

March 2008



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

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Four page AGM report

***This quiet DaC meeting with
Mayoral candidate Brian Paddick
caused a public
rumpus with Boris!***



***The DaC driver on the right is about to
suffer an attack of wind!***





NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

Start of a new series, clubs in the London area, some may just be bars, but they like to pretend they are clubs. Whilst it's a new series I expect it will take a short break next month to bring you the new fare increase...

Clubs, Address	Clubs, Address	Clubs, Address
# 3,3 New Burlington Street, W1S 2JE	Carbon, Old Quebec Street, W1C 1LZ	Doon, 66 Trafalgar Square (Albannach), WC2N 5DS
# 3 Green Street, 3 Green Street, SW1	Cargo, 83 Rivington Street, EC2A 3AY	Downstairs at Mestizo, 103 Hampstead Rd, NW1 3EL
# 5, 5 Cavendish Square, W1G 0PG	Carling Academy Brixton, 211 Stockwell Road, SW9 9SL	Dragon Bar, 5 Leonard Street, EC2A 4AQ
# Ten, 10 Golborne Road, W10 5PE	Casanova Nite Club, 181 Edgware Road, W2 1ET	Dulwich Hamlet, Dog Kennel Hill, SE22 8BD
Abacus, 24 Cornhill, EC3V 3ND	Casino at Empire, 5-6 Leicester Street, WC2H 7NA	Dunes, 20 Kensington Church Street, W8 4EP
Adam Street, 9 Adam Street, WC2N 6AA	Catch, 22 Kingsland Road, E2 8DA	Dusk, 339 Battersea Park Road, SW11 4LS
Addies Club, 121 Earls Court Road, SW5 9RL	Catwalk, 70 New Bond St, W1S 1DE	Dust, 27 Clerkenwell Road, EC1M 5RN
Adelaide, 143 Adelaide Road, NW3 3NL	CC Club, 13 Coventry Street, W1D 7DH	Dutch Master, Tower Hill (Tower Pier), EC3N 4DT
Agenda, Minster Court 3 Mincing Lane, EC3R 7AA	Cedar Room, 235 Upper Street, N1 1RU	Edge Club, Commercial Street, E1 6BJ
Aint Nothin But Blues Bar, 20 Kingly Street, W1R 5LB	Ceilidh Club, Lavender Hill (BAC), SW11 5TN	Edwards, Hatfield Rd, SW19 1QB
AK Club Palace, 657 Green Lanes, N8 0QY	CellarDoor, Zero Aldwych, WC2E 7DN	Egg, 200 York Way, N7 9AP
AKA, 18 West Central Street, WC1A 1JJ	Central Station, 37 Wharfedale Road, N1 9SE	Ego1Southernpride, 82 Norwood High St, SE27 9NW
Albany, 240 Great Portland Street, W1W 5QU	Century, 61-63 Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 6LQ	Eight Members Club, 1 Change Alley, EC3V 3ND
Alchemist Bar, 225 St Johns Hill, SW11 1TH	Charlie Chans, Chingford Road (W'stowDogs), E4 8SJ	Elbow Room, 89-91 Chapel Market, N1 9EX
Alexandra Palace, Alexandra Palace Way, N22 7AY	Charlie Wrights International Bar, 45 Pittfield Street, N1 6DA	Electric Ballroom, 184 Camden High Street, NW1 8QP
All Star Lanes, 151 Queensway (Whiteley's), W2 4YQ	Charlies, 9 Crosswall, EC3N 2HT	Electric Birdcage, 11 Haymarket, SW1Y 4BP
Amersham Arms, 388 New Cross Road, SE14 6TY	Charterhouse, 38 Charterhouse Street, EC1M 6JH	Electricity Showrooms, 39a Hoxton Square, N1 6NN
Amika, 63-65 High Street Kensington, W8 5SE	Chateau 6, 563 Fulham Road, SW6 1ES	Electrowerkz, 7 Torrens Street, EC1V 1NQ
Anam, 3 Chapel Market, N1 9EZ	Cheekos, Archway Close (Tav), N19 3TD	Elmwoods Club, 114 Greenwich South Street, SE10 8UN
Anda De Bridge, 42-44 Kingsland Road, E2 8DA	Chelsea Arts Club, 143 Old Church Street, SW3 6EB	Embargo, 533b Kings Road, SW10 0TZ
Annabels Club, 44 Berkeley Square, W1J 5AR	Cherry Jam, 58 Porchester Road, W2 6ET	Embassy, 119 Essex Road, N1 2SN
Annexe, 9 Brighton Terrace, SW9 8DJ	Chicago Rock Cafe, 5-9 Spread Eagle Walk, Epsom, KT19 8DN	Embassy London, 29 Old Burlington Street, W1S 3AN
Apt, 10-15 Queen Street, EC4N 1TX	Chinawhite, 6 Air Street, W1B 5AA	End, 18 West Central Street, WC1A 1JJ
Arches, 53 Southwark Street, SE1 1TE	Chloe, 3 Cromwell Road, SW7 2AR	Engineer, 65 Gloucester Avenue, NW1 8JH
Area, 67-68 Albert Embankment, SE1 7TP	Chocolate Lounge, 146-148 Newington Butts, SE11 4RN	Enterprise, 2 Haverstock Hill, NW3 2BL
Arizona, 134 Marylebone Road, NW1 5PH	Cigar Divan, Harrington Gardens (Bentley Htl), SW7 4JX	EnVogue, 20 Kensington Church Street, W8 4EP
Arts Theatre Club, 50 Frith Street, W1D 4SQ	City Golf, 24 Bride Lane, EC4Y 8DT	EP Bar, 350-354 Old Street, EC1V 9NQ
Asylum Club, Rathbone Place, W1P 1DJ	Clapham Grand, 21-25 St.Johns Hill, SW11 1TT	EQ Club, Waterden Road, E15 2HN
At Proud, Chalk Farm Road (Stables Mkt), NW1 8AH	Clockwork, 96-98 Pentonville Road, N1 9JB	Equinox, Leicester Square, WC2
Aura, 48-49 St. James's Street, SW1A 1JT	Club 19 at Trent Pk, Bramley Rd (Golf), N14 4UW 1SJ	Escape, 10a Brewer Street, W1F 0SU
Avenue, 19 The Avenue, W13 8JR	Club 414, 414 Coldharbour Lane, SW9 8LF	Establishment, 135 Finchley Road, NW3 6JH
Blagclub (Holland Park), 11 Russell Gardens, W14 8EZ	CLUB 49, 49 Greek Street, W1D 4EG	Eve Club, 3 New Burlington Street, W1S 2JF
Blagclub (Kensal Road), 222 Kensal Road, W10 5BN	Club Afrique, 145 -147 Barking Road, E16 9HL	Exilio Latino 1 LSE, Houghton Street, WC2A
Blagclub (Notting Hill Gate), 68 Notting Hill Gate, W11 3HT	Club Aquarium, 256-264 Old Street, EC1V 9DD	Fabric, 77a Charterhouse Street, EC1M 3HN
Bloomsbury Ballroom, Bloomsbury Sq (VicHse), WC1B4DA	Club Boulevard, 10 High Street, W5 5JY	Faces Nightclub, 458 Cranbrook Rd Gants Hill, IG2 6LE
Bloomsbury Bowling, Bedford Way (Tavistock), WC1H 9EU	Club E3, 562 Mile End Road, E3 4PH	Factory, 65 Goding Street, SE11 5AW
Blue, 222 High Street, SW19 2BH	Club G Spot, 56 Bondway, SW8	Faltering Fullback, 88 Green Lanes, N13 5UP
Blue Room, 41-53 Richmond Road Kingston, KT2 5BW	Club KO, 9a The Broadway, N22 6DS	Favela Chic, 91-93 Great Eastern Street, EC2A 3HZ
Bluescene at Lion, 27 Wick Road, TW11 9DN	Club Moonlight, 32 Railway Approach Harrow, HA3 5AA	Fest, 678-680 Fulham Road, SW6 5SA
Blush, 8 Cazenove Road, N16 6BD	Club Oops, 30 Alie Street, E1 8DA	Fez Club, 200b Upper Richmond Road, SW15 2SH
Bluu, 1 Hoxton Square, N1 6NU	Club U Wish, 272 Muswell Hill, N10 2QR	Fiddlers Elbow, 1 Malden Road, NW5 3HS
Bondai, 329-331 Fulham Road, SW10 9QL	Club Wicked, 2-4 Tooley Street, SE1 2SY	Fiesta Havana, 490 Fulham Road, SW6 5NH
Boogaloo, 312 Archway Road, N6 5AT	C02 Bar, 2 Clements Road Ilford, IG1 1BP	Fine Line, 124-127 Minories, EC3N 1NT
Borderline, Orange Yard (Manette St), W1D 4JB	Coco SW5, 180-184 Earls Court Road, SW5 9QG	Fire, South Lambeth Road, SW8 1UQ
Boston Arms, 178 Junction Road, N19 5QQ	Cocoma, 323 Old Street, EC1V 9LE	FLIP, 30 Lisle Street, WC2H 7BA
Boujis, 43 Thurloe Street, SW7 2LQ	Coconut Grove, Waterden Road, E15 2EE	Fluid Bar, 40 Charterhouse Street, EC1M 6JN
Boutique 60, 60 Hyde Park Gate, SW7 5BB	Colosseum, 1 Nine Elms Lane, SW8 5NQ	Fly, 36-38 New Oxford Street, WC1A 1EP
BRB Arc, 1 Torrens Street, EC1V 1NQ	Comedy Store, 1a Oxenden Street, SW1Y 4EE	Fortress Studios, 34-38 Provost Street, N1 7NG
Brewery, 52 Chiswell Street, EC1Y 4SD	Copacabana, Unit1 FerryQuays Ferry Ln Brentford, TW8 0BD	Forum, 9-17 Highgate Road, NW5 1JY
Brickhouse, Brick Lane (Truman Brwy), E1 6RU	Corks Wine Bar, 28 Binney Street, W1K 5BW	Freedom, 66 Wardour Street, W1F 0TA
Bridge Bar, Southend Road Beckenham, BR3 1SD	Corner Store, 33-35 Wellington Street, WC2E 7BN,	Fridge, 1 Town Hall Parade Brixton Hill, SW2 1RJ
Bridge SE1, Weston Street, SE1 3QX	Coronet, 26-28 New Kent Road, SE1 6TJ	Fringe, 330 Kennington Lane, SE11 5HY
Brown Sugar, 146 High Holborn, WC1V 6RJ	Corsica Studios, Elephant Road (Unit5), SE17 1LB	Fudge, 18 Bear Street, WC2H 7AS
Buffalo Bar, 295 Upper Street, N1 1RU	CosmoBar, 50-54 Clerkenwell Road, EC1M 5PS	Funky Munk, 25 Camberwell Church Street, SE5 8TR
Bull, 292-294 St John Street, EC1V 4PA	Cougar Club, 11 Russell Gardens W14 8EZ	Funkybuddha, 15 Berkeley Street, W1J 8DY
Bull and Gate, 389 Kentish Town Road, NW5 2TJ	Cousin Jills Karaoke, 42 Albemarle Street, W1S 4JH	G.E.Club, 40 Liverpool Street (Hotel), EC2M 7QN
Bungalow 8, 45 St Martins Lane (Htl), WC2N 4HX	Crash, 66 Albert Embankment, SE1 7TP	Galtymore Dance Club, 194 Cricklewood Bdy, NW2 3EB
Bunker Club, 46 Deptford Broadway, SE8 4PH	Crazy Larrys, 533 Kings Road, SW10 0TZ	Gardening Club, 6/7 The Piazza, WC2E 8HA
Burlington Club, 12 New Burlington Street, W1S 3BF	Cross, York Way (KXGoodsYd), N1 0UZ	Gate Res/Bar/Club, 87 Notting Hill Gate, W11 3JZ
Bush Hall, 310 Uxbridge Road, W12 7LJ	Crown, 117 London Road Morden, SM4 5LX	G-A-Y 1 Astoria, 157 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0EN
Caesars, 156-160 Streatham Hill, SW2 4RU	Crown, 142-152 Cricklewood Broadway, NW2 3ED	G-A-Y Late, 5 Goslett Yard, WC2H 0ER
Cafe 1001, 101 Brick Lane, E1 6SE	Crystal Club, 78 Wells Street, W1T 3QL	Ghetto, 1 Falconberg Court, W1V 5FG
Cafe de Paris, 3-4 Coventry Street, W1V 7FL	Cube Bar, 58a Camberwell Church Street, SE5 8QZ	Ginglik, 1 Shepherds Bush Green, W12 8PH
Cafe Society, 5 Windsor Close Brentford, TW8 9DZ	Cuckoo Club, Swallow Street, W1B 4EZ	Glass, 9 Glasshouse Street, W1R 5RL
Calm Salsa, 122 Oakleigh Road North, N20 9EZ0TG	Dex Club, 467-469 Brixton Road, SW9 8HH	Good Ship, 289 Kilburn High Road, NW6 7JR
Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1H 9DB1F	Dicey Reillys, 295 Neasden Lane, NW10 1QR	Gramophone, 60-62 Commercial Street, E1 6LT
Cameos, 50 Margaret Street, W1W 8SF	Digress Soho, 10 Beak Street, W1F 9RA	Granaries, 6 Overtons Yard Croydon, CR0 1SL
Camouflage, 84-86 Wardour Street, W1	Dingwalls, Camden Lock (Middle Yd), NW1 8AB	Grand Junction Arms, Acton Lane, NW10 7AD
Candy Bar, 4 Carlisle Street, W1D 3BJ	Ditch Bar, 145 Shoreditch High Street, E1 6TE	Grand Union, 45 Woodfield Road, W9 2BA
Canterbury Arms, 8 Canterbury Crescent, SW9 7QD	Divas, 17a Harrington Road, SW7 3ES	Green Carnation, 5 Greek Street, W1D 4DD
Canvas, Kings Cross Freight Depot off York Way, N1 0UZ	Dizzys, 28 King William Street, EC4R 9AT	Grosvenor Casino, 150-162 Edgware Road, W2 2DT
Canve bar (Prodigal), Wood Street / Love Lane, EC2V 7JF	Dogstar, 389 Coldharbour Lane, SW9 8LQ	Groucho Club, 45 Dean Street, W1D 4QB
	Dome, 178 Junction Road (Boston), N19 5QQ	Guanabara, Parker Street, WC2B 5PW

For this months "What's On" or all the clubs A to Z in both alphabetical order and Post Code order, you will have to do something. Get on your computer and send an email to - alan@nashnumbers.co.uk - then put the heading as "UID" and in the text just put your name, next line your email address, next line badge number, call sign and contact telephone number, which I will only use if I have problems sending you an email. Simple or what? And it's FREE, that's what you call a bargain!

from the editor's desk

Fare increase

As exclusively revealed in the Chairman's column last month - several weeks before the rest of the trade press got their hands on it - there will be an increase in fares from 5 April.

But is it just me or am I wrong in claiming that the increase in costs we've suffered over the past year are far higher than the increase we are going to get? The average taxi fare will increase by 2.7% according to TfL who then go on to say that this increase will help us to maintain our earnings by covering increased operating costs - specifically rises in diesel.

For many years, the new fares have been calculated using the cost index devised in 1981 by late T&G rep, Peter Hagger and based on national average earnings and taxi operating costs.

But those costs have gone up by 5.7% this year, not to mention a huge increase in diesel prices. So 2.7%? But no, say TfL! The increase going by the cost index is 4.7% with the extra 2% being the result of removing the 20p environmental surcharge on every journey, which was introduced in 2005, and then giving it back to us!

According to TfL, 3 years of the 20p will have given all those who spent between £2000 - £3000 on emission-busting equipment, that in many cases needed other bits and pieces to make it work, their money back. So calling it £2500 over those 3 years means you would need to have taken around 17 trips per day on a 5-day, 50-week year and then saved it all up!

According to Ed Thompson, *Taxi and PH director at the PCO*, the new fares take into account the increased costs over the year of running a taxi. He said:

"They protect taxi drivers' income while still providing value for money for passengers who enjoy a top quality service in London."

Sorry, but I disagree. Don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating a huge increase. To frighten passengers away in such a sensitive economic climate would be madness. I just don't like being told that I'm getting something that I patently am not.

Figures from the *Office for National Statistics* show that fuel prices are rising at their fastest rate for a decade and that the price of diesel has risen by 19% in the past year alone! Taking into account the increased cost in insurance and the increase in parts / repairs etc, the ONS report shows an increase in the cost of motoring over the past year of 11.7%.

Anyone buy a TXII after 23 March? Then your road tax went up from £195 to £300. If you bought a TX4, then the tax increased from £215 to £300. And, er... anyone heard of the 6-month safety check, which as from 2 April will also include a ramp check as well? This increase won't go near recovering any of the above.

But there is some good news; inflation is just 2.2% (excuse me while I choke because even Bank of England Governor Mervyn King is expecting it to increase with fuel being a large contributory factor!)

Yes, when the Mayor took office in 2000 diesel was 81.9p a litre, but by the following year it had dropped to 77.9p and by 2002 dropped even further to 75.9p. Even by 2003 it still hadn't returned up to its 2000 level.

But there is more good news - an increase of 50p to fixed fares for taxi sharing from Buck



House following garden parties. I also hear that HM has been given £3million to fix up the old home. Rumours that she was told she could have the loot in 20p admission charges were dismissed!

Any by the way, yes I did read the *Evening Standard* article about how disgusting it was for taxis to get another yearly increase. And no, I took no notice of it seeing as how their staff aren't allowed to use taxis and unless absolutely necessary, must stick to buses or trains. Rumour is they are having financial problems and besides, once a year merchants like the ES always moan!

And speaking of the PCO...!

It may not sound like it, but I have always believed in the concept of the PCO and indeed I only have to ask for assistance with a taxi-related query and Penton Street will give it if humanly possible. For that I am always grateful.

But - what do you mean you knew there was a 'but' - I am becoming concerned about a 'them and us' scenario. When I passed out on 21 May 1971, I had to show my bank accounts and any other savings I had, to ensure that I would never run away after renting a cab. Before buying my first taxi and getting a proprietor's licence, I had to once again prove I had some dosh. But now for the second time in a year, companies recommended by the PCO via having their equipment passed and a press release put out, have crashed leaving drivers out of pocket by thousands of pounds.

Cabtvate were first to hit the floor with their in-cab TV system and now **van Aaken** have gone into administration. Yet there hasn't been a single word from Penton Street saying we're sorry for those drivers that took notice and went to either! If it was Cabtvate, you are probably several thousand pounds out of pocket and if it was van Aaken then you face the uncertain future of having a system where you may not be able to get spare parts.

The quality of both may well have been good, but financially they obviously were not up to the mark. My only thought is whether, like we cabbies, the PCO asked them for a guarantee bond to cover drivers should the unthinkable happen - and of course, it did. As I said earlier, it smells of 'them and us'...

Not knowing when to be quiet!

I'm not going to go into the expulsion of former DaC driver Grant Davis in detail.

Suffice to say that he was given his marching orders for putting a private phone call onto the Internet via a chat list. There were no regrets from Mr Davis, only a complaint in *The Badge* that the driver who reported him to DaC had breached the Data Protection Act! That is akin to the Latino woman in the wonderful musical *Chicago* who disputes the murder charge that she stabbed her cheating husband by claiming that he ran onto her kitchen knife - that he ran onto her kitchen knife 18 times!

Grant spouts his usual rubbish of how the DaC complaints system is loaded against the driver and how he was really expelled for being outspoken! Again I make no comment on his claims other than the complaints committee consists of 3 ordinary drivers picked from a list of volunteers. Anyone can apply, although few bother. Even so, the drivers who sit when picked out of the hat are just ordinary drivers with no axe to grind.

Then we had the rumours circulating earlier last month suggested in-fighting at the LCDC followed by the shock resignation of Chairman Alan Fleming, leaving Grant Davis as the unelected Chairman of the organisation. Whilst I didn't always agree with Alan, I have never made any secret of my admiration for his knowledge of cab law and the way he defended his members in court with an amazingly high success ratio. One of the reasons the LCDC is financially solvent is probably because Mr Fleming did most of it for nothing! If the Club had to pay for defence lawyers, I can't but help wonder where all that money would have come from? A large number of drivers rely on the LCDC to be there for them if they hit trouble. It appears that Mr Fleming has agreed to return as Chairman, however, he no longer has the editorship of *The Badge*. Other than Grant Davis' constant snipes at DaC, *The Badge* is usually informative. I can't wait to see which way it goes now. It certainly doesn't take much imagination to expect to see Grant's personal views on DaC given more space!

Putting all that aside, I'm not sure that I could trust someone who thinks it's ok to put a private phone call on the Internet? Perhaps the "outspoken" Mr Davis - erstwhile star of failed DVD *Lunatic: Blame it on the moon* - should learn to keep quiet at times? The world had forgotten about his expulsion and in all probability, those who hadn't forgotten could not have cared less anyway! And let's hope it's true that the LCDC committee saw sense and got Alan Fleming to reconsider...

Arnold Ritter...

I like to think that the recently held and very well behaved AGM was a sign of respect to former BM Arnold Ritter, who sadly passed away a few days later. Arnold was very much someone who believed in creating a presentable image for the Society and a piece on his DaC career is in this issue...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

AGM

Well, another AGM has come and gone - the latest one being held on 10 February 2008. As usual, the overwhelming majority of members chose to vote by post rather than attend the meeting. It was the thirteenth meeting that I have conducted and in my view probably the best! Everyone behaved impeccably and asked sensible, poignant questions relating to the business - which is the way it should be!

However, one thing really did make me smile. As you probably remember, we had to seek a rule change to bring our rulebook up-to-date regarding the address of our building. The current rulebook shows our address as Brunswick Place and it needed to be amended to show East Road, amazingly 62 members voted not to change our address! I am not sure if they were having a bit of fun or didn't read the rule change correctly, anyway, it was quite amazing!

Downturn?

I know everyone is talking about a downturn in the economy, but at this moment in time I have not noticed anything unusual concerning our business. Of course all our clients - especially the larger ones - are looking at their costs and endeavouring to save money wherever they can and move more work towards cars, as they see this as a way of cutting their expenditure on transport. However, as I have already stated, I have not noticed any downturn as yet, in fact the first third of our financial year shows a small increase in turnover of £1million and trips that we completed in January were up 1% over the corresponding period last year.

So as you can see, although we are not experiencing the massive growth that we enjoyed over the past two years, business is not looking too bad at the moment. Personally, I will be satisfied if we can maintain the *status quo*!

PCNs

As you will see elsewhere in the magazine, some letters have gone to various Boroughs from the *Confederation of British Industry* (CBI) concerning the number of parking tickets that our members are receiving. We are endeavouring to enlist support from anywhere we can in an attempt to eradicate the victimisation our members are experiencing. In the past I have spoken to the Mayor's office, TfL, the PCO, MPs and even the Boroughs themselves in an attempt to rectify the situation. Enlisting the support of the CBI is just the latest development in this saga.

There is also a meeting later this month with certain Boroughs and a joint representation from the radio circuits in a further attempt to resolve the situation. In addition,



some of our members have been extremely successful in their own right in fighting these PCNs if they felt the parking tickets were unjustified. I must say that these members have my utmost admiration, as they have taken it upon themselves to pursue a situation when they felt an injustice/s had been done. The easy solution would have been to bring the PCNs to us for payment, as they were on a *bona fide* credit ride at the time of the alleged incidents, however, they chose to fight the Boroughs concerned and in every case they have been successful - so well done to them.

Channels and Signals

As I explained at the AGM, our number one priority at the moment is to improve signals. As you are aware, we have converted our voice channel to data and made it channel 9 in an attempt to alleviate the pressure on our other channels. However, we have been extremely fortunate - and I mean really fortunate - in that we have obtained another three VHF High Band channels from Ofcom. I really can't stress how important or significant this is, because to obtain these extra frequencies is nothing short of a small miracle. As I explained earlier, signals have taken over as top priority and our new terminals have moved to second spot in the list of priorities. After all, there is no point in buying the latest super HD Plasma TV and then after you have installed it, find out that the new piece of equipment cannot receive a television signal. It is then practically useless!

So our old voice channel (channel 2) is now the new data channel 9, our three new channels will be - not surprisingly - channels 10, 11 and 12. Channel 10 will be sited on Brunel University at Englefield Green, channel 11 on the Trellick Tower and channel 12 at Guys Hospital. We are optimistic that we can have all the new sites up and running by the beginning of April. Like everything else, there is of course a drawback and that is our MC Micra radios are only equipped to accommodate eight channels whereas our Tait radios can accommodate sixteen channels! But before you all rush off to Roman Way requesting a new radio, I am informed that Dana at Roman

way has devised a new piece of equipment for the MC Micra that means it is compatible and can accommodate all of our new frequencies. Because we now have the new site at Englefield Green and another at Shooters Hill - the two sites that are furthest apart - we have decided to split the channel at Englefield Green and re-use it at Shooters Hill. This will be channel 13 and will of course show on your terminal as channel 13. The reason we can split this channel is because the sites are so far apart, the signals will not overlap.

I hope the above makes you all aware of just how determined we are to improve signals. However, of one thing I can assure you, they will never, ever be perfect!

Fare Increase

As I informed you in the last edition of the magazine, the 4.7% tariff increase has now been ratified and will commence on 5 April this year - again, you heard it first in *Call Sign*!

Credit Card Fraud

I would like to remind all members that when completing a credit card trip, the card **MUST** - and I repeat **MUST** - be swiped through the terminal. If you do not swipe the card it could mean you have completed a fraudulent trip. It would also mean that you might not get paid for that job.

If the passenger doesn't have the card, you must not do the trip...

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

FOUNDLING MUSEUM

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

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**Usual admission £5, concessions £4,
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E-DRIVERSTATEMENT: OVER 800 DRIVERS USING IT!

Following last month's update on E-driverstatement, Dial-a-Cab accountant **Warren Smith** has told *Call Sign* that the Driver On-Line Statement facility is proving very popular with subscribers and that over 800 drivers have signed up with over half already making full use of the system.

"As our drivers are paid at different times of the month, I expect the system to be fully utilised by the time this issue comes out," said Warren. "Subscribers also like the fact that they can check their credits at any time of the day or night, when-



ever it is convenient instead of having to wait for the postman to deliver their mail."

He added that another big advantage is that our Carbon Footprint is being dra-

matically reduced, with much less paper being used.

"We are rapidly becoming an ever more environmentally Friendly Society," he said with a grin and 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."

West End Explosion Causes DaC Signals Havoc!



Lunchtime shoppers in the area were stunned and many feared an imminent terror attack.

But it soon became obvious that the workman, who was digging up the road, had accidentally drilled through a power cable and that was what caused the explosion.

The worker was treated by paramedics and then taken away by air ambulance and the immediate area was sealed off by police causing traffic chaos.

A policeman at the scene told a DaC driver who then passed the story over to *Call Sign*:

"It looks as though the workman hit the wrong line. He was very badly injured, but there was no terrorism involved."

Shops in the vicinity, including some on Oxford Street, faced lengthy

power cuts while the cable was repaired and electricity switched off. The explosion also took out some BT lines and that had an immediate effect on Dial-a-Cab. The signals, which had been behaving pretty well for some time, gradually deteriorated to the extent where drivers were saying they couldn't get any signal in or around the west end. That continued well into the evening with some drivers not even being able to sign on.

DaC IT Director, **John Banks** told *Call Sign*:

"The explosion caused the Mayfair exchange to go down. Whether it was a power failure or a power surge that damaged the equipment I'm not sure, but when it went, it took out DaC channels three and nine. Three is our busiest channel and it happened at a time when we had around 1200 cabs working. The result was that they all had to migrate onto the rest of the network. That overloaded it. By late evening, things began to return to normal."

The condition of the workman was critical but stable...

CCTV Parking Tickets: Now it's with Number 10!

The recent petition at Dial-a-Cab House organised by **Martin Hizer (M47)** and **Tony Mitchell (T88)** regarding the number of **Penalty Charge Notices** received by Dial-a-Cab taxi drivers during the course of their working hours, attracted around 1000 signatures in total – a phenomenal number. The petition was handed over to Ilford North MP Lee Scott and will pass on a strong message about the feelings of drivers whose only crime is to be working.

Now *Call Sign* has been contacted by DaC driver **Craig Barker (O96)**, who told us:

"More and more drivers are getting PCNs from Westminster Council's stealth smart cars with their fixed cameras. My brother Tony recently introduced me to the 10 Downing Street website



10 DOWNING STREET

and the section *e-petitions*. We have now set up a petition against receiving remotely issued parking tickets. All you need is a computer, email address and two minutes of your time."

The link is <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/CCTVfines>

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

Craig Barker (O96)

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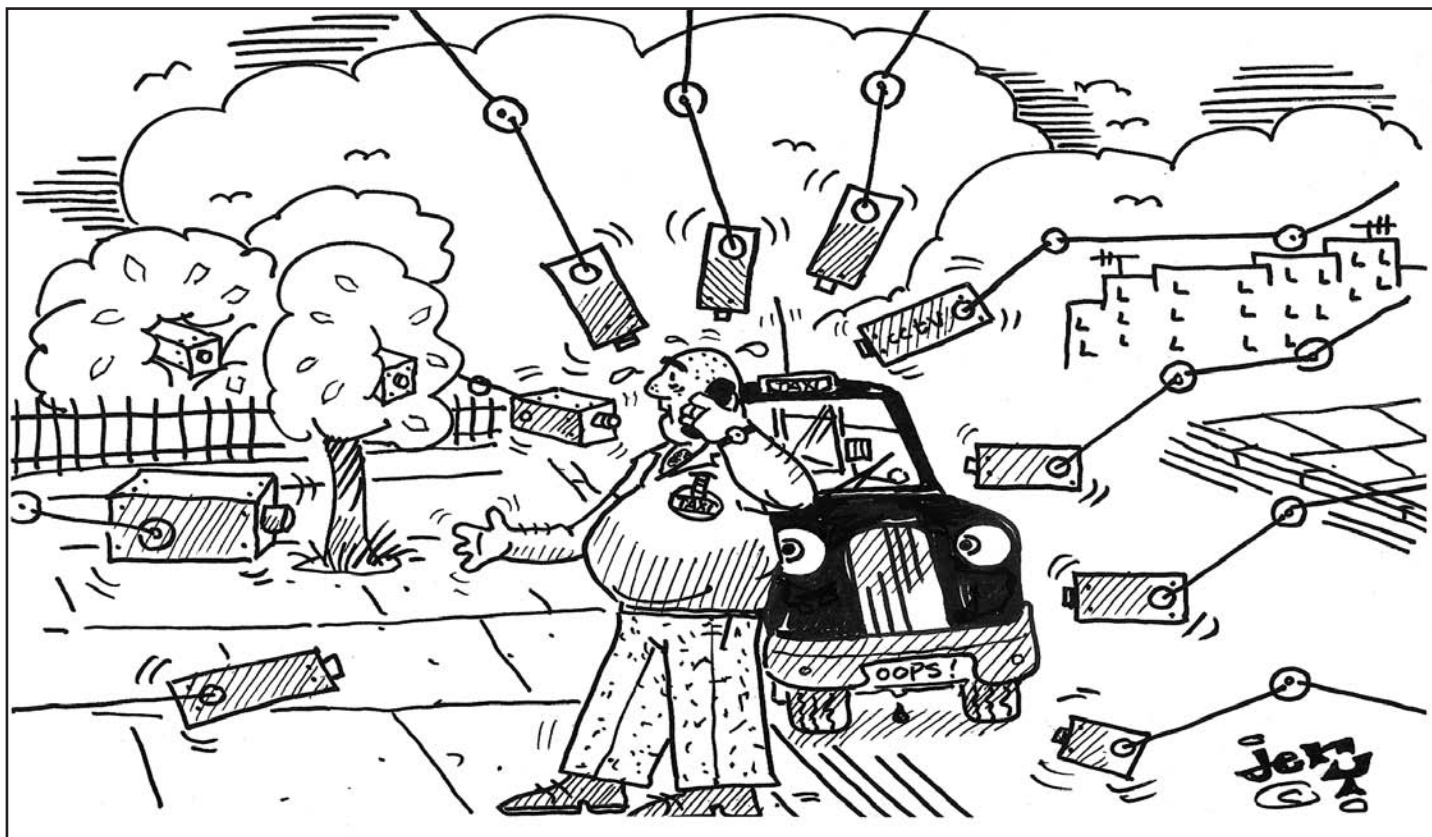
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Jery's World



I don't think I'll bother taking my mobile phone to work any more doll. With all these CCTV cameras, you can see me by just switching on the telly!

Can I have a Boris - I mean a receipt please!

Sean Morgan (Y85) has been with Dial-a-Cab since November 2004 and has seen most things out on the road. Like most of us, he is rarely surprised at what he sees. That applies to spot checks by Public Carriage Officers.

But even Sean was mildly surprised by what happened to him recently involving PCO/TfL officers who approached him whilst on an account ride. He asked **Call Sign** to pass on his experience. He emphasised that he wasn't particularly upset at being stopped, just a bit puzzled as to what they told him. Sean continues the story:

"I was on an account job recently and waiting for a client to come out of New Court, when two very smart gentlemen came up and flashed their PCO badges at me. They were not wearing the usual high-viz jackets that they normally do, but asked to see my badge and Bill, which was no problem as I always wear my badge and carry my Bill. So everything was ok there. Then they checked my insurance and gave the cab a once-over, again no problems – something I was quite thankful for as I was due in overhaul shortly afterwards!"

Then it became interesting. Sean continued:

"Then they asked me about receipts and I told them that I can print them out on my Dial-a-Cab terminal or write a manual one. They asked to see the manual ones that I use. I found that rather strange but showed them and they again said all was ok. So I asked why they were so interested in my manual receipts and they replied that there were receipt pads going round saying *Back Boris for Mayor!* They said it was illegal for cab drivers to endorse any political party!"

Sean ended by saying that he thought **Call Sign** should warn Dial-a-Cab drivers about this and as he said; it could save some other driver from a PCO telling off! And that's what we have done!



A Carriage Office notice from 1850 - have things changed much?

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Dial-a-Cab driver **Paul Jenner (L19)** has passed onto **Call Sign** an astonishing document from a licensed taxi driver who received a *Penalty Charge Notice* (PCN) for waiting whilst his passenger went to an ATM machine because he did not have enough cash to pay the fare.

The driver decided to appeal and went in person to Haymarket SW1 to put his case to an Adjudicator, in this instance to Mr Michael Nathan who is appointed to that position within Section 73(3) of the *Road Traffic Act 1991*.

In **Call Sign's** view, this sets a precedent that should be followed up. After hearing the driver put his case, Mr Nathan's adjudication went as follows:

"This is a personal hearing attended by the Appellant, who is a licensed London cab driver. The authority did not appear and was not represented. It is claimed that the Appellant stopped where prohibited on a red route or clearway outside 203 – 207 Earls Court Road on 18 May 2007 at 16:10 hours. The applicable restrictions prevent stopping at any time, with a loading exemption for a maximum of 20 minutes. This is not in dispute.

The facts of this case are straightforward and have been clearly explained by the Appellant in his written evidence and at the hearing and supported by the Authority's video evidence. The Appellant had been hired to take three passengers to Earls Court Road. Upon arrival, and not before, he learned they had no funds to pay him. He stopped in a red route loading bay and to enable them to pay the fare, two of the passengers went to a nearby cash machine and then returned approximately 4 minutes later.

The Authority has helpfully provided a copy of the relevant traffic Management Order, The Kensington and Chelsea Priority (Red)

LEZ GOES LIVE!

Drivers going into London on 4 February from the suburbs suddenly noticed signs informing them that they were entering a Low Emission Zone (LEZ). From that day, all lorries weighing more than 12 tonnes had to meet Euro III emissions standards to avoid a £200 per day charge. Non-payment means a £1,000 penalty.

From 7 July, the charges will apply to smaller lorries weighing between 3.5 and 12 tonnes together with buses and coaches. Being in force seven days a week, 24 hours every day, the hope is that the UK's first LEZ will reduce air pollution in the capital.

The registration numbers of large vehicles will be captured via CCTV and these will be checked against the DVLA database. Vehicles entering London from outside the UK will have to be registered with TfL to avoid the penalty charge. However, a TfL spokesperson told **Call Sign** that because many of the European lorries covered huge distances, most of the fleets were regularly replaced and were already compliant with the Euro III standard.

October 2010 will see the LEZ extended to cover smaller diesel-engined vehicles and as of January 2012, emissions standards will be tightened even further to Euro IV. No coughing at the London Olympics!

The first day of the LEZ saw 22,000 vehicles over 12 tonnes entering the zone. Of those, 1,600 failed to meet the standards but were given an extra 28 days to retrofit or replace vehicles before the charges kick in. This period of grace wasn't expected to be permanent.

Call Sign Exclusive! ATM Cashpoint Taxi Breakthrough?



Could PCN's be a thing of the past for stopping at cashpoint machines?

Routes (No.2) Traffic Order 2000, which provides at Article 9 that the (red route) controls do not apply in respect of a person causing a vehicle to stop if that person is using the vehicle under a licence under section 6 of the Metropolitan Public Carriage Act 1869 to stop for so long only as may be required to enable a passenger to get on or off the vehicle. They acknowledge that the Appellant falls within this exemption as a Hackney Carriage licence holder, but claim that the Appellant was not dropping off a passenger, but had stopped for an extended period.

It is an implicit and essential part of the contractual arrangement between a cab driver and his passenger that payment must be made at the end of the journey. The exemption recognises that a passenger may get off the vehicle and, as this process must involve payment of the fare, a reasonable period

must be allowed for the exiting and payment process. In this particular case, the Adjudicator finds that the period of four minutes was not unreasonable in all circumstances, and that the exemption therefore applied.


Accordingly the appeal is allowed."

Michael Nathan

Adjudicator appointed under Section 73(3) of the Road Traffic Act 1991

What the above means is that if your passenger tells you in advance that they need a cashpoint, it is up to the driver to find one where he can safely stop without restrictions. However, if the destination is arrived at and the passenger finds that he/she does not have enough funds, then a brief visit to an ATM to get the rest of the payment should not be penalised by a PCN.

Interesting times...



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Personal Injury - accidents at work, on the road, at home, criminal injury claims

Continued from February

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.

Now that I think back to even before we met in New York six months previous, I remember he mentioned he had met some girls from his hometown in Ireland at a pub. He said they were nurses; I bet this girl at his house is a nurse. So he met her even before we ever met in person, but still he allowed me to fall in love with him. I know he was seeing her when I went to London, I could feel the difference in him towards me. How could he do this to me? All I had ever done was to love him and be faithful all this time. I felt lonely being over here in California again, so far away from him in London. But it never crossed my mind to be with anyone else, he was all I needed, his love just kept me going. I would have moved to London to be with him, but he kept on saying that he didn't want me to leave my 'lifestyle' here in California as he put it. Like I cared about that. He told me this girl was just a friend who had stopped by to talk with him; he was able to convince me of that. I was such a fool! I loved him so much that I could believe anything he would say to me.

Next stop... Miami, Florida.

Sam has assured me that there is nothing going on between him and anyone else in London. I want to believe him, but I don't think I can. We still talk every night and he keeps on saying that he wants to come and visit me in my hometown, but I'm not too sure I want that anymore. So we decide to meet in Miami Beach for a few days. It was May of 1999 and a hotel in South Beach, Florida. I will travel with my girlfriend Sheila and Sam will take his good friend Sean along with him. The strange thing is that they are planning to fly into Tampa airport, which is way across from where Miami Beach is. Sam said they could get a better deal flying into

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

Jenny thinks Sam is seeing another woman in London...

L♥ve On the Internet



Jenny and DaC driver Sam looking happy in Florida... but all is not well

this airport and I accepted that, but still have a funny feeling inside of me.

Well, the three months since we met in London have gone by so slowly and today I fly to Miami - the day I will see Sam again. We've got the two rooms booked - one for Sheila and I and the other for Sam and Sean.

Sheila and I arrive at Miami International Airport and I'm so nervous you have no idea. I'm going to see the love of my life again. I can hardly wait. Sam and Sean must be at the hotel already, as they arrived the day before and had driven all the way across state to the Miami Beach area. Sam called me when they arrived in Tampa and was excited about seeing me the next day. I was just dying to see him again and to see if we could fix things up. I know that the distance can be bad on a relationship -

especially for a young man on his own - as I know what loneliness can do to you...

Continued next month

PORTRAIT AND WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

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



MORE MARSHALS WANTED!



Due to the success of our Marshalled events prior to Christmas and our regular marshalled sites, we would like to recruit more Marshals to supervise events for our clients in the future.

If you are smart, friendly and can deal with our account clients in a professional manner, please contact Shelagh Adkins on 020 7553 7200.

You can also email on shelagha@dialalcab.co.uk for more details.

Do you enjoy lying on a Spanish beach from day one of your hols? Then read no further! If, however, you crave something more adventurous, then how about a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of working on a Tall Ship as a trainee crew member sailing from Bergen in Norway to Rouen en la belle France along with another Dial-a-Cab driver, Mike Bures (B01)?

Mike recently wrote to *Call Sign* wondering whether any other DaC driver would care to join him for the one-week training course? He wrote:

Dear Alan,

I am booked on a Tall Ship as a trainee crew member for the 28th June 2008 sailing from Bergen to Rouen. The trip takes one week and I just wondered if there were any other drivers on our circuit who may want to experience the world's largest sailing Tall Ship, *Statsraad Lehmkuhl*. You will sleep in hammocks and will be part of 120 trainees ageing from 17 upwards. Over 70 years old and you need a doctor's letter.

Your duties will involve 4 hours on, then 12 hours later a repeat 4 hours with shifts running say 12midnight – 4am then midday – 4pm. Whether you get the am or pm shift is decided on the day. The

Fancy an **adventure you will never forget?**

remaining 16 hours are yours. Anyone wishing to know more, please contact me.

The cost will be:

Stanstead to Bergen	£ 45.00
Trip all in	550.00 approx
Foul weather gear plus boots (you can pay less)	210.00
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Insurance	
£35.00	












If you are interested in going on the world's largest Tall Ship with Mike, you can contact him on buddybures@yahoo.co.uk.



The World's largest sailing Tall Ship and you could be in it. Inset Mike Bures - he is already booked to go!

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CALL CENTRE CHAT

I have dedicated this report to the workings of E140. Many calls have been received from drivers regarding the controllers altering the rules of E140 when we are busy.

As you know, the initial set up of E140 was for drivers to be positioned anywhere within the security cordon. When work is more plentiful, it is extended to allow drivers who are 15 minutes away from the pick up to book in and take a trip. The general feeling from those regular drivers who work the island is that the 15-minute rule should remain all the time, as they believe this gives all drivers a level playing field to work to.

I would like to make it clear that our controllers and the BoM do not have any preference whatsoever what method is put in place. Despite the belief of some, we are not here to make the working practises of members difficult, our responsibility is to ensure the trips in the system get covered and that our clients receive the best possible service. More importantly, our role is to ensure the dispatching system is fair for all members.

There have been a number of suggestions as why the 15 minutes would be perceived to be the fairest system and I would like to say that I fully accept these suggestions, however it is open to abuse, which in turn then makes it an unfair system.

Unbeknown to the nucleus of members who regularly work the island and adopt the policy that you take the rough with the smooth, there are those who do not subscribe to this. They book in within the correct time and when they receive their details, if the trip just happens to be going local, they contact the controller to have the trip taken off them on the grounds that they are running further than the trip is going. There is nothing wrong in doing this, but I believe it's unfair because certain drivers



will not take local trips and it could be possible that those who take the rough with the smooth will end up doing all the rough.

I am not at this moment in time looking at the time spent by controllers doing this and the delays it causes to the clients, the issue is fairness to drivers. It was stated that if you are returning to the island having taken a trip to, for example, Twickenham, being allowed to book in within 15 minutes can reduce the hours of a working day by up to 80/90 minutes depending on the number of account rides undertaken.

Being devil's advocate, what would happen if a driver returned to the island having taken a passenger to Manchester Road? Could it not be said that when he/she books in, the queue position could be high because there are more drivers booking in from further afield? Therefore, a driver who is on top of the island will have to wait the longest to receive their next trip. This does not make sense to me when we are trying to supply a prompt service. More often than not, we find drivers stretch the 15 minutes

to 20/25. In doing this, we find more rejects are happening because a driver dare not accept for fear of not getting to the pick up on time. There are those who do take a chance and end up offering a long delay, which in the big picture is unnecessary and gives clients the wrong impression of our service. Drivers become very indignant as to their estimation of how long it takes them to travel certain distances, which in more cases than one means they are given the benefit of the doubt when deciding on a complaint being issued. I also agree that being inside the security cordon does have its problems when drivers book in when they are not in the correct position. I have written and spoken to many that monitoring this is not only time consuming, but also takes up resources to do it. When work is plentiful, I would be the first to agree the 15 minutes would possibly work, but when it's not, then being inside the security cordon works better.

So the moral of the story as I see it is that we need a solution to level out the playing field for everyone. My suggestion - and I repeat it is only a suggestion - should we now be implementing because of the amount of work we undertake on the island, a within 15 minute distance book in and make all trips non rejectable as with EC5? This, I feel, will make the system a fair one and it would definitely create the level playing field members are striving to achieve. Or alternatively, let the controllers carry on in the same way. When it's quiet, be inside the security cordon, when it's busy being within 15 minutes of the pick up operates.

Keith Cain
Call Centre Manager
Driver Operations Manager

WHAT A TOSSER!

A touch of wind and DaC's John drops his pancake in Liveryman's race...

This year's annual inter-livery Pancake Race took place in The Guildhall Yard, on a bright sunny day. The race is always competitive, but sadly due to a gust of wind, *The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* team failed to win any races.

Dial-a-Cab's **John Dixon (B67)** was leading the Liveryman's race and within five yards of the finish line when the ill-fated gust of wind removed the pancake from his pan!

John told **Call Sign**:

"The City of London holds a Pancake Day series of races every year on Shrove Tuesday where most, if not all of the Livery Companies based in the City, take part and the proceeds go towards a chosen charity of that year's Lord Mayor. There are several races and I was doing really well in mine - in fact I was leading and had no trouble in tossing the pancake, but just as I was about to cross the winning line, a gust of wind blew the pancake clean out of the pan! Last year I had trouble tossing it because the pancake seemed stuck in the pan and this year it was the reverse - it came out without even a toss!"

All the hats worn by the competitors had to reflect the current Lord Mayor's chosen charity. This year it is ORBIS world sight charity."

DaC's **Jim Rainbird (T25)** was on hand to encourage the teams and take the photographs. He told us:

"Jacquie Quail was penalised for a tossing penalty (no double entendres please) but she was re-instated for the semi-final after a stewards enquiry and a firm word from Carlos Oliveira. Everyone enjoyed the event and we had a lovely sunny morning as well, unlike last year when it was wet and slippery."

Well done to everyone, but Jim, what on earth do you mean by no double entendres? What type of magazine do you think we are!



John after losing the race - and his pancake!

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Continued from February...

Christmas and New Year now seem like ages ago as we return to what is now thought of as normal working conditions and just like the good, bad old days waiting for spring and better weather. However, if we are honest, bad weather never did any harm to our pockets! There's nothing like snow, ice, fog, rain and best of all, TfL transport strikes to help out!

However, to those of you who last month disagreed with my praise of the past 10 years or so of a top quality **Call Sign** magazine that costs you now to receive, I have dug out an earlyish copy of the Society's news magazine, *Owner-Drivers Radio Taxi Service Limited, Series 11, No.1 November 1965 - Official Publication of the Society*. Now how is that for a catchy, attention grabbing title! Its editor was the lovely **Joe Toff (B4)**...

ODRTS was still based at 172 Pentonville Road, N1 - no multiple postcodes then - and phone numbers had area titles such as Gulliver, North, Primrose, Rodney, Mayfair, Belgravia, Lords and so on. Much fiddling went on by some snobs to get the right one, that was if you could manage to get a telephone from the monopoly run by the Royal Mail.

Back to the magazine, which was A5 in size or half the size of a single sheet of A4 paper and had 16 pages in plain type. Inside, the annual dinner dance was being promoted with tickets costing 45 shillings a head (£2.25) at The Windsor Suite, Coventry Street, W1. Dinner was at 7pm with a buffet at 9.45pm and the bar open from 6.15 to 11pm. You could even pay off weekly according to **Michael Crawford (B22)**. No it wasn't THAT Michael Crawford!

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

FIFTY GREEN YEARS...



The Editor in 1965 was Joe Toff

There was a page devoted to poor coverage of new cash and credit accounts at busy times and how this was making it difficult for the BoM to get new clients and keep old ones, so nothing too new there then.

Stanley Hall (B3) was running a members only breakdown club that, from memory, lasted only a few years before folding through lack of support, whilst a nice letter was sent in by a regular taxi user, a lovely elderly lady by the name of Mrs Edna Roberts of Cope Place W8, who wrote in thanking the circuit and all the regular drivers who had carried her over the years. She had sold her business and after many years would no longer need our ser-

vices.

Another article was from Founder-Chairman **Bonnie Martyn** selling, or to be more accurate, trying to sell 15-day holidays for £105 guineas (£106.25) per person to The Palace Hotel, Nathanya, Israel, including airfare as against the brochure price of £160. Dear old Bonnie, he was always wheeling and dealing and always prepared to try something new right up to the end of his extraordinary life.

There is also a letter from one of ODRTS' best-known and respected dispatchers apologising for his "distasteful outburst this afternoon." At that time he was not a dispatcher, but a radio driver of excellent reputation, a radioman through and through not usually given to swearing, but the dispatcher in question must have really wound him up for him to go off on one over the radio. Can any of you tell the Editor the name or call sign of the apologist?

Comparing that 1965 publication to **Call Sign** with its glossy pages, variety of subjects and graphics is proof of just how much more professional the London taxi trade has become in so many areas. The bad side is that it still needs to cure its problems of coverage and support to customers, act in a more united manner with regulatory authorities and keep its hard-earned reputation as the best taxi service in the world.

More next month...

Sunset Strip

LTI STAMPS OUT ITS FUTURE

And Dial-a-Cab drivers will be the first to see it...!

The largest British owned automotive manufacturer, LTI Vehicles, has strengthened its UK position by pouring significant investment into its Coventry based plant.

A fully refurbished automotive panel press has been purchased from Fulltex Press Sales in West Bromwich to boost efficiency and re-affirm LTI's commitment to manufacturing in the UK. The new press will cost LTI in excess of £375,000 and is part of a complete reorganisation of the press facilities in Coventry.

Work has already begun at the 21,000 square metre site to make way for the 300 tonne piece of equipment. Arriving in sections under police transport escort, the press is expected to be fully installed and in working order by April 2008. It will produce the large skin panels for the TX4.

Mike Brown, Operations Director for LTI Vehicles told **Call Sign**:

"As we look to celebrate 60 years of taxi manufacturing later this year, this investment provides us with a platform to expand our operation the world over. As the largest UK owned vehicle manufacturer, we are proud of our automotive heritage and this news helps us to secure continued manufacturing here in Coventry."

The first group to see this huge piece of machinery - outside of the LTI workers - will be the ten Dial-a-Cab drivers who are on the next **Call Sign** organised trip to the factory on March 5. A report will be in the next issue



Preparing for the automotive panel press



Keith Reading
Professional Toastmaster &
Master of Ceremonies

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Graduate of the
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Bloodless Coup doesn't hit Dial-a-Cab!

Many internet subscribers on Dial-a-Cab have found themselves being sent emails from someone referring to himself as *dialacab.driver* who, seemingly in a mission of trying to stir up some mischief, declared that he had heard from a taxi trade scribe about "a bloodless coup at DaC after Mike Son and the BoM had launched a vote of no confidence in the Chairman."

Like all his (surely not her) previous emails, this driver was once again attempting to cause trouble and more importantly along his merry way, irritate many of the drivers that didn't want to be on his email list. Several told **Call Sign** following an earlier email from *dialacab.driver* that they had asked to be removed from his mailing list but to no avail.

Mike Son told **Call Sign**: "Yes, it is total rubbish. This BoM works well together, but there are some people in this trade to whom that scenario doesn't suit. What this person has done is to take Brian's views of how he sees the future at DaC and twist it around to suit their stupid email. My view of those who are too afraid to sign their names is that their views cannot be trusted. We believe in democracy at DaC and we are all allowed to speak our mind at Board meetings. Not once has there been the slightest hint that we are unhappy with Brian's leadership, which in case the so-called *dialacab.driver* doesn't know, has been the most successful in this organisation's history in addition to making us the number one radio circuit. To be honest, I really have far more important things to do than comment on a stupid email, but as it mentioned me and seems to have spread around the trade, I just wanted to put the subject to bed. Once again, it was total garbage and anyone at the AGM would know that..."

Brian Rice added: "If there was a bloodless coup, I do wish someone would have told me about it. I wouldn't have bothered coming in the next day..."

If you know who *dialacab.driver* is, then please don't bother telling **Call Sign**. We've wasted far too much space on him already...



Prelude to a bloodless coup? Nah! It was the BoM surprising Brian Rice on his 10th Anniversary as Chairman last year

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

It may be warm and sunny down here in the Languedoc this winter as per usual, but I recently decided to leave the sun-kissed vineyards and beaches of the Med for a wee trip to bonny Scotland. Fully equipped with thermals, gloves, hats and scarves, we expected snow, well at least a heavy frost, but no! This climate changing is quite bizarre, even up in Jockoland spring has arrived early with daffodils about and even ladybirds and bumblebees! Can't blame Ken Livingstone for that I suppose!

The plan was to enjoy a spot of 'twitching' up there and I was not disappointed. Most of my family and friends find relaxation is a case of keeping the Germans off the sun loungers in equatorial and exotic locations worldwide, but give me a pair of binoculars to go search Red Kite of Loch Ken any time! Another cabbie once said to me: "Of all the 47,000 Millwall fans that went to Wembley in 1999 for the Final of the Football League Trophy, you must have been the only one that would ever consider going birdwatching!"

What a palaver these days it is handing in lost property found in the cab! Just before Christmas, a palm top computer was found in my hired cab, but being out of the loop for a



while I called the PCO to find out of any changes. A guy there told me that because of security implications these days, most police stations will not take items and even if they did, there would be no reward. He told me to take it to the Lost Property Office on Baker St.

Have you ever done that? You wait 10 minutes straddling the pavement inconveniencing pedestrians, while some 'doughnut' on the intercom is mystified that you would ever want to report there! When you finally get to the other side of the big steel gate, a clerk says that you really shouldn't bring it here, but have taken it to a police station! You could blame Ken Livingstone for that one I suppose?

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

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One of the closest charities to the London taxi business that isn't actually run by us is the **Royal British Legion**. Following WW2, the Legion was interminably linked to the Knowledge of London and through it, many ex-servicemen learned London's ropes via help from the Legion and became taxi drivers.

Now **Lisa Desborough**, daughter of Dial-a-Cab driver **Ron (P42)**, is planning to run the *Flora London Marathon* and to raise funds for the Royal British Legion. She is also running in memory of her grandfather who passed away last October.

Call Sign asked Lisa to write a few words about her forthcoming run. She told us:

"I am the Daughter of Ron Desborough (P42), a long time member of Dial-a-Cab. I'm 24 and a Business Studies graduate from Brighton University. I have just started a new job as a Category Analyst for Coty. I enjoy music, travelling and for some strange reason, I enjoy doing adventurous things. I have done sky diving twice, a canyon swing and a bungee jump! And before anyone asks, no, I would never do a bungee again. I was terrified, but I suppose I am glad to have done it.

Anyway, last year I decided I would like to run the *Flora London Marathon*. The furthest I had run before was to catch a bus, so little did I realise what I was letting myself in for! I also decided I wasn't going to run all that way and submit myself to all that pain for nothing, so I decided to run for charity. As a charity I have always supported, I decided to run for The Royal British Legion. This became even more poignant when my granddad died last

LISA RUNS FOR BRITISH LEGION IN LONDON MARATHON



October as he was in the RAF during World War II, so I am also running in his memory.

I have now been in training for about six months and am up to sixteen miles, only another ten miles more - a piece of cake... I wish! Although it is hard work, I don't regret entering and I know that I will complete the course.

My aim is to raise £1,500 for my charity, but hopefully with your help, I can raise a lot more. As I know the licensed cab trade has a great affiliation with ex-services charities, I would like to ask the DaC drivers if they would like to make a donation to the British Legion and help me raise as much as possible. If you would like to make a donation you can do so online at: <https://www.bmycharity.com/V2/lisadesborough> or you can send a cheque made out to The Royal British Legion to 44 Lavender Vale, Wallington, Surrey SM6 9QT. You can also contact my dad direct via his mobile on 07889 983 322.

I would like to thank you all for taking the time to read this article and also thank you all in advance for your kind donation. You can read a follow up article in the May issue of **Call Sign** about how I get on with my London Marathon experience."

Lisa Desborough

NATASHA KAPLINSKY AND THE "DAC HUNKS!"

One lucky DaC driver (who forgot to leave his name on the **Call Sign** voicemail) recently picked up the lovely **Natasha Kaplinsky** and whilst exchanging small talk, she mentioned having interviewed four "Dial-a-Cab hunks" in the earlier days of her career. All she could remember was that it had "...something to do with the YMCA!" Hardly a combination you would automatically link together!

Natasha was recently in the news following a decision to leave her £175,000 BBC TV News position and move across to Channel Five where she has taken up her new, reputed £1million post, replacing Kirsty Young on Five News.

So **Call Sign** searched through 11 years of mags looking for mention of the YMCA - our only hope of possibly tracing the "four DaC hunks." And sure enough we came up trumps!

It was in September 2000 and followed a **Call Sign** article by Allen Togwell bemoaning the fact that finding a gym for a gentle workout was so difficult. The article found its way to the **Y Hotel** in Great Russell Street and they inaugurated *Taxi Drivers Fitness Awareness Week!* They asked for four DaC drivers to test out the facilities in front of ITV television cameras and that's where Natasha came in. Aged 27 and working for Carlton TV's *London Today*, Natasha opened the piece by claiming that London's cab drivers could use some shaking up as driving for a living was far from being the healthiest of occupations. She went on to speak of the item in **Call Sign**, which she referred to as the cabbies trade paper!

Alan Gold (L95) told the viewers that a good work-out not only helped rid him of built-up stress, but also of the aggression that most drivers eventually feel at some point in their working day, while **Paul Tully (Y40)** added that stress came with the job and working-out helped relieve it.

Closing the item, Natasha spoke longingly of "...all those hunky cab drivers in shorts!" So there you have it!



The four DaC drivers from September 2000 (L-R): Paul Tully, Alan Gold, Mickey Tarbuck and Ian Read. Inset pic Natasha Kaplinsky (Pic: Five)

As I grow more advanced in years, my mind regularly reflects back to when I was a teenager and spending time at the family home. They were the days, even though I may not have appreciated it at the time. Indeed, having lost both parents to cancer by the time I was 37, there's not a day goes by when I don't miss speaking to my mum and having a chat and asking advice of the "old man." Recently my second eldest daughter gave birth to a little boy, thus being my third grandchild, my first being born when I was 38. Events like this always put you through a range of emotions, like how fantastic it is being a granddad again to how sad it is that my parents aren't here to enjoy the moment. Yes, sometimes life can be unfair but that's the way it is and as I have 5 children, most suffering from I E S (instant expert syndrome), 4 being girls along with the wife, there is always plenty of advice freely available in my household and hopefully a few more grandchildren to come as well. But there can't be anything more important to a family than the home and at some stage as parents, you have to consider getting the builders in to do some work, whether renovating or extending. I brought my house in a state that needed much work, which was fine because that was reflected in the purchase price. But getting builders can be a gamble. Having a young family at the time, I felt very much out of control and reliant on the cooperation of the builder.

The next time you buy your household insurance and you get the option to purchase *family legal protection*, ask what it does. I've always had it and after an unfortunate occurrence with a builder, it came to my assistance when I received a court summons through the post. The legal argument was based around who owed what money to who and it seemed that this builder was used to sending out court summonses as a way of strengthening his position and indeed by representing himself in the court, which appeared surprised that it had got that far. You can use *family legal protection* for amongst other things, help in contractual disputes or employment disputes. At no extra cost to my family and myself, I was represented by a barrister from Grays Inn and the issue was dealt with satisfactorily, so it was well worth the extra £16.00 premium.

Cab trade cost index

As we're all aware, the price of diesel has rocketed over the past months. Ten years ago the government were encouraging drivers to buy diesel cars as the way forward and set diesel duty 2p a litre cheaper than petrol. Now it's around 5p per litre more and increasing our monthly fuel bills considerably. To bring this imbalance into line, the cab trade has without doubt one of the best pay formulas within the any UK trade organisation. The *cost index* works out how much more a cab driver is paying to ply his trade compared to the previous year, taking into account rises in insur-

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...



ance, diesel and PCO inspection costs etc. Once the % increase has been worked out and justified, then the increase is reflected within that figure by the April meter changes. You may not think it important, but believe me should there be no cost index and a need to go cap-in-hand to the Mayor ever year, he'd have used his position to negotiate away our conditions in return for any pay increases. The present situation is not negotiable and the envy of many public sector unions as the PM has said there will be no above-inflation pay increases for them, so with a 4.7% increase we have done well and long may it continue. We may not be in the public sector, however Ken treats us as if we are...

Baroness Clarke and wheelchairs...

Listening to BBC London like many cab drivers do, I was surprised by Baroness Nicky Clarke's attack on the trade regarding wheelchair users and cab drivers. What was apparent was that she had little understanding of the hackney carriage laws, health and safety issues regards lifting in and out of taxis and that once again a person was trying to generalise about an incident that had happened to her, implying it was happening across London when clearly it does not. We give disabled and wheelchair users an excellent service and I was surprised when she said London cab drivers had a vendetta against Ken Livingstone and were taking it out on wheelchair users. Considering her position, I think this sort of comment is totally unacceptable and should be challenged.

Bits n' pieces...

If you're the type of person who likes to answer questions about a range of issues and get paid for doing it, then have a go at *yougov*.

Yougov is an online market research company and surveys last around 5 minutes. You get paid 50p - £1 per survey. To join the *yougov* panel, log onto www.yougov.com.

If you are heading off on an early holiday soon, you may be interested to know that since last October, the *Halifax Bank* has a facility to withdraw euros and dollars from the ATM in Old Broad Street. If you're a *Halifax* customer, you can save a trip to the Bureau de change. This is apparently the first of many, as the *Halifax* intends to roll this facility out across the UK...

Also if you want a good deal on new tyres, *Costco* are selling 4 Michelins for £150 all in. Buy a voucher and you have 12 months to get them fitted. Fitting one at a time isn't a problem...

Finally, after being with *Directline Insurance* for 7 years, I decided it was time for a change. I got a quote from a number of insurance companies for my household and car insurance and for the same level of insurance, *Churchill* were the most competitive. Incredibly for a one-year policy, I saved myself a combined total of £488 for both as against the *Directline* renewal quotes. The changeover was hassle free and proves it is totally healthy to change insurance companies on a regular basis, because they start off competitive and then raise the premium in the immediate years after.

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

Richard Potter (T51)

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Sunday 10 February 2008 saw the 2007 Dial-a-Cab AGM held again at the Brewery in Chiswell Street.

What follows are not the official minutes, but an unofficial record of the meeting as captured by Call Sign Editor, Alan Fisher. It is not a full record and neither should it be taken as including every word said or indeed the exact wording spoken. A brief Editor's estimation of the attendance put it at 82. Some paragraph grammar has been sacrificed in order to make the long report as compact as possible...

The meeting opened at 11.05 with Chairman **Brian Rice** asking for the traditional one-minute silence to remember those members who had passed away during the past 12 months. Approval for the presence of a sound engineer and **Mike Tovey** from DaC Accountants Chantrey Vellacott, was given.

To approve the minutes of the 2006 AGM

There were no questions.

Matters arising

First to speak was **Paul Tully (Y40)** who spoke on whether DaC rules allowed us to operate our Concierge system and disagreed with the Chairman's assessment of the situation given at the previous AGM. Paul believed that the system serviced the private hire community, which he claims went against the rules.

Brian Rice disagreed with Paul's assessment and said that DaC did not service the private hire industry, but serviced our clients. He spoke of the number of platforms similar to Concierge that were now available and added that if we did not provide Concierge, there would be others who would – some of which were not even connected to the cab industry but software houses just selling the system. He made the point that the wheel could not be reinvented and that we had to take these people on at their own game. He said that £17million of work went through Concierge of which over £10million came to DaC and ended by saying that he disagreed with Paul's interpretation of the rules.

Paul came back and said that he agreed Concierge was here to stay but just didn't like the way it was brought in. He said it came down to the interpretation of the rules and that he believed the Chairman's interpretation



All You Need to Know About the 2007 DaC AGM

Photos: Ray Sorene (A53)

was wrong. The exchange ended with Paul and Brian saying that they would have to agree to disagree.

Chairman's Report on the Financial Statement for year ending 31 August 2007

First to question the Chairman was **Stanley Roth (Y53)**. He asked about Brian's comments on making the BoM more professional and queried whether he was suggesting a parliamentary system where we would have more civil servants, but still vote for the Board?



The Chairman replied that the answer was yes. He added that this was his personal view and had been for some time and that the Board and members all know that he held that view. He believed future Boards should take a more strategic view, deciding what the future role of the Society was and how we could take it forward, but that you then needed a top layer of professionals who would ensure that policy was carried out on a day-to-day basis. He added that DaC was continuing to grow and that having passed the £50million PA income, we had ventured from being a medium-sized company into a large one. He also said that we would still need a Board, but unlike the way we currently have one and that we would need people who are trained for specific jobs and that these people should be interviewed and employed on merit. Stanley then asked whether that meant that Board members would spend less time in the office? Brian said yes, but that it should be remembered that in the 12-year lifetime of this BoM they had taken the Society from an income of £18million to its current £53.25million, so he was in no way suggesting that the Board should be disbanded, only that we had to move over to an even more professional platform.

Paul Tully (Y40) then returned to the rostrum and quoted from the Chairman's Report where he wrote of moving ahead or standing still. Paul said that he did not envisage the Board just allowing the world to pass it by and that as a Friendly Society, we have always coped well and had done so up to the present day. He spoke of the demise of *Enron*, the American energy company, which also took the respected accounting firm Arthur Anderson with it and compared that to the successful continuation of DaC under its present guise. He said that we needed to enlist from within our membership as we had

always done, but added that we should do so with a more forward-thinking outlook. Paul's view was that as cab drivers, the BoM knew the job and that as elected representatives, if they were not up to the job then they should stand down. He ended by congratulating the current Board for continuing the legacy of a successful DaC through what has not always been an easy road, yet had still "taken us to the next level."

Brian thanked Paul and said that although they disagreed on how it should be done, both wanted the same success for the Society. He also spoke of the period in the early nineties when DaC almost ceased to exist. He added that in the end, if there was a strong anti-feeling against his ideas for the future, then the Society would probably retain the *status quo*. However, should there be no hard feelings against, the Society would probably begin to employ professionals as no rule changes were needed to begin that process. He reminded those present that it was as late as 1996 that we used to have a Treasurer until we took on an accountant in order to deal with the Society's day-to-day running. "We have a professional IT man and HR department. It's just progress," Brian said and the way he believed we had to go.

Next up was **John Edwardes (H05)** who said that he agreed 100% with Paul Tully. He said that his future time left with DaC wasn't that long. He spoke of the war's end and how Britain had so much of the world's car manufacturers and asked how many were still left? He added that so much of our manufacturing base had now gone and compared it to DaC, which in his words "...had been bloody successful – and I don't feel like changing it!"



Brian Rice replied that one of the reasons DaC had been so successful is because they had not been afraid to bring in changes and added that he remembered the days when if DaC had to introduce new terminals or to move to a new building, they first had to call an EGM! Now, he said that thanks to strong leadership and management, the Society had moved away from all that and he wanted to see that maintained in the future, which was the only reason he was suggesting change. He finished his response by saying that following publication of the report, not one member had called to complain about his suggestion. "Members aren't afraid to phone or email me when they disagree strongly with something, so I must assume that they are not totally

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against it," he added.

Laurence Kelvin (W88) was next up. He asked about the *chain of command* if we began to employ more professionals and wondered who would answer to whom? He gave Sales as an example. **Brian Rice** responded by saying that in actual fact there had been no one in charge of Sales since last February and that he had been doing the job. The problem was that because DaC has been so successful, as soon as we got someone to head Sales, someone else comes along and "pinches" them! He added that it could be that no one from the BoM would be associated with that position, but would actually instruct whomever did the job which direction we'd like to go. The Board might suggest targeting a particular group and whoever was doing the job would report directly to the BoM. Laurence came back and gave another example as in if someone was brought in and wanted to change door logos, would they have the authority to go ahead? Brian again responded that it would be a Board decision. **Laurence** came back a third time and praised Brian's leadership. He claimed that he was very underpaid for what he did and queried whether if professionals came in, they would have to be paid market rates and would then be earning far more than the boss – ie the Chairman? Brian said it depended on whom you employed, adding that even now on an hourly basis, he wasn't the highest paid member at DaC House. He said that no one could know what the future would bring but that if his suggestion was to come about, the BoM could turn round and say that the Chairman should only work one day a week or on the other hand could say that he could apply for the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Laurence then asked whether current Board members would be able to apply for any of the positions advertised for incoming professionals? Brian's answer was that it could happen and there were some BMs who are very proficient at what they do, but added that some drivers tended to hang onto his every word and would call that jobs for the boys. But that wasn't the case and it would be the best man getting the job. Brian went over his suggestion again and said that several of the BoM were already part-time with Mike Son and Allen Togwell doing 3 days a week, while Allan Evans and Tom Whitbread did four days. Keith Cain running the Call Centre and Brian as Chairman were on five days. "So," said Brian, "to some extent we have already introduced the idea." He went on to say that he felt it should now be taken to the next stage and called it advancement and ended by saying that the suggestions were his views of how things should go in the future, but that the final decision would not be his alone.

In response to a Laurence point on costs, he said that he felt we needed 2 or 3 good people brought in and that could cost around £250,000 a year but against that you would be making savings with some BMs not having such a 'hands on' approach and needing

fewer hours. Good people do come at a cost, said Brian, but for a company as successful as DaC has become, that amount wasn't such a lot. Brian then pointed to the Chairman's Report showing increased cost for new staff and said that many new staff had already been employed this year and that it represented an 11% increase, but then qualified that by putting it against DaC's 34% growth over the past 2 years and said that if we wanted to maintain our growth, then it couldn't be done without more good staff. Laurence then spoke of chaos in the NHS, as an example, when an extra tier of management were brought in. Brian said that he didn't consider that would apply to DaC and that provided you got the right people in first time, we should have no problems in that respect.

Trevor Denton (Y18) was next up to question Brian. He reiterated Laurence's point on costs and said that if we could get the extra people we required for £250,000 we'd have done well, but went on to ask about current BMs applying for positions that they were already currently doing anyway? Brian said that the point was good and added that if he were the owner of DaC, he would be concerned and called the structure of the Society 'flaky', depending too much on certain individuals. He said that there were no contracts or terms of employment and BMs who ran the business were employed on an hourly basis. That's wrong, said Brian. They could get up from this AGM and we'd have no tie on them whatsoever. In a £52million business, you need to tie people down and should they leave, you need to make sure they cannot work in this industry for at least a two-year period. If you got rid of them, it could cost you 'garden leave' but his view was that it could not be allowed to continue like this.

Trevor came back saying that our turnover wasn't bad for a 'flaky' company, but Brian responded that he was indeed proud of our achievements but other than the Secretary (Howard Pears), not one member of the BoM was tied down by a contract and that was a danger to DaC.

Allen Togwell then entered the debate by saying there was a lot of experience within the BoM but that it was possible that the entire Board could come off in one fell swoop and could be replaced by six "radicals." **Brian Rice** added that should the BoM go to more of an advisory capacity with professionals being brought in, that type of event would be far less likely because any new people of that calibre would be tied down by a contract.

Russell Poluck MBE (T55) then asked whether an emergency proposition could be put to members present asking that contracts be issued to BMs? The Chairman replied that wasn't possible because all members would have to vote on it and not just those present.

John Rubini (F55) was next and spoke of Concierge. He wanted confirmation that it

would be put into accounts who agreed to have Concierge only and who did not use any PH companies that weren't on the system. Brian said that in most cases that still applied. The exceptions were where directors from some accounts had made their own arrangements. Perhaps they lived out of town, he said, but went on to confirm that the vast majority of Concierge users had it as it was originally set up.

Changing subjects, **John** then asked about any possible restructuring and the re-advertising of posts within DaC, hinting that the current BoM might get the available positions. Brian said that the BoM got on very well and despite rumours to the contrary, there were no splits on the BoM and in response to a further point from John about private sector pay rates, gave his view that any increase in cost should the BoM go to a 3-man Board of professionals, would cost the Society very little because of the money saved.

Pat Keefe (G01) asked whether if any current BMs applied for a new position, would they then have to give up their membership of the Society pointing out that members would have loyalty to DaC, whereas employed persons would not necessarily have the same emotion?

Brian Rice admitted that he hadn't thought of that question, but as a first thought couldn't see why they should have to. Pat then asked whether BMs whose days were dramatically cut would then go back to driving cabs? Brian said that in all probability they would. Pat added that we had lost our last two Sales execs which showed how little loyalty employed personnel had. Brian said that because we were so successful, other companies looked at our staff and that the two he referred to had left after being offered much better salaries. He did add though that since losing the last Sales exec last February, it hadn't made one jot of a difference as we hadn't lost any of our large accounts. Pat ended by going back to an answer Brian had given **Paul Tully** regarding Concierge and private hire companies, but Brian reiterated the answer he had given earlier and said that Pat had misunderstood it. Brian was concerned that some of the providers of Concierge-like ground transportation systems were trying to sell them to our accounts on the strength that these software houses were totally unaffiliated to any taxi or private hire company, leaving the account to choose whomever they wanted – something that would cause damage to DaC. **Pat** finished by mentioning T-accounts and felt we were 'sweeping up.' He asked why we couldn't raise the minimum fares on those trips? Brian pointed out that the average T-trip was now £36 with some weekend trips having a £66 average. "That's hardly rubbish," said the Chairman, "but in the end it's up to the drivers."

Sid Nathan (K88) was next up to his usual cheer after informing some drivers to be quiet while he was talking! He then went onto his point that DaC did not need any outsiders to



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help run our business. "With a £52million turnover, we are doing very well with our current Board," he said to a round of applause, "we don't need anyone else!"



Brian responded that what Sid was missing was that as Allen Togwell had reiterated earlier, our business was vulnerable because the Board could just get up and leave as there was nothing to tie them to the company. Sid then suggested that every BM have a deputy who could take over should the BM leave. When Brian said that would double our overheads, Sid corrected him to loud laughter by saying that they wouldn't actually be employed as such, but would be on standby "...as though they were waiting on the Finsbury Square rank!" He said that if a BM left, his deputy would be called into action. Brian thanked Sid and promised (possibly with tongue in cheek) to make a note of his suggestion!

Trevor Denton (Y18) made his second visit to the rostrum and asked about job interviews and how a fair decision could be made about who gets what if the current BoM were involved in the process? Brian said that any interviews would be completely impartial and spoke about how our HR manager was interviewed as an example. None of the BoM other than Howard Pears and the Chairman was involved. Questions on the Chairman's Report ended at midday.

Mike Tovey of Society Auditors Chantrey Vellacott went through the balance sheet next

Mike's bottom line was that we'd had a good year showing a very healthy position and that we had also done very well gaining a much higher price for Brunswick House than expected. He also gave an explanation on a rule change regarding a tax change that was to be voted on later in the meeting. Brian thanked Mike and said that had it not been for Mike and his company, DaC would have been paying substantial amounts of corporation tax on all surpluses, whereas we now will probably have to pay tax just on any accrued interest at the bank. A huge difference and benefit to DaC.



"They cost us enough," joked Brian, "but they're worth it!" Applause broke out as Brian added that DaC now had £3.1million in the bank.

John Rubini (F55) asked Mike whether the Revenue could force us to change our status? He said no, they couldn't, but they have argued about exactly what our status is because they see huge surpluses and compare it to big business rather than a "golf club." Mike added that the battle as to being taxed as a Mutual was ongoing and that "one day we would lose."

Joe Brazil (K16) then asked for confirmation that we were still under the Friendly Society Act and wondered whether the tax people had the power to



change our status? Mike responded that the tax situation was unconnected with DaC's actual status and that the only problem was that the revenue considered our mutual status to be a long way from the way we carry out business due to our success. He added that only DaC drivers could change our status and that regardless of whether we stayed that way, eventually we would probably lose the taxation battle and have to pay tax on "profits" rather than just on interest at the bank.

Rule Changes

There were 3 rule changes put forward.

1. To change our address from Brunswick Place to East Road (Proposed by BoM).

2. HM Customs & Revenue would accept our tax status as a mutual trading society in return for a change of wording in the rule on dissolution (Rule 26). This means that in the case of any dissolution of the Society, members and not shareholders would share any capital left. As the two are the same in our case, it made no difference (Proposed by BoM).

3. Mike McGlynn (F60) proposed that any DaC member who had been with the Society for two years or more should receive full Society membership and any benefits that could bring (as in should the Society ever be sold and members received a share out). Mike said that we were doing very well and even though he had no problem with the Board's possible changes in management structure, he still preferred to stay as a Mutual. However he didn't consider it was fair for drivers to come to DaC, work hard but not be treated the same as other members. So he proposed that so long as you had been with the Society for at least two years, you would be an equal member. He added that he would rather any share-out be according to length of service, but the Chairman had told him all payments had to be equal, otherwise DaC could be open to a legal challenge.



Paul Shorter (H88) said that the Board's comment on amounts should we ever be sold was not the only thing to consider. Fairness to members was just as important.



Russell Poluck (T55) made the point that younger drivers didn't seem interested and asked for a show of hands to see how many of the 82 (approx) present had been with the Society for less than two years? Just six raised their hands.

A very nervous **Gary Cowderoy (N17)** said he was new to DaC, but had been with ComCab for 9 years previously. He said that when you came to DaC, you very soon realised that you were part of something different compared to the others. He felt that the way forward was to look at our history, move forward to the digital world, but to understand that most of those that come here did so because of DaC's reputation and not for any possible



payout. He said we should protect what we had and carry it forward to the future. Gary's nerves dissipated when he was given a round of applause and a "well done" from the Chairman!

Trevor Denton (Y18) then spoke on the number of extra members on DaC since 2004 and said that the issue had to be settled one way or another. He said if not he would put forward a rule change next year giving all those who had joined since 2004 the right to speak on the subject, but not get any financial gain. He said those members would have an unbiased view.

The Chairman responded that surely if these drivers could vote but not gain any financial reward, they would probably vote no. He added that the BoM had no problem with the rule change if that is what members wanted.

Malcolm Levant (F24)

felt that the rule change would fall, but should be on the next AGM agenda as a 2-year watershed removing any fixed dates and just have it as members not on DaC for 2 years would not be eligible for any benefits of that nature.



The Chairman responded that was what Mike was proposing.

Mike McGlynn then summed up.

Propositions

Keith D'urso (M57)

known better to DaC drivers as Santa Claus when he dresses up to collect money for charity - put forward the only proposition. If successful, it would amend the 'going home' facility to allow evening / night drivers to book into a city zone (EC1 - EC5) or E140, rather than as before when you could only 'bid' for a trip in these zones. He claimed the current facility was unworkable and said his idea was to book in but for the trip still to be AD. All you'd know was that it was going to your home zone or to a back up. You couldn't pick or choose.



Bill Chatterway (A43)

spoke against and said when he went home, there were more cabs than jobs in those zones. **Brian Rice** said the Board were against it because they felt the perception would be from those drivers still working that all the good jobs will be going to those at the point of a rank waiting for their trip. He understood Keith's point about it being AD, but reiterated that drivers would see several cabs on the point and would feel that any good jobs would go to those drivers.



Keith D'urso came back and said that he had 40 night drivers signing the petition and not one had voiced concern or said they would not book into EC5 or E140. Brian responded that he understood Keith's point, but that it was up to the membership as a whole and not just the 40.

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2007 AGM

Any Other Business

Sid Nathan (K88) was first up and wanted to know why we had no voice channel? **Brian** explained that in order to try and improve signals at a time when turnover was up 34% in just two years, DaC decided to use that channel, which wasn't really used much, and convert it into a data channel. He added that it was working reasonably well, but was delighted to tell those present that we had just received another 3 High Frequency VHF channels from Ofcom. He then explained about the radios (information is in the Chairman's column on page 4). Sid asked about emergency facilities and Brian explained how the panic button now worked. Instead of blocking out everything as before, now one dispatcher will automatically get the coordinates of the driver in trouble, whilst the other would attempt to make contact and if a problem was confirmed, the GPS coordinates would be put out over the air. He added that if the extra 3 channels worked as well as was hoped, the situation regarding voice might be looked at again. Sid then raised the point of the possible rule change that was stopped and which would have enabled a compulsory stoppage of £5 from every driver towards helping a sick or dying member and wanted to know why it was stopped? Brian said the BoM were not against it, but a compulsory collection was illegal. There is no problem with someone making a voluntary collection and going round with the hat, added the Chairman, but it just was not legal to make it compulsory.

Ray Sorene (A53) queried what he claimed were a spate of incorrect details given on terminals since moving to East Road and the increase in telephonist numbers.

Brian admitted that we had an increase in staff and that until more experienced, they might be more prone to errors. He asked Call Centre Manager **Keith Cain** to respond. Keith also agreed that it was happening, but said that it was always difficult when you employed new staff. He said that drivers should remember that those taking calls did not have our knowledge of London and they might not even know the postal code for Oxford Street. Keith explained that every call taker was given one month training in the call centre. He added that listening to calls and writing down details was a skill and some take longer than others to learn it. He said that anyone needing to write down details of a phone message with 100% accuracy would realise that it wasn't easy. It would be great, Keith added, if all the telephonists we employed had previous experience of this job, but that wasn't always possible. He also said that the number of passengers ordering cabs online and therefore filling in their own details had increased (between 1500 to 2000 each day). They are also trained, but still don't always fill in correct details. Our controllers do try to watch for errors but you can't spot every one. Keith ended by saying that 3 or 4 of the latest batch failed to meet the training criteria and were not taken on, so we don't just take anybody, he said, and just hope

for the best.

David Kupler (Y74) was next up and asked Mike Tovey if we could spend the interest on our £3.1million in the bank on anything we wanted such as donations to sick or dying members, leaving less for the taxman?

Mike Tovey responded that what David was proposing would have a negligible effect on tax and that we had some good tax losses "in store" that we could use in the future. He added that tax on the interest was fairly low and that giving donations would make little difference to the tax. Brian added that the HMRC would deduct the tax on interest at source and we could then do what we wanted with the rest.

Paul Jenner (L17) asked what procedures were in place in case of a total system crash linking the question to the loss of the voice channel?

Brian's honest answer was that if the system totally crashed, we would be unable to do anything and trying to get it out on a single voice channel would be impossible. He spoke of the one time in the last 18 years where we had to temporarily go to voice dispatching. It had been at 3 in the morning with around 25 jobs to cover and it had been a complete disaster! However, whilst our competitors were going over to the public GPRS network, we are working on 8 aerial sites, which gives us a chance.

Paul then asked about increasing the run-ins. Brian said that we deserved it but that we would be increasing prices by around 5% in April anyway and that increasing run-ins would make our position very difficult with customers currently looking to cut costs. They are already asking why our increase was double the rate of inflation and added that we didn't want them to perceive us as being greedy.

Russell Poluck (T55) asked whether there was any news on new screens for the cabs? Brian said that the screen resolution was so much better now than when we had ours, but signals had to take priority. Once that has been sorted, we know exactly what we want and the resolution would be excellent. Russell asked one other question about destinations and the way we can get incorrect information. He wanted to know whether we could improve that facility with a software change? To an audible gasp from the floor, Brian replied that the new terminals would come complete with satnav fitted.

John Rubini (F55) made another visit to the rostrum and asked **Mike Tovey** about the attempt to change status to a PLC and whether the decision not to convert had a detrimental effect on the Society? Mike said he didn't know the answer, but in order to give a view would have to go into an area he didn't believe was his authority. John followed up by asking Brian whether there had been any



recent interest from anywhere in buying Dial-a-Cab? Brian said there had been none at all.

John Fisher (C45) ended the day's proceedings to give the Editor's typing finger a rest by asking about a trip he had recently done where, on page 2, it stated that all airports were to go in cars. He named the account and asked if it was true? Brian said that it was as indeed it also was with three other large accounts. Brian gave an example airport fare from Docklands of £46 to Heathrow in a car. We can't compete against that, said the Chairman, and ended by saying that it was purely down to cost.

Brian Rice brought the meeting to a close by telling those present:

"This was my 12th year as Chairman and the 13th meeting I have taken and I must say that this one was the most attentive, civilised and respectful membership of all the meetings and it was so nice to have drivers get up and ask sensible questions without setting out to try and catch anyone."

The voting results:

To approve the minutes of the 2006 AGM –
For 98.6% Against 1.4%
To approve the Annual Report –
For 98.5% Against 1.5%
To reappoint Chantrey Vellacott –
For 97.5% Against 2.5%
To amend rule 2 (registered office) –
For 96.5% Against 3.5%
To amend rule 26 (dissolution) –
For 91.3% Against 8.7%
To amend rule 4b (Terms of admission, M.McGlynn) –
For 53.2% Against 46.8%
To amend going home facility proposition K.D'urso) –
For 36.9% Against 63.1%



Alan Fisher

Call Sign

March 2008

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In an astonishing attack on Lib-Dem candidate **Brian Paddick** following his trip to Dial-a-Cab House in late January where he had a meeting with Chairman **Brian Rice**, Conservative candidate **Boris Johnson** claimed that Mr Paddick's "...first policy initiative began to fall apart as it was shown to contain no new ideas."

To coincide with his DaC visit, Brian Paddick launched what he described as a ten-point plan for licensed black cabs.

*He told **Call Sign** that if elected Mayor, he would acknowledge that licensed taxis are as much a part of London's public transport as buses and trains by giving cabbies a seat on the board of Transport for London.

*He would consult at the possibility of banning pedicabs or severely restricting their numbers.

*He would completely overhaul traffic management in Central London, including rephasing traffic lights, proper management of road works and a scheme to reduce the number of vans and lorries to ensure smoother traffic flow, less congestion and faster journeys.

*The obligations for licensed taxis for more stringent driving tests, vehicle examinations and 'the Knowledge' must result in privileges not afforded to private hire vehicles.

Private hire vehicles would not be given access to bus lanes and enforcement against private hire cars plying for hire would be stepped-up.

*Licensed taxi drivers should be encouraged to make their vehicles more environmentally friendly, he said, and not be penalised for doing so. He would look at working with taxi manufacturers to develop more environmentally friendly vehicles and at providing a subsidy to taxi drivers who bought new environmentally friendly vehicles.

*He would eliminate the risk of accidentally getting a ticket for driving in a bus lane. All bus lanes under the control of TfL (Red Routes) would be standardised to the same hours of operation and all would allow licensed taxis to use them. He would encourage all local authorities to follow suit so that all bus lanes were standardised.

*Local authorities needed to take a more reasonable approach to licensed taxis that were waiting for their passengers – as DaC drivers have to. For reasons of security, where loading and unloading is permitted, he would encourage all local authorities to treat licensed taxis stopped to allow passengers to access a cash machine as 'loading and unloading'.

*To save on congestion and pollution, taxis should be encouraged to use taxi ranks. As Mayor he would look to increase the number of taxi ranks, particularly at stations and hotels and revise the fare structure to allow an additional charge for taxis picking-up from ranks.

*Effective action must be taken to ensure all vehicles registered as private hire are genuine, he said. When I am Mayor, those registering or

Paddick DaC Visit Causes Election Fury!



The two Brians flashed around the world via the BBC
Inset: Brian Paddick reveals his 10 point-plan that upset Boris



renewing would have to provide copies of 'hire and reward' insurance certificates and contact number(s) where members of the public could hire the vehicle. Random 'mystery shopper' calls

would be made to those numbers

to ensure the service was genuine.

*Road planners needed to consult with those who know London's road best. He would look to consult the taxi trade on all future road schemes on TfL roads (Red Routes) and encourage local authorities to do the same on all other roads.

DaC Chairman Brian Rice told **Call Sign** that his meeting with Brian Paddick went very well. Under the eyes of BBC TV and LBC radio, Mr Paddick said that London's taxi drivers were an important part of the transport system and deserved to be treated as such. The DaC visit was on all the BBC London news programmes as well as being reported on each hourly LBC bulletin.

One driver told Call Sign he had seen Brian Rice and Brian Paddick on US channel Fox News! It was also reported on in many UK and international newspapers.

However, according to Tory candidate Boris Johnson, Brian Paddick's policy of promoting black cabs and giving a seat on the board of TfL to the trade was directly copied from proposals launched by Mr Johnson two weeks earlier. Boris Johnson told **Call Sign**:

"Nothing in these plans is new. A seat on the board of TfL for black cabs is overdue but

is something I have proposed already and a consultation on licensing Pedicabs was run by TfL in 2006. It is flattering that Brian Paddick has used his first policy launch to endorse my plans for black cabs in London but what Londoners are calling out for is a change of Mayor, not a copycat Mayor!"

Among Boris Johnson's licensed taxi strategy, which he launched on 14 January, he proposed giving a representative of the cab trade a place on the TfL Board, scrapping mid-year inspections, working with local councils to make rules on using bus lanes the same across London and scrapping rules which penalise cab drivers for stopping to allow passengers to use cashpoints.

Brian Rice added: **"What started as a low key visit to DaC, changed when BBC cameras turned up. Once it appeared on TV, it turned into a Mayoral candidate's battle and my phone turned red hot! However, I must say that it was nice to be able to pass across our views as a radio taxi organisation to a Mayoral candidate so that they could see and hopefully understand our problems."**

Call Sign also invited 3 drivers in for an informal question and answer session with the Lib-Dem candidate. **Dennis Heavin (A1), Jim Smith (D9) and Jon Trevor (W94)** together with DaC Board Members **Allan Evans, Mike Son** and Chairman Brian, grilled Brian Paddick on many of the topics near and dear to our hearts. Bendy buses, ATMs, bus lanes and the half-yearly safety checks. Mr Paddick agreed that given our stringent annual overhaul these were unnecessary. He was also shown our dispatch system by Brian Rice.

Continued from February...

After a brief chat with Charles Rathbone about how DaC was doing, he gave me a tour around Luxor's radio circuit and garage. What I was looking at felt so familiar to me. Charles has recently been 'kicked up stairs' at Luxor and as a result, said he was now only doing three days a week in the cab. He was enjoying his new roll working in the office, helping to keep the wheels turning from behind a desk.

In the far corner of the large yard, I noticed a blue and white TX2 that was looking very sorry for itself. Charles said that half its inner and outer parts had been harvested to maintain the last cab remaining of an original fleet of 25 TX2s that the garage once had. So why did the TX2 venture fail so badly? Charles explained that it wasn't that the cabs were not popular, it was getting the spare parts to run a big fleet of them. Charles loved driving his TX2 around San Francisco (*Call Sign, October 2004*).

"It was good on fuel consumption compared to previous cabs," he said, "and customers still ask for that type of taxicab as their preferred ride, especially disabled passengers."

Charles commented that another drawback with their TX2s was accommodating the large motorised American wheelchairs used by the disabled. They wouldn't fit into the rear of the cab. If you go to Charles' website www.taxi-library.org you will read all about the TX2's USA saga and see pictures of the setting-up of the London cabs in Charles's great city. It is also a fascinating website for world taxi info.

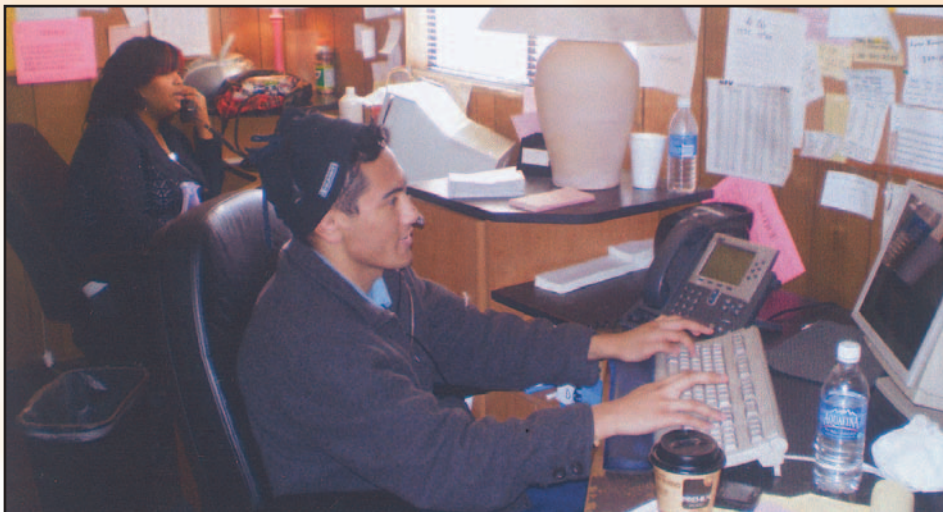
Charles has many interests in life away from the US cab trade. A committed Anglophile, he admires with a deep passion anything related to London's licensed cab trade and especially all things **Dial-a-Cab**! If anyone qualifies to be an honorary London taxi driver, then that person should be San Francisco cabdriver, Charles Rathbone. His interest, support and knowledge of our taxi trade problems are genuine and sincere because his taxi trade in San Francisco has the same inherent problems that we have here in London – pirates! Over there, the big Lincoln town limousines are openly stealing the cab trade's work from hotels, while staff are receiving back-handers just like some hotels in London. Disgusted by the behaviour, Charles has boycotted many SF hotels in protest. Then there is the frustration of battling the Taxicab Commission, which seems to put SF taxi driver's affairs at the end of the queue. Familiar?

He knows all about Ken Livingstone and what he's doing to the taxi trade in London. Charles must be the most well informed person on London's cab trade anywhere in the world, outside of London. He has nothing but praise for the way **Dial-a-Cab** has progressed from its small beginnings to the dizzy heights that have been achieved today.

Compared with the other SF radio circuits, Luxor's fleet is the busiest radio circuit over a 24/7 period in San Francisco. All drivers taking a Luxor cab out to work have to place a green metal medallion on display in the front window of the cab for all to see and at the end of the driver's day, it is handed back to the paying-in office. Each driver has to pay 40% of the meter takings, everything else is theirs to keep.

Call Sign's illustrious cartoonist recently visited Dial-a-Cab's equivalent in San Francisco where Charles Rathbone showed him around The Luxor Cab Co...

Jery Craig visits Luxor Cabs - San Francisco



Taking calls isn't quite like it is at DaC!

The Luxor fleet was established in 1928 and comprises of 200 cabs and over 400 drivers. The garage maintains and services its entire fleet on their premises. The Luxor set-up also runs 6 licensed limos from their garage, each driven by a non-cabdriver. I was impressed by the good condition of all the vehicles I saw. Like our PCO cab plates, the SF medallions cannot be sold on. Charles is a medallion owner - the garage uses them collectively. On a driver's retirement, long-lasting ill health or any other serious reason, the medallion has to be handed back to the Commission.

In Luxor's small radio room, there is only one dispatcher on duty handling the entire fleet and giving out trips to drivers on 'the streets of San Francisco' - I had to get that in! I watched as dispatcher Christina showed me the workings of the GPS-linked dispatch software and all the little cab symbols moving around on the map. The two 19-inch flat screens displayed the whereabouts of each individual cab, whether they were engaged or

not. All job queries are dealt with on a one-to-one basis by the dispatcher. A dispatcher's life at Luxor cabs seemed to be one that is both stressful and busy. Alongside the dispatcher at any time, there are always two order takers – Charles wife Bettina being one. They handle over 800 jobs per 8-hour shift.

I told Charles that his radio circuit reminded me very much of the ODRTS office that we operated in Pentonville road in 1966. In those far off days, it comprised of just 300 owner-drivers who had to compete with the two other radio circuits operating in the London area. There was Levy's at Kings Cross and Mountview up at Highgate.

If any *Call Sign* readers ever get to the beautiful city of San Francisco, hire a blue and white Luxor Cab and tell the driver that you know about Charles Rathbone, I'm sure the driver will say he knows him well and what a nice guy he is.

Jery Craig.

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There are few issues of **Call Sign** that do not involve the problem of parking and PCNs in one way or another. This issue is no different! But there is now also welcome assistance from the CBI.

As members of the Confederation of British Industry, Dial-a-Cab Chairman Brian Rice has spoken to that organisation asking if they could lend some weight to what has become a long and ongoing battle.

CBI Regional director, Nigel Bourne, has now written to the individual heads of parking departments at Westminster, Camden and Transport for London. His text is below...

As the regional arm of the CBI, the voice of business, in the UK, I am writing to raise some concerns with you around Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs.) A number of our members operating in the licensed taxi businesses are incurring these costs for simply picking up and setting down clients for a matter of seconds and are finding it increasingly difficult to manage the costs of these seemingly unfair charges.

The cost to an individual firm can be up to £3,000 per week, which for one firm alone amounts to £155,000 per annum. The firms

Parking: Brian Rice ropes in the CBI...!



Nigel Bourne

pay the fine, rather than contesting them, in order to avoid the escalation of these costs. If a driver is to receive two fines in one day, this can cancel out any earnings that they have made that day. These fines are effectively an

extra tax to a licensed taxi firm as there seems to be little discretion as to how and when these FPN's are made. I understand that this is largely due to the use of cameras to monitor vehicles.

Of course, we understand the need to ensure that the road network in London is not held up by blockages in the system. We understand the importance of keeping London's red routes clear and to prevent vehicles from parking in these spaces, but as these taxis are not parking, but only stopping to pick up and set down, we feel that they should not be forced to incur these costs.

The London cab is an essential part of the London Transport mix and I would very much welcome your views on this.

Nigel Bourne, CBI Regional Director



DaC Sales Exec Natalie Ezekiel keeps Call Sign readers informed with updates...

Natalie's Hot Gossip From the Sales Dept...

Firstly, I would like to wish you a belated Happy New Year. As you are aware, it has been some time since my last report. With the build-up to Christmas, the demand on service became extremely high, therefore new business was put

on hold until the New Year. Nevertheless, I can confirm that all applications received during the hold-off period have been sent out.

With the fantastic driver incentive in place, coverage during our busiest time of year was absolutely brilliant and I would like to say a big thank you to all drivers that participated in the scheme – this made my job a lot easier as there were hardly any complaints – with the exception of the Chairman who had to be resuscitated when he saw the final figure of half a million quid!

New Business:

Usually January and February are our quietest times of the year for new business, however, throughout January we received over 140 account applications via our web page. This does **not** include additional accounts or telephone requests! Compared to this time last year, requests for account facilities to our website have doubled and have led to over 60 new accounts being opened within the first month. If you have Internet access, I recommend you view the Dial-a-Cab website at www.dialacab.co.uk. It really is great and well done to our IT department. There is so much information available; not just for new business but for drivers, traffic information, job vacancies, the latest information regarding our Carbon Emissions and much, much more.

Other good news is that over the past few weeks I have received several Proposals / Tenders for larger business accounts, which I hope to update further in my next article. After recently submitting the first proposal with a solicitors firm in EC2, I was then invited to meet with them to discuss the next stage. Business is not always as simple as someone calling up to open an account. To be successful in winning a larger account can take months, more often it will involve several people from different departments attending the meeting. I cannot stress enough the hard work involved and how important it is to ensure the work is covered - whatever the time of year. Winning new business is good, but keeping that business is just as important. During this particular meeting, the client informed me that we had been highly recommended by a business associate. Please keep up the good work.

I would also like to say thank you to the drivers who have given me some good leads through the year, please keep them coming in. Remember, there is an incentive bonus for any information leading to an account being opened. I can be contacted by email at nataliee@dialacab.co.uk. Please include your call sign and full name or

you can call me on 020 7553 7249. I look forward to more successes in 2008...

Until next time...

Natalie

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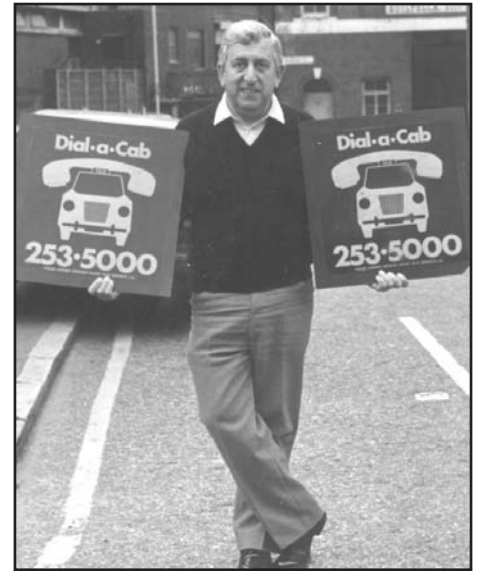
FORMER BOARD MEMBER ARNOLD RITTER DIES

Call Sign was sad to hear of the death of former Board member **Arnold Ritter**. It was he who together with Jack Taylor put so much emphasis on ODRTS having a door logo that drivers could have on their cab should they want to. The early one didn't have the style of current door logos, but was groundbreaking in that it differentiated us from the rest. The follow-up logo was better in having the telephone incorporated into a taxi.

In 1984, ODRTS were in the last days of the Chairmanship of **Peter Fennymore** and had just decided on a new name for the Society to take from their old house in Maida Vale to the new building, Allington House in Brunswick Place (later to become Brunswick House).

The Society's new name was to be Dial-a-Cab and a publicity campaign to herald the move to the new premises was organised by incoming Chairman, Kenny Burns. He handed part of the responsibility for the publicity campaign to then-Sales Executive Phil Messias along with Arnold Ritter, who became his assistant.

Sadly, no one informed either DaC or **Call Sign** of Arnold's death, so the Society couldn't send anyone along and neither could any drivers that knew Arnold attend his funeral. However and belatedly, our sympathies go out to Arnold's family, some of whom we know are in Australia and who hopefully may see this via Google on the internet...R.I.P.



Arnold Ritter: Always trying to get DaC drivers to fit door logos

Cream Always Rises To The Top

Which is why the Evening Standard is stuck at the bottom!

Call Sign believes in the concept of free speech but would never criticise a London taxi because the fare for a single person on a three-mile taxi trip is usually more than that for a similar length bus ride, even though eventually they'll both get you to where you want to go.

Neither would we criticise a grocery store because their cheese is cheaper than their smoked salmon? After all, they are both food and eating a pound of either will dissipate your hunger.

Come to that, neither would we go into a car showroom and ask why their Saab convertible is more expensive than their Ka? Are they not both cars that get you from A to B...?

Yet Evening Standard reporter **Joan Smith**, not content with a cut and paste job of a previous day's article from the same paper, went further than just criticising London taxi fares. After reading an article in the February **TaxiTalk**, she referred to us as *the great black cab rip-off*. We know we aren't cheap and that it would cost less to go 6 miles in a New York cab. Most sensible people also realise that New York cab drivers tend to use that job as a part-time bit of assistance while going through college, while looking for a better job or in some cases just to help them learn to speak English! Does that make London taxis a rip-off? Like the bus and cheese, New York cabs serve a purpose – but to compare them to the recently voted best taxis in the world?

We all know why Evening Standard reporters dislike London taxi drivers. Sheer jealousy! As **Call Sign** wrote in January following receipt of a leaked memo:

The Evening Standard has banned its



Lower Standards? Can it get much lower?

journalists from using taxis other than in what it calls "exceptional circumstances." Just to rub it in, the paper has also refused to pay for meals with contacts unless they end up generating a genuine story. And surely the biggest blow to any self-respecting journalist, an internal memo sent to staff by the Standard's deputy news editor, Steve Vaughan, which said that staff now needed prior permission for any purchase of "more than a few drinks!"

Two days prior, Associated Newspapers who produce the Evening Standard, had announced a dramatic fall in profits of 16% - down from £99m to £83m. Why? Well much blame was put onto the emergence of two freebie evening newspapers in competition with the 50p Evening Standard. If we are a rip-off for being dearer than New York, what do you call a paper that charges when the opposition put theirs out for free?

What do you call a newspaper that makes a derogatory article from an editorial that they didn't even have the decency to ask for permission to use and when they did, completely took the quote out of context?

TaxiTalk Editor, **David Millward**, told **Call Sign** that the article the **Evening Standard** used to base their article on from his magazine wasn't a criticism of taxi prices, more a reason why Christmas didn't have the earning power it once did. David was furious, even mentioning the threat of legal action. After all, like it or not, criticising our prices comes down to free speech. But referring to our trade as a rip-off goes far beyond that?

As an aside, **Call Sign** went online for a photo of Joan Smith to accompany this article, but a warning came up saying we did not have permission to access photos on that server. Funny how Miss Smith didn't need permission before taking parts of **TaxiTalk's** editorial? **Call Sign's** translation of taking something without permission is stealing – but the Evening Standard are obviously used to that.

As we said at the beginning; cream rises to the top, which is why after 350 years the London taxi trade – as expensive as it may or may not be – is now considered the number one in the world in its field. Sadly, we can't say the same about the Evening Standard.

And our advice to David Millward? Forget the ES and legal action. They probably won't be around long enough to answer the summons...

Alan Fisher

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello Ladies & Gents,

Firstly I would like to thank those of you who responded to my request for members who were interested in joining the pool of drivers willing and interested on sitting on forthcoming complaint hearings. I must say that it was nice to meet with many drivers who agreed with the whole complaints procedure, who also felt it was their way of putting something back into the Society. We must all work within a tight framework, being the Society Rule book and Procedure Rules.

These rules are designed to safeguard both drivers and clients alike and it is imperative that we don't break or fall fail of the strict guidelines that are in place.

From time to time the procedure rules are revised in accordance with the rulebook and I feel it would now be prudent of me to include the new updated list of twenty procedure rules that I trust will give you a better awareness of issues and grievances that may lead to a complaint. Both sets of rules are used in conjunction with each other and sometimes it is deemed that more than one rule has been breached on a particular complaint.

I would like to reassure you that before a complaint is processed, a thorough and fair investigation is carried out and each individual complaint is treated on its merits.

1. Rudeness abuse or violence, threatened or actual, towards clients, other members or staff of O.D.R.T.S.
2. Conducting him or herself in a manner likely to bring the Society into disrepute.
3. Conduct liable to prejudice the Society.



4. Arriving at the pickup point with more than the authorised amount showing on the meter.
5. Taking a job allocated to another member or pulling off a job without the consent of the Call Centre.
6. Making a journey which is the property of the Society his / her own.
7. Clearing more or adding to the correct meter fare at the end of a trip.
8. Misuse, non-accidental damage, or tampering with the O.D.R.T.S. equipment.
9. Failing to complete a journey as per trip details.
10. Using a badge number other than their own or allowing another to use their badge number.
11. Booking into a zone or placing him/her self in a favourable position of which they have prior knowledge to gain an

unfair advantage.

12. Accepting and then failing to complete or trying to have recovered an As Directed trip.
13. Trying to reject a non-rejectable trip by engaging the meter or timing out.
14. Failing to accept a Company Charge Card or Westminster TaxiCard trip (Hail & Ride).
15. Failing to keep his/her taxi in a good mechanical, clean and presentable condition.
16. Not adhering to a Rule as specified in the Society's Rule Book.
17. Not producing his/her Motor Cab Licence within the time limit set by O.D.R.T.S.
18. Not displaying the company logo.
19. Failing to use the delay advised facility when anticipating being late for a pickup.
20. Not transporting the passenger by the shortest route without authorisation from the Call Centre.

Can I finally remind you that if you accept a credit card booking through the system, the card must be swiped at the start of the trip. It is very important that the card is correctly validated before you start the journey. An invalid card will in most case result in non-payment. Please be very careful...

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

Slipped discs

I used to be known as Charles (Chas) Kissin until recently, but since the government and several of its agencies have misplaced, (euphemism for lost) some computer discs holding vital information on all of us, my whole persona has altered.

One new name afforded to me is U Canta Makeit Up, a failed asylum seeker given leave to stay indefinitely. I am able to claim for 12 children, all under the age of twelve, along with housing benefit and mobility allowance. All thanks to the two unencrypted discs sent by unrecorded and unregistered delivery from one department to another. These are now lost.

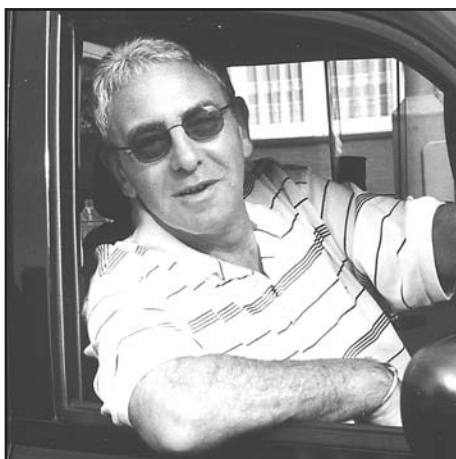
Another identity I have assumed is that of Paddy McGinty (minus the goat) after vehicle licensing staff lost details of almost 8000 drivers from Northern Ireland. It also transpired that another persona of mine. Upza Jumpa, a learner driver, can actually drive an eighteen-wheel truck in the state of Iowa, USA, as a disc was lost there as well, although how and why it should be there is anyone's guess.

My heartfelt thanks go out to colonel (retired) Harry Blimp, KFC CDM X BOX2 for his contribution to a pension. You see, HM Customs and Revenue actually admitted to losing personal details of nearly seven

thousand (7000) private pension holders. Several NHS Trusts also admit to losing the data of several thousand patients and so another of my new identities, Luvza Bigun,

An Occasional Chas Grump

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



is now awaiting a breast implant, liposuction, hysterectomy and hernia operations, as well as her brother's circumcision and hair transplant operations.

Would the Inland Revenue believe me if I told them that I had lost my records for the past year? I doubt it, but they have done - and big time to boot. Makes you wonder who is running the asylum.

Last Word

Some people think the streets of London are paved with gold, however with Ken Livingstone's new proposed emission tax, to enable movement of bikes perhaps that should now read: The streets of London are paved over...

Chas Kissin (P99J)

Busker Deano on the right "line" for the big time - and £5,000!

By day, office worker Dean Saunders endures the daily grind of travelling from his home in Rainham, Essex to Vauxhall for his job. But at night - and some early mornings - he turns into "Deano" and busks, playing his guitar and cheering up the tube travelling public with his unique voice and songs.

Now Deano, Dial-a-cab's **Terry Catheral (Y90)** soon to be son-in-law, could be in line for a £5,000 prize as The London Paper and Capital FM are running a London-wide competition to find the underground's favourite busker.

Deano takes up the story and told *Mickey's Music*:

"I got my busking licence in December and so far I've racked up around 60 hours playing to the public at various stations. Although the money comes in handy, the smiles on their faces when they hear some of my more light-hearted songs is all the payment I need. It would be brilliant to win the competition and be able to call myself *London's Favourite Busker* - not to mention the publicity, which could help kick-start my music career. And of course the money would come in handy towards my wedding!"

I've listened to Deano a few times now and can honestly say that he has a distinctive quality to his voice with lyrics that would appeal to a wide-ranging audience. With the resurgence of the Folk Music scene at the moment, he could go far. *Call Sign* would like to wish Deano good luck for what looks like a very successful future.

If you would like to check out Deano, you can on www.deanosaunders.co.uk and listen to his hilarious and politically incorrect

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...



This month's story comes from Terry Catheral (Y90)...

MICKEY'S MUSIC



Deano with backing singer???

song "Little Miss Munter," a tale of love coming from a one-night stand. You can also check out his Busker profile and perhaps show your support at <http://ear.thelondonpaper.com/buskerprofile.aspx?b=1622>

**Yes, you do have to have a licence to busk on London's underground and you can only play at the pitches you have been given!!*

Mickey Lappin (E46)
mickeylappin@hotmail.com

LEILA HIZER

Call Sign extends its sincere condolences to both Martin and Tony Hizer on the sad and sudden death of their mother Leila. We wish both brothers, their father and the immediate family a long life...

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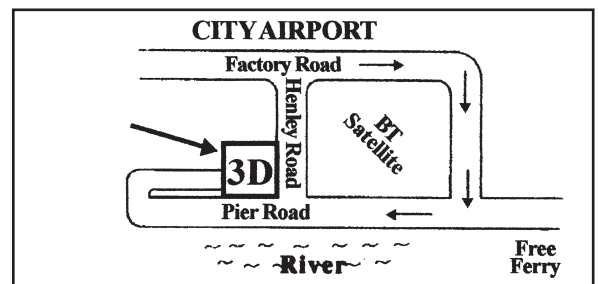
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NOW DAC'S LEE IN BATTLE TO FINISH HIGHEST!

Bedfont Green's recent 2 – 0 win over Raynes Park Vale at the same time as **DaC-Wembley** went down 1 – 0 away to Horley Town in the *Combined Counties Premier League* proved significant for DaC driver and Bedfont Green goalkeeper, **Lee Pearce (J71)**.

Lee had been transferred from DaC-Wembley following the birth of his and partner Becky's third child when he received what he described as a financial offer that was too good to turn down. The significance of the above results were that Bedfont Green had overtaken DaC-Wembley on a day when Lee also won the *Man of the Match* award!

"It was a lovely day," Lee told **Call Sign**, "I still have lots of friends and good memories of Wembley, but Bedfont Green is now my team and it would be great if we finished above them after being quite a way behind when I arrived."

You can follow the battle only in **Call Sign**...



Beginning of last season's FA Cup run - Lee with the trophy!

Manganese Bronze Trading Update



Li Shufu Chairman of MBH Chinese Partner Geely



MBH CEO John Russell

Manganese Bronze Holdings PLC, the leading manufacturer of the London taxi, has released this trading update covering the final five months of 2007. The Group will report its results for the extended 17-month financial year ended 31st December 2007 on April 16th.

MBH is pleased to report that its results for the five months continued in line with expectations. Sales volumes were maintained at similar levels to the equivalent period of 2006, even though sales were abnormally high that year due to the dual effects of the run out of the TXII model and the initial launch surge of our new vehicle, the TX4. The driver appeal of the TX4 continued to create sales opportunities throughout the UK and in particular has resulted in an improvement in the Company's market share outside London.

The key focus for the Group in 2008 is to deliver on the operational milestones of our Chinese joint venture, Shanghai LTI (SLTI) whilst ensuring continued good progress, in terms of both sales and profitability, of the current UK business.

Prototype production of the first Chinese built TX4 is scheduled for mid-2008 as planned. This will be followed by a series of quality maturation builds leading to production for sales in

world markets outside the UK scheduled towards the end of 2008. The engineering, manufacturing and supplier development actions are proceeding according to plan and the intensity of these efforts will increase as the sales launch approaches. The primary aim of these actions is to deliver the targeted cost and quality objectives set for the project.

To complement the focus on delivering the Chinese built TX4, it is anticipated that an equivalent effort will be applied in 2008 to establish the international sales and marketing capability required to deliver the Group's planned sales and profit margin. The market studies conducted in 2007 have identified that significant international market opportunities exist, which support our overseas sales ambitions and in 2008 prospecting of markets and finalisation of sales and distribution agreements is the priority. It is our intention to conclude such agreements in advance of the commencement of production and it the Board's intention is to provide relevant updates to shareholders of progress at appropriate times during 2008.

The Board is confident of the Group's prospects for 2008. We believe that the continuing appeal of the TX4, the effect of the EURO 3 regulations change in

London in mid 2008 and the strength of the demand for TX4 outside London, will all have positive impacts in 2008. We will also continue to make good progress in achieving the strategic milestones of the joint venture in China and the development of our international business.

John Russell, Chief Executive, said:

"The continued strong performance of the TX4 will ensure that Manganese Bronze's results are in line with expectations. Our Chinese joint venture is well on track to produce its first prototypes in mid 2008 and production for sales at the end of the year."

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Major Service

£129.00 inc VAT



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

Eating Out with Call Sign



The next time you are sitting in Hobart Place waiting for the lights to change, look to your left at the fabulous frontage of the **NOURA Lebanese Restaurant** at number 16. This is where **Call Sign** sent Jan and myself for our latest restaurant critique.

As usual we took a look at their website (www.noura.co.uk) beforehand to scan the menu and were impressed with

the multitude of dishes on offer. Even before arriving, we had already decided that Jan would have the *Sea Bass* whilst I would go for a *Lamb* dish.

It was a cold and windy Monday evening when we were greeted on arrival by the manager Kamil, who offered us a choice of linen dressed tables in the cavernous high ceiling room. There were many diners enjoying their food to the rear, so we opted for a window table that commanded an excellent aspect to a beautiful ambience. I suggested that Kamil select the wine as I had never tasted Lebanese vintage before and we were not disappointed with the fruity, somewhat dry white wine that bore resemblance to a Hock.

Having discussed our preferences with Kamil, there began a seemingly endless arrival of bowls of *Meze* for us to sample! Most were vegetarian dishes ranging from sliced tomato to a puree of aubergines. There were small parcels of minced lamb, Lebanese cheese, hummus, and slices of smoked fish roe served with garlic and olive oil. Around 14 dishes plus hot Lebanese bread – similar to pita. That *Meze* was just wonderful!

We were filling up fast and were concerned there would not be room for the main courses. We asked Kamil for a brief respite from the gargantuan feast and he smiled knowingly!

Meanwhile, more and more diners arrived; some young professionals, a few families and a pair of recognisable celebrities. This was a Monday evening when traditionally restaurants are supposed to be quiet!

Throughout the evening the staff were attentive, yet not overbearing. Our water and wine were topped up by smartly suited waiters who never hovered. Every so often the manager would come to our table for a chat. He told us that the owner had just come in and wanted to meet us! We were introduced to the charming Nader Bou Antoun who made it clear that we were to enjoy our experience. We complimented him on his staff, the ambience of his restaurant and the excellent quality of his food.

Now we were ready for the entree. Jan's *Baked Sea Bass* was firstly presented whole for her inspection before being whisked back to the kitchen for filleting, returned just a few minutes later to be accompanied by a sesame-based

sauce and saffron rice dish.

I begged Kamil to keep my portion of the *Lamb and Chicken Shawama with rice* on the small side! I love my Shawama, but hate the grease that you would usually get in a Kebab shop. At **NOURA**, the meats were moist and succulent – the way they should be – fragrant and delicious.

We were full and ready for coffee. I chose the thick Lebanese variety whilst Jan went for an Irish. These arrived with a selection of Baklava pastries and iced sorbets – Pistachio, Mango and Strawberry – which, even though full, I just couldn't resist!

I have not quoted prices as all are listed in the website www.noura.co.uk. Considering the size of the portions, **NOURA** is not really expensive for a Belgravia restaurant and I estimate around £40 per head without wine.

Without a doubt, **NOURA** has to be the best Mediterranean style restaurant we have ever visited and for ambience, service and food quality, definitely one of the finest restaurants in London. I absolutely and whole-heartedly recommend it – and so should you...

NOURA restaurants are at 16 Hobart Place (7235 9444)

12 William St, Knightsbridge (7235 5900)

122 Jermyn St (7839 2020)

16 Curzon St (7495 1050) where there are also occasional belly dancers – booking for that is essential.

David Kupler

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Salieri Restaurant

376 Strand, WC2

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The Central London 1/230 Cab Trade Section (T&G) is due to restart following suspension of branch meetings from November 2006. It is expected that the first meeting will be Tuesday 4 March 2008, but members are asked to read the Newsletter that accompanies the February / March copy of CTN, which was due out in the last week of February.

The restart comes after the conclusion of a meeting of the *Emergencies and General Practises Committee* on 17 December 2007, which heard charges against four active members who have been campaigning against the way the branch has been run. These members had already had to resort to taking a complaint to the *Certification Office* (a government agency set up to oversee the Unions) regarding access to Branch Accounts, something that they were fully entitled to see to under union rules.

During the period that the branch was suspended, activists also alleged there was evidence of misuse and fraudulent electoral practices. On 17 December 2007, Regional Secretary Steve Hart issued a letter to all members of the Region 1 Passenger Group (which includes the Cab Trade Section) stating that (*paraphrasing*) due to a significant number of branch ballots showing clear evidence of

T&G mystery as branch meeting restarts

fraud, the results were unsafe and a re-run of the ballot would be conducted by post, utilising the independent *Electoral Reform Services*.

At the hearing on December 17, the four members were found 'not proven' of sexist harassment of the branch Chair due to her failure to open the meeting in November 2006 properly and then suspend *standing orders* in order to allow the meeting to be held on one issue - the proposed merger (at the time) of the T&G and Amicus. The members wanted a separate meeting to be held on the issue with the branch meeting concentrating on trade issues. They were also accused of inappropriate language and threatening and intimidating behaviour. The E&GP Committee's decision was one of 'no further action'. The committee accepted that the volatile situation was not helped by the Regional Secretary's use of profane language when addressing the meeting (as in telling one of the four that if he didn't

like it, then he should f*** off).

Although the immediate charges of financial impropriety raised by the four defendants were not going to be taken further by the E&GP committee, it is known that investigations are continuing. The E&GP committee were also concerned that the four members and others had raised concerns over the way the 1/230 Branch was run over several years, recommending that a full time officer attend future meetings. However this is not the first time that this has been said, but following one meeting where it happened, the officer was not seen again.

As stated above, 1/230 members are asked to read carefully any communications from the Union - particularly regarding the restart to meetings and to consider attending to help bring back the branch to the trade and its members.

Eddie Lambert (V47)

This series sent out Call Sign's Richard Potter to test different diesel fuels to see what, if any, of their publicity is true. He tested BP Ultimate, Shell Diesel Extra and V-Power, Sainsburys Biodiesel and City diesel. This is his summing up report...

The Call Sign Fuel Test

When asked by the Editor to trial different diesel fuels available to the cab trade, I agreed and with so many on the market claiming to burn cleaner / give you more miles / smoother ride / less smoke etc, I was expecting much more than I found. Like most cab drivers I have been alarmed at the fuel hikes of late. Paying £1.08 per litre is appalling considering it wasn't long ago that 89.9p per litre was deemed expensive. Taking into consideration that the pay formula by which the taxi trade claims its year-on-year meter increase isn't negotiated until late February - early March, we have basically been earning less mile upon mile for almost 10 months and it's only due to the increase in work that we haven't noticed the loss too much.

When I owned a *Fairway Driver*, I brought a *Powerplus* fuel saving unit from *JV Bright* and even though it wasn't cheap, it actually paid for itself over 5 months because it really did improve my MPG. The 'Driver' did 26 MPG and rose to 28 MPG with the *Powerplus* unit. The unit consisted of a tube of magnets by which the diesel fuel passed through. The magnets had the effect of changing the diesel particles into a better structure, thus the fuel would burn more efficiently with more power and less waste.

What was disappointing about the *Call Sign* trial was that other than Sainsbury's Biodiesel with its solvent base that cleans the engine giving a smoother drive, it quickly became apparent that the other fuels were basically all the same. Regardless of the claims made by the leading brands, my MPG over the trials remained around 23.5, which as I have previously mentioned is not very good. So could the fuel producers make a diesel that really does do more miles per gallon and be cleaner for the environment? I think so. If there were significant results with the addition of *Power Pill* then there is the evidence. Call me a cynic, but the top petrol retailers will not produce it because to remain competitive they would have to absorb additional production costs and a better fuel would mean less fuel sold on the forecourts! Then in turn, less tax payable to the Chancellor of the Exchequer!

Finally, 20 years ago Greenpeace and green parties were looked upon as being left over hippies with nothing better to do than cause trouble. Suddenly environmental issues have come to the fore with global warming heading the way. Yes, green issues are big issues for central government because they have realised that you can attach taxes to them. The idea (in theory) is that the greener a vehicle is and less polluting, the less tax you have to pay... unless you are a London taxi driver! Personally, I think that if the government were really serious about the environment, they would take steps to produce a fuel for the future.

So to sum up, the *Call Sign* trial was definitely worth doing because it opened my eyes and made me realise that there is very little difference between the fuels and that the prices can vary greatly - so be prudent; buy where it's competitively priced - but don't expect too much!

Richard Potter (T51)



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We make the wheels turn
so you can earn,

After over 35 years on Dial-a-Cab, **Terry Lynn (E44)** recently stripped out his TX1 and flew to the island of Crete where he joined wife Tessa in the small house they bought in 2005. Until recently, Terry had split his life into two sections – most of it based in London and DaC, whereas Tessa was enjoying the peaceful life in the largest of the Greek islands.

Tessa had discovered Crete some years before and loved it, knowing that was where she wanted to be. Eventually they bought the house and spent more time there than in London.

"She was a female version of Allen Togwell," Terry told **Call Sign**, "she would spend days just painting the beautiful scenery. She was similar to Shirley Valentine, but without the chips and egg on Mondays! I think we always knew that the house in Crete wouldn't be just be for holidays. Now it's going to be our home."

Terry was one of the founders of the DaC Credit Union along with Marie White, Steve Sanders and Trevor Clarke and was President of that organisation for 10 years. For the past year or so, Terry has worked in London to cover his 40 jobs and then flown back to Crete

Terry Lynn Leaves DaC For His Shirley Valentine



Terry with Allen Togwell at the DaC House Launch

"I will miss everyone on DaC," said Terry, "it has been such a big part of my life, but the time is now right and I'm looking forward to this move so much."

Terry asked **Call Sign** to say good-

bye to everyone he knows and who he may not get the chance to see personally.

Good luck to both Tessa and Terry...

Wooden It Be Luverly...

With apologies to Lerner and Loewe!

Dial-a-Cab driver **Martin Howells (F84)** has a rather unusual hobby – for many years he has enjoyed woodcarving.

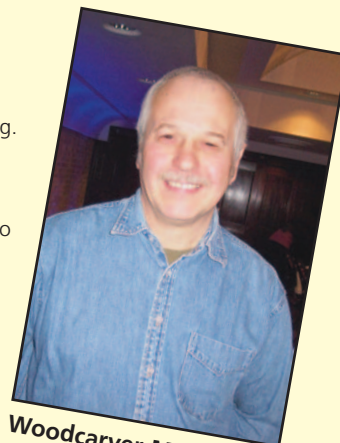
"In fact," Martin told **Call Sign**, "when I'm sitting on a rank or have a lengthy wait for a account passenger to come down during the light summer months, you can often see me sitting in my taxi chipping away!"

Martin recently exhibited some of his carvings at the Goodmayes Library in Ilford. He told us that he had been doing woodcarving for around 20 years and goes two nights each week to follow his unusual hobby in addition to another two clubs on a monthly basis.

"I just enjoy it," said Martin, "especially when you are carving out something unusual. I recently completed a foot with a face on it that was entered into a competition. A judge claimed that it wasn't like *One Foot in the Grave*! That led me to do a follow-up of a foot with a skeleton on it!"

Martin added that he has also carved out a TX2 and a Metrocab and then gave the finished products to two of his grandchildren. He now has a third grandchild and after reading about DaC's **Mo Abed-Alaziz (N09)** rescue of an old FX3 in the February **Call Sign**, Martin asked us if we could get some photos of Mo's prize taxi so that he could begin woodcarving the vehicle.

If any DaC drivers have an unusual hobby that they would like to share with other DaC drivers, just let **Call Sign** know on callsignmag@aol.com.



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You can obtain further details or arrange cover at any of Cabsurance' four offices at Seven Kings, Dunbridge Street, KPM's show-room 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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The normal price is £99 for 12 months breakdown cover, but for all new policies taken up during March 2008, Dial-a-Cab members will receive a 10% discount.

Don't leave it until it's too late! Call 0208 597 2622 now...

DaC Customer Services

I must say I am very pleased that the AGM is now out of the way, no doubt all the rumours and scurrilous comments by some individuals about the Board via email, will now disappear and we can get back to business.



Improving coverage...

Reviewing client's usage is an extremely important part of customer service. In other words, if the usage has reduced the question is why? Is it cost or perhaps service issues?

Looking at one of our long-standing account clients, the Chairman noticed and passed on to me that there had been a dramatic reduction in usage and spend. In June 2007, Brian sent our Sales Executive Natalie Ezekiel to that account and it was saved, however, they decided to have one of our competitors as a supplier too. I thought it prudent to make contact with the client to see if I could initiate a meeting to discuss all aspects of our service and this was

agreed.

Together with Natalie, we visited their premises. The objective was to resurrect confidence in our service and try to win back work we had lost. It was a completely frank discussion, but because of the lack of service, the competitor remains a supplier. So the upshot is that in an effort to improve coverage, this account will become As Directed. Because senior directors were let down and instructed that the account be closed, we have given them a VIP status as well. Our team leaders and fleet controllers will monitor the account, however without your help in covering trips, all will be lost.

So if you come across an AD trip in the city from an account client that has been with us for a substantial period of time and wonder why, well now you will understand.

Fixed rates

Due to the fact that car companies offer fixed rates to their new and existing customers, more of our clients are inquiring about the same. However, we do try to resist this direction, nevertheless as you are aware fixed rates for example to airports can still be quite lucrative - providing of course they are at a rate that is accept-

able to our members. We do increase the rates when we get the TfL fare tariff increase and we will always calculate rates as near to the meter fare as possible. With this in mind and because you may be offered a fixed rate, do not assume that the rates are automatically skinny and well below the meter fare. If you reject these trips, they go straight back to the car companies.

Westminster TaxiCards

At the end of February we have a meeting with the Westminster TaxiCard User Group. I am hoping the response from users will be favourable and appreciative of the Dial-a-Cab service.

In the meantime, please take as many of these trips as you can, it will help enormously.

Westminster Council parking issues

I am pleased to tell you that following our previous meeting with Westminster Council and submitting the various PCN data we provided to the Director of Parking, they have asked for a further meeting. This will take place at Dial-a-Cab House on 3 March. I will report back to you as soon as I have any updates.

Mike Son

DaC Customer Services

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

Kupkake's Korner



Next Year in Edgware Road

At Cumberland Gate
By Marble Arch
They've gone and built
Palm Tree Park!

A gesture by Ken
to our Middle Eastern friends
to make them feel at home
at the Edgware Road's end.

There'll be camels a plenty,
donkeys and goats,
a juice bar and an ATM -
that gives 50 pound notes!

There'll be Hookums for smoking
all over Hyde Park,
an Oasis in London
awake after dark...

Perhaps it'll be opened
by George Galloway,
I'm sure he'll be happy
to visit each day...?

Kupkake 2008

HOW TO GET POWER PILL?

Greig Smith isn't on Dial-a-Cab but drives a licensed taxi and is also a regular reader of *Call Sign's* online version. He read about the apparent disappearance of the Power Pill supplier and wrote:

"You mentioned Power Pill in last month's edition of *Call Sign*. I've just bought 20 packs from an online seller. I have no idea how many he is holding in stock, but it may be worth a try for your members who can no longer purchase them from the UK supplier. It could be an answer to the Power Pill addicts like myself, providing he doesn't stop stocking it."

The website is at <http://www.powerpillonline.com/> and *Call Sign* has now been contacted by that supplier who is based in Chesterfield. Judging by Greig Smith's experience, it looks as though Power Pill is back. As a starter for DaC drivers, Chris will supply 10 packets for £110 - even cheaper than the last supplier.

All the details are in the ad on page 21 in this issue...



2-BEDROOM SPANISH VILLA FOR RENT

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



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

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

Prices from £225 (includes final clean) OR £199 golf weekend (Thurs-Mon)
Email john@sheridanj.freesevice.co.uk or phone John (E35) on 07866 943 469

Poppy's money advice

I don't know many drivers, but those I do are good providers and their wives make a point of saying they are working for pin money, the extras, just part time. If that is widespread and I guess it is, then you may be thinking about saving money at this time of year when passengers are thin on the ground and the breadwinner may be struggling. My DaCman Glen tells me he has to work about 30% longer for the same money as he did in November/December. So here are some money-saving tips...

Get new eyeglasses on the internet at sites like **Spex4less.com** and save loads – just key in your prescription. Or give your prescription and a photo of the frames you like, as I did, to a friend travelling to Pakistan. She got me two wonderful pairs of glasses for £40 after I lost two pairs that cost £150 each!

Go to the supermarket near closing time – especially on Saturday night – and pick up bargains like bread for 20p. Get your hair done at a training school like *Vidal Sassoon* for little or nothing – they won't ruin it, but they will take a bit longer than your local girl. They sometimes prefer under-40s though.

Make sure your **Dial-a-Cab** man or lady tells you about the free ticket offers that come up on the terminal – *Shadowlands* was a fantastic recent freebie and it's fun to go to the theatre at short notice to see something that you had never even thought of. Buy Christmas, birthday and baby presents all year round, especially on holiday when you can pick up cheap, interesting things like the smart chair-shaped remote-control holders I found in Spain. It will keep you from buying tat that you will regret if you look for

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

Back Seat *Driver*



healthcare, however marvellous your friends tell you their *ayurvedic* therapist or *homeopath* or *acupuncturist* is. If they feel better, it's because of the placebo effect and the attention, and the need to feel their investment was worthwhile. Alternative therapy does not work and it is really too high a price to pay for love. You do not need any supplements your doctor does not recommend. Rethink, and make sure you get some real health boosters – laughter and the support of people who care about you. Too many people are afraid to be a nuisance – ask if you need attention from the people who love you. Spend your money visiting them if they are far away, or ringing them; don't spend it on pretty, but pretty useless therapies.

Rediscover your library, where you can order new books, use the internet, get DVDs and videos, read magazines and get audio books. Most of it's free and some services are online too. There are loads of events listed in local papers and places to go that are free, the library, *Time Out* and so on.

Education's free, so think seriously before going the private school route. Maybe it is worth it to separate your child from the *hoi polloi* and give them a sense that they are part of an elite with all the job and marriage choices that follow from that. They are not guaranteed to escape bullying, though, just because they've gone private, nor will they necessarily get a better education. I know this is an emotional topic, but I'm just saying you could examine what all those thousands of pounds are really buying. My children ended up a lot smarter than I am, at State expense and I bet yours could too...

*Till then...
Love Poppy x x x*

P.S. Glen says never buy lottery tickets. OK, stop looking over my shoulder now; I thought you were going out to work! Go...!

M&O Lower Their TX4 Finance Rates!



Savings of up to £3000 on HP Payments

Trading up to the popular TX4 has never been so affordable thanks to the latest initiatives from LTI's flagship main dealer, Mann & Overton.

The LTI dealership – based in Brewery Road – has introduced a new and dramatically lower finance rate for 2008. Depending on the model and finance term chosen, London's owner-drivers taking advantage of this offer can now expect to save up to £3,000 in their repayments across the full period of their finance agreement.

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

"We're always seeking ways to provide our customers with the best possible value for money on their vehicle purchases. Well over 90% of all the new taxis we sell are bought on hire purchase terms and so the deal we have struck with our finance partners for 2008 will provide our customers with one of the most competitive finance rates around, whilst at the same time offer real and dramatic customer savings."

Peter ended by saying: "This strong customer offering allows London licensed drivers to experience the most advanced purpose-built taxi in the world and at a very affordable rate."

For more information call M&O on 0207 700 0888 or visit www.mannandoverton.com.

serious presents. Keep them in a secret drawer and you're free then in December from the horror of the shops.

Get your fruit, veg and household things from an open market, loose and not packaged. You will save hundreds of pounds more in a year than those loyalty points could ever get you. Not Borough Market or farmers' markets, lovely but about twice the price of the kind I'm talking about. I mean ones where the stallholders still shout and call you "darling."

Devise a strategy for shared meals out with friends or colleagues where other people are going to be drinking a lot – most taxi drivers don't drink much for obvious reasons. It looks mean to pay separately or ask for a discount if you aren't drinking, but the drinkers can put the price up by 50% in my experience. Once you work out what to do, please tell me! I've started avoiding these jollies with wine flowing at £20 a bottle, plus brandies. You split the bill and then get asked for lifts home in your taxi "...cause you're sober."

Stop paying for all the things that are free – ditch bottled water, as tap water is always fresh and pure and healthy. Never pay for alternative

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

FREE TX4 JACKET ON TEST DRIVES...



**Enhance your
wardrobe with LTI's
latest promotion!**

Test drive a purpose built TX4 at one of LTI's nine UK dealerships and you will receive a limited edition TX4 jacket, free of charge, while stocks last. In addition, drivers can enter a national prize draw with a £2,000 first prize and £500 second prize up for grabs.

Rob Laidler, Sales Director at LTI Vehicles told **Call Sign**:

"We hope this incentive will encourage drivers to test drive the most advanced purpose-built taxi in the world. It's easy to see why the TX4 has broken all sales records since its launch, with an abundance of improved features that clearly sets the vehicle apart from any other taxi. These include a cleaner, quieter and more powerful Euro IV compliant engine, ABS brakes to give increased control and stability in adverse road conditions and all-round coil suspension to give passengers and drivers a smoother and more comfortable ride."

Rob ended by saying: "By taking the redefined, new generation TX4 taxi for a test drive, we know that drivers will soon realise what a great leap forward the TX4 represents in terms of power, comfort and safety."

To arrange a test drive, contact your local dealership or visit www.lti.co.uk.



Transport for London

Six Month Safety Check Includes Ramp From April

All taxis licensed from 2 April 2007 already face the six-month "safety inspection" in accordance with the requirement set out in article 14(o) of the London Cab Order 1934 (as amended by the London Cab Order 2007).

Now Alan Matthews, PCO Head of Projects and Developments has told **Call Sign** that from **2 April 2008**, all taxis undergoing the inspection will also go onto the ramp. See below for what that section consists of.

The current first time pass rate for vehicles undergoing a mid-year inspection is 63%. Of those vehicles that have failed the inspection, the most common reasons for failure are:

Diesel emissions (smoke test) 17%, taximeter/printer (failure to produce the certificate) 6%, shock absorbers 6% and brakes 3%. Some fail for more than one reason.

If you are a vehicle owner, driver or vehicle presenter who might be directly affected by this and require further information, you can contact the PCO on 020 7126 1638.

The ramp inspection will consist of:

Drive onto ramp turn engine off making sure to leave driver's window open.

Select vehicle on computer.

Rise ramp to waist height and fit brake bar.

Rise ramp to working height.

From underneath the vehicle visually check the condition of the following components using MAHA shaker plates and turning plates.

Starting at o/s/f

Steering / box, pipes and hoses.

Suspension joints.

Moving across front check for

Damaged, corroded or badly repaired chassis.

Visually check engine and pipes for leaks and damaged or broken mounts.

Visually check n/s/f steering and suspension joints.

Visually check steering idler box condition and mounting.

Working down n/s check condition of

N/S/F Brake calliper, brake discs, pads and back plates.

N/S/F Road wheel and tyre; overall condition, tread, etc.

Visually check chassis, bodywork mounts, pipes.

At n/s/r check condition of

Visually check suspension components and mounts.

Visually check brake pipes, back plate, cables and wiring.

Visually check rear axle for leaks damage and mounting.

Visually check road wheel and tyre; overall condition, tread, etc.

At o/s/r check condition of

Visually check suspension components and mounts.

Visually check brake pipes, back plate, cables and wiring

Visually check exhaust / Euro3 AT or equivalent.

Visually check road wheel and tyre; overall condition, tread, etc.

Working up o/s check condition of

Chassis, bodywork mounts, pipes.

O/S/F brake calliper, brake discs, pads and back plates.

O/S/F Road wheel and tyre; overall condition, tread, etc.

Then you can hopefully drive out with a licence!

SOUTH LONDON TAXIS 10% DISCOUNT FOR DAC DRIVERS!

If you live to the south of London and are looking for a garage offering quality work for a discounted price, try South London Taxis Limited because if you pull in with a Dial-a-Cab logo on your taxi, you will get a 10% discount on ALL work you have carried out there. And YES – that includes overhauls!

South London Taxis Limited are already well known in Croydon, but with the savings on offer for Dial-a-Cab drivers, they must be worth those few extra miles even if you don't live there!

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

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



I know that driving around London all day is what you DaC drivers do, so why on earth would I tell you about the **VRX Mach 4 racing simulator**? Well, when I came across it over the Christmas holidays while surfing the 'net and feeling totally bored, I instantly thought: I want this! And who wouldn't! Sure, with its 4 Xbox 360's, 3 37" 1080p HD LCD displays, Italian Sparco Monza racing seat and 1500 watt Tactile Vibration Feedback System, it's a seriously oversized (and expensive) big boy's toy, but that's what makes it SO desirable!

Sadly, she-who-must-be-obeyed immediately decided that it was too big, too expensive and too unnecessary for me to have - although my 5-year-old son was in full agreement with me! So it will remain forever an object on my Christmas list. Perhaps those of you who love this sort of thing might have better luck convincing your better halves!

Now Tony is off to OZ



2002 saw Tony in China. Now it's Australia...

Dial-a-Cab driver **Tony Arnold (F03)** is quite probably the only taxi driver in the world who has travelled across the continents purely as a working cabby and deserves the title bestowed on him by **Call Sign** last year of World Licensed Taxi Driver!

In 2002 Tony flew with his TXII to Beijing in China and then drove it all the way back to London to help publicise the Beijing Olympics - which were then still 6 years away. The 3-month trip took him through China, Outer Mongolia and Russia, through the Arctic Circle, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Holland, France and finally London after a trouble free trip!

Next, Tony took a TXII to Nigeria's capital city of Abuja to help train the local cabbies in how to not only drive the LTI vehicle, but also in how to behave towards passengers. He then went on to Ghana to continue the lessons!

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

Tony, who has a TX4 - will be sending a report on his Australia venture to **Call Sign**. Look out for it next month...

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

Jon Ask's What's New?



The VRX Mach 4 Racing Simulator is a very (very) expensive "toy"

These are the stats: # 3 Sharp Aquos 37" LC-D62U 1080p HD LCD displays

Adjustable rear view power acoustic (PTM 750) 7" LCD display

Bose Acoustimass 10 series surround sound system with subwoofer

Harmon Kardon AVR-144 surround sound receiver

1500 watt tactile vibration feedback system

1900 watt tactile power amplifier

Virtual Wind System powered by 2 dual Honeywell fans with chrome shroud

1" CNC machined polished aluminium foot assembly that connects to the front of the VRX

Universal triple screen aluminium mounting bracket; accepts LCD displays from 20" to 40"

Adjustable aluminium and tinted acrylic component shelves

On board power bar and unique wire way system conceals cables

Polished chrome chassis with powder coated wheel mount and pedal mount

CNC billet aluminium speaker mounts and seat wing

Front and rear non-slip aluminium vibration dampeners

3M automotive chrome trim concealed edges

Italian Sparco Monza racing seat (choice of red/black or black/silver)

Sparco automotive seat slider

Suspension seat base

3/D epoxy coated graphics

Velcro and machined rubber grip blocks "to prevent wheel and pedal movement"

10" diagonal and 8" horizontal wheel adjustments

Polished aluminium speaker mounts

LED lighting effects

Beverage containment system - otherwise known as a drinks holder!

As you can see, it is seriously cool! You can see more photos and read more about it at www.virtualracers.com/new_products.php.

Jonathen Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

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

Grilles and security gates

Additional vehicle locks fitted

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

Call Sign At LTI's RAC Lunch

Call Sign recently attended an informal luncheon at the RAC Club to meet members of the LTI management team and be updated on happenings/goings-on at the Coventry factory, together with progress being made with Geely - the Chinese Connection!

John Russell, CEO of LTI parent company *Manganese Bronze Holdings*, opened proceedings by welcoming we 'hacks' to the Pall Mall venue, giving him the opportunity to meet taxi trade people he had not met previously during his time with MBH. He said he was privileged to be a part of the business that produces the iconic London Taxi and proud of the TX4. He said that the TX4 was proving a popular taxi not only in London, but across the UK as a whole with both operators and drivers alike. Sales figures were healthy, keeping the factory busier than ever before.

"An improved product relates to improved sales," he said. He also confirmed that taxi production would continue at Coventry, producing cabs for the UK, US and European markets. Mr Russell did however see the long-term future of the company as having to "break out" of being a low-volume manufacturer, by being able to expand into international markets and this is where their relationship with Geely Automotive would prove beneficial to both parties.

Speaking of the legally binding agreement with Geely Automobile Holdings to produce the London Taxi and a limousine variant in Shanghai for the Chino/Asian markets, Mr Russell said that the expectation was to produce 40,000 units per year starting mid-2008, with Geely having the right to sell the taxi within Asia, while LTI will sell the cab throughout the rest of the world.

Their joint venture, he said, would benefit LTI by the ability to source components at reduced cost, given the greater unit volumes involved, while Geely would benefit from LTI's quality control and marketing skills. LTI staff will support Geely in quality improvement and sales initiatives.

He was upbeat about the future of the purpose-built taxi and looked forward to the long term security of LTI with its Chinese partner, helping to reduce production costs and stabilise parts availability. He also praised the Chinese for their enthusiasm and entrepreneurial skills.

He added that there were already some Chinese built prototypes up and running, and were presently undergoing quality control tests before 'ramp up' production starts later this year. Interestingly, he then related a conversation with a Chinese executive who not only wanted to build the Chinese London taxi, but our Chinese friend was hoping LTI would also be able to export "...the famous London taxi driver too" That says much for the reputation of our trade...

John Russell then took questions from the floor of which there were many! Several journalists wanted to know more about the *Listening Programme*, LTI's User Forum through which **Call Sign** often arranges visits to the Coventry factory (next one is March 5). Andrew Overton explained the nature of the Focus Groups and suggested interested parties write in.

Another trade journalist asked about the possibility of a 'hybrid' taxi. John Russell said that the technology was chal-



Fellow 'hacks' at the RAC luncheon. No Call Sign - we were taking the photo!

lenging and was not easily resolved, but another questioner suggested halving the cab body weight and fitting an electric motor? It was pointed out that battery power would severely limit the vehicle's range and overnight re-charging might be a problem.

The TX4 then came under discussion and problems drivers were experiencing. John

Russell acknowledged that there were still some issues with the cab that needed sorting and by working closely with main dealers, these were being resolved.

Answering a question from the floor, Peter Shillcock, LTI's MD responded that despite rumours of a return to a Nissan engine, LTI remained committed to the VM engine for the foreseeable future.

Another lunch guest raised the issue of a better publicised *Dealer Network* for owners to have warranty work done. This was taken on board and a list of dealers would be published in due course.

An informative afternoon with the opportunity to put across issues that as drivers and owners, affect our daily working lives. Ok... and the food was nice!

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

USING MOBILE PHONES ON AIRCRAFT

Dial-a-Cab drivers taking business people to the airport have long been used to the passenger spending the whole trip on their mobile phone. Well as of next month, it seems that the little matter of the flight won't be enough to get them off the phone!

With no smoking on any aircraft around Europe now taken for granted, it looks as though the space where the **smoking / no-smoking** sign used to be will soon have a new use as a **mobile service / no mobile service** indicator for mobile phones.

It seems likely that many airlines will soon allow you to use your mobile phone in mid-air. Specialist spectrum policy newsletter, *PolicyTracker*, say that **Air France** is now conducting the world's first trial on international flights. Using a system developed by



Airbus associate *OnAir*, passengers on an Air France Airbus A318 can use their mobiles at heights of over 3,000 metres, just as if they were roaming in a foreign country while paying much the same rate for the service. The only fly in the ointment at this point is that while most European telecom operators have agreed to the mobile service being provided in their national airspace, some have not. When the trial flight flies over countries such as Spain and Portugal, which have not yet approved the service, the no mobile service sign will light up.

Air France reports there has been a warm reception from travellers to the initially data-only service, with business travellers in particular delighted to be able to stay in touch via email, SMS and MMS while airborne. The crunch part of the six-month trial, which began on a flight between Paris and Warsaw, will come in a few weeks time when voice is also introduced allowing passengers to make and take ordinary calls on their handsets. But Air France is also expecting many passengers to be against fellow travellers holding phone conversations and every passenger is being given a questionnaire to put their views on the service. Depending on what the majority have to say, Air France may launch a full service, a data-only service or no service on the rest of its fleet.

Other airlines are watching the trial with interest and cut-price operator **RyanAir** has announced it plans to launch a similar service on its 200 Boeing 737 aircraft in March.

In the meantime, passengers can still use mobiles in their DaC taxi...!

M25 variable speed cameras going digital

Many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers use various stretches of the M25 motorway – especially those who work more at Heathrow Airport. **Call Sign** has now been informed by a member of the *Metropolitan Police Service* that as from 15th February 2008, all speed cameras in the *variable speed limit* section of the M25 close to Heathrow (junctions 10-15) went digital and the activation limit has now also been lowered.

The old batch were the film type cameras and set at 90mph when the variable limit signs were not in operation. However, the new digital cameras have been set at the more usual 10% of the speed limit + 2mph (79mph). Touch 80mph and you are taking a risk with your licence.

When the variable speed signs are in operation, it seems probable that the same equation will be in use ie 60mph might allow you up to 68mph.

However, there is only one way to ensure that your taxi doesn't end up as a photo in the new digi-cams and that is to stick to the advertised speed limit.

The M25 began life in the 1960s as a series of three ring roads known as the London Ringways and which were supposed to be the forerunners of a road to circle London. The plan by the Greater London Council was to circle the capital and stop heavy lorries and other vehicles on their way elsewhere from having to go through the city centre. By 1973 only three sections had been constructed and the rest of the project was cancelled.

Modifications to two of the existing outer ring roads was then begun and these became the first two sections of the M25 to open in 1975. They were where junctions 23 / 24 are and in 1976, the stretch where junctions 6 / 8 are, was opened.

Nowadays the M25 is described as either a lifesaver when clear - or just a 117 mile car park...!

See Jon Gaunt Live

UK's number one shock jock on tour with a discount ticket offer for taxi drivers!

Live and undaunted, **Talksport's Jon Gaunt** is arguably the favourite radio presenter of London taxi drivers. Thousands tune in to his daily morning programme or read his weekly page in *The Sun*. Now you can see him personally in his live show with his 25-date UK tour.

Gaunt is hoping to see as many of his **Dial-a-Cab** driver fans as possible at the shows and is offering a £2 discount on tickets for you AND your families and friends!

The offer applies at the following venues:

Dartford Orchard Theatre March 18, Phone 01322 220000, tickets £13.50 including discount.

Croydon Fairfield Halls March 20, Phone 0208 688 9291, tickets £14.50 including discount.

Potters Bar Wylyotts March 27, Phone 01707 645005, tickets £10 including discount.

Harpندن Public Halls April 25, Phone 01582 762880, tickets £13 including discount.

London Shaw Theatre April 26 & 27, Phone 0870 033 2600, tickets £16 including discount.

Radlett Centre, Radlett May 23, Phone 01923 859291, tickets £14 including discount.

Vintage Gaunt – brash, loud and gloriously lacking in the slightest hint of political correctness!

*Good fun, whether you agree with him or not! **Wolverhampton Express & Star***

You can now order your copy of Jon Gaunt's autobiography, **Undaunted** (price £16.95 at all good bookshops and amazon.co.uk)...



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.

Tel.: 01628 471632. Mob.: 07974 348974.

MAILSHOT

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

Eight happy years, but....!

Can I start by saying I've been on DaC now for 8 years and am very happy; this isn't intended as a moan, just a few suggestions to make everyone's life a bit easier - although I may have a moan at the end! I'll list my suggestions first if that's ok!

1. Double meaning instructions: I've noticed this is happening a lot now, by this I mean *Advise Arrival* next to *Make Own Contact* or *Make No Contact* next to *Advise Arrival*. I realise a lot of accounts have standard remarks and the passenger may add instructions, but it is confusing for us drivers.

2. Outer zone job offers: For example, when a job is offered in W50C it will say something like Lady Margaret Rd, *Stbll*. Is it not possible to state *Southall*? If a driver is not too familiar with the area, he or she may not be able to work it out in time.

3. Cash and credit card jobs: Wouldn't it be worth having a trial where all these were unmasked between 7am and 10am? I think this may improve coverage as I'm sure a lot of drivers are reluctant to do these jobs if they don't know where they are going. I for one am and it could help both the driver and DaC.

4. Tube strike days and 'T' jobs: Much has been written on these subjects and I must admit I'm undecided on the latter, although I can see the Board's point of view. My issue is that on tube strike days, I think we should inform all minicab accounts we will not take their work. It seems that we are making them look better at our own expense. Also on tube strike days, how about informing all of our clients that we will impose a £10 premium if the taxi is left waiting for more than 15 minutes? The reason for this is that I believe a lot of passengers are now wise to the fact that they may have to wait for a taxi, therefore they book it well before they need it. This just makes a bad situation even worse by having taxis waiting outside people's houses / workplaces when there is work building up everywhere.

5. Why is there no more talk of new terminals? I seem to remember some mentions of new super-duper terminals with sat nav etc.

6. Why is the McKinsey account attributed with a T? If we share it, shouldn't it be a J? Now the moan! In my opinion the traffic is the worst it's ever been. Shaftesbury Avenue shuts and they close St Giles High St at the same time? Westbourne Grove shuts for 8 months? Soho is practically impossible to access! I for one have changed my working hours to avoid sitting in traffic for most of my shift and I'm sure I'm not alone. Surely most of our larger accounts are just as annoyed as us about it as they must be los-

ing fortunes. Couldn't DaC get together with some of them and make noises to the relevant authorities? Just a thought! Sorry if I went on a bit, but it's my first letter to *Call Sign* and I thought I'd get it all in one hit!

Richard Long (A06)

Keith Cain replies: Richard, thank you for your suggestions and I will try to answer them as written...

1) I agree, these instructions are confusing but the problem is as you have guessed.

The accounts are set up with default information, which primarily applies to the account address. When picking up elsewhere, individual passengers require different driver instructions. Unfortunately, the system is not flexible enough to override the default instructions. Until such time as reprogramming can be done to improve this, my suggestion is to contact our controllers for guidance.

2) This problem has been with us since the implementation of the data dispatch system in 1989. The reason for the abbreviation is the field for entering this information is our dispatching zone, which comprises of a maximum of four digits. I am given to understand that to alter this would take a considerable amount of work and affect the basic functionality of the dispatch system. It's priority is fairly low because of the number of trips it affects, which are very minimal.

3) Showing the destination of credit cards to improve coverage could have a totally opposite effect. In my long experience, those trips that do not go very far would certainly not be covered, thus leaving us in the same situation. This should be left alone.

4) Fortunately, tube strike days do not happen very often. While your sentiments of the 'T' attribute are fine, the whole idea of the attribute is for all members to make their own choice whether to accept a trip or not. Before Christmas, I put into place with our controllers to return each 'T' attribute trip to its car vendor if it was not covered within a couple of minutes. This seems to work very well and conversations with car firms have left them with a better understanding of how we operate.

All clients, as you know, have terms & conditions with us. It would be for the sales team to decide if implementing this type of charge would be damaging to securing the account. From my experience, clients often remark that the whole idea of paying over and above the meter fare for having an account facility is to ensure during certain times, for example adverse weather, strikes, terrorist action etc, that they get a cab regardless.

5) New Terminals? This project is still

ongoing. The Board have not given this a high priority status because our poor signals need to be resolved much sooner than implementing a new terminal.

6) The McKinsey account is shared with a car company and not another licensed taxi firm. That's why we have a 'T' attribute.

Where possible, we do talk to relevant authorities about general conditions in and around London. We hope that our approach of being gentlemen is accepted and does go some way to express the frustration of not only our members, but the whole trade. If you were to ask, do they listen to us? The answer is I don't know.

I hope these answers have been of some help to you...

Mo Abed-Alaziz and his FX3

Just read the article on **Mo Abed-Alaziz (N09)** restoration of his Manchester FX3 (Feb *Call Sign*). Excellent story and certainly good PR for the LVTA (London Vintage Taxi Association). I remember Mo, as he bought the cab after a successful bid on eBay. I emailed him and suggested he should join the LVTA and he did. I was delighted at the time and still am! He is a member with courage! I believe he has more old-timers including, I think, a Beardmore. *My best wishes to all on Dial-a-Cab...*

Hans Dooren

**LVTA Membership Secretary,
Holland**

Wheelchairs and insurance?

I've asked this question before, but I think we need a definitive answer now. I have just renewed my cab's insurance and whilst there asked what their policy was on the carriage of wheelchair passengers should they not be correctly strapped in and in the event of an accident - be it even a non fault one? How would they deal with it?

They said under no circumstance should I carry a wheelchair passenger who was not strapped in with the supplied LTI straps, rear facing, their belt on and the chair's brakes fully locked. In the event of an accident and they were not correctly strapped in (in conjunction with PCO and LTI requirements) and the passenger was injured - be it my fault or not - I could be held responsible, even grossly negligent. This also may in turn void your insurance and leave you open to a claim, which your insurance might



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not cover.

They also said never to allow the passenger to say they don't mind being side facing as this kind of verbal confirmation would never stand up in law. So as you know, a taxi only really takes a standard size chair in the correct method and many of the newer adapted or electric powered chairs only fit into a cab facing the side. So my insurance company said that if the wheelchair did not fit in conjunction with the PCO / LTI requirements, then you shouldn't really carry it.

I have spoken to no less than 7 people at the PCO to ask how I would stand on refusing a wheelchair on grounds that it couldn't be taken in the correct method? They don't know what their policy is! It seems funny that they know exactly where they stand on things like tissue boxes on the rear parcel shelf and logoed tax disc holders, but for something with such serious repercussions as this, they have no clue. So could I have DaCs policy should I refuse an accepted job for a wheelchair on the grounds that it cannot be placed in the cab correctly?

Michael Beevor (N76)

Thanks for the letter Michael. Allan Evans has been in touch with the Policy Standards dept at the PCO on behalf of Call Sign and has been promised an answer – hopefully for the next issue ...Ed

Not earning enough?

Pleeeaaassse, Alan, tell me what I am doing wrong. Whilst doing an £8 minimum account ride from E14 to E14 in the early hours of last Thursday, my passenger informed me that many of my colleagues earn over £70K per year and some even top £100K. He seemed quite surprised when I told him that my earnings were nowhere near that. Could this drastic shortfall in my earnings be due to the fact that I very rarely work on Sundays?

Answers on the back of a £5 note to...

Ian Skeels (J74)

Ian, I trust you mentioned to your passenger that according to The Sunday Times (and as you don't work that day, you have plenty of time to peruse it), he probably earns over £1.5million per annum! His answer would have been interesting! ...Ed

Dear Aunty Alan...

I need help and I need it now! Ever since the 40 jobs per month rule has been enforced, I've tried hard to meet the quota, hanging around in the depths of SW4 in the early morning to give me the start I need and most months I made the numbers – perhaps only just – but I made it. When the

incentive was announced and the job numbers were upped to 100, I started to sweat a bit, but was sure I could do it. Then the rear axle came adrift, which also coincided with the overhaul. It became an uphill struggle from then on and I failed miserably. Depressed and on the brink, I waited for *Call Sign* mag to arrive and cheer me up, but all it's done is to make things worse... 600 jobs in seven weeks! I'm suicidal. At the start of this letter I asked for help, so tell me: Do I need to do days or nights or both? **Worried from Maidstone (or Colin Lewis N55)**

Dear Worried, I can understand your frustration knowing that everyone else is better than you. But fear not because things can always be worse – I'm just not sure how! Wish your axle better...Ed

Xmas incentive headlines?

The headline on the front of the February *Call Sign* magazine read as: "No wonder Brian is smiling, he has just given away £million!" Perhaps it could have read: "No wonder Brian is smiling....he has just found the trophy cabinet for Queens Park Rangers!"

Richard Barford (R39)

Hi Richard, how's your trophy cabinet? I seem to remember a £35,000 'Gold' spec TX2 winging its way to you after Christmas 2006 BT (before TX4)? Bigger than QPR's I'd bet! ...Ed

PCN victories!

Greetings all PCN warriors! I'm pleased to announce two recent victories over the heavens at Westminster council. Following their concession to me over the ticket issued whilst on DaC business in Soho Street, **BANG!** Westminster suffers a bloody nose as the infamous PCN in the Carlisle Street *cul-de-sac* is defeated. Then, before they can recover, **BIFF!** A black eye in the shape of another cancellation. This time, it's personal as I could have spent £120 on the most expensive can of drink in history after getting caught outside Sainsburys in Mortimer Street.

Both of these were drawn out affairs requiring lots of nerve whilst receiving various communiqués designed to make the old bottle go. The bottom line is that so long as you communicate, you will be fine. When you make your appeal, you will generally be rebuffed and sent a green form known as a *Notice to Owner* (NtO). I made a mistake here as I tried to reply by email in the same way as my initial appeal. No good! The appeal section of the form itself must be filled out and sent back. I was then sent a red letter in the form of a charge notice threatening me with county court judgments. This forced me to contact The Parking and Traffic Appeals Service (P.A.T.A.S.) to whom I made a formal request for arbitration. To cut a long one short, I was given a date for a hearing at



New Zealand House, Haymarket, but just over a week before the hearing was due, a letter was sent informing me that Westminster were no longer pursuing payment of this PCN.

The Mortimer Street situation was exacerbated by me forgetting to return the NtO. This resulted in me receiving another charge notice followed by a letter from *First Revenue Assurance*, a debt collection agency! I don't know what scared me more, this letter or the reaction of my Missus! Communication was key. I contacted them to explain that I was in a dispute, which was ongoing. Unfortunately, it was too late to stop a letter from Northampton county court, but I contacted the court and spoke to a very nice lady who advised me to fill out the appeal section on the court letter, get it witnessed by a policeman or at a county court and send it back. This had the effect of removing my case from the legal system, meaning that Westminster had to start again from the beginning which I guess was the straw that broke the camels back in this particular chase. **Eight, Nine, Ten.....You're Out!**

It only goes to show; so long as you communicate, whether it be with the council themselves or any other third party they set on you such as debt collection agencies or even the court, you will be fine! You just have to know that they are bullies who only pick on those who don't stand up! So I'm telling you: **Stand up!**

Just remember, if you're on a job then DaC will back you! After all, you are helping the Society by helping yourself! Every ticket you hand into Driver Services is an invitation to the powers that be to take your photo again and again. It's a numbers game and whilst DaC are paying, those people are winning! And if you're not on DaC business? Well, hey, war is a dirty business! If it's OK for them to fine you whilst you are being paid off or assisting some poor old lady who depends on us to get her to the hospital, then I say it's OK to invent a disabled customer to have taken into a building whilst the heartless warden was looking on! Or to say that the warden *specifically* said he would give you time to quickly empty your bladder and yet you still came out only a minute later to find him writing a ticket whilst laughing like a cartoon baddie! It's not an ideal way to go about things, but to me it's self-preservation!

Thanks to all of you who signed Anthony Mitchell's petition. Anthony and I presented at least 1000 names to Lee Scott, MP for Ilford North. Will it do any good? I honestly don't know, but he is on our side! One thing's for sure, nothing will really change whilst cuddly Ken is in charge! So shout out loud to the multitudes! Vote Boris!

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Be Lucky, Be Strong!

Martin Hizer (M47)

Well-done Martin! There is now also a petition on the Number 10 Downing Street website which must be worth 2 minutes of anyone's time (see elsewhere in this issue for details). As for my PCN while stopping briefly to use the toilet at the northern end of Queensway (page 22 Feb *Call Sign*), after writing to Westminster and the Mayor, that has now been quashed. If you feel a PCN has been unfairly issued...APPEAL! Also write to the Mayor. He may well say it isn't TfL's area, but that doesn't matter. The response is all you need - and to let him know how we feel. If enough did it, word might get around ...Ed

The Editor...and Jimmy Greaves???

I know this isn't Dial-a-Cab related and you can rap me over the knuckles if you like, but having just bought the latest Tottenham Hotspur monthly mag (*Hotspur*), I found inside a photo of Jimmy Greaves from late 1961 being mobbed by several young Spurs fans - one of whom (clutching a newspaper) looks suspiciously like your good self as you would have been around 15 or 16 at the

time, so it fits!

And knowing you're a Spurs fan yourself anyway, I had to ask . . . is it you?

Robert Richland (N94)

Thank you Robert! Not content with giving my age away, you associate me with being something of a geek! Apparently it was me! ...Ed

Xmas incentive

I don't work particularly long hours but decided to work longer and harder to try to earn some Christmas bonus. I was aiming for £500 but fell well short as credit work dried up as drivers took every job on offer. I managed to earn £230, which was ok, but I'm writing because Brian Rice said that two drivers took £2500. I find that absolutely amazing! To achieve this amount they would have had to do the equivalent of approx 12 jobs every day for the 51 days consecutively and bearing in mind that the last two weeks of credit work was skinny, it certainly must have taken some doing!

Anyway, I was happy with my £230 and didn't even need a dentist!

Martyn Madden (Y97)

I beat you by £100, Martyn! I think you should bear in mind that the vast majority of drivers picked up amounts between £100 and £750, but some really

set out to capitalise by working more than just a few extra hours and did up to 20 account rides in a day! However, you are talking about two drivers out of well over 2000. I'm not sure if either required a dentist afterwards ...Ed

An apology!

One morning last week, one of my fellow DaC drivers let me out from Dean Bradley Street to turn right onto Horseferry Road. I duly thanked him for his courtesy and continued along Horseferry Road via Artillery Row roundabout and then into Rochester Row. Just short of Vauxhall Bridge Road, someone hailed me and I stopped to pick this person up only to be hooted and subjected to the finger treatment and silently mouthed words of derision. I had not noticed that the cab that had let me out of Dean Bradley Street had followed the same route down Rochester Row as myself. If I had noticed that he was still behind me, I would in all decency have passed the hailing person and signalled to the following driver that it was only fair for him to have the fare. If that driver reads this letter, I wish to apologise to him profusely and say that I honestly did not realise that he was still behind me.

Roy C.Martin (R42)

Well said Roy ...Ed

WAR DISABLED CHARITY SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Occasion marked by trip back to the Normandy beaches ...

The President, Chairman and Officers of *The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled* have asked **Call Sign** to thank all their advertisers and sponsors who have supported them through this year's diary and also all the drivers who purchased one. As this is a major source of their income, they need the trade's continued support so they are able to continue the yearly outings to Worthing. These began in 1948 with 25 taxis and 50 ex-servicemen and continue to the present day with 130 taxis and 400 ex-servicemen and women.

They have also been able to give assistance to Combat Stress, The Haigh Homes Morden, St David's Home Ealing, Queen Alexandra's Home Worthing and The First World War Veterans Association, in addition to supplying transport for **Henry Allingham**, the oldest surviving veteran of the First World War and who was able to go with them to Worthing in 2007. On June 6, Mr Allingham will be 112 years old!

2008 is the 60th anniversary of the Association and to mark that momentous occasion, between 7th and 11th



Returning to the Normandy beaches one more time

May 2008 they will be taking 160 veterans to Normandy. That coincides with the victory celebrations in France and they have been asked by the City of Caen to be involved in the parade that will take place there on May 8th 2008.

Doug Sherry MBE and Alan Hooker have been invited to a meeting with **Admiral Brac de la Perriere**, who is involved with the French governmental department associated with the Normandy veterans.

All three have been instrumental in arranging the trip.

The War Disabled charity is also having their annual trip to Worthing on Tuesday 10th June 2008 where the guest of honour will be **Lieutenant Colonel S.J.C.Tootal** DSO OBE PARA. To complete a momentous year they will also be organising a concert on Sunday 28th September 2008 in The Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

If any of the regular drivers have moved or if there are any new drivers wishing to be involved in the outings, please contact the charity's Secretary, Paul Davis, on 07860 850 102 or contact the organisation on www.taxicharity.org

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