eurostar sign

Do you know or could you find out if there are any plans to move the *Taxis Required* sign that was sited at the entrance to the old Eurostar terminal at Waterloo? This was always helpful to both drivers and passengers and would cut down on the need for messages to be sent via the terminal re any queue. A space at the junction of Pancras Rd or Midland Rd would be ideal so you can see it when passing

**Mike Curwood (F51)**

**Keith Cain replies:** At the meetings we have attended with St Pancras International Station and Eurostar, this subject has been spoken about each and every time. While I believe our suggestions have been taken on board, something that seems to us to be all so simple and productive has to go through much red tape. I'm sure it will be implemented, but when I just don't know...

## Legal loophole?

A while back in *Call Sign* there was a copy of a letter from a driver originally published in *Motorcycle News*. The driver was into motorbikes and the letter was about getting a speeding ticket through the post and getting off the ticket and 3 points on a technicality. You had to copy this letter with your own details and FPN number. Do you remember this and have you heard of anyone getting a result by sending this letter to the Met? I have been trying to find the link in *Call Sign* but cannot remember which year it was in. Any help would be great.

**Sean Morgan (Y85)**

**Sorry Sean, that loophole was closed pretty soon after we published the letter (2006). I remember 3 drivers thanking me and saying that it had worked, but then a fourth said it no longer worked and I haven't heard of it working since ...Ed**

## ALG TaxiCard

Dear Alan, may I start by wishing you a very happy and healthy new year. Back in late November, a message was transmitted via our terminals stating that from this December we would no longer be participating in the All London TaxiCard scheme, which we shared with ComCab. The message also stated there would be a full explanation in the following month's *Call Sign*.

To the best of my knowledge, this message was not printed in the December or January issues. Is it possible to explain why we lost this valuable and handy contract, which will be sorely missed especially over the next few lean months?

**Roland Brewer (M38)**

**Thanks for the good wishes, Roland. The reason DaC no longer service the ALG TaxiCard was published on page 35 of the January issue. It was purely down to the terms of the new tender being unacceptable to DaC and making coverage of that account extremely difficult to accomplish – no matter how quiet it is out ...Ed**

## Paint job – and a half!

As you are aware, I brought my TX4 new in August 2007 from KPM. A week after I got it I noticed that a large area of the cab didn't have enough paint on it. When you stood the cab in bright sunlight, you could see through the paint to the beige primer underneath. Also I didn't think the finish was very good on other parts of the taxi. The Cab was returned to KPM who showed it the LTI engineer and they agreed to repaint one panel of the cab. He said the rest of the cab was fine. I disagreed, but never pushed the subject. After the panel was resprayed, I returned the cab yet again, this time when sunlight caught the boot I could see through the paint again. KPM booked the cab in again and while waiting for a loan cab I contacted LTI directly about the overhaul finish and they sent their engineer to see it again. This time he said he could see the paint wasn't good enough and that he would recommend a complete respray and would be in touch.

I was contacted by Chris at KPM and told that the factory had confirmed the work and



# MAILSHOT

## Mailshot continued from page 37

said the cab was to be returned to M&O who would send it back to Coventry. A Dial-a-Cab loan taxi was ordered through M&O while the taxi was gone. First date was mid-November, then mid-December and then 7th January 2008. Each time it was cancelled with the reason given that there was no loan cab available.

The trouble now is that my taxi is almost 6 months old and the mid-year test in due, there is warranty work that I hoped would be done while it was away and so the cab will have to go back to KPM for that. The SGS test will be booked and if the cab isn't back, the appointment will be cancelled. What happens then I just don't know?

With hindsight, I should have instructed KPM that the taxi was not of merchantable quality and asked for it to be replaced straight away. At least it might have been repaired quicker.

From what's been said to me, I'm not the only one to have this problem but after paying £36,700, I'm fed up being messed around.

**Jon Robinson (E88)**

**I'm not surprised that you're fed up Jon. I think you have been a saint putting up with the problem for as long as you have! However, in all fairness to M&O they have to reserve their 4 DaC taxis for their own overhaul customers and KPM should have provided the DaC cab if available (they have three). Anyway, I've written to LTI on your behalf to see whether things can be speeded up ...Ed**

## CCTV, SGS, M&O, LTDA....!

The Martin Hizer (M47) story (*Dec Call Sign*) really underpinned my thoughts of the past few months with regard to the evil CCTV being used to persecute and prosecute working cab drivers. Having held a cab licence for 36 years, for some of that time I was a government driver and never incurred any offence including parking during that time... until now. I was always thought and trained to respect and not cause inconvenience to other road users. I am currently fighting a PCN for having to set-down a job in Noel St last summer during the Wardour Street road closure. I will rather go to prison than pay this thieving Westminster Council. Martin is quite right, this is the biggest threat that our trade has ever seen and the more we pay up, the more tickets they will issue. Do they have some hidden agenda like peeing us off so much that you may decide to go away and retire? Perhaps they want your/my licence for some immigrants and think that English cab drivers are no longer representative of the London

population because maybe immigrant drivers will be happy to pay PCNs and think it's part of the system just like back home in their corrupt countries?

Trying to provide a decent and courteous service today is almost impossible and a polite explanation to my passengers regarding stopping at an ATM for fear of a PCN, which in itself takes my driving concentration, is often met with silent disbelief and creates bad feeling and maybe I will not get paid. I don't want or need this stress. Replicate this every day x 25,000 cab drivers and it is an enormous problem.

On a more positive note, things are getting better. SGS, whom I have dealt with 2 or 3 times, have been cooperative, helpful, knowledgeable and booking an overall inspection appointment is a breeze. They have blown away the cobwebs of the old PCO where any enquiry deemed you a bloody nuisance.

And having purchased a new TX4 from Mann & Overton last September, I have experienced very few problems and when returning the cab for minor repair, have found the service department very cooperative and they have given me immediate attention. Why go anywhere else? The improved suspension is enough reason to buy a new cab to counter the barbaric speed bumps which damage your body.

In conclusion we must take a hard stand against these thieving councils who know we are a soft target, something must be done. LTDA, where are you?

**Stuart Benjamin B10**

**The petition organised by Martin Hizer and Tony Mitchell is still at Driver Reception in DaC House. Several hundred have signed so far and whether it works or not, it is still important that it's seen to be representative of our views re parking harassment. So the next time anyone who hasn't signed is passing the office, pop in ...Ed**

## Speed cameras

According to government statistics, there has been a marked reduction in injuries and deaths from road accidents with a 10.5% reduction in deaths from a 3,578 average between 1994-1998 to 3,201 in 2005; whilst seriously injured have fallen by 34.3% from 44,078 to 28,954 in the same period (Road Casualties Great Britain: 2005 Annual Report (DfT)).

There are several factors which contribute to this; cars now have better brakes and steering, roads and lighting have improved, emergency services are more efficient and doctors can now save more people who would have died some years ago.

But what has not helped has been the introduction of speed cameras, or as the spin people prefer, "safety cameras." At first the Department for Transport claimed that 100 lives per year were saved by speed cameras, but in December 2005 admitted the figure should only be 25 per year, and in September 2006 they discovered that the proportion of injury crashes involving any speeding vehicle was only 5% - not the 'one third' that they had previously claimed ([www.safespeed.org.uk](http://www.safespeed.org.uk)). The government's own statistics have shown that road deaths ceased to decline following the widespread deployment of cameras (The Spectator, 12 December 2007).

As taxi drivers know, if you drive at 37 mph on a straight dual carriageway in dry conditions when there is no other traffic, it does not mean you are speeding, even though the limit may be 30mph as on Talgarth Road, but to drive at 18 mph when it is foggy or icy is too fast but no speed camera will catch this form of dangerous driving. According to an editorial in The Observer (17 January 2005): "*... far from acting as a deterrent, speed cameras take responsibility for safe speed away from drivers and their concentration from the road. Cameras are as likely to cause an accident as to prevent one.*"

After the July bombings in 2005, some people decided that the underground was dangerous and went out and bought bikes to get to work, even though cycling is far more dangerous than any likely terrorist threat. The simplistic and faulty logic used by those new cyclists is similar to the government persisting on installing more speed cameras to reduce accidents, rather than tackling careless and dangerous driving.

**Laurence Kelvin (W88)**

**It seems rather over simplistic to just say that I agree with your speeding sentiments... but I agree with your speeding sentiments! However, the last time I dared to criticise cyclists in Call Sign, I was physically threatened by a driver whose son was a keen cyclist! ...Ed**

## Security at Roman Way?

Just before Xmas I was close to Roman Way so I thought I would collect my prezzie. On arrival, I noticed one member of staff washing his car, two others with their heads under the bonnet of a 4x4 and another fiddling about with model cars. I haven't got a problem with staff doing private work when there is no work to do, but I do have a problem when I go to sign for my jacket and someone has already signed for it. With the well-documented security in place, I want to know





# MAILSHOT

## Mailshot continued from page 38

how this happened? Surely when collecting the present you should show your badge and then be ticked off against your name, call sign and badge number? I was given a jacket, but I feel a breach of security has been broken with someone else being allowed to sign for my coat in the first place...

**Barry Spear (Y16)**

**I was going to ask Tom Whitbread for an answer, but it seems fairly obvious that someone has signed their name on the wrong line after probably suffering a case of pre-Xmas jollity. By the way Barry, did you notice if they had finished working on my car yet! ...Ed**

## Thanks from an admitted drunk!

I'm sure your Customer Services team get the occasional email of complaint following drunken trips by account passengers, so I thought it worthwhile sending you a different email - one of thanks following a drunken trip by an AMV passenger ...me!

Worse for wear last Thursday after a work night, I left my phone in one of your cabs. I knew it was gone the next day and suspected a dropped-in-cab scenario, but despite ringing it a few times on the Friday, couldn't connect. Then I got a call from a

driver saying he had it, but what's more, takes the time to drop it by my house! For not only taking the time to scrawl through the phone to find my number, but for also returning the handset pretty immediately, this was beyond the call of duty and much appreciated. The drivers name was Steve Cruikshank (G10). He did your company a great reputational credit. Can you pass on my thanks again to Steve...

**Colin Fleming**

**Finance Director**

**AMV BBDO Ltd**

**I believe Brian Rice phoned Steve to pass on your message. Thanks for taking the time to send it, Colin, as you rightly point out some people are quick to criticise but very slow to praise ...Ed**

## Help from colleagues at a sad time?

*Dear Colleagues*

Many of you will know that we put forward a proposal for the forthcoming AGM. The essence of this being that all we members of ODRTS would each donate five pounds to the family of any paid-up member in the event of his/her demise. The purpose would be to help soften the blow at a very

emotional and distressing period with some financial assistance from colleagues at Dial-a-Cab.

Unfortunately, for reasons we could not have foreseen, it has been deemed that it would breach mutual Society, ergo ODRTS rules. We have therefore reluctantly had to withdraw the proposal. However, after lengthy discussions with our Chairman, who along with other members of the Board has fully supported us, there may well be another way forward.

We believe that the Chairman, along with the BoM, are best equipped to further this proposal, who, once all the legalities have been ironed out, may well put it to the membership in a mail shot.

We would like to thank the very many members who backed our proposal and the support and encouragement given to us by all whom we have encountered.

**Paul Soteriou (P89)/Panteli Savvas (B85)**  
**Brian Rice replies: Sorry Paul and Panteli, while the BoM are sympathetic to the idea of helping the family of a colleague at a time like that, we cannot do anything about it because it is illegal and sending out a mailshot rather than you bringing it up at the AGM would make absolutely no difference to that.**



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

## CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE

Walking an elderly neighbour's dogs yesterday afternoon, I was reminded of an interesting fact about the countryside around our French village. Vineyards surround us, but there is also the *Garrige*, a shrubby woodland consisting mostly of small pine trees, herbs, thyme grasses, brambles and heathers. This is a thick mat of vegetation with hundreds of gravel paths made, presumably, by other dog walkers and various animals including wild boar.

I discovered that if you follow a track for twenty minutes in any one direction, in order to get back to where you started from will take at least an hour! My neighbour says I keep getting lost, but my theory is that these mystical woodlands are really time portals - or thyme portals - and we keep stepping through them into alternative dimensions, hence the shrinking and expansion of distances. Yes, you're right, I was sipping the wine again last night!  
The new year has started like a roller-



coaster - a lot is happening and I have a few new plans, including the frequent export of wine from these sun-kissed vineyards. Judging by the success of the first batch transported, resulting in a near-empty lock-up in Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, I may well be making more than just a few trips there and back.

I wonder how the kipper season is? I keep in touch with the weather news around London and the wind and rain must be good for street work. I always preferred covering as much of the account work as I could - and there was always plenty of that on DaC.

But if you're struggling and fancy an early break, go to [www.southof-francelets.com](http://www.southof-francelets.com).

There are villas with pools, French village homes and others to help you recharge and get ready for the busy time to come.

*Be lucky, be careful out there et à bientôt...*

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



**Keith Reading**  
**Professional Toastmaster & Master of Ceremonies**

Telephone: 01279 465938  
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*Graduate of the Professional Toastmasters' Academy*

# Test the icon

## Drive away in a new jacket

Test drive the TX4 at your LTI dealer and get this branded jacket FREE of charge, (hurry while stocks last). Each participant will be included in our national DRAW with the chance to WIN £2,000 1<sup>st</sup> Prize, £500 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize.\*

When you first get into a TX4 you'll see why so many of your colleagues have already chosen to own one. With its powerful VM Motori engine, improved suspension, ABS brakes and comfortable ride, it really is the best taxi on the road for the professional driver. Why not try one and we will reward you with a TX4 jacket.



To receive your FREE TX4 jacket, simply make an appointment with your local LTI dealership, test drive the TX4 and complete the customer enquiry form.

\* Offer ends 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008

#### Improved features include:

- Euro IV compliant engine
- ABS all round brakes
- Improved in car entertainment
- Improved intercom
- Head restraints
- Coil suspension
- Improved security
- Air-blend air conditioning
- More power

The TX4 is the most advanced purpose-built taxi in the world. The redefined, new generation TX4 taxi has a massive 45% increase in torque over the Fairway and 20% more torque than the TXII.

\* Offer available at participating dealers only while stocks last. Test drive by appointment only. Must fully complete customer enquiry form and must present both parts of driving licence and Hackney licence. Standard terms and conditions apply, available on request.

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KPM UK Taxis PLC - London  
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tel: 0161 831 3434  
tel: 0131 558 8005

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